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Preface

Fred Brooks said that "dissertations are not finished; they are abandoned." He was a computer scientist, but he was, I think, expressing an insight into the temporality of dissertation writing. While outwardly dissertation writing may have the character of a *kinesis*—something with a determinate end-point—it nevertheless strikes its author as having the character of an *energeia*--something the termination of which is never justified from its own perspective or on its own terms. On this note, I want to to acknowledge my indebtedness to some people who contributed to the abandonment of this dissertation.

First and foremost, I am grateful to my chair, Candace, whose support and philosophical guidance has been invaluable throughout. It was largely because her running my 'First Year Seminar' that, for the first time, I became interested in practical philosophy. This was no doubt due to her infectious passion for the topic. As my chair, she has been patient enough to give me the space and encouragement to develop my ideas over time—often when the structure of the whole was as yet only dimly in view.

Jason has also been a great source of encouragement throughout my graduate career. His classes, especially one several years ago, aptly called 'Reasons', were a great help to me in seeing how we could readily affirm the centrality of causality to the understanding of human action, without risking a collapse into 'bald naturalism'.

From the outset Agnes has always forced me to clarify my own ideas, making them sharper than they would have been otherwise, as well as helped me to see what in them was most worth pursuing. Then, about a year or so ago, I was delighted to discover her piece on Aristotle on deliberation, having finally found a fellow traveler on a path I haven't seen anyone take before. In the piece Agnes articulated the thought that a practical reasoner without a good end cannot

deliberate well: not even about means. Knowing that Agnes had defended a version of this idea, on Aristotle's behalf, gave me the philosophical courage to pursue a line of thought that hitherto I had been tentative elaborating myself.

It was in Anton's classes that I received my introduction to the philosophy of action proper. I don't think it could have been a better one. As is evidenced in what follows, throughout working on my dissertation I have found the papers that he has written over the past few years to be great sources of inspiration; they have also served for me as a model of philosophical writing about action.

Matthias deserves special mention, partly because he arrived so late on the scene. In the last year or so since we have started talking about philosophy, Matthias has been amazingly generous with his time and acumen. I have been the true beneficiary of his ability, which I have also witnessed numerous times at conferences and seminars, to step inside the framework of another philosopher's thought and see what it is they want to say—and also what they *need* to say—better than they themselves can. It is safe to say the dissertation would not have the form it now does without his help.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to two other professors who are not on my committee. Over the course of countless classes, meetings and Friday afternoon workshops, Jim Conant has influenced my conception of philosophy, and philosophical discussion, in a profound and pervasive manner that is impossible to trace to any particular philosophical doctrine or school of thought. He is not referenced once in what follows, but his influence, I hope, will be found everywhere.

Often being a graduate student brings with it a kind of philosophical fatigue that can threaten one's essential passion for—and sense of—philosophy. Whenever I myself felt this way nothing renewed my faith in philosophy as a singular pursuit more than attending one of Irad Kimhi's classes, where I could always witness the fact that philosophy in the strictest sense was very much alive and well (even if it wasn't always on time). A paper I gave at a conference devoted to his

work last summer allowed me to think through some of his ideas in relation to the topic of intentional action. Looking back, that opportunity proved pivotal in my thinking.

I also owe a great deal to my fellow graduate students at Chicago, who form a remarkable community of young philosophers, and whose support and friendship, both philosophical and otherwise, has been crucial. There are too many to name, but Claire and Pascal, fellow members of my cohort, deserve special mention for their support over the past seven years.

Finally, I want to acknowledge a great debt of gratitude to Anastasia. There is no part of this dissertation which she has not read in some form or other, or otherwise discussed with me over the past year. Without her encouragement and help, but most importantly her belief in me, this dissertation would, I am fairly sure, not have been abandoned.

Introduction

The systematic treatment of practical rationality—reasoning directed towards acting—begins in earnest with Aristotle's distinction between practical and theoretical reason. In the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle distinguishes thought about how things are—thought aimed at the comprehension of timeless truths (*sophia*) and opinion about empirical matters (*doxa*)—from practical thought—deliberation—which is aimed at action, either action whose end lies outside of itself, as in the case of craft (*techne*) or action whose end lies within it (*praxis*). We find in Aristotle the idea that reason itself can be aimed not merely at the comprehension of truths about a world that exists independently of our comprehension of it, but at a world that depends for its existence on us, on our acting in accordance with our own desired ends.

For Aristotle, therefore, practical thought is thought that is fundamentally *productive*. While theoretical syllogisms proceed from premises that are theoretical judgments to a conclusion that is another theoretical judgment, the practical syllogisms Aristotle describes conclude not in belief or knowledge but in action. Starting out from a major premise that contains some desired end, and through a minor premise that specifies a possible means of attaining the desired end, the conclusion of a syllogism is an action in which we pursue the end desired through the means identified.

But the idea that a rational inference can conclude not in a belief about some worldly state of affairs, or a judgment about an eternal truth, but in *action* itself—the idea that changes in material reality could really be the acts of thought—will be baffling to philosophers in the modern era. This is principally because, by contrast with Aristotle, for the philosophers of the modern era, material reality comes to be defined in terms of its contrast, and complete causal independence and conceptual incongruence with the mental: material reality consists exclusively in those things that

can take part in material causal transactions with other material things. This renders equally mysterious the possibility that mental activity is explanatorily relevant to explanations of changes in the material world, as well as the idea that material reality displays, embodies or expresses any so-called rational form. As such, it can seem that the only options open to us for understanding practical thought consist either in an unattractive dualism, in which the interaction of the mental and the material is left undetermined, or a reductionist attempt to understand mental activity as in principle explicable in terms of the laws that govern material things.[1]

Perhaps more than any other philosopher, Immanuel Kant was concerned to vindicate practical reason's claim to its own distinctive form of rationality. Kant, like Aristotle, affirms the productive nature of practical reason as what distinguishes it from theoretical reason:

> 'Now so far as reason is...its knowledge can be related to its object in two ways, either merely to determine this object and its concept (which must be given from elsewhere), or also to make it actual. The former is theoretical and the latter practical knowledge of reason.' (Bix-x; KpV46, 89)

Yet on Kant's account, practical reason's productivity threatens to stop short of material reality itself. For the agent's practical thought to causally influence material reality, it must, for Kant, overstep its own boundary, a transgression that requires an appeal to another form of causality, that of freedom, of which Kant can say little about save for asserting its possibility. But the world in which the agent intervenes is a world known theoretically, a world that is essentially determined not

[1] If the former position is expressed most clearly in Descartes's metaphysics of mind, there is nevertheless a more different kind of dualism between nature and freedom at work in Kant's philosophy. Of the early moderns, Hobbes takes the starkly materialist route. In contemporary philosophy, the reductionist program takes many forms, though perhaps the keystone guiding all its various forms is a commitment to physicalism, "the thesis that everything is physical, or as contemporary philosophers sometimes put it, that everything supervenes on the physical." (Stoljar, 2017)

through the laws of freedom, but through the laws of nature.[2] Thus, insofar as the action the agent performs has any material reality, i.e. is a part of the material world, it is difficult to see, in Kant, how that material reality can be recognized as what it supposedly is—the product of an exercise of practical reason. Insofar as the movements the agent makes are part of material reality, it seems that practical reason is not *immediately* productive of those movements, only of that posture of mind characteristic of an agent who, recognizing her duty, determines herself to perform an act of a certain kind. As Stephen Engstrom puts it, the immediate object of practical reason is nothing but the subject herself, as for the object considered as the actions themselves, practical reason requires mediation: "practical cognition's determination of the object is not itself the *making actual* of the object…it is where possible the determination of the power of choice *to* make actual what it represents in its determination of the object" (2008, 122fn.14). As for the rational activity necessary for the realization of the end chosen, this rational activity is itself not essentially practical at all but is identified by Kant with the exercise of theoretical rationality, for, according to Kant, hypothetical imperatives are statements whose truth must ultimately consist in facts about causal regularities.

In the first chapter of this dissertation I consider the prospects for developing an account of a genuinely practical reason, that is to say productive reason, through engagement with the two pioneers of 20th century philosophy of action who can be viewed as inheritors of the thought of Aristotle and Kant: Elizabeth Anscombe and Donald Davidson.

Davidson's account of action begins with the observation that when we explain why someone does something by citing their reason, we give both the cause of their action, and that in the light of which their action appeared to them choice worthy. There is something deeply right about Davidson's initial motivation here. When I take myself to act for a reason, I understand

[2] "Subsumption of an action possible to me in the sensible world under a *pure practical law* does not concern the possibility of the *action* as an event in the sensible world; for, it belongs to the theoretical use of reason to appraise that possibility in accordance with the law of causality, a pure concept of the understanding for which reason has a *schema* in sensible intuition." (1996, p.195)

myself to be acting in virtue of the very thought that casts that action in a favorable light. Had I not recognized that particular consideration as a reason to act, I would not be now acting. Furthermore, it is because the consideration casts my action in a favorable light, i.e., it is because I recognize it as *a reason*, that it is able to explain why I am now acting. The productive grasp of my reason is of a fundamentally rational kind.

For Davidson it followed that explanations of actions in terms of reasons, what he called 'rationalizations', had to be understood as *causal* explanations. His notion of causal explanation is entirely grounded in a conception of natural law. For Davidson, causes and effects are events which count as causes and effects in virtue of falling under exceptionless laws, understood as universal generalizations with appropriate ceteris paribus clauses. Since he respects the autonomy of rational explanations—which he thinks obey their own constitutively normative ideal of rationality that can therefore never be formulated in terms of such laws—he is forced, I shall argue, to pry apart the mode of *causality* that belongs to an agent's thought from its *rationality*. Aiming to give an account of genuinely productive thought, Davidson ended up affirming a split between the causal and the rational, reproducing Kant's distinction between the sensible world and the practical self-knowledge of an agent.[3]

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[3] Davidson fully owns his Kantian inheritance in 'Mental Events': "I start from the assumption that both the causal dependence, and the anomalousness, of mental events are undeniable facts. My aim is therefore to explain, in the face of apparent difficulties, how this can be. I am in sympathy with Kant when he says,

> it is as impossible for the subtlest philosophy as for the commonest reason- ing to argue freedom away. Philosophy must therefore assume that no true contradiction will be found between freedom and natural necessity in the same human actions, for it cannot give up the idea of nature any more than that of freedom. Hence even if we should never be able to conceive how freedom is possible, at least this apparent contradiction must be convincingly eradicated. For if the thought of freedom contradicts itself or nature . . . it would have to be surrendered in competition with natural necessity.

Generalize human actions to mental events, substitute anomaly for freedom, and this is a description of my problem. And of course, the connection is closer, since Kant believed freedom entails anomaly." (2001, Essay 11)

Anscombe's ambition is to maintain the unity of an action as something both rational and materially real. To this end she places the notion of 'practical knowledge' at the center of her account of intentional action, claiming that only those events known by their agents in a special non-observational way are intentional actions. "Non-observational" is of course a merely negative characterization of practical knowledge; Anscombe's positive characterization of practical knowledge deploys a slogan from Aquinas—she says practical knowledge is "the cause of what it understands". As Anscombe's interpreters have been at pains to point out, the notion of cause at question here is not Davidson's basically Humean conception of efficient cause, but instead a notion of *formal cause* that has its original home in the Aristotelian tradition. Practical knowledge is knowledge that is not, like theoretical knowledge, 'derived from the things known', but instead determines the form of the intentional actions which are that knowledge's objects. Practical knowledge does so in virtue of being the product of practical reasoning, calculation about the means through which an agent realizes their intention. This marks an improvement over the Davidsonian picture in the following respect: an action and an agent's practical thought no longer fall into a causal relation which is indifferent to their rational relation to one another. For an action only is the action it is, in *virtue* of its being the object of such thought.

Because Anscombe's conception of practical thought posits a kind of causal relation between thought and action that is genuinely rational, her conception of practical thought can seem to provide precisely what is needed in order to understand practical *reason* as productive. Indeed, Anscombe was especially concerned to criticize the "incorrigibly contemplative" conception of knowledge characteristic of the philosophy of her time, which rather than determining its object, is only ever "derived from the things known". But the claim that practical knowledge is the formal cause of action—i.e., that it is practical knowledge that explains why action has the form it has—leaves hanging the question of how the form contained in the knowledge is present in the action.

This problem points to a general lacuna in the account so understood. The kind of causation in question—formal causation—is not, as it was in the original account from whence it derives—namely Aristotle's—by itself explanatory of how a change is produced: a separate notion was introduced by Aristotle for explaining the occurrence of change, that of the efficient cause. I shall argue that, if we are to understand how an agent's thought is actually productive of change and we are thus to live up to Anscombe's own ambition of displacing the incorrigibly contemplative conception of knowledge, we need to move beyond the mere idea of formal causation. We must appreciate the need for something like a (non-Humean) efficient cause. Only then do we stand a chance of completing the revolution in philosophy Anscombe inaugurated in *Intention* by describing a form of thought that is not merely reflective of the world, but actively changes it.

The animating thought of this dissertation, one developed in the first chapter, is that philosophy has as yet failed to move past an incorrigibly contemplative conception of thought in virtue of its lacking a conception of practical reason's distinctively rational mode of productivity. The predicament of contemporary thought about practical reason can be summarized as follows: on the one hand, as the case of Davidson shows, we have not yet overcome the difficulties characteristic of our inheritance of the modern-scientific notion of cause, difficulties that stand in the way of our conceiving of the kind of rationality Aristotle described; on the other hand, we can find no simple insight in earlier thinkers that we have simply forgotten and can easily resuscitate. Aristotle's general metaphysical framework—at least insofar as it has come to be understood—is in many ways foreign to us, especially when it comes to his explanation of natural phenomena—explanations in which many of its key concepts are forged. If we are to regain a notion of productive thought, we shall have to work for it, and in large part on our own terms.

The central thesis of my dissertation is that in order to recover such a conception, we need to understand practical reason as a special kind of causal capacity: one whose exercises are *intrinsically*

rational. The investigation into the character of this capacity will reveal, not only how a rational capacity can be productive of action, but that its productivity essentially stems from an agent's grasp of the good of their action.

As a preliminary step in developing my account, in Chapter Two I develop an answer to the following question: What is an agent's causal capacity? In general, changes that are the actualizations of capacities are explicable in virtue of their being actualizations of those capacities: a general capacity for change that is manifested on indefinitely [is 'indefinitely the right word? Or even necessary?] many different occasions. The specific mode of efficacy that pertains to a capacity must be understood in terms of the kind of activity it is a capacity for, which in turn is understood in light of the kind of substance to which that capacity belongs. The concept of a causal capacity in question here is not one at home in the causal theory of action that Davidson developed. First of all, it does not identify causality with a relation between events. Actions are not caused by events involving the mental states of their agents. Rather, an action is an event in which an agent changes something. As such, agential efficacy does not consist in one event's causing another event—does not consist in a causal relation between two events—but is internal to a single event: their action. Secondly, it presupposes a conceptual connection between capacities and their acts. Unlike in the causal theory of action—where the relata of a causal relation are conceptually unconnected to one another--acts of capacities cannot be understood as the actions they are independently of their being the exercises of such acts.

With a general conception of an agent's causal capacities in place, I am able to ask in Chapter Three: What is a *rational* causal power?

One promising way of explicating of the idea of rational causality with respect to action *identifies* certain kinds of judgments with intentional actions. According to Sebastian Rödl and Eric Marcus only an identification of intentional action with judgment can explain the way in which

practical thought is rationally productive. These accounts attempt to illuminate the Aristotelian doctrine we described above, insofar as they attempt to explain how action is as an exercise of reasoning, namely, practical inference. In their picture, agential movements can be viewed as the product of reasoning because actions just are the judgments that conclude episodes of practical reasoning. Yet, as I shall argue, in assimilating action to judgment, these accounts fail to do justice to the temporal character of action. Much recent work in contemporary philosophy of action has been dedicated to characterizing the form of temporality peculiar to it. The key observation has been the contrast of perfective and imperfective aspect that characterizes most action: the fact that I can be walking to school, without having already walked there. But the temporal character of judgments, I shall demonstrate, is incompatible with this form of temporality. Judgments exhibit a unique form of temporality which belongs to those activities Aristotle terms *energeia,* they are acts that, unlike activities like walking to a destination, are always already complete. Consequently, any attempt to identify actions with judgments therefore loses sight of their specific temporal nature. Moreover, it obscures the fact that the rational activity that is productive of action must itself have a form of temporality that, like action itself, can be intrinsically incomplete. If reasoning is productive of action, then like action, it must be something that unfolds in time.

But if the productivity of practical reason cannot be understood through the identity of judgments and actions, then in what does its rational productivity consist? I shall argue we should begin, not by considering practical judgments, but rather by considering practical *reasoning*. Practical reasoning is distinctive not because, while otherwise having the structure of theoretical reasoning, its components are practical judgments. Practical reasoning has a distinctive form of its own, that of realizing ends. This activity, unlike that of judgment, has a form of temporality proper to production; it is a 'kinetic' activity that itself admits of the contrast between perfective and imperfective aspect. Moreover, I shall argue, it manifests a distinctive kind of relation between the

general and the particular. Whereas theoretical thought subsumes a particular reality that is existentially independent of it under general concepts—as when I judge 'This avocado is ripe'—practical reasoning consists in the making particular of that which always starts out as inherently general. The activity of realizing ends consists both in the specification of means—to make a salad I should get some vegetables—but also, crucially, in the actual movements that agents make to realize the means that they have specified—the getting of tomatoes and cucumbers.

In Chapter Four, I turn to give an account of how movements themselves can be thought of as acts of practical reason, of the realization of ends. I propose that we must explain the difficult idea of Aristotle's that movement *itself* can be considered an act of reason not by equating movement and judgments, but through recognizing the specific kind of rational determination that an intentional movement consists in, a form of determination through which agents realize something inherently general—their end—in a particular completed action. Intentional actions are acts of practical reason insofar as they display the form of rationality distinctive of production: realization—a form of rationality in which the inherently general is progressively made particular, i.e., made materially real. To understand this form of 'basic' realization, I argue that we need to get in view an agent's capacities to perform actions that are *not* themselves composed of further actions. To do so requires grasping the special role of the agent's body in action. Bodily movement poses a serious problem since it is not something an agent transacts with as with a tool. The agent's body is not simply the object of a capacity for movement—as the shopping cart is when I push it around—but, properly understood, it is the embodiment *of* the capacity to move: the capacity to move made flesh. Moreover, this explains why we do not need to reason out how to perform such movements: since my body is not something I need to appropriate, or do anything to, in order to move it, there is no gap to be closed between it and what is within my immediate power, for, properly understood, the body just is my immediate power for movement.

In Chapter Five, I argue that the fact that practical reasoning takes the distinctive form of the realization of ends just described, yields the remarkable consequence that instrumental rationality itself involves the recognition of our ends as actually good. Most conceptions of instrumental reasoning understand instrumental reasoning to be equivalent to a kind of theoretical reasoning that is in put into the service of practical thought. In this respect it remains in accordance with Kant's limitation of the reach of instrumental reason, perhaps inherited from Hume. However, the form of rationality exhibited in the realization of ends is not one that can be assimilated to theoretical reasoning, for it does not consist in subsuming an independent reality under general concepts. What sets the standard for this activity is not whether a thinker brings the correct general concept *to* the particular reality they are confronted with, but whether they have made real the general end they are seeking to realize. Since ends themselves are not the objects of theoretical reason, but a form of practical generality, there is no answer as to whether one action genuinely realizes another that can be given simply in terms of knowledge about, for example, kinds of causal relations between events and/or objects. Since the very idea of realizing an end through means involves standard for success—one that cannot be grounded in theoretical thought—it necessarily depends on an irreducibly practical standard, one that consists in knowledge of one's end as *good*. For only a good end can provide a standard against which realization can be more or less successful. Ultimately, the productivity of practical reason consists in its being the realization of the good. The efficacy of rational agents—the productivity of practical reason—can, therefore, be described as the efficacy of the good.

Chapter One

In Search of Rational Efficacy

1. Introduction

Donald Davidson's insight, one that decisively influenced the development of 20th century philosophy of action, was that when I act for a reason, I do not merely take my reason to speak in favor of my so acting; I understand my reason that there is a 'knock at the door', to be that which explains *why* I am acting—why I am now actually getting up out of my chair, walking toward the front-door and opening it to greet my neighbor. Furthermore, it is no accident that what my considerations reveal to be worthwhile, or my calculations determine to be effective, are actions that those considerations and calculations *thereby* have a share in bringing about. The explanation of action, in other words, does not merely place an agent's action in some kind of normative framework, but in so doing frames what I do as the *product* of my thought about the normative significance of my action. Whenever we are asked why we are doing what we are doing, where what we are doing is intentional, we can explain what we are doing in terms of the productive character of the considerations in light of which we act. When we do so, we do not take these considerations to have somehow *forced* us into the acts we perform—rather, we understand what we are doing as happening only because we take those considerations to be reasons to perform those very acts. Thus, in the case of rational agents like ourselves, Davidson was concerned to bring to the fore the apparent unity of an agent's rationality—embodied in their appreciation of their reasons for acting—and their productivity: their capacity to make real interventions in the material world.

In championing this idea, Davidson took himself to be breaking with a mainstream current of thought embodied in work of the authors of the so-called 'little red books'—a series of works

published by Routledge in the middle of the century.[1] As he read those accounts, they shared a broad dogma concerning the manner of explanation proper to rational agency, according to which it excluded any reference to causality. To explain an agent's action in terms of the rational considerations on which it was based was not to refer to something that, in any sense, was its cause—but was instead to place it in a certain sphere of rational relations. Causes were essentially and uniformly non-rational. Whether Davidson's characterization and critique of the so-called 'anti-causal' account of action explanation was fair is far from clear, not least because in the process he lumps together substantially different accounts. But it is fair to say that many of the authors he discussed stood in danger of missing what I called Davidson's insight: that an agent's practical thought is not merely a contemplative matter, but plays an essential role in the production of action itself. [2]

What I have called 'Davidson's insight' is, in the first place, *not* best thought of as a particular philosophical doctrine—though Davidson did develop one to account for his insight—but rather as a truth that any philosophical account of intentional action needs to explain. In general, what critics of Davidson are often taking issue with is Davidson's particular way of explaining his own insight—one which casts reasons, thought of as mental states, in the role of the efficient causes of actions.[3]

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[1] Davidson is referring to a series of books edited by R.F Holland, which includes Kenny (1961), Melden (1961) and Winch (2008). The books were originally published with red covers, and Davidson is clearly using this to make a gently mocking reference to Mao's little red book, presumably because the consensus he finds in these books strikes him as something of a 'party line.' Davidson also mentions Anscombe's *Intention* as a notable anti-causalist view. As we shall see, this characterization of Anscombe is problematic.

[2] Winch later came to see that the barrier to accepting something like this point was a resistance to the idea of cause at work in Davidson, but that could look like (or even become) a prejudice against the very idea of causation: "The result was that I found myself at times denying that human behavior can be understood in causal terms, when I should have been saying our understanding of human behavior is not elucidated by anything like the account given of "cause" by Hume (and Mill)" (2008, xii) (for discussion, see Marcus 2012, p.163).

[3] Those philosophers, such as Dancy (2000), who have been concerned to argue that reasons explanations are *not* causal, still want to explain the actuality of an agent's action through the idea of their acting 'in the light of reasons', where this means 'motivating reasons', the reasons that drove them to act as they do. Given an appropriately broad sense of cause, it is hard to see how motivating reasons cannot be at least part of the causal explanation of an action. I think it is only a (largely correct) hostility to fitting reasons in a causal framework that is hostile to rationality in general that stands in the way of this recognition.

As I shall argue in this chapter (§2), Davidson's own account of action deploys a conception of causation that is fundamentally unsuited to the characterization of practical thought; as such, he fails to explain his own insight in a satisfactory way. In viewing intentional action as the causal result of a Humean efficient causation, the account is unable to characterize the properly conceptual relation that holds between an agent's practical thought and their action. Since in his account the nature of the causal efficacy through which an agent's practical thought causes actions is fundamentally arrational, we cannot vindicate the claim that it is through the productive recognition of my reasons for acting that my action is explained. This failure of the view, I argue, is the real cause of the intractable problem of 'causal deviance'. However, my argument in that section will not constitute a rebuke to the idea that practical thought should be understood, in its essence, as fundamentally productive, only as a rebuke to a certain way of understanding its productivity—one that hives off the rational aspects of practical thought from its productive aspects.

One of the authors who Davidson placed in the 'little red books' category was Elizabeth Anscombe, whose work *Intention* he nevertheless greatly admired. Many authors unsatisfied with Davidson's influential causal theory have in recent years returned to Anscombe's account as an important alternative to the broadly Davidsonian orthodoxy. Central to Anscombe's account is the notion of practical knowledge, this is the knowledge an agent has of her own intentional actions and it is grounded in reasons for action. In getting up out of my chair and heading to the front door, I know what I am doing, in virtue of knowing *why* I am doing it. Unlike Davidson, however, Anscombe does not think the significance of an agent's reasons lies in their causing action. In characterizing practical knowledge, Anscombe quotes Aquinas, who claimed that practical knowledge is the 'cause of what it understands', but the sense of cause in question, she insists, is 'formal'. An agent's practical knowledge contains the form of the action the agent performs—and it is this knowledge that makes it the case that the action is the very action it is. The great strength of

this account is that, unlike Davidson's, it secures the properly rational relation that holds between an agent's practical thought, in the form of their intention, and the action they perform.

However, I shall argue (§3), that Anscombe's doctrine—at least as it is taken up by most of her interpreters—is itself in danger of failing to do justice to Davidson's initial insight. For insofar as it explains the relation between practical thought and action through the notion of formal causation, the idea that practical thought is not merely reflective, but genuinely productive in relation to action, is in danger of being lost. To say that X is the formal cause of Y, is not to have said anything, simply by itself, about how Y comes to be. That this point has been little recognized in the recent boom of work on Anscombe's philosophy is a partly result of an imperfect reception of the Aristotelian tradition that Anscombe is, in her own way, a part of. For Aristotle, reference to a formal cause was never thought of as being able to provide, by itself, a complete explanation of a given phenomenon. It always presupposes a further productive cause, albeit one to which it is intimately connected, and that in turn presupposes it. This eclipsing of the question of practical thought's productivity in the reception of Anscombe is somewhat ironic, given that Anscombe herself was the first to criticize the 'incorrigibly contemplative' conception of knowledge that she thought characterized the thought of her contemporaries. Indeed, I do not think Anscombe ever meant to give an account that remained at the level of formal cause.[4] If we *do* stay merely at the level of formal causation then we indeed risk understanding practical reason in a way that is, ultimately, merely reflective. For even though in this account practical knowledge is not something known by observation—and so is not 'contemplative'

[4] In this chapter I shall prescind from offering a direct interpretation of Anscombe herself on this point. I take it to be one of the hardest moments in Anscombe to grasp exegetically. But I think her view is certainly more complicated than some of her interpreters have made out. And I do not think she can be read as simply adverting to the notion of 'formal cause'. For in §48 of *Intention* Anscombe characterizes practical knowledge as an *ability*, and says that practical knowledge is 'exercised in the action'. This broader notion of practical knowledge as a capacity already brings in far more than a mere reference to formal cause. But Anscombe does not herself develop this point in *Intention*.

in that sense—insofar as its role in the production of action is left untheorized, a central element of its practicality is lost.

In light of the criticisms I make of both the Davidsonian and Anscombian legacies in philosophy of action, I shall conclude by proposing that we reconceive of how practical thought is causally related to action. To do this while avoiding Davidson's conception of action as efficiently caused by practical thought—as well as the pitfall of making practical thought the *merely* formal cause of intentional action—I suggest that we need to understand practical thought as a distinctive kind of *capacity*. Practical thought, being a distinctive kind of capacity, will possess its own distinctive form of causality: practical thought is, I will suggest, *rationally productive of action*.

2. Davidson and the Causal Theory of Action

2.1 Davidson's Insight

In 'Actions, Reasons and Causes' Davidson framed his account of intentional action in opposition to an alleged orthodoxy—that of the 'little red books'—according to which reasons can only justify but not cause actions.[5] In Davidson's terminology, to 'rationalize' an action is to render it explicable by 'giving the agent's reason for doing what he did'. Davidson argued that the orthodoxy faced a fatal objection. If justifications of actions bear no relation to causes of action one can never know when explaining an action whether one is citing the actual reason acted upon or some other reason which, although it *might justify* the action itself, is not the agent's reason for acting as she did. The question whether the action was genuinely performed in the light of the reason is left unanswered.[6]

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[5] Davidson (1980, Essay 1).

[6] The criticism Davidson makes of the authors of the 'little red books' is not entirely fair. As he understands it, 'Noting that non-teleological causal explanations do not display the element of justification provided by reasons, some philosophers have concluded that the concept of cause that applies elsewhere cannot apply to the relation between reasons and actions, *and that the pattern of justification provides, in the case of reasons, the required explanation.*' (1980, p.9, emphasis

But, Davidson insists, it is essential to our ordinary way of explaining action that there be—at least in a central group of cases—such a thing as the very reason the agent, on an occasion, acted upon.

Davidson closes the gap that he claims to find in the 'little red book' accounts, a gap between justification on the one hand, and explanation on the other, by maintaining that the sense of 'because' in sentences of the form "A Φ-ed because *y*", where 'Φ' stands for an act type and '*y*' stands for an agent's reason, is causal. Davidson is thinking of '*y*' here as a mental item: a part of the agent's psychic economy which explains why the agent acted the way they did.[7] More specifically, he is thinking of what he calls a 'primary reason': a mental state formed by the combination of a 'pro-attitude' towards actions of a certain kind and a belief that the agent's action is of the kind specified in the pro-attitude.[8]

To do justice to his insight—that when I act for a reason, I do not merely take my reason to speak in favor of my so acting, but understand my reason to be that which explains *why* I am acting—Davidson relies on a particular concept of "rationalization": a form of explanation of action in terms of an agent's reasons, which brooks no divergence between an action's *cause* and an action's *justification* (in what Davidson calls an "anemic" sense of justification, signifying only that the agent saw "something to be said" for the action). For Davidson, at least from the perspective of the agent, an intentional action has both a cause and a justification. Furthermore, since the causal and the

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mine) But as Marcus (2012, p.152) is at pains to point out none of the authors cited by Davidson think that patterns of justification *alone* provide this kind of explanation. It is also unclear why Davidson assumes there is only one way of going about distinguishing the reasons one actually acts for from all the reasons the agent is cognizant of.

[7] Davidson's account is therefore a version of 'psychologism': the view that an agent's reasons for acting are their mental states, as opposed to entities that are in some sense 'outside' of them. I will ignore the problems associated with psychologism in my discussion of Davidson and the causal theory more generally. For a prominent criticism of psychologism see Dancy (2000); for responses see Setiya (2011) and Davis (2005). The latter authors claim that psychologism need not be committed to the idea that reasons are mental states, only that it is mental states which cause actions. If these mental states are appropriately related to reasons external to the agent, then all is well. However, Marcus (2012) gives good reasons for thinking this undermines what he calls the 'equivalence thesis' and what I shall call Davidson's 'core insight' i.e. the idea that reasons can play a unified explanatory and justificatory role.

[8] Davidson later thought that the attitude of intending was *sui generis* and thus irreducible to such a combination. However, for our purposes this shift is of minor importance.

justificatory forms of explanation come together in a *single* form of explanation, cause and justification (the rationality and productivity of thought) emerge as non-accidentally related. The core insight of Davidson's 'Actions, Reasons and Causes' is thus as follows: It is *in virtue* of an action being viewed as justificatory by an agent that it can be cited in an explanation of the agent's action that is also causal.[9] The question is whether Davidson's theory is able to live up to this thought. As we shall see, the general shape of this theory—and those that followed in its wake—seem to enforce a strict dualism of the causal and the justificatory, one that disbars him from fully vindicating the insight of his famous paper.

2.2 Davidson's Despair

Davidson had originally hoped to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for intentional action in terms of its causal antecedents. An intentional action would be any bodily movement caused by the mental states making up the agent's primary reason for performing that action. Through this idea, he inaugurated the causal theory of action, sometimes known as the 'standard story' of action. The causal theory of action (CTA) is often framed as an answer to a certain kind of question:

> Suppose an agent acts in some way. What makes it the case that he acted, as distinct from his having been involved in some mere happening or other? What makes him an agent, rather than a patient? According to the standard story of action that gets

[9] I suppose someone might contest this reading of Davidson on the grounds that he had always meant the causal and the justificatory elements of rationalization to be more separate than I have suggested. I think this would be exegetically dubious, but ultimately it does not matter, for in what follows we shall see that either way the theory fails to capture what it purports to be a theory of: rational agency.

> told by philosophers, the answer lies in the causal etiology of what happened. (Smith 2010, p.45)[10]

CTA answers Smith's question in the following way: Certain of our mental states—perhaps combinations of beliefs and desires, perhaps intentions—cause our bodily movements. Bodily movements earn the privileged metaphysical status of intentional actions (as opposed to being 'mere movements') just in case they have those mental states as their causal antecedents. The theory, although it has faced a variety of objections since its inception, has nevertheless remained ascendant in the philosophy of action over the last half-century or so.[11]

However, Davidson's own optimism about providing necessary and sufficient conditions for intentional action were soon tempered. In 'Freedom to Act' Davidson gives an example of what would subsequently come to be called 'causal deviance' or 'wayward causation' and around which an entire sub-literature soon developed. Davidson realized that the mental states causing movement might yet not do so 'in the right way':

> Let a single example serve. A climber might want to rid himself of the weight and danger of holding another man on a rope, and he might know that by loosening his hold on the rope he could rid himself of the weight and danger. This belief and want

[10] In fact, there is a distinction between CTA (what Smith here calls the 'standard story of action') and what philosophers more generally call the 'standard story of action'. The former aims to explain intentional actions in terms of their causal antecedents. The latter is a *specific kind* of CTA according to which the causal antecedents of action are pairs of beliefs and desires.

[11] Davidson is often cited as the source of the theory. However, as Davidson himself noted, 'Actions, Reasons and Causes' was on many points preceded by Hempel (1962) and even earlier than that by Ducasse (1925). Other well-known formulations of the causal theory are found in Bishop (1989) and Enc (2003), (both of whom we shall have recourse to) as well as Peacocke (1979a; 1979b).

might so unnerve him as to cause him to loosen his hold, and yet it might be the case that he never chose to loosen his hold, nor did he do it intentionally. (1980, p.79)[12]

In the light of such cases, Davidson gives up on 'spelling out the way in which attitudes must cause actions if they are to rationalize the action.' In other words, he gives up on the possibility of distinguishing in a principled way between genuine intentional actions and things like startle responses, and thus gives up on showing how reasons genuinely succeed in rationalizing actions. Others following Davidson, recognized the significance of the problem and hurried to take up the challenge of trying to specify what 'the right way' of being caused is. Indeed, if the theory aims to separate intentional action from mere movement through the presence of a causal antecedent then it seems it ought to take seriously counter-examples where the presence of the causal antecedent does not guarantee the intentionality of bodily movement. The causal theorist must indeed specify the 'right way' of being caused that occurs in the case of action proper so as to rule out cases that are not intentional.

What has received too little attention is Davidson's original despair at the prospect of specifying what it would be for actions to be caused 'in the right way'. Exploring it in some detail will help us recognize where the true difficulties for the causal theory lie; we shall come to see that wayward causation is best viewed as merely a symptom of more fundamental problems.

To assess Davidson's account of action we must attend to his background commitment to the doctrine of anomalous monism. Anomalous monism is introduced by Davidson as a way of rendering consistent three principles which appear to form an inconsistent triad:

i. *Principle of Causal Interaction*: 'Some mental events causally interact with physical events.'

[12] Davidson (1980, Essay 4)

ii. *Principle of The Nomological Character of Causality*: 'Events related as cause and effect fall under strict general laws.'

iii. *Principle of the Anomalism of the Mental*: 'There are no strict deterministic laws on the basis of which mental events can be predicted and explained.'[13]

These principles generate a contradiction. If, by (i), mental events can cause physical events (e.g. a primary reason causes my bodily movement) then those events fall into causal relations with one another and therefore, by (ii), a strict general law 'covers' them. But as the first event is mental, then by (iii), no such law covers them. Hence, we reach a contradiction which Davidson hopes to avoid as follows: some events are mental *under a description*, but all events (*a fortiori* all mental events) are physical under a *different* description. Mental events are anomalous with respect to strict general laws, but only under their mental descriptions. Described physically, they fall under strict general laws through which they can be predicted and explained. The possibility referred to in the first of Davidson's principles is vindicated: reasons (mental) can cause bodily movements (physical), but only on the condition that both events are covered by a strict law under their physical description. Davidson's view of events is therefore what he calls 'anomalous monism': events are anomalous with respect to laws insofar as they are described mentally, but the theory is monistic insofar as token events are simultaneously mental and physical.

Once anomalous monism is in view it is clear why Davidson despaired of specifying the 'right way' of causing. For it must be the case that, although we can know *that* mental states cause actions, there is no possibility of knowing *how* they do. A fuller account of any singular causal statement must make reference, for Davidson, to strict covering laws. This is what providing an account of how something is caused consists in for Davidson: identifying the correct covering law

[13] Davidson (2008, Essay 11)

or laws involved in such a way that the question 'How was *E* caused?' is answered. Now, this restriction stems, ultimately, from his acceptance of a broadly Humean conception of causation. For Davidson, since causality is not something we can observe in cases of singular causation, instances of singular causation must be understood in the light of a general proposition (i.e. a universal generalization ranging over event types) that grounds cases of singular causation.

If that were the end of the story, then Davidson might have been a garden variety functionalist—but Davidson's respect for the autonomy of our rational explanations of our own and others' activity, an autonomy governed by a constitutive ideal of rationality which he takes to be incompatible with natural law—prevents him from claiming rationalizations are nomological explanations. For then the *real* explanation of action would be expressed in the vocabulary of physical events, as opposed to that of the rationally evaluable contents attributed to events under their mental descriptions. Only in the realm of the physical will a covering law be found. Consequently, no conditions of correct causation cast in a mental idiom are possible, as mental descriptions employ predicates incapable of featuring in specifications of genuine laws. And no such conditions can be cast in the language of genuine laws, for then we should lose the autonomy of rational explanation. In light of this, Davidson's despair in the face of the task of formulating a deviancy-free causal analysis is perfectly intelligible. From his perspective the despair is no more than a healthy respect for the structure of anomalous monism.

Historically, anomalous monism has come under attack for ultimately being a form of epiphenomenalism, the view that mental events are caused by physical events but lack any causal efficacy of their own. For example, Honderich (1982) argues that because only physical properties are properly nomic, they alone can be identified as causally efficacious. Mental properties are not really causally relevant, for they are neither nomic properties nor reducible to nomic properties. However, this misses a crucial aspect of Davidson's account: Davidson does not think properties

feature in singular causal statements—token events do. Token events can instantiate multiple properties. As anomalous monism holds that mental and physical events are token-identical it makes no sense to say that *only* the physical property is causally efficacious, for properties of events are not efficacious at all. It is events that are the true relata of causation—not the properties they instantiate.

However, although this criticism misses the target, there exists an importantly related criticism. Davidson's theory ascribes to us the explanatory resources to know *that* a mental event caused our action, but not the resources to state *how*: it does not enable us to make a principled distinction between actions caused by mental states *simpliciter* and actions caused by reasons 'in light of' or 'through' their contents. We do not, in other words, have a grasp on *rational* efficacy. Because the framework of anomalous monism is unable to ground this distinction one can justifiably complain that its explanations of actions are impoverished in relation to explanations of physical phenomena. Any explanation of the *manner* in which events cause other events is confined to the physical. For only in the case of physical events can one make reference to the appropriate law that explains a case of singular causation. So, although it would be wrong to call mental events epiphenomenal, it is still the case that what makes any event susceptible to its being featuring in causal explanation is its instantiating a type that figures in a statement of natural law. And it is only in virtue of an events having physical properties that it belongs to such a type.

Davidson's theory ends up sundering the unity of reason and causation that he had hoped to champion. It provides the resources to specify the reason that causally explains the agent's action, but it is unable to guarantee that the reason that explains is the reason that justifies. In the same stroke Davidson's theory fails to live up to its non-reductive aspirations. Although it affirms the anomalousness of the mental, it ultimately locates the explanation of efficacy not at the level of thought, but at the level of physical events and their covering laws. He escapes the charge of

epiphenomenalism by affirming the token-identity of mental and physical events, but he still leaves us with a problematic asymmetry between mental and physical explanation.[14]

The problem of causal deviance is best understood as arising from his simultaneous acknowledgement of the *sui generis* nature of 'the space of reasons', and his assumption that any efficacy—even the efficacy possessed by the denizens of the space of reasons—must ultimately have its explanation in the realm of law. It is precisely his adherence to the latter that puts pressure on his core insight that rationalizations reveal the unity of the rational and the causal.

2.4 The Inevitability of Deviance

Was Davidson wrong to think that practical thought's relation to action could not be captured in terms of natural laws? If we think that he was, then we may hold out hope for solving the problem of causal deviance, that is of specifying the 'right way' in which reasons cause actions. So before

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[14] John McDowell nicely summarizes the tension in Davidson's work which causes the difficulties we have discovered here. Davidson, McDowell notes, is wedded to the idea that:

> concepts of "propositional attitudes" make sense only as governed by a "constitutive ideal of rationality" […] the fundamental points of these concepts is to subserve the kind of intelligibility that is proper to meaning, the kind of intelligibility we find in something when we place it in the space of reasons. On that basis Davidson argues that we cannot reduce those concepts to concepts governed by a different "constitutive ideal", or, to put it in Sellarsian terms, concepts whose home is a different logical space.

Yet Davidson also holds that:

> the satisfiers of the *sui generis* concepts can be causally linked only if they are also occupants of the realm of law; and Davidson says they are, even though they are not revealed as such by their satisfaction of the *sui generis* concepts. So a reason can be a cause, though it is not by virtue of its rational relationships that it stands in causal relations. (1994, 74-5)

My understanding of the tension McDowell here summarizes was greatly aided by the discussion in Kimhi (1993).

leaving the causal theory behind, we must see why there is *in principle no solution to the problem of causal deviance*.

Sarah Paul helpfully glosses the causal theory as follows: "Intentional actions are those behaviors that are caused to occur by some relevant psychological property of the agent. Paul glosses "cause" as "the primary source of the change or rest" of the agent" (2011, p.2). She is quoting from Aristotle, but the kind of causation in question is not, in fact, Aristotle's conception of efficient causation, but a conception of causation whose original inspiration is Hume. An efficient cause in this sense is simply a prior event in a succession of events which necessitates the occurrence of the succeeding event according to a general law.

According to the CTA, causal relata are 'discrete'. I use 'discrete' here as a term of art. Discrete causal relata are conceptually independent of one another. A cause or effect is discrete if, considered by itself, nothing can be inferred from it concerning what kind of thing did/could have caused it, or what it has/could/will cause. None of the concepts through which we grasp the intrinsic nature of an effect imply that the effect arose from any specific kind of cause or that it will give rise to any specific kind of effect. According to CTA, action is bodily movement caused by certain mental states. Yet a bodily movement can be grasped as exactly the movement it is, without us knowing whether it is intentional or not. It's being intentional is an additional 'relational' property that it bears in virtue of its causal etiology—an etiology which is specified independently of its intrinsic properties.[15] No mark of intentionality is found *in* bodily movement, as intrinsic to the sort of movement it is, even if that movement counts as intentional.

Similarly, that an intention has a certain content provides no way of knowing through consideration of it alone that it will cause any particular kind of bodily movement. Thus, Paul writes:

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[15] Berent Enc is especially clear on this point: "what counts as [an action] depends not on the *intrinsic*…structure (or properties) of [actions], but rather on their aetiology (an *extrinsic*, relational property). Hence of two *physically identical* entities, one may be [an action], and another not" (2003, p.99)

> Of course, the representation of [the action of] squirrel-house building is not irrelevant to the behavior caused by the state of intending; it is not merely the initiation of the building that is causally explained by the intention, but the sustained progression from initiation to completion of the squirrel house. The causation and guidance of behavior must be somehow sensitive to the representative content of the intention. But the representation of the squirrel-house-building is independent of the causal powers of intending in the sense that the very same representation could feature as the content of a variety of other intentional states—beliefs, desires, wishes—and in that its satisfaction conditions could be met without the requisite behavior being caused by an intention. (2011, p.3)

Although Paul says the intention is supposed to cause the movement specified in its content in a way that is sensitive to the contents of the intention, the causal power of intending is independent from the content it in fact has. The representation of squirrel-house-building is independent of the causal power of intention in the sense that the representation could feature in other attitudes. But as she notes, the problem of causal deviance reveals that the state of affairs that matches that of the representation can be brought about without it being due to the representation. Therefore, even the intention *itself* could cause a state of affairs without the agent counting as acting in the light of that content. There is no way of telling just from the fact that an intention caused movements describable as *building a squirrel house* that the content of the intention was in fact: *build a squirrel house*.

Similarly, there is no telling, just through consideration of an intention with the content: *build a squirrel house*, that it will cause bodily movements falling under that description.[16]

If intentions and bodily movements are discrete, a gap inevitably opens up between the contents of intentions and their causal power. And if the power of an intention to cause movement is separate from the content of the intention it becomes mysterious—that is, there is no possibility of explaining—how intentions are able to cause the appropriate bodily movements. What we get is a miracle of conformity between intention and action.

There is, of course, no shortage of attempts to solve the problem of causal deviance that aim to secure the claim that intentions cause actions in a way that is *sensitive* to their contents. The shapes these solutions take either betrays a misunderstanding of the true source of the problem, or else a total lack of commitment to Davidson's original insight.

One might think that the question of what constitutes the 'right way' of causing is a matter for science to decide. But to think that is to think the causal efficacy of one's thought is something that operates behinds one's back.[17] It would be impossible, from this perspective, to claim that the kind of efficacy associated with reasons is related to the justificatory aspect of reasons—for the efficacy would no longer depend on the agent's taking their reason to be justificatory. Any account that thinks the conformity of one's intention with one's action is something that is explained at the neurological, physical, biological or physiological level, is committed to the species of causation being something that is fundamentally outside the ken of the agent's consciousness (or at best

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[16] One should not be misled by the fact that the movements are described using an action-concept. In this context the use of the concept 'building' is neutral between cases in which the agent is really building and cases in which the agent is merely making movements that *look* as though they are intentional.

[17] This 'solution' makes a mystery out of how we were supposed to realize that there *was* a problem here in the first place. If we need a special science to tell us there is both normal and abnormal causation of bodily movement then how did we know there was a problem of causal deviance before engaging in that science? The fact that we can already distinguish what we would and would not consider a 'deviant' causal chain shows that we have knowledge of the source of the distinction.

accidentally related to it). It would then just be an accident of nature that whatever they take to be the thing to do, they somehow start doing.

Another group of accounts have attempted to capture the conditions under which the 'right kind' of causation takes place, while insisting it is the philosopher's responsibility to explain what it is for an agent's action to be 'sensitive' to the content of their intention. We can take John Bishop's account as representative of this general strategy. Bishop writes:

> In…intentional action, the agent *carries out* [an]…intention by making controlled bodily movements to fit its content. According to the sensitivity strategy, this reference to the agent's exercise of control can be analyzed without reference to agent-causation. There is exercise of control if and only if the causal link from basic intention to matching behavior is sensitive, in the sense that *over a sufficiently wide range of differences, had the agent's intention differed in content, the resulting behavior would have differed correspondingly*. The sensitivity condition is thus understood in terms of the existence of suitable pattern of counter-factual dependence of resulting behavior upon the content of the agent's intention. (1989, p.150)

Bishop thinks that to specify what it is to be caused 'in the right way' by an intention it is enough if one can characterize, in terms that do not assume the concept of agency, what *pattern* of causation holds between mental states and bodily movements in cases of intentional action. But Bishop's characterization of sensitivity leaves the following unanswered: in virtue of what is behavior counterfactually dependent on the contents of intentions? Let us grant momentarily that this analysis of controlled behavior does not illicitly presuppose the concept of agency. If intentions are discrete causal relata it remains mysterious how they can cause actions in a way that is sensitive to the

contents of those intentions. Bishop never takes up the question: 'in virtue of what do the counterfactuals that underlie sensitivity hold?' and he gives us no resources to answer on his behalf. Counterfactual sensitivity holds in virtue of *nothing* or else in virtue of some physical mechanisms. The former response gives up on providing a solution to the problem of causal deviance, insofar as the sensitivity of an intention to action is simply asserted; whilst the latter, once again, gives up on Davidson's original insight.

Berent Enc pursues another strategy for solving the problem of causal deviance worth noting here, one that seeks to make a crucial distinction between an agent's proper and improper functioning. Instead of developing an account of the 'right way' of being caused by formulating requirements concerning the structure of a causal chain, Enc attempts to understand what constitutes normal, non-deviant causation in terms of how a mechanism "normally functions" or how it behaves in the way it is supposed to. A mechanism might malfunction in some way and produce the same movement as it would have had it been functioning normally, but this sort of case would be distinguished in a principled manner from the normal case through the notion of normal functioning.

Where does the notion of 'normal functioning' get a foothold in the case of an agent's intentional action? One natural answer is that the agent functions properly when it causes the action that it intended to. But of course, the causal theorist cannot appeal to the notions of agency and intention here to specify the conditions of correct functioning on pain of giving a circular account. Enc gives the following definitions:

> *Causal Theory of Action*: The behavioral output of an organism is an intentional action A if it is caused in the way it is supposed to be caused by an intention to do A.

> *Correct Causation*: An intention to do A causes an event in the way it is supposed to if and only if for any intermediate link, X, from the intention to the event, the fact that the intention causes X is explained by the fact that X results in that event.[18]

Enc's account of correct causation makes use of the idea of proper function insofar as it counts an event as causing an action 'in the right way' if the fact that it caused the action is explained by the fact it was 'supposed' to cause action. Enc's hope is that he can in turn give an account of proper function in a way which does not simply presuppose the notion of agency. To this end he reformulates *Correct Causation* in a way that avoids circularity:

> *Correct Causation (2):* An intention to do A causes an event in the way it is supposed to if and only if for any intermediate link, X, from the intention to the event, the fact that a tokening of the intention causes a token X is explained by the fact that under the circumstances that type of X would generate that kind of event. (2003, p.112)

Here Enc glosses 'supposed to' in terms of what X 'would generate' under certain circumstances. Everything depends, therefore, on what explanation is given of the fact that a token intention 'would generate' a token action. Enc ultimately seeks an explanation in the mechanisms of evolutionary adaptation. What separates proper from improper functioning of the agent for Enc is that when properly functioning the action is caused by an intention in a way that it has adapted to—in the sense of 'adapted' that we find in evolutionary theory: a biological function that has been naturally selected for.

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[18] I've renamed the two principles for ease of exposition, which otherwise are quoted verbatim.

In giving this kind of explanation Enc gives up on illuminating how it is that in the good case action is caused in light of the agent's reasons and in the bad case it is not. The fact that a process of natural selection has brought it about that certain mental states, "intentions," generally bring about the states of affairs included in their contents in such and such a way does nothing to illuminate the difference between deviant and non-deviant causation. It is simply a proposed explanation of how a certain regularity came to be. If we seek to explain what mechanisms underlie this regularity we face the same dilemma of obscurity or reductionism that Bishop's account did.

3. Practical Knowledge and the Form of Action

3.1 Rejecting Discreteness

If the causal theory's central mistake lies in thinking of practical thought and action as discrete causal relata, then it is natural to assume that progress requires rejecting this doctrine. For an agent's intention to be non-discrete with respect to their action there would have to be a *conceptual* connection between an agent's thought and their action, such that it is an intrinsic property of an intention that it is related to an action of a certain kind. To express the same point from the other direction: To recognize an event as an intentional action of a certain kind would be to see it as intrinsically related to an intention of a conceptually associated kind.

We find a view of this kind in the work of philosophers of action influenced by Anscombe's *Intention*. On their accounts, the relation between an agent's practical thought—their practical knowledge—and their action, is one of *formal causation.*[19] As we shall see, finding a precise sense for the notion of formal causation at work in these accounts is not as straight-forward as one would

[19] This is not say that all Anscombe-inspired accounts appeal to formal causation, either directly or indirectly. Both Velleman (2007) and Setiya (2007) give accounts that, although indebted to Anscombe, nevertheless remain strongly committed to the causal theory of action. As such, they lie outside the considerations of the present section.

hope. But the guiding thought is something like this: Were it not for the agent's thought that they are doing *A* by doing *B*, there would be no happening in reality that is describable as an agent's doing A by doing B. That there *is* any happening so describable is dependent, formally, upon the agent's practical knowledge, which, in turn, depends on practical reasoning concerning how to perform their action.

Indeed, Anscombe's investigation into intentional action is one that, she claims, seeks to describe and illuminates "a form of description" of events. The form of description in question is isolated by a special sense of the question 'Why?' This particular question, one which in the context of action invites a certain kind of answer, serves to isolate the kind of thing, intentional action, the form of description of which is then elucidated in *Intention*. The result of the investigation is the characterization of the form of a particular species of events—namely, intentional actions.

Now, crucial to the form of description of events that Anscombe elucidates is that a condition of its applying is that it is a description the agent themselves are prepared to make or assent to when prompted, Anscombe provides the following example:

> By the knowledge that a man has of his intentional actions I mean the knowledge that one denies having if when asked e.g. 'Why are you ringing that bell?' one replies 'Good heavens! I didn't know *I* was ringing it!' (1959, p.50-51)

So the agent must be prepared to make this description *not* on the basis of any empirical observation concerning what is happening. If they do know they are doing something by observation, then the application of the question 'Why?' is refused. (If one's answer to the question 'Why are you ringing that bell?' is 'Oh, my foot appears to be caught in the rope!' then one is not answering the relevant sort of 'why' question, but rejecting it by answering a different kind of question.)

So, an intentional action must be known by the agent non-observationally if it is to be an intentional action. Indeed, that there is such an action is dependent on the agent's knowing their action in precisely this way. The action, in other words, is dependent on the thought. We can begin to grasp this thought by considering what Anscombe says about practical *reasoning*. Anscombe elucidates the import of the 'Why?' question in terms of her famous 'A-D' order, which she initially depicts as a series of answers elicited from the agent in response to the question "Why?":

Why are you moving your arm up and down (A)?

B: *I'm operating the pump*

Why are you (B)?

C: *I'm replenishing the house water supply*

Why are you (C)?

D: *I'm poisoning the inhabitants.*

This is an order of means and ends: each subsequent answer—B, C and finally D—refers to an end to which the previous answer stated the means. This order, which has its source in the agent's practical reasoning—their working out how to achieve their end—thereby gives the form of the agent's action.

So, the agent, through their reasoning, is the source of the practical knowledge of *what* they are doing—this is the upshot of their practical reasoning—and their action has that form, i.e. is the action it is, in virtue of this knowledge. Drawing on another of Anscombe's famous examples, we can say that their knowledge is like a shopper's list[20]—it dictates or determines the form of an action the shopper is performing; in this it differs from the list of a detective, superficially indistinguishable

[20] (1959, §32)

from the shopper's, who is following the shopper around on market day, and is making a record of what the shopper is putting in their basket.

On this account, some bodily movement is intentional—can come under the form of description which picks out intentional actions—only if it is the object of an agent's practical knowledge. And it is under the descriptions that characterize such knowledge that the event counts as the particular intentional action it is. There is, therefore, no independently specifiable movement-type of which we can sensibly ask 'is it related to the intention in the right way?' We can only ask of some movement, one which we have not already grasped the intrinsic nature of: is this an intentional action, or not? (And if it is, which one?) Put another way, if practical knowledge is 'knowledge in intention', then intention and action are not discrete causal relata, but phenomena where the existence of one conceptually presupposes the existence of the other.

3.2 Formal Causation

The sketch of Anscombe's account just given was aimed at bringing out, in a preliminary way, the way in which practical knowledge is supposed to play a special role in action: more than a mere 'enabling condition', it plays a role in determining the description of the action itself. The kind of determination in question is one that entails an intrinsic conceptual connection between practical thought and action.

We are now in a position to ask: If practical knowledge doesn't cause action as a Humean efficient cause, in what sense does it cause or produce it? i.e., what *kind* of determination is it through which practical thought determines action?

Richard Moran identifies the core of Anscombe's notion of practical knowledge in the following way:

> ...the sense in which my practical knowledge is 'the cause of what it understands' is not primarily in the sense that my intention to do a particular thing is a necessary causal antecedent for my making the movements I do […] Rather, Anscombe's point is that practical knowledge, whose object is specified within an intensional context, determines which descriptions of 'what happens' may count as descriptions of what the person is intentionally *doing*. So, the sense of the phrase from Aquinas is not about the efficient causal role of intention in producing movements, but rather concerns the formal or constitutive role of the description embedded in one's practical knowledge making it the case that *this* description counts as a description of the person's intentional action. If the agent didn't *know* this happening under *this* description, then as so specified it *would not be* 'what he is intentionally doing'. It is in this sense that 'practical knowledge is the cause of that which it understands'. (2004, p.47)

For Moran, intentional action depends on an agent's practical knowledge insofar as it plays a crucial 'formal or constitutive' role in determining the action. It is precisely because the agent knows their action under a certain description that the action can be described *as* the action that it is. The description the agent knows their action under, in being known by the agent, makes it the case that it is correctly described, by anyone, in just that way.

What precisely does Moran take this determining role of practical knowledge to be? He says, first of all, that, without practical knowledge, the action would 'not be the action it is or perhaps any action at all.' This suggests the action could depend for its *specific identity* on the agent's practical knowledge. It would be a different action absent the practical knowledge (in Anscombe's case: a

mere refilling of the cistern, rather than a poisoning of the inhabitants). If so, that is because the agent's practical knowledge determines what action—what *form* of action—the agent is performing.

On the other hand, other of Moran's comments suggest that action depends *existentially* on practical knowledge—that it would not exist without the practical knowledge: "practical knowledge will not be passive or receptive to the facts in question, but is rather a state of the person that plays a role in the constituting of such facts". This seems to suggest that practical knowledge is not only responsible for a given event falling under a certain description (that of intentional action) but that it is also playing a productive role in bringing about the event itself whose form it contains. Yet this latter idea is ruled out almost immediately:

> The point is not that the knowledge embedded in my intention helps to *produce* the movements that lead to the picking up of some milk, but rather that those movements would not count as my picking up some milk unless my practical understanding conceived of them in those terms. (2004, 47)

Here we are warned against thinking that practical knowledge plays any role—even an aiding role—in the production of the agent's movements.

Thus on the one hand Moran recognizes—quite rightly—that he needs to separate Anscombe's account from any associations with the causal theory of action. This expresses itself in the way he strictly demarcates the role of formal causation from that of efficient causation. On the other hand, however, he seems to suggest in less careful moments that the agent's practical knowledge must play some role in producing the action, and that it is not merely that which, somehow, makes the actions 'count' as the particular actions they are. That Moran seems to slide back and forth, at least momentarily, on the question whether an agent's practical knowledge is

merely determining *what* action is being performed, or whether it is also productive of the action (such that without it there would be nothing about which we could ask whether it counts as an intentional action), is due to the unclarity of the notion of the 'formal or constitutive role' of practical knowledge that he is working with. To assess Moran's account, we need to look more closely at what the idea of a 'formal or constitutive role' he finds for practical knowledge amounts to.

The idea of formal causation has its original home in Aristotle's metaphysical framework, and it is this tradition that Anscombe is harking back to when she cites Aquinas in order to characterize practical knowledge as the 'cause of what it understands'. For Aristotle, to say that X is the formal cause of Y is to say that X is, or contains, the account of what Y is. The formal cause of a statue, for example, is its particular shape—e.g., that of Achilles. To merely cite something's formal cause, then, is to say nothing about causation in the sense of *production*. At least if a significant explanatory background is not already being presupposed. Thus, for Aristotle, to cite the formal cause of something is only to have explained it in a limited way. To fully explain the thing in question, one also needs to employ the other three modes of explanation that make up Aristotle's four causes: the efficient, material and final cause.[21] The material cause will be that from which the thing in question is made, for example the bronze of a statue. The efficient cause will be the 'primary source of change', which we can understand as that which is responsible for producing the thing in question. Aristotle cites both the artisan, but also the art of statue-making as an efficient cause. The final cause will be the purpose of the thing e.g., the beautification of the villa. (In the case of action, the final and the formal cause presumably coincide—something that Aristotle's allows for elsewhere—for the form the action takes is determined by the purpose to which it is oriented.)

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[21] Aristotle's general discussions of the four causes are found in *Physics* II.3 and *Metaphysics* V.2

Moran, in following Anscombe's remark, is in effect drawing on this Aristotelian conception of 'formal cause'. He puts a modern spin on the idea in the case of practical knowledge, by pointing out that it is the agent's knowledge of what they are doing, understood in terms of its *intension* rather than extension, that determines the action. But the kind of determination in question otherwise lines up neatly with Aristotle's: the practical knowledge is what makes the action 'count' as, or be, the specific kind of movement it is. This would seem to speak against the idea that I said he appears to slide into from time to time, that the action is *existentially* dependent on practical knowledge. For that, it would appear we would need to bring into view the action's efficient cause. So it can seem Moran is right to strictly demarcate the way in which practical knowledge explains action from any kind of productive story about the action's genesis.

However, there is a deep problem with casting practical knowledge *simply* in the formal role Moran does. To see this, consider Aristotle's example of the statue once more: If in explaining the bronze statue, I say that its formal cause of a statue is the shape of Achilles, but without any conception of how the statue came to be, then for all *I* know the shape it seems to bear could be an accident, e.g. the freak result of volcanic activity. What makes certain that the shape of Achilles is the genuine form of the bronze is the fact that the craftsman *constructed the statue with a view to the form that the craftsman had in mind, the craftsman gave the statue the form it bears*.[22] That does not mean that, in citing the efficient cause of the statue, we've rendered the reference to its form unnecessary. But without reference to the efficient cause, the attribution of form is left undetermined.

Precisely the same point can be made with respect to intentional action. If we claim that practical knowledge contains the form of action, without having any clue as to how that form comes

[22] The same sort of point can be made with respect to the more complicated cases of natural explanation in Aristotle. Consider the formal cause of a particular kind of animal, i.e., the life-form 'lion'; we can only understand a particular lion as bearing that form in virtue of the fact that the form itself is reproduced by particular lions who, in reproductive acts, are the efficient cause of further lions.

to be 'in' the action as its form, then we no longer have any right to that claim. To understand practical knowledge as the formal cause of action, we need to have in view the way in which that knowledge comes to be in the action itself. Without any such conception, the idea that the form contained in the agent's knowledge is the *same form* that is in their action is dogmatic. Consequently, to say that the agent's practical knowledge *makes it the case* that the action is the action, by itself, rings hollow. Indeed, talk of making something the case, when speaking of formal cause, is dangerously misleading—for it seems to suggest a productive act, precisely what is not in question.[23]

Now, perhaps Moran's view could be supplemented to deal with this objection. It is tempting to think that we need only add to Moran's account the idea that practical knowledge is *also* the efficient cause of action. This promises to fill in the gaps in Moran's picture, securing both the productivity and the constitutive role of such knowledge in one fell swoop.

In order to see just how hard it is to arrive at a satisfactory account of this sort, it is enough to consider a recent account of John Schwenkler's. Schwenkler is critical of the way in which existing accounts of practical knowledge remain at the level of formal causation. He claims such accounts fail to explain "how the knowledge of what one is intentionally doing makes a difference to the character of those movements themselves, and is therefore a knowledge of oneself *as an agent*, and not a merely passive subject of motion." (2015, p.9) As a solution he proposes that practical knowledge has, in addition to being a merely formal cause, a specific kind of 'causal role,' insofar as it 'guides' or 'controls' the intentional action. On this account, Schwenkler writes:

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[23] Although I think her argument is flawed, Paul's (2011) attempt to motivate the idea of 'deviant formal causation' can be read as in some way registering this difficulty. Paul imagines a case where there are two gardeners, one who is pumping poison into the cistern to kill the inhabitants, and one who is doing the same, not because they want to kill the inhabitants, but simply because it's their job to fill the cistern up. She thinks that in each case they have the same non-observational knowledge concerning the poison, and so in fact we cannot, *pace* Anscombe, distinguish their actions from one another. Her argument fails insofar as it merely takes note of Anscombe's negative characterization of practical knowledge as 'non-observational'. But Anscombe would never say the non-murderous gardener has practical knowledge that they are poisoning the inhabitants, for their knowledge would make no difference to what they do in the case where, for example, the water is getting into the cistern but the poison is not. But note that her argument *could* be made to work if we limited our positive characterization of practical knowledge to that of a merely formal cause.

> a person's knowledge of what she is intentionally doing is a form of *practical* thought — different from the way one thinks of other things — insofar as this knowledge does not idly accompany one's behavior as a mere representation of it, but is rather an integral component of its object, playing a *distinctive causal role* in the execution of the very action that it represents. It is insofar as the knowledge of what one is doing plays such a role that it stands as "form" to the "matter" of a person's behavior, and is something without which she would not be acting intentionally as she is. Knowledge that lacks this characteristic cannot be practical knowledge, and what it is knowledge of cannot be one's own intentional action. (2015, p.16. Emphasis mine.)

Schwenkler's talk of 'form' and 'matter' here is, as in Moran, taking its inspiration from Anscombe's use of Aquinas. If practical knowledge is the form of a certain species of movement—intentional movement—then its matter is whatever it is in those movements that takes that specific form. The form is *in* the movements. The additional causal role he proposes for practical knowledge is supposed to answer the question of how the form in practical knowledge comes to be the form in the agent's bodily movements.

The central difficulty of his account is his insistence that, in order for practical knowledge to be properly active, as opposed to merely passive, the form and the matter of an action must themselves be conceptualized as causal relata.

To begin, consider the status of the so-called matter. Schwenkler claims that the matter is the behavior that practical knowledge is meant to be guiding. Such behavior is supposed to comprise an agent's various bodily movements. But this raises the question: what gives rise to and explains the character of these movements, such that an agent's practical knowledge has something 'to go to

work on', or be causally related to, in the first case? This problem doesn't arise for Anscombe's own account because practical knowledge and action are intrinsically related to one another as form to matter, and therefore there is no reason to think we can conceptualize the bodily movements separately from their bearing a particular form. But Schwenkler does not admit an intrinsic form-matter relation, instead making the form-matter relation *supervenient* on the causal role he ascribes to practical knowledge. This in turn necessitates that the form and matter of an intentional action *are* separable. Thus the action's "matter," the agent's 'bodily movements and their effects' (10), must be available for the agent to *causally* transact with. The matter, considered separately from its having been 'enformed' by the work of the agent in respect to it, is not intentional action—so it is not something we deliberately *do*.

It is unclear what kind of causal relation *could* hold between practical knowledge and the behaviour in question—Schwenkler says very little about it. Indeed, he even admits that his account does not settle the question of whether it could be developed in a way 'consonant with' the standard story of action. That this question is left open suggests that Schwenkler has failed to get in view the radicality of Anscombe's account, which, in rejecting the discreteness of intention and action, is incompatible with *any* version of the 'standard story'. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the position threatens to devolve into a form of causal theory. If the practical knowledge is simply there to guide movements which, from its perspective, are mere 'behaviour'—then we are back, it seems, to the idea of intention and bodily movement conceived of as discrete casual relata, and with that idea to the problems of the causal theory that a conception of practical knowledge was supposed to overcome. For only if the agent's movements already bear the form that practical knowledge contains can it stand to them as their formal cause. But this means that, however we might conceive of the form and matter of an intentional action, it cannot be in virtue of them standing in a *productive* relation of the kind Schwenkler envisages. Schwenkler's account shows, therefore, that we cannot

illuminate practical knowledge's formal causal role in action by simply 'tacking on' an efficient causal role for practical knowledge.

3.3 Practical Knowledge and the Capacity to Act

As I shall explain in a moment, to understand the sense in which an efficient causal role, which is to say a productive role, can be ascribed to the agent's practical thought requires a more unified conception of practical thought and action. While the productive element must not be left out entirely, as in Moran's account, we must not *reduce* the idea of action's bearing a certain form to a species of productive causation—which is effectively what happens Schwenkler's account.

What would a unified conception that heeds both requirements look like? I want to suggest that a unified conception would view intentional action as the exercise of a *capacity* for making changes of a distinctive kind. To ascribe a capacity for change to something is to think of it as able to engage in changes of a certain sort—changes that will be susceptible to the different modes of explanation that Aristotle describes in his account of causes. Now, we have been assuming that in order to understand practical thought as properly productive of action—and to thereby vindicate practical knowledge's role as the action's form—we need to be able to get its efficient, not just its formal cause, into view. I think this is *broadly speaking* correct—but it is crucial that the notion of efficient cause here be strictly distinguished from that found in the causal theory of action, i.e., a Humean efficient cause—a discrete event that triggers an action. In his elucidatory example of the bronze statue, Aristotle describes the efficient cause both as the artisan, but also as the *art* of the statue-making, this is not however just knowledge of the form of the statue, but refers to the particular *skill* involved. I propose that we understand the description of the art of statue-making as the efficient cause of the statue as a specification of the artisan's being its efficient cause. The artisan is the efficient cause of the statue *insofar* as they are the bearer of the capacity to make that statue. It

is the agent *qua* bearer of capacity that is the efficient cause of the action. In order to illuminate the way which a particular capacity results in the changes that it does, is not enough to merely cite that capacity as an efficient cause—one must instead understand the activity of the capacity through the lens of the different modes of explanation Aristotle cites. For example, if we want to understand the bronze statue in its full reality, we need to understand not just that the artisan is its efficient cause, nor that the shape is its formal cause, nor the bronze its material cause and so on. What we need to have in view is the whole nature of the process through which the artisan brought it about; how, through the exercise of their capacity to make the statue, form and matter have come together in the way they have.

Now, another Anscombe-inspired account that is of interest here is one McDowell has articulated in various places. Although McDowell's conception of practical knowledge is in many ways like Moran's—he agrees that the content of the agent's intention is that which determines the form of the agent's action—unlike Moran he tries to say more about practical knowledge's relation to the agent's capacity to act.

According to McDowell, "the content of an intention in action is given by what one would say in expressing it, or what one would say in stating the practical knowledge one has in executing it, which comes to the same thing." (2010, p.417) So, we can speak equally of the agent's intention or of their practical knowledge as being the 'cause of what it understands'. But, unlike in Schwenkler's adaptation, the agent's productive efficacy does not get into the picture via a tacked on efficient-causal role that the intention plays. Indeed, McDowell expressly rejects any view on which "the operation of practical rationality that is registered by describing a bit of behavior as intentional is related to the agent's movings of her limbs as cause to effect" (2011, p.17). According to the alternative he proposes, the exercise of the agent's practically rational capacity just *is* their action: "physical activity can be rationality in action, as opposed to a mere result [i.e., the causal effect] of

exercises of rationality" (2011, p.17). To exercise one's practically rational capacities just is to be performing an action, one that falls under the description which constitutes the agent's practical knowledge. On this account, action is thought of as the productive exercise of a distinctively rational capacity. Elsewhere, McDowell says that, "the practical concepts realized in acting are concepts of things to do. Realizing such a concept is doing the thing in question, not thinking about doing it" (2007, p.367). McDowell's talk of realizing a concept marks the idea that the exercise of practically rational capacities involves more than *simply* possessing knowledge that has a 'formal' role: it is the bringing of the act itself to fruition. This is promising, for it casts practical thought not merely as a formal cause of action—or as a formal cause with a tacked on 'efficient causal' role—but as a capacity to act.

However, since all McDowell says about 'realizing a concept,' ultimately, is that it is the activity engaged in by an agent who has practical knowledge, we still only get the formal part of the story about what realizing a concept consists in. This opens McDowell up to the same objection we raised for Moran. For although he is keen to assert that the agent's exercise of the capacity for practical knowledge just *is* the exercise of the capacity to act, all we are told about the capacity in question is that its acts are of the form contained in practical knowledge. As such, although he brings in the idea of the agent's practically rational capacities as a properly productive capacity, he tells us no more about this capacity's productive role than was found in Moran's reading of Anscombe. Practical knowledge is not rendered distinctive in any way from theoretical knowledge of action except that by stipulation it is the kind of knowledge that is the action.

One might question, at this point, whether we *need* anything more to our account of the capacity to act than is contained in practical knowledge. Perhaps McDowell's mistake lies not in having failed to say more about the productive role of an agent's thought, but in suggesting that practical knowledge is *merely* formal in the first place; perhaps we should just reject that constrictive

idea and identify practical knowledge *as* the capacity to act. The problem then, would not be that anything is missing from this account—but only that we erroneously *take* there to be something missing.

This cannot be a proper gloss on McDowell's considered view. McDowell himself insists that there are actions whose performance practical knowledge does not explain:

> In the most fundamental kind of case—the case of kinds of things to do that are basic actions for the agents in question, in one of the senses of that phrase—there is, by definition, no room for thought about how to do the thing in question. Such thought would need to traffic in concepts of other things to do, by doing which one would do the thing in question; and that would contradict the hypothesis that the thing in question is a basic action for the agent in question. (2007, 367)

In the case of basic actions there is no role for practical knowledge to play, except to register that some actions are performed by performing them. How *they* are performed is not a question for practical knowledge. This alone undermines the idea that an elucidation of practical knowledge could, just by itself, be an account of the capacity to act. For either some other form of rationality accounts for basic action, or no form of rationality does. Either way, an account of practical knowledge will not thereby be exhaustive of the capacity to act. McDowell's line of thought here is a version of a more common one. Many philosophers assume that the agent's means-end reasoning gives out in the case of basic action. Yet this fact, if it is one, speaks against the idea that we could exhaust an account of the capacity to act through an account of practical knowledge, for practical knowledge has its source in practical reasoning, it is the knowledge of the A-D order of one's

action.[24] So if we said practical knowledge was not merely the form of action, but also what produces action, we would need an account, at the very least, of how it related productively to the performance of basic actions.

I have not proven that there is *no* possible account of practical knowledge that could be, just thereby, an account of our capacity to act. In Chapter Three we shall consider Sebastian Rödl's account of action, in which Anscombe's practical knowledge is *identified* with action. On this understanding of practical knowledge, the capacity to know what one is doing is nothing but the capacity to do those very things. I shall argue there that although such an account, if successful, would overcome some of the difficulties for the accounts discussed here, such an identification is flawed. To see why that it so, we shall have to investigate in further depth the notion of a capacity and the mode of causality it involves.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to bring out the way in which the Anscombian legacy in philosophy of action marks a distinct improvement over the Davidsonian one, insofar as it does not conceive of practical thought and action as discrete causal relata: conceptually unrelated events standing in a kind of causal nexus that cannot explain the way in which practical thought is internally related to the actions it is responsible for. Yet I have also tried to bring out the way in which philosophers drawing on and interpreting Anscombe's conception of practical knowledge are in danger of obscuring practical reason's productive role in action: the way in which it is responsible for bringing action about. This danger stems from what might be described as an imperfect inheritance of the non-

[24] McDowell says that bodily movement is 'informed' by practical rationality (2011, p.17); but what does informed mean here? Is it guided by it? If so then how?

Humean framework Anscombe was working in. When Anscombe herself briefly considers the idea that a reason for action might be considered cause in *Intention*, she claims that 'the topic of causality is in too much confusion' (10) for the suggestion to be of help. The notion she goes on to develop in *Intention* of practical knowledge as 'the cause of what it understands' is, it seems, at least partly intended to bring some clarity here, insofar as it gets in view the properly conceptual relation between practical knowledge and action. But as I have started to show, the clarity can only remain at best partial if the notion of a formal cause is not understood within the broader encompassing framework of an agent's capacity to act. Anscombe herself, I think, saw this, for towards the end of *Intention* she describes practical knowledge as a capacity for action, one that is 'exercised in action' (1959, §48). But the thought of what this capacity, as a capacity to act, might involve beyond formal causation, is not developed by her.

To make progress, it is necessary to investigate what kind of causality belongs to our capacity for intentional action. I shall take up this task in the next chapter. This will involve breaking radically with the causal theory of action's Humean, event-causal framework, and replacing it with a conception of an action as the exercise of a capacity. On this latter conception, we shall see that agential efficacy is explained not in terms of one event causing another, but is instead viewed as something internal to a single event: the agent's action.

Unfolding this latter conception will take some work; as such we shall not broach the distinctively rational nature of an agent's capacity for intentional action until Chapter Three. However, by that point the argument of Chapter Two will have put us in a much better position to adjudicate against the proposal that the agent's capacity for practical knowledge—their ability to know what they are doing—could be exhaustive of their capacity to act. There I shall argue that practical knowledge is best thought of as but one actualization of the agent's capacity for practical thought. The primary act of this capacity is the capacity to perform the actions which are the objects

of practical knowledge. This form of activity, in rational agents, has a distinctive logical form that cannot be assimilated to *acts of practical knowledge*. On this conception, practical knowledge, the knowledge I have of what I am doing, should be viewed as a secondary actualization of the agent's practical reason—one which is importantly dependent on the first.

Chapter Two

Agents and Their Capacities

1. Introduction

I concluded the last chapter by proposing that understanding rational agency will require developing an account of practical thought as a special form of causal capacity: one whose causality is intrinsically rational or, equivalently, one whose rationality is intrinsically efficacious.

As a preliminary step in developing such an account, in this chapter I elaborate and defend the idea that intentional action is the exercise or actualization of a causal capacity. This will involve making a radical break with the causal theory of action's conception of the mode of causality involved in intentional action. On the account given here, the event of someone's acting is not caused by an event involving their mental states. Rather, an action is an event in which an agent brings about a change in some substance—a patient. As such, agential efficacy does not consist in one event's causing another event—does not consist in a causal relation between two events—but is internal to a single event: their action. That causality can be internal to an event is explained by the fact that an action is the exercise of an agent's causal power: a potentiality of a substance, of a particular type, to bring about changes of a certain kind, in something else.

Moreover, it is essential to this account that actions are not understandable as the events they are separately from their being the actualizations of a powers of specific type. In other words, acts are conceptually related to the powers of which they are actualizations. Different kinds of causal powers bring with them different modes of efficacy, and in general, to understand the mode of

efficacy proper to each, we need to understand what kind of substance they belong to. Ultimately, of course, our goal will be to understand the rational mode of efficacy distinctive of human agents. We shall take up this challenge in the remaining chapters. The work of this chapter consists in getting into view the basic structure of action considered as an exercise of a capacity.

I shall motivate my own account of agential capacities through discussion of a recent approach to action that we have not yet considered—the agent-causation view—precisely because it promises to offer an account of the exercise of an agent's causal powers that breaks with the causal theory in the requisite way.[1] According to the agent causation view, an agent's causal activity is best understood as internal to their action: it is not that which is brought about by some prior event, but internal to action itself. Indeed, the agent causation account is partly born of dissatisfaction with the causal theory of action. A central complaint made against the causal theory by proponents of agent causation is that its ontology of events 'leaves out the agent'. As Helen Steward puts it, when constrained to the event-causal conception of action, it seems that in order for the agent to be causally involved,

> we need an action to appear *in the middle* of the causal chain offered us by the standard story, the causal chain which was supposed to tell us what it was for an action to occur in the first place. We seem to need an action to appear between the intentions and beliefs on the one hand, and the bodily movement on the other, to make the bodily movement happen, as it were, pursuant to the relevant intention. (2017, 74)[2]

[1] Sometimes the label 'agent causation' has also been used to describe views on which the agent (as opposed to say, some of the agent's causal states) causes their action. This is not the account we shall be considering here, which instead thinks of action as the 'causing' or the 'bringing about' of changes.
[2] For another elaboration of this criticism see Hornsby (2004)

The concern is this: if all we have in our account of action's causal genesis are events involving mental states and bodily movements, it is hard to see where agents themselves figure in intentional action—in what sense the events that cause action can be seen as the causal work of the substance the agent is, as opposed to some event, involving their mental states, that they are somehow implicated in. To avoid this concern, the agent causation account locates the agent's efficacy, as I think we should, *within* their action, which is thought of as the exercise of a causal power attributable to the agent given the kind of substance they are. The view aims to articulate, thereby, a view of agents as substances that are part of the natural world, and that possess distinctive capacities to change other substances in that world in various ways.

However, as I shall argue (§2), the agent causation account ultimately suffers from a fatal assumption that is common to all of its different versions. This is the assumption that we should distinguish between the *causing of an event*, the bringing about of a change, and *the event thereby caused*. The former is the agent's *action*—it is what they *do*—the latter is understood as the *result* of their action. In divorcing the bringing about of a change from the change thereby brought about, the view introduces a split in practical reality—one that divides the agent's efficacious activity, their *doing*, from the very thing that, ordinarily, we would take them to have achieved in acting. Ordinarily, the change an agent makes is also describable as that which they have *done*. Think of the scene that occurs when we happen upon a broken vase and ask, 'who did this?'; 'this' refers here to the thing done—the destructive change they have wrought in the vase—and which now lies before our very eyes. Different versions of the account make the problematic distinction in different ways. But in each case the result is the same: in sundering the making of changes from those changes themselves, the agent causation view loses its grip on the crucial idea that in action, to quote Hornsby, "the agent herself plays a causal role, and does so by virtue of causality's being internal to activity in which she engages" (2012, 234). For, as we shall see, it is only if the agent's action is part of the change they

make that we can make sense of the agent's very capacity to make that change. As consequence of the division between actions and the changes they make, the temporal unity of an action is also endangered—for once the change made by an agent is external to the agent's action, the action itself loses its natural terminus, which is precisely that which grounds the crucial contrast between the completion and incompletion in action.

I shall argue that we can only overcome the deficiencies of the agent causation account by *identifying* the exercises of an agent's power with the changes agents make. However, making this identification brings to light an issue that is covered over by the agent causation account. The terminus of action is not determined by the agent's activity, but by the patient's activity—that is, by the change in that which the agent works on in acting. My action is only finished once the thing I want to change has changed in the way that I want it to. This raises the question of how the agent's activity is related to the activity of the patient they work on. By drawing on Aristotle's conception of powers for change I shall elaborate an account of the internal structure of action (§3), which understands changes as the joint actualization of the correlated active and passive powers of agents and the patients they work on. Through this framework, we shall be able to illuminate both the precise sense in which causality is 'internal' to an agent's action, as well those observations about the temporal character of action that lead proponents of the agent causation account to reject the necessary identification in the first place.

2. The Agent-Causation Account

2.1 Actions as 'Causings'

Common to all versions of the 'agent-causation' account is the idea that actions are *causings of events*, where causings are separate entities from the events caused. Its proponents often articulate this view through the linguistic distinction between transitive and intransitive uses of causative verbs. They note the difference between someone's *moving their arm* (a transitive use of the verb 'to move') and someone's *arm moving* (an intransitive use of the verb.) Adopting Hornsby's sub-script notation, we can say that ascriptions of movements$_i$ do not imply one way or the other whether I have acted—whether I moved my arm or am merely undergoing a spasm—whereas ascriptions of movements$_t$ imply genuine agency. Consequently, actions are then identified with movements$_t$ rather than movements$_i$. Now, the philosophical significance of this grammatical point is, I think, very much open to interpretation. But a core tenet of the agent-causation account is that this grammatical distinction for the most part tracks a central truth that philosophers of action must pay attention to: that movements$_I$ and movements$_t$ belong to different ontological categories. [3]

Indeed, the non-identity of these categories is argued to be crucial on pain of absurdity. One argument, originally given by Maria Alvarez and John Hyman, is as follows: If to act is to cause something to happen, and if the event caused, e.g. the rising of an arm, just *is* the agent's action, then

[3] In the context of her original emphasis on this distinction Hornsby makes the following argument, which is cited approvingly by Steward (2013a, p.34):

> The sort of answer we expect to the question 'What did he do?' is not 'His body moved' ('His arm rose', 'His knee bent') but rather 'He moved his body' ('He raised his arm', 'He bent his knee'). It is the same when we go beyond the agent's body to describe his action: what he did, we say, was melt$_T$ the chocolate; and we cannot say that what he did was the chocolate melted$_I$. So it appears that if there is to be any hope of truth in an identification of actions with bodily movements, then they must be movements$_T$, not movements$_I$, that are actions. (1980, p.34)

This knock-down argument is, by itself, weak. Although it is true that we would never say that 'what he did was the chocolate melted', we can and do say things like 'the chocolate melted, and this was *his* doing.'

actions are therefore events that cause themselves. Assuming that the concept of a self-causing event is absurd, one must therefore distinguish between the *causing* of events—phenomena captured in English by appearances of transitive causative verbs—and the results of such 'causings', describable by means of the intransitive appearances of such verbs.[4] Causings are actions, what we cause are the 'results' of our actions.[5] If one rejects the standard story of action's conception of causality, according to which the causes of actions are events, then as a consequence of this argument one must find another category than 'event' for actions, which is precisely what the proponents of agent-causation do. Actions are not events, but causings of events.

But what are causings of events? Proponents of the agent-causal account differ in their answer to this question. Steward and Hornsby identify actions as belonging to special kinds of temporal categories. Others, such as Hyman and Alvarez, deny that actions are events and so 'follow Aristotle in assigning actions to a category *sui generis*.'[6] In each case the account is taken to articulate what it is for an agent to exercise a causal power. Yet we shall see that, in different though related ways, it is precisely the kind of ontological distinction that is made between the 'causing' and the 'caused' that undermines the account's ability to do just that. In the next section (§2.2) I shall look at the latter kind of account, before considering Steward and Hornsby's accounts (§2.3-2.4).

2.2 Actions and 'Results'

To get a grip on the idea of what an action, considered as a 'causing', is, it will be helpful to consider the question of how agents do what they do; or, what amounts to the same thing in the context of

[4] Alvarez and Hyman (1998, p.229); Steward (2013, p.293) explicitly endorses a version of it articulated in Hinshelwood (2013). Steward draws the lesson that the event or process of 'causing' must be separate from the event that is caused.
[5] The terminology of 'results' traces back to Von Wright (1963)
[6] Or so they claim, we shall see that the account is far from Aristotelian. Cf. Alvarez & Hyman (1998, p.233); the view has also been restated in Hyman (2015).

the agent causal view, what it is for an agent to exercise a causal power. If I ask how you did something, for example, how you brought down City Hall, and you say: 'I caused it to be brought down', you will have told me nothing my question did not already presuppose. However, if you answer by saying 'bribes and blackmail' or 'blowing it up!', I will start to get a picture of both what you did and how you did it. Whenever an agent exercises a causal power to do something, there is some *way* in which they do what they do. The specific way in which the power operates—the way in which it brings about what it does—determines what kind of power it is. As such, there is no such thing as 'causing' something to change *simpliciter*, there is always a manner in which the change is brought about. We can call this 'manner' the power's 'mode of operation'.[7]

Alvarez and Hyman claim that "to act is to exercise a causal power—to cause, bring about or effect an event. But the exercise of a causal power is neither an event, nor the relation between the agent and the event that it entails" (1998, p.233). The problem with this view, I shall argue, is that it renders the manifold ways in which agents do what they do—the mode of operation of their powers—unintelligible.

Consider someone moving a trolley. This action, according to Alvarez and Hyman, is different from what the action brings about—its result. What the agent does is cause or bring about an event of the trolley's moving. Yet this has the consequence that, if we were to describe *how* they brought about the trolley's movement—e.g., by pushing it, pulling it or by deploying some other means—we could not be able to cite anything about that event that normally would constitute an explanation. For anything that our answer might include—the pressure applied by the agent to the trolley, their masterful grip on the handle—are technically off-limits if we are describing their action as opposed to the results of their action. For what the agent does is bring about the event, part of which consists *in* the very application of that pressure. This means that, the application of force to

[7] See Hacker (2007, p.78) for a useful discussion of the idea of a 'mode of operation'

the trolley—the crucial part of the trolley's moving—is *no part of their action.* Indeed, everything that could plausibly feature in a description of the way in which the power works—the way an agent is acting—is separated off from it, and instead made the 'result' of exercises of the power. These elements cannot feature in a characterization of the way in which agents do what they do. Consequently, we are left with nothing to say in response to the question: "how do agents cause the events that they do?" Though it does so unwittingly, the account is effectively reduced to ascribing an occult power to agents for bringing events into existence, i.e. a power whose operation is in principle inexplicable.

Nevertheless, it might be thought that the account has recourse to all kinds of responses here. After all, there are causings of a trolley's change in position that are brought about by *pushings*, and causings of a trolley's being moved by *kickings, pullings,* and so on and so forth. These are different ways of bringing things about. Yet kicking something, pulling something and pushing something must, if they are to be of any help here, be at least be part of, events. But according to Alvarez and Hyman, when these words pick out actions, they cannot be identified with any event. As such, these various action verbs cannot provide specifications of the way in which we do the things we do—they cannot be specifications of our causal powers. Everything that might have been included in such specifications, has been pushed into the realm of what is brought about *by* the exercises of our powers.

This difficulty with the account is not helped, it seems, by Alvarez's conception of the logical form of action sentences, which rather than bringing illumination here, in fact seems to confirm the shadowy nature of the agent's action.[8] For example, she analyzes 'I broke the vase' in the following terms: 'There is an event x such that x was a breaking of which I was the agent and the vase was the patient'. The 'breaking' referred to here is not the agent's action, but the result of their action—the

[8] Alvarez (1999)

event. Consequently, an action sentence does not make reference to the bringing about of the change—the agent's action—but only the change itself, the event—which is nevertheless attributed to an agent and a patient. It is therefore unclear what precisely we would be quantifying over in quantifying over the action—indeed *how* we could quantify over it. At any rate, if we can indeed only speak of an agent's actions indirectly, somehow *via* their results, then it is hard to see how we can individuate the acts in their own right. This would not be an issue, of course, if the results of actions were not viewed as separate from them. As matters stand though, the question as to how an action brings about its results is not answered by consideration of those sentences which refer to them.

Hyman has more recently has characterized actions in a way that might appear to offer some illumination here. For he claims that actions belong to: "Quine's super-category of 'objects', an object being 'the material content of any portion of space–time.'" (2015, p.61) They are, he claims, "dynamic episodes" (p.66). These characterizations suggest that far from being shadowy entities, actions are in fact identifiable with the very material goings on I have been assuming the account must separate them from.[9] But it is difficult to see how dynamic episodes could be material processes without losing the structure of the account entirely. To preserve the difference between the 'causing' that an action is, and the event thereby caused, Hyman admits that we must "distinguish between my raising of my arm, which is an act—a dynamic episode, so to speak—and the motion of my arm, which is a mere kinetic episode." (ibid.) Yet it is hard to see in what intelligible relation the former episode could stand to the latter. Indeed, the account appears to be stuck on the horns of a dilemma. If the dynamic episode is in any way identified with the material features of what Hyman is thinking of as the result of that episode, then the causing of the event and

[9] On this point, Alvarez and Hyman may seem to have parted ways. In a recent paper, 'Acting as Causing Change' (delivered at the 'Being and Doing' conference University College London on 24th June 2016) Alvarez extends to this account to the processes leading up to change. That is, the agent's action is the bringing about of that process as much as the finished event itself. This confirms the idea that the agent's action is not identified with the process that eventually becomes the finished event. But as we see below, it is unclear how Hyman *could* have 'broken rank' here given the kinds of distinction he still wants to maintain.

the event caused shall have been identified—something he has already ruled out by the pain of absurdity (recall the argument described in §2.2). On the other hand, if the dynamic episode is not to be identified with the material features of an unfolding event, then it must somehow be *another* temporally extended 'material content of space-time' that is somehow running parallel to the 'mere' motion. But this reinvites the charge of occultism, for now there is an episode—not itself the event of movement—which is somehow bringing this episode about. It is hard to see what this event could possibly consist in. As such, the account seems unable to avail itself of the more natural idea that the agent's action is the genuine motion or motions that together constitute overall change an agent makes in a patient.

However, perhaps the real difficulties here stem from the notion of basic action. If all our complex actions are performed by performing basic actions, and if basic actions are bodily movements, then one may indeed think there *is* no material 'mode of operation' through which I act more generally. How do I 'bring about' my bodily movements? Not by pushing myself around, it seems. I do not relate to my body as I relate to a cart. Reflection on basic action may therefore make Alvarez and Hyman's view even seem attractive, insofar as it doesn't identify some material mode of causation through which I move myself. Yet the attraction can, I think, only be superficial. For even if it is true that I don't move myself by pushing myself about as I push a cart, we still want to know how I do move myself. This should not be a mystery, either from a philosophical perspective, or from the perspective of agents, who after all know how to move. Unfortunately, I must defer the question of how to positively characterize bodily movement until Chapter Four. However, for now I simply want to point out that the fact that bodily movements present certain difficulties for a philosophical account of action does not speak in favor of Alvarez and Hyman's account, but only paints that account as potentially suffering for its lack of an answer to a pressing question about agents and their bodies.

2.3 Actions and Activities

In contrast to Alvarez and Hyman, other proponents of the agent-causal account *do* straight-forwardly identify the exercise of agents' powers with concrete material happenings, thereby avoiding the problems just discussed.

Hornsby claims that when someone acts they engage in an activity to which 'causality is internal'.[10] On her account, the results that agents bring about through acting are *comprised* of what she calls their 'activity.' Consequently, in response to the question of how someone, for example, moved a trolley, one can specify the kind of activity they engaged in: pushing, kicking, blowing etc. In so doing one is specifying an ongoing spatio-temporal happening—one that can include, for example, the force exerted on a trolley by an agent—and which eventually constitutes the 'result' of acting.

Hornsby's agent-causation view turns on a number of categorial distinctions grounded in observations concerning the temporality of action. Like all proponents of agent-causation, Hornsby maintains there is an all-important difference between actions and their results: 'causings' and the 'caused.' Yet on her account, the difference is between the changes agents make and the *activity* of making those changes.[11] Hornsby is concerned to mark a fundamental difference between, on the one hand, actions considered as finished events, which she thinks of as countable particulars, and on the other hand, what she calls 'on-going activities,' which she takes to be the temporal analogue to spatial 'stuffs'. In thinking along these lines, Hornsby is thus participating in a tradition of temporal

[10] Hornsby (2012, p.233-4)
[11] Hornsby (2012), (2013).

ontology which Mourelatos—drawing on Kenny and Vendler—initially inaugurated.[12] According to this tradition, we can speak of countable events such as: *a* stroll to the store, or *a* snooker shot. But when we are merely considering some presently on-going activity, e.g. someone strolling with no particular destination, we can only speak of there being 'some' strolling—just as, in the case of spatial entities, we can in certain cases only speak in terms of there being, for example, 'some water on the floor', rather than 'a water on the floor'. Hornsby uses the term 'activity' for temporal 'stuff', and she thinks of what that activity *results in* as a temporal particular, an 'event'.

For Hornsby, actions are comprised of activity—but not every mere stretch of activity, despite being a countable particular, counts as what we would normally think of as an action. For actions are generally considered to be those events which have a determinate, anticipated end-point. But an activity can be ongoing without having any set end, and can, after some duration, come to a finish; only what Hornsby calls 'individual' or 'directed' activities can be said to be actions proper, if that means that it has an anticipated outcome: something with a natural beginning, a middle, and an end. The distinguishing feature of directed activities is that they admit of the contrast between what linguists term perfective and imperfective aspect. Indeed, it is a sensitivity to the importance of aspect that largely motivates the analogy between activities and spatial stuffs. The thought is that, as Helen Steward puts it:

> the nominalisations obtained from sentences having imperfective aspect seem better thought of as mass-quantified than as count-quantified. Consider, for instance, the sentence 'Jones was swimming yesterday'. Nominalising, it is argued, it is better to suppose that what we obtain is 'There was (some) swimming by Jones yesterday'

[12] See Mourelatos (1978), Kenny (1962), Vendler (1957).

> rather than 'there was *a* swimming by Jones yesterday'—since, for all the sentence tells us, Jones might be swimming still.[13]

Of an agent performing what Hornsby calls a *non-directed* activity (i.e, one admitting of no aspectual contrast) one cannot say: 'He was strolling, but he never strolled.' For there is no end-point internal to the activity. Of an agent performing a *directed* activity, e.g. strolling to the store, one can say: 'He was strolling to the store, but he never strolled there,'—that is, he never arrived. The events that are mere stretches of activity and the events that are actions are alike 'comprised' of activity, but only the latter can be properly thought of as being interrupted before reaching their conclusion. For Hornsby an action in the latter sense consists in an agent 'engaging in' activity for the whole length of time they are acting, and with an anticipated end in sight. The end can be thought of as an 'accomplishment'—a term of art indicating the particular that the agent has thereby brought into being. The accomplishment is never something the agent is actually engaged in, but is instead the result of their acting—it is, as it were, made *out of* the activity the agent is engaged in.

Hornsby's temporal ontology therefore contains the following categories:

Table 1: Hornsby's Temporal Ontology

Category:	**Type:**	**Terminates in:**
Activities	Temporal Stuff	Stretches of Activity
Directed Activities	Temporal Stuff	Accomplishments
Stretches of Activity	Temporal Particular	_
Accomplishments	Temporal Particular	_

Now, a crucial animating thought behind this ontology is the idea that activities and events must be distinguished from one another due to their possessing incompatible characteristics. First, it is

[13] Steward (2012b, 381)

thought that whereas activities are 'fully present' at any given moment that they are being engaged in, the events that they result in are not. Events are particulars that are sorted according to the temporal parts that they have; as such they cannot be wholly present until they have the temporal parts that they do. Second, and clearly relatedly, it is argued that while activities are themselves capable of change, events are not. Activities can get faster, slow down, intensify and so on and so forth. Events, because they are fundamentally finished—there is no particular event to speak of until it *has* happened—cannot be subject to change. While events are ongoing, they are indeterminate with respect to their parts, and so cannot be said to properly exist. Whatever 'unfolding events' or 'events in progress' are, they are not *events*. I shall turn to these alleged incompatibilities and their philosophical import later on (§3.3-3.4), for now I simply want to make a note of them.

The difficulty with Hornsby's account consists in the way in which it conceives of the relation between the stuff of activity and the events they result in. Although agents bring about what they accomplish by engaging in activity, the character of this activity is in fact left problematically external to the accomplishments thereby achieved. Consider that the structure of our intentional actions is determined by the end to which they are oriented. In the case of successful action, every facet of an intentional action must be appropriately sensitive to the end if the action. This applies, not merely to the broad structure of what I am doing—the various parts of my plan—but also to the fine detail of my movements. What the activities of walking, running, baking or building all consist in will differ depending on what the intended outcome of these activities are. The fact that actions are directed toward a certain terminus has consequences for the internal structure of actions. This means that, in order to distinguish directed from non-directed activities we need more than the addition of an anticipated end-point from outside—we need the difference to be *internal to the activity itself*. Yet directed and non-directed activities are alike comprised of 'activity': the kind of

temporal stuff that does not contain, within itself, a structure that is determined by a particular terminus.

How might Hornsby try to accommodate the internal structure of activities that are aimed towards a particular outcome? One option is to appeal to the guiding role of the agent who, in performing directed activities, hopes to have achieved what they have set out to do. In other words, the agent *adapts* their activity in light of their goal. Although talk of guiding and adaption in relation to action are—when understood correctly—no doubt innocent, they are susceptible to problematic interpretations. What must be avoided at all costs is a picture on which the agent stands to their action as an agent does to the things they change *within* action. Agents do not guide their own actions in the way in which they guide golf balls into holes. If an agent engages in enough walking to get to where she is going, this is not because she controls her activity of walking—the temporal stuff of getting to where she is going—as something which stands outside her activity. The 'guiding' must be internal to the activity itself.

Now, although Hornsby would no doubt accept this point, her various analogies between activities and material stuffs make it seem as though reaching the end-point of one's action would be analogous to filling a receptacle with liquid. One simply pours until one has reaches the top—and then one stops. The problem with that image is not just that the end-point lies outside of the activity itself, but also that the end-point does not have any significance to the internal character of the liquid itself. There is 'a water' rather than 'some water' only by virtue of its having been structured by something *other* than itself: the bottle. But precisely the water in question could easily be the same stuff were it lying on the ground in a puddle.

I do not think this is just simply a matter of a poor choice of analogies. It is unclear how Hornsby *can* build the kind of sensitivity to ends required of agents into their activities. 'Ongoing activities' are thought by Hornsby to be tokens of distinct activity types, and since the types in

question are types of stuff, they make no essential reference to the particular goals to which they can be directed. Hornsby's idea is presumably that particular tokens of these types will manifest different characteristics depending on what accomplishment they are directed towards on particular occasions. But the question is how these token activities can take on the various structural features they must. For the types of which they are tokens are types of stuff, as such they do not have an internal structure which differs from case to case.

Now, although she does not elaborate on the point, Hornsby does suggest that directed activities should in fact be added to the list of *types* of activity we engage in:

> When directed activities are brought onto the scene, a list of activities multiplies profusely. For now not only are raising an arm, strolling, painting, running and pushing a cart activities, so also are raising an arm to reach a bowl, strolling to Da Cesare, painting a picture, running a mile, pushing a cart to the top of the hill. (2012, p.241)

Perhaps the notion of *directed* activity types can solve the problem of how an agent's action can take on the structural qualities it needs to. For once a terminus is introduced into the type of activity the agent is performing, we can see the agent's token activity as intrinsically structured towards that terminus. Going for a stroll to the pub will involve, on this account, a different type of activity than simply going for a stroll with no set end-point. And this type of activity will be one that is intrinsically geared towards a certain outcome.

In fact, in the quotation above Hornsby seem to characterize the types of activity we engage in at the wrong level of generality. For example, I have the capacity to walk, that's a kind activity I can engage in. I do not appear to have some further capacity in addition to this: the capacity to walk

to the pub. I can walk anywhere I please, if I know how to find it and it's not too far, and each time I do I exercise the same capacity. I do not have a further capacity for every place I could walk to. To make the view plausible then, we at least need to eliminate particular end-points from the characterization of the different types of directed activity there are. So perhaps we should say, instead, that there is a directed activity type: walking somewhere in particular. But now it is unclear what distinguishes *this* activity type from the correlative *non*-directed activity type: walking nowhere in particular. Am I really exercising a different capacity when I walk with no set destination in mind, and when I walk to the pub? Consider that, even I am just passing the time by walking about, I at least need to be able to walk the next couple of steps in some kind of direction even if I am going for a stroll. But what is that bit of activity, if not one of walking *somewhere*? In fact, on closer inspection, it seems that non-directed activities, far from being the paradigmatic case of activities, are parasitic on directed activities. For raising an arm, strolling, painting, running and pushing a cart are all activities that, although they may have no set terminus, nevertheless consist of parts that have their various termini: this step, that brush-stroke, that shove of the cart etc.

The idea that activities are analogous to material stuffs seems wrong in the case of both directed activities and non-directed activities. Hornsby recognizes this fact in the former case, but is unable to do justice to it with her idea of directed activity types in virtue of having a prior conception of activity as 'stuff-like'. From that perspective, it can seem that the only way activities could become directed is if the particular end is built into the notion of the type of activity. Once we ditch that implausible thought, the distinction between directed and non-directed activity types begins to falter, such that even in tokens of non-directed activity types we find directed activities.

What the breakdown of the distinction shows is that whether a particular activity is directed or non-directed should not be something decided at the level of activity types. In the case of activities like walking, we can understand particular instances of walking as directed or non-directed

depending on the context—but that does not change what type of activity is in question. Furthermore, although this distinction is not made at the level of types, it nevertheless belongs to our understanding of types of activity that make up actions that they are fundamentally the kinds of things whose instances are normally directed towards a terminus. The cases in which they are not, are parasitic on the cases which they are. This shows itself in the fact that even what Hornsby calls non-directed activities have, as parts, directed activity. However, even so-called non-directed activities are not as open-ended as Hornsby makes out. Indeed, Hornsby often speaks as though the non-directed activity of walking is something that, from the agent's perspective, is such as to go on endlessly. But that is a queer way of thinking about taking a stroll. My intention is not to stroll forever, but usually until I get bored, or for such-and-such an amount of time—say, until mid-afternoon, or perhaps until my friend is due to arrive. In those cases, my activity is structured by an end-point. If I need to get back in time, I can't wander too far, and if I am going to discuss philosophy with my friend upon their arrival, I won't want to have worn myself out. All these considerations influence, therefore, the internal structure of my walking.[14]

The source of the problem, then, is Hornsby's leaving the idea of a terminus out of her guiding notion of an activity, which is the non-directed kind. First, it is considered an *external boundary* to the activity—much as a dip in the road stands to some water in it is its external boundary, rather than something that is part of the water itself as its own limit. Second, it is *external to the internal structure* of the type of activity at hand. (We shall see below that Coope's Aristotle-inspired account, which is very similar to Hornsby's in many ways, undermines our grasp of the activity of our capacities in a different but related way.)

[14] A further exploration of the notion of activity Hornsby is using here, and that belongs to the tradition that stems from Mourelatos, would I think have to unearth the way in which it is blind to the way in which, in Aristotle, the distinction between kinesis and energeia maps on to the distinction between motions that have their ends in themselves (energeia) and motions that do not (kinesis). Going for a stroll need not be an activity in the sense of energeia even if I have not set in advance a determinate stopping point. For the end to which going for a stroll can be aimed: passing the time etc., is 'outside' of the strolling. As such it is still a kinesis, something which admits of a contrast between perfective and the imperfective aspect, even if the notion of its end-point is slightly harder to make out.

2.4 Individual Processes

We can usefully view Steward's version of agent-causationism as a response to the problems afflicting Hornsby's account.[15] Steward's account shares a lot in common with Hornsby's, for they both make much of the analogy between activities and events, on the one hand, and material stuffs and particulars on the other. But whereas Hornsby thinks that we should conceive of the agent's activity as in the first place analogous to a stuff, Steward thinks the proper analogy is to an Aristotelian *substance*. The primary motivation for this view is the observation that we can predicate change of actions. Whereas Steward understands events to be 'modally fragile,' i.e., events count as different events if any of their temporal parts differ, what she calls 'individual processes' are 'modally robust'. Individual processes can develop in any of many ways—taking on and losing properties—while still remaining the same processes. Steward cashes out the modal robustness of individual processes through reference to possible words; individual processes are:

> entities which are potentially rather robust with respect to their temporal parts — they can be conceived of as the very same tokens even shorn of many of their actual constituent temporal parts, and hence as existing in possible worlds where they are interrupted and do not run to completion. (2013, p.807)

This conception of process allows her to understand an agent's activity as something internally structured according to the agent's intention. As she puts the point:

[15] Steward (2013b) herself presents things this way at some points, though not quite in the terms I have here.

> in thinking of a process, we lock onto an entity which we conceive of as having a principle of individuation which has to do with what one might call norms of development—or, in the case specifically of human action, with such things as intentions and goals. (2012b, p.384)

It thus belongs to a process, for example one of defusing a bomb, that it should develop in a particular way given the goal to which it is directed, the intention which it is an execution of. Nevertheless, although individual processes are said to "go on in time," they are not, like Aristotelian substances, endurants, but rather are perdurants: phenomena that are made up of temporal parts. For example, on Steward's view, the individual process of raising one's arm is something that results in the completed event of one's arm going up. The way in which a process results in a completed event is through its gaining the temporal parts it does, parts that together constitute the completed event. The competed event, however, is distinct from the individual process that leads to it, for the individual process is something that, in close possible worlds, may have gone in a different direction entirely.

However, it is hard to see how we can distinguish, on this view, between the activity through which a process gains its temporal parts, and those temporal parts themselves. There must be a distinction of this kind on Steward's account in virtue of the fact that she understands the action itself to be more than the sum of its temporal parts. We must therefore be able to distinguish between all the various movements that make up the event the agent brings about, and the bringing about of those movements, i.e. the action/individual process. The action, unlike the finished event, is not simply a collection of actual temporal parts, but something that is irreducible to the various temporal parts that result from the process that it is.

Once this distinction is made, we can pose the following question: How does the individual process bring about the temporal parts that constitute a particular change? It somehow must be

through the agent's activity, the action itself, that the temporal parts that eventually constitute the finished event are brought about. Yet it is hard to see how the activity of bringing about the finished event *could* be the work of the action. For the activity of the individual process would appear to consist in nothing more—at least in *this* world—than is embodied in its temporal parts. If that is the case, then there is no way to distinguish here between that which is brought about—the completed set of temporal parts—and that which brings this set of parts about.

Everything depends, therefore, on whether Steward can make sense of the additional contribution a process makes to the bringing about of an event—additional, that is, to the temporal parts that make up that event. Now, there is an intuitive sense in which an action is more than the sum of its parts, one that might be drawn on here to help the account. For in the midst of acting, we might think, the action consists of more than what has already happened, it also consists in the agent's conception of how the action might continue. The activity of the agent, then, consists in more than the temporal parts that are progressively accumulating, but also in this awareness of the 'what next', an awareness no doubt shaped by the agent's idea of the kind of thing they are doing. Yet ultimately the way in which this activity brings about the completed event that it is supposed to, is by making it happen. This is an activity that it seems that—if it is ever to touch material reality—must consist in the actual movements the agent makes. And here the difficulty remains, that these movements are both what in which process consists, but also whose accumulation it was supposed to be the causing of.

At the root of this difficulty is the fact that the independence of an action from its temporal parts is precisely what is supposed to ensure that we can make the distinction between the change an agent brings about, and their bringing about of that change. Without that distinction, the individual process will be identical to the event it results in. However, Steward's only way of distinguishing the actions from the temporal parts they 'result in' is in terms of their identity across possible worlds. An

action is kind of thing that would still be what it is in close possible worlds in which its temporal parts differed from its actual ones. But that notion of independence is not able to ground the idea that an individual process is the causing of the temporal parts it has; that requires a different kind of independence, one that could make intelligible the idea that the individual process is an activity which produces those parts. Yet as matters stand, the activity constitutive of the individual process that is my action—the one in this world—just consists in those temporal parts, and so cannot be what brings them about.

Ultimately, Steward's analogy to Aristotelian substances here is deeply misleading. A living substance, something with a certain form, can grow, i.e. can add more to itself, whilst remaining the same substance—and all through its own activity. However, in explaining a substance's capacity to do this we crucially need to *presuppose* the idea of that substance exercising a power to change something other than itself. In order to grow, a living substance must gather up the matter of nutrition, which is initially external to it, and incorporate it into itself. Both of these steps necessarily involve action—both on the part of the agent, but also of its 'sub-personal' parts—in which the living substance makes alterations to other pre-existing substances. Therefore, if we do not already have a grasp on how an agent is able to bring about a change, it not very surprising that an appeal to this framework does little to illuminate the exercise of an agent's power.

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In each of its forms, the agent-causation account separates what agents do or are doing from what they get done. And in each case, the upshot is the same: the very intelligibility of the agent's efficacy—the very thing the account wished to illuminate—is threatened. In Alvarez and Hyman's account, action becomes a shadowy double of the motions agents are responsible for. In Hornsby,

the agent's activity is left peculiarly bereft of the terminus which determines its internal structure. Finally, in Steward, we found that the agent's activity of bringing about a change threatens to collapse into that it was supposed to bringing about.

In each case the agent's action has been separated from the very change it is, and is then is modeled on a different kind of phenomenon than it in fact is. Consequently, I propose that we give up on the idea that what agents do is separate from what they bring about. But in developing an account that abandons this separation, I shall need to respond to the arguments made by the agent-causation theorists—which thus far I have only noted in passing—that purport to establish the necessity of such a distinction. We shall see that, once a satisfactory account of action as the exercise of causal powers is in place, we will not only be able to defuse such arguments, we will be able to explain the various observations and intuitions that originally motivated them.

3. Agents and Their Powers

3.1 Exercising Powers

Proponents of agent-causation hold that action is the bringing about of a change by an agent, whether in herself or in something else. Heard the right way, this is perfectly correct, but in contrast to those accounts, I propose that we should instead *identify* changes with particular exercises of an agent's power. This will both avoid the problems that afflicted those accounts, hence restoring the respectability of the ordinary thought that an agent's action is nothing but the material changes of which she is the agent.

However, such an identification was ruled out of consideration by (at least some) agent-causal theorists on the grounds that it leads to the absurd result that agent's actions are self-causing events (§2.2). I shall begin elaborating my positive account of agential powers by explaining why, if we understand the relation between powers and their acts correctly, this argument can be defused. Indeed, a curious feature of the agent-causation account in its different forms is that, although it gives an account of action as the exercise of a causal power, it rarely considers the significance of the explanatory relation between powers and their acts. Yet it is precisely through understanding this relation that we stand a chance of illuminating the mode of causality proper to agency.

Recall that Alvarez and Hyman's concern was that if actions are causings of changes, then identifying such causings with the actual changes made amounts to conceiving of an event that inexplicably is able to bring itself into existence

However, we are only forced into this conclusion if the role of the agent's power in action is occluded. Although I think that acts of powers should not be distinguished from the changes those powers bring about, powers are still importantly distinct from their particular acts. We can begin by noting that a power, or potentiality, is something general that is manifested in—but not exhausted by—its particular acts.[16] My ability to throw apple cores from my desk into the kitchen bin does not 'run out' after *n*-many successful exercises.[17] Of course, not every relation of the general to the particular is genuinely explanatory. The boy skipping down the street may just happen to alternately land on white and black paving stones, in which case the pattern his steps thereby exemplify in no

[16] Kern's elaboration of this point is particularly vivid: "A capacity is something general that intrinsically refers to a potentially infinite series of states or actions, namely all those states that actualize the capacity in question. Actions that actualize a capacity may differ from one another in every respect apart from the fact that they all, insofar as they are actualizations of a capacity, contain one selfsame common element: the very capacity they actualize. Someone who can ski never skis down the mountain in precisely the same way. Sometimes she swings out leisurely curves, sometimes she cuts her turns short and brisk. Even the individual motions she makes may differ in many respects…But what manifests itself in all these various skiing activities is not something that is merely similar between the various cases, in the sense that various particular runs down the mountain may be more or less similar. No. It is one and the same element that sustains itself through all the members of this potentially infinite series of actions." (2017, p.136-137)

[17] Although powers can be lost through corruption of the substance possessing the power—or in the case of rational powers, through lack of practice—the power, once possessed, can be exercised indefinitely.

way enters into the explanation of his skipping having exemplified that pattern. We can describe his action truly by subsuming it under the concept of this pattern, but the pattern itself is not any sense explanatory of his action—it remains accidental to it. However, if the boy does this intentionally, the pattern stems from a capacity to do just that. In which case his capacity—something which is both general and actual—is genuinely explanatory of the action that he performs.[18] A power is at least always partly explanatory of a particular change simply because the latter is a manifestation of the former. Another way to put this point is to say that powers are actively at work in their acts, for their acts are nothing other than the activity *of* the potentiality in question. In ascribing powers to agents what we are doing is ascribing to them a potential for a certain kind of activity; it is in virtue of the agent being the bearer of such a potentiality that various manifestations *of* the potentiality can be explained.

Since powers explain their acts in this way, particular changes made by agents are susceptible to causal explanations of a certain stripe. A particular change is explicable in virtue of its being the activity of an agent who has the capacity to make changes of that very kind. Of course, explanations that appeal to agential capacities must do more than merely ascribe to an agent the capacity to cause the change. We must know how agents make changes—that is, what the character of the power in question is, what its 'mode of operation' consists in. This in turn requires an understanding of the *kind* of substance the agent is, such that they could possess a capacity of that type.[19] To know that something moved because pushed is to know relatively little, for the activity of pushing differs in the case of, for example, billiard balls and construction workers. More comprehensive explanations are reached through specifications of the character of the power, and the kind of agent it belongs to. Reference to the kind of agent in question helps establish that the change in question really is an

[18] Cf. 'Part Three' of Thompson (2008) for discussion of the idea of something both actual and general.
[19] Boyle and Lavin (2010) contains an illuminating discussion of the role of kinds in the explication of goal-directed activities of animate substances.

actualization of a power. If we see a bear hurtling through the sky, then given the kind of substance it is, we can safely assume that this is not an exercise of its power of flight. Of course, none of this is to say that all causal explanation could or does consist in is reference to agential capacities. Often, causal explanations require a complex understanding of environmental conditions and the interrelation between the powers of many different kinds of substance. What I mean to point out is that changes in the material world are largely comprehended against a background of the agents responsible for those changes, in virtue of their bearing powers distinctive of the kind of agent they are.

Once the explanatory role of powers is allowed into the picture, even to this degree, we are in a position to address Alvarez and Hyman's argument. We can agree with them that an agent's action of, say, raising their arm, is their causing an event of their arm's rising. But in order to grant this, there is no need to separate the agent's causing of that event from the very event caused. To say that the action *is* the causing of an event is to say that it is a manifestation of a power—a general potentiality of the agent which is actualized on a particular occasion. If we focus myopically on the event, without taking into account the role of the agent's powers in explaining their acts, then it will inevitably be mysterious how the very same event can both be described as (i) the event of my causing the cart to move and (ii) the cart's movement. For there is nothing in the event itself—*considered in abstraction from the fact of the agent's power*—that would explain its coming to be.[20] However, if we have in view the event as the actualization of an agent's power, this mystery is dispelled—for now we can see how the agent's causality is internal to the event itself. In other words, the 'causing' and the 'caused' can be identified in virtue of the fact that what brings about the change—the power—is active *in* the very change itself.

Ursula Coope attempts to respond in different way—on Aristotle's behalf—to the charge of

[20] This is what leads them to posit the action as a 'causing' that, somehow, is responsible for the event without having any part of it.)

absurdity that I have just been defusing. Her response gets something importantly wrong (and I think it cannot be Aristotle' view either), but seeing how it does will be illuminating, for it shows just how important it is to our understanding of the idea of a capacity that we include within its exercise its terminus—an issue we discussed in relation to Hornsby's view.

According to Coope's Aristotle, to exercise a causal power is not to cause an arm's rising, it is to cause the end-state that an event of an arm's rising terminates in: an arm's being up. The power in question, therefore, is not a power to produce a movement; the arm's movement is the 'incomplete actuality' of the power to bring about the state the movement terminates in. What Coope means by 'incomplete actuality' is the following: the movement that brings about the end-state is the power's activity, but that activity is fundamentally incomplete—its incompleteness consists, as it were, in its being headed towards the complete actuality of the power: the finished action. This avoids falling afoul of Alvarez and Hyman's objection, for the causing and the caused are separate: the 'causing' *is* the movement, the 'caused' is the end-state of the movement.

In fact, a difficulty that Coope herself identifies brings out the problem with this view:

> There are, surely, different types of action that result in one's arm being up, and also different types of action that result in one's being at the pier. How is Aristotle to distinguish between these? How, for instance, is he to distinguish between walking to the pier and swimming to the pier? Each of these actions would, after all, be an incomplete fulfillment of the potential for being at the pier. (2007, p.132)

Coope's response on Aristotle's behalf is that we can speak of different ways in which one is incompletely fulfilling the potential to be at P; for example, either in a swimming manner or a walking one. This proposal, then, does not distinguish powers in terms of their full actualizations but

in term of their incomplete actualizations. As Coope puts it: "swimming to P and walking to P are different ways of incompletely fulfilling one and the same potential" (ibid).

Although ingenuous, this response destroys the unity of the action, and with it our comprehension of an agent's powers. As I noted above, we understand powers by understanding what they are powers *for*, since, as potentialities, they are characterized in terms of their actualizations. If there are different 'ways' of incompletely fulfilling the same potentiality—where 'ways' differ from one another as swimming and walking do—then the end-state cannot be understood as the full actualization of any determinate power. Consider that, in fact, I can 'be at P' because I was kidnapped, thrown out of a helicopter and landed there in a sack. Yet we would not consider this misadventure a kind of 'incomplete fulfillment' of a capacity of mine—we wouldn't consider it an exercise of my capacity at all.[21] In making the complete actualization of an agent's powers entirely separate from their ways of incompletely actualizing those capacities, we lose any sense of their counting *as* the actualizations of those powers. Coope is repeating, within a Aristotelian framework, a similar kind of mistake that Hornsby made in having the end-point of activity be external to the action itself. We can now see that this threatens the very identity of an agent's various practical capacities by making their full actualizations conceptually separate from their various modes of activity.

What is needed is an account that, rather than alienating an agent's action from its own terminus, instead makes the terminus part of the action. That is part of what identifying changes with actions involves. But this might seem absurd: How can we say that the end-point of a change is part of an action if it is a state, something static and that could remain in place after the action is finished? Coope's account shows that that we must think of the end-points of action, but not simply

[21] Coope, like Hornsby, ties the characterization of activity types too closely to particular objects. I have powers of locomotion, but not powers of locomotion to *particular places*. The exercise of these powers always takes the particular circumstances into account—but the generality which constitutes my power cannot be understood as limited in this way to particular places I can move to, paintings I can paint etc.

as states of affairs whose identities are conceptually separable from an agent's action.[22] We must be open to the idea, that is, that there are two ways in which we can think of some states of affairs. I and anyone else can simply observe the state of affairs which consists in the location of my car with respect to the curb. On the other hand, in parking the car, I could also view this state of affairs as the terminus of my act of parking it. Viewing it this way, I see it as the final point of a motion. And it seems I must be able to view it as such if it is something to which, in parking the car, I am aiming at. When I do so, however, I see it as conceptually connected to its genesis, to the way in which I brought it about, even though, in bringing it about, things are now as they are without my having any longer to act. This is why, upon seeing the broken vase in my living room I can ask: "who did this?"—'this' referring to the shattered piece? I do not think of it merely as some state of affairs, but as the terminus of an *action*.[23] As such, it cannot be thought of separately from the exercise of the power of which it is the terminus.

On this conception of an action and its terminus, the whole of the change—from the moment it begins, to the moment it ends, is considered the agent's action. Once we identify actions with changes we can overcome the various alienating effects that separating these has. We can find the efficacious activity of agents, not outside of the changes they make, but within them—up to and including their terminus. In so doing, we can see activity of their powers not as something that is problematically related to these changes, but as nothing but the activity of those powers. Additionally, we can view the *internal* structure of an action as being intrinsically directed towards its own terminus. This avoids the problems that afflicted Hornsby's view, on which the end of the action lay outside of it, and is thus unable to structure the activity leading towards it.

[22] Coope, as it were, brings the conceptual discreteness of causal relata we found in the causal theory to her conception of capacities. Instead of events being conceptually discrete, exercise of powers and their results are discrete.
[23] It is worth noting that we also speak of our actions being undone. For example, when someone fixes the vase I just smashed out of spite.

However, at this point we face a new problem that hitherto had been obscured. If we identify an agent's action with the change that they make, then we must reckon with the fact that these changes are, very often, not simply changes in the agent but changes in other things. And it is the changes in these things that determine the end-point of the action, and that thus are internal to their temporal and instrumental structure. What matters, in closing the door, or making an omelet, is what is happening to the door, or to the ingredients. It is the changes in those things that set the terminus of those actions. Consequently, in order to identify an agent's action with the change they make, we need to understand how agents are related to things they change: the patients of action.

3.2 Agents and Patients

The role of patients within action poses the following problem for the identification of action with the changes agents make: If the agent's action is identified with a change, and if this change is the patient's, then how can we identify the agent's action *with* this change? The change, it seems, is the patient's activity—not the agent's. This question—and in fact the entire topic of the agent-patient relation in action—is obscured by the agent-causation account. If the agent's causing of a change is in any way external to the change made, then no question arises concerning as to how, within the change, the agent's activity is related to the patient. Even Hornsby and Steward, who think of the change made by an agent as in different ways comprised of the agent's activity, make no essential mention in their accounts of the role of the patient in such activity. Once we recognize that actions and changes are identical, the issue in unavoidable.

In this section I will give an account, aided by a certain reading of Aristotle's definition of motion, as to how agent and patient are related in action. However, this amounts to more than simply discharging a burden specific to our own account, for it is only once the role of the patient in

action is properly in view that the temporal character of action can be properly illuminated. What I shall suggest is that the various 'incompatibility' arguments martialed by agent causation accounts against identifying actions and events are based on observations that are only properly explicated once the role of agent and patient in action are elucidated.

In the first chapter of Metaphysics *Theta* Aristotle makes a remark which at first is difficult to comprehend, but which relates directly to our question:

> It is plain…that there is in a way one capacity of acting and being affected (for something is capable both in that it has a capacity of being acted upon and in that something else can be acted on by it, but in another way they are different.) ($1046^{b}19$-22)

Aristotle is concerned to show how, in one sense, there is only a single change, and hence only one capacity for change, and that in another sense there are two capacities involved in change: the capacity for something to act in a certain way, and the capacity for something to be acted upon in a certain way. The existence of powers presupposes the existence of patients who have an ability or power that, to use Jonathan Beere's terminology, 'correlated' to the agent's power.[24] The power to burn is a power to burn things that are flammable; the power to crush is a power to crush things that are crushable. Possessing the active power to crush means *being able to crush something*, possessing the correlated passive power means *being able to be crushed by something*. The positing of such passive powers is not a metaphysical indulgence, but simply the recognition that the exercise of active powers presupposes the existence of substances that can participate in the changes those powers are for. Now, the sense in which these are two powers is perhaps easier to grasp than the sense in which they are one. They are, after all, powers *of* different things, and *for* different things. Indeed, the

[24] See Beere (2009, 44), who gives an illuminating account of the relation between active and passive power in Aristotle.

possession of an active power often logically excludes possession of the correlative passive power. If a teacher could be taught what they are able to teach another, they would *not* be in a position to teach it in the first place—for they would not already know it.[25]

Yet Aristotle holds that powers of agents and patients—despite being for different things—are also for the same thing. And, in this sense, they constitute a single power. This is because although agents and patients may play different roles within a change, those roles are nevertheless played within the *same* change. There are not two changes, but only one. The difference between them therefore presupposes a unified activity in which they both figure, and upon which their identity as capacities depends. As such, a change can therefore be understood, in this sense, as the single act of two correlated powers, one of agency and one of 'patiency'. Just as there are two powers, but for one change, what agents and patients are doing *within* this single act cannot be strictly the same—for only one of them—the patient—changes.

To understand the way in which agents and patients play asymmetric roles within unitary changes, we need to understand the relation between such changes and the differing activities of their powers. As we noted above (§2.3) an action is something that takes time and admits of interruption—this is what Aristotle calls a '*kinesis*' (what Hornsby and Steward wished to characterize as their 'directed activities' and 'individual processes' respectively). It is characteristic of actions, in other words, that they admit of the contrast between perfective and imperfective aspect: one can be doing them without having done them. The relevant comparison class is what Aristotle called 'energeia' and can be translated either as 'activity' or 'actuality.'[26] Exercises of capacities that have the character of an energeia, e.g., perceiving, are such as to be complete at any moment of their exercise.

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[25] As Aristotle notes, passive powers can be associated features of patients which are not shared by agents with the correlated power, in his example: 'what is oily can be burnt' (1046^b24), but a cigarette lighter is not oily.
[26] For the most part I shall follow Kosman and Beere in adopting the former translation.

By looking at Aristotle's own conception of kinesis, we shall be able to avail ourselves of some crucial distinctions it affords, distinctions which will help us to comprehend the 'oneness' and the 'twoness' of the activities of agents and patients in action. In what follows I don't pretend to have made anything like a proper exegesis of Aristotle's theory of change, which I shall propound dogmatically, drawing on what I find there in order to help us with our own problem of thinking the unity of a change.

'Kinesis' is Aristotle's word for motion or change, which he famously defines as the 'actualization of what potentially is, as such.'[27] The 'as such' is all important. A patient's potential to burn, its flammability, is a potential to be ash. If we identified a kinesis, i.e. a change, with the actualization of *that* capacity, its being burned would, in fact, not be a change at all, but an instantaneous or 'punctate' moment. To avoid that absurdity, we need to make room for the following three phenomena: (i) something being able to burn (a passive power 'in potentiality'), (ii) something that has been burned (the same power 'fully actualized') and (iii) something in the process of being burned. Now, following Aryeh Kosman, we can do this if the 'as such' in Aristotle's definition is read as qualifying 'what potentially is.' A kinesis is the actualization of what potentially is *qua* potentiality. On this reading, we can distinguish between the actualization of a potentiality *tout court*, and the actualization of the same potentiality just insofar as it is a potentiality. The latter is the kinesis (process, movement, change) by which something comes to be the way it is. Aristotle's definition implies that there are more possibilities for substances than either being potentially such-and-such or being actively such-and-such. There is also the possibility of *actively being potentially such-and-such*—this is what is to be in motion, to be changing. There is a difference between merely being able to be some way, and actually being on the way to being that way, without yet being it. The latter activity, change, is peculiar insofar as it is intrinsically incomplete. Being potentially such-and-such

[27] *Physics* III, 2, 201^{a}11

and being actively such-and-such both straightforwardly have the temporal character of an energeia. Although the activity of a potentiality *qua* potentiality is also an energeia, it is one that seeks to bring about its own demise.[28]

Now, whatever the strength of this as a reading of Aristotle, this definition of kinesis might anyway seem to run foul of the linguistic tests philosophers have used for distinguishing between an energeia or a kinesis. Philosophers like Vendler, Kenny and Mourelatos were not simply transposing Aristotle's distinction into new language, but hoping to use it as an inspiration for a more perspicuous temporal ontology. But they did introduce a general distinction between events and processes originally inspired by Aristotle (we saw versions of this distinction in Hornsby and Steward). In thinking of a kinesis (i.e., Steward's 'individual processes' or Hornsby's 'directed activities') as itself kind of energeia (i.e., activity *simpliciter*) we might look to be ignoring the fact that activities do not admit of the contrast between perfect and imperfective aspect. But here Aristotle has the upper hand: although it is false that my walking to the Rose and Crown implies that I have walked to the Rose and Crown, it is true that my walking to the Rose and Crown implies that I have *been* walking to the Rose and Crown. Once the necessary restriction has been made, the linguistic test, which is entirely apt, is easily passed. My activity of walking is, in these cases, completely actualized at every moment I am walking—but only *qua* potential. So, a kinesis can be thought, at the correct level of analysis, to pass the modern linguistic test for having the temporal profile of an energeia. When we considered the motion simply as the activity of a potential insofar as it is potential, the contrast between perfective and imperfective applies to it.

What is the significance of this Aristotelian finesse for the question about the relation between agents and patients? We can begin to see by rephrasing the question with which we began: If change is the activity of a potentiality *qua* potentiality, then whose potentiality is in question? In

[28] As Kosman puts it, 'Motion does not…just happen to cease; its essential activity is devoted to ceasing. Its being is autosubversive, for its whole purpose and project is one of self-annihilation.' (2013, p.67).

light of *some* of what we have said, it would appear to be the potentiality of *both* the agent and the patient. For there is only one event. However, we also said that it is only the patient that changes. The problem is this: if we admit that the activity of potentiality *qua* potentiality pertains to both, then it would appear that both the agent and the patient must change. However, if we say the activity is only the patient's, then it seems we can no longer identify the change with an act of the agent's power.

To answer this question, we need to abandon another assumption of the Kenny-Vendler tradition as taken up by Mourelatos and others. According to this tradition, the categories of activity and process are opposed to one another. If something is an activity, it is not a process, and vice versa. Yet from the Aristotelian perspective, not only is it the case that an action has, at one level of analysis, the character of an activity—it is also the case that (at another level of analysis) it can be said to contain *another* activity: that of the agent. For the agent is engaged in activity when changing something, but without itself changing. Within a single change we find *both* the activity of the patient's potential to be otherwise, qua potentiality, and the activity of the agent. Together these form the change as a unified whole. So, a kinesis or processes, understood at the correct level of analysis, has the character of an activity.

So how should we conceive of the agent's activity in a change? There are at least two obstacles to our understanding here: firstly, agential activity does seem to inevitably involve motions on the part of the agent that it can be hard to think of as anything other than changes (just think of the movements made by Aristotle's builder); secondly, and perhaps more worryingly, it seems wrong to think of the agent's activity as an energeia. An energeia is complete at every moment because, for Aristotle, its end or telos is within itself (at every moment of perceiving I have perceived; of living I have lived etc.) And when I am building, although the change lies outside me, the character of what

I am doing surely depends on it. We do not want to say that I have built the house at every moment I am building it.

In response to the first difficulty we should note, firstly, that many changes have parts that are themselves changes. Building a house is an action made up of many smaller actions. When builders walk from the cement mixer to the foundations of the building what they are doing is part of the overall alteration in materials that eventually constitutes a house. Although the builders move, none of these movements are, properly speaking, changes in them, for they are parts of alterations which are ultimately in the patient.[29] Although we can consider these acts in isolation, in so doing we are blinkering ourselves to the larger whole in which they occur, and from which they inherit their identity.[30]

However, the second difficulty concerns the crux of the issue regarding the unity of transaction. If we identify the agent's activity in the action with the change in the agent then we are forced into saying the change is *in* the agent. But if we think of it as an activity that is independent of that change we shall we lose the sense in which the change is the agent's work, and with it the internal unity of the change. Now, the sense in which the builder's activity *is* incomplete is clear: builders are not indifferent to whether or not their building stops short of the finished product. Their activity is therefore importantly tied to the fate of the patient. Nevertheless, because it is not a change in them, their activity is not intrinsically incomplete in the way that the kinetic activity of the patient is. As such, when the builder's activity is interrupted, its incompleteness is parasitic on the incompleteness of the alteration in the patient. A change admits of interruption, and insofar as the change is the patient's, we say it is in the patient. But in identifying acts of the correlated powers of

[29] Of course, many actions are going to contain parts that consist in locomotive acts—for example when the builder has to move from the cement-mixer to the foundations of the building. These are acts in which the agent is also patient, so we need not view them simply as energeia. They are changes in the agent which are parts of the overall change they are involved in and which results in a house.

[30] Sarah Waterlow says of Aristotle's builder that 'he can be taken to raise his arm *qua* builder only if the arm-raising is not considered a self-contained change. In this sense, then, what takes place in the working agent is not *a change*, i.e. a coming to be of some new state of him, although it is not a condition of rest either.' (1982, p.191)

agents and patients with these changes, we need not be committed to saying that agents and patients both change.[31]

On the resulting view, an action is a unified whole that has a beginning, middle and end. We can understand the nature of this whole through reference to the respective activities of the agent and patient. The patient's activity is the activity of its potentiality to be otherwise than it is (in some determinate respect) *qua* potentiality. The agent's activity is not separate from this activity, insofar as it is an integral aspect of the very same change. But it cannot be simply identified with the patient's activity, for the agent does not itself change.[32] Nevertheless, considered as an unfolding change, both activities are one. This change, the kinesis, is in the patient, and its two constitutive aspects are the jointly exercised power of the agent and the patient. Its terminus—the state it eventually arrives at—must be viewed from within the perspective of this change.

This account provides both for the temporal unity of action, as well as the efficacy of agents within action. We needed the terminus of agent's action to be included as part of the very change the agent makes. This we can do once we recognize how that terminus, although identified as the end-point of a change in a *patient*, is the upshot of the correlated activities of agent and patient. That the efficacy of an agent is internal to change is shown by the fact that its role in the change is that of providing its source.

As we shall now see, the distinctions just introduced in order to solve this problem allow us to respond convincingly to the observations and arguments made by proponents of the agent-causation account against the very identification we have just been defending.

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[31] Waterlow points out that the builder can keep on building for as long as they want, they needn't finish because this particular house is built, but immediately move on to the next.

[32] As Aristotle is at pains to emphasize: 'it by no means follows from the fact teaching is the same as learning that to learn is the same as to teach...teaching is not the same as learning or agency as patiency, in the full sense, though they belong to the same subject, the motion.' *Physics* 202^{b}17-21

3.3 The Temporal Character of Action

Hornsby and Steward were both impressed by the fact that while an activity or process is 'entirely present' at every moment of the duration of an action, the result of that activity itself is only fully present once completed. Indeed, this served as a principle for distinguishing acts of powers from the changes that are eventually performed. However, I think we can do justice to this intuition without abandoning the account just developed, but rather by drawing on it.

Since actions are kinetic they can be interrupted, i.e. they admit of the contrast between perfective and imperfective aspect. However, as we saw, a kinesis constitutively involves two activities that presuppose one another. There is a sense, therefore, in which an agent's activity *is* 'present' for the duration of an action. For the activities of the agent and patient have—at the correct level of analysis—the character of an energeia. At that level of analysis, they are complete, fully present, at every moment of the unfolding action. However, these activities presuppose the actualization of the patient's capacity to change *tout court*. They only exist as fully present insofar as they are understood as part of something which is as yet incomplete—which is still underway. We cannot make sense of these activities without understanding them as together constituting something that *is*, for the time being, essentially incomplete. The actualization of the powers of agent and patient therefore have the character both of a kinesis and an energeia, yet both are nevertheless aspects of the same unfolding event. This allows us to uphold Hornsby and Steward's intuition without sundering an agent's action from the change they make. However, without getting into view the roles of agents *and* patients within change, this analysis of action as a unity constituted by their respective activities would not be possible. Only when these are in view can we make sense of the way in which actions are both are and are not 'fully present.'

However, the view that the very same things, i.e., events, can both be underway and then afterwards something we refer to as concluded, is often thought to be incoherent. Two objections to this idea are firstly, that events are *particulars* whilst events in progress are not, and secondly, that events in progress are subjects of change, whereas events are not.

In fact, both objections can be seen to stem from the doctrine of 'mereological essentialism' about events. If events are particulars, it is thought that they must have the parts that they do essentially. This was what Steward meant to capture in calling events 'modally fragile.' Events are modally fragile because they allegedly count as the particulars that they do only in virtue of possessing the temporal parts that they do: their particular beginnings, middles, and ends. Since none of the individuation conditions for events can be applied to something lacking such parts, it is often thought that particular events cannot be identified with events in progress. And once it is accepted that events can be particulars only if they have their parts essentially, it is clear that they cannot be subjects of change, for any change in their temporal make-up would simply result in a new event rather than a new determination of the same event. Conversely, events in progress do seem open to change, insofar as they might go any of many possible ways whilst retaining their identity.

Behind this whole line of thought lies, I think, a genuine refusal to take seriously the distinctive nature of our temporal categories on their own terms. Although the idea is presented as intuitive, it is unclear, ultimately, why we should not think of events in progress as identical to the completed events they eventually become. In fact, this is deeply revisionary with respect to ordinary thought, for we say the very same things—actions—are both underway and then eventually concluded. What I *will do*, *am doing*, and what I *have done*, are all parts of the very same thing: namely, my action. From this perspective, insisting that events are 'modally fragile' in virtue of having their parts essentially is simply to confine oneself to the perspective we have of actions once they are

finished. Of course, if is simply assumed events are essentially completed—if they are always viewed from the perspective of the present *looking back*—then it will seem obvious that they could only have the 'temporal parts' that they do. But is there any reason to confine ourselves to a conception of events that only grants this temporal perspective on them? Instead of saying there are two kinds of things: activities and events, we could say the following: there is one kind of thing—events—and once they're over, they're over.

Against the idea that events in progress are identical to finished events it is often urged that there is an *indeterminacy* to the event in progress which is incompatible with the determinacy of the finished event. Although this indeterminacy is cashed out in different ways, it is often cashed out through the analogy to spatial stuffs.[33] But as we saw in Hornsby's account above, the analogy quickly falters. The kind of indeterminacy that characterizes an action is one that is structured *internally* by its anticipated end-point. In other words, *contra* Hornsby, there isn't just 'some swimming' when after setting off we fail to cross the channel—there is some of 'a swimming', albeit a particularly ill-fated one, one the rest of which never occurred.

The question of whether actions are particulars should not be answered positively or negatively, but rather rejected, as long as the concept of particularity presupposed is one fundamentally hostile to the category of action. This idea of particularity is drawn from the metaphysics of spatial objects. If we apply a pre-conceived spatial notion of particularity to events then we may well think that they count as the particular events they do only if they have the correct

[33] Eric Marcus takes a different tack:

> It is of course often true that an event of a certain type was unfolding. Jones, we can suppose, was indeed crossing Columbus Avenue. In this sense, the event-type crossing of Columbus Avenue has a kind of actuality—a real presence in the spatiotemporal world—that it lacks when no one is crossing that street. But this actuality consists not in the existence of a particular but rather only in the obtaining of a fact. (2012, p.217)

It is deeply unclear what such a spatio-temporal presence could amount if all it is is 'the obtaining of a fact.' If what I say in this section is correct, there is no need to tie ourselves in such knots over this issue.

sorts of 'parts'—and what parts will an event have, it will become natural to think, but temporal parts? But if we are to think seriously about the particularity of actions, then it must be from the perspective of their characteristic being. Actions are particulars in the following sense: the particular actualizations of the capacities of agents and patients. They are changes. Are these 'countable' particulars? Again, we can answer in the positive, I think, as long as the relevant notion of 'counting' is appropriate to the nature of action as something that, until complete, is liable to interruption. From this perspective, Steward's contrast between 'modal fragility' and 'modal robustness' need not characterize the occupants of different temporal categories. Rather, it can be definitive of the temporal category of action, that its occupants essentially move from relative robustness to relative fragility as their fate is progressively determined. What starts out as something that, given the capacity it is an actualization of, could still go many ways, eventually becomes something that just went *this* way.

Steward, in her own way, accepts that actions are particulars, but she makes much of the fact that whilst actions are the kinds of particulars that can go any of many ways, finished events cannot. I have been urging that there is in effect nothing more behind this point than the fact that one cannot change the past. That truism does not, in itself, speak against identifying completed events with those same events that were in progress. But there still remains the question of how to understand the nature of changes *to* actions. Indeed, I criticized Steward for thinking of actions in terms of analogy with continuants. But if we cannot think of actions as substances that underlie change, then how can we understand the ways in which we predicate change of them?

Once again, understanding action as the actualization of active and passive capacities can help us here. The key lies in a distinction between two sorts of change that Aristotle makes.[34] The change in which a substance takes on a new determination differs from another form of change,

[34] Cf. *De Anima* 417^{b}2-16

which we can call a 'transition.' Clearly some kind of change occurs when an agent moves from merely being able to do something to actually doing it. Something wasn't happening, and now it is. But this transition does not consist in something taking on a property or quality that it previously lacked. The agent remains entirely as they were before, it is just that their capacity is now active as opposed to merely potential. Since it is the very same power that is first in potentiality, and then in activity, this transition in no way constitutes a change in the agent's qualities. In a change proper the patient moves from one state to its contrary, e.g. from being hot to cold, from being intact to being smashed etc. The transition from capacity to activity involves no such alteration. Although the agent transitions from not exercising the capacity to exercising the capacity, this does not involve contrary attributes or qualities. If I am able to lift things, then I am still able to lift things when I actively do so—I do not lose my capacity to lift by lifting something.[35]

Armed with this distinction, we can get in view the real nature of those 'changes' action undergoes. Someone able to lift things can do so in different ways. For example, there are differences in how perfectly someone exercises that capacity. Someone able to lift may be impeded by external factors, such as strong winds. Another measure of difference concerns what aspects of their power are in play. Being able to lift involves being able to do many things. For example, it involves knowing both when to lift something slowly and when to pick up the pace. Someone may begin to lift something slowly, and then, when impediments are removed, finish by lifting it quickly. Or, absent any impediment, someone might begin to lift something slowly and with much deliberateness, before recognizing that now a little more haste is called for. In each case there is change in the way the power is being exercised, but no alteration of the agent. Just as there is no real change in the transition from being able to do something to actively doing it, there is no real change in the transition between doing something poorly and doing it well, or between one or another

[35] It is true that when I begin acting I go from not acting to acting. But these are not ultimately contrary attributes, for the state of not-acting in question is one of having the capacity to act, which capacity is still present when I am acting.

aspect of a capacity's being actualized. The changes predicated of actions are therefore what I called 'transitions'—not the taking on or shedding of the contrary determinations of a substance. There is clearly much more to be said about this special form of change, but the above suggests a good alternative framework within which 'changes in changes' are intelligible—one that does not require thinking of an action as a kind of quasi-substance.

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The aim of this chapter was to get in view the notion of a capacity and its acts, and, thereby, an understanding of agential efficacy. We have seen that agential efficacy is not a matter of bringing about an event, but is something that is manifested within the events which are the actualizations of an agent's powers. We have also seen how the notion of the correlated capacities of agents and patients sheds crucial light on the internal temporal character of action. As yet, however, I have said nothing about what it would be for such a power to be intrinsically rational—for the 'mode of operation' of a power be of a rational kind. Having gotten in view the some of the general structure of an agential capacity and its acts, I shall now turn to answering this question in the remainder of the dissertation.

Chapter Three

Practical Reason as the Capacity to Act

1. Introduction

In the last chapter we laid the groundwork for an account of rational agency by developing an account of what it would be for intentional action to be the exercise of an agent's causal capacity. However, in so doing, I effectively followed my 'agent causation' opponents in setting to one side the question of what would make such a capacity distinctively rational. Now that the general notion of an agential capacity is properly in view, we can return to the question with which we began this dissertation: the question of how reason itself can constitute a mode of causality.

I shall broach this topic through an examination of two recent accounts by philosophers who are self-consciously working within the Anscombian tradition, but who find a causal role for practical reason that is more than merely formal. Central to these accounts is the *identification* of intentional actions with judgments that are the conclusion of an agent's practical reasoning. This idea is promising, for by identifying judgments and actions we arrive at the idea of rational capacity that is, at the very same time, properly *productive*—precisely what we concluded we needed at the end of Chapter One. From the perspective of this account, the very thoughts that the agent's reasoning culminate in do not merely contain, as in Moran's account, the formal cause of action—they are themselves the agent's actions. Practical reason is a full-blown causal capacity on these views because intentional actions simply are judgments that such reasoning concludes in. The capacity for practical inference is the capacity to act.

However, although I welcome the central ambition of these accounts, the crucial identity claims they turn upon are, alas, highly problematic. I shall argue below (§2) that the form of

temporal activity characteristic of action that we began exploring in the previous chapter is incompatible with those judgments to which they are allegedly identical, and that we consequently need a different account both of practical reason's rational productivity, and its relation to the various kinds of propositional thought that are clearly involved in action. The consideration of these views will therefore be a fruitful one, for it will highlight the need for an understanding of practical reasoning that is not tied to the forms of rationality associated with propositional thought.

To do this, I give an account (§3), firstly, of practical reasoning as a *sui generis* form of rational activity whose activity primarily consists, *not* in the formation judgments, but in the *realization of ends*. This activity has the temporal character proper to the actualization of a causal capacity, and, moreover, in virtue of this exhibits a different form of relation between general and particular than is found in acts of judgments. I shall sketch the beginnings of an account of the relation between this activity and the kinds of propositional thought that are characteristic of agency: although the activity of realizing ends can neither be identified with those judgments about means that figure as premises in a practical syllogism, nor with the agent's knowledge of their own actions, it is nevertheless the *source* of both. Consequently, both action and knowledge of action can be understood as internally related—yet non-identical—actualizations of the capacity for intentional action: practical reason.

2. Actions as Judgments

2.1 Rational Causality

In *Rational Causation* Eric Marcus describes a *sui generis* form of rational causation of which theoretical and practical inference are paradigmatic species. Marcus takes as his starting point rational explanations:

Belief Explanation: S believes P because Q

Action Explanation: S is ϕ-ing because she is ψ-ing

Explanations of these forms, if correct, are so in virtue of the fact that S has exercised the ability to make a particular kind of inference. Marcus holds that, in the theoretical case, the agent has exercised the ability 'to believe what is to be believed on the basis of something else that is to be believed.'; and, in the practical case, the ability to 'to do what is to be done on the basis of something else that is to be done,' where the connection between the two actions is specifically instrumental one. Common to both cases, is the exercise of an ability that can "preserve the relevant good-making status" Marcus (2012, p.5) of the proposition or action.

Marcus identifies the exercise of these abilities with S's holding the belief, or performing the action, that features as the explananda in the respective rational explanations, and in each case, he identifies the explanandum as the 'rational cause' of the explananda. Q is the rational cause of S's believing P; her ψ-ing the rational cause of her ϕ-ing. Marcus contends that because each of the above explanations specify a non-trivial and non-constitutive explanation of why the world is the way it is in some respect, they deserve to be called causal explanations. The fact that P explains why I believe Q, my ψ-ing explains my ϕ-ing.[1] The rational cause in each is not understood to be a 'trigger' of the rational ability that underlies such causation. The form of causation is explicated in terms of the exercise of the agent's respective inferential abilities. Indeed, Marcus holds that "the entire causal transactions themselves are manifestations of rational abilities…Rational efficacy, unlike efficient efficacy, is internal to the manifestation of an underlying disposition." (2012, 181) The rational cause of my belief or my action is never something external to the ability in question

[1] Importantly, the cause is not to be understood as the 'trigger' or 'stimulus' of the ability. Rather, the exercise of the ability just is 'the causal-relational connection.' (2012, p.5)

which somehow rouses it into activity. It is a central part of the capacity's activity. In the case of action, specifically, the efficacy of the capacity is not dependent on a stimulus condition, but simply upon the agent recognizing that that one action is to be performed because another is to be.

Consequently, Marcus identifies intentional action with a certain kind of *representation*: a calculative thought in which means are related to ends. This comes out in Marcus's characterization of the 'expressibility' of belief and action:

> Just as believing-for-a-reason is expressible because it is the believer's representing one proposition as <to-be-believed as a consequence of another proposition's to-be-believed-ness>, acting for a reason is expressible because it is the agent's representing an action as <to-be-done as a consequence of another action's to-be-done-ness>. (2012, p.72)

Marcus identifies acting intentionally with drawing this practical inference and, therefore, the capacity to make a practical inference with the capacity to act intentionally.

As we shall see below, although the details of his view differ in many ways from Marcus's, Sebastian Rödl in essence endorses the same kind of claim when he states that: "An action expresses a thought about what to do, not in the sense of being its effect, but in the sense of being this thought." (2010, p.49) For Rödl an action is a judgment about what to do that figures as the conclusion of a syllogism, again instrumental, that establishes the performance-worthiness of the action given its status as a means that accomplishes an end that the agent judges to be worth doing. Crucially, the inferential unity represented by the agent is not just any nexus of thoughts, but a causal nexus:

> When we explain that someone is doing *A* because she wants to do *B*, we do not give a further cause; rather, we specify *the kind of causality*. We give the sense of the question "why?" [i.e., Anscombe's question in *Intention*] that we answer. If the explanation is true, then the subject's thought constitutes the causal nexus. The causality of the will is thought. (2007, p.50)

So, on both accounts, an agent's capacity for practical thought as to what is to be done is *causal* insofar as the conclusion of such a thought is nothing but the action that capacity is oriented towards bring about; it is *rationally* causal insofar as it brings about its acts, which is a judgment, is accomplished through reasoning about what should be done.

We saw in Chapter 1 (§3.3) that McDowell understood the content of the agent's intention to be practical knowledge of their action. But, in contrast to Moran, he also spoke at times of 'realizing a practical concept,' suggesting some further exercise of practical reason, one genuinely productive of action. Yet the relation between the act of 'realizing a concept' and the content of the agent's intention—the formal cause of the action—was itself left untheorized. We can see Marcus and Rödl, by identifying intentional actions with judgments arising from practical inference, as aiming to explain how practical thought can be genuinely efficacious. I shall consider Marcus's conception of this view before turning to Rödl's.

2.2 Marcus's Account and the 'Simple Objection'

What I shall call the 'simple objection' to the identification of judgment and action is just this: it seems perfectly possible to make judgments whose content fits in the schema: 'I should ϕ' or 'ϕ-ing

is to-be-done' without there being any action corresponding to 'ϕ'. For it is easy to come up with cases in which I think I should do something but fail to do it.

Marcus is aware of the difficulty. In order to account for cases where a thought of this form is present, but in which there is no action for it to be identified, Marcus distinguishes between 'engaged' and 'disengaged' deliberation. The difference between engaged and disengaged deliberators is that the latter have not 'given themselves over' to the results of deliberation. Marcus gives the following example: A gambler reasons that, all things considered, he should urgently fix the faulty brakes on his car, but instead he drives to the casino. According to Marcus he isn't *truly* engaged in his deliberation and so hasn't committed himself to embracing the results of his deliberation. Marcus takes the distinction between engaged and disengaged reasoning to reveal an ambiguity in the phrase 'to be done'; disambiguation reveals two modes of thought: one that is fully active, and one that falls short of action.[2]

As Marcus observes, an appeal to such a distinction may look like question begging, for it apparently "presupposes just what is it at issue, viz., that there are cases in which what one shall do and what one should do are not separate questions." (2012, p.83) The person who has that worry is, Marcus thinks, someone who is bothered by Marcus's commitment to Motivational Internalism, the doctrine that judging that one's action as worth doing is sufficient for being motivated to perform it (sufficient, that is, without there being some antecedent desire for an action of that type). Marcus's response to this concern, which is familiar from debates in moral psychology, is that he only means to show that his view, *if* correct, has the resources to explain apparent counter-examples to his identification of an evaluative judgment with acting. This is a resource that, he thinks, is found in

[2] "When I say that to ϕ is to represent ϕ-ing as to be done, I mean that it is to regard ϕ-ing the way an engaged practical deliberator regards her conclusion, which she can express equally either by saying "I should ϕ" or "I shall ϕ." Someone who believes that she ought to ϕ, yet has not made up her mind to ϕ, will regard ϕ-ing the way a disengaged deliberator does. She may believe that ϕ-ing is the thing to do, she may desire to ϕ, but she has not represented ϕ-ing as to be done in my sense." (2012, p.83)

our ordinary thought about action. As such, he does not take himself to be mounting a direct defense of Motivational Internalism, but rather thinks that the power of his overall account of acting for a reason will constitute an independent argument for Motivational Internalism, which is indeed entailed by his overall account.[3] So officially the distinction between engaged and disengaged deliberation is only there to show that the account, *if* plausible, does not lack something to say about certain kinds of alleged counter-examples.[4] According to Marcus's overall account, explanations of agent's actions use the concept of to-be-done-ness that applies in *engaged* cases, and such cases are prior in the order of understanding to disengaged cases. We understand what is happening in disengaged deliberation through reference to engaged deliberation.

Still, one might wonder what precisely has gone 'wrong' in the disengaged cases. In both engaged and disengaged cases we find the very same judgments, and the very same pattern of inference. But in the disengaged case there is no action. In fact, Marcus's focus on the cases of *accidie* and *akrasia* is misleading. For it makes it seem as though it is only hostility to some quite specific philosophical doctrines—Motivational Internalism and the 'guise of the good' thesis—that could stoke opposition to the identification of judgment and action. But after all, someone could agree with Marcus that judging that I should *A* is enough to *motivate* me to do it without thereby thinking that my doing it and my judging that I should do it are identical. Even the most committed motivational internalist might recoil from that identification. What I called the 'simple' objection need not turn on the specifics of that position—it could simply be rooted in the thought that it is far from obvious that judgment and action, however closely tied they are, need to be identical to one another. In order to make this plausible, what is wanted, at the very least, is an account of practical

[3] "The argument in favor of the relevant version of Motivational Internalism (and, similarly, for the 'guise of the good' thesis) is just the argument in favor of my view as a whole." (2012, p.84)

[4] "How one interprets any of these examples will depend on one's antecedent philosophical commitments…both defenders and critics…have the resources to explain any example in a manner that renders it consistent with their own views. Indeed, that is all I have tried to do here." (2012, p. 80)

inference which reveals how it can be truly practical as opposed to *merely* reflective. Such an account should help us see precisely what goes wrong in the disengaged cases.

It is important to see that this demand for a further account is not grounded in the thought that action and judgment *must* always come apart because sometimes it can: that judgment and action must always factor out into two different elements—even in the 'good' (i.e., engaged) case. It is merely a request that the account does not treat cases where they *do* come apart as identical to those cases in which they do not. My point here is not that because sometimes judgments and actions are not identical that therefore they can never be. That would be analogous to making the argument from illusion in the case of perceptual knowledge. What I am instead urging is that Marcus needs some account of what separates the good from the bad cases. If he can, then I'll grant him the engaged/disengaged distinction, and let it do the work he wants it to.

The problem for Marcus is that, due to his conception of practical inference he is in fact unable to make the necessary kind of distinction here. According to him, the content of the agent's inference is identical in each case.[5] He describes the inference as the recognition of a 'normative fact' about two actions where one action is "<to-be-done as a consequence of another action's to-be-done-ness>" (2012, p.72) If one identifies a representation with this content both with action and with inaction, then some difference between the two cases will need to be found. But according to Marcus, the inference is nothing but a representation of this content—so, *ex hypothesi*, no difference can be found. In one case the representation is an action, in another, identical case, it is not—the discrepancy is left unexplained.

Despite the bold move of identifying action with judgment—bold insofar as it brings action immediately into the realm of the rational—his talk of representing a 'normative fact' sounds

[5] This particular problem does not afflict the run of the mill motivational internalist because they do not need to claim that the inference made is *ever* identical to the action. They will presumably have to explain why an apparently identical judgment motivates one person to action but not another, and without referring to the presence or lack of an antecedent desire—but this is not what is at issue *here*.

strikingly contemplative in form. Yet the real difficulty lies in conceiving of practical inference merely in terms of the representation of a certain kind of *content*. Marcus sometimes speaks of inference as an act of extending a normative status, which in the case of action is a matter of seeing one action as to-be-done on the basis of a further action being to-be-done. But if representing that fact about the normative relation between two actions is just a matter of being related to a content of a certain kind, then we shall still want to know: what is lacking when the representation of such content is *not* an action?

2.3 Practical Predication

It is productive to view Sebastian Rödl's account of practical reasoning as providing the necessary materials to make up the deficit in Marcus's. For Rödl, actions are judgments that display a special *form of predication*:

> Frege concluded that the concept *true* relates to judgment in a different way from that in which any other concept does so. He suggested that *true* is not part of a predicate and does not contribute to the content of a representation, but signifies its form, a form of predication, *the form that is judging*. Perhaps this is how it is in our case, as well. Representing doing something as good is applying a concept, an action form concept. It may be that *good signifies the manner in which this concept is applied*. Then *good* is not part of a predicate and does not contribute to the content of a representation. Instead, it signifies its form, a form of predication, a form of applying a concept, *the form that is acting intentionally*. (2010, p.138-139)

On this understanding of the nature of practical judgment, what distinguishes thoughts that are

properly practical—thoughts that are actions—from ones that are not, is that the former involves a special form of predication whose presence is indicated by a formal concept, that of the good, which does not make up part of the *content* of the judgment. This promises to provide an answer to the question of what differs in cases of engaged and disengaged deliberation. In the latter, although someone may make or utter the judgment—'I should A'—they are not necessarily predicating the action concept of themselves *practically*. On Rödl's conception the 'simple objection' is avoided. For practical judgments, on his account, are not distinguished through their content but through their *form*. Although two different judgments of the form 'I should *A*' may appear to be, when uttered or written down, identical, we may in one of these judgments encounter a special kind of predication which, properly understood, just is acting.

Rödl introduces a special notation: 'I * do A' to mark the fact that from his perspective knowing that one *is A*-ing and knowing that one should *A* are ultimately two ways of expressing what is the *same* practical judgment. For, according to Rödl, it is *by* ascertaining what I should do that I am in fact doing it and—what is the same—that I know I am doing it. The agent's practical knowledge, in Anscombe's sense, is therefore dependent on the 'normative' content of my practical inference. So, whereas Marcus only identified judgments about what one should do with actions, Rödl also identified them with judgments of practical knowledge.

This account will constitute progress over Marcus's if the idea of practical predication can be properly articulated and practical judgment's identification with action thereby made intelligible. Unfortunately, as I shall explain now, the prospects for such an articulation are dim.

To bring out what is wrong with the idea of practical predication we can begin by studying the different temporal character of judgments and the actions that are to be identified with them. As we saw in Chapter Two, intentional actions, in their most familiar form, are a *kinesis*—they are processes that can be interrupted before reaching completion. As such, they admit of a contrast

between perfective and imperfective aspect: one can be walking to school without having walked to school. This is not true of the activity of judgment. At every moment one thinks 'I should walk' one has already thought it. Thinking it is not something that takes time, even if—in its guise as ocurrent thought—it has a certain duration. In other words, judgments have a temporal character more akin to Aristotelian energeia. The judgment that I should do, or am doing something, is not the kind of thing that admits of interruption prior to reaching a terminus. Of course, I might revise my judgments, or I might express the same judgment later by saying "I should have *A*-ed." But these transformations are not the result of a thought undergoing some kind of process. They are different ways in which the same thought is expressed at different points in time.

Rödl, though, should know better than anyone that judgments are not a form of kinesis. For when discussing the nature of theoretical thought, belief, the fact they are not is a lynch-pin of his overall argument:

> A belief is neither a state nor a movement. Neither is any duration accidental to it, nor does it have a proper end. It exhibits a yet higher form of temporality: *any limit of its duration is accidental to it.* Thus "X believes *p"* expresses the same judgment at all times so long as *x* believes *p.* In order to mark that temporality of belief, we call it a temporally unlimited act. (2007, p.78)

How is it then, that in the case of practical thought, the agent's judgments—that appear to display the form of temporality that Rödl describes here as 'unlimited'- are nevertheless identified with movements? Although Rödl is willing to allow that intentions are not changeable states and that they have the durative unity of a kinesis, he does not take them to have the 'temporally unlimited' character of belief. A belief's cessation, unlike that of an intention, is accidental to it: if the belief is

good—if it is *knowledge*—then only an accident such as forgetfulness or a knock on the head will bring about its demise. An intention, on the other hand, is as it were actively seeking its own demise. But as we have seen, this is not true of the judgments with which he wishes to identify action.

It might be urged on Rödl's behalf that the problem here is that the familiarity of kinetic activities is obscuring the significance of the category of energeia-like activities for the full philosophical understanding of intentional action. Rödl argues that although actions involve or include a kinesis, the presence of a kinesis always necessitates the presence of an activity which does have the temporal form of an energeia—he calls these 'infinite ends': "An infinite end, by contrast [to particular intentions], is neither a state, nor is it a movement. It is time-general and thus manifests itself throughout an action and up to its end. In this way an infinite end contains the whole temporal extension of actions it explains." (2007, p.38) For example, although my walking is something which admits of interruption before reaching its terminus, the general end for the sake of which I walk—say health, or if I'm walking to pay a debt, justice—does not so conclude. It is something that, insofar as I am always already prepared to perform actions that realize it when the time arises, cannot be thought of as bearing the temporality of a kinesis. Perhaps intentional actions bear *this* fundamental form of activity and can, therefore, thereby be identified with practical judgments.

However, even if we identify the agent's practical self-consciousness with judgments employing *praxis* concepts, there remains the question of how practical judgments could, as they must if they are identical to actions with the form of a praxis, contain a kinesis *within* them. Rödl notes that movements—activities which do not have their end in themselves—can be *parts* of activities, actions that do contain their end in themselves.[6] If my walking is a means to something

[6] "A movement may be an element of an activity, but not vice versa, because the unlimited temporal unity of an activity cannot be contained within the limited temporal unity of a movement." (2011, p.220)

which is an end in itself, and therefore bearing an unlimited temporality, then what I am doing, at the correct level of analysis, really does have the temporality of an energeia.

However, a judgment, unlike just any energetic activity or praxis, has the character of what we might call 'pure' activity. There does not seem to be any sense in which it contains parts which can be interrupted before reaching completion. The idea of a temporally incomplete *judgment*, a temporally incomplete *part* of a judgment, or a temporally incomplete part of a *syllogism* (whether in terms of the content of the syllogism or the inferential connections between those contents) therefore seems fundamentally confused. Now of course, the activity that features *in* a judgment might be the kind of activity that admits of interruption. But there is no reason to think that the judgment itself inherits any such kinetic aspect, any more than there is a reason to think that a judgment that something is red takes on the temporality of a state because it is about a state.

I have been speaking mainly of the possibility of interruption before completion in action, and its impossibility in the case of judgment. However, not only do judgments possess a different *internal* temporality to actions, they also 'outlast' actions. The knowledge I expressed yesterday by saying 'I should walk' is the very same knowledge I express today by saying 'I should have walked' or 'walking was to be done'; similarly, with 'I am walking' and 'I was walking'.[7] But in the latter case there is no longer any action for the thought to be identical with.

In response to these concerns, it might be replied that while practical judgments cannot be simply identified with actions, practical judgments nevertheless are the *form* of intentional actions: and that in this sense practical judgments and actions are the 'same reality'—sameness in form not being the same as strict identity. If that is true, it may explain both why practical judgments remain after the actions themselves are complete, as well as why their internal temporal character differs

[7] Indeed, that the very same knowledge is expressed by both is argued for, convincingly in my view, by Rödl himself in *Categories of The Temporal*. The insight expressed there (2012, p.65) is therefore in deep tension with his claims in the practical sphere.

from that of actions, while nevertheless allowing that practical judgments and actions are the same reality. For just as form may be thought to survive the destruction of matter, so too, on this suggestion, might practical judgments 'survive' particular actions. Indeed, another aspect of Aristotle's hylomorphism might be drawn on in defense of this idea: If Aristotle is correct that form and matter are fundamentally related as activity to capacity, then a judgment's being the form of action would perhaps explain its energeiac character, whilst perhaps making room, somehow, for some kind of essentially enformed kinetic matter.

However, deploying hylomorphism in this way quickly leads to difficulties. Firstly, if the practical judgment that 'I am walking' is to be the form of my particular intentional action then it must not only persist after the act of walking is over, it must be something that can be exemplified in various other acts of mine. For a form is something general, and as such is capable of being multiply realized in disparate instances of enformed matter. But the judgment 'I am walking' pertains to a particular act, one that is never repeated. In order to avoid this unhappy consequence, we might attempt to identify the judgment with the *whole* of the action, while nevertheless maintaining that the judgment, or perhaps the whole syllogism of which the judgment is a conclusion, itself admits of a distinction between form and matter. Here is one way to cash out that idea: the form will be determined by the general action concepts that are deployed by the agent, but the matter will be whatever particulars of the situation the agent is dealing with in a particular given action. Take, for example, the judgment of practical knowledge that corresponds to the minor premise of a practical syllogism: 'I'm doing *A* by doing *B*.' This will owe its form to the action concepts '*A*' and '*B*', but its matter will consist of everything in the judgment/action that does not depend for its existence on the will.[8] Now, the problem with this rendering of the thesis is that it no longer helps us with our

[8] In articulating this version of the view, I deliberately mean to be drawing on some suggestive remarks that Rödl himself makes about the practical syllogism. As Rödl puts it, the "difference of the first premise from the second premise—the first premise is a desire, the second premise a statement of fact—marks the will as finite. It reflects the fact that, in

original difficulty. Recall that we needed the form of the action to be the *whole* of the judgment 'I am walking', not just the action concepts it employs. For it was understanding the doctrine that way that made it at least *prima facie* plausible that the judgment in question could 'outlast' the particular action performed. On this alternative understanding of the doctrine, what is left after the action is finished is *only* the form of the thought—its matter will have gone missing. This no longer gives us the judgment 'I was walking,' but the mere concept: 'walking.'

The lesson of these reflections on the incompatible modes of temporality associated with judgment and actions is that there are significant formal differences between intentional actions and practical judgments—differences that cannot be explicated through reference to a different mode of predication. However, these differences are even deeper than the issue of temporal mismatch might seem to initially suggest. This comes out when we consider an agent's practical knowledge. The thought that 'I am walking', when knowledge, expresses an agent's grasp of the fact they are walking. The activity of walking certainly figures as an element of the predicative unity: 'I am walking.' But the cognitive activity that we would usually associate with this thought is not the activity denoted by the predicate; it is the thought that walking is taking place (and that I am the one doing it). To simply identify this act of thought as a genuinely productive one, would make the agent, it seems, not the agent of their action, but somehow the agent of the fact *that* their action is happening—the fact that they are walking. The activity of walking would no longer simply be a matter of being engaged in the activity of walking referred to by the predicate, but would instead be the holding together of the fact that 'I'm walking.' However, it is not within the power, at least of a finite thinker, to directly produce facts. So, the problem isn't just that actions have a form of temporality that judgments do not.

realizing its object, the will depends on conditions that are not its own deed. It depends on a matter in which to realize itself." He thinks of the means-stating premise as having its form from the will, but its matter as coming from theoretical reason: "Knowledge of means depends on the will for its form; the will depends on knowledge of means for its matter; the matter is inseparable from the form." Rödl (2011, p.224) There is, I think, a genuine insight here about the relation between practical and theoretical thought—more specifically: the way in which they must be tightly bound up with one another in the case of practical reasoning, but with practical reason playing the determining role. But ultimately, identifying the action with the judgment does not do the insight contained here any favors.

Judgments constitute a form of activity that positively resist characterization as exercises of an agent's *productive* capacity—for they comprise the acknowledgement, not the creation, of a fact.

It could be objected here that we can be said to 'make things the case' and in, that sense, can be said to be the authors of certain truths. But it is crucial that we do this, not directly somehow, but *by* performing actions. For example, the inventor of the bread-slicing machine's dying wish may have been 'that it be true that someone is using my device on the anniversary of my death'. I, a dedicated fan of Otto Frederick Rohwedder, may decide to make this wish come true. I do so by using a bread-slicer on November 8th 2017. Making something the case, where this means seeing to it that a certain fact holds, is a specific (and, it would seem, quite unusual) kind of action. Intentional action is not aimed at the production of facts—and although many things are made true each time someone acts—these truths are never directly produced, whatever that could amount to, but are made true by acting.[9] Even if what I know when I know that I am walking is something that only holds because of my walking, we must distinguish the *action* which makes that true from *what* is made true.[10]

That the above observations have not been given the proper attention they are due is partly a consequence, I think, of an analogy between theoretical and practical thought that is at work in Rödl's account. On Rödl's view there is sense of the words 'I do,' that are understood to be the practical correlate of Kant's famous 'I think', and it is precisely this 'I do' which features in practical knowledge. For Kant, the 'I think' is not part of the content of a judgment, but that it is attachable to any thought indicates that the special kind of unity of what a thinker thinks—the unity of a

[9] The things that agents really produce—the products of *poiesis*—are all liable to various forms of destruction. Our products are constituted by a material matter that, regardless of our purposes, is liable to disintegration. A fact, on the other hand, can never be destroyed, but only be forgotten. By what capacity could human beings create and destroy facts—these timeless, indestructible entities—directly? To think of agency in this way would, it seems, to usurp the activity of God, or perhaps the world. (Related to this point see Kimhi 2018, 158-9)

[10] My remarks here are supported by arguments made convincingly in recent years that the object of intention—that which the agent is bringing about—is not to be thought of as a proposition or a fact, but a verb in active infinitive form. See, for example, Boyle and Lavin (2010), Thompson (2008).

thought—is none other than the unity of self-consciousness.[11] Extending this idea of self-conscious unity to the practical domain, one can hold that, just as the 'I think' in 'I think *p*' may plausibly be thought to add no further content to '*p*', the 'I do' (or perhaps the 'I am' when followed by an action concept such as 'walking') of 'I am doing *A*' is not meant to add any content to '*A*'. Instead, its role is to indicate the form of practically self-conscious unity the act possesses. McDowell also endorses this practical extension of Kant's framework, to the point of which he gives especially clear expression:

> Self-awareness in action is practical, not theoretical. It is a matter of an "I do" rather than an "I think". And the "I do" is not a representation added to representations, as Kant's "I think" is. Conceiving action in terms of the "I do" is a way of registering the essentially first-person character of the realization of practical rational capacities that acting is. The presence of the "I do" in a philosophical account of action marks the distinctive form of a kind of phenomenon, like the presence of the "I think", as at least able to accompany representations, in Kant's account of empirical consciousness. The practical concepts realized in acting are concepts of things to do. Realizing such a concept is doing the thing in question, not thinking about doing it." 2007, p.367)

McDowell's thought here is that just as reflection on the role of the 'I think' with respect to a thinker's belief can clarify the first-personal (i.e., self-conscious) form of theoretical thought, so too will reflection on the 'I do' play a role in elucidating the form of self-conscious thought that Rödl (and, judging by this passage at least, McDowell) wishes to identify with acting.

[11] Engstrom's takes on Kant's point here that "Reflection on this identity—the identity of self-consciousness with the consciousness of which it is a consciousness—reveals that self-consciousness is essentially one: not just something that *has* unity, but unity itself, unity of consciousness lying in consciousness of unity." (2009, 99)

However, the clarificatory nature of this practical extension of the 'I think' breaks down under scrutiny. For the 'I do' is incapable of indicating the "distinctive form of a kind of phenomenon" that constitutes the exercise of a practical capacity for action. We can begin by noting that there is an important disanalogy between Kant's 'I think' and its alleged practical correlate. In the case of: 'I think the cat is on the mat' the removal of the 'I think' yields a perfectly contentful thought: 'the cat is on the mat.' The 'I think', which is "at least able to accompany representations," accompanies something with a recognizable unity. It can appear in speech and in thought without the 'I think'. The 'I think' must be *able* to accompany my representation—there is no thought that it must do so. Not because it is an optional added extra, but because it is already implicitly contained in every judgment.

Now, McDowell himself admits that the 'I do' is not 'added' to a thought in the way in which the 'I think' is. *He* takes this to be indicative of the fact that an agent's self-consciousness of action cannot be separated from that very action. Indeed, if one removes the 'I do' (or the 'I'm doing' or the 'I am' that precedes '*A*' or '*A*-ing') one is left with an isolated verb. Consequently, what the 'I do' is supposed to indicate the form of is not an independently significant representation. Yet this just means that the verb, for example 'baking', is not something whose special *practical* unity is elucidated through the fact that it is connected with the 'I do.' For it has no unity (implicit or otherwise) until it is joined with a subject term. But here's the rub: once it is joined with a subject term, what it yields a propositional thought. But in that case, the 'I do' is not fit for the purpose McDowell and Rödl wish to assign it: that of elucidating the special form of self-consciousness found in acting. For 'I do'—unlike 'I think'—only functions *within* a propositional whole, i.e. as part of a thought to the effect that a certain fact holds, a judgment that things are thus and so. But 'realizing a concept,' the activity the 'I do' was supposed to bring to light, was not supposed to be that kind of activity, but rather an action.

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Rödl is rightly insistent that practical reason possesses a distinctive form, one which marks it off from theoretical thought. But the identification of action with judgment ultimately appears to mark a final resistance to embracing an account of practical reason that fully overcomes what Anscombe referred to critically as a 'incorrigibly contemplative' model of practical thought. The assumption that a practical exercise of rationality must, at bottom, somehow *be* a judgment is symptomatic of an inability to see what else an exercise of practical rationality could possibly be, except a kind of special variation on theoretical thought.

None of the above necessitates rejecting Anscombe's claim that practical knowledge is "the cause of what it understands." The content of an agent's practical knowledge is the fact that they are, for example, walking. As Anscombe says, an agent has practical knowledge when a certain form of description applies to her actions. This form of description applies when what she is doing is of a kind that can be described as the result of her practical reasoning, i.e. when it can be made intelligible by being placed in an A-D order. We can agree with all of that without asserting that the agent's practical knowledge *is* their action. The agent knows they are acting, but their acting is not this knowledge—it is the activity associated with the predicate in ascriptions of practical knowledge. Nevertheless, if practical knowledge is, like action, the direct consequence of the agent's exercise of practical reason, we can explain the sense in which it is the formal cause of what it understands. For *what* it understands—the practical fact in question—would not have the form it does were it not for the agent's practical reasoning.

I want to suggest we should draw a distinction between two species of thought here, each of which can be thought of as the actualization of the capacity for practical reason. Practical reasoning

is the capacity to act, and as such its primary actualization is action itself. Practical knowledge is then knowledge *of* this primary actualization. However, it too is practical, not merely in virtue of its object, but insofar as it does not derive from observation but instead from the agent's practical reasoning. This is explained by the fact that there is a relation of dependence between these two actualizations: one knows that one is acting *by* exercising the capacity to act. Thus we can still assert, in full Anscombian spirit, that to act intentionally is to know one is acting. But the first 'is' in the previous sentence is not that of identity. We need not—indeed, *cannot*, given the foregoing considerations—identify such knowledge with their so acting, even if it derives from the very same capacity.

The identity view is not the possible conceptions of practical reasoning, i.e., practical inference, as productive of action. For one could think of the conclusion of practical reasoning as an action, but without thereby thinking of it as identical to a judgment. One can think of an action, that is, as performed 'in the light of' practical premises. There are no doubt different possible ways to cash out this thought. The virtue of the identity theory, is that it has a simple answer as to what it would mean for a material process to be the conclusion of a practical syllogism—it just was a judgment. Other accounts will all have to give some account of how an action, not being a judgment, can nevertheless be viewed as an act of reason—one flowing from the judgments on which it is based. The account of practical reasoning I shall give in a moment can be viewed as an instance of such a view—with the very important caveat that the judgments that form the premises leading to such a conclusion must themselves be viewed, like practical knowledge, as the result of a more fundamental activity of practical reasoning.[12]

[12] See Fernandez (2016) for an unusually detailed discussion of this idea. Fernandez, like other authors who defend an Aristotelian account of action as the conclusion of a syllogism (e.g. Tenenbaum 2007) sometimes characterizes his account in a way that makes it seem like an action is very *different* to a kind of thinking captured in proposition representations. He says, for example, that "what is constituted in practical reasoning is not a representation or a proposition about the action, but the progress of the action in reality." (p.890) This sounds promising to me, the

3 Practical Reasoning as Realizing Ends

3.1 Practical Generality

Practical reason, in distinction to theoretical reason, is productive of its object. Yet the idea of bringing something about through reasoning as yet remains obscure. The fog surrounding this idea was not lifted by the doctrine that practical reasoning concludes in judgments that are actions. We need, I think, to start afresh. We should begin by grasping two characteristic marks that a productive form of reasoning will necessarily possess: (i) direction of existential dependence and (ii) incompleteness.

First, the object of productive reasoning is something which exists only insofar as it is the object of that reasoning: its existence depends on the agent's reasoning. Second, at least at some point, the object of such reasoning is something that is incomplete and underway, something that has not reached fruition.[13] However, the fact that the object of practical reason *can* be incomplete alters the character of the acts of reason that are productive of it. Incompletion (at least at some stage) is not only an essential feature of the object of practical reasoning, but also of those acts of reasoning which are productive of it. If practical reasoning is aimed at bringing about its object, and if this takes time, the act of practical reasoning required to bring it about is itself incomplete. It is precisely these features of practical reasoning that mean it cannot, in the first place, consist in judgments.

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question as to how an agent's premises relate to this progress of an action is left unclear—action is said to be essentially 'informed' by the premises, such that the progress of an action comes to exemplify the correct order. But then everything turns on what 'informing' amounts to—though in fairness to Fernandez, his article is mainly engaged in clearing certain barriers to a view of this kind, rather than a full articulation of the view.

[13] If the object of practical reasoning existed prior to its acts then it would be redundant—there would be nothing for it to be productive *of*. On the other hand, if the activity of practical reason had reached fruition prior to its object's coming into being, it would not be actively productive of the object; it would at best be anticipating it, perhaps playing the role of 'trigger' to an action that, having initiated it, it no longer had any hand in.

The key to understanding practical reasoning lies in grasping the special forms of generality peculiar to it—forms of generality the determination of which is tied up with, and ultimately consists in, the performance of intentional actions. What makes practical reasoning *practical* is the fact that these forms of generality, and the forms of determination associated with them, consist, in different ways, in the execution of the agent's intention. Taken together, they constitute the agent's capacity to realize their intentions, to act.

We saw in the last chapter that capacities are general in the sense that they are principles that explain their particular manifestations without being reducible to them. The bearers of self-conscious capacities are aware, in exercising their capacities, that powers and their acts are related in this way. However, there is a crucial difference between the theoretical capacity that is exercised in the thought that 'This F is G' and the capacity to do *A,* actualized in acts of *A*-ing. Paradigmatic acts of the former capacity are those in which some particular object, F, is recognized as being G (e.g. red, fast, large, suspicious etc.)[14] In an act of this kind the concept G is applied to some particular, this being but one possible exercise of the general capacity to apply that very concept to other suitable objects. As such, the independent existence of objects that are G is an essential condition on the exercise of that capacity. Particular acts of the capacity are acts of applying that concept to something particular. Without the existence of the particular F there is no possibility of a knowledgeable act of the form: 'This F is G'.

In contrast, consider the practical capacity to do *A*, for example the capacity to walk. Acts of such a capacity are obviously dependent on conditions being suitable. For conditions to be suitable, there have to be particulars—for example, a solid path if I'm walking—that enable the exercise of this capacity. But there is no particular of the kind that figures in the case of a theoretical capacity.

[14] Obviously, the capacities for theoretical and practical reason are not exhausted by judgments concerning particulars encountered in perception, and by intentional actions respectively. I use these as examples of fundamental exercises of each that bring out the crucial difference in generality that I am interested in here.

The exercise of the capacity to swim or to walk entails that there be, of course, a particular act of swimming or walking; but this is analogous to particular acts of thinking that something is F, not to the fact that there is some particular—one existentially independent of the act—which is grasped in the act. In both cases the actualization of the capacity involves something general. In the theoretical case, this is the concept that is applied to some object; in the practical case, it is the general intention that the agent has formed. However, in the case of practical thought, the general end or intention from which an agent starts out is not something that is applied to anything, but something that is realized.

But how? If an agent's particular ends or intentions can be thought of as particular actualizations of the capacity to act, then these actions are for the most part performed through *further* such actualizations of the same capacity. In other words, we perform actions by performing other actions. In practical reasoning, one act of a capacity, is executed or realized through another act of the very same capacity. This is what allows for the productivity of a practical capacity: it is not something whose actualization depends on the existence of the particular it is concerned with, but something which brings that particular about. But it poses an important question: how can acts of a capacity, which in the first place are general, be realized in further acts of the same kind? *Prima facie*, we should find this puzzling, for practical reason is supposed to result in a particular, completed actions, not in a proliferation of general ends. In order to answer this question, we need to get into view three aspects of practical generality that characterize the particular ends agents have in acting. In each case, we shall see that the form of generality in question is related to a kind of rational activity that realizes the end in question.

The first kind of generality pertains to a particular end or intention that needs to be rendered more *determinate* in order to be executed. Since this generality has to do with the relation between means and ends in the broadest sense, I shall call this form of generality 'instrumental generality'.

Recall Anscombe's pumper, who had the aim of poisoning the inhabitants of a house. There are many ways to poison people. He might have crept in at night and injected deadly fluids into their sponge cake. Or he might have followed the procedure Anscombe describes. In arriving at either of these specifications of his original intention to poison the inhabitants the agent makes a step toward achieving his goal. He does so by bringing the task of killing into contact with further ends. In this manner, a poisoning becomes a pumping. This specifically practical kind of generality is determined, therefore, not by being brought into contact with some particular of which *it* is a determination. (That is what happens when we subsume a particular object under a concept, e.g., 'This pump is rusty'). Instead, the end is brought into contact with a further end—the means—which is a determination *of* the end. And of course, the means can in turn be made more determinate in the same way by being related to a further means. The kind of determination in question here is directed towards arriving at an end that could actually be performed by the agent: a conception of action as poisoning as opposed to a conception of action as merely 'killing'.

Second, there is the generality that pertains to the *kind* of end being realized, of which the particular end is an *instance*. There are many intentional actions that, for example, fall under the kind: 'poisoning'. In theoretical reasoning the general concept, 'red,' is correctly applied to something if and only if the thing in question is red. In other words, particular employments of the general concept in judgment are beholden to the object to which they are applied. What it means for something to be red, on particular occasions, is in part determined by the kind of object to which the concept is applied.[15] Indeed, our grasp on the concept red itself undergoes transformation as our appreciation of the range of objects and the ways in which they can satisfy that concept expands. In practical reasoning, the particular end in question is correctly brought into contact with the thought

[15] Evans's famous 'Generality Constraint' is relevant here: Evans argues that the theoretical capacity to apply a concept is internally related to the capacity to have in view the objects to which those concepts are applied. The observation in this paragraph implies that a kind of similar constraint holds in the practical case. (1982, p.100)

of some particular means of action if the latter is of a kind whose instances can genuinely realize ends of that kind. Nevertheless, the determination is not all one way. For example, once the agent determines that their act of poisoning will involve pumping, the particular act of pumping is itself determined by the end to which it is aimed—it is a 'pumping in order to poison', and it thereby inherits a new teleological structure. This determination goes beyond what is contained in the concept of an action that is referred to by the word 'pumping'. (We shall return to these points in more detail in Chapter Five.)

The third kind of generality that pertains to particular ends is the kind that is opposed to the particularity pertaining to a completed action. Think of trying to get somewhere. Upon setting out, there are many ways your journey could possibly go. In the end, though, there is only the course it in fact took, in contrast to the many courses it might have taken, but did not. The agent's end transitions, in the course of its progress, from bearing *this* kind of generality, to eventually bearing the particularity of a finished action. This form of generality and the progress it demands differs from what I called 'instrumental' generality, for the transition does not simply consist in finding further means to my action, but in employing those means in such a way that the action reaches completion. Now, as we shall see shortly, it is not a straight-forward question in what sense this final aspect of generality is something the agent self-consciously advances in its own right. That is to say, we *might* think that, simply by engaging in the kind of reasoning that determines the instrumental generality of its end, it thereby effects the transition from the generality of incompletion to the particularity of completion. Or, we might think—as I shall argue—that this involves some further form of activity on the part of the agent.

If the activities of determination associated with each of these forms of generality—especially the first and third—are acts of practical reason, then the work of practical reason taken as a whole consists in effecting the transition from the agent's general intention to the particular,

completed action. In contrast to the theoretical knower, the practical thinker does not apply a general concept to a pre-existent reality. Instead, they bring forth their own reality, through the forms of determination described above. In order to begin to flesh out this conception of practical reasoning, I want to turn to an account of practical reasoning recently advanced by Anton Ford. The great benefit of this account is that its elucidation of the specification of means helps to get in view the sense in which practical reasoning is not simply a matter of forming judgments or beliefs, but is productive activity that itself can be understood as unfolding in time.

3.2 Ford on 'Specification' and 'Particularization'

Ford argues that there are two essential moments in practical reasoning: 'specification' and 'particularization'. His account of these two moments can help us understand the first kind of generality—instrumental generality—and fill in some crucial details concerning the form of determination associated with it. Specification involves finding a specific action one can perform given the genus of the action one intends to perform. It moves from a general aim such as: 'kill those men' to the more specific one of 'poison those men'. Only once I have a determinate species of action in mind can I set about performing it. Specification is, thus, one example of way in which we determine ends with respect to their instrumental generality.

However, once a specific end is determined, I also need to find the particular means by which to perform it. What Ford calls 'particularization' involves finding, within one's circumstances, the particulars necessary for the performance of one's action. Particularization, unlike specification, has been relatively neglected by philosophers of action. If I'm going to cook myself some spaghetti, I need to find the actual spaghetti I'm going to cook and the pot I'm going to cook it in. A *mere*

specification—the thought of a general way of doing something—is too general to act upon.[16] As such, it cannot be an end-point of reasoning whose aim is action. By having in view the particular means through which I am going to perform my action, I render my end even more determinate. The end of putting some spaghetti in a pot becomes the end of putting *this* spaghetti in *that* pot.

An important part of this account is that what I am locating are not merely some objects—what I am getting in view is an opportunity for *action*. What I am really looking for is a pot at the right time and the right place, and which I know how to use. What I am looking for is a concrete opportunity: "To think that the means are hers for the taking, a reasoner must suppose, not only that she has the requisite abilities, but also that her circumstances afford her the opportunity to exercise those abilities in the envisioned way. Even with a good stomach, one cannot eat—and so, cannot eat as a means of satisfying one's hunger—unless one has food. Even with knowledge of French, one cannot read a French newspaper—and so, cannot read a French newspaper as a means of learning the news—unless a French newspaper is there for the reading. The requirement here is not merely that a thing of the relevant sort exist, but that it be available to the reasoner." As such, the inquiry I am engaged in is not one which terminates in the knowledge of something merely external to me; there is a 'subjective' element to it: "Thus, a practical possibility has subjective conditions and objective conditions. On the one hand, subjectively, it depends on the agent's abilities—i.e., on the potential that is latent in her. On the other hand, objectively, it depends on her opportunities—i.e., on the potential that, given her abilities, is latent in her circumstances." (2016a, 137)

When we combine the work of specification and particularization, we can arrive at a single practical syllogism that will fit the following schema:

[16] This is a difference in kind, not degree. Any intention that is left merely general will be 'too general' to act upon.

1. Do *B*.

2. To do *B*, do *A*. [specification]

3. Do *A*.

4. To do *A*, do *A vis-à-vis* this. [particularization]

∴ Do *A vis-à-vis* this.

Now, according to Ford, specification and particularization necessarily involve a real, non-metaphorical inquiry: a search. In order to know *what* I am going to do, I need to find the relevant materials and circumstances that afford me the opportunity to act. Now, just in virtue of including an intentional action as part of its activity, this instrumental reasoning would appear to conform to our characterization of productive thought as something which unfolds over time, and hence can be temporally incomplete. Still, it might be objected at this point that, sometimes, the particulars needed to act are all already in view. This is most clear in the case in which a particular opportunity for action—the conjunction of materials and circumstance required for performing a particular action—are in fact what inspire me to act in the first place. So perhaps a search is not always necessary. But nevertheless, the opportunity that lies within the circumstances in which I act, including the particular material means I will draw on, is something that, if I perform the relevant action, I must constantly keep track of. As such, it is essential to practical reasoning that I make sure—*for the whole duration of my action*—that the opportunity spotted is still genuinely there.

Through such practical reasoning we arrive at the judgment of the form: 'In order to *A*, *A* vis-à-vis *this*.' Upon reaching this recognition, the agent draws the practical conclusion—that is, performs the action—enacts the possibility—that the minor premise of the practical syllogism has identified. However, it seems clear—even putting aside our earlier considerations about the

temporality of judgment—that making a judgment of this kind about a 'practical possibility' is not the same as actualizing the possibility; even if it is a necessary step towards doing so.

The reasoning Ford describes determines an intention whose level of instrumental generality is initially only that of a genus, by rendering it specific and 'particularized'. Now, one might think that a natural extension of this conception of reasoning would involve introducing a final step—one in which the agent, through acting, brings about a member of the species. Particularization gets in view the various external means that an agent requires in order to act. But being able to locate the various patients required for action, as well as the opportunity for utilizing them, is not the same *as* utilizing them. Recall our initial distinctions above: the perceptually grounded demonstrative that features in the judgment shows that one aspect of the generality of the agent's end has been successfully determined—they have moved from the idea of using nails, for example, to the idea of using *these* nails. Nevertheless, the action the agent means to perform has yet to be realized. As such, we still find the generality of the action concept that features in the judgment: 'Do *A vis-à-vis* this.' Crucially, this is not a matter of instrumental generality—the means have been determined—rather, it is the kind of generality that we said was opposed to the completion of the action.

Now, if the conclusion of the syllogism is the action then—in the very act of reason that the conclusion is—we should be able to find the transition from something inherently general to that which possesses a determinate particularity. This consideration alone speaks against the identification of action with a kind of judgment—for any judgment, it seems, could only capture a moment of this transition "I've A-ed this much", or perhaps all of it at once "I've finished A-ing." No judgment would actually *be* the transitioning of which these judgments capture the progress. At any rate, if we deny that the conclusion is an act of reason, then it will consist in something that happens 'behind our backs', so to speak—or if not then it will be something that we merely observe. Practical reason will only be concerned with our ends insofar as they remain suitably general, and so

an action's passage from generality to particularity will fall outside the purview of practical thought itself—which is really just to deny that practical reason is, in fact, the capacity to act.

Yet one might think we have already introduced enough to explain this transition. Consider first that, in the specification and particularization of means, I am, just in working out what to do, already making progress in realizing my intention. In this phase of my reasoning, there is nothing I need do, apart from specifying my means, in order to be realizing my intention—in order for it already to be unfolding. That I have made progress is simply explained by the fact I have successfully specified the means to my end. Emboldened by this recognition, one might extend the account of particularization to the final transition. For example, say I conclude I should break *this* egg, on *this* bowl, at which point I go ahead and do it. Now, in response to the question of how this final transition is made, I may introduce a further, fine-grained, syllogism:

1. Break this egg on that bowl
2. Break this egg on that bowl by hitting it on the bowl at *this* angle.

∴ Hit the egg on the bowl at *this* angle.

If that is not fine-grained enough, then I can make my conclusion the major premise of a further syllogism, and so on and so forth.[17] The problem with this suggestion is not that it requires ascribing an infinite number of syllogisms to an agent, but that it does not produce a syllogism that *ever* brings in particularity on the side of the action concept—the reasoning only ever proposes further and further fine-grained descriptions of *general* ends. Having reached such a conclusion, the task of moving from the general to the particular, is still left untouched. I think it is only by appreciating the distinctive role of the *third* species of practical generality within an agent's practical thought that I

[17] Since such reasoning is not a prior occurrence of the action, but always a part of what I am doing, there is no problem here about 'when' I do all this thinking.

noted above—the species of generality that is opposed to completion—that we can make sense of this final transition.

3.3 Intentional Movements as Acts of Reason

The transition from generality to particularity—the transition that we can think of as culminating in a finished action—cannot be achieved through the activities of specification and particularization. But it is hard to see what other role there is for practical reason to play in the actualization or realization of these means, apart from the doubtless essential task of keeping track of how things are going with respect to one's various means. What more can reason contribute at the very point in which all is left is for the agent to do is to actually get down to the business of employing the means that practical reasoning arrived at? In order to answer this question, it will be useful to determine exactly what made specification and particularization necessary in the first place. In so doing, we shall bring into view more clearly the kind of activity that cannot be reduced to them.

Human beings are finite creatures, they cannot make something actual merely by thinking it. In order to bring make real their ends, they must wrestle with an external world. Although it may not be immediately obvious, the fact we are dependent on an external world means that intentional action necessarily takes the form of a *change*. Because the object of our desire is not made actual simply in virtue of our thinking it into being in a pure act of creation, we must achieve our ends through what already exists—and since what already exists is not how we want it to be, this means we must change what is already there. Even when the product of our activity did not exist before we acted, as is the case with, for example, omelets and bronze statues, we must nevertheless bring these things into being through alterations in some pre-existing matter. If we *could* realize our ends immediately, instrumental reasoning would be unnecessary, for instrumental reasoning is nothing

but an inquiry into the materials and opportunities for change. In specification and particularization, I take in the world, through the lens of my capacities, in order to work out how I can bring about the alteration desired. At least most of the time, the change in question must be made in a piecemeal fashion—bit by bit, step by step. The alterations in the matter of an omelet (eggs, butter, cheese etc.) that ultimately bring it to fruition involve a whole series of sub-alterations: the breaking of eggs, the melting of butter, as well as the necessary alterations in the instruments I use, such as the heating of a pan. We realize the overall alteration that our action is through the various 'sub-alterations' this requires. Practical reasoning is the inquiry into precisely how, in each case, this is to be done. How, that is, I can make the change I need to, through intermediate means.[18] That practical reasoning is necessary, and that it takes the form it does, is due to the fact that our ends, the ends of finite rational being, are necessarily mediated by means. However, if every change we had to make—every action that I had to perform—was such that I could only perform it by finding some further mediating change then—it seems—action would be impossible. It would appear to follows that there must be two general ways in which agents perform actions. One kind of change is made by agents making further a further change or changes which, when performed, make up or constitute the original change. But if it is true that not every change can be made up of further alterations, then some changes must be such that they can be made without making any further alterations.

Now, it is precisely this latter kind of change that we must have in view in order to understand how the conclusion of a practical syllogism is itself an act of reason. For it is these changes that do not require any further specification of means. That of course, raises the question of, firstly, how such acts are performed, and secondly, how their performance are genuinely acts of reason. To answer these questions, we need to understand the special role the body plays in action.

[18] Here, again, this inquiry must involve essential reference to myself as subject—perhaps for someone more able or better equipped than myself, the same circumstances afford the opportunity to accomplish in a few steps, or perhaps even a single bound, what for me requires a complicated set of procedures and devices.

Note that, although my body is something particular—a material substance in the world—it does not feature explicitly in 'particularization.' Far from an oversight, this absence marks the fact that the body is, fundamentally, something that does not need to be appropriated by me. This is not because I always just happen to know where my body is (perhaps due to some easy inference from something else that is known observationally.)[19] The body—the body of an agent—is not one thing among many that I have the capacity to move, one which just happens to be especially 'close' to me. It can be tempting to think that what is true of, say, my hammer, is also true of my arm. For, like a hammer, an arm can be described as something I use in order to make changes. But a gulf separates them. The various tools I take up, unlike the body, are things I must appropriate (look for, keep hold of, give up etc.)[20] Yet there is no sense in which I need manipulate my arm order to change it—for I can move it directly. But what does this inchoate notion of 'directness,' nevertheless so intuitive, ultimately consist in? We shall pursue this topic in the next chapter—but for now we can say, no doubt enigmatically, that the body is not *simply* an object of our capacities to change, it is also the *locus* of our capacity to change things: it is, as it were, the capacity made flesh.

What is important for our current purposes, is that bodily movements are essential to effecting the final transition from generality to particularity we are interested in precisely because they do not depend on relating ends to further means. Consider a ubiquitous example in the philosophy of action: somebody raising their arm. At each point during their arm-raising the agent can move their arm in a variety of ways. Pointless as it is to reflect on these possibilities most of the time, there are indefinitely many routes that can be taken between the two points between which the arm's movement begins and ends. Yet every bit of progress the agent makes in raising their arm

[19] Ford says the body is "distinguished from the particulars we have been considering by virtue of the fact that one's body is not something one encounters face-to-face in the field of action. One does not need to find one's body, so one does not need to look for it." (2016a, 20) I think this is exactly right. I would simply add: The fact one does not need to find it is not because one always just happens to know where it is. You do not need to look for your body because you *are* your body.

[20] Moreover, it is worth noting that a hammer is something which must be made: its creation is itself an intentional action. My body is not the direct product of any of my intentional actions.

closes down the manifold options that are open at each point during this movement, all of which lie within the generality of that which is yet to be done. Moreover, whatever route that is taken is taken *intentionally*—not by employing any further means, but through direct and controlled movement.

It is worth emphasizing why this cannot be achieved through particularization. It is tempting to think that once the content of judgments concerning particular means are articulated more comprehensively they would at least include the particular *path* that one's arm takes when moving from point A to point B. But the notion of particularity belonging to the trajectory of one's bodily movement is fundamentally different to that which pertains to the particularity of means found in particularization. 'Particular' means that objects are existentially independent of our activity, they are 'particulars' that the agent could take up, in advance of actually acting, as the objects of various theoretical judgments. Movements, on the other hand, *are* our practical activity. It is true that we need to have in view a particular path, in the sense of an unobstructed portion of space through which to move. But that sense of path—that of the path one *takes*—is different than that of the path one *makes* in forging ahead. The former can be described as a means in the sense that it is something external that is used or taken advantage of in acting (in that sense, it belongs to the same very broad category of particular means as a hammer does). But the latter is one's action, and it is not something found, but something done. I have given no account of our bodily capacities for movement here—that shall have to wait until the next chapter—I have only argued that such capacities are required, and that they will have to be recognizable as the exercise of a rational capacity.

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If practical reasoning, *qua* realization, consists both in the specification of means, as well as in the direct realization of ends through bodily capacities for movement, then it will have the two characteristics we discussed at the outset of our discussion: it will be both productive and capable of temporal incompleteness.

Yet in our discussion of specification, we were formulating the agent's practical reasoning in terms of premises and conclusions—propositional thoughts arranged in a syllogistic order. Have we thereby reneged on our rejection of the identity theory? Well, that conclusion is not entailed by our discussion: the claim that practical reasoning involves such judgments does not entail that the conclusions of practical reasoning are judgments. But even so, the status of these judgments in my account is as yet unclear—how can they, with *their* characteristic temporality, be a part of practical reasoning, with its characteristic form of temporality? I shall turn to this question now.

3.4 Practical Reasoning and Practical Knowledge

There appear to be three kinds of judgments that are involved in practical reasoning: First, there is practical knowledge, knowledge of what I am doing. Second, there are judgments that concern means, these are not necessarily judgments about what I *am* doing, but of what I can or could do. Third, there are judgments about what I should do, or ought to do. I am concerned here with the first and second—we shall address the third in the final chapter.

My proposal is this: I have practical knowledge in virtue of realizing an end. Practical knowledge, in this sense, is dependent on acting. I know what I am doing, *by* doing it. The reason is this: the practical knowledge that I am *A*-ing in order to *B* is dependent on my recognition that doing *A* is a way of doing *B*; but the latter is itself dependent on my engaging in the activities described in the previous section. However, from the perspective of the standard way that

Anscombe's interpreters have understood the idea of practical knowledge this will seem to get things exactly backwards. For normally, my action is thought to be dependent upon *it*. It is because I know what I'm doing, where this is knowledge of the means-end structure of my action, it's A-D order, that I am able to perform the action itself. I do not want to reject the claim that practical knowledge is a necessary part of acting—that there is no intentional action without practical knowledge—but I do want to challenge this conception of the relation between them.

Consider the specification of means. Ford observes that working out what to do can itself involve action, a real search. The judgment arrived at by the agent is thereby the consequence *of* the agent's acting. This is one sense in which a judgment about means could be understood as dependent on acting, rather than *vice versa*. Nevertheless, it is natural to think that the action one performs on the basis of that judgment is, after all, dependent on that very judgment—that it is in virtue of recognizing what must be done to realize my end, that I am thereby able to realize it. Consequently, judgments of means would appear to have a natural priority over the actions they prescribe.

However, here we can turn the tables on that way of looking at things: judgments about means do not simply allow for, or enable, the exercise of the capacity to perform the actions they prescribe—they are themselves formed through exercises of these capacities. My recognition of the options open to me in realizing my intention to irrigate the fields is itself an exercise of my capacity to irrigate fields. An essential part of the exercise of practical capacities involves working out—in particular situations—what I am to do. For example, part of being able to make an omelet is being able to reason towards the achievement of that end in indefinitely many contexts.[21] The agent able to

[21] Of course, this doesn't mean that people are not sometimes engaged in some privative form of instrumental thought about how to perform actions without having any ability to perform the action in question. Perhaps you lack some of the necessary skills to make the perfect Spanish omelet, but because you've seen me do it many times before and know what *I* am capable of you nevertheless can reason as to what I should do next when making such an omelet. But clearly my capacity for practical reasoning is prior in such cases: only my reasoning is truly productive—and you would have

act is not in the first place the person who just happened to hit upon the correct judgment, it is the person who is reliably able to make the correct judgment. When making an omelet I show myself to be a master or novice partly through the ingenuity and perspicuity I display in the reasoning that goes into my action. Accordingly, making an appropriate judgment about how to do something is not that which enables my doing it—where the 'enabling' is something outside the exercise of the capacity itself—it is simply part of doing it. But the sense of 'part' here is special one: judgments of means are not 'parts' of my action in the way that the means actions judgments prescribe are parts of my action.[22] Yet neither are they identical to the actions themselves.

To get a grip on the role of means judgments, it is crucial to recognize that the exercise of the capacity on which judgments of means depends involves a form of awareness which outstrips the particular judgments that are made at any point in the process of acting. In the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle says that deliberation concerns what is "capable of being otherwise" (1140b). He is contrasting deliberation, on the one hand, with knowledge of that which is necessarily so. But the object that deliberation is seeking to make actual is also "capable of being otherwise" in the more ordinary sense that *anything could happen* whilst practical reasoning is ongoing. Deliberation involves more than the *mere* recognition of a possibility for acting—one that shows up in a judgment concerning means—it demands an ongoing awareness of my action that is aimed at ensuring that the sorts of opportunity articulated in judgments of means are still, in fact, possibilities.[23] This awareness is not an aid to the realization of ends, but essential to the kind of activity realization is. The different forms that it takes are associated closely with my specific practical capacities. The more

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nothing to reason about even in this attenuated sense had I not possessed this capacity. Nor is this to deny that such reasoning can be engaged in and terminated prematurely simply because the agent, through their attempt, realizes that they cannot, in fact, do what they set out to do: either because circumstances proved inhospitable, or they simply misjudged their own level of expertise.

[22] See Mueller (1967) for an intricate discussion of the sense in which judgments concerning means are for the sake of the end.

[23] Heidegger's discussion of Aristotle's conception of deliberation has been helpful to me on this point; see (1997, especially p.101-102)

skilled I am in a specific domain the better I will be at keeping track of whether the means I have adopted really are what is needed and, as matters progress, really are what is still needed. The judgments of means that we ascribe to agents, or that they express, are only ever a partial characterization of the agent's ongoing activity of realizing their end. The same goes for the practical knowledge grounded in judgments of means. The thought that one *can A* by doing *B,* or that one *is* doing *A* by doing *B* is best thought of as an articulation of ongoing actualization of the capacities to *A* and to *B* (to *A by B-ing*.)

Practical knowledge depends on the activity of practical reason in the case of the basic acts of realization we described above: the making of intentional movements. If knowledge of what I am doing is to encompass the material reality of my action, and not merely a general description of it, then it must distinguish between what has been done and what has still to come. In successful cases I have practical knowledge, not just of the specified means I am taking to my end—of the A-D order *qua* developed plan—but also of the progress of the intentional movements I make *in* realizing that plan. This knowledge expands *as* I thus realize these ends in intentional movement.

The judgments of means that figure in the practical syllogism, then, are best understood as themselves the product of realizing one's end. If practical knowledge is knowledge of the material happening that is the agent's intentional action—and if such knowledge is grounded in the agent's comprehension of the instrumental structure of that action—then practical knowledge is ultimately the consequence of the activity of practical reasoning.

Clearly much more needs to be said to give a full account of practical knowledge. For example, the 'non-observational' nature of an agent's practical knowledge raises the question of how it could be that the activity of realization can result knowledge of what one is doing. Ford's account of instrumental reasoning gives pride of place to perception, for perception is our mode of awareness of particulars. However, the kind of perception in question involves the grasp of objects

whose reality is *not* independent of the agent's practical thought. For, as we saw above, it involves perceiving opportunities that are not independent of the agent's capacities. Ford describes practical perception as one in which,

> the objects of perception all have a practical valence—a positive or negative charge, as it were—presenting themselves as to be avoided, or to be pursued. It is not only interested, but discriminating; for every- thing in the environment has a role assigned to it in action. What is seen in this mode are things like goals, opportunities, obstacles, and distractions, all of which are determined by relation to an end. (2016a, p.154)

This idea of practical perception gets in view some of what is needed to make sense of practical knowledge as stemming from the activity of realization. But it cannot be the whole story. I never find out *what* it is that I am doing through perception—practical perception, after all, presupposes that I already know what I am doing in a way that does not require any act of perception. It is because I already know what I am doing that I can recognize, in an act of practical perception, that my surroundings present me with an opportunity or an obstacle.

Furthermore, this knowledge of what I am doing is not knowledge of a mere wish or aspiration of mine. It is knowledge of myself as bringing something about—knowledge of myself as *efficacious*. I know I am *A*-ing through the primary act of the capacity to *A, A*-ing. There must be some way in which I know myself to be efficacious that is *not* grounded in such perception but which grounds it. I think that part of this will have to involve paying attention to the special role of the body in action, and the kind of basic realization of one's intention that is manifested in the exercise of bodily capacities for movement. In the case of the body, the relation between agency and knowledge of agency is perhaps most evident, albeit difficult to comprehend. The agent's knowledge

of their body—the way in which it is moving, where her various limbs are—is clearly dependent on their capacity *to* move it. As such, it presents the clearest case of a material reality whose goings on I am privy to, not in virtue of any act of perception—nor simply in virtue of having a general plan in mind as to how I am to act—but rather in virtue of acting.

There can be something unsettling about this way of relating practical knowledge to practical reasoning. If the realization of an agent's ends is thought of as a different kind of rational activity from the agent's practical knowledge, it is natural to wonder what the rationality of that former activity consists in. Now, I have said that it consists in the activity of realizing one's end. Yet in giving an account of what makes realizing one's end distinctively *rational*, it can seem as though we *must* in fact turn to the very judgments that that activity is, to some degree, distinct from. For what distinguishes the activity of realizing my ends from that of a non-rational animal—which after all, can be understood as realizing its ends through various means—is that my so doing works through concepts. Because I grasp my end *as* an end, I can comprehend its relation to the various means that might realize it. And this comprehension, it seems, simply involves my being able to make the judgments that I can. This seems to threaten the very idea that the activity of realization exhibits a distinctive form of rationality.

The first thing to say in response to this concern is that, on my account, it is essential to the activity of realization that it *can* be expressed in such judgments. This is not an accidental feature of realizing ends, but essential to its being a self-conscious activity. If self-conscious agents not only act, but know that they are acting, then it is essential that they can have thoughts to the effect that they are acting. It is correct, in a sense, to say that it is my being able to make these judgments that renders *my* action rational—but my being able to make these judgments is precisely understood through my capacity to realize my ends.

But the suspicion that ultimately motivates the above concern is that such judgments are not merely the partial articulation of the agent's fully practical awareness in realizing an end, but that they contain the very things that makes such action rational in the first place—for it is in such judgments that we find the conceptual articulation of action that its rationality would appear to consist in. That, in other words, there is nothing left to the rationality of realizing ends than these judgments themselves. What I have said in this section is meant to speak against that idea. However, to *fully* dispel that concern it will be necessary, I think, to demonstrate the sense in which my practical reasoning takes as its starting point, not merely a judgment about what I should do, or ought to do, that, as it were, validates my end from outside, but is rather itself a form of awareness that is essentially a practical activity in its own right. In other words, my comprehension of my action as good—a comprehension which grounds my selection of appropriate means—is *itself* a practical activity, a form of realization which grounds the application of those practical concepts that we find in practical knowledge. I shall take up this task in Chapter Five.

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When I introduced the notion of an agential capacity in the previous chapter, I spoke of its particular 'mode of operation', or 'mode of causality'. We can now say something about the applicability of these concepts to practical reason itself. Clearly, practical reason's mode of efficacy is not of a kind describable using any particular action concept, such as *kicking, pushing, burning,* or *convincing*. The activity of realizing ends is one that is entirely general, in the sense that it can involve

any mode of operation specifiable through particular action concepts. Its mode of efficacy consists in the ways in which it realizes the various ends that are ascribable to an agent. The 'ways' in question are the activities of realization: the activities that consist either in specifying means or in basic realization. What is distinctive about practical reason, then, is its absolute generality—the fact that its ways of realizing ends are not limited to the kinds of mode of operation that characterize particular practical capacities, but is the form that, in rational agents, all such modes of operation take.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, I want to summarize the relation between the different kinds of rational activity I have been describing in this chapter. I noted at the outset of my investigation that the traditional way of distinguishing practical and theoretical thought locates their difference in the fact that practical reason is productive of its object, whereas theoretical thought is merely reflective of it. The end of theoretical reason, being knowledge of the world, paradigmatically manifests itself in propositional judgments—the apprehension of facts. Practical reason, being productive of its object, does not seek to *culminate* in a judgment about anything—but rather results in a completed action. To judge that something is happening, or could happen, is not to perform an intentional action. Nevertheless, because performing an intentional action is a self-conscious activity, it necessarily gives rise to the knowledge that something is the case—namely, that you are performing that very action. The self-consciousness characteristic of intentional action comprises both the realization of an agent's intention and the awareness of this realization. The latter takes the form of a judgment, since it is the awareness of a fact (a fact that someone other than the agent could equally be aware of)—the fact

that such-and-such is happening. But it is not derived from the things known: it is knowledge had *by* acting.

As a result, we cannot assert that knowledge of worldly states, knowledge of facts, of affairs is exclusively theoretical. We can gain our initial philosophical grasp on worldly knowledge through the idea of theoretical knowledge: knowledge whose object is existentially independent of it, is propositional in form, and to which the 'I think' can always be attached. But worldly knowledge can also be had, in a different way, by someone who is realizing their end. If action is to be self-conscious, the agent must be aware that their action is actually happening—and this consciousness can be nothing other than knowledge that some fact obtains. Practical reason then, must contain both what I have called realization as well as knowledge of the worldly facts that depend upon realization—most notably, practical knowledge.

The following table presents the various distinctions between forms of thought I have made during the course of this chapter:

Table 2: Forms of Reasoning	**Practical Form** (Realization)	**Theoretical Form** (Judgment)
Practical Matter (Existentially *dependent* on the agent)	*A*-ing (agent-side)	"I am A-ing"
Theoretical Matter (Existentially *independent* of the agent)	*A*-ing (patient-side)	"That car is red"

For a kind of thought to have a genuinely practical form is for it to consist not in judgment but in realization; for it to have a theoretical form is for it to consist in a propositional thought. For a thought to have a practical *matter* is for its content to be existentially dependent upon the agent's thinking; for it to have theoretical matter is for it to be existentially independent of the agent's thought.

The left-side of the table represents two aspects of an agent's realization of their intention: the 'patient-side' comprises the changes made in that which is existentially independent of the agent's thought (various external materials) and that thus depend on theoretical forms of thought; the 'agent-side' comprises the changes made in that which is *not* existentially independent of an agent's thought, i.e. their body. This latter, represented by the top-left box of the table, may appear immediately suspect—surely I do not think my body into existence? That is true. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, it is nevertheless the case that one's body is the sort of thing it is only in virtue of the fact that one is a self-conscious agent. Thus, even though at one level of analysis it is clearly constituted by a matter that is not thought into existence by the agent, considered as that which the agent is capable of directly changing—i.e., considered as the body of an agent—it is existentially dependent on the agent's thought.

The right side of the table represents thought that is theoretical in form, *in the sense that it is knowledge of a worldly fact*, knowledge which is not itself productive of its content. The top-right box represents thought which takes that form, but whose matter is practical in the sense that it is the product of realization. As such, the 'matter' in question the matter of an act of realization, is best thought of as a whole action constituted by the joint activities that figure on the left-hand side of the table. The bottom-right box represents ordinary theoretical knowledge. The epistemological character of practical knowledge, then, will ultimately be explained by the fact that it arises from the

forms of activity on the left-hand side of the table. To understand practical knowledge, we would have to understand them.

Chapter Four

The Body of an Agent

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued that, in practical reasoning, an agent realizes their end through a special form of determination unique to it. Yet we found that the conclusion of a practical syllogism—which we can view as representing the progress of such reasoning—contains reference to an act of realization which could not itself be fully explicated by the inference which lead to it. Furthermore, this act of practical determination was precisely the act in which the agent engages in intentional movement. As such our lacking an explanation for it is urgently felt, for if practical reason is nothing less than the capacity to act, then we cannot leave the act in which an agent's end is actually brought to fruition outside practical reason's productive scope. The problem is that it is hard to see how what I called 'basic realization'—the realizing of end without recourse to further means—can be brought within practical reason's scope. For it is precisely here that *calculation* of means comes to an end, and it is unclear what other function practical reason could play than that of calculation.

The same kind of thought that lead us to the necessity of 'basic' realization has often been introduced by philosophers to motivate the much-discussed category of basic action. Indeed, in this chapter I will argue that there is at least one viable notion of basic action, and that understanding the capacities through which agents perform such acts will help illuminate the sense in which basic realization can be understood as an act of reason. However, in order to do this, we shall have to both break with some recent skepticism concerning basic action, as well as conceptions of basic action that

make the idea of their being acts of reason thoroughly hopeless. In order to do that, we ultimately shall have to reflect on the special role of the *body* in the action.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the first half of the chapter I rehearse the line of thought that necessitates the concept of basic action. Not every action can be constituted of parts that themselves have further parts if action is to be possible. The actions that do not, are precisely those basic continuous movements through which agents achieve further ends. I then consider an argument of Michael Thompson's that is designed to show the spuriousness of this category. Although I criticize his argument, consideration of it nevertheless illuminates important strictures that exist on any account of how basic actions are performed. Although basic actions are not comprised of further means, their agents must still have some kind of rational and productive (i.e. *practical*) comprehension of their progress—of how, in other words, such actions are performed.

In the second half of the chapter I give a positive account of the capacity to perform basic actions. Doing so brings us ineluctably to the role of bodily movement in action—for it is the body which, in the first place, we can move without needing to employ further means. The difficulty in grasping our capacities for bodily movement revolves around the fact that different considerations seem to require us to simultaneously retain and reject the idea that an agent acts upon themselves. Without this notion, it seems, self-movement appears simply *mysterious*—but once we introduce it, we end up losing the unity of an agent, reducing them in different ways to their parts. In order to overcome this dead-end I shall introduce an Aristotelian conception of the unity of a living thing, one which involves viewing the living individual's body as the capacity for its various life-activities. This will allow us to understand the sense in which self-movement both does and does not involve agent-patient relations. From this perspective, we shall be able to understand basic realization.

2. What in Action is Basic?

2.1 The Threat of Regress

In the previous chapter I argued that, if we are to earn the right to a conception of intentional actions as acts of practical reason, we must recognize—and comprehend as rational—the agential capacity to make changes which do not require that an agent make any further changes in order to complete them.

This assertion resembles a familiar line of thought in philosophy of action, one aimed at establishing the necessity of *basic actions*. Basic actions are often defined negatively in the literature, in much the way I have done in the introduction to this chapter: they are actions performed 'without having to do anything else,' and the thought that motivates their necessity is supposed to be simple: if every action required the performance of some further action, then intentional action would be impossible.

Although some version of this line of thought may well be persuasive, the concept of basicness, and the threat of regress associated with it, is often left under-determined by philosophers employing the notion of basic action.[1] The negative definition of basic actions, that they are performed 'without doing anything else,' could be understood as ruling out one, several, or all of a variety of different instrumental relations that feature in intentional action, some of which we documented in the previous chapter. Faced with the *via negativa*, we can legitimately ask questions such as the following: Are basic actions those performed without performing actions of *any* kind whatsoever? Or

[1] I do not think there is a single reason for this. It seems to be part and parcel of the general neglect of the instrumental structure of action in contemporary action theory. Danto, who coined the term 'basic action', took it to be the idea of an action which stands at the end of a causal chain. But of course, even a causal theorist must admit that at least some instrumental relations cannot be captured in terms of one action causing another. Other authors are more cautious; Chisolm (1969) sticks to the merely negative definition. Yet the negative definition, even if it escapes the difficulties of the positive causal characterization, leaves radically undetermined the various kinds of instrumental/teleological connections that can hold between means and ends.

just without performing any actions that would stand to the basic one as a genus of which it is the species? Or are they actions whose performance does not require the performance of any further *parts* that they may have? If our answer to these kinds of questions are left unclear, so too will our conception of basic action, leaving the potential significance of the category in doubt.[2]

However, matters are further complicated by the fact that the concept of basic action is performing a double service in the action literature. For a basic action is not exclusively used to refer to something that plays a fundamental role in the instrumental structure of action. It is also used as a way of capturing an allegedly central form of *know-how* characteristic of agency. Jennifer Hornsby brings out the idea of basic action as the exercise of know-how through a distinction between 'procedural' and 'non-procedural' knowledge:

> Sometimes a whole series of procedural facts needs to be known to get something done: *One can* φ *by* ψ*-ing and* χ*-ing* and *One can* φ *by* ς*-ing* and *One can* χ *by* ω*-ing*, and . . . (whatever). There are potential regresses here. But it must be possible to halt them. For we surely do not require indefinitely much procedural knowledge in order to get anything done. Thus, some things—at the end of these 'by'-chains, as it were—must be done without possession of knowledge of procedures. These are things the agent does 'directly'. They are basic things, in one sense of that action-theoretic notion. They are things which we are inclined to say the agent is *able to simply do*. (2005, 114)

[2] See Baier (1971) for an attempt to clarify some of these notions in relation to Danto and Chisolm's theories of action. Her paper brings out, most of all, the sense in which the intuitive appeal to the concept of basicness very often covers over a plethora of important distinctions—but furthermore how once these potential senses are clarified and separated, the posited link between basic actions and what we can call mere bodily movements becomes problematic. Sandis (2010) also argues that there are many senses of 'basic' on which one might take there to be, or not to be, basic actions.

Although we might naturally think that actions we can 'simply do', as Hornsby puts it, are precisely those that are structurally basic, this is not entailed by the mere idea of non-procedural knowledge. Examples Hornsby gives of things we can simply do, such as walking and buttering toast, have a complex instrumental structure. This suggests that distinctions drawn between non-basic and basic actions that are grounded in considerations of instrumental structure will cut across distinctions grounded in considerations to do with what Hornsby calls procedural and non-procedural thought. What matters for Hornsby's distinction is not that there are different forms of instrumental relation between actions—such that some actions must be basic—but rather different forms of knowledge that agents have of their actions, one of which is procedural, and one of which is not. In fact, one need not even think that structurally basic actions *exist* in order to endorse the idea of basic know-how; even a skeptic about structurally basic action, such as Douglas Lavin, endorses the idea of non-procedural knowledge in some form.[3] And of course, for anyone who thinks that the instrumental structure of action is the product of the agent's practical thought, it will be neither possible nor desirable to cleanly separate these issues. The fact that different, though likely connected, conceptions of basic action are available, and worse, that these different conceptions are rarely distinguished from one another with much clarity in the literature, means that in developing our account of what I have called 'basic realization,' we shall have to navigate with care. This means, first of all, making crystal-clear the *form* of regress that necessitates the concept of basic realization and, secondly, by elaborating the internal relation between the structural features of intentional action and the form of rational comprehension from which it flows.

We saw in the previous chapter that specifying means only advances an agent so far in realizing their intentions. The conclusion of the practical syllogism represents a final transition from generality to particularity that the specification of means cannot itself provide for. Specifying means advances

[3] See Lavin (2013, 282-87)

the realization of my intention by finding (a) a *way* of doing something (b) breaking that way of doing something into its necessary parts, and all the while (c) getting in view the necessary particulars required for performing those various parts. Through calculating means in these ways, the agent works out *how* they are to do the thing in question.

Now, if sometimes an action is performed by performing an action that is a *species* of it (if I make lunch by making an omelet), it is nevertheless clear that not all actions can be performed through further such species—for the task of specifying the general kind of action would go on *ad infinitum*. Specification must come to an end somewhere. Moreover, if a specified action is performed, not through a further species, but through the performance of its various parts (by breaking eggs, heating a pan etc.) it nevertheless cannot be the case that all such actions are performed by performing their further sub-parts, for there would always be further sub-parts of *those* actions that they would then be required to perform.

So, in fact there are two threats of regress described here: one which applies to *species* of actions and one which applies to *parts* of actions. We cannot realize our intentions if we are engaged in infinite specification of the general kind of thing we mean to perform. Nor can we do so if every action can only be performed by performing further parts which belong to it. The 'regress of parts' is ultimately more pressing than that concerning species, insofar as the performance of the parts of an action can be understood as what halts the regress of specification. What we can call 'specifically basic' acts—acts that need not be further specified with respect to their kind—are performed by performing their parts. Whereas we lack, thus far, a conception of how an action that does not include any further sub-parts could be performed. How do we perform the parts of actions—those parts which are not performed by performing their sub-parts? To answer this question, I think, would be to grasp the nature of basic realization.

However, before tackling this question directly, we must first rebut the objection that the threat of regress just articulated is, in fact, illusory and thus that the concept of compositionally basic action just described in fact spurious.

2.2 Skepticism About Basic Action

In different but related ways, Michael Thompson and Douglas Lavin have both offered arguments that cast doubt on the very idea of basic action. As part of his project in 'Naïve Action Theory' Thompson argues positively that it is definitive of intentional actions that they are performed for the sake of further actions. Employing similar observations as Thompson concerning the kinetic nature of intentional action, Lavin argues against the concept of basic action on the grounds that such actions would necessarily involve the agent's alienation from the teleological structure of their own action—thus undermining their very status as intentional actions. In play in both arguments is a conception of actions as teleologically structured 'through and through' or 'all the way down'. In resisting their argument, we shall be concerned to bring out what is correct in this broad idea, as well as what is mistaken about many of the conceptions of basic action that they resist, without giving up on the concept of basic action described at the end of the last section.

Thompson's argument, though it makes no explicit mention of 'basic action', clearly undermines the category of basic action itself:

> Let it be, then, that I have pushed a stone along a certain path from α to ω, and that this is a completed intentional action of mine. It must also, of course, be that I have pushed the stone from α to β, if β is a place about halfway along the path from α to ω. And as I began to push off from α it would have been as much *true* for me to say, "I

> am pushing it to β" as "I am pushing it to ω." How, though, can we deny the further claim that I was pushing the stone to β, the midpoint, *intentionally*—just as, by hypothesis, I was pushing it to ω intentionally, and along that path? ... [I]t is hard to see why we shouldn't say not *just* that I was pushing the stone to β *intentionally,* but also that I was pushing, and pushed, the stone to β *because* I was pushing it to ω. Why not? The push from α to β might not be "salient", of course, so it might be a bit odd, conversationally, to point it out…But, now, every bodily movement that is intentional under what might be called a "bodily movement description" takes a limb from one kinesthetically given position to another: why, then, shouldn't we isolate some such initial segment in every such case? (2008, p.107-8)

Isolate any act that you wish to call basic, insofar as it is kinetic—something extended in time—then it will be possible to find some further part of that action. Furthermore, even if the agent would not have thought of *that* part as "salient"—would not attribute any special significance to point β—nevertheless they still pushed the stone there, and did so intentionally. Yet this means that there are no actions that are performed without performing any further actions that are their 'sub-parts'. An action, being kinetic, invariably has further parts—and these parts are performed for its sake. Consequently, the temporal structure of action that I have been emphasizing throughout this dissertation seems to render the 'threat of regress' utterly spurious.

Lavin's complaint against the idea of basic action draws on similar observations in order to argue that agents would be fundamentally alienated from basic actions. If basic actions have the temporal structure of a kinesis, then their teleological structure will be as nothing to the agent themselves:

> Now, since doing *A* is *basic* it follows that, at any point during the proceedings, what *X* has already done (A^{***}, A^{****}), and what else *X* is doing (A^{*}, A^{**}), do not involve anything that is *per se* an intentional action. By hypothesis, the subordinate phases of a basic action are not themselves undertaken in pursuit of the goal…Moreover, if all goes well, nothing that figures in the constitution of the whole completed action, none of the phases or proper parts of *X*'s having done *A*, will be *per se* intentional actions. The progress of the deed toward its completion is thus wholly opaque to its subject, except in the way it might be known to an observer or to someone with general knowledge of how such things happen. In short, the subject of basic action is alienated from the progress of her deed. (2013, p.292)

One objection to arguments of this kind is that they do not pay proper respect to the agent's own conception of what they are doing, insofar as it is implausible that, in moving Thompson's rock, I think of myself as moving it to what seem to be entirely arbitrary points between my location and my destination. If that is implausible, then there are grounds for claiming that the skeptical argument has slid from the idea that pushing the stone to a certain point can be considered intentional—insofar as it is chunk or phase of something he *is* doing intentionally—to the idea that it is an intentional action in its own right:

> Thompson uses the fact that he was pushing intentionally throughout the action to make us think that at any point not only has he *been intentionally pushing it* to that point, but also he has *pushed the stone intentionally* to that point. Thompson then has us view his pushing the stone from α to ω as having consisted of an ever-increasing stock of actions that have occurred (he *has* pushed it to here, now to a point further on, now

> to some next point) and an ever-decreasing stock of actions that will occur (he has still to push it from here to there, then to beyond there, then to further beyond) (2013, p.11)

However, although the suspicion that an important distinction is being elided here is importantly correct, this line of objection as often formulated is not particularly convincing. Think of the various 'sub-movements' that are at issue in Thompson's example. Are these movements not a necessary stage in moving from the starting location to the destination?[4] If they are, then saying they are not things the agent intends to do seems mistaken. These stretches as not merely the inevitable 'side-effects' of what I am really doing—they represent real bits of *progress* towards the destination, and as such differ from, for example, the sounds the boulder inevitably makes as it is being rolled through the dirt. Remove one of these arbitrarily decided upon chunks from the action and a necessary part of the agent's trajectory will have gone missing—somehow silence the boulder and nothing essential to the task goes amiss. Nor is the fact that these arbitrary points do not figure *as such* in the agent's practical thought seem particularly telling by itself. In general, we are able, it seems, to represent continuous magnitudes. Being able to do that involves viewing them as subject to arbitrary division. Yet we need not actually think every possible arbitrary division in order to conceive of the whole *as* a whole, or as being capable of infinite division. Why can't the same apply to actions that traverse such magnitudes?

Moreover, in order to really press the point against Thompson, responses of this kind need to vindicate the thought that the chunks or phases of the action are performed *intentionally* without being intentional actions. In other words, they owe us some account of what constitutes their intentionality. Thompson and Lavin have an easy answer to that question, for they take these phases to have the

[4] Of course, other trajectories may have gotten the boulder to the same point—but means action are rarely entirely necessary if that means that they couldn't be replaced by other sufficient means.

same temporal and instrumental structure as any other action—they are just more actions. They are thus subject to Anscombe's 'Why?' question (or, taking into account Thompson's reversal of Anscombe's approach: they are answers to this question). Their being intentional is thus no harder to explain than it is in the cause of any other action, and is inextricably bound up with their falling into the requisite kinds of instrumental/teleological relations to other actions.

Hornsby, on the other hand, wants to think of these phases as 'stretches of activity.' Now, we have already had cause to criticize her account in Chapter Two. The central problem was its inability to account for the internal structure of activities, the way in which they are intrinsically directed towards ends. Yet we can now see how her account of *basic* activities opens her up to Lavin's suspicions about the category of basic action. For Hornsby, a basic activity is one that an agent has no conception of how to perform, since it has no calculative structure. It is something one can do "just like that." Her thought that she will engage in the basic activity of, say, pushing, for just so long as she needs to, therefore does not reach that activity itself, but must, at best guide that activity, from an external stand-point. Indeed, since, according to Hornsby, "practical reasoning terminates in things that one needs no knowledge of the means to do" (2013, p.116) there is no other role, it seems, for the agent to play in performing them apart from what Lavin calls, echoing Marx, the 'labor of superintendence' (2013, p.293). The problem with superintendence is not just that it is vaguely 'alienating', but that, thought through, it ultimately requires that an agent acts *upon* their action; the intelligibility of which action is deeply suspect. Consequently, in lieu of a more convincing alternative, Thompson and Lavin's approach seems superior insofar as it allows us to retain our conception of intentional action and intentional through-and-through and thus as something the progress of which is contained within the agent's practical comprehension.[5]

[5] Kim Frost, like Hornsby, also emphasizes the importance of activity in defusing Thompson's argument, but his account seems to suffer from similar problems. Symptomatic of this is the conclusion of his paper: 'When one has in mind to do something limited and finite and instrumentally rational, one's "mere activity" already has the character that would make

Despite the failings of the alternate accounts, there *does* seems to be a distinction to be made between the way in which the acts of breaking an egg and making an omelet are related, and the way in which moving the rock the first half of the way to its destination, and moving it to the second half of its destination are related. The sense many philosophers share that the latter two acts are arbitrarily derived by carving up the agent's action from an external stand-point is, I think, correct. But the solution cannot be to replace an infinity of parts with a homogenous mush of an activity.

Ford faults Thompson not for assimilating the categories action and activity, but those of 'part' and 'phase.' The category of a phase is a temporal one, whereas the category of a part is teleological. Whereas a part of an action is a genuine element of means-end structure, a phase of an action is 'has a different kind of unity from that of which it is a phase…A phase is not something that an agent *does*, intentionally or otherwise; thus, it neither rationalizes nor is rationalized. A phase of an action is, as it were, a fragment, or slice, or chunk, of that which is done intentionally.' (2018, 179) Ford distinguishes phases of actions from the parts of action in two ways: (i) phases, unlike the parts of actions, cannot overlap one another, and, (ii), the parts of action, unlike its phases, are infinitely divisible into more of the same kind. However, it hard to see why Thompson could not, if he wished to, posit such 'chunks' as a special class of means-actions that are involved in continuous motion. These parts would *not* overlap, would each be performed for the sake of the next such part, and could be divided into further such actions.[6]

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it constitute an intentional action, were the activity to be brought to a successful completion. That does not imply that one's "mere activity" is intentional activity; that would require an independent reason to, for example, move as such [i.e. to move with no end-point in sight]. We might instead say that it is thoughtful activity: motion permeated by (in this case, limited, finite) thought." (2016, §7) What would it be for thought to permeate movement, except for the agent's activity to be intentional? We are not told. But the reason it can't be, given what he says, is because the activity is not itself internally oriented towards a terminus. In which case, how can he say it already has the "character that would make it an intentional action"?

[6] Ford is not concerned to refute the initial segment argument directly, but is rather concerned to show that the initial segment argument was in fact unnecessary to Thompson's project in 'Naïve Action Theory.' According to Ford, once we note that any act of a locomotive being—one divided into parts—involves doing many other things, we see that the parts are capable of naively rationalizing one another. It is by conflating the features of parts and phases that this possibility is obscured, and the need for the initial segment argument is felt. Nevertheless, it is important to see that the distinction

Ultimately, the problem with Thompson's argument is that, in order to make his observations all plausible he needs to treat the whole act as the subject of *potentially* infinite division—but his argument in fact requires that it be the subject of an *actual* infinite division. At every intermediate point at which one could divide a continuous motion, Thompson must assert the existence of an actual division, for only then can he preserve the idea that every action is a means to some further action. However, intentional actions have a structural integrity that is determined by their end-point, and which serves as the ground of the distinction between completion and incompletion. As such, a terminus, the end of a change, is a possible stopping point, a place of rest. Now, if an agent really thought of themselves as doing each of Thompson's candidate actions through further such actions, then it should be possible in theory for the agent to pause after every such action. For at every point in the agent's progress there is a division which marks the end of one action and the beginning of another. But these are infinitely many—this entails infinitely many pauses, one per terminus.[7]

Now, we might simply resist this identification of an action's terminus with a possible resting point and hold that in order to complete a continuous motion it is necessary that the actions that make it up are not separated by a rest—and why not? Yet this is the same as saying that the divisions are merely potential. For it is only if some pause or interference occurred that the action would be divided, rather than merely divisible. Any other kind of division would be projected onto the motion from without—it would simply be a point at which something could have divided it, but did not.

Moreover, it is unclear that such potential divisions could usefully play any role in the agent's calculation of means. For these termini now only feature as points of possible privation in an ongoing action. Rather than serving as the limiting points of actions that further the agent's end, they in fact

between parts and phases does not by itself scupper the initial segment argument, since Thompson's assimilation of their properties might nevertheless hold good for a certain restricted sub-class of actions.

[7] Aristotle argues in *Physics* 8.8 that this would destroy the continuity of movement.

only represent potential obstacles. It is clearly necessary that the agent be able to comprehend the possibility that any point along their trajectory a division may be made by the agent, or occur through external interference—that at any point interruption is possible—but to think of these points as themselves demarcating something teleologically significant is wrong. For they would only gain teleological significance as further parts if they needed to feature in the agent's reasoning in some way—and it is only if interruption occurs that this would be the case.

This is, I think, what is truly problematic in Thompson's view. The initial defense I gave of Thompson above—that an agent might be able to think of all of the divisions in an action as contained within their continuous motion—depends on the division remaining potential; but Thompson's argument requires that these divisions are actual.

This still leaves the question of how to think of chunks of actions as properly intentional. On the one hand, they do not figure in the instrumental thought of the agent—they are not things through which we do other things. On the other hand, they are real portions of the agent's progress from their starting point to their destination. As such, it seems they must be comprehended as in *some* sense teleologically significant from the agent's perspective. Agents, insofar as they make continuous movements, are able to comprehend how much of what it is they are doing that they have done, even if the stuff of this 'how much' are not proper parts of actions, i.e. actual means—and this 'how much' is something they view as their own work.[8] Indeed, this observation was behind Lavin's criticism of basic action. We need to be able to do justice to it without reverting to the notion of infinite parts.

An observation Ford makes is suggestive of what is needed here. Taking up Thompson's original analogy between an organism and an action, he compares the parts of an action to the organs of a fish, and the phases of an action to the external spatial divisions made in the fish by the chop of

[8] Hornsby wanted to make room, it seemed, for precisely this kind of distinction; but her account gave no answer to the question as to how the agent, when engaged in the 'activity' that makes up an action proper, could really comprehend the progress thus made from a practical perspective.

a butcher's knife. Thompson's analogy would suggest, Ford remarks, not that actions are organs all the way down, but that rather that action 'bottoms out in practical flesh—that is, in something whose structure is, though teleological, not that of an organ' (182). It is this 'practical flesh' which we are interested in and that, unlike the mere concept of a phase, has a teleological role of its own. Understanding this role is a necessary part of escaping the two unattractive accounts: one according to which there is nothing intentional about the progress made within the parts of actions—which is precisely the kind of account Lavin was correct to criticize—or one on which the parts of actions are made up of infinitely many sub-parts. What we should say here, I think, is that the agent understands every chunk of their intentional movement as being for the sake of the whole, insofar as it constitutes some of that of which the whole action is made up. Saying that any given bit of a continuous movement is for the sake of the whole in this way is not the same as saying that it is a proper part of the whole; just as saying that the tissue making up the left-ventricle is essential to it is not the same as saying that it is an organ in its own right.

Hornsby, in some sense, was approaching this idea. But the problem was that the 'tissue' of a particular change, according to her, was comprised of activity that could be understood independently of the action that it eventually made up. Consequently, its teleological relation to the whole had to be secured from outside the activity itself. We can avoid that conclusion if we say that the chunks of continuous motion made by agents are essentially understood by them as subjects of potential interruption—to 'division'—before reaching their goal. This determines, I think, their internal character. Just as the tissue of the heart is constituted in such a way to promote the heart's functioning, the continuous motion that makes up a particular action will be appropriate to that particular end-point. This appropriateness will *not* consist in it having the requisite parts, but rather in its being performed in a way suitable to the agent's goal. In Thompson's example, this will involve going not too fast, not too slow—by not using too much pressure, nor too little. This differences in the exercise

of the agent's capacities are determining factors of the 'tissue' of an action, which, like the tissue of a heart—must be of a sort useful to the whole. Having found the skeptical arguments against the concept of basic actions wanting, we are left with the question we posed at the end of Section 1.1: how do we perform basic actions?

2.3 Basic Powers of Movement

Once we have recognized the need for basic actions—actions that themselves contain no further parts through which they are performed—it can seem as if there is little else left to say about *how* they are performed. Although we must posit some fundamental practical powers to perform such actions, it can seem that their *being* fundamental resides in the fact that there is nothing more to say about how they are performed. For the powers to perform non-basic actions are, after all, explained in terms of performing further actions, which is precisely not the case with basic actions.

However, this stance is untenable. In Chapter Two I criticized Alvarez and Hyman's conception of action on the grounds that it alienates an agent's exercise of their power—the bringing about of a change—from the material reality that defines it as the kind of action it is. Because the force exerted in pushing a trolley, for example, is not an aspect of the power to change the trolley's location, but is instead that which the exercise of the power brings about, the agent's power to bring about change is itself inexplicable. Everything that might be appealed to in an explanation of how an agent does something (e.g., by exerting force) is shifted to the position of something caused by the agent—but *how* caused, was left unclear. Insisting that there is no answer to the question of how agents exercise their basic powers of movement would simply be to repeat this mistake—which, as I mentioned earlier, perhaps even stems from the difficulty of understanding such powers in the first

place. To the question of how I bring about these changes I would be simply saying: 'I just cause them'. Now, it is clear that the sense of the word 'how' operative in the previous sentence is not that of calculative, means-end reasoning. What it seeks is what some philosophers have called the 'mode of operation' of a power, the way in which it produces the changes that it does.

Unfortunately, contemporary accounts of basic action and skill are often committed to the idea that, from the agent's perspective, there *is* nothing to be said as to *how* we can perform such actions.[9] The exercise of non-procedural know-how is a matter of processes whose progress the agent is therefore alienated from in the way just described. We saw one such account that has this implication in Hornsby, but the view is fairly widespread.[10] However, any account which banishes the performance of basic actions to sub-personal processes is no better than one which gives no account whatsoever of how such actions are performed. For in either case the agent's exercise of their own capacities will be, to the agent, a mystery.

3. Bodily Powers of Movement

3.1 Basic Actions and Basic Capacities

I have been speaking of basic actions, thus far, without touching upon the role of the body within them. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the body is intrinsically related to the notion of basic action—

[9] I say 'such actions' because the kinds of action that I have described as being basic overlap with those actions that other accounts would consider basic. However, this is not to suggest that the same conception of what actions are basic is at play in my account and theirs. As I mentioned in §2.1, these accounts often count as basic *any* action that is the conclusion of a real *episode* of procedural thought, or that can be viewed as something the agent would have a hard time articulating their knowledge of how to perform. I shall compare these ways of isolating basic action in §3.5.

[10] For example, Steward called such actions 'automated' and 'non-intentional' (2009, p.301); Enc calls them the work of "lower sub-systems" (2003, p.71); Setiya calls them "sub-intentional" (2007, p.75). See Small (MS) for an illuminating summary of these kinds of views.

that the capacities to perform basic actions are bodily powers of movement. All my actions must originate from me, and since I *am* my body—they must originate, in some sense from it.

Although philosophers who have made use of the notion of basic action are almost universally at one in affirming that basic actions are bodily movements, they overwhelming hold a restricted and restrictive notion of what bodily movements are. According to common wisdom, the category of bodily movements does not comprise all intentional movements that involve the body, but movements *only* of the body—not of anything the agent manipulates using their body. Although I think this view is false, in order to see why it is, it will be best to first consider the nature of locomotive acts—actions in which it is the agent's goal to change *themselves* with respect to their location—and with an account of those powers, return to consider the widespread notion that acts of, say, pushing trolleys, are in fact composed of two different acts—one basic, and one non-basic.

In Chapter Two I argued that if we are to grasp its temporal unity, action must be understood from the perspective both of the agent and the patient. The change as a whole, we can say with Aristotle, is 'in' the patient, insofar as it is the patient that is actually changed, but the process of change itself, the movement, involves the correlated activities of both agent and the patient. Within these acts we can identify one or many 'modes of operation': concrete ways in which agents effect changes in patients: *pushing, pulling, burning, pressing*—and perhaps in more extended senses: *coaxing, beckoning, undermining* and so on and so forth.

In cases in which an agent acts upon an external material reality, a mode of operation is identified with ease. But what about locomotive acts? Indeed, insofar as acts of self-movement essentially involve the body, it is natural to think that they lack a mode of operation altogether, that there simply is no way in which, for example, I raise my arm. (It's like the Nike slogan: I "just do it"). The ways in which we directly make alterations in an external material reality are understood through the specific interaction between the agent and the patient. I apply pressure to the trolley; move the

egg downwards with force towards the edge of the bowl in order to break it; gently pull the trigger in order to…and so on. But when I raise my arm it seems wrong to say that I do something *to* it which explains its change of position. As Peter Hacker puts the point:

> When I nod my head in assent, I don't make my head nod or bring it about that my head nods – that I do when I seize it in my hands and move it up and down. When I move, or move my limbs, voluntarily, I don't *act on* myself or on my limbs – I don't do something *to* myself. My body, the body I *have* is not the reflexive patient on which I act. I *am* a body, a living spatio-temporal continuant of a certain kind; but when I move, I don't *move myself*, I just move. (2007, p.155)

If, in moving my body, I am not acting on something else (for I am my body), then there is no room for the idea that there is a 'way' in which I act upon myself. To think otherwise would seem to irreparably alienate me from my body: I would always have to divide myself into two—into a dead, agentless part, and the agentive part.[11] But no such division is on offer in the case of my arm movement, it—that is, *I*—just move.

However, although these observations appear perfectly sound, by denying the presence of an agent-patient relation in the case of locomotion, they seemingly leave us without the means to identify the specific character of our powers of self-movement.[12]

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[11] "Now, although I raised my left arm by raising my right arm, it would be a mistake to think of my raising of my right arm in such a way that my right arm is construed as the patient. My left arm figures for me as something "other" when I raise it with my right, but if I think of my right arm as something other, I will shortly find myself vanishing—receding inward, where I am no longer "at one with" my body." Small (2016, p.200)

[12] It is tempting to point out here that powers of material substances often do not have a recognizable mode of operation. Why can't it be the same for powers self-movement? The suggestion is unhelpful. On the one hand, this can be the expression of a dogmatic 'quietism' about the character of locomotive powers. Whatever we make of magnetism and gravitation, that this is unsatisfactory in the case of human action is shown by the fact that, *if* there is no way in which these powers operate, then there is nothing that the agents who employ them know in utilizing them; nothing they know how to do (or not to do) in order to further the progress of their act. The agent will confront the actions that stem from such capacities not as movements of which they are the comprehending origin, but rather as mundane miracles.

In order to resist this conclusion, we might try to argue that, despite initial appearances, it is false that there is no mode of operation of our basic capacities for movement. To see this, consider the simple task of walking. Walking is an act that is performed by taking, first, one step, with one leg, then, taking another step with the other leg (repeat as necessary). Now, walking itself seems like a complex act in a sense corresponding to the notion of basicness I defended in the last section: it breaks into parts—at least into steps. As such it does not meet our criterion of a basic act, one which has no further parts. But it brings out something important: namely that locomotive acts—at least in an agent like us—are accomplished in virtue of the fact that we are articulated into parts. Consider instead the ubiquitous example of a simple arm raising. Here, we might think, there is only the one continuous movement. But in order to raise my arm, there are in fact many other things I must do. This in general holds of bodily movements—they do not occur in a vacuum, but require the cooperation of the rest of my body. In fact, even for the simplest locomotive acts—even if the position of the rest of my body is highly unlikely to be called upon in making the movement—I must still make sure the rest of my body is controlled enough to allow for the movement. As Ford puts the point, "in order to raise my arm, I must see to it that the rest of my body cooperates. And the cooperating movement, or stillness, of my other moveable bodily parts is intentional, and is part of what I am doing." (2018, p.184)

But haven't we just returned to speaking of performing actions in virtue of performing their parts? However, the connection between the various sub-parts of say, raising one's arm, are importantly different to the kind we have been concerned with in isolating the category of basic action. Although they are connected to one another teleologically, they do not stand to one another in a part-whole relation in the way that, say, taking one step (part of the action) relates to walking to the store (whole of the action). What necessitates basic action consists in the fact that not all actions can be performed by performing actions that are further sub-parts of those actions. Actions cannot be parts

all the way down. But that threat of regress does not rule out the possibility that parts of actions can be performed by performing other parts of action that are *not* further parts of themselves. Although it will take us some time to develop this idea, I want to propose that this is precisely what happens, in locomotive action. Raising my arm is an action that consists of various parts, each of which can be understood as performed through the others and for the sake of the whole. We perform basic acts of locomotion, in other words, by performing other basic acts of locomotion.

However, the central difficulty facing this initial answer to the question as to how I perform basic actions is that, if we are unsure how it is that I make *one* basic act, then simply appealing to further such basic acts is unilluminating. However, once the articulated nature of bodily movement is taken into account, we can observe that there are agent-patient relations within such movement. When raising my right arm to a certain point, I move slightly leftwards by bending of my left knee, thus allowing my upper arm a better angle through which to raise my forearm. Many of these body parts are, most of the time, simultaneously agent *and* patient. My upper body which is being moved downwards when I crouch may be also be that which is moving another part of my body upwards. In each basic action consisting of continuous bodily movement, we shall find some part of the body in the role of agent and another part of the body in the role of patient.

But of course, although these various internal bodily agent-patient relations in some sense explicate the manner in which the body moves—preventing bodily movement from being some kind of physical or bio-mechanical mystery—the explanation all takes place at the wrong level. The agent, after all, is *both* the moving part and the moved part. They are, they identify with, the patient in any given action no less than with the agent. Even if an agent necessarily understands themselves as a being that is articulated into parts that, in some sense, can play both agent and patient roles, these crucially must be understood as forming a unity that the agent themselves *is*. In other words, we cannot

illuminate the 'mode of operation' of locomotive capacities by merely appealing to the fact that there are ways in which parts of the body act upon one another.

So, we are faced with a problem. If we have no mode of operation, then locomotion is a mystery, at least to the agent. Once we introduce a mode of operation, we seem to lose sight of the very thing we were attempting to understand. Before attempting to find our way out of this thicket, it will be useful to consider two kinds of view philosophers are in danger of falling into when our options seem to be exhausted in this way.

We can call any view that undermines the unity of an agent by reducing it to a collection of parts that work on each other an *assemblage view*. An assemblage view is one that reduces the work of an agent considered as a unified being to the work of its various parts. The main object of criticism in the literature in terms of this error is the causal theory of action, insofar as it is thought to lead to the 'disappearance' of the agent.[13] The idea being that the agent just becomes a matter of parts working on parts—mental states triggering bodily movements—in a way that leaves the agent as a whole out of the picture.

However, avoiding such a position is not such a straight-forward matter. Assemblage views can be seen as motivated, not just by some particular theory of action, but merely from the understandable desire to remove the aura of mystery surrounding an agent's relation to itself—as well as the observation we ourselves just made: that animate beings are not monads, but articulated beings. Consider John Hyman:

> It is assumed that the right way of understanding agency is to proceed from the individual to the collective, the association, or the group. But I believe we need to turn this order of explanation on its head, because individual human agency is always really

[13] See Chapter Two, §1.

> collective agency, since a human being, like every other multicellular organism with specialized tissues, is in reality a highly integrated colony of functionally differentiated but genetically similar cells. (2015, p.48)

Hyman emphasizes that human agency (and animal agency in general) is 'non-aggregative', in the sense that the capacities attributable to the whole are not simply the sum of the capacities of the various sub-parts in the way that the weight of an animal is the sum of the weight of its parts. Ultimately, we should think of "think of the integration of metabolic, motor, and cognitive systems in general as the mark of non-aggregative human agency" (50). The concept of 'integration' sounds promising. Yet note how general the concept of integration is: all kinds of systems, capacities and objects may be 'integrated' with one another. Two weather systems may be integrated with one another, bringing about effects that cannot be reduced to the sum of their parts. Yet their coming to be integrated will be purely accidental. Alternatively, a computer may consist of various integrated parts and activities. Yet its specific form of unity is only explicable through the schemes of its designer. Neither meteorology nor computer science—just two fields which provide a concept of integration—give the correct model of the kind of systematic unity that pertains to a human being. If the concept of integration is to do real work in illuminating agency, we shall need a conception of the special kind of rationally practical 'integration' that we find there. Otherwise, our account risks collapsing into a mere assemblage view, in which the work of the agent as a whole is, really, the work of its various parts. Of course, it is not that Hyman would himself ever endorse such a position—but the question is how he, or anyone else, can actually avoid it.

However, in an effort to avoid the assemblage view, it is startlingly easy to fall into another sort of account which undermines the unity of an agent, this time by identifying the agent's activity with the activity of one of its parts. In its grossest form, this would constitute a kind of 'homunculus'

account, in which we find an agent within an agent, sitting at the driver's seat. But the account need not be as crude as this. In order to see how easy it is to slide into such a position we can consider the kind of account given by Helen Steward, who initially appears sensitive to the dangers lurking here:

> In the phenomenon of action…we see a situation in which a complex whole entity—an animal—is able to produce effects—in the first instance, movements of and changes in its own body by means of which it is then able to bring about further effects in the world. But how can this be? […] The question is how on earth a whole person or animal could manage to have effects on its own parts in such a way that that causation does not simply reduce to the causation of parts on parts? (2012, p.243)

Steward tries to answer this question in terms of 'higher-level' and 'lower-level' processes. The former are responsible for controlling or 'dominating' the latter, in a way that explains the coordinated action on the part of agents. The higher-level processes would consist, for example, in the agent's decision or intention to raise their arm—a decision realized physically, but not reducible to its physical elements—which controls the various lower-level processes responsible for bringing that about. Steward's account requires that these higher-level processes are not simply some part of the agent that affects other parts of the agent (a kind of 'neural' version of the agent-patient story I told about the relations between our various limbs) but is really attributable to the agent as a whole.[14] The activity of the agent, as she puts it, needs to be more than the 'sum of its parts.' Yet it is difficult to see how she can have this conclusion. For the higher-level processes—the ones that control what actually happens, and so form the genuine locus of agency—must be able to 'dominate processes at lower levels.' This

[14] "The important feature of the top-level system is discretion: the creature itself becomes a special sort of object with a power selectively to control certain of its own subsystems in the light of constantly updated information" (2012, p.245)

is what explains *why* the agent's activity is coordinated—and not merely an aggregate of various processes—in the first place. But in that case, the locus of agency is *not* the agent as a whole, but some particular processes happening in the agent. Steward devotes much space to arguing that higher-level processes cannot be reduced to the physical elements that they are realized in. If successful, she thereby avoids the consequence that action consists in some physical elements (neurons) causally affecting other things (muscles etc.) But that does not change the fact that the agent's activity is being attributed to one intra-agential process causally affecting another. This is still part-on-part causation. (Furthermore, it is the kind of part-on-part causation that is entirely opaque to the agent themselves—they have *no clue* how this happens, it is, according to Steward, an empirical question.)

How can we think of the agent's capacities for locomotion without sliding into either 'assemblage' or 'homunculus' conceptions of agency? We need, somehow, to think of agents as a unity of moving parts, without reducing that unity to that of a mere collection, or by privileging a member of that unity as the agent. In order to grasp the agent's relation to their body—and thus the nature of their locomotive powers—it will be necessary to consider the nature of animal life more generally. Only then will we find the kind of 'integration'—that is, the kind of unity—that pertains to an agent, that can therefore shed light on our bodily capacities for movement.

3.2 The Unity of an Animal

Our understanding of animals is intrinsically teleological. We understand animals, when we do, as engaged in a whole range of activities and processes which we conceive of as having a characteristic purpose. Unlike the movements of tides, or the formation of volcanoes, these processes admit of a distinction between success and failure that are properly internal to them. The kind of *vital* processes

that belong to animals can be frustrated in a way that the formation of an ox-bow lake in a river, or the journey of boulder down the side of a mountain, cannot be.

Most animal activities can be viewed as, whether directly or indirectly, aimed at *self-*maintenance—the continuation of the individual animal—and the maintenance/continuation of the species through *reproduction*. When confronting a new animal—one whose general bodily functions, relation to its habitat, and relation to other members of its kind is at first utterly mysterious—the work of the zoologist consists in understanding what, in various contexts, the animal is doing. To understand that, it is crucial, in the first place, to start from an understanding of how *what* it is doing contributes to, or constitutes, the self-maintenance of that being and the reproduction of its species. Particular acts of animals will only be understood through the lens of these fundamental activities. Not everything an animal does—not every movement it makes—may be understandable as contributing to these goals, but if we lack any understanding of the way in which an animal performs these tasks, how it keeps itself going, and how through its relation to others of its kind the species keeps going, then our interpretative frame work really will be unanchored.

Boyle and Lavin say the following about the activities of living things:[15]

> Any given kind of living thing is characterized by a manifold of powers directed toward various ends, powers which constitute a sort of *self-maintaining system*: one such that the realization of any one of its ends supplies the condition for the realization of various others, and these in turn of others, in such a way that the kind "makes itself exist," so to speak…[It] is characteristic of these powers that they not only contribute variously to the maintenance of the kind of living thing in question, but thereby contribute to

[15] I shall confine my discussion to animal life. If what I say is not true of sub-animal life—vegetative life, then it is of no import to my concerns here.

> the maintenance of themselves and one another in *sound order*... Indeed, this reciprocal *interdependence* extends to all of the essential powers of a living thing, for precisely insofar as they are essential, they are each needed to contribute to the maintenance of the *system of which they are powers*, but equally they each depend on all the other powers to operate *in a way that maintains that system*, and thus makes each power possible. (2010, 182-3, emphases mine.)

This seems to me perfectly sound; but as we saw in reference to Hyman's discussion, it is crucial that we understand the concept of a 'system of powers' correctly. Consider the whirlpool: in *some* sense we can understand it as consisting of a system of powers that, through their inter-dependent activities, manage to maintain its continued existence—we could even imagine a kind of whirlpool whose activities happen to bring *other* whirlpools into existence. The ideas of self-maintenance and reproduction obviously take on a specific meaning when applied to animal life. The whirlpool's self-maintenance, though fascinating to behold, is not a process that is guided towards any recognizable purpose—it either happens or it doesn't, and there is no question of 'success' or 'failure' applying either way. In the case of animal life, we need the idea of a standard that fixes when the animal in question is in fact succeeding in its activities of self-production and self-maintenance. This standard is neither found in the idea of the animal's design (it has no designer), nor is it merely projected upon the animal from without. Nor is it something we can simply 'read off' the individual animal, considered in all its idiosyncratic particularity.

Boyle and Lavin recognize the necessity of just such a standard in the case of the *kind* of teleology characteristic of animal life—drawing on the Neo-Aristotelian framework developed by Michael Thompson. They take the standard in question to be the agent's *life-form*. Here is Thompson himself:

> If a thing is alive, if it is an *organism,* then some particular vital operations and processes must go on in it from time to time—eating, budding out, breathing, walking, growing, thinking, reproducing, photosynthesizing; and it must have certain particular organs or 'parts'—leaves, legs, cells, kidneys, a heart, a root, a spine. But we have suggested…if any of these things *is there,* or *is happening,* then this is not something fixed or determined by anything in the organism considered in its particularity or as occupying a certain region of space. That they are there or happening, and thus that we have an organism at all, presupposes the existence of a certain 'wider context'; it is this that stamps these several characters onto things. (2008, 56)

The wider context, he suggests, is the animal's life-form or species. It is with reference to the kind to which an animal belongs that we understand each of its various vital operations and processes. Our conception of the life-form is articulated in what Thompson calls 'natural historical judgments', generic propositions—as opposed to universal quantifications—that specify the various vital operations and processes distinctive of members of that kind.[16] These propositions are not falsified when some members, perhaps all members, of the life-form deviate from these descriptions. These deviations are rather understood as privations—fallings away from the life-form thus specified. It is in in virtue of being the *bearer of a life-form* that an animal's system of powers possesses the unity it does: a teleological unity in virtue of which we can speak of particular animals as succeeding and failing in their various activities.

As such, it must belong to the idea of the a priori category of 'life-form' that it could not find application in the case of the whirlpool. The whirlpool is not a bearer of a life-form, even if, in some

[16] "The individual judgments are to be understood as out-takes from such an ensemble; the idea of such a judgment is, that is, internally related to the idea of such a totality; each is a contribution to the description of the "wider context" that came to our attention in the last chapter; the exemplification of any one of these general propositions in any individual case ("this one is eating") will rest on the truth of many others." (p.72)

sense, it maintains itself and (we can imagine) reproduces its 'kind'. In order to grasp the kind of unity that Thompson's concept of a life-form possesses, we need a more concrete conception of what it is for an individual something 'be the bearer' of a life-form. If this notion is left unclear, then the various italicized phrases in the quotation from Boyle and Lavin will not provide us with the materials required to distinguish an individual animal—something that possesses a genuine teleological unity[17]—from what I earlier called a mere 'assemblage', a merely *accidental* unity.[18]

Luckily, the Aristotelian framework that the authors I have cited have fruitfully drawn on enables us to give a fuller characterization of what bearing a life-form consists in. My remarks here are ultimately aimed at elucidating the idea of an animal's relation to its own body; if they therefore err exegetically, the crucial point is whether they aid our understanding of this.

Aristotle understands individual animals hylomorphically: as a composite of form and matter. What it is to be the 'bearer' of a life-form, in the Aristotelian framework, must be understood through the lens of this hylomorphism. What is special about living things—which Aristotle take to be paradigmatic examples of *substances*—is that their matter cannot be understood as separable from their form. The matter of an artifact can be understood as what it is separately from its form, e.g. the bronze of a statue. This shows up in the fact that the bronze itself has a material cause that we can investigate entirely independently of the fact that this bronze happens to be formed in the shape of Achilles. But now consider Achilles himself. Achilles has a matter which, according to Aristotle, is his body, and which includes all of its various parts: organs in the broad sense. These organs, even considered *qua*

[17] I do not mean to attribute to Boyle and Lavin the claim that what they note in the above passage *is* enough to delineate the idea of a living being for, like Thompson, they take the idea of living *kinds* to be of crucial importance, as marking out a particular domain of logical space. (Nevertheless, it is telling, perhaps, that they cite Kant in a footnote to that passage—for it is of course a vexed question whether Kant truly avoids an account upon which the teleological organization of animal life is *not* something projected from without on living beings by their human interpreters.)

[18] The example of a whirlpool is especially apt, for it is plausible that whirlpools have 'emergent' powers that are more than the sum of their parts. Even so, they do not yet count as living. The idea that that capacities of animals together to enable an activity not attributable to their parts considered separately does not give us enough to distinguish the concept of a life-form.

matter, can only be understood in terms of their instrumental role in the life-form to which they belong. Furthermore, Aristotle thinks, each of Achilles's organs themselves have a material cause. But the matter of those organs, like those organs themselves, can only really be understood in terms of their function in the life-form as a whole.

To understand this point, it is necessary to recognize that for Aristotle 'matter' and 'form' are related to one another here as 'potentiality' to 'actuality'. Aristotle describes a living being's life-form, or 'soul' (*psyche*) as 'the first actuality of a natural body which has life in potentiality' (*De Anima* 412a125). The soul is described here as the 'first actuality' (*entelechia*, which we can also translate as 'realization') of that which is able to be alive. for we can consider a living thing both when it is at rest, asleep (or perhaps even comatose), and also when it is presently engaged in the activities characteristic of its kind. A body is alive in both cases—but in terms of giving an account of what the living thing is, it is the exercise of these various capacities that takes precedence. That which has 'life potentially' here, then, does not refer to a corpse, but to the body that is alive, but rather a living animal not presently engaged in some of its characteristic activities—either because it pursues them privatively or not at all.

A body is essentially defined, then, in terms of its capacity for living—that is, for its various life-activities 'or vital operations.' Because the body, the matter of a living being, is related to its form as capacity (*dunamis*) is to activity (*energeia*) there is no distinction between the formal account we give of the matter of a living thing *qua its being the matter of a life-form* and the formal account we give of that matter *qua thing in its own right*.[19] What it is 'in its own right' is something that is for the sake of living—whereas the bronze of a statue is the matter of the statue in a qualified way, for it is also something else entirely. It might be objected here that there will always be *some* level of analysis at which the

[19] I am indebted here—and generally in this section—to Kosman's analysis of the distinction between artifacts and living substances (2013, p104-105)

matter cannot be so understood, that Aristotle is therefore wrong to hold that, as Kosman nicely puts it, "The relation between an animal and its body is…reproduced at every stage of an iterative material analysis with respect to the elements that make it up" (2013, p.119).

Consider for example the tooth, its matter consists in enamel and various other tissues, nerves etc. These are all understood in terms of their role in the tooth—which is for eating. But now consider the matter of enamel, it is made from hydroxylapatite. Now, this mineral is largely found in animal bone—it's even called a 'bone mineral.' But it has a certain chemical make-up that it seems can be understood 'in its own right' without making any reference to the living beings that it turns up in. Here then, it seems the formal account of the living being's matter *is* independent of that being. Perhaps it is here that we, occupying a more modern perspective, must break with Aristotle's apparently over-strong thesis.

However, there is no need to defend Aristotle's thesis in all its strength. For the fact that relation between form and matter that characterizes life breaks down at some level does not entail that it breaks down at *all* levels. There is still no way to isolate, for example, form and matter of the *heart* in a similar way. For the heart's proximate matter is tissue—and the character of that tissue is understood through its function in the heart. Only an especially strong reductive thesis, according to which all of the functional aspects of heart's tissue can be completely defined in terms of the activity of matter which is independently understandable in terms of biological function would undermine this idea.[20]

The point of this excursus into Aristotle's hylomorphic conception of animals is that it helps explicate why it is that the concept of a life-form is neither (i) a mere jumble or assemblage of capacities

[20] I think only an aversion to teleological explanation in general would motivate this idea—but defeating such a skepticism would take us far beyond the scope of our own discussion.

that accidently form a self-sustaining system, nor (ii) something which is projected from an external standpoint onto a living individual. We shall take each point in turn.

First, because a living being's matter, its body, stands to its life-form as capacity to activity, there is simply no way of identifying those various capacities independently of that life-form. A capacity is always elucidated through what it is a capacity *for*, and the animal's body as a whole is a capacity for a specific form of *life activity*. As such, the very account of the capacity makes reference, necessarily, to the life-form in question. In a merely accidental self-sustaining system of activities, there will be an account available of each capacity independently of the whole. Since the 'form' these capacities together sustain is not in fact an explication of any of them, but merely their result—it is not really a form at all, i.e. not something which is explanatory of the essence of any of those capacities. Second, and relatedly, there is no conception available here of the particular living individual as something which engages in various activities or vital processes independently of those vital processes. In understanding the individual as a capacity for those very activities, we see it as intrinsically related to its life-form—as truly being its 'bearer'. Aristotle's conception of a living thing as a composite of form and matter, understood through potentiality and actuality, therefore helps elucidate the Neo-Aristotelian framework which Thompson, Boyle and Lavin are operating within, according to which each of the various life-activities of a being are ordered towards a form of life characteristic of a certain kind. The 'kind' sets the standard for the success or failure of these activities, for the living individual is nothing but the capacities for those activities that constitute its form.

3.3 The Unity of Self-Movement

How can these reflections on the unity of individual animals, of what it is to bear a life-form, help us in grasping the human agent's relation to herself? Recall that at the end of §2.1 we were faced with the question of how to avoid both 'assemblage' and 'homunculus' views of self-movement. We needed a

way to understand how it is that an agent can be the source of changes in themselves, without reducing self-movement either to the movements of their various parts, or by privileging one part within the agent as the 'real' mover. We can do just this if we recognize that the unity of an agent is—at least in part—the unity of a living thing.

What we have just said about the unity of the various life-activities of a living individual shows why the assemblage view of locomotion is insufficient. We cannot understand the powers of movement that belong to the various parts of animals independently of their role in the overall life-activity of an animal, for they just *are* capacities for that life-activity—or rather, that specific range of life-activities that require or consist in locomotion. Because the parts of an animal are capacities that are understood only with respect to the whole, there is no hope of constructing an account of the movement of the whole through the various parts independently of the whole.

The homunculus view, on the other hand, stood in danger of failing to appreciate—or rather, in the case of Steward, failing to explicate an intuitive appreciation of—the true character of agential unity. We saw that the sense in which the agent as a whole has control over the various bodily parts she uses in locomotion should not be explicated through the idea that some particular part or process in the agent dominates the processes that go on in these parts, hence playing the role of a 'coordinator' or 'supervisor' that issues executive orders to them. The Aristotelian account offers us a more satisfying picture. On that account, the unity of the living individual as a whole is explicated through the fact that all of its parts are capacities to engage in a unified set of life-activities that they are the capacities for. As such, in the case of locomotion, the coordinated exercise of these capacities is not understood in terms of the agent—represented by a privileged 'part' or 'process' in the agent—acting *upon* themselves. Instead, each capacity is intrinsically related to the others in their exercise—the agent as a whole is understood as the unity of these various capacities.

Moreover, from this perspective, we can give a more satisfying positive account of the sense in which rational agents are self-movers. Recall that the difficulty which motivated the slide into assemblage and homunculus styles of accounts was that, in the case of self-movement, there appeared to be no such thing as a 'mode of operation'. For this required an agent-patient structure. But the idea of a mode of operation seemed essential to our understanding of a power, for it is nothing other than the specification of the correlated active and passive powers of agent and patient that, together, constitute a particular change. It seemed that we both must, and must not, have some conception of the mode operation of these powers. So, is there one or not?

The answer is: 'in a sense, yes, and in a sense no.' There is no way in which an agent, considered as a whole, acts upon their body analogously to the way in which an agent acts on some portion of external material reality. When we consider the active and passive powers of agents and patients in the latter cases, we need to frame the notion of a mode of operation in such a way that we can understand how two separate things are able to come together to form the kind of change that they do. The agent's capacity to push a trolley must be understood, not only in terms of what the agent is able to do, but also in terms of the characteristic passive propensities of that which they are able to push. The character of the change—i.e., the change in location of the trolley—is defined in terms of the specific form of transaction that occurs when they come together. It is because the character of the precise transaction between human and trolley through which the latter moves is not immediately obvious just from a bare statement of what they are, that such an explanation is required.[21]

However, as we noted earlier, there *is* some mode of operation through which an agent moves. For an agent, being articulated into limbs, is able to move itself around in virtue of the fact that its parts can stand in various of agent-patient relations to one another. Without these, the agent would

[21] This is not quite accurate, since a cart is after all an artefact—something that is *for* pushing—but we can concoct other such examples. And after all, some might push a cart in an unusual way, for example with a long rod.

be, as it were, entirely simple, its motion both sublime and mysterious. Aristotle thought that an animal had to be articulated into parts if self-movement were to be so much as possible. The way in which, for example, I walk from A to B is through the coordinated parts of my body moving one another and so myself as a whole.[22] Yet as an explanation of the power of locomotion we found this kind of answer lacking. The danger was that is simply reduced an agent to its various component parts. (In fact, the difficulty is even sharper than we made out earlier. Even if we could explain the movements of our bodily parts in terms of their being patients with respect to other bodily parts that are agents, not every agent is therefore a patient with respect to some further agent. So, the movements of the 'agent' parts that are not patients with respect to another agent part would still require explanation.)

The absence of a mode of operation in the case of our powers of self-movement is a consequence of the fact that there is no distinction to be made between that which moves and that which is moved. But simply noting that is only to restate what is puzzling about self-movement. The mystery is only really dispelled once we recognize why it belongs to the very idea of a living body that it can be moved without being manipulated by the agent whose body it is. The body is not simply one object among many, nor is it simply an object to which the agent happens to be numerically identical. The body, properly understood, is nothing *but* the agent's capacity for movement. The agent's body is, as it were, intrinsically powerful—transition from its potentiality for movement being-in-capacity to being-in-activity requires nothing external to it. This will seem mysterious only if we think of the living body, not as something that has such a potential, but instead rather like the trolley—something that can move, but whose particular movements require further explanation in terms of something other than it. The trolley, to frame the point in Aristotle's terms, does not contain a 'principle of motion' within itself—we need to refer to some other agent in order to explicate its movements, and that explanation will invoke a mode of operation.

[22] Aristotle's account is contained in *De Motu Animalium*. Cf. Nussbaum (1986).

However, it is important to see that although the body of an agent is what I have called 'intrinsically powerful,' it does not thereby exit the realm of nature as understood non-biologically. That self-movement does require that agents are separated into parts that take agent and patient roles with respect to one another can be understood as life's concession to the mechanical necessities of movement. Only through being articulated in this way are animals able to move from one place to another. For we always need, at a minimum, a fixed point from which to move off from, a part that propels forward from it, and a part that is thus propelled forwards. Nevertheless, the concession is strictly limited. For the agent is both at once: and even when one part is patient, it at least actively refrains from moving that part in a way that would cause interference. Furthermore, when we look closely at the bio-mechanical agent-patient relations that can occur in, say, the human arm, the correlated 'active' and 'passive' powers of the various parts are characterized by modes of operation that presuppose the intrinsically powerful nature of the human body as a whole. The ways in which they act on one another can only be understood in the light of this. That one part of my body moves another part of my body is only explained if we understand the ways in which each is shaped in such a way that it is intrinsically 'for' being moved by other parts. This is why it is right to say that there 'is and is not' a mode of operation through which agents move themselves. There is no mode of operation, if we mean a way in which an agent transacts with itself, manipulates itself; that sense of a mode of operation is confined to external alteration. There *is* a mode of operation, if that means the various ways in which the parts of an agent interact with the other parts. But, as we have seen, this latter mode of operation must be understood in an entirely transformed sense, for the active and passive powers of those parts of the agent involved in locomotion can only themselves be understood *through* the notion of an intrinsically powerful substance: the living body.

I flagged at the beginning of section 2 that my discussion would initially focus on *locomotion*—the agent's alteration of themselves with respect to location—ignoring, at first, the role of the body in

altering an external material reality. In so doing, it will seem to have mirrored much of the literature, according to which changes in one's own body are the most basic kind of actions—all the others being composed out of bodily movements and the movements of other objects.[23] But nothing in our specific notion of basic action, at least, suggests this picture. For, after all, continuous movements include not just the raising of arms, but also the pushing of rocks. What, then, should we say about the role of the body in actions of the latter sort?

Focusing on locomotion is useful insofar as it brings out, most clearly, the special character of bodily movement. But we should resist the temptation to think of acts of locomotion as a foundation on which all other actions are built. Think of slicing an onion into two halves. This action, like all actions, involves the body. But it is mistaken to say that, in slicing an onion, my action splits into two parts: one that consists in the motion of my body, and one that consists in the motion of my knife (and perhaps—but who knows?—a further part consisting in the motion of the onion.) Just intuitively, we might think this is already a strange way to carve up the structure of this action. Do I, the agent, really think of onion slicing in this way? The intuitive recoil from this idea can be framed in terms of a question: What precisely is the teleological relation supposed to be between these two candidate actions? What is the meaning of 'by' if I say 'I move the knife by moving my hand'? Moving the knife does not stand to moving my hand as genus of action stands to a species of action, for obviously it does not belong to the bare idea of moving my hand that I thereby move a knife. Furthermore, nor does moving my arm appear to be a *part* of moving the knife—for what would its other parts consist in? It is no accident, I think, that the only view of the 'by' relation here which is even remotely plausible, at least *prima* facie, is that the first action *causes* the second action. That is, it is only within the context of the causal theory of action's event-causal framework that we broke with in Chapter Two that we can seemingly divide an onion slicing into a hand movement and a knife movement.

[23] See Ford (2016b) for a critique of the motivations that lie behind views of this kind.

Once the agent's efficacy is found not between changes considered as causal relata, but within changes, we find no reason to decompose the action in this way.

Consequently, I think we should say that the distinction between basic and non-basic actions, and the distinction between locomotive alterations and external alterations, belong to different but related dimensions of agency. Basic and non-basic actions can alike be either be purely locomotive or not. Bodily capacities for movement, therefore, include not just acts of 'pure' self-movement, but also all actions in which the agent is transacting with something else. My capacity to use instruments and tools such as a kitchen knife is a bodily capacity insofar as it involves the *use* of my body in an action in the alteration of an external patient—but this patient is not, in the primary case, the knife itself—but the *onion*. When it comes to acts of external alteration, therefore, the question of what particular practical capacity is in question cannot be separated off from the instruments used in acting. I may push a trolley with my hand, in which case *no* instrument is employed or I might slice an onion with a knife. But in the latter case, the instrument, just like my body in the former case, falls on the agent side of the agent-patient relation. For, after all, chopping an onion is what I am doing. Although the knife moves during this act, just as the body does, the change is in the onion. When we reflect on our capacities to use tools, this appears to be just the right conclusion, for in the absence of the appropriate instrument, the capacity cannot be exercised. No one could learn to chop onions without ever holding a knife.[24] In contrast, on the alternative picture, it is unclear why the main action performed in slicing an onion is one that could be performed not just absent the onion, but also absent the knife itself.[25]

[24] Or perhaps they could, but only if they'd practiced with something similar first—we can imagine that perhaps a young child would first learn with a relatively blunt instrument used on incredibly soft food. But no one learns by simply making hand movements in the air. Relatedly, sometimes golfers practice their swing without a ball—or sometimes, walking between shots, even without their club—but such motions could never be substituted for practicing with balls.

[25] This is why I have been speaking of 'bodily capacities for movement' rather than 'capacities for bodily movement'—the latter nomenclature makes it seem as though (i) the agent's capacity for moving their own body is just like their capacity to move anything else, and (ii), as though an agent's capacities for basic movements were only capacities for locomotion.

I cannot expand on this topic here, but merely want to note something interesting that it brings out. On the general account of action, we have given, the patient of an action is that which the agent is concerned to change. This means that tools have a special role in the understanding of action that usually they do not. For although they are not a part of the agent *qua* living body, they are on the agent-side of a transaction. The tool becomes, as it were, an extension of the body. But of course, it is not really the body. What makes tools useful is that they have properties that the body does not. There would be no need for a hammer if my fists were plated with metal, perhaps. However, in locating tools on the agent-side of the activity that makes up a particular action, we greatly increase the scope of the things that human beings are immediately capable of. Once the tool is in hand, has been appropriated by the agent, the agent's capacities to change other things expands hugely. Furthermore, since the tool is itself the product of human activity, this expansion in capacity is something that the agent has procured for themselves—opening up the idea of an in principle *unlimited* expansion of practical capacities. This unlimitedness seems to be a mark of the capacity for practical reason, which secures the expansion through its own exercise, in conjunction with a theoretical understanding of the world.[26] I remarked in Chapter Three that the conceptual nature of practical reason separates it off from the capacities of non-rational animals, and opens it up to an in principle endless expansion—this shows up, I think, most clearly in the case of tools.

[26] Ford remarks on the blindness of contemporary philosophy of action to the question of tools: "philosophers of action, unlike social and natural scientists, have had little or nothing to say about our use of instruments. This is remarkable because when we act intentionally, we *normally* use instruments to execute our intentions—whether in sitting (on a chair) and typing (on a keyboard), as I am doing now, or in such life-sustaining actions as acquiring, storing, preparing and eating food. Indeed, one of the most striking characteristics of specifically human action is that it involves, not just the use of tools, but of tools for making tools, and of tools for using tools, and of tools for making tools for using tools for making tools—and so on—so as to achieve our purposes. It is a much-studied empirical fact that human action is subject to a peculiar mediation that is quite unlike anything in the life of a chimpanzee. And yet, self-described "philosophers of action" could not be less interested." (2016b, p.2)

3.4 Basic Realization Explained

With the notion of a capacity for bodily movement illuminated, we can now give a positive characterization of that moment in the exercise of practical reason that prompted our initial reflections on such capacities: basic realization.

In the case of an animal it is the life-form of which it is the bearer that serves as the principle of its unity. But our concern is not mere animal life, but the life of a rational being. With self-consciousness comes not just a unified set of vital activities, but a grasp of this unity. In the case of locomotion—a specifically *practical* grasp of this unity. That is, in exercising my powers of movement, I understand myself as having these powers—understand them as forming the unity that they do. Indeed, it is constitutive of our powers of locomotion, since they are exercised in action, that we are conscious of them. The unity of an agent's powers of locomotion is nothing separate from the agent's grasp *of* that very unity. This is only true, in a limited way, of those means which exist outside of us. For even if we do not grasp them *as* means, still they still have their own existence—the forest floor does not cease to exist because it is not viewed, at any given moment, as a solid path to walk upon. In the case of the human body, the limbs that I have really do cease to exist as limbs—as moveable parts—in the event of some catastrophic injury, or indeed my death. For limbs, we said, are nothing but the capacity for the various movements they perform; absent that capacity, there are no limbs. This is why I said at the end of the last chapter that the realization of bodily movements had a practical form *and* a practical matter (thus belonging in the top-right box of Table 2.) Not only do such acts take the form of realization, their matter—the arm that moves—is nothing but the capacity for such realization (even if, at some level of analysis, it consists in a matter that cannot be so described.)

However, we can now wonder: if in general the unity of a living being's locomotion is explained through reference to its life-form, its characteristic life activities, does that mean that, in acting, I grasp my own life-form 'human being'? This is an important question.[27] For the time being, I want to set aside the issue of how precisely to characterize the kind of unity that is grasped in our own case. What is clear is that, however we want to understand that unity, it will be essentially the kind of thing that figures in the thought of those very beings—namely *us*—whose unity it is. Practical reason, the capacity for intentional action, thus contains a self-consciousness *of* the very kind of being it belongs to.

The actions that match our notion of 'basic action' are those continuous intentional movements that do not contain further actions as parts of themselves. We can now say that we perform such actions through the exercise of those bodily capacities for movement we have been concerned with. Such actions contain no further parts in virtue of the fact that they can be performed without the agent needing to break down their action into further parts in order to perform them. That further calculation is surplus to requirements is explained by the fact that such capacities can be immediately realized by the agent—that is, realized without the mediation of any further means that must be appropriated by the agent. The agent's comprehension of the inner teleology of her basic actions is not a matter of comprehending their various parts, but of comprehending what I called above the 'tissue' of these acts.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, this does not mean that basic actions stand in a vacuum, for they are intrinsically related to one another. The non-basic act of walking from A to B, for example, involves many basic actions, each of which is performed for the sake of the whole, but that also actively facilitate one another—but without being *parts* of one another. The agent's rational comprehension of each basic action is therefore understood through the light of the others. Someone

[27] Michael Thompson's answer is a resounding 'yes,' see his (2004), (2013).

able to walk, for example, comprehends the facilitating role that each her of various movements contribute to the overall act. And, we noted, even if there are basic actions of bodily movement that seem to involve no other part of the body, the agent must still ensure that the other parts of their body are not interfering.

What necessitated the very idea of what I called 'basic realization' in Chapter Three was the observation that practical reasoning concludes in the specification of means that are still general with respect to the agent's end; specification that can, for example, be expressed as: 'Chop the onion vis-à-vis *this* knife.' Moreover, we saw that further reasoning of the same kind would not be able to help us effect this final transition. We can now say why. Because the task of practical reasoning consists in an agent's working out how to effect changes through further changes (where 'further' can be understood either in terms of constitutive or non-constitutive means actions), its work necessarily comes to an end upon arriving at means actions that needn't be performed through further means of these kinds.

That there is no requirement for further means is explained by the fact that the agent's own body is their *immediate means*. The concept of immediacy is often drawn on in characterizing bodily movement and basic action. However, we are now in a position to give this concept a precise sense. If the concept of means at its most abstract is simply that by which something is done, then it can be applied both to actions and to the materials that are used in acting. Means actions are those actions through which we perform other actions; material means are the things we rely on *in* acting. Both will count as *mediate* means if they are not sufficient, by themselves, for realizing the agent's end. As we have seen, the agent's body is that material means through which something is done, but whose use requires no act of appropriation or manipulation. This is because it just *is* the capacity to move. The idea of a basic capacity for movement and that of an 'immediate' means are therefore essentially the same—the concept of something through which something is done without further means.

The concept of basic realization therefore presupposes an agent's special grasp of their own body as immediate means. The special kind of practical awareness I have of my body—one that is not based on any kind of observation—is grounded in the fact that my body is my capacity for movement. My arm is not something that, through mediate means, I am able to move, but that which I can move at will. Although an account of the nature of bodily awareness is beyond the scope of this dissertation, our reflections on the nature of the body *qua* capacity for movement form the basic insight on which such a conception could be developed.[28] Whereas the material things that I transact with in action are viewed through the light of my capacities to act, yet still have an independent existence of their own, my body is precisely that material substance whose practical relevance is, as it were, exhausted by an account of my capacity to move it—for it is nothing *but* capacity. In the case of rational beings such as ourselves, the role our body as immediate means is a form of self-consciousness. My various limbs only have the practical role in realizing ends that they do insofar as I comprehend them as such.

3.5 Basic Realization and Skill

To conclude, I want to say something about the relation between basic realization and skill. I noted in the introduction to this chapter that the concept of basicness performs, at least, two roles in contemporary thought about action. I have been concerned, largely, with the notion of *structural* basicness: with those actions that play a special role in the structure of action in virtue of not being

[28] McDowell at least begins to articulate a notion of bodily awareness that, I think, is friendly to my position here: "It may seem mysterious how some spatial arrangement of matter could be known otherwise than receptively. But it is not just any material thing whose layout is known in the kind of knowledge we are considering. It is oneself as a bodily agent, characterized at a time by specific possibilities of moving the parts of oneself that one can move at will. No doubt someone else could know how the matter that constitutes one is disposed in space without even viewing one as an agent. And the agentive knowledge we are considering would put its possessor in a position to know truths that would match that knowledge in content." (2011, p.145) The "specific possibilities of movement" that play a crucial role here, are precisely those bodily capacities for movement I have been characterizing.

composed out of further actions. But there is another idea of basicness, which is tied up with the concept of 'know-how'; some actions are basic, it is claimed, because we know how to perform them without having to engage in any more practical reasoning about how to perform them (we saw this in the quotation from Hornsby). Now, if one conflates these notions of basicness, then it would seem as though, on the basis of what I have said so far, the only actions I can perform without having to engage in calculative thought are those continuous movements I have said are compositionally basic. And that, it seems, is crazy: do I really have to calculate how to perform the various movements that are involved in raising my arm? Surely not. For most—if not all—the continuous movements I perform are habitual, they are acts whose performance are so deeply ingrained that calculative thought about them is neither necessary, desirable, or even particularly easy.

What I want to suggest is that the concept of basicness that has to do with know-how cuts across our distinction between structurally basic and non-basic action. What any given agent can do without doing anything else, that is, without having to engage in any further calculation, does not map on to structurally basic actions—the basic realizations—that they perform. However, this suggestion can seem wrong-headed. For one might think that, if I don't have to engage in calculative thought about such actions, then those actions will no longer play the role they do in practical reasoning. That is, we shall be able to engage in 'basic realization' of our ends whenever the activity of calculation is absent in what we do—and so many more actions than the ones *I* have said are basic will be acts of 'basic realization'.

The solution to this difficulty, I think, lies in the fact that the notion of specifying means here is ambiguous between two kinds of case: (i) cases in which I consciously engage in a process of figuring out my means ahead of performing my action, and (ii) cases where my action displays a calculative order, but where I engage in no such prior process of calculation. The concept of basic realization we are concerned with applies to those actions that could *never* be the topic of a possible prior calculation,

simply because they are themselves not made up of further changes. They therefore play a basic role in the structure of action. The other concept of calculation—whose end-point is determined by where a particular agent ends an episode of reasoning performed in advance of acting—has to do not with the rational structure of their action and the reasoning it stems from, but with what kinds of action are for them appropriately habitual. This is not say that the notion of skill is of no importance to the philosophy of action, or that the concept of habit I have just been employing will not play an important part in our conception of skilled activity. Nor is it to say a conception of skill won't have much to say about the actions that agents basically realize. However, it is important to recognize that the distinctions necessary for describing the activity of practical reasoning as I have articulated it in this and the previous chapter are not ones that map to the concept of skill as that which 'drives out' deliberation. For the concept of deliberation of importance there, though related to ours, is not the same as ours.[29]

[29] Small (2012) presents another way of distinguishing basic and non-basic actions. He does so by distinguishing two *ways* in which an action can come to have calculative structure: either through the kind of practical reasoning that Anscombe describes, or through the kinds of skill distinctive of 'know-how'. Basic actions, for Small, are those actions whose calculative order stem from the latter source, which source, properly understood, is supposed to ensure that basic actions are not structured in a way that the agent themselves is not cognizant of, *despite* the fact that they are not arrived at through calculation. There is a question here about where to draw the line between basic and non-basic actions so understood. For Small does not want the idea of calculative order had through practical reasoning to be simply a matter of what the agent consciously thought about in deliberating. This order can be there even when agent acts with *no* prior deliberation. But it is hard to see what distinguishes cases of basic and non-basic in that case, for if we can't distinguish between skilled and non-skilled calculative order based on when the agent has to consciously deliberate, then it is hard to see how else we can. I register this as a concern, rather than any kind of developed criticism of the view, which I take to be in any case consistent with what I have said here.

Chapter Five

Practical Reasoning and Goodness

1. Introduction

We have articulated a conception of practical reason as a causal capacity, one whose causality is intrinsically rational. We have seen how acts of this capacity are the realization of ends—both through specification of means, but also through basic acts of movement—as well as how these activities relate to those forms of propositional thought that are involved in practical reasoning: judgments about means and practical knowledge. However, as matters stand our account is crucially incomplete. For although we have elaborated the nature of the activities of this capacity—the rational 'mode of operation' peculiar to it—we have said nothing about what this capacity is ultimately *for*, what its actualizations are aimed at achieving, and therefore, what would constitute a successful actualization of this capacity.

Yet, one might think we already know what the capacity is for based on the foregoing. It is for what we have been discussing all along: acting! Acts are successful if they realize the agent's end, unsuccessful if they do not. We have, after all, been concerned with a capacity for *instrumental* rationality, and so the measure of its success would apparently be whether that capacity manages, through its activity, to realize an agent's end. That way of putting things is not wrong, but it is dangerously misleading. For it can encourage the idea, one I shall argue against in this chapter, that instrumental rationality can be understood independently of the agent's rational comprehension of the good of their action. The idea that instrumental rationality constitutes an independent fiefdom is widespread in contemporary philosophy. In the case of Neo-Humeans, this is hardly surprising—for

they take instrumental rationality to be the only form of practical rationality.[1] However, even Neo-Kantians and Neo-Aristotelians of various stripes are committed to the idea that instrumental reasoning can be understood independently of any other form of practical rationality that might exist.[2]

I shall challenge this common conception of instrumental rationality by demonstrating the way in which an agent's grasp of their end as good is an essential aspect of practical reasoning. This is not merely true of *us*, either in virtue of the particular practical life-form we are, nor in virtue of the kind of finite rational agent we are. For it belongs to the very idea of instrumental reasoning that, wherever it occurs, it proceeds from such an understanding on the part of the agent. The argument of this chapter will establish that the capacity for intentional action can be described not merely as the capacity to realize ends—but as the capacity to realize the good. Indeed, the interest of the account consists in its showing that these two descriptions are, properly understood, actually equivalent. For ends are realizable insofar as they are conceived of as good by their agents, unrealizable if not. The form of efficacy distinctive of rational agents is not merely instrumental efficacy—or instrumental efficacy in addition to an independently intelligible grasp of the good—it is an efficacy that flows directly from the agent's grasp of the goodness of their action. It is the efficacy of the good.

I just raised the question about the constitutive goal of practical reason in terms of the activity of realization—of what successful acts of realization would amount to. Yet we can equally raise the question in terms of practical knowledge: the agent's knowledge of what they are doing.

I argued in Chapter Three that practical knowledge has its source in the primary acts of practical reason; that I know what I am doing *by* doing it. A full account of practical knowledge would therefore have to explore in detail how its distinctive 'non-observational' character arises from the

[1] See, for example, Drier (1997) and Street (2010)
[2] For the Neo-Aristotelians, see Lavin (2017) and Thompson (2008), (2013). Korsgaard (2008) contains, I would argue, a version of such a view, but I accept that the attribution is more controversial. Engstrom's Kant, as we shall, certainly belongs in this camp.

activity of realization. Unfortunately, such an account lays beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, we can begin to sketch an outline such an account might take based on what we have said so far.

As Ford noted, because the activity of realizing ends involves a special kind of practical perception on the part of an agent, a form of perception that views the external world through the lens of the agent's various determinate practical capacities, agents are afforded a perceptual grasp of the world which is not merely 'derived from the things known.' However, insofar as the activity of realizing ends also involves the agent's bodily capacities for movement, it contains the source of a further aspect of practical knowledge. An agent is not knowledgeably related to the movements of their body through either ordinary perception or practical forms of perception just discussed. I do not need to check where my body is—or when I do—I do so not primarily through observation, but through moving my body. Indeed, my body is precisely that whose location I can determine through moving it, as I do when, waking in the middle of the night, I flex my limbs and roll about to work out what precise tangle I've gotten into during sleep. A full account of practical knowledge, then, would have to show how the agent's realization of ends provides for an agent's awareness of the whole of their action insofar as it comprises both the agent's awareness of their own body, but also, perceptually, the patients they are working on in action.

The nature of practical perception, and that of the agent's epistemic relation to their own body, are large topics that I cannot hope to do justice to here. What is important for our purposes is that the sources of practical knowledge just discussed are not sufficient for understanding what an agent knows when they know they are doing *A* by doing *B*. For the kind of actuality these modes of awareness afford presupposes the agent's non-observational knowledge of the *kinds* of things they are doing. Knowledge of the location of my body in space with respect to the external world—even with respect to the external world viewed through the lens of my capacities—is not enough to tell me

whether I am *A*-ing if I do not already have a conception of what *A*-ing consists in. I cannot make an omelet if I do not know what making one would be.

Practical reasoning must start from a conception of what its ends are, then, if it is to be successful. This may suggest that, despite what I said in Chapter Three about the priority of practical reasoning to practical knowledge, practical reasoning in fact takes as its starting point practical knowledge about an end the agent is realizing. I shall return to this point later in the chapter; for now I merely want to flag the question. What is important is that neither instrumental reasoning nor practical knowledge can be understood in the absence of this central component: the agent's comprehension of what they are doing, the end they are realizing. As we shall see, it is precisely a proper understanding of what this knowledge amounts to that undermines the idea of a capacity for practical reasoning that is that is merely instrumental.

The chapter proceeds as follows: In §2, I shall describe the central prerequisite for instrumental reasoning: the agent's need for a *determinate* conception of their end, of what they are doing. Through a contrast with theoretical reasoning, I shall argue that this conception requires, on the part of agents, an irreducibly practical understanding of the point of, the good of, their end—and show that this entails that instrumental reasoning cannot be assimilated to theoretical reasoning. In §3, I shall expand on this argument by exploring four progressively more sophisticated conceptions of so-called 'merely instrumental agents'; agents that engage instrumental reasoning *without* a conception of the good of their action, and show why they are all ultimately incoherent. Having demonstrated the unintelligibility of a merely instrumental agent, in §4 I turn to deriving some conclusions, based on the considerations advanced thus far in the chapter, about the nature of our final ends—those ends that ground the goodness of our particular ends. I argue that final ends necessarily form a harmonious unity, and that the activity of realizing this unity is the real source of an agent's conception of what they are doing. Finally, in §5 I broach the topic of actions of instrumental reasoning from bad ends. Since the

instrumental reasoning that flows from a bad end is privative—in virtue of the essential indeterminacy of its starting point—there is no coherent conception of an excellent instrumental reasoner whose ends are nevertheless bad. I offer an account of how we should understand reasoning from bad ends, given that it can appear, *qua* instrumental reasoning, to be perfectly valid.

2. The Prerequisite of Instrumental Reasoning

2.1 Determinate Ends

In theoretical reasoning, a general concept, such as 'red' can be used in any number of situations in order to characterize particular objects in judgments. I can say: '*This* is red'; 'The car is red'; 'Those jeans are red' etc. In each case the truth of my thought turns on how things are with the particular object my judgment concerns. Whether I am right or wrong in subsuming any object under the concept 'red' turns entirely on whether the object in question actually *is* red. The employment of an empirical concept is answerable to the *world*.

Now, in practical reasoning, it is the end that I start out with, e.g., 'make a pair of jeans' that is what sets the standards of success in my subsequent reasoning. The various means I adopt are answerable *to* my end. They only are means, that is, if they contribute to my realizing my end. The same is true of the basic acts I perform: They are only *successful* if they genuinely realize my intention. We can bring out the difference between the kinds of generality at play here through reference to the following table:

Table 3: Practical and Theoretical Determination

		Practical			Theoretical
C	Action	*Make a pair of jeans with this denim.* [C* *Make a pair of jeans with this* denim; C** Make a pair of jeans with this** denim*]		Particular	This is a pair of jeans
B	Means	*Make a pair of jeans* [B* *Make a pair of jeans,* B** *Make a pair of jeans*]		Species	Jeans
A	End	*Win "Project Runway"* [A* *Make something for a friend;* A** *Become an Elvis Impersonator*]		Genus	Clothing

At the bottom row of the table (A) we find the different kinds of generality that figure in practical and theoretical reasoning respectively: that of an end and that of a theoretical genus. In the middle row (B), we find in the practical column, a species of means that determines the end from the bottom row, and in the theoretical column, a species that is a further determination of the genus featuring in the bottom row. Finally, in the top row of the table, we find the particular action that the agent performs in order to realize their end; and, on the theoretical side, an employment of a species concept used to determine a particular object in judgment.

The first thing to note is that if I genuinely possess the theoretical concept, 'Jeans', I will know what particular objects will and will not fall under that concept. Furthermore, on the various occasions on which I am confronted with different pairs of jeans, I will not need to consult—implicitly or

explicitly—the genus concept, 'clothing', in order to assess whether or not some pairs of jeans really are 'jeans'. That question is already settled if I am prepared to subsume something under the concept 'jeans.' Just as, in thinking something blue, I do not need to check whether I am in fact *also* prepared to call it colored.

But now consider the practical case. Let's say I want to determine my means with respect to action: 'making a pair of jeans.' (That is, I want to progress from Row B to Row C on the table.) The end I am realizing is not something I can presuppose simply in virtue of a comprehension of the means. For depending on what end making some jeans is in service of, making them with some kinds of denim will not constitute a true realization of my end. Consider the various ends to which making the jeans might be the means: I might want to win the reality TV show 'Project Runway', in which case they need to be impressive objects of high fashion. If so, a classic blue denim won't cut the mustard. Yet perhaps I am simply making a gift for a friend who appreciates simplicity in attire, and also fancies himself to be a bit of a cowboy. Or perhaps making these jeans is a preparatory step in my own goal of becoming an Elvis impersonator, which may require a different kind of material again. In all cases, what will constitute the correct determination of my means action will differ according to my end. So, although the means that appear as B, B* and B** above can all be picked out by the same concept, they determine importantly different means depending on whether they are determinations of A, A* or A**.

In the theoretical case, my being prepared to subsume an indefinite array of objects under the concept 'jeans' just *is* my being prepared to subsume any such object under the concept of 'clothing'. Yet my standing prepared to determine any ends I may at some point adopt through the means: 'making a pair of jeans' does *not* put me in a position to know, in advance, which ends, what practical generality, making a pair of jeans will be a determination of. The fact that the successful employment of means does not turn on how things stand with a particular object—but rather on whether the

concepts realize the *end*—entails that we cannot know whether such concepts are employed correctly without taking into account the very end that they are determinations of. And since *different* ends may be realized by employment of the same means, what it is to adopt some means should not be understood on the model of the employment of theoretical concepts.

What these observations bring to the fore is the special notion of 'kind' that pertains to action. What kind an action belongs to can be radically altered in virtue of what other actions it is taken in pursuit of. In Chapter Three I noted three aspects of practical generality that particular ends display. First, instrumental generality: the kind of generality that is determined through specification of means. Second, the generality belonging the kind of end to which each particular end belongs. Third, the kind of generality that is opposed to an action's completion, that belongs to an action that is still underway. We can now see that the second kind of generality is intimately related to the first. For in making one action a means to another of my actions, I thereby bring it under a new kind. So, for example, in Anscombe's famous case, a mere pumping can, through practical reasoning, become be a poisoning.

An important consequence of this fact is that means are *determinables* that are not fully *determinate* in isolation from their employment in realizing a particular end. In our example, the bare idea of making a pair of jeans is not determinate, but is merely awaiting determination, until it is brought into connection with a particular end. What counts as successfully making jeans will differ depending on what end is in question, because without that criterion of success that they provide, the internal instrumental structure of the action itself will be left undetermined. So, the end is precisely what allows us to see what the means really are.

That ends provide such determinacy can be explained, I propose, by the fact that knowing *what* action one is performing requires knowing *why* one is performing it—and this is precisely what the end provides: the point of the action.

Of course, the special sense of the question 'Why?' that elicits reasons for action is not restricted to means actions; for our ends are subject to the very same question. Indeed, they are generally referred to using the very same concepts. They themselves are no more than merely determinable unless we know why they are being performed. For example, even if the reason I'm making jeans is that I'm making a gift for a friend, to know what constitutes a means to *that* end requires knowing why I'm making them a gift in the first place. And, if I have no further end in sight, the reason why I'm making a gift—the characterization of the point of doing *that*—will still affect what means promote the pursuit of my goal (not all gifts are equally suitable on every occasion of gift giving).

In summary, an action is *determinate* only if the agent realizing it knows what would constitute a successful realization of it. Knowing what constitutes a successful realization of it requires knowing why one is performing it. I shall call any action where this is not the case *indeterminate*. Determinate means presuppose determinate ends. In other words, that our ends must be such as to enable us to see what would constitute means towards them. For, as we said above, it is the end that sets the standard—only it can determine whether any given means can realize that end. To have determinate means, we need to have determinate ends; yet, as we said, to have determinate end actions, we need a grasp of the point—the reason—why we are performing them.

In suggesting that what makes an end determinate is the agent's comprehension of the point of what they are doing, I mean to echo Anscombe's claim that an agent's ends, in order to *be* ends, must be susceptible to what she calls desirability characterizations.[3] In other words, the agent whose ends they are must be able to say something (barring any accidental barriers to their articulacy) about what makes that end the sort of thing one would pursue, what make it intelligibly desirable. However, although Anscombe claims that intentional actions pursued in practical reasoning must be susceptible

[3] Anscombe (1959, §37)

to desirability characterizations—it is not enough to understand someone as taking means in pursuit of their end that they *just want to do it*—she does not directly connect this idea to the internal structure of the A-D order, to which the desirability characterization, though necessary, is external. I propose that there is a direct connection here, which is simply that without some general conception of the point of what one is doing—the desirability of that which one is pursuing—one does not know *what* it is one is doing, so cannot work out how to do it.

Desirability characterizations, then, in making an agent's end determinate, allow the agent to select, from any number of possible actions, those and only those that would properly constitute a realization of their end. Whereas an indeterminate end leaves open whether or not it is undertaken with a view to some further end, a determinate end does not leave this question open. When this question *is* left open with respect to a given end, the instrumental structure of any action thought to realize it is itself irreparably indeterminate, because it is not known to which end, if any, the action is ultimately oriented.

In making a particular end determinate, a desirability characterization also provides the end in question (or the end to which it is in turn a means) the property of *finality*—for it rules out that the end in question is being pursued for some further end to which it is the means. If this were not ruled out, the agent's end would not be determinate.

Now, it might be thought strange to think of particular ends such as making jeans as final in this way. But desirability characterizations determine ends by showing how they are manifestations of ends that are not particular. Making a pair of jeans can be, for example, a manifestation of more general ends such as: living a glorious existence, being a good friend, becoming the next Versace. Candace Vogler describes these reasons for action as 'radically interminable' insofar as their pursuit cannot be thought of as being brought to an end in any of the particular actions which are performed for the

sake of them.[4] Sebastian Rödl is driving at a similar idea in a different way in speaking of 'infinite ends': ends that, due to their being radically interminable, are not best thought of as a kinesis, but rather an *energeia* although they are manifested *in* particular ends that have the form of a kinesis.[5] Both Vogler and Rödl are articulating the features of final ends: ends that are pursued by agents as intrinsically valuable, and whose value explicates their pursuit of the more particular ends that are manifestations of them.

I shall not, for the moment, give a further characterization of infinite or (non-local) radically interminable ends, but merely point out that if the good of an action is not merely that it is useful (i.e. a means to some further end) then it will be good in virtue of being the manifestation of an end that takes this form. (I put to the side, for the moment, the question of actions that are performed from pleasure.) The importance of this fact is that it shows how the agent's comprehension of the good of their action, involves a comprehension of their action as the realization of something practical—a comprehension of it as the manifestation of a pursuit that is in principle unlimited. Whatever we make of the agent's understanding of such pursuits, it is important they are not the kind of comprehension that is simply theoretical: 'derived from the things known', as Anscombe puts it.

2.2 Is Instrumental Rationality a Theoretical Achievement?

On the account just sketched, the agent's determination of their means is a peculiarly practical excellence, insofar as it requires the agent's conception of the point, or good of what they are doing. The concepts used to describe an agent's end independently of a desirability characterization do not

[4] Vogler (2002, p.43) distinguishes between non-local radically interminable reasons (reasons that explain many different actions, and have no set terminus) and local radically interminable reasons (reasons for particular actions, but that have no set terminus). The former are what I am concerned with, the latter are reasons for action that make reference to *pleasure*.
[5] Rodl (2007, p.38)

determine, merely by themselves, what would constitute a realization of those ends, but rather must instead be referred to an understanding of those concepts that relate them to the pursuit of a final end.

This characterization breaks with a fundamental assumption of contemporary work on practical rationality, namely the idea that means-end rationality is a *theoretical* excellence, albeit one that is pursued in service of a practical aim. If this were the case, then—contrary to what *I* have said—the specification of means to one's ends would appear to consist, not in an act of realization, but in one of *subsumption*, in which an independent reality is brought under a general concept. The idea that practical reasoning is a matter of subsumption can seem natural for two reasons. First of all, it can look as though practical reasoning does consist in subsuming means under the concepts of ends. One might think, for example, that in the same way that I can say 'that car is red', or 'red *is* a color,' so too I can say: "operating *that* pump *is* poisoning the inhabitants of the house." Secondly, instrumental reasoning obviously must depend in some way on theoretical knowledge. We need to know how the world works—a world that does not depend for its existence on our thoughts about it—if we are to get anywhere in achieving our goals.

Although we obviously need to make room for these observations, we should not do so by understanding instrumental reasoning as a form of theoretical reasoning. I have already argued in Chapter Three against the idea that practical reasoning is merely a matter of making judgments. However, even if that thought were granted, it still might be thought that the judgments we *do* make in practical reasoning could be purely theoretical judgments. It is necessary, then, to consider what is wrong about this idea.

Consider a practical syllogism, written out in a way that is as friendly as possible to a purely theoretical conception of the minor premise as possible:

1. Break some eggs.
2. Hitting eggs on the side of the bowl will break them.

∴ Hit some eggs on the side of the bowl.

The minor premise of this syllogism is, on the suggestion we are considering, an ordinary theoretical belief about a certain species of causal interaction. However, if that were really the case, the concept of 'breaking eggs' that features within it would have to be independent of the end that appears in the major premise. For that end is determined by the agent's practical understanding of the point of their end. However, to repeat our earlier observations with respect to this example, what counts as successfully breaking eggs will differ depending on what one is up to in breaking eggs. It makes all the difference in the world as to how one breaks eggs if one's end requires keeping the egg yolks fully intact. And if the point of breaking eggs is to surprise your partner in the adjacent room with breakfast in bed, then you had better do it without making much noise. It would seem then, that the merely theoretical judgment must somehow be controlled by the agent's general conception of what they are doing in realizing their end. But why does that point require us to give up on the idea that the minor premise is, in itself, an act of *theoretical* reason?

In one of McDowell's discussions of Aristotle's moral psychology we find an account of instrumental reasoning that grants the theoretical nature of the minor premise, while nevertheless allowing that the major premise is the product of a genuinely practical kind of thinking. He says that:

> If behaviour-directed thought is to be recognizable as thought at all, as an exercise of the intellect, there must be room for the notion of getting things right. With instrumental deliberation, this requirement is comparatively easy to satisfy. This kind of deliberation is not called on to establish that the posited end is worthy of pursuit;

> we can take that as given from outside the deliberation itself…Assuming the end, we can satisfyingly base the notion of deliberative correctness on the notion of reliable efficacy…This does not require us to countenance an excellence in thought that is in any real sense distinctively practical; the ideal for this kind of deliberation is to apply, in the pursuit of given ends, knowledge that is in itself theoretical, about what can relied on to bring about what.[6] (1998, p.24-5)

The pursuit worthiness of the end pursued—something McDowell thinks could *not* be established through knowledge that is theoretical—is something presupposed by the instrumental syllogism. As such, McDowell seems either to think that the particular end that features in the major premise of an instrumental syllogism could in principle be grasped by an agent who lacks an understanding of the practical point of the end; or alternatively, that even if the agent must be aware of the point of the end, that somehow the minor premise should anyway be able to be grasped independently of knowing *that*. But neither of these options is plausible as an account of a syllogism. The major premise, *qua* the starting point of instrumental reasoning, must presuppose knowledge of the reason for performing one's action, on pain of not being a determinate end—something which we've seen instrumental reasoning presupposes. Neither is it plausible that the minor premise is purely theoretical, for if it were, the syllogism would ultimately be equivocating in virtue of introducing a theoretical notion of the agent's action in the minor premise by means of the same term that was used, in the major premise, to denote something our understanding of involves something irreducibly practical. The same words would appear twice, but they would bear a different meaning in each case—for the end grasped *practically* would be determined in a way that the same end, grasped theoretically, would not be. As

[6] The truth of the minor premise is 'presumably afforded by ordinary cognitive capacities' (29), the word 'ordinary' here indicating merely theoretical capacities.

such, the truth of the minor premise would be irrelevant to the agent's purposes, for it would no longer be specifying means to the agent's ends, but to something else altogether.

McDowell's picture of the instrumental syllogism makes it seem as if instrumental reasoning could transition from a practical conception of an end, to an end *qua* object-of-theoretical-reason. But the latter cannot serve as a premise in instrumental reasoning, for our ends are not theoretical entities. The generality that belongs to ends, and that must be made progressively more concrete in practical reasoning, is not the kind of thing whose causal genesis we can reflect on merely theoretically. From the only perspective that matters—that of the agent—the end is something that must be made progressively actual through practical reason. This activity requires a conception of one's *purpose* that is absent in theoretical reason.

If all that instrumental reasoning consisted in was, for example, knowledge of causal relations, then it would be a different matter. But it does not. It may well be true that, for example, 'if that poison gets in that water, then those people will die'. It may also be a central insight in my attempts to kill them. But my practical reasoning concerns my own action, my *putting* the poison there. So, for me, the practical reasoner, the question is: What exactly will count *as* putting the poison there? That depends on what counts as killing them, in this context, and *that* depends on my purpose. If I am opposing a brutal regime, then making them look like martyrs may well hinder my cause. If they have made me prisoner in their camp, then their death better not be of a sort to draw attention. There is no hope of escaping these kinds of concerns by reducing instrumental reasoning to knowledge of causal relations. The point is not that the action concepts invoked in practical premises are simply *non*-causal. The point is that the kind of causality they refer to depends essentially on the agent's comprehension of what they are doing. As such, there is no hope of understanding the significance of the action concepts that arise in instrumental reasoning as involving a form of causality that can be understood independently of the agent's grasp of the good of what they are doing.

We cannot, in our practical employment of action concepts, separate out two distinct elements: the understanding of our ends as good, and another element which, entirely regardless of whether what we take the good of them to be, can identify what would count as a realization of those ends.[7] This is not to deny that the agent must have some conception, when practically reasoning, of 'what can be relied on to bring about what.' But it is to deny that it can only consist in this.

The conception of instrumental reasoning as a theoretical achievement is a crucial component of the idea that instrumental reasoning can stand apart from an agent's conception of their end as good. For if one really *can* reason how to bring about an end through thought that is not "in any real sense distinctively practical," then all we need in order to realize our ends is theoretical reason: reason that does not have a distinctively practical grasp of ends as such, but only of ends thought of as theoretical entities.

Still, even if instrumental reasoning is not theoretical reasoning, one might still want to reject the idea that a conception of our ends as good is what is needed for instrumental reasoning. For one might think that understanding the action's goodness, though perhaps able to determine an end in a way that allows for instrumental reasoning, is not the only thing capable of determining an end. In order to argue against this idea, I shall consider four increasingly demanding conceptions of a 'merely instrumental agent': an agent whose reasoning does not require the kind of comprehension I've argued

[7] The idea that knowledge of means is merely theoretical knowledge of causal relations is no doubt susceptible to more sophisticated articulations. One could involve picking up on a strand of thought in Kant, namely that in hypothetical imperatives we find theoretical knowledge, *qua* matter, in a practical form. (Rodl (2011) has an analysis along these lines). The two cognitive achievements would be practical knowledge of what is to be done (form), and theoretical knowledge of how to do it (matter.) A virtue of this approach may seem to be that it allows a strong dependency between the two kinds of knowledge at play in instrumental reasoning without entirely collapsing them. But although such a view does well, it seems, to distinguish between two different kinds of knowledge that are drawn on in practical thought—knowledge of an end as good on the whole, and knowledge of the various worldly facts that can be *drawn* on in realizing this end—the hylomorphic relation is too strong for us to speak of genuinely independent achievements here. Consider that the theoretical knowledge, *qua* matter, cannot exist independently of its form. Insofar as it can, it is no longer functioning practically, but merely becomes theoretical knowledge. But then it is no longer the same knowledge. More would need to be said about this specific proposal, but ultimately the idea that 'B-ing is a means to A-ing' could be exactly the same piece of knowledge regardless of whether the agent has a grasp on 'A-ing' as good in their major premise, undermines the unity of the practical syllogism.

it does—moving from the most basic to the most sophisticated—in order to better appreciate the force of my argument against the idea that anything but a rational comprehension of one's end as good could form the starting point of instrumental reasoning.

3. Merely Instrumental Agents

3.1 Merely Instrumental Agent No.1: The 'Naïve' Agent'

Our first agent is constructible, using nothing other than the materials present in Michael Thompson's 'Naïve Action Theory.' As such, it is not even a Humean agent; that is, its consciousness of its own actions makes no reference to desire. This gives us our thinnest possible conception of an instrumental agent—for all we are granting is that it is conscious of realizing one action concept by realizing another.

For Thompson, the fundamental explainer of an intentional action—what 'rationalizes' intentional action, in the jargon of contemporary action theory—is just another intentional action. If you want to know why I'm breaking eggs, then it is my making an omelet, first and foremost, that explains it; not that I desired such-and-such and believed that things were thus-and-so. These so-called 'sophisticated' explanations are explanatorily posterior. Thompson thus defines an intentional action as that which can figure as the *answer* to a 'Why?'-question when the answer given is a naïve rationalization. But another way of putting this, is that, for Thompson, an intentional action is something to which a special sense of the question 'How'? is applicable. For something done intentionally is essentially something that is done for the sake of something else.

According to Thompson, we can understand the form of intentional action without having to take into view anything like final ends, appetites, sensible desires etc. Indeed, his argument for the

priority of naïve rationalization over sophisticated rationalization turns on the intelligibility of 'naïve agents': agents who can do one thing by doing another, but of whom various 'psychical' explanations are not applicable. Consequently, there is a possible form of rational agency in which actions can be explained *simply* in terms of their being part of some further unfolding action the agent is engaged in.

If the naïve agent is self-consciously realizing actions by performing other actions, it needs to know what will count as a means to its end. But naïve agency is, *ex hypothesi*, exhaustively characterized using action-concepts that have not been rendered determinate. Naïve Agents have, at the top of their chain of means, action-concepts like 'make an omelet'; however, they lack any way of knowing what could count as *realizing* such an end—since they have no grasp of the point of their doing so. To have such a grasp, we would need to introduce as part of our naïve agent's repertoire of cognitive achievement, the appreciation of *reasons* for performing their end-actions—but these are off-limits to the naïve agent.

The above paragraph repeats our argument from the previous section. However, it is worth considering a variant of the thought that all that is needed to realize an end is an action concept left undetermined by reasons. For it is easy to think of cases in which agents—human agents—give one another orders: "Make an omelet!", "Climb that hill!", "Kill those men!" and so on. Can't we tell or ask people to do things, without having to explain our reasons for why we want them to do the things in question? If we can, then it seems that we are *all* able to function, from time to time, in the way that naïve agents function.

Although it is true that I rarely need a complete conception of what someone's reason are for asking me to do what they do, it cannot be the case that I have absolutely *no* conception of what those reasons may be, or better: of what kinds of reason they have for asking me to do what they do. If my friend asks me to make an omelet, I will assume, based on the context, what they want it for—a quick snack, a gourmet treat, or perhaps a display item for the front window of their shop. Or consider the

army squadron, who are sent to the top of the hill 'and no questions corporal!' ("theirs is not to reason why, theirs is but to do or die"); even in this case, interpreting the order will require a certain understanding of what being at the top of the hill should consist in, in accordance with the norms that control, as it were, the good of a squadron. Presumably everyone should get there, and with all of their equipment intact, and not by cartwheeling or using satirical songs about the army's chain of command to keep up morale. In all such cases, the agents in question are already drawing on an interpretative framework that far outstrips the capacities of the naïve agent, to whom all these forms of thought are *ex hypothesi* utterly alien. There may be some indeterminacy in their reasoning, but not complete indeterminacy.

3.2 Merely Instrumental Agent No. 2: The Humean Agent

We can think of the next kind of instrumental agent as the result of an attempt to supplement the idea of the naïve agent so as to fix the problem just encountered, but without yielding something *more* than a merely instrumental agent. This instrumental agent pursues ends, not for *no* reason, but simply because it desires them. Mere desire is the additional element required to determine its end, thereby rendering it a suitable starting point of instrumental calculation.

In his defense of the Humean theory of motivation, Michael Smith raises Davidson's example of a man who has had a yen to drink a can of paint. According to Smith,

> knowing that he has always had a yen to drink a can of paint does provide us, and him, with a partial justification of his action, albeit a justification that only justifies from the perspective of assigning value to the action of drinking a can of paint, a perspective

> that he himself may occupy only to the extent that he has a yen to drink a can of paint,
>
> a perspective that none of us may actually share. (1987, p.39)

Justification of action here, simply amounts to thinking that there is 'something to be said' for the action from the agent's point of view—not in any kind of objective justification of the action. Smith's thought here can therefore appear superficially similar to Anscombe's line of thought to the effect that an end, to be an end, must be susceptible to a desirability characterization. However, for Smith, what you have to say in favor of your action can simply be that you desire to do it. A desire here, is not meant to be conceived of in terms of a brute phenomenological attraction to something, but is merely understood in terms of being disposed towards something.

Yet the mere fact that I want to do something does not by itself shed any light on *what* it is I want to do. If I do not know what it would be to eat a sandwich, then it is *no* help at all if you tell me it is something that you really want to do. What we need is an account of how desire is able to determine an end in such a way such that one could know what would constitute performing it—of what would constitute taking means towards it. No account is forthcoming. Smith has simply *presupposed* that we have the capacity to understand action-concepts as determinate. He defines the desire to A as a 'functional state' that is a disposition to A, or reduces to a set of dispositions to A. But this definition of desire simply presupposes the determinateness of the action concept it cites in the definition of desire—it does nothing to secure it.

Ultimately, the same concerns that were raised here against the 'naïve agent' still hold against the Humean agent, and they will continue to hold in the absence of an account of how mere desire allows us to determine an end. The problem in the Humean theory is precisely that the relation between reasons and actionable desires is the reverse of what it needs to be. We need reasons in order to render desire determinate—not the other way around. We need to know how the mere fact that I

want to do *A* can allow me to distinguish between the various things that *A*-ing would consist in, thereby allowing me to take the means to *A*.

3.3 Merely Instrumental Agent No. 3: Engstrom's Atomic Practical Thinker

The two final forms of merely instrumental agents I will consider are abstracted from two moments in Stephen Engstrom's elaboration of what he calls a 'practical thinker.' Although Engstrom does not think we human beings are practical thinkers, his account is of interest to us precisely because it seeks to explicate, in a way that contemporary Humean accounts do not, the precise relation between an agent's end and their non-rational desire. Now, the word 'thinker' in 'practical thinker' must be heard as contrasting with 'practical knower': the latter being an agent in whom reason is, in the Kantian sense, properly practical. A practical knower is able to set ends for herself without having to pay heed in any way to her inclinations. We are not mere thinkers—*we* have practical *knowledge*. But he does defend the possibility of such a being, and he elaborates in detail the structure of capacities that characterize such a being.

Engstrom gives the following description of mere practical thought:

> As spontaneously efficacious, practical thinking is a type of desiderative representation in which the self-consciousness distinctive of conceptual representation belongs to the representation's very efficacy, to the striving constituting it as desire. This amounts to saying that the efficacy of practical thinking is integral to the thinking itself, so that the self-consciousness essential to thinking in general also pertains, in the case of practical thinking, to that thinking's efficacy, its productive power, and hence that the efficacy

> depends on the consciousness of it. Thus, practical thinking *can* make its object actual through and only through its *consciousness* that it can do so. (2009*,* p.30)

Practical thought is the capacity to act through representations of action that are inherently productive. However, this mere capacity to form intentions—that is, to have representations that make their object actual—does not explicate why the practical thinker is motivated to form intentions in the first place. In a being in whom reason alone cannot motivate the formation of intentions, we need something more—we need sensible *desire*. Engstrom describes sensible desire as a:

> …form of awareness [which] falls squarely under the heading of feeling—pleasure or displeasure—rather than thinking…What is distinctive of inclination, or sensible desire…is that the efficacy by which it works to bring the object it represents into existence is one the awareness of which lies in the feeling that accompanies it, salient modes of which are pleasure in the presence of the object (the enjoyment of an apple, for instance) and displeasure or pain where that object's realization is blocked or hindered. (2009, p.30)

Engstrom's thought can be described as follows: I have a representation of an object *that* I find pleasing—or better: I have a pleasing representation of an object—and this representation has a tendency to secure the continued existence of a representation of that very form. It does so in virtue of causing me to form the intention to make the object represented actual, and to maintain its actuality. To use Engstrom's example: The pleasure found in biting into the apple makes me form an intention to eat the next bite, thereby reproducing the very sensation in question.

So, how does sensible desire determine an agent's action-concept, in order to give them a starting point of instrumental reasoning—that is, how does it give them an *end*? Now, when speaking of practical *knowers* Engstrom fully admits that it is the task of practical thought to provide the concept of an end, he says that:

> the decision to pursue the object is a formation of intention, which, though its efficacy depends on the presence of sensible desire for the object, includes *a new ingredient not originally contained in that desire*, namely, a representation of the action. (2009 p.123; emphasis mine.)

But when discussing the merely practical *thinker*, he says that:

> "In such a being, reason would have only the subalternate or derivative function of *further specifying given action specifications*, never that of supporting them through providing an original, or immediate, specification" (2009 p.92; emphasis mine.)

Judging by the first quotation, it seems that he should not have admitted that sensible desire can *ever* provide an action specification. For the action specification is supposed to be provided for by something not found in mere desire, but stems from the full-blown practical knowledge distinctive of finite rational agents such as ourselves. Now, in the second quotation he claims that a practical thinker can only further specify *given* action specifications—but that raises the question, from where are these action specifications given if they cannot come from desire, nor from our awareness of the categorical imperative? The thought must be that, in the practical *thinker*, the capacity to simply form intentions is somehow able to provide an action specification.

So how does action specification work in the practical thinker? If sensible desire is merely the awareness, or expectation, of a pleasurable sensation, then it will not be able by itself to provide specifications of actions. That will have to stem from the capacity associated with practical thought, the capacity to form *intentions*. It is important to recognize that this is true even if the very thing comprehended as providing pleasure *is* an action. If eating an apple is precisely what is pleasurable, *qua* object of sensible desire, it is nevertheless not the source of the action-concept 'eating an apple'—for it is only receptively aware of this action—it is only affected *by* the action. This is Engstrom's considered interpretation of Kant, but it also lines up with our own findings in the previous section—a mere disposition does not determine an end. Consequently, it seems our end concepts must stem from practical thought. On the basis of what sensible desire gives the practical thinker, the practical thinker must be able to give itself an end. But the bare content of sensible desire does not provide something of the right kind for the agent to 'work up' into an end through practical thought. Sure, the apple *seems nice*—it gives me pleasurable sensations—and let's grant that that in itself that leads me to do something. The question is this: What, precisely, does it lead me to do?

The sheer indeterminacy of any action based on sensible desire can be brought out quite easily if we pose a few questions about it from the perspective of the agent. Should I aim to get the very apple before my eyes? Or should I instead adopt means that ensure that I don't just get one apple, but rather, as many apples as possible? Will any apple suffice, or should I avoid the poisoned ones? Some of these answers will strike us as 'absurd,' but the real problem is that we have no principle to rule any of them in or out. The point is that nothing in desire answers *any* such question: either positively, negatively or with indifference. And this is just to say that there is no such thing as going right or wrong in the pursuit of the apple—no standard of correctness, and hence, no instrumental reasoning.

Now, one might think this is an artificial problem derived from the fact that I am only considering a *single* end. One might think these questions *will* be provided for once we bring further

ends into the picture so that we have not just my sensible desire for apple-based pleasure, but also my sensible desire *not* to suffer the pain of a poisoning, and also my sensible desire *not* to be so full of apples that it hurts—and so on. But this is an illusion. These further ends are, after all, no *more* determinate than the one I started out from. The thought just cited, one true of us—namely, that ends are partly determined by the existence and content of other ends—is of no help here. For I cannot balance my desire for an apple against my desire to avoid the pain of being over-full if I do not *already* have some idea of what satisfying the first desire amounts to. We have just multiplied the original problem. Sensible desire does not give us the right kind of content to enable a determinate employment of an action-concept—an end; and since practical thought only has sensible desire to go on, it seems it cannot arrive at the starting point for instrumental reasoning.

3.4 Merely Instrumental Agent No.4: Engstrom's Prudential Practical Thinker

Thus far, I have only drawn on one aspect of the capacity that Engstrom ascribes to the practical thinker. Engstrom also claims that a practical thinker is capable of prudence: It does not merely *have* multiple desires, it has a conception of the totality of its desires. As Engstrom puts it, such a being is:

> capable of intention, of efficacious action specification, and hence of an efficacious self-conception, including a *conception of the totality of the somehow practicable activities in which its happiness consists*, and is in addition capable of rational deliberation in the specification of this conception and the means for its realization. (2009, p.92)

In virtue of having a conception of its desires as a totality, perhaps the practical thinker can determine its ends in a way that allows for instrumental reasoning. The idea of what it is to conceive of one's

desires as a totality will have to be handled carefully. Asserting that the prudential practical thinker is capable of pursuing its desires consistently with one another by jointly pursuing them, presupposes that we already understand what we wanted the conception of a totality to explain: namely, the agent's knowledge of what it would *be* to realize *any* of its ends in the first place. As we saw above, introducing more and more desires will not by itself account for the determinacy of an agent's particular end or intention. So presumably, the thought will be that, by conceiving of our desires as a totality, the agent will have found a way to develop determinate ends from those desires, and thus achieve precisely what the mere addition of desires by the atomic practical thinker was unable to achieve.

Yet here the prudential practical thinker is on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, if the reasoned conception of a totality of desires includes anything more than a way of working out how to realize a totality of desires that are already able to ground determinate ends, then we will have introduced a new principle in order to structure our desires—one that, as soon as we give it any real content, will exceed the capacities of a merely prudential being. For example, the concept of a totality may take the form of the idea that intense but short-lived desires that lead to an early demise should be jettisoned in favor of gentler desires that promise longer fulfillment. As such, it would provide a kind of determinacy for ends based on desires, a determinacy that involves choosing means that promote a quiet but reasonably content existence. Yet in so doing, this conception introduces a notion of a valuable way of going about things, one that goes beyond any particular desire, and that embodies a rational conception of how to pursue desires. If, on the other hand, the concept of a totality gives us anything less than this, then our objection against the 'atomic' practical thinker will apply here too: The totality in question will simply be a totality of desires that, by themselves, are unable to provide action specifications. We either rescue the intelligibility of the prudential practical thinker but only by granting it a form of rationality that is more than merely instrumental, or else, like its atomic kin, its ends will be irredeemably indeterminate.

4. Final Ends

4.1 The Unity of Final Ends

The role of desirability characterizations, I said, is to reveal the pursuit-worthiness of a given end. I also said that what a characterization of an end as pursuit-worthy does, when it is not being characterized as merely useful, is show the way in which that end is a manifestation or instance of a more general kind of end, one whose pursuit is inherently valuable, in the sense that its being valuable does not require reference to some further end that confers its value upon it. For example, my particular act of giving a gift to a friend maybe be good insofar as it is a manifestation of the general end I have of being a friend: an end whose goodness is not conferred upon it from some further end it is in pursuit of, but is viewed as simply good. The true nature of the goodness of final ends is, ultimately, a subject matter for ethics. Whether final ends are good because they exhibit the form of rationality distinctive of finite rational beings, or because they partake in the Form of the Good, or because they are the ends proper to our life-form, or because they exhibit a kind of goodness intuited by moral agents with the requisite capacity, is not something we can hope to settle here. However, we can say something positive about the character of final ends from the perspective of what we have said about practical reason thus far in this dissertation. Indeed, if the argument of the last section stands, we have already ruled out *one* conception of final ends, on which they can be simply those actions we 'merely' desire—and we did so simply by reflecting on what instrumental reason has to be. In this section, I want to show, first, that the role an agent's final ends play in instrumental reasoning shows that they must necessarily be compatible with another—and, second, that this form of compatibility is not explained through reference to some further practical end the agent has: for example, the pursuit of a harmonious existence.

Let us assume, quite plausibly, that an agent has more than one final end—has some further kind of goal in life than simply being that of a friend. In other words, that agents have a number of 'radically interminable' or 'infinite' ends. This means that, in any episode of practical reasoning in which they are realizing one of these general ends through a particular end that they have, they will be concerned not just to realize that end, but also to avoid the *hindrance* of their further ends. To see a clear example of failure in this regard, think of Anscombe's example of someone who, in order to roast a pig, decides to burn down the house.[8] If one final end, the one that makes roasting a pig a good thing to do, can be described as something like 'self-sustenance', then burning down the house would appear to be an action which in this case realizes that good. Yet it is clearly a mad act. That is presumably because the agent has some other ends that burning down one's house hinder in what is clearly quite a serious way. Now, perhaps in this case the end in question is in fact the very same one, when we locate it at the correct level of generality. Having shelter and having food, could both be viewed perhaps as manifestation of the more general end of 'health'. But we can also imagine it's my neighbor's house I decide to roast the pig in. Here the end of friendship, or probably just justice, would seem to be what speaks against my pursuing my own health in this way.

There are different ways to understand what this failure of practical reasoning would consist in. On one understanding, roasting the pig by burning down the house is a perfectly good way to pursue my own healthiness, it is just that, as it happens, I also have another end: neighborliness, and this speaks against this particular path to dinner. On another understanding, roasting the pig by burning down the house is not even a pursuit of health, for it belongs to my final end of health that it is simply incompatible with gross violations of communal existence. Health won by any manner of wronging of other individuals is no longer something I am interested in, something I cannot even recognize *as* health anymore—not in any sense that I can understand.

[8] Anscombe (1980)

I think the latter conception of the case is far more natural a characterization of how we in fact see things, but there is a logical consideration that tells against the former understanding. The former understanding of ends needs to explain the fact that I do not burn down the house in order to roast the pig through a further end of mine, namely, the end of pursuing both health and neighborliness at *once*. The reason why is this: burning down the house is not something that health, in itself, speaks against on this conception (assuming I'm a skilled pyromaniac). Somehow neighborliness needs to impinge on my action here—and yet all we have are two final ends that in this case are opposed to one another. So how can they suitably constrain the pursuit of one another? The idea of a hierarchy of ends here is a red herring, since it need not be the case that I value either above the other. Friendship and health, to me, may well be equally 'absolute' concerns. So, in order to bring them into suitable relation to one another, it can seem like my refusing to burn down the house can only be explained by my being committed, not simply to the fact that pursuing health *and* pursuing neighborliness are both things I do—but that I am also committed to the end of pursuing each in a manner harmonious with the other.

That doesn't sound so bad: aren't we committed to as harmonious as possible a pursuit of our ends? However, the difficulty lies in understanding the agent's commitment to harmony as the commitment to a *further end*. For now the question is, why is it that I pursue these *three* ends: health, neighborliness and harmony among ends? If neighborliness and health did not already contain, as the ends they are, their harmony with one another, then it is unclear why they should contain the idea of their being harmonious with the proposed 'meta-end' of pursuing each in harmony. And this seems to entail an infinite regress of 'meta-ends', because none of them are able, by itself, to ground the unity of the others.

Alternatively, though, one might suggest that there is a further principle of practical reasoning—something like a principle of prudence—that does not figure in practical reasoning as a

further end, but is nevertheless not built into the content of the final ends themselves. However, as our reflection on Engstrom's prudential agent showed, it is hard to see precisely how such a principle should be seen as getting a grip on practical reasoning. What grounds our selection of means, both in terms of the particular ends we decide upon that count as manifestations of final ends, and in terms of the means we take to realize those particular actions, is our understanding of their goodness. For what we might call a 'formal' principle of harmony to apply in our deliberations, it would have to seem to us to be something worth pursuing—but why? Why bother with harmony? Any explanation of why we should, I think, would have to appeal to something contentfully *good* about harmony—in other words by making harmony a final end in itself, something that is worth pursuing.

What this shows, I think, is that the compatibility or, rather the *unity* of final ends, is not something that can be explained in terms of further meta-ends of which they are in pursuit, but must be intrinsic to final ends themselves. What each final end is, is already something that is suitably related to the other ends that I have. Only then can we make sense of the restrictions we do in fact place on the pursuit of particular final ends in light of one another.

Furthermore, corresponding to this idea of a unity of final ends, is the idea of a unity of their goodness. Since each of them must be pursued in light of the others, the good of one is simultaneously the good of the all, insofar as to pursue it properly is to be pursuing them properly, i.e., without hindering them. The unity of our final ends, therefore, is the unity of their goodness; perhaps we might say: the good.

4.2 Knowing What One is Doing

We are now in a position to discuss the concern I flagged in the introduction, namely, that practical knowledge seems to consist, not just in those pieces of knowledge about what I am doing that result

from the activity of realizing my ends, but in the more fundamental conception of *what* I am doing. That kind of knowledge, it seems, was not something I came to *by* realizing my particular ends, but something my realization of those ends presupposed. I think this is right, but it is important to get in view precisely what is being presupposed here. In grasping the determinacy of one's end, one is ultimately grasping something which makes that end good: the final end which it is a manifestation of. But that end is something which the agent is *realizing*. As we said earlier, it belongs to the pursuit of final ends that they do not terminate in any particular acts, and are pursued through the whole series of acts that manifest them. Judgments about what I am doing are therefore judgments that stem from the realization of final ends, and in that sense are the product of an activity of realization.

This kind of realization, the realization of final ends, is of course very different from the realization of particular ends. There is a sense, in fact, in which we are never *not* realizing these ends. Their pursuit has the form of an *energeia,* as opposed to a *kinesis*. For we are always already on the lookout, as it were, for those circumstances and opportunities in which these can be manifested in particular acts. Indeed, the kind of sensitivity this involves is part of the activity of that very end. As such, the pursuit of final ends is not something intermittent—something that ceases between the particular actions they are manifested in—but something always ongoing. The knowledge of what I am doing in realizing any particular end is a knowledge that stems from the realization of final ends. For it is these activities of realization that provide the determinacy of particular ends, in virtue of being the good to which they are directed. Although this knowledge can be articulated in terms of a judgment about what I am doing, all such judgments have their source, ultimately, in the ongoing pursuit the agent is engaged in. So, while the activity of realizing particular ends does presuppose a kind of practical knowledge about what one is doing, this is knowledge of another kind of activity the agent is engaged in.

Before concluding this section, I want to note something that we can now cast some more light on: I have been speaking from the outset of this dissertation of practical reason as *the* capacity for intentional action. But we take ourselves normally to be possessed of many different kinds of practical capacities: such as the capacity to walk, the capacity to manage personnel, the capacity to direct a building project, and so on. What warrants speaking of *the* capacity for practical reason? That a single capacity is in question here is shown by the fact that the successful exercise of any of these individual capacities requires taking in 'the whole' that I mentioned—the unity of the good as made up of our final ends. Any exercise of our particular capacities is immediately answerable to this whole. This suggests that, although particular practical capacities have an integrity of their own, they are all best viewed as determinations of a single capacity—the capacity to act intentionally—whose exercise presupposes the agent's conception of the good of their end.

5. Bad and Pointless Ends

I have been arguing that a conception of the good of one's action is essential to the task of practical reasoning. But the term 'conception' is ambiguous between a stronger and a weaker reading. It might just mean that one has to merely conceive of one's end as good in order to be able to realize it—or it might mean that one actually *knows* it to be good. The former claim would be a version of the 'guise of the good' thesis, the idea that intentional action requires viewing one's action to be good. The latter claim, though entailing the 'guise of the good' thesis—is much stronger. For it means that, lacking a genuinely good end, one is unable to properly engage in instrumental reasoning at all.

In fact, I think the stronger claim is already entailed by the considerations we have already advanced. Once we recognize that instrumental reasoning is a distinctively practical achievement—one that involves a kind of determination that cannot be outsourced to theoretical reason—it becomes

impossible to make intelligible the idea of a 'sensible knave': of an agent whose instrumental reasoning is perfectly sound, but whose ends are bad. Because instrumental reasoning requires a conception of our ends that is irreducibly practical, the sensible knave has nothing to draw on in the execution of their plan. Of course, that is not to say that they do not *take* themselves to have such resources. The execution of bad or evil ends constitutively involves, therefore, a kind of confusion on the part of its agents.[9]

To avoid what I have called the stronger claim that I want to make, it would seem one would have to deny that it matters whether the agent's end is actually good. However, that is simply to deny the argument I have already been making—to deny that particular ends need to be referred to final ends that make them determinate. Nevertheless, one might think it possible to escape the problem through other means. One might think, for example, that although not everything about a bad action is good, there is nonetheless always something good about it and that the good *aspect* of an action explains the possibility of instrumental reasoning. However, this ignores the fact that the kind of goodness we are concerned with here is *practical* goodness, the kind of goodness which determines whether an action should or should not be pursued. What determines whether or not an agent should pursue something is whether it is in fact, on the whole or 'all things considered' good. It is definitive of the correlative notion of 'the bad' that it should not be pursued—indeed, it should be actively *avoided*. On the safe assumption that the very same action cannot both be pursued and avoided by the same agent, the idea that a good 'aspect' of a bad action is able to ground its instrumental structure is a non-starter.

My goal in this section, therefore, is to explain how it can be true both that: (i) there is no answer to the question 'How?' when it comes to bad ends and (ii) that agents nevertheless perform bad actions. However, it is best to start with an importantly related case: actions performed for no

[9] I do not mean, in speaking of 'confusion' here to rule out that agents are culpable for their confusion.

reason—pointless actions. Anscombe herself allows that the question 'Why?' is "not refused application" if the answer given is: "no reason". Yet given what I have said, it would appear that 'pointless' actions are just as impossible as bad actions.

Once we consider pointless actions closely, what we find could be termed a mere semblance of instrumental structure. Consider kicking a stone for no reason while walking down the street. *Really* for no reason—not even because it seems fun. What instrumental standards apply to this action? On the one hand, it seems obvious: The action succeeds if I manage to hit the stone with my foot. But we can ask: how far does the stone need to move? Or, indeed, does it need to move at all—does it matter if it turns out to be stuck the ground? If there is really no point to the action then, *ex hypothesi*, there are no answers to these questions. It is crucial, however, that kicking a stone *can* be a kind of action that in fact has a point. In those cases, kicking a stone will have an instrumental structure. In pointless actions, we find a mere pretense of such instrumental structure. In other words, we act *as if* our action had a point. That allows us to say that we missed the stone we were trying to kick, etc.. However, on closer inspection, in such cases we shall always find that the action has a properly indeterminate instrumental structure, which amounts to saying that it has no structure at all. When we try to see what really counts as success or failure, the answer eludes us. The existence of such actions is entirely parasitic on the existence of good ones: without acknowledging the actuality of good actions there would be nothing for pointless actions—which merely appear to contain an instrumental order—to be an appearance *of*. Nevertheless, we can still view them as exercises of the capacity for instrumental reasoning, insofar as they rely on agents being able to perform the good actions that they are parasitic on. But they are derivative acts of this capacity, whose relation to genuinely good actions is similar to the relation between genuine assertions and the kind of mock assertions, we see, for example, on the stage during a dramatic performance.

Now, it is important to recognize that bad actions do not differ from pointless actions in virtue of genuinely having a point, albeit a bad point. They differ from pointless actions in virtue of the fact that (i) agents mistakenly *think* they have a point and (ii) rather than being neutral, they are actions that should have been avoided rather than pursued.[10] So actions performed for bad reasons, and actions performed for no reason, are really two species of a single genus: pointless action. When it comes to bad actions, the intuition that there really is a genuine instrumental structure requires a different kind of explanation. For when we ourselves are realizing a bad end, we do not think that there is nothing that ultimately sets the standard of success—quite the opposite. We should note firstly that actions can be intentional under various different descriptions, many of which do not reveal an action to be either good or bad. Murder, i.e. killing an *innocent*, can also be described as *killing someone*. Furthermore, one part of that action may be described simply as 'heading to the train station', even if the agent is heading to the train station with murderous intent. Many descriptions of actions under which they count as intentional are used to characterize actions that are either good or bad. For this reason, it can seem as though there *are* standards governing instrumental reasoning from bad ends, since bad actions are characterized using descriptions which also serve to describe actions that, in other circumstances, are good. Now, agents performing bad actions are *mistaken*: they think they are following instrumental standards that govern what counts as a means to their end when in fact there are none. This mistake is enabled—though not fully explained by—the fact that their actions, or parts thereof, can appear exactly like those actions to which instrumental standards with which they are familiar *do* genuinely apply.[11]

[10] If Anscombe is correct, then perhaps there are no 'neutral actions', only good and bad actions. The ones we are tempted to call neutral will simply be good actions, perhaps in virtue of the context of the life in which they appear.

[11] I do not mean that the original source of the mistake—the mistake that leads one to perform a bad action—is a neutral action description. The real sources of the mistake can be those traditionally thought to be such, e.g. whatever the various forms of character defect are that make bad actions looks good to people.

However, it is important to insist that neutral action descriptions do not characterize what we might call, borrowing from disjunctivism in the philosophy of perception, a 'highest common factor' between good and bad actions. According to the disjunctivist's diagnosis, a highest common factor view identifies something of epistemological relevance shared in common between a case of genuine perception and a case of perceptual illusion. The disjunctivist, in contrast, denies that that which puts me in a position to know there is a table before me is equally present in a case of perceptual illusion. Otherwise, she claims, perception is at best only capable of providing defeasible reasons for belief, leaving the way open for the skeptic. Analogously, a 'highest common factor' conception of instrumental rationality holds that good and bad actions can exhibit identically good instrumental reasoning. Consider an example: two people break into the same car using identical methods, one in order to steal a wallet lying on the front seat, the other in order to resuscitate the owner. The 'highest common factor' view states that stretches of their instrumental reasoning will be identical. This is precisely what I am denying.

This still leaves the question of what bad actions are 'in themselves'. Actions have instrumental structures, but instrumental structures require some kind of purpose that means taken in pursuit of them are means towards. What I want to suggest is that although bad actions lack genuine instrumental structure, they can still be thought of as actions because they are exercises of our capacity to act; albeit failed ones. They are failed acts because they are only mistakenly thought to be good—and so to have standards of success or failure—by their agents. Yet they are still exercises of the capacity for instrumental rationality insofar as they are attempts to realize a determinate end; this is true even if they are predicated on the mistake that there is a determinate end to be realized in the first place. Speaking of perception, Andrea Kern says that "We must understand sense experience disjunctively because such an experience must consist either in an act that perfectly actualizes the capacity in question or in an act that fails to be a perfect actualization of the capacity." (2017, 186) If perception

is the actualization of a rational capacity, then the so-called 'bad cases' (illusions and hallucinations) can be thought of as failed acts. But they are still acts of the self-same capacity. That the disjunctivist denies that there is any kind of success in common between genuine cases of seeing P and the visual illusion describable as 'seeing P' does not mean that they must deny that in each case the capacity for perception is what is ultimately in question. For a capacity can be *fallible*—that is, liable to failure—without this impugning the normative status of its successful exercises. I want to suggest that the same is true of exercises of instrumental rationality: the fact that the capacity's exercise is hopelessly flawed does not obstruct our ascribing the act to the capacity.

However, this is precisely where it is tempting to conclude that all one needs, in order to get something done, is the 'guise'—the mere thought that the action is good, regardless of whether or not that thought is correct. Indeed, one could argue that I have, in my account, effectively abandoned the distinction between validity and soundness in practical reasoning. Anscombe could justifiably be enlisted as support in making this point:

> 'Perfectly sound practical reasoning may lead to bad actions.' Yes, that is true, in just the same sense as it is true that 'Perfectly sound theoretical reasoning may lead to false conclusions'. If we limit what we mean by 'soundness' to what is called 'validity', both observations are correct. And in our philosophical training we learn carefully to use this idea of soundness of reasoning and to make the distinction between truth and validity and we are right to do so. Equally right, therefore, to distinguish between goodness and validity; for in the sphere of practical reasoning, goodness of the end has the same role as truth of the premises has in theoretical reasoning. (1989, p.33)

For Anscombe, soundness consists in having a good end, validity in knowing how to carry it out. Just as one can have a false premise and reason validly from it (e.g. by employing *modus ponens*) so too can

one have a bad end and reason validly from it, by finding real means towards that end.

However, whatever the distinction between soundness and validity may consist in in practical reasoning, this cannot be it. For we cannot separate out in this way the goodness of an end and the reasoning through which we realize it. Anscombe's analogy between the theoretical and practical cases of inference is most natural when understood in terms of false empirical premises and bad ends. But there is an important disanalogy between these. Although one can falsely think one's end good, it is not true that one's bad end might have been good. The temptation to say otherwise derives from the fact that we can think of our ends in abstraction from what makes them bad. Picking up an apple seems a fine thing to do. But picking up this apple is bad: it is your apple. Someone could say, perfectly correctly, that the end of picking up an apple can nevertheless be a good one—even if it is not now. However, although the action I am now performing is of the type: 'picking up an apple', it is one whose nature cannot be unaffected by the fact that it is yours. The action I *actually* perform—being theft—could not have been good. When we say the action would have been good, an 'if…' always follows whose function is to specify what is in effect a different action.[12] Now in theoretical reasoning we think that the *very same* premise may have been true, even if, being contingent, it turns out to be false. The idea of validity in theoretical reasoning seems to depend on this possibility. If the false premise of an unsound but valid inference is simply a different premise when it is true, then we cannot say that a valid inference is one in which, if the premises are true, the conclusion is also true. For that definition of validity—if it is to make room for valid but unsound inferences—requires that we can make sense of the very same premises being either true or false.

As such, the genuine analog to the mistake someone with a bad end makes is not a false

[12] This can be difficult to get in view, since someone who sets out with the intention to get an apple may end up stealing one *or* buying one. So, it looks like we are speaking here of two different realizations of the same end. In which case, we can ask: 'but what if the end had been good'? But an end is transformed in virtue of being made more determinate *when* someone decides to realize it in a particular way. Once the intention becomes one of taking *your* apple then *it* could never have been good, even if the intention might have instead simply been to go to the store and buy one.

empirical belief, but rather a contradiction (or perhaps a piece of nonsense). Someone can 'infer' things from these, in some sense of having certain thoughts 'because' of them. But these are not genuine inferences; they have merely psychological as opposed to logical consequences. As such they do not admit of soundness *or* validity. There is no good quality a practical inference can exhibit if it stems from a bad major premise.

I described above how neutral action descriptions play a role in the constitutive self-deception of agents performing bad ends. But what about the role of the observer--can't we, looking on an action that we know to be bad, nevertheless think it is being performed correctly? In fact, the idea that we cannot abstract from the badness of an end in order to see how it should be performed accords with, rather than contradicts, ordinary thought. When it comes to bad actions, especially particularly heinous ones, we often naturally think that there is no right way of performing them. True, at first glance, we seemingly can easily distinguish a bungled from a successful murder. But what distinguishes a more perfect murder from a less perfect one? The very question presupposes some grasp of what makes murder practically good. If we think nothing makes murder practically good, then we will never be able to determine what counts as a better or worse example of it. People often speak of the 'perfect' murder as one which someone gets away with; but the thought that a murder is better if the murderer avoids detection clearly presupposes that murder is something that is anyway good to do. A genuine unintelligibility attaches to bad actions, since they are instrumental structures which lack a determinate guiding end. What explains the action despite this lack of intelligibility—at least to some extent—is the fact that their agents mistakenly think there is a guiding end. The *appearance* of efficiency is explained, not by the fact there is an answer to the question as to what makes a murder good, but rather by the fact that murders can be understood under limited forms of descriptions that also apply to good actions—actions which do have instrumental structure. The distinction that we draw between a murderous intention that has been realized, and one that has failed, is one drawn *within* a space of

practical illusion. We can make the idea of the reality of the standards adopted superficially plausible insofar as the action externally resembles, in various ways, those genuinely good actions whose success conditions we are familiar with.

Still, one might think that the bare fact that one can count as having actually committed or failed to commit a murder speaks against this. If the instrumental standards governing bad actions are only mistakenly believed to exist by agents who perform them, why is it not *also* a mistake to think they have actually performed the actions for which we hold them responsible? Or in other words: If the instrumental structure is only imagined, why isn't the action merely imagined too? However, I think these questions are ultimately based on a confusion: all one needs to do in order to commit murder is intentionally kill an innocent person. In order that such an action be intentional, it need not be the case that it is really governed by an instrumental standard. All that need be the case is that the agent thought as much; that they acted in light of that belief, and under no external compulsion. Just as in the case of action performed for no reason, the question 'Why?' still finds application, so too does it find application in cases where actions are performed in the mistaken belief they are good. The paradigm case of intentional action, from which our understanding of the other cases is derived, is that of an action that is performed for a reason which reveals it to be good—*actually* good. Bad actions are not like this. But they are failed exercises of the very same capacity—practical reason—whose successful exercises are good actions, and they thereby warrant their status as intentional, and the culpability that that entails.

6. Conclusion

In the foregoing, I have attempted to give an account of practical reason as a special kind of causal capacity—the capacity for intentional action. In so doing, my aim was to do justice to the idea that, at

the beginning of this dissertation, I located in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*: the idea that thought can be productive of action. In Chapter Two, I articulated a general conception of what it would be for an intentional action to be the actualization of a causal capacity. I then turned, in Chapter Three, to giving an account of what a causal capacity with a distinctively *rational* mode of efficacy might be. That involved elucidating a form of reasoning that consists not in judgment, but in the realization of ends. With this form of reasoning in view, in Chapter Four I turned to understanding what 'basic realization' might be—those acts of practical reason that consist in continuous intentional movement—and how the nature of this realization required a proper concept of the body of agent. Finally, in this chapter, I have asked what would constitute a successful exercise of practical reason, and have argued that success in realizing particular ends requires knowledge of the goodness of those ends, knowledge of goodness that itself stems from realizing our final ends.

In the first chapter, when discussing Moran's reading of Anscombe, I said that a proper understanding of practical reason as productive would have to involve moving beyond an isolated conception of formal causation, and embrace the notion of an agent's practical reason as an efficient cause in virtue of being a kind of causal capacity. Yet I also said that that a notion of efficient cause couldn't be simply 'tacked on' to the account; an understanding of practical thought as productive in virtue of being a certain kind of capacity, would have to involve a conception of the *working* of that capacity, one that also took into account formal, final and material cause. We are now in a position to summarize the outcome of our investigation along these lines. An action's final cause is simply the good to which it is aimed, that for the sake of which it is performed. This also gives the action's formal cause, insofar as the form of the action is determined by the good to which it is aimed. The material cause of an action are those elements in action that do not depend on the agent's practical thought, in the first place, for their existence: the things they go to work on, and whatever aspects of their body cannot be captured merely in terms of its being the embodiment of the agent's capacity to move. As

for the action's efficient cause, we have some options, none of which are, however, essentially in tension with one another. We can say the efficient cause is the agent's capacity itself—or we can say it is whatever prompts the exercise of that capacity in particular cases, i.e., those things in the agent's environment that they see as calling for action: the doughnut in the shop window, the drowning child etc.. Yet our understanding of the capacity as the efficient cause of an action—or those things which, through reference to the agent's capacity, can be thought of as the efficient cause of action—is dependent on our having an understanding of the nature of practical reasoning as realization such as I have described it in this dissertation.

In developing this conception of practical reason, I have touched upon many important topics whose full exploration would lie beyond the scope of this dissertation, in virtue of their requiring lengthy treatments in their own right. Indeed, these topics can themselves been seen as correlated to the different moments of a practical syllogism. Concerning the major premise of a syllogism, and its source in final ends: it is clear that a full account of practical reasoning would have to advance some kind of systematic theory of the nature of final ends that goes beyond what I have been able establish here in a preliminary way. Concerning the minor premise: there is still much more that needs to be said about the relation between practical and theoretical reason—although I have demonstrated that practical thought cannot be reduced to theoretical thought, their distinctive mode of relation to one another requires further inquiry. And finally, concerning the conclusion of the syllogism: there still remains the difficult question of the nature of bodily awareness that grounds basic realization.

Through the framework I have developed in this dissertation I hope to have shown that the idea of practical reason—*genuinely* practical reason, thought that is productive—is not a lost cause for philosophy. Indeed, with this framework in place, I am confident the topics mentioned above will be susceptible to a more fruitful exploration than they otherwise would. I hope also to have shown that getting the nature of practical thought properly in view requires accepting it *on its own terms*: both in

relation to the distinctive *form* its activity possesses, as well as the irreducibly practical standards to which this activity is therefore beholden.

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