Thesis Title:

Thought in motion: An essay on the possibility of practical reason

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Declaration:

I, Alec Hinshelwood confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

All intentional action involves practical thought, for the agent of intentional action represents the *kind* of action they do in a distinctively practical way: as a model or guide for their actual action. In the first instance, this thesis is about how we should conceive of the relationship between such practical thought and the particular intentional actions for which it is necessary.

In this thesis I defend what I call the Identity Account. The account claims that there is a fundamental way of thinking that some kind of action is to-be-done, or is good-to-do, wherein one is and knows oneself to be doing that action-kind. In such cases, practical thoughts *are* intentional actions: a species of self-conscious change. I argue that other forms of practical thought are less fundamental than intentional action, and must be understood only relative to it.

Standing in the way of the Identity Account is a certain conception of what a particular change is, which I call the block view. This entails a separation between practical thought and intentional action, and it puts out of the reach the possibility of the kind of self-conscious changes which the Identity Account says intentional actions are. I marshal a number of arguments against the separation of practical thought from intentional action, but ultimately press that the very possibility of a distinctively practical form of thought requires the truth of the Identity Account.

In order to make room for the Identity Account, I elaborate an alternative conception of what a particular change is, which I call the Aristotelian view. By drawing on this, I show how self-conscious change, and so practical thought, is possible.

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Introduction

> […] Descartes is said to have given us the problem of how a movement in the material world can be mind-imbued or mind-informed […]. Earlier philosophers, even those who believed the soul could be separated from the body, found nothing paradoxical in our intentional action. It takes a special sort of achievement to become puzzled about the most familiar of things, and intentional action surely should be the most familiar of realities, even to a philosopher. (Baier, p.34, (1985))

> [We] need to confront, face to face, the distinction between, on the one hand, the perfectly general notion of thought, as what is partly constitutive of all specifically human actions and reactions, and, on the other, the quite special and almost professional notion of thought, as a separate, self-moving and self-piloting activity of reflection. (Ryle, p.424, (1971))

§1

This thesis is about practical thought—thought about what one is *to do*, rather than thought about what is the case independently of one's thinking it to be so—and it is about intentional action. More specifically: it is about how, most fundamentally, we should understand the relation between practical thought and intentional action.

I suppose that everyone will agree that, in some sense, practical thought is properly fulfilled or realized by action, in which action—paradigmatically, at least—the rational agent moves themselves and thereby changes things in the world. *Practical* thought is just that kind of thought which is such as to get realized in this way. On the other hand, of course, such intentional changing as rational agents undertake must, in some sense, be modelled in and be guided by practical thought. It is only because of this that intentional action gets to be the distinctive manner of changing that it is. As Marx put it, 'Man not only effects a change in form in the materials of nature; he also realizes his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of […]. Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work.'[1]

I suggest, then, that fully comprehending both practical thought and intentional action turns on our getting clear about the relation in which they stand to each other. After all, what do the phrases 'realized by' or 'guided by' mean in this context? They at

[1] p.284, (1976).

least indicate more than the fact that practical thought and intentional action can be present together; but beyond that, one might think that there are a number of options. What is crucial to bear in mind, of course, is that we are not free to deny that we do in fact think practically, or that we change things intentionally in accordance with such thought.[2] We must, then, in spelling out the relationship between practical thought and intentional action, retain our grip on the idea that there is a kind of thought that is distinctively practical and that, correlatively, there is a distinctive way in which actual changes can be bound up with the practical thinker's intentional activity.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to advance, defend and partially elaborate what I call the Identity Account. All intentional action involves the agent's practical representation of the action-kind which they do, wherein that kind serves a model or guide for the action. The Identity Account then says that the form taken by practical thought here is just intentional action itself, and that this form is fundamental: other forms of practical thought can be understood only relative to it. Thus the account claims that there is a fundamental way of thinking that some kind of action is to-be-done, or is good-to-do, wherein one is and knows oneself to be doing that action-kind. In such cases, practical thoughts *are* intentional actions: a species of self-conscious change. We must accept this, I shall argue, in order to secure the distinctively practical character of practical thought, and thus the idea that there is a way of changing things—intentional action—for which such thought is necessary.

Now, the Identity Account is not original; indeed, it may be ancient. I suspect that Aristotle meant to insist on it when he claimed that, clearly, the conclusion of practical reasoning is an action.[3] In this thesis, however, I am not concerned to settle the question of whether Aristotle was an adherent of the Identity Account. Instead, my aim is to describe, in a novel and illuminating way, some deep sources of opposition to the account which may be found in contemporary philosophy of action; to then explicate the severity of the consequences of that opposition, along with the doubtful character of its sources; and to try to put in place, or revive, some of the conceptual apparatus which we need in order to maintain the account, once those sources of opposition have been rejected.

[2] As Geach puts it (p.181, (1968)): 'we do know that our plans and purposes radically alter our physical environment […]; any contrary theory, however plausibly argued, just has to be false'.
[3] *De Motu Animalium*, 7 701a19-22.

§2

Opposition to the Identity Account, whatever its source and whatever shape it then takes, must include the idea that, fundamentally, practical thought is *separate* from the actual changes involved in acting intentionally. Here the practical representation of action does not, to borrow a phrase from Brian O'Shaughnessy, 'enter the precincts' of intentional action itself.[4]

Now, the distinction between the various elements in this picture is helpfully dramatized by Candace Vogler:

> If we were to draw a crude diagram of the theoretical tendency in contemporary work on practical reason, we might depict a very large human head with many things going on inside it (the scene of reason) plus a kind of external flash-mark (the action). A tight connection is assumed between the two […] [but for] all that, as would be indicated by the sparseness of the flash-mark, "intentional action" functions as a kind unanalyzed primitive in contemporary work. Paradigmatically, an intentional action is an event of some kind. In the big-head approach, it is the event caused and explained or justified by some sort of mental process. (p.45, (2002))

In this passage, Vogler aims to capture 'the theoretical tendency in contemporary work on practical reason'. For what it is worth, I believe she is right in this: the separation of practical thought and intentional action is, I think, widespread and often simply assumed within much contemporary philosophy of mind and action. I shall not, however, try to show this. For my purposes, it is enough that this is one—and perhaps one of the most natural—places to begin when thinking about how practical thought and intentional action relate to each other. With that said, it is worth bearing in mind that Vogler's intent in the passage is clearly to provoke: her aim is to bring to reflective awareness a certain way of thinking about practical thought and action which is, she thinks, often taken for granted but which ought to be questioned. There is plenty of room, then, for someone who subscribes to the separation of practical thought from intentional action to quibble over some of details suggested by Vogler's caricature. What matters are its broad outlines.

Central here, it seems to me, is the distinction between three elements within the picture. On the one hand, there are the practical thoughts which the thinker

[4] p.282, (1991).

entertains. On the other, there is the particular change, or event, in which consists the agent's intentional activity. Thirdly, there is the connection between these first two elements.

With the distinction between these in place, one can then raise a number of questions about each of them. Are practical thoughts to be treated as mental states which an agent is in? Are these states desires, say, or intentions? What is the typical content of these states, and what are the rational relations between them? With respect to the question of practical thought's connection to action, Vogler allows that someone committed to the separation of practical thought from action will assume that the connection between them must be tight. She herself suggests two ways of thinking about it which may or may not come as a package: that practical thoughts justify the particular actions by which they are realized, or that they cause them in some sense. There may be further kinds of connection still, or anyway different ways of thinking about what justification or causation come to in this context. Finally, then, there is room for discussion about how to think about the element of the picture which corresponds to the agent's intentional activity. Vogler thinks that, by and large, this is assumed to be a particular, concrete event: typically, though she does not say this, a change in the position of a limb.[5] But is this the only option? Perhaps intentional action involves a complex of changes, or something different from particular changes altogether.

Now, Vogler is trying, in the first place, to depict a certain way of thinking about practical thought. And whilst she admits that this picture does include the idea that practical thought guides or gets realized by intentional action, her concern seems to be that the structure of the picture allows this crucial dimension of practical thought to go under-theorized. Of course, it need not be that someone who accepts the separation of practical thought from intentional action must suppose that we can define, in advance, any of the elements in the picture without mentioning the others. It is only that the separation does presuppose that there are three elements, each requiring some independent treatment. This might then encourage one to try to characterize practical thought, as that kind of thought which guides and is realized by action, independently

[5] Perhaps this is suggested by the occurrence of the "flash-mark" just outside of the big-headed practical thinker.

of one's having characterized intentional action—or how, relatedly, such thought is supposed to be connected to this.

I take it, then, that Vogler means to raise a suspicion about this whole approach. Can one presume to have distinctively practical thought in view, as a topic of inquiry, independently of having achieved some understanding of that which it guides? The thought would be that, on the contrary, we shall not understand the practicality of practical thought—its being such as to guide, or be realized by, action—if we have a conception of what it is to change things intentionally which prevents us from seeing how such changing *could* realize, or be guided by, practical thought. Thus Vogler may be seen as suggesting that if one is interested in practical thought, then one cannot afford to under-theorize what it is to change things intentionally. Otherwise, one might assume a conception of intentional activity which wrecks the distinctively practical character of practical thought, and the idea of intentional activity with it.

§3

This suspicion is, I think, well-grounded; but I would frame the problem a bit differently. I have presented Vogler as starting from the separation of practical thought from intentional action. She then identifies a certain blind-spot this might encourage when we inquire into practical thought, and goes on to point out how this could allow one to assume a conception of intentional action which may be inimical, ultimately, to the idea that intentional action is that which is guided by or realizes practical thought. In this thesis, I approach these matters in a different order.

I think that Vogler is right that, by and large, philosophers of action assume that an agent's intentional activity consists in a concrete change, or perhaps a series of such. Whilst this may often go under-theorized, I suggest that we can see a recent dispute about intentional action as turning on a quite specific, albeit tacitly assumed, conception of what such changes must be like. I call this conception the block view of changes, and I think that it is in fact quite widespread amongst philosophers of mind and action. But be that as it may, I claim that the separation of practical thought from intentional action does not just permit the block view to creep unnoticed into our characterizations of intentional action. Rather, I think that the separation of practical thought from intentional action is actually entailed by it, whether or not this entailment is relied upon by those who insist on the separation of practical thought from action. What is more, I

argue that it is the separation of practical thought from intentional action itself which then prevents us from comprehending the practical character of such thought.

My claim, then, is that the possibility of practical thought depends upon the truth of the Identity Account, and so the falsity of the block view. In showing so much, I then generate the demand for a metaphysical characterization of intentional action which supports that account rather than stands in the way of it. So the question is how we should think about intentional action, and the changes involved in it, so that we are able to comprehend the distinctively practical, action-guiding character of practical thought. Given the Identity Account, and so the idea that intentional actions are self-conscious changes, what is the right metaphysical characterization of intentional action? In this thesis, I seek to provide an answer to this question—or at least provide the beginnings of one. I do this by describing an alternative conception of particular changes, which I call the Aristotelian view. With this in place, I show how we can maintain the Identity Account and so the possibility of practical thought.

Now, it is important to acknowledge that philosophy has recently seen a renewed focus on the metaphysics of action and, more specifically, on whether we can properly characterize action through the category of particular changes alone. A lot of this work seeks to show that when conceived in accordance with the block view, an agent's activity must be seen to involve more than such changes. In addition to them, the thought goes, we need to recognize some *sui generis* category of occurrence.[6] To that extent, of course, it can hardly be said that contemporary philosophers just assume that an agent's practical thought gets realized by a particular change of some distinctively thought-guided variety.

This point is well-taken. However, it must be said this work has not been pursued with a view to capturing the relation in which practical thought stands to intentional action. The arguments offered do not specifically concern, say, how we should characterize an agent's intentional activity in order that we see better how it might be guided by practical thought. Nevertheless, I shall ultimately suggest that, in spite of this, the best argument for a view with this general shape takes for granted the separation of practical thought from the changes involved in intentional action, and

[6] Though their arguments differ, these authors views at least conform to the abstract formulation presented in the text: Alvarez and Hyman (1998); Stout (1997), (2016); Hornsby (2012), (2013a); Steward (2012b), (2013); Crowther (2011).

then urges that we must recognize the *sui generis* metaphysical character of the connection between them. So even if they are sensitive to what drives it, I argue that such views do not provide the understanding afforded by Identity Account.

Furthermore, just as it may be said that contemporary philosophers do not take for granted the idea that intentional activity consists in particular changes, so it may be said that the Identity Account itself has some contemporary, possibly implicit, adherents.[7] An acceptance of the separation of practical thought from intentional action is not so widespread.

Again, this point is well-taken. However, whilst recent work on the metaphysics of action tends not to be governed by a concern to capture practical thought's relation to action, recent advocacy of the Identity Account has not tended to reflect a concern with the underlying metaphysics of action. In the main, these views simply take for granted the block view of changes which, I think, ultimately stands in the way of our defending the Identity Account.[8] To that extent, such views will struggle to distinguish themselves from the foregoing views: those which claim that the *connection* between practical thought and the changes involved in action must take a special form. In this thesis, however, I do not directly engage with these advocates of the Identity Account, letting the challenge to them remain oblique.

Instead, once again, my goal is answer together the two questions which, in this introduction, I have suggested must be intimately connected. In the first place: what is the relation in which practical thought stands to intentional action? In the second place: how must we characterize intentional action, metaphysically speaking, so that it may be seen to be that which is guided by, or realizes, distinctively practical thought? The answer to the first question is the Identity Account, and this determines how we must answer the second.

§4

The plan for the thesis is as follows.

[7] See Thompson (2008), (2011); Lavin (2013), (2015); Rödl (2007), (2010), (2011), (2013); Small (2012); McDowell (2010), (2011a), (2015); Marcus (2012).
[8] One notable exception to this is Rödl (2007), (2012). I draw upon his work throughout this thesis and often refer to it.

In Chapter 1 I begin one step back from the question of practical thought's relation to action. The goal here is to put the block view of changes in place and to articulate a rationale for it. The fundamental feature of the block view is that a change falls under its kind in virtue of a fixed actual duration, and the rationale for this situates the view within a conception of causation as what relates particular changes. I then describe the role the block view plays in a dispute about the metaphysics of action. On the one hand, there is a view which I call functionalism, and on the other, there is a recent objection to it provided by Jennifer Hornsby. Both views incorporate the block view, but Hornsby argues that we shall not understand agents' temporally-extended activity unless we recognize that action over time requires, in addition, a *sui generis* category of occurrence: *process*.

By emphasizing the non-reductive credentials of the functionalist's position, and the specific focus of Hornsby's objection, we are able to get a better grip on the block view and what its problems are. However, I argue that Hornsby's argument fails, and that we can maintain a view like hers only if we find a different argument for it. I provide this in the next chapter.

In Chapter 2 I take up the question of how to think about practical thought's relation to intentional action, once the block view of changes is in place. I show that given the block view, if an agent knows what kind of action they are doing, then, whether or not they change their mind, they know they will have finished doing it. Thus the block view requires one to deny that agents can know what kind of action they are in the midst of doing, and so it must be incompatible with the Identity Account. I then describe three views which incorporate the block view and the attendant separation of practical thought from action: functionalism, occasionalism and interventionism. My principal focus is on the interventionist's challenge. They argue that between a desire and the particular changes involved in action, we must recognize a *sui generis* kind of active practical thought, one which includes its thinker's knowledge of it.

Here we find an alternative argument for views like Hornsby's, although I go on to argue that interventionism generally falls foul of an irresolvable dilemma. Due to the unsatisfactory character of interventionism, functionalism and occasionalism, I press that we have some motivation for pursuing the Identity Account and so dropping the block view. However, I note that the motivation for interventionism might be questioned, so that what lies behind their challenge must be put on a more secure basis.

In Chapter 3 I provide more direct arguments against the separation of practical thought from intentional action, and so against the block view. In the first place, I argue that with the separation in place, one faces a dilemma concerning how agents are supposed to come to know what their capacities for intentional action are. In the second place, I argue that once we think through what is involved in practical thought's being a species of *thought*, we must recognize the truth of the Identity Account. Someone who can deploy an action-kind in practical thought, in the fundamental case, knows that they can do it self-consciously; they know that they can think practically in the manner of acting intentionally. The interventionist is right, then, to the extent that practical thought fundamentally includes the agent's knowledge of their own activity. Rather than trying to bridge a gap between desire and change, however, what we need is a conception of change which allows us to see how there is no gap to bridge. We must replace the block view, not add to it.

I close by noting a challenge to my second argument. This view, maintained by one I call the hybrid theorist, allows that it must be possible for the agent to know what kind of action they are doing, but denies that intentional actions just are practical thoughts. If this is right, then the block view of changes still has to go even whilst the Identity Account is denied. However, I postpone meeting the hybrid theorist's challenge until I have characterized an alternative to the block view, and so secured the possibility of knowing what one is doing.

In Chapter 4 I begin on the task of advancing an alternative conception of what a particular change is. I call this alternative the Aristotelian view, drawing upon both Aristotle and P.F. Strawson to expound it. Where the block view, according to the rationale for it which I describe, sees particular changes as causes and effects, the Aristotelian view sees them as episodes within which an agent alters a patient. On this view, a particular change just *is* an agent's causing the patient to be in a different state. Having re-thought the link between causation and change, then, we are free to characterize changes in a way that allows for an agent's knowing what kind of action they are doing.

However, even after meeting some of the principal objections to the Aristotelian view which arise at this stage, we still face the question of how to think the dynamic character of change: namely, the way change involves the patient's non-

accidental progression of state across time. This requires a more detailed characterization.

In Chapter 5 I characterize more fully the dynamic character of change. In the first place, I argue that we must recognize changes to be the exercises of correlative capacities and liabilities of their agents and patients. Here I emphasize that agents and patients must be material individuals that fall under a kind and have parts from which they are distinct. It is by recognizing changes to be the exercises of such individuals' capacities, I argue, that we can understand how changes have marked out for them a culminating state which they may never reach.

I then go on characterize what is involved in a change's development across time. I press that changes may only partially instantiate the kind under which they fall, and that we should not understand a change's becoming complete in terms of its acquiring new changes as parts. Indeed, I press that we can only understand a change's non-accidental development across time insofar as we keep in view the point from Chapter 4: that a change just is a patient's being made to be some way by an agent.

In Chapter 6 I show how, with the Aristotelian view in place, self-conscious action is possible; and I show that the challenge launched by the hybrid theorist against the Identity Account can be met. The hybrid theorist supposes that an agent might act intentionally, but then only latterly come to know what they are doing on the basis of perception or inference. I argue against this, urging that it puts out of reach the first-personal character of our knowledge of what we are doing intentionally. It is only if the agent can be, and know themselves to be, acting intentionally *in* thinking practically, I argue, that the first-personal character of our knowledge of action makes sense. The Identity Account must be true.

I maintain that the Identity Account can be seen to be underwritten by the Aristotelian view of change only if we appreciate the difference between mechanical agents like bricks—in terms of which I unfold the Aristotelian view in Chapter 5—and self-conscious self-moving creatures like us. So along with characterizing how, with the Aristotelian view in place, practical thought guides action, I also spell out some of what is distinctive about self-moving agents. And after characterizing the first-personal character of the practical thinker's knowledge of their capacities for intentional action, I close by suggesting that, as self-conscious self-movers, practical thinkers must represent

themselves as falling under their own kinds in a peculiarly agentive or practical way. The task of properly comprehending this idea lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

In the Coda I take up the question of whether, and in what sense, intentional action is the most fundamental form of practical thought, only in terms of which can we understand the others. I argue that reflection on the means-ends character of our activity does not force us to introduce forms of practical thought—future intentions, say—beyond intentional action itself. Put another way, I press that 'desiring to act', 'intending to act' and 'acting intentionally' are all forms of words apt to express or describe the same: the incomplete exercise of a rational agent's self-conscious capacities for changing things. I go on to describe how merely wishing that one do something may be seen to be a merely incipient or truncated form of intentional action: the representation of an action-kind as to-be-done where one does not know how to do it.

Part 1

Chapter 1: The block view of changes and Hornsby's argument for process

Introduction

We human beings are agents of intentional action, and we can thereby be deliberate sources of change with respect to the objects in our environment; but it goes without saying that we cannot engage in telekinesis.[9] I can intentionally move a book across my desk only by picking it up, say; and then my hand had better move. So in one way or another, the intentional action through which we human beings change things in our environment involves the occurrence of movements in parts of our bodies. As Wittgenstein had it, 'When I move something, I move'.[10] But what is the nature of such bodily movements?

Philosophers have argued about whether bodily movements are identical with actions—or whether instead they are parts of them, or are their effects or results. Equally, philosophers have wondered whether, and in what sense, the bodily movements involved in intentional action are caused by beliefs and desires, and whether, if so, this might provide the basis for an analysis of the concept *intentional action*. But philosophers have not devoted a great deal of attention to the question of what bodily movements *are*.[11] This is the more fundamental question, however, and I think it is an important one to ask. For as said, the occurrence of bodily movements is a condition on, as we might put it, our intentional efficacy—as rational agents—with respect to things in our environment. But I think that there is a more or less received view of bodily movements at work in the philosophy of mind and action, and that this view determines, unnoticed, the space of possibilities within which a lot that philosophy operates.

This view treats bodily movements as changes in the location of a body part, with a beginning and end point in time and so a determinate actual duration. Apparently innocuous, this view is shared by otherwise sharply opposed accounts of intentional action. This view of bodily movements is, I suggest, best seen as an application—however implicit—of a more general view about how to conceive particular changes. I

[9] Cf. Danto (pp.138-142, (1973)), O'Shaughnessy (ch.4, (2008i)), and Mayr (p.30, (2011)).
[10] p.88e, *Notebooks 1914-1916*.
[11] That is not to say that they have not devoted any. See, for example, Baier (1971); Haddock (2005), (2010); and Small (2016).

call this the *block view* of changes, or the block view of what a particular change is. As will become clear, this label deliberately insinuates a connection between this view of changes and the view of time which goes by the same name. In this thesis, however, I shall use 'block view' as a label for a view about temporal particulars, making clear when I am talking about the more general view of time instead.

It is the burden of this chapter and the next to show that anyone who accepts the block view confronts the question of how practical thoughts connect to intentional actions, the latter then being treated as separate from practical thoughts. What is more, I shall suggest that none of the available answers to this question is attractive—which answers I label functionalism, occasionalism and interventionism. The functionalist treats practical thoughts as mental states of an agent that are realized by states of their brain; thus, the functionalist thinks, the agent's being in such states is causally relevant to existence of the corresponding actions. The occasionalist, on the other hand, denies that the connection between such mental states and actions can be causal. The interventionist thinks that the connection between practical thought and intentional action must be seen to consist in a *sui generis* and self-conscious kind of occurrence.

I shall characterize these three positions more fully in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I want to set the scene by looking at a recent argument made by Jennifer Hornsby. She argues that we cannot think of agency exclusively in terms of the occurrence of particular changes, and I think that her view may ultimately be seen as an instance of interventionism. Her argument turns on the block view of changes and thus serves to get that view into focus. However, whilst Hornsby's argument helps to get the block view into focus, her argument is not successful. I reframe the dispute between functionalism, interventionism and occasionalism—as a dispute about how practical thought relates to action—in the next chapter, when I try to provide a more cogent argument for the interventionist position.

I begin by introducing the block view of bodily movements, in §1, and try to show how its key feature may be understood as an application of a more general view about what a particular change is. In §2, I then introduce, in outline, the functionalist view of intentional action and I describe how it incorporates the block view of bodily movements. I then go on to present Hornsby's position in §3, and I suggest that one might think that it rests on a certain view of time—namely, that the future is open. In §4, I press that when so conceived, Hornsby's argument is question-begging, and I go

on to suggest how the functionalist might diagnose the error which they see Hornsby's argument as committing.

§1

1.1: The block view of bodily movements

Let me begin with the simple example I mentioned above. In it, we have an agent who moves a book across their desk by pushing it with their hand. We can suppose that our agent thinks their friend will see them do this. By pushing the book, our agent means to send a signal of some sort to that friend. In this case, of course, the agent gets to move the book only because they move their hand against it in a certain way, and thus their hand must undergo a change in its location. The agent's hand starts on one side of the desk, and ends up on the other. The block view of bodily movements takes a position on how to think about the movement of the hand in this case.

In the first instance, we can say that the block view treats the change which the hand undergoes as particular event: a concrete temporal particular. I do not, however, want to rest anything on the idea that such movements are treated by the adherent of the block view as events. Rather, I want the relevant conception of what an event is to be fixed by the underlying conception of what particular changes are. So what does the block view of bodily movements say about the change in our agent's hand?

The crucial point is that the block view takes bodily movements to fall under their kinds—and so to be countable particulars of a kind of which there may be one or many—only in virtue having an earlier and a later bound in time, and thus a determinate, or fixed, actual duration. For the block view of bodily movements takes them to be individuated in terms of the culminating state of the body part which undergoes the movement. On this view, the change which the agent's hand undergoes—a change from being on one side of the desk to the other—must have enough temporal parts for the hand to have come to be in the position characteristic of the kind of change it is. As we shall see, this view can allow that, so long as the body part in question reaches the state in question, any particular bodily movement might have taken more or less time in other possible worlds. What the view denies is that the *actual* duration of a particular bodily movement can change—over time, say. Again, the bodily movement falls under its kind and so is the particular movement it is only in virtue the culminating state of what undergoes it, and so in virtue of its actual duration.

When it is spelled out as starkly as this, one might wonder whether such a view could really be common ground between a large part of those who are trying to characterize what intentional action is. Reflection on Hornsby's argument, below, will help to assuage this concern somewhat. What is more, I think it is fair to say that most contemporary philosophers of action think that most intentional action at least involves the occurrence of particular bodily movements, and *some* conception of what these are is ultimately required.[12] Indeed, once we have seen the role of the block view in generating the interventionist's position, there will then be a question of how to make sense of certain philosophers' accounts unless they harbour an implicit commitment to the block view. For now, though, let me turn to the question of what the rationale could be for thinking about bodily movements in this way.

1.2: The block view of changes and its rationale

Why think of bodily movements as temporal particulars whose kinds are settled by their actual duration, so that they have great enough temporal extent for the continuant who participates in them to have come to be in the relevant state? This block view of bodily movements is, I think, best understood as an application of a more general picture of temporal particulars as changes: what I shall call a block view of changes. The question, however, is why one should think of changes quite generally as items with a determinate actual duration: the time it takes for what undergoes it to have come to be in the state in whose terms the change's kind is specified. What is the block view's rationale?

Although I am unsure whether she still holds them, this block view of changes is best seen as supported, I think, by a set of commitments that Hornsby advanced in her early work. Thus Hornsby once suggested that 'it is in the nature of events to be members of kinds that pull their weight in illuminating accounts of why one thing followed on another'. As she put it, 'the items which are events […] need to be singled out […] by reference to a suitable ideology; and the suitable ideology for events is conditioned by the need to construct an explanatory causal nexus'.[13] Moreover, she

[12] At the beginning of Chapter 4, I have a word to say about those like Prior (2003) who deny that there are particular events.
[13] p.59, (1997a).

claimed that 'we see events as parts of others where that enables us better to explain things'.[14]

Crucial here is the idea that an event just is something whose occurrence is such as to be mentioned in a causal-explanation, either in the *explanans* or the *explanandum*. And the thought is that the very idea of characterizing a particular event as being of this or that kind, and so identifying it as a particular event at all, is bound up with the possibility of that event's occurrence then being able to figure in a causal explanation. In order that they allow us to causally explain 'why one [particular] thing followed on another', then, it looks like multiple event-kinds must be such as to figure together in a statement of a regularity concerning pairs of events.

In this, at least, it seems to me that Hornsby was in agreement with some later remarks made by Donald Davidson:

> It is not surprising […] that singular causal statements imply the existence of covering laws: events are changes that explain and require such explanations. This is not an empirical fact: nature doesn't care what we call a change, so we decide what counts as change on the basis of what we want to explain, and what we think available as an explanation. [And in] deciding what counts as a change we also decide what generalizations to count as lawlike. (p.212, (2005))

Let us ignore for now the anti-realist or pragmatist note sounded by Davidson's remark. I shall say a little more about this in Chapter 4. The important claim here is that what *bona fide* or "natural" event-kinds there are must be settled together with which generalizations about pairs of events are to be treated as lawlike, this being the other side of the idea that events just are those temporal particulars into whose occurrence we can gain causal insight by reference to the occurrence of other events.[15] Thus an event is here being treated as a temporal particular—or as a particular *change*—that falls under its kind in virtue of its instantiating a lawlike regularity, something expressible by means of a statement with something like this form: for all changes of kind F and for all changes of kind G, if there is an F, then is there is a G'.[16]

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[14] p.58 and p.59, (1997a). See also Brewer (1998) for a development of these claims, along with Danto (ch.4, (1973)) and Waterlow (pp.173-5, (1982)) for precursors to them.
[15] This view was not a view Davidson only came to accept in his later work: see (pp.52-3, (2001b)).
[16] See also Fodor in relation to this: (pp.101-2, (1974)).

All this leaves open whether there is an independent characterization of what it takes for a generalization to be lawlike; what it takes for an event-kind to be natural; or in what the causal relation itself consists. (Even if it is readily granted, I suppose, that genuine laws are confirmed by their instances and support counterfactuals concerning those instances.) And it leaves open, relatedly, on what basis we determine whether particular cases of causation, event-kinds or laws count as such. The point is just that a conceptual link is supposed to be discerned between the categories of *particular change*—or *event*—*cause*, *causal explanation* and *law*, without any analysis necessarily being offered of any of them.[17]

Hornsby's point about event-parts can now be more easily elaborated. An event is characterized as a determinate alteration of state in a continuant of some sort, where alterations of such a kind are regularly preceded and succeeded by instances of other such kinds. The laws in which those kinds figure together reflect—though need not reduce to—patterns across particular changes, appeal to which patterns is supposed to afford us causal insight into the occurrence of the particular changes which instantiate them. And in the quotation above, Hornsby says that we should count an event as part of another only if it aids us in the business of, in effect, achieving such insight. So the idea would be that an event, or change, counts as a temporal part of a longer one only if it combines with others in a way that allows us—*non*-causally or, in Aristotelian terms, *materially*—to explain how the whole change instantiates its kind-constitutive laws, and so has the kinds of causes and effects that it does.[18] Compare the way in which there is a sense of 'part' on which in speaking of a clock's parts we designate those of its parts that contribute to its doing what clocks as such do: display the time, for example.

With this much in place, then, we might venture that a particular change's kind is settled by its actual duration because it is in virtue of possessing its parts that the event contributes to the lawlike patterns across particular events. So, it might be

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[17] See Davidson's (2001f) for his repudiation of any strictly analytical ambitions with respect to *cause*, and see Fodor (p.32, 1991)) for some scepticism about an analysis of *law*. Davidson did, it seems, seek a non-circular account of *event*; see his (2001g). He wanted, in Quinean-fashion, I suspect, some particulars that could be characterized independently of any modal notions like *kind*. However, given the sort of connection between events and causal explanation that Davidson makes explicit in the quotation from 'Laws and cause' just given—a commitment, I think, implicit in much of his writing—his reductive ambitions in respect of *event* seem to me to be misplaced. What effect such a concession would have on other parts of his philosophy—for example, his semantics—I am not in a position to say.

[18] On the importance to the philosophy of mind of respecting the distinction between causal and non-causal explanations, see Burge (p.371, (2007)).

suggested, in virtue of possessing as parts various muscle- and bone-involving changes, *inter alia*, the movement of our agent's hand across their desk has duration enough to be apt to cause the kinds of change for the explanation of whose occurrence we appeal to the occurrence of such hand-movements: changes in books, say.

§2

2.1: A preliminary characterization of functionalism: attempts and bodily movements

In this thesis, I shall at times refer to the 'full dress' version of the block view as what incorporates both that view of changes and the rationale for it just canvassed. One view of intentional action which incorporates the full-dress version of the block view is what I call functionalism. As I understand it, this view is best understood in terms of its commitments vis-à-vis practical thought's relation to action. In the first instance, however, Hornsby's argument against it may be seen as trading on its commitment to the block view of changes alone. Here, then, I want to elaborate the view just enough to get this commitment in view: what is crucial is how the functionalist insists that, once we allow that an agent may be in distinctive sorts of mental state, intentional action can be exclusively characterized in terms of the occurrence of particular changes. In what follows, I shall also be at pains to stress the variously non-reductive character of functionalism: this helps us to be clear about what sort of trouble is caused by an acceptance of the block view.

Now, the law-schema which I proposed above was a universally quantified conditional. It is clear, however, that the laws relating kinds of changes investigated by almost any causal-explanatory practice except, perhaps, physics—any of the special sciences, say, or common-sense psychology—will have exceptions, so that in some cases the antecedent kind of change may be instantiated but not that of the consequent.[19] Even when one does not change one's mind about whether to move one's left hand, a disruption in one's nervous system could prevent one's hand from moving even when one tries to move it. Here the functionalist claims that changes of the kind *attempting to move one's left hand* are followed by changes of the kind *movement of one's left hand*—but only *ceteris paribus*.

[19] In fact, it is not obvious that the laws of physics do not admit of exceptions. Cf. Cartwright (1983). I briefly return to this at the end of Chapter 5.

By the functionalist's reckoning, then, temporally extended changes will contain as parts changes of kinds investigated by some lower level science. Where a movement of one's hand might be said to comprise a number of physiologically describable changes in the parts of that hand, an attempt to move one's hand will be said to comprise a number of changes in one's brain and nervous-system: just those, say, that together typically cause the changes which a hand-moving comprises.[20]

Note that this view of attempts may not be shared by all parties. Nevertheless, it should be clear that there could be an open disjunction of kinds of change whose instantiation in various combinations, at a lower level, accounts for the holding of a higher level law. So from the point of view of neuro-physiology, say, there may be no unity to the change-kinds whose instances attempts to raise an arm comprise—across various agents of possibly different species—beyond their being those kinds whose instantiation makes for the occurrence of such attempts. After all, compatibly with what we know, there may be attempt*ers* with very different sorts of material parts, changes in which parts their attempts comprise.

Thus, on this picture, even as our scientific investigations tell us why the law relating attempts and movements holds in particular cases, no definitional reduction of the change-kinds which figure in the higher level law to those which figure in the relevant lower level laws will be forthcoming.[21] The integrity of higher level natural change-kinds, as multiply-realizable by chains of lower level changes of various kinds, goes hand-in-hand with those higher level kinds' figuring in *ceteris paribus* laws.

Furthermore, this picture recommends the idea that particular temporally extended changes are modally robust. Say that on some occasion an attempt to raise my left hand does cause, as the functionalist supposes, a movement in that hand. Plausibly, that attempt might have occurred and still have caused the same hand-movement whilst containing, say, a slightly different series of brain-events or having taken a slightly longer or shorter time to occur. (In that counterfactual scenario, presumably the hand-movement would have been slightly different too.) Temporally extended changes

[20] For such a view of attempts, see Wilson (p.165, (1989)).
[21] This picture is largely inspired by Fodor's (1974), though there he talks about inter-level identities between events. See also Blackburn (1991).

cannot be identified with mereological-sums of their parts, in that case, and identifying changes through their kinds allows the functionalist to avoid this.[22]

In my example, there is a causal link between an attempt and a bodily movement, and the relevant covering law relates changes of these kinds. For the purposes of causally explaining the occurrence of a hand-movement, then, mention of the occurrence of a preceding attempt might be necessary;[23] it is when a hand-movement of the relevant kind *fails* to ensue upon an attempt that one is forced to descend to a lower level, in a bid to causally explain what has happened. So-called 'ontological reduction' of particular personal-level changes to physical events is thereby resisted.[24]

Finally, say that the functionalist is right, and that there must occur both an attempt to move a hand and a movement in that hand whenever someone moves it on purpose, the former then causing the latter. There is room on this view, given the foregoing, for thinking that intentional hand-movings contain as parts, without being identical with the mereological-sums of, the relevant attempts and bodily movements.[25] What would need to be shown is that there are kinds of change whose occurrence could only be causally explained by the occurrence of an intentional hand-moving, and then that only if the latter include bodily movements as parts. Perhaps the formation by humans of certain moral-reactive attitudes would be an example: maybe some forms of

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[22] Such 'sortalism' about events was long ago hinted at by Wiggins (p.92, (1968)). Note that this possibility would seem to defuse Steward's (2013a) argument for individual processes. See Smith (1983) for an early adherent of the view that events may be modally robust.

[23] Cf. Yablo (pp.279-80, (1992)).

[24] Whilst I appealed to Davidson's 'Laws and cause' to help introduce the view I am now elaborating, it has now diverged from other tenets of his view. Davidson thought that if one event caused another, then each was identical with an event describable in terms fit to feature in a strict physical law. Now, it seems to me that the view I describe retains Davidson's thought that events are multiply describable individuals that stand in extensional relations. However, on my alternative each temporally extended event will only *contain as parts* things describable in the way Davidson favoured; each temporally extended event will not *be identical with* any event that is so describable. But I think my alternative is adequate to the—broadly speaking, materialist—purposes for which Davidson's anomalous monism was advanced. And for what it is worth, I do not see how 'Laws and cause' contains an argument for Davidson's view: in it, grounds are offered for thinking that each case of event-causation is subsumable by law but not, so far as I can see, by strict law. Indeed, I wonder whether a strict law could even relate kinds of *change*, or temporally extended event. It is a good question, then, whether Davidson's earlier remarks (2001g) about the individuation of events can cohere with what he says in 'Laws and cause'—see n.17 above.

[25] This view is severally proposed by Danto (1973), O'Shaughnessy (1974), McGinn (1982), Dretske (1988) as well as, perhaps, by Smith (1983) and Snowdon (2001).

resentment can only be explained as responses to such psycho-physical changes.[26] Moreover, given the foregoing, there will be no saying in advance how *in general* an attempt causes a bodily movement when an intentional action comprises them both; there could only be a piece-meal answer to this question which, on this view, must be an empirical one.[27]

2.2: A preliminary characterization of functionalism continued: desires

Now, my functionalist treats intentional bodily actions in accordance with the foregoing: as complex changes which contain attempts and bodily changes as parts. I do not think this is really essential to the view, for a functionalist might, instead, just identify bodily actions with attempt-caused bodily movements. Nothing I say turns on this difference, however, and it helps to have a more determinate view before us. Moreover, whilst any functionalist will claim that, in our example, the agent's hand-moving action causes the movement in the book, let us just assume that the agent's action of moving the book is, to that extent, identical with their hand-moving action. Again, my argument will not turn on this way of individuating extra-bodily actions.

What is crucial to the functionalist's view, however, is that the agent of intentional action must desire to do what they do intentionally—or, as I shall later put it, that they practically represent the action-kind they do intentionally. The functionalist treats such representations as mental states, and claims that the agent's being in them makes a difference to what they do. Let me say only a little about this here: it forms the topic of the next chapter.

Now, it is basic to the full dress version of the block view that properly speaking it is particular changes that are causes and effects; their very particularity is understood in such terms. In our example, then, the functionalist must suppose that some event precedes and causes the agent's action of moving their hand to the place required by their end of signal-sending. I shall not worry about whether it could be reasonable to think that every action has an event-cause, and whether anything general could be said about such causes. Let us just suppose that our signal-sender undergoes an event of

[26] Though she does not put them to quite this purpose, O'Brien (pp.136-7, (2007)) provides the materials for such an argument. As O'Brien notes, it is the same kind of argument as that deployed by Williamson (1995) in defence of his claim that 'knowing is a mental state'. See Danto (p.108, (1973)) for a defence of the idea that there are *ceteris paribus* laws relating, irreducibly, kinds of action with other kinds of change.
[27] Cf. Loar (p.93, (1981)).

seeing: they see the clock-hands move into the position that tells them it is time to send the signal.[28] The question is: what causal role could the agent's desire play?

The functionalist is committed to thinking that the agent's desire is realized by states of parts of their brain. One might spill a lot of ink over what realization is supposed to come to in this context, but I do not want to worry about that.[29] The functionalist's basic picture is that the event of seeing which the agent undergoes comprises as parts, *inter alia*, a series of changes in their brain. Likewise, the first half of the agent's action of moving their hand will also comprise, *inter alia*, a series changes in their brain. That such a seeing causes such an action, however, is then to be explained by the agent's brain's being in those states which realize the desire in question. If the agent had wanted to do something else, then the relevant parts of their brain would be in different states; and then the seeing would not have caused that action. So whilst the functionalist must deny that desires cause actions, strictly speaking, they may maintain that an agent's being in such states is "causally relevant" to the existence of the corresponding actions.[30]

Now, the functionalist may insist that the concepts *action* and *desire-to-act* cannot be understood apart from each other.[31] An action might then be said to be that sort of change to whose existence a desire is causally relevant; and a desire might be said to be that state of an agent which is causally relevant to their actions. Such conceptual inter-connections would not prevent actions from being seen to conform to the generic conception of a change which the block view imports.

What is more, whilst any particular desires may be realized by states of parts of the agent's brain, the multiple-realizability of those kinds of desires would ensure their irreducibility to kinds of brain-state. And the possibility that any particular state retain its causal relevance whilst being differently realized, in another possible world, will ensure its non-identity with what realizes it. The functionalist will then be in a position to insist on the seemingly *bona fide* causal relevance of desire in respect of action, even as the mechanism whereby it enjoys that relevance will admit of empirical investigation

[28] Child (ch.3, (1994)) tentatively accepts something like this.
[29] One might worry that such would involve a problematic particularization of states, which particularization Steward (ch.4, (1997)) effectively attacks. On the other hand, see Yablo (1992) for some interesting suggestions about what realization might be; for my part, I wonder whether states of a subject's *brain* could be determinates of states of that *subject*, as Yablo in effect claims.
[30] Again, see Child (1994).
[31] Cf. O'Shaughnessy (p.461, (2008ii)).

and scientific explication on a case-by-case basis. Then there need be no *a priori* answer to the question of how a desire is causally relevant to a change when that change is an action: beyond making clear what realization is supposed to involve, there need be no philosophical solution to the problem of "deviant causal chains".[32]

Again, the point of all the foregoing is to emphasize the non-reductive credentials of this events-based view of bodily action; to indicate that on it, actions need not occur inside the body; and to signal the irrelevance to it of worries about "deviant causal chains". The view accepts that *being the agent of an action* admits of no reductive analysis—in terms of causation or anything else. Indeed, the functionalist can claim that *event*, or *change*, is a determinable genus of which *action* is a determinate yet strictly undefinable species.[33]

What is absolutely central to the view, however, is the idea that actions are temporally extended changes, conceived in line with the block view. For the functionalist, there is no other sort of occurrence in which an agent is such as to engage. In particular, the functionalist insists that whilst an agent may be credited with having caused the changes which their actions cause, we should not introduce any special kind of activity on the part of the agent on which their actions may be seen to depend. Rather, the functionalist thinks that some positive yet *non*-agential characterization of what an agent's causal activity consists in must, on a case-by-case basis, be possible. They think that an agent's intentional action of moving their hand is the complex, temporally extended change which contains both their attempt to move their hand and the movement of that hand, with these in turn comprising causally-linked events of kinds that physiology investigates.

§3

3.1: Hornsby's challenge and a pair of objections to it

The functionalist's view of intentional action is, I think, relatively common amongst philosophers of mind and action. Indeed, although I have sought to offer a more detailed characterization of it than one sometimes finds, the functionalist's view broadly

[32] This is, broadly speaking, the position Anthony (1989) advocates.
[33] Though made in a spirit less conciliatory to mainstream philosophy of action, this claim may be found in Anton Ford's (2011).

conforms to what is sometimes called 'the standard story of action'.[34] I have provided that detail, by way of articulating the view in terms of the full dress version of the block view changes, in order to make clear how it must purport to make sense of the way intentional action involves change, and so is extended across time. This is important because Hornsby's challenge to such a view is precisely targeted on the way it characterizes our temporally extended activity.

Hornsby's complaint is as follows.[35] Hornsby claims that in order for there to be a particular action—an event of some kind—its agent must have begun and then stopped doing something. There is an action describable as 'my moving of my book across my desk' only because I began to move my hand, did so for some time and then stopped. Indeed, there is an action of mine describable in that way, Hornsby thinks, only if I was moving my hand for long enough for it now to be on the other side of the desk; my action must extend sufficiently far through time for that.[36] Whatever her attitude to the rationale I claimed for it, then, Hornsby treats actions as changes in accordance with the block view.

However, if I am at some moment engaged in moving my hand across my desk and have not yet stopped, then, Hornsby claims, there can be no particular action in which my present activity in respect of my hand consists. There is such a change only once I have finished. This concern then generalizes to the multiplicity of kinds of change in which agents participate, and the possible presence of agents in the natural world is jeopardized. For if *present* yet on-going activity is impossible, then there is no place amongst nature's causal interactions for beings like us who must act continuously across time. Plainly, though, we are often active in the present, and it is only because we are that we get to have eventually changed anything. Thus Hornsby argues that if actions are particular changes, then present activity must consist in the occurrence of something without temporal extension: something the whole of which occurs *at* each of the times during which one is engaged in it, and so which *goes on* for that length of time, but which does not then *take* that length of time to occur. This is process, she says, and

[34] See, for example, Smith (2004).
[35] See her (pp.234-5, (2012)), and (p.131, (2015)).
[36] p.240, (2012).

it can occur in the present where it is argued that changes cannot.[37] Because of its occurrence, there are actions in the past.

It is worth pointing out that the bodily movements involved in bodily actions are, for Hornsby, identical with those actions.[38] When an agent has moved their hand and thus their hand has moved, there is one and the same active bodily change, Hornsby claims; and there is such a one only in virtue of the agent's having engaged in the process of hand-moving. Whether or not Hornsby would allow that such movements contain as parts any of the shorter changes which the functionalist finds in them does not matter for our purposes. Nor does it matter that my functionalist thinks that bodily actions have attempts as parts. So long as one thinks that actions are changes which must, as *per* the block view, have a determinate actual duration, then Hornsby's argument in favour of introducing processual activity in addition to such changes has bite.

Now, the following premise is crucial to Hornsby's argument: when an agent is, in the present, moving their hand across their desk, there could exist no action of the kind *move the hand across the desk*. We need to ask why Hornsby accepts this 'no action until completion' premise, and I shall address this question in the next section. Before that, we must consider a response to Hornsby's argument which concedes it. For might it be said: even if there is no action of the kind *move the hand across the desk* whilst the agent presently engaged in so moving their hand, still, there might be a change of some other kind in which the agent's activity in respect of their hand consists. If that were so, then Hornsby's argument for introducing a *sui generis* kind of occurrence would limp.

There are two forms this objection could take. First, it might be insisted that whilst the agent is in the middle of moving their hand across their desk, there exists the very same change which we shall later identify as the agent's action of moving of their hand across their desk. That change, it will be said, *becomes* an action of the kind *move the hand across the desk*.

This response is confused. On the one hand, this view claims, in effect, that one and the same change can grow over time, and thus that it is not in virtue of its actual

[37] McDowell (p.7, (2011)) too claims that events only exist in the past. See also Thompson (pp.134-7, (2008)), (p.209, (2011)); Marcus (p.192, (2012)) and Ford (p.33, (2014)). I tentatively suggest that each author implicitly accepts the line of thought I lay out in §3.4 below, or else the argument for interventionism which I describe in Chapter 2.
[38] p.235, (2012).

duration that it is the single countable change that it is. On the other, this view accepts exactly that in claiming that an action becomes a single change of the relevant kind only once the hand reaches the relevant location. In fact, someone who propounds this first objection ought to drop the block view of changes altogether, and just deny that changes fall under their kinds, and thus are the individual changes that they are, in virtue of their actual duration. But then the objector can just dispute Hornsby's premise and allow that an action of the kind *move the hand across the desk* can be occurring even though the hand has not yet reached the relevant location. Ultimately, this is a strategy which I shall pursue; but it is only in Chapters 4 and 5 that I develop the relevant conception of what a change is. As it stands, we have before us no such conception.

The second form this objection could take is as follows. Here the block view is kept more firmly in mind, but it is insisted that the agent's present activity of moving their book across their desk consists *not* in a change which will become such a hand-moving, but in a different change from the completed action: an action of moving the hand to wherever it has got to so far. This shorter change could only be a part of the completed action.

This, however, simply re-introduces Hornsby's challenge. On this view, the shorter change exists only once the agent *has done* the kind under which it falls, the hand has entered the relevant state and so the change has terminated. So what was occurring earlier? In fact it is plain that for *any* change, and so for any temporal particular which has temporal extension, there will be a point at which the agent is active in the present but where what is undergoing the change has not yet reached the state characteristic of the kind of change in question. If the latter point suffices for the non-existence of the change in question, as the objector concedes, then there must be some other sort of occurrence, different from change, in which the agent is engaged in the present. It does not matter how long any particular change is supposed to be; nor does it matter that, once there is one, it could be infinitely divided. The question is how, once one accepts Hornsby's premise, and unless we admit something like Hornsby's process, there could ever be any changes in the first place. Ultimately, then, I think that this objector also needs to reject Hornsby's premise. This time, rather than doubting the block view of changes, this objector should take issue with Hornsby's claim that, so conceived, changes can only exist in the past. Why might one think that?

3.2: A potential basis for Hornsby's argument

One natural thought here is this. Perhaps Hornsby thinks that our tensed way of representing reality does not just constitute a perspective on something that fails to contain—in-itself, as it were—past, present and future. Compare the way in which 'here' and 'there' are not likely to be thought of as perspective-independent locations that reality contains. The thought might go, rather, that our distinction between past, present and future *does* reflect a distinction contained in reality itself: that between the absolute present and what is before or after it. Furthermore, it might then be thought that the future is not actual, so that reality contains no facts about what will actually happen or will actually be the case.

Taking for granted the block view, and so a conception of temporal particulars as changes whose kinds are settled by their actual duration, and against the background of this picture of time, one will then conclude that the occurrence of such a change in the present is impossible. At a certain point in time, the event's actual duration would have to reach into the future; but here the future is being treated as a realm only of possibility, and not as something into which anything could *actually* extend. Put another way, a merely possible future cannot contain the actual temporal parts a change would need to have in order to fall under a kind, and so be a single change at all. On this view, then, it is metaphysically open whether the agent who is moving their hand across their desk will eventually have done so; and it is the presence of on-going process which is then supposed to constrain the range of possible futures in which the agent figures as such. That is to say, it is because someone is engaged in the activity of moving their across their desk that it will be no accident if their hand eventually gets there—so that there will be, only at that point, an action of moving their hand across the desk.

I suggest, then, that Hornsby may be viewed as arguing in favour of the need for the category *process*, as contrasted with that of *event*—or, as I have been putting it, *particular change*—by combining the block view of the latter with the view of time at which I have just gestured. Of course, we might now wonder whether this assumption about time is one we have independent grounds for accepting, given that the argument for processes might be seen to turn on it. The second objector to Hornsby's argument for process which I considered above should, then, I think, take issue with this reliance on the open future as a premise.

§4

4.1: A functionalist rejoinder

To begin with, I think the functionalist might respond that the block view of changes, far from being compatible with the open future—and so affording part of the basis for an argument for the need for process—in fact presupposes the fixity of the future. If that were so, then Hornsby's argument would not merely be question-begging; it would be seriously internally conflicted. In fact, I think that views like Hornsby's—interventionist positions, as I shall later describe them—may have better grounds for accepting the open future than this would suggest. However, I shall return to this in the next chapter. Here let me develop the functionalist response I just intimated: whatever the grounds might be for accepting the open future, I think that the functionalist is basically right about the presuppositions of the block view of changes.

Recall the bedrock commitment of the block view: that changes have a determinate actual duration, so that what participates in them have come to be in the state characteristic of the kind of change in question. That changes are what stand in causal relations is the idea which affords, I suggested, a rationale for this. With it in place, we can see how a change's kind would be settled by its actual duration, for changes are then seen to instantiate kinds that are specified by the causal laws in which they figure, and what shorter changes a given change has for its temporal parts would be what makes for its being apt to cause certain effects.

On this picture, then, the holding of a *ceteris paribus*, or causal, law is accounted for by appeal to the existence of changes that are parts of those changes whose kinds are related by the law in question. And we thereby make sense of why the law does only hold *ceteris paribus*: even where the antecedent change-kind is instantiated, there could, for all that one knows, still fail to be all the changes that would be needed as parts for there to be a change of the consequent kind.

So again, in cases of intentional hand-moving, it may be said that there occur attempts and bodily movements which both contain as parts changes whose kinds it is the job of physiology to describe. However, even these latter changes will have temporal extension, and the laws relating their kinds will admit of exceptions. And where one can tell a story with respect to any exception to a higher level law—or just with respect to the possibility of such—in terms of the arrangement of changes at a lower level, eventually one must reach bedrock. As one descends through the levels

investigated by the various special sciences, so to speak, one must get to a point at which what one finds are not temporally extended changes whose kinds are related by *ceteris paribus* laws. Instead the fundamental level must consist, on this picture, in the arrangement of non-interruptible items, or "change-atoms", that are described by strict laws.[39] That there is one of these fundamental items, together with the obtaining of the relevant law, entails that there is the other.[40] And where there is no interruptible mechanism of change-parts through which one item "makes" another happen, the idea of causation between those items seems to lapse—along with the idea that it is changeable continuants that participate in them.[41]

Thus full dress version of the block view implies that changes are parts of a timeless manifold, the existence of portions of which we can explain or predict by appeal to generalizations across pairs of changes. So even though the layout of the whole manifold of changes is supposed to be fully determinate, and even though, by the same token, such laws themselves do not then cause what happens in any strict sense, our necessarily limited epistemic situation forces us to seek, in accordance with our interrelated categories of *cause* and *law*, what can only be *ceteris paribus* (albeit universally quantified) generalizations across the changes in that manifold.[42] That the event-kinds which figure in causal laws are such as to be multiply-realiz*able* and so irreducible to those at a lower level, on this view, comes down to the fact that, for all we could ever know, given our epistemic limitations, those event-kinds are multiply-real*ized* in fact. Thus those kinds may be drawn upon in causal explanations, despite the explainer's ignorance of how their instances are constituted in any particular case.[43]

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[39] Compare Maudlin (pp.60-1, (2012)) on the physicist's use of 'event'.

[40] Or else, the indeterminacy one finds at the lowest level—that described by, say, quantum mechanics—must be brute, admitting of no explanation by appeal to the arrangement of events at a lower level. But saying this ignores a serious difficulty. As Sturgeon persuasively argues (ch.6, (2000)), it is hard to see how any macro-event's possession of its properties could be explained by its possessing as parts phenomena described by quantum mechanics, given our current understanding of the latter.

[41] Cf. Davidson (p.80, 2001c), and Strawson (p.120, (1992)).

[42] Cf. Fodor (1997).

[43] See here von Wright (p.144, (1984)): 'one cannot disentangle the existence of laws from considerations of an epistemic nature. To say that there is a law such that … is *like* saying we have a "device" […] for *explaining* why *p* at *t* once this is an established fact'. Note, though, von Wright's 'like': a reduction of *law* to epistemic concepts is not in the offing. Equally, von Wright disavows any straightforward anti-realism about laws of nature. That one might have concerns on this score, however, given the block view, is a matter I return to briefly in Chapter 4.

If we allow the idea of the finite agent's necessary epistemic limitations to stand, then, the adherent of the block view can insist on the ultimate indispensability to such an agent of *general* causal laws and the change-kinds which have their home in them. Nevertheless, ontologically speaking such laws are not supposed to introduce anything over and above the *particular* changes over which they quantify. However the story is meant to go about what determines (rationally or otherwise) our treatment of certain generalizations over event-pairs *as* causal laws, such laws, and the change-kinds which feature in them, at least purport to record how things stand amongst those timelessly actual changes. As we might put it, then, on this view the categories *cause*, *change*, *law* and *causal explanation*—together with tensed representations—are needed to articulate the perspective of a finite agent who navigates such a reality.

4.2: The functionalist's diagnosis of Hornsby's error

If this is right, then the functionalist is committed to rejecting the premise of Hornsby's argument—namely, that when an agent is moving their hand across their desk in the present, no action of the relevant kind could exist yet. Once one has thought through what the block view of changes involves, and so once one has accepted the full dress version of it, then, the functionalist may say, there is no barrier at all to the present existence of temporally extended changes. Indeed, once one has accepted the block view, they will say, one cannot accept that the future is open.

Having said that, we can see how the foregoing section indicates the resources with which the functionalist might try to diagnose what they will see as Hornsby's error. In short, where the functionalist will allow that the agent is necessarily epistemically limited, Hornsby, they may say, wrongly reifies such epistemic openness and treats it as genuine metaphysical indeterminacy.

After all, whether or not there can actually be a change of the relevant kind when the agent is in the midst of acting, it is surely part of the agent's practical perspective that they do not take themselves to *know* that there is change with great enough temporal-extent to be—so the block view will have it—an action of, say, moving their hand all the way across the desk. At the very least, the agent must think that they could change their mind about whether to move their hand; thus, as Arthur

Danto claimed, 'the cognitive openness of the future is required if we are to believe that [its shape] is in any way a matter of what we choose to do'.[44]

Now, I shall have more to say about this in the following chapter. Although I take the claim to be an intuitive *datum* which it behoves the philosopher to explain, the functionalist in particular, it would seem, cannot adopt it without further ado. For them, after all, there is a fact of the matter about what the future parts of an agent's action are. Thus there must be something peculiar about the changes which are actions, the functionalist must think, which means that their agent cannot know their kinds until they have finished doing those kinds. But be that as it may, the *epistemic* openness of the agent's own future is common ground between the functionalist and Hornsby. Whilst an agent must believe that they have some chance of success, equally whether there *is* an action of a kind that would render them successful must be, in the nature of the case, a matter which is left epistemically open to them. Moreover, in representing some state of affairs in terms which are sensitive to an agent's point of view on them, this limitation would then need to be respected.

The functionalist's idea, then, will be that in representing someone as mov*ing* their hand across their desk, we need not be representing them as engaging in something without temporal extension. We can instead be registering agnosticism about the temporal extension of some change, and thus what kind of action the agent is actually doing. Likewise for the agent who is intentionally moving their hand across their desk: they may know that there is *some* change which is their presently occurring action, even as they must remain agnostic about the kind under which it falls. Again, then, there is no barrier to accepting the present existence of particular actions once one has accepted the block view of changes. It is only if one mistakenly reifies the agent's perspective on their future that there will seem to be such a barrier—or so the functionalist maintains.

Conclusion

So far it would seem as if the functionalist can resist Hornsby's challenge, and not only that: the functionalist can insist that, led astray by the epistemic openness of the agent's perspective on their own future, Hornsby adopts a picture of time which is in fact at

[44] p.357, (2007).

odds with the other premise of her argument for process—namely, the block view of changes.

On this way of presenting matters, the advocate of a position like Hornsby's is not represented as having any good grounds for supposing that the future is open, even if their supposing such can be helpfully diagnosed. However, there is a general shape a view can take which I shall describe in the next chapter and which I call interventionism. Hornsby's view may be seen as an instance of this position, and I think that a different argument for such a view may be made. Here we still start with an acceptance of the block view of change. However, by returning to the first-person perspective of the rational agency, we can argue that the block view entails an implausible account of how the agent's practical thought relates to the changes involved in acting intentionally. Thus we reach what is of most interest in connection with the block view.

In any case, interventionism may then, I think, be represented as a response to this issue concerning practical thought's relation to action. To that extent, an acceptance of the open future may be seen as a corollary of interventionism, rather than as something which serves as a premise in an argument for it. Nevertheless, whatever the grounds for it may be, interventionism still incorporates the block view and so, I think, a commitment to the fixed future. Ultimately, I pressed, the rationale for the block view ties the kinds under which changes fall to the causal laws in which those kinds are said to figure. Such laws are then seen to obtain only in virtue of the timeless arrangement of the parts of the particular changes over which those laws range. I shall expound this incoherence at the heart of interventionism in the next chapter, once we have the proper rationale for it laid out.

Chapter 2: Interventionism and the relation of practical thought to action

Introduction

In the last chapter I began to introduce the functionalist's account of intentional action. Although I was at pains to describe this position in terms of its incorporation of the block view of changes, nevertheless I take the view to be one whose broad outlines are familiar. In response to it, I presented Hornsby's challenge, which precisely turns on the view's incorporation of the block view of changes. Hornsby argues that if we wish to make sense of an agent's continuous activity in the present, we must introduce—or better, perhaps, recognize—a *sui generis* category of on-going occurrence within our ontology, in addition to that of *particular change*: something whose instances are not changes, and which Hornsby calls process.

Hornsby argument, at least as I reconstructed it, fails. But that does not exhaust the interest of the dispute between the position she advocates and functionalism. Indeed, I think that there is an argument for such a position, and so against functionalism, which gets to the heart of the topic of this thesis: the nature of practical thought and its relation to intentional action. Thus, even though, as I shall argue, interventionism fails as a position, reflection on it helps us to get clear about how, with the block view of changes in place, we have available to us only unsatisfactory conceptions of practical thought's relation to action. To begin, then, we should return to a characterization of functionalism. This time, I shall pay special attention the way the view has to handle the desires and beliefs, and so the first-person perspective, of the rational agent.

In §1, then, I offer a more detailed description of functionalism, in connection with the role it sees an agent's desires playing with respect to their actions. I present this in contrast to a brief statement of the Identity Account I ultimately wish to defend. In §2 I present the occasionalist opponent to functionalism, and I go on to present the interventionist's argument for their position, as that takes off from a characterization of practical thought which is common to both functionalism and occasionalism. In §3, I show that interventionism quite generally, and so Hornsby's view in particular, confronts a dilemma. Ultimately, I suggest, this is owed to the view's having to adopt incompatible views about time. After suggesting that a variety of views in the philosophy of action might be considered to be instances of interventionism, I conclude

by reflecting on the dialectical state of play. This provides the motivation, in the next chapter, for some direct criticism of the conception of practical thought's relation to action which the block view requires.

§1

1.1: Practical thought: some general preliminary remarks

Let us return to the example I used in the first chapter: that of an agent who intentionally pushes a book across their desk with their hand, with a view to sending a signal to their friend.

Now, our agent moves their hand for the sake of moving the book, and they move the book for the sake of getting the attention of their friend. All this at least requires that they be cognitively related to the means which they take to their ends. Our agent knows—or at least believes—that by moving their hand, they could move the book; and that by moving the book, they could catch their friend's attention. Of course, though, our agent must think more than this. In doing an action-kind intentionally, that action-kind must be represented by the agent as to-be-done, worth-doing or good-to-do; these formulations are meant to be equivalent. In our case, our agent thinks that *sending a signal to their friend* is to-be-done—let us suppose that it is thought by them to be a means by which they can do something further—and in the light of what they know, they then represent *moving the book across the desk* and *moving their hand across the desk* as to-be-done as well.

I call such representations of action-kinds *practical thoughts*, and I take it for granted that all intentional action involves them. So much seems to be internal to the goal-directed character of intentional action, and I think it is a *datum* that philosophers must interpret. Where other forms of practical thought are at issue, I shall signal this. The crucial thing is that an agent who practically represents an action-kind is, as some have been tempted to put the point, committed to doing it.[45] An action-kind which an agent practically represents thereby serves as a measure, guide, or model in accordance with which they act.[46] But how should we think about the relation between an agent's

[45] See, for example, Moran and Stone (pp.69-70, (2011)), and Davidson (p.107, (2004)).
[46] I do not think I have yet said anything to upset a philosopher like Velleman (1992), who denies that in desiring to do something we represent doing that thing to be valuable. All I am taking for granted is that intentional action involves a committed posture of practical mindedness, in which an action-kind is taken by the agent as model or guide for their doing. For

practical thought and their intentional action itself, in order that we properly capture such "guidance" or, more lyrically, practical thought's *practicality*?

I introduced some of the functionalist's account on this score in the last chapter. The functionalist thinks that practical thoughts are desires: states which are separate from, although in some sense causally relevant to, their corresponding actions. Before expanding on that, however, I want to begin with a brief statement of the view which, ultimately, I shall defend. Having it before us will help to throw into relief this central feature of the functionalist's treatment of practical thought: the way it keeps practical thoughts separate from their corresponding intentional actions.

Suppose, then, that there is a manner of representing an action-kind as to-be-done which simply *is*, and is therein known by the representor to be, doing that action-kind intentionally. On this view, there would be a way of thinking that something—a hand, say—is to-be-changed which just is knowing oneself to be changing it; and an intentional action—a distinctive kind of change—would be, and would be known by its agent to be, identical with that agent's practical thought of its kind. Intentional actions, being identical with practical thoughts, would then be, as we might put it, self-conscious changes. I call this the Identity Account of the relationship between particular intentional actions and the practical thoughts required by them. It claims that other ways of representing an action-kind as to-be-done, or other forms of practical thought, are derivative upon this more fundamental form.[47]

Now, as said, I think that this is the truth of the matter. In the fundamental case, I think, practical thoughts *are* intentional actions. Indeed, I shall suggest that all other forms of practical thought can only be understood derivatively, as incipient or truncated manifestations of intentional action. Why one might be motivated to maintain this, however, is a question which I shall use the rest of this chapter to begin to answer. The attractions of this position will emerge against a better a view of the inadequacies of the alternatives. Why one *must* maintain this position is a question which I shall try to answer, in the positive, in Chapter 3. What is involved in maintaining it is, in effect, the

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all that I have said, such agents need not think that the action-kind is the one morality recommends, or is even the best alternative. Akratic agents, who act intentionally, think practical thoughts in my sense.

[47] For a trenchant expression of this view, see Rödl (pp.48-9, (2007)): '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. Actions do not point to a state of mind as to their cause. Acting intentionally *is* being of a certain mind.'

work of the remainder of the thesis. All that lies ahead, then: I mention the position here in order to draw a contrast with the functionalist's position, and so to make a negative point only.

The crucial thing is that the functionalist, because of their incorporation of the block view of changes, could not maintain the identity of practical thought and intentional action in the way I just indicated. That this is so was already prefigured in my sketch of the functionalist's diagnosis of Hornsby's error. It was prefigured, that is to say, in the functionalist's claim that one could not *know* what kind of action one was doing whilst one was in the midst of doing it.

After all, were the view I aim to defend true, then an agent who practically represented *moving their hand across their desk* as to-be-done, in the manner of doing that kind intentionally, would know, given the truth of the block view of changes, that there was in fact an action of that kind. Such an agent would then take themselves to know that their action had actual parts in their future which sufficed for their eventual success. That matter would be, so the agent must think, metaphysically fixed. But then, such an agent must thereby suppose that, even if they were to find reason to change their mind before they had finished moving their hand across their desk, and so find reason to cease representing *moving their hand across their desk* as to-be-done before that point, still, their hand would end up in the relevant state. And that, the thought runs, is not compatible with the change in the agent's hand being, or being a part of, an intentional action of theirs. Here the practically represented action-kind cannot be taken by the agent as what serves, thereby, as a measure or guide for what happens; and the agent could not suppose that the change in question instantiates an *action*-kind, or is a doing of theirs in which they pursue a practically-represented goal.

Given the block view of changes, then, the Identity Account could not be compatible with the practicality of the practical thought which an intentional action requires. What change the agent thinks is occurring could not then be taken by them to be an intentional action of theirs, and their practical thought would be reduced to a theoretical attitude towards a change whose existence that attitude merely records.

1.2: Practical thought according to functionalism

As I intimated in the previous chapter, it seems to me to be a *datum* that if an agent is intentionally doing something—or, for that matter, is trying to do it, intends to do it or

wants to do it—then they cannot take themselves *to know* that they will have done it.[48] Once one has accepted the block view, however, along with the idea that particular actions are changes, one must then accept that thinking that one is doing something involves taking oneself to know already that one will have done it. My functionalist, accordingly, does not think that the agent of intentional action takes themselves to know what kind of action they are presently doing. So much is required in order that they make room for the practicality of practical thoughts. And in contrast to the mooted Identity Account, the functionalist insists that the practical thought required by an intentional action is not, in being identical with it, a change, but is rather a separate state, without the agent's being in which there would exist no action of theirs of the relevant kind. Let me spell out some of details of this.

The functionalist treats practical thoughts as act-desires, or desires to do some action-kind. One might also call such intentions. It seems plausible to me that agents can take up a more passive, appetitive posture of mind than practical thought, which posture might also be fairly called desire.[49] But whether to label practical thoughts 'desires to act' or 'intentions'—or whether to say that there are two kinds of desire or one—should, I think, be treated by the functionalist as a matter of book-keeping. More central to view is the claim, made in a non-reductive spirit, that *intentional action* and *practical thought* are inter-definable concepts. What it is for a change to be an intentional action, the functionalist thinks, is that, at least in part, it would not exist had its agent not desired there to be an action of just such a kind. It need not be supposed that this necessary condition could be worked up into a proper analysis. Nevertheless, it illustrates how the functionalist thinks about the practicality of practical thought—or, that is, how it guides action: by being, in some sense, productive of it.

Now, I said something in the preceding chapter about how, according to the functionalist, we should think about the causal relevance of the fact that an agent desires some kind of action to the fact that there is such an action. There must be some story, the functionalist thinks, about how states of desire get realized by states of the agent's brain. Here I want to say a bit more about how the functionalist thinks about the content of practical thoughts.

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[48] See Sartre (pp.455-6, (1957)): 'action necessarily implies as its condition the recognition of a "desideratum"; that is, of an objective lack […]. Creating Constantinople is understood as an *act* only if first the conception of a *new* city has preceded the action itself or at least if this conception serves as an organizing theme for all later steps.' Second emphasis mine.

[49] Thompson (pp.103-4, (2008)) has emphasized the distinction.

Recall again our book-pusher. In moving their hand intentionally against the book, our agent must know that they can move their hand—and that by doing so, they will likely move the book and thereby gain their friend's attention. As we might put it: the agent of intentional action knows how to do what they do intentionally.[50] For the functionalist, such knowledge is more perspicuously described as set of beliefs that record causal laws which obtain, in principle, independently of being believed by the agent to obtain. Such beliefs concern how the existence of a change of one kind—an action of moving one's hand across the desk, say—is liable to lead to the existence of a change of another.

Correlatively, although of course in contrast, an agent's practical thoughts will be, so the functionalist supposes, to the effect that there is *to be* an action of some kind. Here we reach for the optative mood in conveying what the subject of practical thought thinks. They think it would be good if there *were* an action of the kind in question; they do not think that it is good that there is such a one. After all, as we have seen, for the functionalist the subject of practical thought cannot think that there *is* an action of theirs of whatever kind, either now or in their future. Rather, as we may somewhat more naturally put it, such a subject desires that there *be* an action of that kind, or desires *an* action of the kind in question.

In representing a possible action of the kind in question an agent provides themselves, the functionalist thinks, with a measure with which their particular action may accord. So far as the functionalist is concerned, the latter is a wholly independent item whose actuality the practical thinker cannot, in thinking practically, prejudge. The content of a desire that there be an action of one's own of a certain kind is, then, something to which "the world" may answer only on the condition that one remains agnostic about one's eventual success. One's confidence that there exists an action of one's own of a kind one practically represents, as a measure to follow in acting, should, the functionalist maintains, only be consequential upon one's actually having finished doing that kind.

Nevertheless, in order to capture properly the practicality of practical thought, or its serving as a guide to what realizes it, the functionalist must, I think, suppose that it is self-referential. After all, as I mentioned in the last chapter, the functionalist must be able to explain why the agent of intentional action cannot, compatibly with being a

[50] Cf. Hornsby (2017).

practical thinker, purport to know that they will have done what they practically represent. If it is metaphysically fixed what the agent does, why can they not know it?

The functionalist's idea here, I take it, will be that if a desire is a practical thought, then it is a desire that there be an action of the relevant kind only due to the agent's harbouring "this" desire. In that case, such an agent is equipped with the formal concept *action*, and they will, according to the functionalist, grasp how an intentional action is such only when its agent's desiring that there be one is causally relevant to its existence. So whilst the subject of such a self-referential state in effect represents the possibility that they be in a different one, they must also think that any change that is an action of the desired kind can be such only insofar as it would not exist were they to stop wanting such an action. This subject could not then take themselves to know that there *is* an action of the kind they desire to do: then they would have to suppose that their wanting it was irrelevant to its existence.

In outline, then, the foregoing is how I think the functionalist will try to characterize, against the backdrop of their acceptance of the separation of practical thoughts from actions, the kind of commitment to doing something which practical thought *is*—along with some of the epistemic consequences, for the agent, of harbouring such a commitment.[51] Such a picture is expressed, I think, by Anselm Müller when he writes: 'Both ends and means must be (seen as) 'future contingents'. No thinking whose content was not thus restricted could be in the service of what it was about'. Likewise Dennis Stampe: if 'desire comprises a basis for doing something, what is wanted is a state of affairs which either does not or might not obtain'.[52]

§2

2.1: The occasionalist's challenge to functionalism

[51] One might be sceptical of the fundamentality of the distinction between belief and desire—perhaps encouraged by the claim that both take propositional contents—and so want to treat desire as a species of belief. Then the idea of a state's being causally self-referential might be what allows one to distinguish practical from non-practical beliefs, along with the epistemic openness attendant upon the former. Velleman (2007) offers something like this story to account for the epistemic openness of the agential point-of-view; cf. Armstrong (pp.161-2, (1968)) and Ismael (2011)). I confess, however, that I do not understand why Velleman thinks this is compatible with an agent's *knowing* what they will do, unless he thinks an agent may know what they believe could be false.

[52] Müller (p.105, (1979)); Stampe (p.337, (1987)). Cf. Velleman (p.17, (1992)).

Bearing in mind the caveats entered in Chapter 1 about the difference between particular event-causes and the causal relevance of being in a certain state, we can say that the functionalist's basic thought is that the relation between an intentional action and the practical thought required by it is one of *production*: of intentional action, by practical thought. Of course, in accordance with the full dress version of the block view, the functionalist does not think that the *general* practically represented action-kind itself somehow causes the particular action which instantiates it. Rather, they think, it is crucial that such a kind is represented in desire. And so long as we can tell a convincing story about how a desire can be realized by states of the agent's brain, the functionalist thinks, we may then understand the guidance of action by practical thought in terms of causal relevance.

The occasionalist is someone who accepts the block view of change and the entailed separation of practical thought from action, but who is sceptical of the functionalist's claim to have made sense of the relationship between practical thought and action in terms of causal relevance. The link between an action-kind that is represented as to-be-done and any putative doing which falls under that kind, the occasionalist may say, is in some sense rational or logical: the latter being recommended, as it were, by the former. And although such a link would allow us to make sense of a particular action in the light of its agent's practical thoughts, the occasionalist continues, it would be a mistake to think that such a link will be reflected in empirically discoverable mechanisms in the brain. The occasionalist may say that no story about events involving parts of the brain, and the states such parts must be in, could be isomorphic to, and so metaphysically underwrite, the link between a desire and some action which, they may say, *expresses* that desire.[53]

If this is right, the occasionalist maintains, then talk of the *realization* of practical thoughts by states of parts of an agent's brain must be bogus—even if some weaker "materialist" thesis may be upheld: the global supervenience of the mental on the physical, for example.[54] Nevertheless, the occasionalist agrees with the functionalist to this extent: it is a condition on the causal relevance of desiring something that the desire be realized in states of the agent's brain. Thus an agent's following a practically

[53] See Child (pp.80-7, (1994)) and Burge (p.482, (2013)) for this complaint. Still, I am not certain that these authors ought, in the final analysis, be classified as occasionalists. For the use of 'expression', see Taylor (1979).
[54] Again, see Burge (2013); cf. Marcus (ch.6, (2012)).

represented action-kind, or the non-accidental accord of their ensuing actions with it, cannot, the occasionalist thinks, be given a causal sense which would render the phenomenon apt for scientific investigation, even on a merely case-by-case basis. For the occasionalist, the difference between "deviantly caused" movements and genuine actions is not a matter on which scientists may shed any light, even at the level of certain species or particular agents: perhaps the distinction has only to do with the extent to which someone's action may be interpreted coherently. Talk of the causal relevance of desiring an action to the existence of one can only be, the occasionalist thinks, understood in terms of whatever "merely" rational sense can be made of an action's existence in the light of the agent's desiring an action of its kind.

Now, much more would need to be said about the occasionalist's challenge here before we could properly assess it. Furthermore, it would take some serious exegetical work to show that any particular author counted, by my lights, as an occasioanlist rather than a functionalist of some stripe.[55] As evinced by all the work on "mental causation", there is plenty of room for dispute here about how to conceive the putative metaphysical relation in which desires stand to brain-states—along with whether any of these relations count as sufficiently materialist.

For what it is worth, though, I am sympathetic to the occasionalist's concern here. I doubt whether we have a notion of realization which is such that it could underwrite the causal relevance of desiring, in the way envisioned by the functionalist, whilst doing justice to desire's profile as personal-level phenomenon. On the other hand, however, it is extremely unclear to me that one can accept the block view, and so the conception of practical thought it engenders, whilst going on to deny that practical thoughts play a genuine causal role vis-à-vis the intentional actions which accord with them. In this context, the functionalist is surely right to suppose, as Davidson long ago argued, that *more* is required for a change to be one's action than its meeting a general specification which one practically represents.[56]

This is not a dispute I shall try to settle. By the interventionist's lights, the functionalist and the occasionalist are alike guilty of the same fundamental error. Getting this into view is my principal aim here. Let me turn, then, in the next section, to the interventionist's charge against both of these accounts.

[55] Perhaps Dennett (1987) would count as one.
[56] p.9, (2001a).

2.2: The interventionist's charge against functionalism and occasionalism

The interventionist insists that something has been missed by both of the foregoing accounts of how one's practical thoughts relate to one's intentional actions. And in the first place, the interventionist's point may put in broadly phenomenological terms.[57] The interventionist claims that reflection on how intentional action is for those of us who engage in it shows that, *pace* both the functionalist and the occasionalist, there must be a distinctive kind of practical thought in addition to the states and changes recognized by either of those other parties. For the interventionist presses—correctly, I think—that neither the functionalist nor the occasionalist is in a position to distinguish between being genuinely committed to doing something, in whatever way the latter is involved in acting intentionally, and merely wishing that one do it. Thus the interventionist supposes that we need to introduce something in a *sui generis* category: between, as it were, state and change.

After all, given the block view of changes, along with the idea that actions are changes, the practical representation of an action-kind can only be the representation of a merely possible action.[58] Whilst the agent may grasp the rational connection between an action-kind they represent as to-be-done and a possible particular action which would accord with it, neither the functionalist nor the occasionalist claims that such a grasp could include any knowledge of the non-accidental coming-to-be of an *actual* action of the practically-represented kind. For the occasionalist there is no story to be told here; for the functionalist it is a story about mechanisms in the brain. For either position, however, a practical thinker may think that there *is* an action of the kind they practically represent only once they have finished doing it. Thus the relevant states of the agent, their desires or intentions, are just representations to the effect that doing some action-kind would be good, or that it would be good if there were such an action.

With this way of thinking about what it is to represent some action-kind as to-be-done in place, then, what meaningful distinctions could there be between desire and intention, on the one hand, and mere wish, on the other? There would seem to be no

[57] Compare Lavin (2012), although I think his view might resist being categorized as interventionist.

[58] Velleman's attempt (p.17, (1992)) to make out a distinction between a wish that one do something and genuine desire to do it is, I think, hopeless. Velleman's idea is that a desire to act is just a wish that is constrained by one's beliefs about what is possible for one. But such a restriction on wish hardly gets one closer to the kind of commitment to acting that the interventionist properly demands.

resources within these accounts to make out a more committed posture of practical mindedness. After all, these practical thoughts can be, if one likes, "all out" rather than conditional thoughts about what to do.[59] And the point here is unaffected by the putatively self-referential character of practical thoughts. On the functionalist's telling, that a desire *correctly* represents itself as something the agent's harbouring of which is causally relevant to some action of theirs is not a fact which they could know. A wish that one do something only in virtue of harbouring "this" wish is no less a wish for having such a content.

The occasionalist and the functionalist both adopt, then, the interventionist's charge continues, a picture of practical thought's relation to action on which, in effect, one merely wishes that one do something and then only finds out, after the fact, that one has done it. But this is not how intentional action is for us, the thought goes. Does intentional action not involve, the interventionist asks, some more committed form of practical thinking: one which reaches, so to speak, into the doing of the represented action-kind itself? What is sought here, in effect, is the Identity Account: a manner of representing some action-kind as good-to-do, or to-be-done, in which the agent knows themselves to be doing that kind. However, as we have seen, an acceptance that actions are changes, conceived in line with the block view, puts this out of reach. The interventionist's position may then be seen as the outcome of these pressures.

In effect, the interventionist interposes a special sort of practical thought between the state of wishing and the particular change which is the action. In contrast to the functionalist and the occasionalist, they claim that there must be a distinctive way of thinking the rational link between a practically-represented action-kind and a putative corresponding particular, where any such thinking is then known by its thinker to *be* the bringing-into-existence of a particular action of the kind in question. The agent engages, so we might put it, in the activity of *making a particular action of the wished for kind*, where their engagement in such activity is, and is therein known by them to be, identical with their thinking that, for the sake of producing an actual action, such activity is to-be-engaged-in.[60] It is only in the occurrence of this self-conscious activity, the

[59] See Davidson (p.101, (2001d), where he allows that the all-out judgments which he identifies with intentions are, basically, wishes: 'there is no need to distinguish intention from wish'.
[60] Thus Prichard: 'thinking [of the reason for willing] enters into the character of the willing' (p.38, (1949a)).

interventionist maintains, that we can find the genuinely committed posture of practical mindedness which acting intentionally presupposes.

So against the occasionalist, but with the functionalist, the interventionist insists on practical thought's having some causal role with respect to action. Against the functionalist, however, the interventionist insists this causal role cannot be described in terms of something whose causal relevance operates, as it were, without the agent's knowledge of its doing so.[61] For the interventionist, then, the nature of the activity in which the agent's commitment to acting consists must be knowable by the agent: it cannot be such as to fall under a kind in virtue of extending beyond the present.[62] This activity must be able to occur *at* a point in time and *go on* for a number of such; but it must not *take time* in the way that changes, conceived in accordance with the block view, do. For whilst this activity will be treated as what can go on in the absence of any actual change, it will be only in virtue of its occurrence over time that there come to be particular actions of the wished for kinds. Of course what matters here, for the interventionist, cannot be whether to label the dependence of actions on such activity 'causal', but that we recognize there is such dependence at all.

2.3: A brief re-cap

I hope it is clear how Hornsby's position might, in broad outline, be seen to be an instance of interventionism, according to the foregoing description. Admittedly, Hornsby herself makes no reference to the self-conscious character of the activity of rational agents. If my reconstruction of it in the last chapter is right, then her argument for interventionism is different. Nevertheless, it seems to me that unless one advances the foregoing argument, and so insists on the self-conscious character of the activity in which rational agents engage, then the interventionist is open to the response I offered before: that the position is based on a mistaken reification of the agent's perspective on their future.

[61] On this way of dividing things up, one starts with the block view and the picture of practical thought attendant upon it. Then one asks: does practical thought, in one form or another, play a causal role vis-à-vis actual changes i.e. particular actions? On one branch, one has the occasionalist who answers 'No'. One then asks the 'Yes'-branch: is the causal role of practical thought something its fulfilment of which is identical with the agent's knowledge of its doing so? On the new 'No'-branch, then, sits the functionalist, with the interventionist taking up the new 'Yes'-branch. Thus one exhaustively determines the space of possibilities.

[62] Compare here Stout's remarks about the need for process as what can be present to consciousness (p.59, (2016)).

Of course, this new argument gives the first-person perspective of the agent pride of place. But rather than taking the open future as a premise, an acceptance of which calls for diagnosis, instead the interventionist may now be seen as treating it as a corollary. Once the need for the distinctive activity of rational agents is recognized, then metaphysical room must be made for this activity to play its role.[63] As distinct from the relevant actual changes which depend in whatever sense upon it, such activity must be able to go on whilst it remain an open question what its results are. That is, it is not supposed to be metaphysically fixed and yet unknown to the agent what the results of their activity are. Otherwise, what call could there be to introduce a *sui generis* kind of occurrence, and so what advance would have been made over the functionalist? Rather, that reality comes to contain the new particular actions that it does is supposed to depend on the fact that the agent is active in the present. Thus, I suggest, the interventionist may be led to suppose that the future is open.

Now, I said before that the full-dress version of the block view includes a commitment to the fixity of the future. If that is right, then, even if this new argument for it were persuasive, the interventionist's position must be incoherent. One would predict, in the light of this, that interventionists generally would not offer a rationale for their acceptance of the block view of changes, sticking only with a statement of the view itself. So it is in Hornsby's later work. In any case, here I want to present an old argument of Davidson's against agent-causal accounts of action. That this argument applies speaks to the incoherence at the heart of interventionism.

§3

3.1: Davidson's dilemma for the interventionist

Davidson thought that the idea that agents cause their actions engenders a dilemma.[64] On the first horn, we suppose that the agent's causing of their action is a distinct occurrence from the action which gets caused. On this horn, there are two choices: if the agent's causing of their action is itself a distinct action, then there is a vicious regress; but it is unclear what an agent's causing of their action could be if it is a distinct

[63] One might, I imagine, construct a similar line of argument but in connection with animal action, although the difficulties surrounding the characterization of animal subjectivity would make it harder to state, I think, and so would decrease its intuitive appeal. One would have to suppose that the 'us' in 'how action is for us' could be intelligibly taken as spanning both us and them.

[64] p.52, (2001b); pp.63-4, (2001c).

occurrence without being a prior action. On the second horn, we suppose that the agent's causing of their action is not distinct from the action which gets caused. Davidson maintains, however, that on this horn we have no right to speak of the agent as *causing* their action in the first place.

Now, Hornsby is clear that she wants to avoid saying that agents cause their own actions.[65] Such might be the interventionist's position generally. All that matters, however, is that the agent's on-going activity is a distinct occurrence from whatever particular changes eventuate, and that it is only because of that activity that those changes do eventuate. The changes depend on the activity. As Hornsby herself says, 'an action (event) has occurred only if a process has been underway'.[66] So whether or not we call the dependence of an action on the distinct on-going process 'causal', in effect the interventionist now confronts the two choices of the first horn of Davidson's dilemma.

On the one hand, it is tempting to treat the agent's action as some kind of artefact which they make over time; as a clock is assembled from material parts, so perhaps an action is assembled by progressively adding together its *temporal* parts. But this does not make any sense. One can put together a clock *by* assembling its parts only because those parts exist prior to their getting assembled. In the action case, there are no parts of an action before the action comprises them; thus there is, correlatively, no determinate kind of action which *making an action* could be. Indeed, thinking that this makes sense surely lands one in a regress: for if there is nothing to constitute the parts of one's action before one has so assembled them, the same again will apply to the distinct action which is one's making of the first—and so on *ad infinitum*.[67] We cannot then illuminate why there are the actions that there are by appeal to the occurrence of an independent kind of action: *making an action*, or *engaging in process*. This point will apply

[65] p.131, (2015). At p.114 of her (2011), Hornsby suggests that what the agent causes in acting is the final *state* in which the patient of the change comes to be. If this state is something general, however, then it is hard to see how it can be caused: it neither comes to be nor can be altered. On the other hand, if it is a particular, then it seems to be in the same position as the putative event which is the finished action (cf. Ford (p.33, (2014)). I ignore this element of Hornsby's view here.

[66] p.1, (2013).

[67] Emphasizing the self-conscious character of such activity, we could press that if *making an action* were itself a kind of change, and that an agent can realize some kind of change only if they realize another as a means—as *per* the first choice on the first horn—then the rational agent would have to do an infinite number of different kinds of action-making, each serving as a means to the next. Müller (p.97, (1979)) points out how this is the practical analogue of Carroll's (1895) argument.

even if the latter were taken to be merely determinable kinds, with the making of this or that kind of action being a determinate.[68]

On the other hand, it is unclear how the interventionist could deny that *making an action* is itself a distinct generic kind of *action* whose instances are temporally extended changes. On this view, action as on-going process has no temporal parts; it is not a change and can occur without there being any. As the agent is active over time, then, there are no smaller event-parts prior to their stopping, and so no accumulating series of kinds of action the agent has done on the way to completing their overarching goal. But then a temporally extended action—of, say, moving one's hand across one's desk—comes into existence all at once, at the point at which the agent stops engaging in the relevant activity. And this is scarcely intelligible. As Brian O'Shaughnessy puts it, 'the event must, like an infant, be delivered at the hands of time. In the interim, it was maturing into existence! Elsewhere, presumably!'.[69] There is no room, of course, for any story about such "maturation". Given the changeless character of activity, on this view, it must remain a total mystery there are the particular actions that there are: that activity has been occurring can do nothing to explain it.

Now, the interventionist confronts the first horn of Davidson's dilemma because they want to insist on the causal role of their special kind of active practical thought, and they correctly see that such a causal role presupposes the distinctness of that thought from action. However, there is then no way of understanding how, after all, the activity can play that causal role. Thus, we might imagine the interventionist attempting to inhabit, in effect, the second horn of Davidson's dilemma. Once again, though, if the existence of its products is built into the occurrence of this special practical thought, then there is no way it can play a causal role in respect of them.

Here we might suppose that active practical thought is directed on a particular action, and occurs alongside it; otherwise the thought would be no different from the

[68] On this latter move, made in a different context, see Steward (pp.201-2, (2012a)).
[69] p.239, (1971-2). See also Merleau-Ponty (p.426, (2012): '[the] very notion of freedom requires that our decision plunge into the future, that something has been *done* by it, that the following moment benefits from the preceding one and, if not being a necessity, is at least solicited by it. If freedom has to do with *doing*, then what it does must not immediately be undone by a new freedom.'

contrasting wish that there be an action of the relevant kind.[70] The idea might go that this particular action falls under its kind in virtue of being this thought's object—so that, conversely, it would be indeterminate what kind of action it is apart from its being thus thought about. Then one might suppose that one could change one's mind whilst in the middle of acting. But of course, the block view cannot allow this.

If there is an identifiable action which gets to be the object of a *de re*-practical thought, even if the latter occurs alongside it, then there is no scope for the action to have a different actual duration, and so fall under a different kind depending on the occurrence of that thought across time. What is more, it is not open to the practical thinker to remain agnostic about the desired action's kind. Practical thought is, as such, about doing some kind of action; only thus can it guide. As a purported model for a change, then, the relevant thought would involve the thinker's predicating the action-kind in question of the particular action on which it is directed. The problem then, however, is that such a thinker could only take themselves to be engaging in a receptive form of demonstrative thought: recording the existence of an action of some kind whose being such has, after all, nothing to do with their thinking "practically" about it. The thought is rendered dependent on the action it concerns, and the alleged practicality of the former in respect of the latter is lost. It would be, as Elizabeth Anscombe puts it, 'a special sort of seeing eye in the middle of the acting'.[71]

Of course, it would be pointless for the interventionist to beat a retreat here: to the idea that whilst an active practical thought metaphysically depends on a change in some way, nevertheless the kind of that change is unavailable to the thinker. As I intimated at the beginning of the last section, such a position is indistinguishable from that of the functionalist. On this view, the agent's activity has a nature which cannot be known by them whilst they are engaged in it. We then have no grounds for supposing that such activity is not just a change about whose kind its agent remains agnostic until they have done it, rather than an occurrence in some *sui generis* category.

3.2: The interventionist's incompatible views about time

[70] Cf. Wilson (ch.5, (1989)). Though Wilson does not put it this way, perhaps an adherent of this position will say that active practical thoughts are constituted by the changes—actions—on which they are directed.
[71] p.57, (2000).

On my telling, the interventionist, having accepted the block view of changes and the attendant separation of practical thought from action, and in order to capture the sort of commitment to acting which, they insist, intentional action involves, tries to interpose a distinctively active practical thought between the agent's general wish for an action and the particular action which instantiates the wished for kind. The attempt fails, and this should be no surprise: the project involves an acceptance of incompatible pictures of time. With the block view of changes in place, there is no room between the particular action and the state of wishing; and by finding such a gap, the interventionist hits upon something which nothing could bridge.

Compare, then, Hornsby. She says *kinds* of process 'are not […] actually present in space and time':

> In this respect they are like what are sometimes called *acts* or *act-types*, which are abstract […]. But *someone's engagement in an activity* [i.e. in a kind of process] […] apparently does have actual being in the spatio-temporal world: one might say that it partakes of the *concreteness* of actions. (p.3, (2013))

On-going process—that on which actions depend—has a curious metaphysical status here: *between* the generality of action-kinds and the particularity of actions, or *between* the mere possibility of the former and the full actuality of the latter.

However, if I am right, then the conception of temporal particularity at work here rules out such a gap. On the block view of them, changes fall under their kinds only in virtue of possessing the right parts; and ultimately, I suggest, this requires us to see them as part of a timeless manifold of only actual changes: a wall of blocks, as it were. Change-kinds allow us to classify parts of the wall in such a way that we can predict or explain parts of its layout, given our location within it.[72] But whatever shape practical thought is forced to take with this in the background, we cannot then adopt a view of time which forces on us the question of how changes *become* actual. Indeed, once we suppose that there is such a question, so that the occurrence of on-going process could be part of the answer, then we see, as *per* the first horn of Davidson's dilemma, that there is no way particular changes could be produced by changeless activity. It is an illusion to think the special practical thoughts of the interventionist could be that through which the agent knows themselves to make practical contact, as it

[72] Compare Davidson's talk (p.109, (2004)) of the way 'laws deal […] with particular events only as they have the properties that earn them membership in a type'. See also his (1995).

were, with actual changes conceived in line with the block view: building them up, say, as the present moves on into an open future.

3.3: How widespread is the acceptance of interventionism?

Although the argument which I provided for interventionism was not the one which, I claimed, it was natural to see Hornsby as making for her view, nevertheless my presentation of the position is clearly coloured by hers. Indeed, I think Hornsby's *is* an especially clear, and clear-sighted, example of the position—hence my appealing to several of its features when characterizing the dispute between functionalism and interventionism concerning practical thought's relation to action. Nevertheless, I think a number of prominent views of intentional action may still attract the label 'interventionist'.

The central point I want to make here is as follows. As I presented matters, the interventionist, like Hornsby, supposes that the particular changes for which wishing to do something provides the measure are themselves actions. That makes Davidson's argument against agent-causalism seem especially apt in the context of assessing interventionism: he targets the idea that agents cause their *actions*. But there are a number of prominent views of action which refuse to identify actions with those changes which, arguably, acting intentionally requires—namely, bodily movements. Does this render less suspect the dependence of the changes involved in acting intentionally on the actions themselves? I do not think so: such views may, I think, be seen to be notational variants of interventionism—or else forms of it stuck on the second horn of Davidson's dilemma, where active practical thoughts are seen to metaphysically depend on, and so be unable to cause, actual changes.

Now, Hornsby herself used to identify actions with successful attempts: events which were said merely to cause movements in parts of their agent's body, but without being identical with or even containing as parts changes in their agent's brain or nervous system.[73] More recently, Maria Alvarez and John Hyman have argued that bodily actions are not event-causes of bodily movements but rather *causings* of them: relational occurrences between agents and events, with bodily movements treated not as the effects but instead what are called the 'results' of bodily actions.[74] A related view has

[73] Hornsby (1980) and (1997b).
[74] Alvarez and Hyman (1998); see also Hyman (2015).

also been advanced by Helen Steward, though she presses that we should think of actions as *individual processes*: particular occurrences that grow over time, acquiring more and more resultant changes as parts as they do.[75]

There are, obviously enough, differences between these views; and a variety of arguments are marshalled by their proponents for them. Nevertheless, I think they share a common structure, and share with it Hornsby's new view. On the one hand, bodily action is said to involve the occurrence of an overt bodily movement, conceived in line with the block view; and, on the other, there is a distinct and irreducibly active occurrence—something importantly different from actual bodily changes—on the presence of which the existence of the bodily movement in some sense depends. So described, at least, these views are not different from Hornsby's new view; and whether or not the relevant bodily movement is said to be an action then looks to be a terminological matter. After all, it would not save Hornsby's processual view if the bodily movements produced by the on-going process of moving bodily were not labelled 'actions'.

Moreover, and more polemically, we might note how the picture as described fits a number of the volitional views of action advanced by early modern philosophers. It is perhaps unsurprising that Davidson described philosophers caught on the first-horn of his dilemma as committed to the existence of 'acts of will or worse'.[76] And in this connection it is interesting to note how Locke struggled to say what his acts of will

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[75] Steward (2012a), (2012b) and (2013a). Steward's view is similar to that defended by O'Shaughnessy in ch.12 of his (2008ii). O'Shaughnessy says that his attempts are events (pp.345-7, (2003)). But they cannot be changes according to the block view, for O'Shaughnessy's attempts can supposedly grow to incorporate bodily movements as parts—even when such movements are said by him to depend 'causally-developmentally' on the attempts of which they are parts. O'Shaughnessy emphasizes (ch.10, (2008ii), where Steward (2009) disavows, the self-conscious character of on-going activity. If I am right about what a cogent argument for interventionism would require, then I think O'Shaughnessy is in the stronger position on this score.

[76] p.52, (2001b). It is a good question where Davidson's own view fits within my three-fold division, given his acceptance of the block view of changes. It can look like Davidson's arguments on behalf of the anomalousness of the mental involve the claim that causal links between content-bearing states and events are nothing apart from the subject's thinking that those links *should* obtain; cf. (pp.230-3, (2001h)). To that extent, Davidson might be seen as propounding a version of interventionism, with intentions coming to play the role of Hornsby's process. This explains the anxiety about volitions which frames his 'Intending', along with his wavering about the putatively *de re* content of intentions. By the end of that essay, however, it looks like Davidson abandons the idea that intentions are *de re*, for he retreats to the functionalist idea that intending is not different in kind from wishing. For what it is worth, I do not think Davidson ever resolved this issue. He later described this topic as one about which he had 'no firm conviction' (p.106, (2004)).

were: first trying to characterize them by appeal to another kind of action—as inner orders—but then retreating to an appeal to a form of awareness of them—as, simply, what produce our willed movements—that each of us was meant to enjoy.[77]

These remarks must remain suggestive; establishing conclusively the commonality of structure at which I am gesturing would require a careful presentation of the just-mentioned accounts. [78] In barest outline, however, and familiarly now, I suspect that the problem with these views will be as follows.

Insofar as there is an occurrence that is in some sense *sui generis*—because differentiated from bodily movements, or indeed any actual change or series of such—then the question will arise about how it can connect to bodily movements, or changes more generally, in the manner supposedly definitive of it. With respect to one initial change, at least, we should expect to find the situation which I described the interventionist as confronting: activity which yet comprises no change. Treated only as that kind of potentiality on which actual temporally-extended changes depend, then, the connection between activity and change will remain a mystery—or else attempts to underwrite it which keep with its supposedly *sui generis* character will result in regress. On the other hand, the relevant active occurrence may be said to metaphysically depend on a bodily movement, or a change or series of such preceding a bodily movement, and then there will be no distinguishing the active occurrence from fully determinate actual changes of whatever duration.

Conclusion

If the foregoing is right, then interventionism is not a viable alternative to functionalism or occasionalism. In response, I suppose that an advocate of either position might try to resist the interventionist's claim against them. After all, they may ask, does the interventionist's position not falsify the phenomenology of acting intentionally just as much as theirs allegedly does? As Ryle famously asked, do we know ourselves to engage

[77] See the *Essay* pp.240-1. He also wavered over whether bodily movements or acts of will were actions.

[78] Hyman (2015) emphasizes the dependence of actions on their results (p.61, (2015)), but mentions no converse dependence. Indeed, given that he thinks that the results of bodily actions are caused by a series of events in the brain and nervous system (p.41, (2015)), might his actions be no different, at the end of the day, from those of the functionalist? However, one response here might be that an action's result cannot be a part of it because the result *depends on* the action; such a premise is at least suggested, to say no more than that, by Hyman's talk of the dynamic character of actions (p.66, (2015)).

in stretches of activity *over and above* the overt bodily changes which that activity supposedly produces?[79] Thus the functionalist, say, might wonder whether the demand to find a genuinely committed posture of practical mindedness is not a demand for the impossible. They might remind us that their view avoids the problems which attend the interventionist's introduction of active practical thoughts.

If one thinks that there is something in the interventionist's complaint, however, then one faces something of an impasse. The block view of changes requires a certain view about the separateness of practical thoughts from the intentional actions which require them, and we then seem to be left with functionalism, occasionalism and interventionism as our only options. For all that has been said so far, none of these views is satisfactory—even if, perhaps, functionalism would seem to be the one which holds out the most promise.

We have some motivation, then, for trying to pursue what I called the Identity Account of how practical thoughts relate to intentional actions. After all, I think it is this position which the interventionist is in fact reaching for, even as their underlying conception of particular changes prevents them from getting there. If the Identity Account is right, rather than trying to bridge a gap between practical thoughts and the changes which are intentional actions, what we need to recognize is that there is in fact no such gap to bridge. In order to develop such an account, we shall, instead of trying to introduce new categories of occurrence, need to find an alternative conception of particular changes.

Before doing that, however, in Part 2, I want to try to make good on the thought which lies behind the interventionist's challenge to the functionalist. There is, I think, a more reasoned claim to make here: one which goes beyond the phenomenological point I presented the interventionist as making. *Pace* the functionalist, then, we *must* recognize a more committed posture of practical mindedness. For I want to press that it is in fact internal to being able to think practically that one take oneself to be able to think as the Identity Account describes. That is, I think that, in the fundamental case, if one can practically represent an action-kind, then one knows oneself to be able to do it self-consciously. Thus, leaving to one

[79] pp.61-7, (1949). One good question is how many stretches of activity a temporally extended action would require. After all, it can look like the suggested picture is of agents acting *continually* rather than continuously over time.

side the inadequacies of the views which incorporate the idea, I want to provide some more direct criticism of the conception of practical thought as separate from action. If I am right, then that conception, and so the block views of changes, threatens the very possibility of practical thought itself.

Chapter 3: A pair of arguments against the separation of practical thought from intentional action

Introduction

In the last chapter I tried to reframe the dispute between the functionalist and the view which introduced in Chapter 1, which I then called interventionism. Having accepted the block view of changes, and so having rejected the Identity Account of practical thought's relation to intentional action, the functionalist and the interventionist offer competing accounts of the causal role of practical thought with respect to action. The functionalist restricts practical thought to states the agent's harbouring of which is causally relevant to the existence of the correlative actions. Pressing that this fails to capture to the way in which an agent's commitment to acting includes, in some way, their knowledge of being active, the interventionist claims that we need to recognize a distinctive kind of active practical thought: something that bridges the gap between the state of wishing and the change which is the particular action.

Whilst I am sympathetic to the interventionist's point, I argued that with the block view of changes in the background, there is no room for it. Of course, insofar as one is sympathetic to the interventionist's claim against the functionalist, then one has some reason for pursuing the Identity Account: all the other accounts of practical thought's relation to intentional action look to be problematic. Nevertheless, I want to do something in this chapter to recover the thought which lies behind the interventionist's complaint, and put it on a more secure footing. Rather than sticking with the idea that functionalism is phenomenologically off-key—a complaint which invites a *tu quoque* response from the functionalist—I want to argue that the possibility of a more committed posture of practical mindedness, wherein one knows what one is doing *in* representing it as to-be-done, is actually a condition on being able to think practically at all. To that extent, the functionalist is not in a position to doubt that there need be any kind of practical thought beyond, in effect, wish. Rather than constituting an argument for interventionism, however, my argument counts against the separation of practical thought and intentional action, and so counts against the block view of changes which entails that.

In §1, I shall introduce a dilemma for someone who accepts the separation of practical thought and action in manner of the functionalist. This dilemma concerns the

way in which the agent of intentional action, so conceived, is supposed to come into knowledge of what they *can* do: I suggest that with the acceptance of the separation in place, there can be no good answers on this score. In §2, I take up a response to this dilemma, which argues that capacities for moving parts of our bodies intentionally must be basic and, relatedly, our knowledge of them innate. Whilst I think that this is true, I argue that with the separation of practical thought and action in play, one has no warrant for asserting it. In §3, I articulate the argument which I advertised in the preceding paragraph, for the claim that it is a condition on being able to think practically at all that one be able to practically represent an action-kind in the manner of self-consciously doing it. I close by considering some challenges which might be made to this argument.

§1

1.1: Some preliminary remarks on pre-intentional ("merely animal") action

In the last chapter I claimed that the functionalist will insist on the causally self-referential character of the states which are practical thoughts. I want to begin here by noting how this point dovetails with an account the functionalist is likely to offer of the distinction between intentional and pre-intentional, or "merely animal" action. So far as I can see, some such account will likely be accepted by *any* adherent of the block view of changes and the conception of intentional actions made out on its basis.

Plainly, an animal might desire to act and act accordingly. But even were it to act with a peculiarly agentive sense of the changes which are its actions, we should perhaps deny that it possess the formal concept *action*, any conceptual grasp of the kinds under which its actions fall, or full blown beliefs about the laws in which, the functionalist thinks, those kinds feature. A rational agent, however, is meant to act not just because of but also in the light of their practical thought. The guidance of action by practical thought is supposed to have some more self-conscious dimension in the case of the action of rational agents: thus the functionalist thinks, as said, that the practical thoughts of a rational agent are—or at least, can be—self-referential.

Being able to desire in this way presupposes conceptual mastery of the formal concept *action*, the action-kinds in question and the concept *desire* itself. And by desiring in this way, the thought goes, one would want an *intentional* action: if one did what one so desires to do, then one's doing would count as an intentional action rather than a

merely animal one.[80] Likewise, one's capacities for action—or, as the functionalist supposes, those laws relating one's actions to extra-bodily events—will, when one comes to have conceptually articulated beliefs about them, count as capacities for intentional as opposed to merely animal action.

An agent of *intentional* action, and so one who can think practically in the sense in which we are interested, must, on this telling, come by some beliefs about what they can do. In §§1-2, my question is how we should think about the agent's acquisition of such beliefs. Before turning to some possible answers to that question, though, let me briefly say something about how to think about pre-intentional actions.

At least for the sake of argument, I want to allow that agents might enjoy some non-conceptual awareness of their pre-intentional actions. The latter may be said to be conscious but not self-conscious changes; and I take it that the most plausible account of their being such will deny that it must reside in the agent's being in a distinct state of awareness which has the action as its object.[81] Part of what it is for a change to be an action, the thought will go, is that it figure in one's stream of consciousness in a peculiarly agentive way. On this view, although these actions are taken to fall under genuine kinds and so to have the requisite temporal profiles for that, their agent's agentive awareness of them will not involve that agent's thought that they themselves are doing the action-kind in question. The agent will, if the foregoing is right, harbour some non-self-referential and pre-conceptual practical representation of the kind under which the action in fact falls—an animal equivalent of wish, if one likes—but such will not be something in the light of which the agent acts. Such an agent need not represent the fact that they desire what—they in some sense feel but do not know that—they are doing. I restrict the label 'practical thought' for the practical representation involved in acting intentionally.

1.2: Against "empiricism"

How does an agent come to know what they can do, and thus come to be in a position to practically represent those action-kinds and so be able to do them *intentionally*? The first picture I want to look at here, and reject, is an empiricist one. It suggests that, in

[80] Cf. Wollheim (p.23, (1999)). See also Setiya (p.137, (2011)) and Snowdon (p.15, (2001)).
[81] Cf. Valberg (pp.307-20, (2007)). O'Brien (pp.182-90, (2007)) also elaborates such a view of action-awareness. See Hinton (pp.25-7, (1973)) for the claim that, quite generally, a change in which someone participates may be conscious without their having to be in a distinct state of awareness of it.

the developmentally basic case, the agent comes to know what they can do by, in effect, abstracting those action-kinds out of their pre-intentional doings.

Now, if we allow that an agent can already do various kinds of bodily action intentionally, then it is not hard to see how they might, via experience, come by a grasp of some of the further things they are able to do thereby. An agent can intentionally move a hand in a certain way, testing to see how books in the vicinity move when they do so. But when the story is supposed to go that, in the first place, a human agent acts only pre-intentionally and that *on that basis alone* comes to learn what they can do, then it is not clear how coherent a story it is.[82]

Notice that if one suffers from anarchic-hand syndrome, then one's hand may, as we might put it, *do by itself* an action-kind that one might otherwise do intentionally. Perhaps one's hand keeps anarchically moving books, whether or not one wishes to move them. But no matter how many times this happens, and even though one enjoys perceptual and proprioceptive access to the anarchic movements that one's hand makes, one is not *thereby* put in a position to desire that one *do* just what, before, one's hand did by itself. Even by the functionalist's lights, desiring that one's hand move anarchically (again) is not the same as desiring that one move one's hand.

Of course, in this case, we might suppose that one already possesses a grasp of the action-kind which one's hand does by itself. This might even be a condition on one's sense of alienation from one's hand when it moves anarchically—as though from one's own perspective, in such cases, one can only treat one's hand as if it were being intentionally moved by someone other than oneself. To that extent, one is already in a position to desire, as the functionalist would put it, that there be an action of one's own which is of a kind that, unfortunately, one's hand sometimes does by itself.

However, the point is this: it is deeply puzzling how an awareness of anarchic-hand movements alone could be the basis upon which one comes to grasp, as things that one is in a position to do, the action-kinds that characterize those movements. And I suggest that the agent who is meant to begin to acquire a grasp of any action-kinds at all, supposedly on the basis of their pre-intentional actions, would be in a situation comparable to that of someone whose limbs had only ever moved anarchically. After

[82] Such a tale is independently suggested by Davidson (p.215, (2005)), Snowdon (p.15, (2001)) and Ismael (p.152, (2011)).

all, in either case changes falling under determinate action-kinds occur independently of the subject's reflexive thoughts as to the goodness of doing those kinds. And again, it is hard to see how such occurrences could be that through which one comes to know what it would be to *do* something—either in some specific way or, more fundamentally, in general.

In response to this challenge, the empiricist might be tempted to credit an agent with an innate grasp of the formal concept *action* whilst denying them such a grasp of any of the specific action-kinds which they can do and that determine it. For then we might suppose that an agent can engage in a kind of self-conscious *fiat*—'*Hereby I do*…'—supposing the content of the latter then to be settled by the episode's leading to a pre-conceptually conscious action which is for that agent merely a '…*this*'. Such fiats would not be the same as the occurrences that the interventionist interposes between states of desire, or wishes, and changes. The interventionist's active practical thought must already have content,[83] and are introduced in answer to a different philosophical need. In any case, perhaps it will be said that by means of such fiats, the agent can be seen to come to know what they can do via experience.

The coherence of this story is, however, illusory: the agent cannot in this way provide for themselves a grasp of the action-kinds which their pre-intentional actions are supposed to instantiate independently of any practical thought. For if an agent comes to possess a grasp of an action-kind as something they can do, then that kind is something which they can thereby follow. In that case, the agent could do again, intentionally, the *same* kind of action they had done before; and it is possible—and the agent recognizes that it is possible—that they err in their attempt to do so. But supposing we allow the intelligibility of fiats,[84] it is still impossible to see how one could set up a standard of the needed kind by means of one.

There is no general feature of the pre-intentional action which enters into the agent's self-conscious "doing" of it: the fiat is supposed to be that through which the agent comes, in the first place, to classify kinds of action they can do. In this, such "private definitions" of action-kinds crucially differ, I take it, from those

[83] As Reid well saw: 'He that wills must will something' (p.59, 1969)). He is not explicit, but I think it is pretty clear that Reid's 'something' is a dummy action-*kind*.
[84] They are as questionable as the inner demonstrations on which are based the "private ostensive definitions" that Wittgenstein famously attacked. For an extended and congenial discussion of such putative definitions, see Anscombe (2015).

demonstrations on which are supposed to depend the baptisms of natural-kind words which populate philosophical folklore. From the agent's point-of-view, then, there could be no difference between doing the same thing again, this time intentionally, and doing something else. So this is not a possible story about how, via experience, agents come to be possessed of a conception of the things that they can do—or about how, to that extent, they come to be able to frame practical thoughts in the first place.

1.3: A brief re-cap

I have been trying to make trouble for a certain story about an agent's acquisition of their grasp of the various action-kinds which they can do. The story naturally suggests itself, I think, against the backdrop of the idea that pre-intentional actions instantiate their kinds independently of reflexive practical thought on the part of their agent. Then it will seem as if agents must somehow abstract those kinds on the basis of cases of "merely" conscious action in which they do not deploy those kinds in thinking practically.

I argued that such a story will not work. Maybe we should doubt, then, the idea that intentional actions are simply pre-intentional actions which count as intentional in virtue of the character of the mental state on which they depend. Rather, perhaps the Identity Account is true, and an intentional action just *is* the practical representation of its kind. Of course in that case, the agent could not arrive at knowledge of what they can do, and thereby do intentionally, on the basis of some experience of their doings. That knowledge would be presupposed to the occurrence of such doings. Given how it treats intentional actions, then, the Identity Account will involve a story about how our knowledge of some of our capacities for intentional action must be innate. Indeed, as I shall ultimately argue in Chapter 6, the Identity Account requires one to think that, as *per* their exercises themselves, an agent's capacities for intentional action are identical with a practical representation of them on the part of their possessor. The possession of such capacities could not then precede the agent's knowledge of them.

To insist on that account here, though, would be too fast. For it might be claimed that the problem here is not the idea that one's capacities for pre-intentional action only count as capacities for intentional action if one has the right beliefs about them, or that, relatedly, one's intentional actions are just pre-intentional actions which count as intentional because of the character of the mental state on which they depend.

Rather, it will be said, the problem is only with the idea that the agent must acquire by experience a grasp of what they can do. Thus it may be said that rational agents must just innately possess a grasp of a basic stock of action-kinds—along with, of course, the formal concept *action*.[85] Rational agents would not then need to discover by experience all of what they can do, this discovery thereby enabling intentional action in turn. As an agent matures into being such, the rationalist, as I shall call them, will argue that the agent would mature into a set of beliefs about what, therein, they can do intentionally. Nevertheless, perhaps such beliefs could be lost, leaving only capacities for pre-intentional action behind.

Now, I think an adherent of the block view of changes cannot, in the end, coherently deny that a grasp of a change-kind involves a grasp of some of the laws in which it figures. Beliefs about what kinds of action one can do just are, to that extent, beliefs about the laws relating one's actions to other changes. But which such beliefs will our rationalist suppose must be innate? If the rationalist's account of how we know what we can basically do is to avoid the charge of being an *ad hoc* response to the empiricist's failure, then some principled story on this score is required.

1.4: Against "rationalism"

Whilst on my description of functionalism, attempts are not classified as actions—they are only classified as the first halves, as it were, of intentional actions—one *can* intentionally try to move a part of oneself. Perhaps the claim ought to be, then, that rational agents possess an innate grasp of the supposed fact that *attempts* to move a certain limb cause movements in that limb.[86] As changes of a kind one can already practically represent, such attempts need to be distinguished from the interventionist's special practical thoughts and from the just-considered *fiats*.[87] In any case, when the relevant innate grasp matures in the agent, they will then be in a position to reflexively

[85] Cf. O'Shaughnessy's description of the *a priori* nature of the concept *action* (p.113, (2008i)).
[86] In regards to the question of which beliefs about one's abilities are innate, this is basically Lowe's position (pp.87-9, (2007)). His overall view is, however, interventionist. Although he does not mention this, the problem about how we know what we can do which leads Lowe to his rationalism is propounded by Prichard (pp.196-7, (1949b)). However, along with thinking that intentional action presupposes a grasp of a law regarding one's actions, Prichard also thinks that any such grasp must be consequential upon the *experience* of what happens when one acts *intentionally*. Thus Prichard fails to see the possibility of either an empiricist or a rationalist account of how we know what we can do.
[87] Indeed, the interventionist must suppose that one may think one of their active special practical thoughts in the service of creating just a change. The mind boggles at this, but it does highlight how the functionalist's claim that attempts are not actions is merely stipulative.

desire that there be attempts of the relevant kind. Then agents could *intentionally attempt* to move their limbs, in order to discover the downstream consequences of the ensuing bodily movements. In this way, so the story might go, an agent could go on to build up, via experience, a grasp of the laws in which their actions—changes which incorporate attempts and bodily movements as parts—are related to extra-bodily kinds of change: in things like books, for example.

One might well balk, however, at the proposal that in the developmentally fundamental case, one sets about getting one's limbs to move *by means of* trying to move them.[88] Arguably, one only intentionally tries to get one's limbs to move when one knowingly suffers from paralysis, and even then the proper interpretation of such cases is fraught. I say something about them in Chapter 6.

In response to this, the rationalist may say that the ubiquity of intentional attempts to move one's limbs might be relegated to an early and long-forgotten stage of mental life. For it could be said that once one *has* learnt the laws relating, say, hand-moving actions to books, one can then desire there to be hand-moving actions without further ado. They may say that one has no need to desire, on every occasion, that there be a successful attempt for the sake of there being a hand-moving action. On the other hand, the rationalist might just change tack. Perhaps, they will say, the relevant innate beliefs are about how bodily actions are liable to produce changes in generically described objects—the concept *book*, say, coming later and only with learning. It is not obvious why the developmental story could not be this way.

Which route would be the better one for the rationalist to follow is not a question I want to settle. In either case, *moving a part of oneself* is taken—quite properly, I think—to be developmentally fundamental: either because one has innate beliefs how to get parts of one's body to move, or because, in effect, one believes that by getting one's body to move, never mind how, one can move other things. But there is, I think, a more general problem here. For I think that, given the conception of practical thought in play, it is quite unclear why beliefs about one's capacities for moving parts of one's body ought to be fundamental at all.

[88] As Hornsby so balks (p.87, (1980)). I do not see, however, how she can avoid Lowe's position on this point (see n.86). She seems to think that one's basic powers do not develop apart from an awareness of them, but at least in her (1980) she is committed to the idea that one's power to raise an arm just consists in the fact that one's attempts to raise an arm are liable to cause a rising in it.

On the picture before us, the agent reflexively desires—or better, I think, wishes—that there be an active event which results in some material object's coming to be in some final state. That is just what it is to desire that one change the object in question. But whatever kind of object it is that participates in the required change—a hand, say, or a book—the causal relevance of one's so desiring to the existence of the active event, along with the efficacy of that event in respect of the change in question, are not matters of which one has any knowledge.

But then, why should it be necessary that the agent believe that it is bodily actions which lead to changes in books, so that they must then take themselves to be able to move books only *by* moving a hand, say, or any other part of themselves? Rather this case would seem to be like that in which one desires that one move one's hand. Here one supposedly believes in advance that if one has moved one's hand, then some active event, a trying, of whose actual causally-linked parts one has no knowledge, will have caused a movement in one's hand. On this view, then, it would seem that an agent needs only to believe that they can get objects to change by doing *something*: what they will in fact do, or *how* they will get the object in question to change, need not be a matter about which they have any beliefs. Thus for the functionalist, as we might put it, the parts of one's body are no closer to one's ability to think practically than any other kind of object. In that case, why should a belief about one's capacity to get one's limbs to move come before a belief about one's capacity to get anything else to move?[89]

What is so strange here—the supposedly blind transition from a wish that one change something to only knowing after the fact that one was actually in the business of doing so—is, of course, what I described the interventionist as recoiling from. In any case, what our rationalist needs, at this point, is some justification for their supposition that the practical thinker must have innate beliefs about the fact that they can move parts of themselves. Without any justification on that score, their opposition to the failed empiricist story of the last section looks *ad hoc*.

In the next section, then, I want to look at an argument offered by D.M. Armstrong. Although his is a functionalist position, he offers grounds for thinking that the practical thinker must treat moving their own parts as their basic means for doing anything else. If that argument is successful, then there would indeed be grounds for

[89] Compare Prichard (p.193, (1949b)): 'we can just as much will the sliding of a table towards us as a movement of our hand towards our head'.

thinking that if any beliefs about what one can do are innate, then they must be beliefs about one's capacities for moving parts of one's own body. However, I shall argue that given the underlying picture of practical thought, Armstrong's argument is unsound. His argument involves an appeal to certain perceptual conditions on being able to practically represent an action-kind, but it is hard to see why those conditions should be thought to hold unless one were committed to the Identity Account.

§2

2.1: Armstrong's argument for the basicness of our capacities for bodily action

Armstrong claims, in effect, that in thinking practically, an agent must be perceptually sensitive to whether or not there is, consequent to their thinking, an action of a kind they desired there to be. His slogan is that 'a purpose is an information-sensitive mental cause'.[90] And the point is just that once one perceives that there is an action of the relevant kind, one can then tell whether one has done what one thought it good-to-do—and so whether to stop desiring there to be an action of the relevant kind. The possibility of perceiving so much is a condition on thinking the relevant practical thought, Armstrong thinks: 'only where perception begins can the characteristic mode of operation of the will emerge', as he puts it.[91]

In that case, Armstrong then points out, the '*first* perceived result of [a practical thought] has a quite peculiar importance'.[92] And he supplies grounds for thinking that bodily movements are what fulfil this role, thus underwriting the possibility of practical thought in respect of basic ways of getting one's body to move. But why those changes, as opposed to any others?

When it comes to perceiving things beyond one's own body, one relies on certain organs: for example, the eyes, ears, tongue or skin. And of a sense-organ in general, Armstrong offers the following characterization: 'It is a portion of our body which we habitually move at will with the object of perceiving what is going on in our body and environment'.[93]

[90] p.139, (1968).
[91] p.145, (1968).
[92] p.145, (1968). My emphasis.
[93] p.213, (1968).

Now, Armstrong's idea is that one can desire there to be an action of moving something—a book, let us say—only if one is in a position to perceive changes in the particular book one would intentionally move. Likewise, I suppose, he would insist that one could wish to avoid an object of some kind only if one were similarly positioned in respect of the relevant particular. His thought then seems to be that being in such a position requires one to have first moved 'at will'—that is, have intentionally moved—some parts of one's body, including sense-organs, in order to get oneself into such a position. However, if one can act intentionally at all, then there must be some kinds of action one can do without having to do other kinds as a preparatory means. There must be some changeable patients, then, Armstrong argues, which are so given to us that we do not need to do anything first in order to get into the position of being able to perceive changes in them.[94] Those things are our own body parts, he claims, for proprioception gives us perceptual access to them, and it provides such access without our having to first do anything—move an organ, say—to acquire it.[95]

For Armstrong, then, bodily movements—changes in parts in which one has feeling—should be singled out as the first perceived—or better, perceiv*able*—results of practical thought. If one can think practically at all, and so do anything *intentionally*, then one must believe that one can change how certain parts of oneself are disposed in space. Thus one must take one's capacities for moving parts of oneself to be one's basic capacities, only by exercising which one gets to engage in other kinds of change intentionally.[96] From this vantage point, it could hardly seem arbitrary for the functionalist to insist that one must have some innate beliefs about the fact that, as I put it before, one can get one's limbs to move: either by means of trying to do so, or for the sake of changing or avoiding things beyond one's own skin.

Now, this argument raises a number of questions. For one thing, is it really plausible to suppose that, quite generally, we move parts of ourselves *for the sake of* engaging in all other kinds of change, thus moving those parts intentionally? I say something about this in Chapter 6. Secondly, one might wonder about Armstrong's insistence on the role of intentional action in getting oneself into a position to intentionally change the objects of the outer senses, along with the alleged contrast with proprioception and how it gives one access to one's own parts. On this point, I am in

[94] p.213, (1968).
[95] pp.146-7, (1968).
[96] Cf. O'Shaughnessy (p.274, (2008i)).

agreement with Armstrong and I turn to this in the next section. After that, however, I shall argue that the perceptual condition on practical thought which Armstrong lays down is not warranted by the conception of practical thought which the functionalist, and so he, accepts.

2.2: A brief characterization of the difference between vision and proprioception

Through vision, one may be presented with a manifold of objects: it affords, so to speak, a container, or visual field, within which what is at a spatial distance from oneself may be presented as such.[97] One can see a part of a more extensive space, within which more than one object may appear to one. But proprioception is such as to present to one a single object. For proprioception affords a single space of feeling that seems to enclose one's bodily parts and extends no further, so that what one feels in such a space is felt to fall within spatial boundaries beyond which one cannot feel. Where one *sees* some empty space apart from oneself, in which the objects one sees are located, in proprioception one does not feel a space in which one's bodily parts may fail to be felt. Thus proprioception seemingly presents to oneself the spatially extended organism that one is, and no other thing. And to the extent that one seems to have feeling in something that is not a bodily part of oneself, one then suffers the illusion of extending bodily to that place.[98]

The important point to draw from this is that vision does, where proprioception does not, make room for and require the subject to orient themselves with respect to the objects which it presents to them.[99] One must select and perceptually track an object from within the manifold of objects which vision gives to one; and related to it is an organ, the eye, by moving which, *inter alia*, such orientation is achieved. Thus one can take different perspectives on the objects of vision. That is why Gareth Evans, in describing the skill of 'keeping track of an object in a visual array over time', immediately appeals to the fact that 'our eyes move and our heads move, perhaps we are obliged to turn or move our bodies'.[100] By contrast, there is no organ of proprioception. One just has feeling in some of the parts of the spatially extended thing

[97] What follows is deeply indebted to Martin (1992) and (1995).
[98] Whether a limb *is* a part of oneself and whether one feels it to be do not, then, come to the same thing; thus a subject may coherently wonder whether some limb they are given by proprioception is really theirs. Cf. Martin (1995) and O'Brien (ch.11, (2007)).
[99] Cf. Martin (p.280, 1995)), and Ford (pp.17-9 and p.20n.30, 2015)).
[100] p.310, (1985).

with which one is identical, all being well, and there is no room for "proprioceptively re-orienting" oneself with respect to those parts.[101]

Now, more needs to be said about how, in proprioception, one's body is given to one as a space of feeling. If proprioception is to make possible *basic* capacities for moving parts of oneself, then it would seem that such a space cannot be conceived in terms of an array of sensations in respect of which some inner analogue of visual orientation would be required. Moreover, and relatedly, it must be clarified what it means to claim that, all being well, in proprioception one is presented with one's parts *as* one's parts, or that proprioception seemingly presents to oneself the bodily thing which one is.[102] Here, however, I just mean to do enough to indicate the initial plausibility of Armstrong's claim about the difference between the objects of vision and proprioception, and the role of intentional action in acquiring access to either.

Having registered my sympathy with Armstrong's basic point here, then, let me note how the thought need not be that there is, so to speak, no seeing without doing. Rather, Armstrong is thinking, it seems to me, that one can intentionally change or avoid something only if one's practical thought concerns that very particular; I can intentionally move *that* book, say, only if my seeing of it has put me in a position to think about it as a changeable particular. Thus Armstrong's claim need only be that one cannot, without some intentional doing or other, see something in such a way that one is enabled to intentionally change or avoid that very one.

But now, someone might ask, what about olfaction or audition? Though I *can* turn my head so as to smell the meal better, or press my ear to a wall in a bid to better hear my shouting neighbours, in general I need do no such things in order to enjoy the relevant kinds of sensitivity to objects in my environment. The contrast of proprioception with vision would then seem to be well-chosen but misleading. Does olfaction or audition not give one changeable patients without one's first having to change anything—one's own parts, say—in order to receive them? About these senses, however, I would suggest that—unlike vision and, quite differently of course,

[101] See Valberg (pp.297-9, (2007)) for an elaboration on these phenomenological points.
[102] One idea would be that a body part is one's own, in the relevant sense, if one has a basic capacity to move it, and that it is one's self-conscious such capacities which determine the shape of the space of feeling which proprioception presents one's body as. On the former point, see Danto (pp.138-43, (1973)). On the latter see McDowell (2011b) and Tsakiris, Prabhu and Haggard (2006). See also O'Brien (pp.217-8, (2007)).

proprioception—they do not, just as such, present particular material objects to the perceiver. In hearing sounds or smelling smells, I have access to phenomena which may indicate to me the presence of *a* particular of whatever kind; but by themselves these senses do not, I think, present particular changeable patients. That requires, in addition, vision or touch—and so bodily movement.

2.3: The flaw in Armstrong's argument

Armstrong's perceptual condition on practical thought is that one can frame practical thoughts about changing an object in some way only if one can perceive such changes in objects of that kind. In slogan form: one can desire that one do only what one is able to tell that one has done. However, Armstrong's argument relies, I have suggested, on the idea that one can intentionally move some object only if one's practical thought concerns that particular itself, so that one practically represents moving *that* one. For then one must have moved a part of one's body in some way in order to be in the kind of perceptual contact with the object which enables one to frame such a thought; or else the object must be given to one by proprioception, and is a part of oneself. However, I think it is unclear why, given the underlying conception of practical thought in play, one's practical thoughts should have to concern particular objects. Moreover, I think this calls into question Armstrong's official perceptual condition.

Now, if the Identity Account is true, so that in moving some particular book intentionally one knew oneself to be so, then one would have to practically represent an action-kind specified in terms of that very book. In that case, in advance of actually moving the book, it must have been given to one by perception *as* an actual changeable patient. And it is then plausible to think that one must be in self-conscious possession of various basic capacities for bodily movement, in exercising which one orients oneself in respect of the book. As we might put it, if it is internal to being a practical thinker that one self-consciously change or avoid being changed by actual particulars which must, to that extent, be given to one as such, then one must, in being a practical thinker, represent oneself *as* an actual embodied particular.

However, with practical thought restricted, in effect, to wishing that one do something, and so to the practical representation of *possible* actions alone, it is not clear why it should be a condition on framing practical thoughts that the patients on which the thinker acts intentionally be given to them as such by perception. What is obscure is

why, in their office as a *practical* thinker, it should be necessary that they go beyond wishing that they change only general kinds of patient: it would seem that in advance of having acted, the functionalist's practical thinker need not, in thinking practically, concern themselves with particulars at all.

Suppose that an agent desires, as the functionalist would describe it, that there is to be an action of moving *a* book across their desk, but without thereby desiring a change in any particular perceptually-given book. Armstrong's official condition would not seem to rule out that such an agent actually move a book, and do so intentionally, but only afterwards intentionally move a part their body for the sake of checking whether they have been successful. In such a case, any perceptual orientation prior to acting may be entirely pre-intentional, with all of the agent's traffic with particulars falling, so to speak, below the level of practical thought. On what grounds, then, can the functionalist maintain that the agent's practical thought had to concern the very particular they changed intentionally? If there is no answer to this, then it looks like Armstrong's argument for the necessity of the practical thinker's belief in their own capacities for bodily action collapses. It would seem as if an agent can wish to change a book without crediting themselves with any knowledge of how they, as particular thing, will actually get such a task done in relation to any particular actual book.

But now, it may be objected here that the functionalist can claim that for any change involved in action, there will be some actual object or other in which it occurs. And insofar as the practical thinker must take themselves to be able to see whether they have changed in the relevant way a particular of the kind they wished to change, as *per* Armstrong's official condition, then they must at least take themselves to be able to single out particular patients once they have finished acting intentionally. For this, it may be said, the practical thinker must credit themselves with capacities for moving parts of themselves. Indeed, how could they not exercise those capacities in putting themselves in a position to think about the relevant object in advance of changing it, in order to know which object they will have to check when they have finished acting?

2.4: The flaw in Armstrong's argument continued

I think this objection is confused, but it does bring out how even Armstrong's official perceptual condition on practical thought cannot, in the absence of the Identity Account, be maintained. The objector does not suppose that the patient which the

agent is intentionally changing must figure in their practical thought because the agent knows that they are actually changing it. Instead, the objector supposes that practical thought is restricted to the representation of possible actions alone: wishes that there be an action which causes a change of the relevant kind in the patient. The particular patient figures in the agent's practical thought, the objector supposes, because the agent knows that they will, when they have finished acting, need to be able to determine whether they have indeed changed the patient in the respect in question.

The problem with this is that, on the objector's view, the fact that the agent's practical thought must concern the particular patient on which they act has nothing to do with that thought's *practicality*: its serving as guide or model, to which the particular intentional action conforms. The agent does not know themselves to be actually changing the perceptually-given patient in some determinate way, internal to which, then, would be their knowing by how much it has been changed by them along the way towards entering the terminal state. After all, any perceptual awareness they have of the object as realizing some kind of change cannot be an awareness of it *as* a patient which, in the course of their knowingly changing it in the respect in question, has been changed by them by however much. Such knowledge of action has been ruled out as incompatible with thinking practically. Thus we might suppose that the agent can think the relevant practical thought without maintaining perceptual contact with the particular on which they act. It is only after the agent has done, and no longer practically represents the action-kind in question, that they are to be able to tell whether they have done what they wished to do. However, it is plain that if the agent did not *already* know how they were changing the patient, in their very changing of it, then they could never know when to check whether they had changed it in the wished-for respect.

I think, then, that the agent's knowledge as to whether they have changed the patient completely can—in the fundamental case, at least—only be internal to their knowing themselves to be changing it.[103] Thus if an agent cannot know what they are

[103] The fundamental case, I am supposing, is one in which the agent is in perceptual contact with that which they are changing throughout their changing of it: for example, cases in which one moves a part of oneself in which one has feeling. On the basis of such, one can intentionally engage in kinds of change where one temporarily loses sight, say, of that which one is changing. Imagine flying a remote-control helicopter behind a tree. In such cases the agent at least knows the kind under which what they are changing falls, and so what it will do so long as nothing interrupts. Whether anything has actually interrupted, of course, is something one must use one's senses to learn; thus such losses can only be temporary, and the agent must recognize as much.

doing in their doing of it intentionally, as *per* functionalism, then it does not make sense to suppose that, nevertheless, such agents must take themselves be able to tell, in a separate act, whether they have changed the thing upon which they actually act. Rather, one wants to say, such telling could not then be down to *them*, the thinker of the practical thought.

Thus with the separation of practical thought from particular actions in place, we have no warrant for insisting that the thinker of practical thoughts must, in thinking practically, concern themselves at all with actual, perceptually-given particular patients—either in advance of acting or after the fact. One is tempted to picture a split here, between the merely conscious animal agent who enters into thoughtless traffic with particular patients, but who operates below and somehow in the service of a practical thinker who self-consciously represents only general action-kinds.[104] Given the absolute character of the split, however, it is hard to see how any sense might be attached to that 'in the service of'; correlatively, our grip on the idea that we could have a self-conscious thinker of practical thoughts here at all becomes tenuous. Now, I want to return in the next section to the idea that the separation of practical thoughts from intentional actions, required by the block view of changes, ultimately undermines the very possibility of practical thought. My point here is more limited.

The thrust of Armstrong's argument is that once we recognize the perceptual conditions on practical thought, and so how, in thinking practically, the agent must orient themselves with respect to particulars, then we must also recognize how the agent must conceive of themselves as a material particular: someone with capacities to move parts of themselves. Then it seems proper to claim that the practical thinker must have innate beliefs about such capacities. However, those perceptual conditions hold most naturally if we adopt the Identity Account of practical thought's relation to action. Otherwise, it is not clear why the practical thinker must have a conception of the actual, particular patients on which they act, or how what they wish for actually gets realized in those patients; thus the thinker need not have the unmediated access to their first changeable patients—parts of their own body—which proprioception affords. Such a thinker need not credit themselves with capacities for moving parts of themselves. If that is right, then the separation of practical thought from action, as required by the block view of changes, engenders a dilemma about how we know what we can do.

[104] Compare McDowell (p.145, (2015)), (pp.200-3, 2013); and Boyle (pp.546-9, (2016)).

Either one adopts an impossible form of empiricism, or else one adopts a form of rationalism which can only arbitrarily insist on the innateness of our knowledge of our capacities for moving parts of ourselves.

§3

3.1: What is involved in treating practical thought as a species of *thought*?

I said that with the block view of changes in place, practical thought is restricted to representing merely possible actions, and thus—as I described the interventionist as claiming—it cannot embody a more committed attitude towards doing some kind of action than wishing to do it. What is wanted, it seems, is the idea that one might, in thinking practically, know oneself to be doing what one represents as to-be-done. This is maintained by what I have called the Identity Account; it claims that there is a fundamental way of representing an action-kind as to-be-done in which one knows oneself to be doing it. On this view, practical thoughts just are, paradigmatically, intentional actions; they are self-conscious changes.

What I claim in this section is that if practical thought is seen to be a species of *thought*, then its fundamental form must be intentional action. Correlatively, wishing that one do something must, I think, be seen to be an only derivative posture of practical mindedness. If this argument is correct, then the functionalist is not free to maintain, in the light of the failure of interventionism, that there is no room for a more committed form of practical mindedness than the wishing their account allows. My idea is that so long as one admits that practical thought is possible—and this is not, I take it, something which anyone is free to deny—then they must admit the truth of the Identity Account. To that extent, however, the block view of changes must wrong—and functionalism, occasionalism and interventionism with it.

The idea here is actually very straightforward. Rational subjects can think. And whilst thought can take a number of forms, it is fundamental to what thought is that the rational subject be able, in thinking, to apply general concepts to particular objects, aspiring therein to know how those objects actually are. This is why possessing a concept, as what one deploys in thinking, just is grasping the possibility of so applying it to particular objects that one knows about them.

This characterization applies, I suggest, to thought and the concepts which figure in it quite generally.[105] In the case of theoretical thought, the idea is that possessing a concept fit to figure in it involves a grasp of the kinds of grounds on the basis of which one could justly apply the concept to some object. One can then recognize those grounds as such; and by applying the concept to an object on their basis, one may therein know, and so know the basis on which one knows, that the object actually is as it must be if the concept may be applied to it. If one possesses the concept *red*, then one knows how an object must look, and under what conditions it must do so, in order to be able to correctly think that it is red. In being visually presented with a red object, then, and in such a way that one recognizes that the conditions for the application of the concept are met, one can then know that the object is red—along with one's basis for knowing this.

Now, being able to think practically is being able to represent an action-kind as to-be-done; and an action-kind is a concept which may be applied to objects. And of course, as even the functionalist would allow, in representing an action-kind as to-be-done, one represents a possible action of one's own—and so represents oneself as the agent of a possible action. But in that case, if one can practically represent an action-kind, then that ability must involve one's grasp of the possibility of knowing that it applies to oneself when one is doing it. So I suggest that if practical thought is genuinely thought, and so involves the deployment of concepts in thoughts which aspire to knowledge about actual particulars, then the agent who can think practically about some action-kind must grasp that they could do it *in* practically representing it, and so do it in such a way that they would know that they were. Being able to practically represent an action-kind simply is, in the fundamental case, knowing that one has the capacity to do it self-consciously.

I shall come back to some questions about this. If it is right, however, then there is something seriously amiss with the block view of changes and the picture of practical thought's relation to action which is funded by it. Given the separation of practical thought from particular actions engendered by the block view, the very idea that an agent of intentional action could know what they were in the middle of doing intentionally is put out of reach. But if I am right about what is involved in practical

[105] Cf. Kern (pp.17-8, (2017)).

thought's being a species of thought, then this result can only denature practical thought to the point where it is unrecognizable as such.

This is borne out, I think, by the split between the thinking practical subject and the active yet unself-conscious animal which I described in the last section. If the practical thinker is debarred from actually applying an action-kind to themselves in acting intentionally, then we lose our grip on how the postures of mind which are supposedly left over may be seen to deployments of concepts of actions at all. The wishes of the practical thinker—who, it is hard to resist saying, is attached to that active animal—no longer seem to be representations things which *they* might actually *do*. Those representations would seem to degenerate into a succession of depictions of possible states of affairs in which an animal moves, rather than the thinker's representations of their own possibilities for acting. And with that—the loss of intentionally doable action-kinds as elements of thought, and the correlative idea that there is distinctively *practical* way of thinking about doing—we also lose our grip on the idea that there could occur *intentional* actions at all.[106]

It seems to me, then, that a grasp of an action-kind as something which one could actually do, on the one hand, and as something which one might know oneself to be doing, on the other, are two sides of the same coin—namely, the fact that action-kinds are those concepts which are deployed in a distinctively practical manner of thinking. If one grasps an action-kind in being able to practically represent it, then, in the fundamental case, one represents oneself as able to do it. And this self-ascribed ability is, I think, the ability to practically represent the action-kind in such a way that, therein, one would know oneself to be doing it.[107] Here doing the action-kind just is

[106] In his (1996), McDowell presents an analogue of this argument for the case of theoretical thought. Unless episodes of perceiving are conceived as relations of being affected by an object which are identical with the subject's thought that they are being so affected, and which thus involve the subject's application of concepts to what is doing the affecting, then, McDowell argues, theoretical thought must be restricted to, as it were, non-assertoric forms. For if perceptions were not self-conscious, McDowell presses, then they could not present grounds, for the application of concepts to actual objects, which are recognized by the subject as such. But then the idea that we have a form of thought here at all, in which concepts are deployed, goes missing. So there can be a form of thinking in which one aspires to know actual objects apart from one's judgements only if, McDowell argues, thinking is already operative within perceiving. This seems right to me: the rational subject's being affected *by* and their affecting *of* objects must both be self-conscious.

[107] Compare Rödl (p.60), (2007)): 'Since practical thinking is, fundamentally, acting, the power of practical thought is a power to act.' See also his (2013). I do not know that Rödl ever quite makes the argument that I have just presented for the premise in that quotation.

applying it to oneself: the self-conscious realization of a kind of change. So in grasping an action-kind, one credits oneself with the ability to participate in those self-conscious changes which practical thoughts paradigmatically *are*—namely, I suggest, intentional actions.

If this is right, then the truth of the Identity Account is, in effect, something of which we practical thinkers are availed simply in virtue of our being such—simply in being able to represent action-kinds as to-be-done.

3.2: A pair of worries about the foregoing

The first concern here returns us to the idea of wishing. Consider an example, and say that one witnesses a ballerina moving in a certain way and then wishes that one do what one sees them doing. Plainly, even though one can think about doing the action-kind in question, one does not yet, in such a case, grasp as a possibility for oneself that one self-consciously undertake the kind of movement in question. Indeed, one knows that one *does not* know how to do that kind of move. In that case, how could it be right to say that that being able to practically represent an action-kind just is taking oneself to be able to do it self-consciously?

Now, unless something is said here against the line of argument I presented in the foregoing section, this objection does nothing to upset its conclusion: namely, that the fundamental form of practical thought must be intentional action. All the objection really does, in that case, is issue a challenge. In what sense, it should be asked, is wishing that one do something derivative relative to intentional action? Although, if I am right, there must be such story to tell, nevertheless it must be spelled out. How exactly should wishing be understood, if it is a stunted or, perhaps better, merely incipient version of intentional action, rather than something to which another thing—actual change, say—must be *added* in order to arrive at intentional action proper?

For now I postpone spelling out how this is to work; I do so in the Coda. Doing so depends on a characterization of our knowledge of our capacities for intentional action, which I offer in Chapter 6.

Having said that, however, let me note that someone might, after all, take objection to the argument of the foregoing section. If such a challenge could be made to stick, then the possibility of wishing that one do something might take on a different

light. Then the example above could be taken to reflect—although not, I take it, to establish—how the ability to practically represent an action-kind does not, even in the fundamental case, involve crediting oneself with the ability to do it. Thus it may be said that the ability to *do* an action-kind is one thing, and the ability to think reflexively about doing it is quite another: the exercises of the former are actions, the exercises of the latter are practical thoughts. Thus intentional action must be viewed, *pace* the Identity Account, as pre-intentional action which counts as intentional only in relation to reflexive practical thought.

I suppose that the challenge here will take the following shape. The objector will not rest their opposition on the block view of changes, or the way it forces practical thought outside of actions. Instead, the objector presses that the generic ability to engage in goal-directed behaviour is shared by humans and unself-conscious animals alike, and that this generic capacity takes the same specific shape in them and in us. It cannot be, then, that the exercises of any particular capacity to do a determinate kind of action just are practical thoughts. Rather, in addition to such a capacity the agent of intentional action believes that they have it, and so has the additional ability to frame reflexive practical thoughts about what to do.

Now, this objector will allow that action-kinds are concepts; and they will allow that it is a condition on the practical thinker's grasp of them that they appreciate how such concepts might be applied to actual agents, including themselves. What the objector will say is that given how I am using the word 'thought', practical thought is not really thought: by engaging in it, the practical thinker does not aspire to know about actual objects. Rather, such "thinking" borrows a concept which may be applied in *theoretical* thought, in which home the concept is one whose possessor must credit themselves with the ability to knowingly tell when it applies. They will say that one can enjoy such a grasp, and so wish to do something, but without believing that one can actually do the kind in question. Practical thought proper relies on one's enjoying, in addition, such a beliefs in one's otherwise animal capacities to act.[108]

It is a signal consequence of this that the objector must also be committed to denying the block view: for this objector, one who can practically represent an action-kind takes themselves to be able to know, in principle, that they are doing it, as one

[108] Compare the distinction Velleman draws between wish and desire (p.17, (1992)).

agent amongst others. In that case, we need a different conception of what a particular change is from that provided by the block view.

Nevertheless, on this view, so-called practical thought's fundamental form is not itself an intentional action, and the Identity Account is denied. The agent of intentional action has, so to speak, animal capacities for engaging in goal-directed change, along with a theoretical grasp of the kinds under which such changes fall. In virtue of the latter, they have the additional ability to frame reflexive representations about which kinds of action are to-be-done, which ability becomes an ability to frame supposedly *bona fide* practical thoughts once the thinker believes they can do the kind in question. Such a thinker is then in a position to tell—in a second, evidence-based step which goes beyond the doing itself—that they are in fact doing such a kind. I shall label the proponent of this view a *hybrid theorist*, for they combine the picture of practical thought common to adherents of the block view with a heterodox conception of what a change is.

Conclusion

How should I, as an advocate of the Identity Account, respond to the latter objection to my argument for it? To begin with, something must be said to rebut the hybrid's theorist argument based on the commonality between animal and human agency. In the second place, it is worth bearing in mind the dilemma concerning how we are supposed to come to know what we can do.

Whether that argument applies to the hybrid theorist would depend on whether they are in a position to defend Armstrong's perceptual conditions on practical thought. Although the hybrid theorist will allow that an agent can know what they are doing intentionally, it is not clear that they can defend the idea that the agent *must* know. In which case, it might seem as if the hybrid theorist's agent of intentional need not frame practical thoughts which make reference to the particulars on which they act, so that such agents need have no conception of the bodily means through which they act as one particular on others. Why then suppose that such an agent's beliefs in their own bodily capacities are innate? Moreover, do we have anything that is recognizable as practical thought, given that such knowledge need not be innate?

I shall not pursue the epistemic dilemma in connection with the hybrid theorist. However, I shall take up the second of those foregoing questions in Chapter 6. We need

to ask what the hybrid theorist could possibly mean when they say that practical thought is a distinctively practical deployment of concepts, but where 'deployment' is then divorced from idea that in such thought, concepts are ever applied to actual objects. I suggest that this is confused. What is more, I shall press that our knowledge of what we are doing is first-personal, and that the hybrid theorist can make no sense of this.

As said, I shall attempt to prosecute this response to the hybrid theorist in Chapter 6. However, the cogency of their challenge depends on the idea that the block view of changes can be replaced with something better. Before responding to the challenge, then, I want to try to sketch out an alternative way of thinking about what a particular change is. I shall call this the Aristotelian view of changes, for reasons which will become obvious, and it will ultimately be seen to belong most properly to one who accepts the Identity Account. Indeed, in line with my thought that each practical thinker implicitly takes the truth of the Identity Account for granted, I think each practical thinker represents themselves as an agent of change in accordance with the Aristotelian view. I discuss what this might mean at the end of Chapter 6. The burden of this chapter, one could then say, has been to show that it is incoherent to suppose that the agent represents themselves as such in accordance with the block view of changes. To that extent, functionalism, occasionalism and interventionism must be wrong.

Part 2

Chapter 4: Causation as change

Introduction

In the previous Part of the thesis I argued that the block view of change—the view on which a change's kind is settled by its actual duration—rules out the possibility of self-conscious action. This means that the Identity Account of practical thought's relation to action, which I aim to defend, cannot be true: on that account, to think practically, fundamentally, is know oneself to be doing the action-kind one practically represents. In Chapter 3 I offered arguments in favour of the Identity Account, but even the challenge I considered to the main argument—put forward by the hybrid theory—conceded that we must at least be able to know what we are doing, when we do it intentionally. The block view must be wrong.

At this point, one might try to deny that reality contains actual, concrete changes.[109] Views which assimilate events to facts are, I think, of a piece with this strategy.[110] It seems to me that there are problems with this approach; but beyond making some brief remarks in opposition to it in Chapter 5, I shall not marshal any very serious arguments against it. Rather, in this Part of the thesis I want to at least provide the beginnings of a characterization of what a particular change is that differs from the block view. The aim is to provide one that is compatible with the thought that the agent of intentional action can know what they are doing—that is, know what kind of change they are realizing—when they are doing it. I do not provide this characterization in one go; rather, I take up this task across this chapter and the next. But in any case, if this characterization persuades, then the claim that we should give up on the idea that reality contains actual changes is put into question, at least pending any further considerations which might be brought in favour of it.

Now, I suggested in Chapter 1 that, ultimately, the rationale for the block view of changes was the thought that it is particular changes which are causes and effects. For if we suppose that a change's kind is specified in terms of the typical causes and effects of changes of that kind, then we can explain why a change would fall under its

[109] See, for example, Prior (2003).
[110] See, for example, Kim (1976).

kind in virtue of its actual duration: a given change is apt to cause certain kinds of effect, this line of thought goes, in virtue of its temporal parts and so its actual duration.

If we want to offer an alternative characterization of what a particular change is, then we shall, in the first place, need to dispute this idea that particular changes are, just as such, causes and effects. I do not, however, think that we need to, or should, deny that there is a deep link between the concepts of *causation* and *change*. Indeed, the alternative characterization of particular changes which I advance here claims that, fundamentally, a particular change is what constitutes the link between two continuants related as agent to patient. A particular change just is the agent's changing of the patient—or is, equivalently, the agent's causing of the patient to change. I call this the Aristotelian view, for its outlines may be found in his *Physics*. Where the block view treats changes as that which causation *relates*, the Aristotelian view treats changes as what causation *is*.

Even if it affords the possibility that a change's kind is not be settled by its actual duration, however, this relational character of changes does not promise to shed any light on the possibility of self-conscious action just by itself. But the relational character of changes is only part of the picture. It is a further, and connected, dimension of the Aristotelian view that an agent's changing of a patient is an exercise of correlative capacities and liabilities on the part of those continuants. It is this aspect of the view which will ultimately allow us to see how a change of a certain kind may be occurring but without completely realizing its kind. This is central to the possibility of knowing what one is doing whilst not knowing that one will have done it. I elaborate on this latter aspect in Chapter 5. Here in Chapter 4 my goal is just to get the relational character of changes into view, and thus to indicate the connection between causation and change as I see it.

In §1 I introduce the bare bones of the central idea, *via* some remarks P.F. Strawson makes in his essay 'Causation and explanation'. With this much in view, I then discuss in §2 some of the apparent examples of change which seem to fly in the face of the Aristotelian view, and indicate how I think one should respond to them. In §3 I consider an objection to the Aristotelian view. This turns on the idea that causation just is the *creation* of a particular change, so that a change itself cannot be an instance of causation. I urge that this rests on the block view, and so begs the question; moreover, I raise a question about whether an adherent of the block view can make sense of the

reality of causation. In §4, I suggest that the Aristotelian view is better placed to capture the reality of causation. However, I point out that this depends on our making sense of the dynamic character of change: namely, the way it involves the patient's non-accidental progression of state over time. To articulate this, I turn to the second aspect of the Aristotelian view, in Chapter 5.

§1

1.1: The Aristotelian view of changes and its pedigree

Aristotle claimed that 'the actuality of that which has the power of causing motion is not other than the actuality of the movable, for it must be the fulfilment of *both*.'[111] One way of understanding this is as saying that when one thing changes another, there are not two occurrences that are related as cause and effect: the action of the changer and then the change the patient suffers. Rather, Aristotle seems to be telling us, that one thing changes another is to be understood in terms of the occurrence of a single change, in which the one thing relates to the other as agent to patient. A particular change just is one continuant's changing of another—or, what is equivalent: one continuant's causing of another to change.

This, in barest outline, is what I call the Aristotelian view of what a particular change is. By making use of it, I think we can eventually make sense of how an agent might know what they are doing whilst they are doing it. This view will allow us to defend the Identity Account of practical thought's relation to intentional action.

Now, Aristotle actually puts in place two ideas, both of which I mean to draw upon: that a change is something that relates an agent to a patient, and that changes are the exercises of powers, or capacities. One and the same occurrence is, on this picture, an exercise of the agent's power to change something and a manifestation of the patient's correlative liability so to be changed.[112] Ultimately, we shall see that these points are not really separable; but in this chapter my focus is on the first. I turn to the idea that changes are exercises of capacities in Chapter 5.

In any case, rather than engage in Aristotle-exegesis, I want to begin with some quotations from P.F. Strawson's paper 'Causation and explanation'. Whilst being

[111] *Physics* III.3 202a14-6.
[112] Cf. Lear (pp.31-2, (1988)).

somewhat closer to home, Strawson's paper contains the basic ideas behind what I call the Aristotelian view. It serves, then, as a helpful introduction.

Strawson writes that:

> [We] should regard mechanical transactions as fundamental in our examination of the notion of causality in general. They are fundamental to our own interventions in the world, to our bringing about purposed changes: we put our shoulders to the wheel, our hands to the plough, push a pen or a button, pull a lever of a trigger. Entering into them ourselves, we find in them a source of the idea of power and force, compulsion and constraint. Ourselves apart, they include observable natural phenomena, actions or relations directly detectable by us in the particular case, the observation of which supplies explanations of the states they end in. (pp.118-9, (1992))

Here Strawson talks indiscriminately of 'actions or relations', into which agents 'enter'. And as he remarks a little earlier in his essay:

> [When], as often, in reporting such observable actions or transactions, we employ a two-place predicate, a transitive verb appropriate to the type of transaction in question, the two places are not filled by designations of distinct particular events […]. At least one of them is filled, and often both are filled, by the designations of particular substances. (p.115, (1992))

1.2: An initial elaboration of the Aristotelian view, *via* Strawson's remarks

Strawson seems to think that the kind of report most revelatory of our basic underlying thoughts about causality is that in which one substance is reported as changing another, and in some determinate way.[113] His basic point seems to be that this is our original model of causation, even in connection with inanimate objects—his example is of a boulder flattening a hut—and that we find claims about causal relations intelligible to

[113] I am not certain which kinds of case Strawson has in mind when he denies that *every* report on an observable causal transaction deploys a sentence, using a transitive verb, in which both of the predicate's places are filled by designations of particular substances. Even in the relatively colourless predicate '*x* caused *y* to move'—more specific instances of which we can easily imagine—'*y* to move' is not a nominal used to designate some event. Perhaps he is supposing that we sometimes at least *say* that some event is changing a substance. In any case, that such an infinitival phrase is to be understood as a nominal that designates an effect-event, or anyway as readily replaceable with one, seems to be assumed by many philosophers of action. I take issue with this, briefly, in my (2013). In her response to that paper, Steward (2013b) fairly asked that I elaborate on the idea that both *relata* of the causal relation are continuants. This chapter and the next constitute my attempt to do so.

the extent that we can find some, perhaps extended, application for this model.[114] Moreover, he is clear that he thinks that our basic thoughts about causality should *not* be cast as thoughts about one event's being the effect of another. But how should we understand his alternative?

Strawson himself does not provide details, and his talk of 'bringing about purposed changes' in the first quotation certainly allows itself to be interpreted in terms of one change's causation of another. But we need not elaborate his remarks in that way. Instead, consider Strawson's claim that observations of 'actions or relations', in particular cases, 'supply explanations of the states [those actions or relations] end in'. Here we start from the knowledge that an object is in some state which it need not be in: a hand is on one side of a desk, when it could just as well be on the other. Why is it there? Well, the hand moved there from the other side of the desk: a change occurred in the hand with respect to its position in space, and the change the hand underwent ended in that state of the hand.[115] But now, is there not more to say? What moved the hand there? After all, a hand is not the kind of thing that moves by itself—and when one does, that is a fact which calls for special explanation.

Now, the hand may have been blown by a gust of wind, or pushed there by a friendly dog; each of these is a candidate agent of the change which the hand undergoes. In our case, let us say that the hand's owner simply moved it there: by doing so, they meant to send a signal to their friend.

Strawson's thought is that in principle we can simply *observe* who or what the agent of a change is; and let us suppose that in our case we see the agent move their hand across the desk. The thought now is that our "project" of coming to understand why the hand is located where it is need not take the form of finding *another* change which caused the change in the hand. In the first instance, we do not need to look beyond that change itself but rather—to put it somewhat picturesquely—to look further into the nature of the change in question. For in seeing who or what the agent of the change is, we know—so Strawson's point can be elaborated—more about the specific kind under which the change we are concerned with falls. It was not a dog's moving of a hand, but rather a human's moving of their own hand. Such changes would be, the

[114] pp.118-20, (1992).
[115] Compare Anscombe's (p.150, (1981b)) example of our explaining why something is at some position *B* by saying that it arrived at *B* from *A*.

thought goes, hand-movements of quite different specific kinds.[116] So again, we may understand better why a hand is in some state by knowing the agent of the change of which that state is a culmination. And achieving at least this much understanding need not involve the introduction of another change into the picture, and requires only the informed use of one's senses.[117]

The central point here—it seems to me, for Strawson himself does not explicitly say this—is that efficacy, or causation, obtains *within* the change.[118] On this picture, the change which the hand undergoes is to be understood, to use some unfortunate phrasing, as the agent's causing-to-change of their hand—an occurrence with an agent and a patient, and which relates them as the former's changing of the latter.[119] Furthermore, there is no reason to think that the collapse of a hut, for example, will not admit of similar treatment. Why is the hut like it is? Well, it collapsed: a boulder flattened it. Here the boulder's flattening of the hut can simply *be* the hut's collapsing: we now just know what the nature of the collapse in question was. Likewise with a brick a through a window: a brick's smashing of a window can simply be the window's smashing. Again, on this picture, such causality as we find is supposed to obtain within the change and *between* its agent and patient. A change, so considered, is its agent's making a difference to the state its patient is in.[120]

Now, there is no reason why one substance could not affect another, on this view, even as the second then affects a third; thus we can easily imagine causal chains. But whilst one thing may be the patient of one change and the agent of another, changes themselves will not be treated as causes and effects.[121] The importance of this is

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[116] Compare Strawson (p.128, (1981)): "'a fall" is not one [event-sortal] but an element in many: "a fall of a leaf" is one, "a fall of a stone" another'.
[117] p.116, (1992)).
[118] This is a slogan of Hornsby's (p.107, 2011)). One way of putting my complaint about her view, however, is that it puts the truth of the slogan out of reach: for Hornsby, when causal activity is present, there is no change for it to be inside; and when there is such a change, no activity could be internal to it, for the change is in the past.
[119] For 'causes-to-change' see Ford (p.31, (2014)).
[120] Compare St. Thomas, in his commentary on the *Physics* (p.88, (1993)): 'suffering or undergoing [a] change is nothing more than taking on something from an agent'. Why 'taking on', though? Thomas has in mind a case where a hot thing heats up a cool thing; but the more general point is that the patient's coming into a new state is the work of the agent, where it belongs to the nature of the agent so to change such patients. In an attenuated sense, then, the relevant state of the patient is already "in" the agent. I elaborate on this appeal to natures in Chapter 5.
[121] Lowe (pp.135-9, (2007)) advocates "reducing" event-causation to substance-causation. In the light of what I proposing, it is plain that I am in sympathy with the spirit of his suggestion.

that the block view of changes is ultimately underwritten, I claimed, by the idea that changes just are those items whose occurrence admits of causal explanation by appeal to the occurrence of other changes. Thus by connecting the individuation of particular changes not to the typical causes and effects of changes of that kind, but rather to their agents and patients and what the one is doing to the other, we then begin to make room for a rejection of the block view.

In §3 I want to consider a serious, but I think misguided, source of disquiet about whether such a model of change can incorporate the proposed connection with causality. In the next section, however, I want to indicate how one might respond to some of the apparent exceptions to the idea that a particular change in one thing just is an agent's changing of that thing.

§2

2.1: Changing an extra-bodily object

Consider our case in which an agent intentionally moves their hand to a determinate position in order to push a book across their desk. Aristotle's idea would encourage us to treat the agent's moving of their hand and the movement in that hand as one and the same change, in which the agent relates to their hand as a patient. This seems right to me.

But now, it seems plausible to think—as Aristotle himself perhaps would—that changes in distinct patients are not themselves identical; as Davidson put it, 'If an event *a* is a change in some substance, then $a = b$ only if *b* is also a change in the same substance'.[122] In that case, the movement of the book across the desk and the movement of the hand with which the agent pushes the book cannot be the same change. And with this much in place, we now confront the question: how should we think about the agent's action of moving the book? How does it relate to the other elements we have before us: the hand-moving action and the movement of the book?

One suggestion would be that the agent's moving of the book ought to be identified with the movement in the book. Thus there would occur, in such a case, at

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However, Lowe's is basically an interventionist view: changes are treated by him as changes in the patient that are distinct from the activity of the agent-substance on whom they depend. For my part, I think we should just *deny* that changes are causes or effects and insist instead that they are themselves doings—*of* agents, *on* patients.

[122] p.173, (2001g).

least two actions—each identified, respectively, with the change in the hand and the change in the book.[123] This by itself need not be a problem, of course, but there is a difficulty. After all, the book moves in our case only because the hand moves against it in the requisite way; indeed, that hands can change books in this way is surely a fact upon the agent relies in moving their hand *for the sake of* moving the book. We should, then, I think, treat the movement of the book as identical with the *hand's* moving of it; as the agent changes their hand, so their hand changes the book. But now, the agent's hand is a proper part of them and so they are not identical with it; thus it looks like we shall have to treat the movement of the book as having as its agent both the active human being and that human being's hand.

Now, I shall say something about changes which have more than one agent in the next section, but I take it to be implausible that in this case the agent and their hand are two distinct agents of the same change. After all, absent the hand, what individual contribution would the agent make? Thus we need to deny, I think, that the movement in the book is identical with the agent's action of changing that book. And in that case, considering cases where we move some body-part for the sake of changing something beyond our skin—absolutely fundamental cases, in other words—forces us to abandon any simplistic application of the Aristotelian conception of change to intentional action.

However, I do not think that this is a serious problem. Note once again that where an agent moves a part of themselves, the Aristotelian view may be seen to apply. My own view then is that extra-bodily actions like the agent's changing of the book should be identified with the agent's changing of their hand, and not with the movement in the book. Of course, from the point of view of twentieth-century philosophy of action, this is a mainstream view.[124]

2.2: Concerns about the agents or patients of change

Even if we do not take the agent or patient of a change to be an event, still, in many cases it will only dubiously be a continuant. Indeed, I mentioned earlier the possibility that a gust of wind may be what moves one's hand; and a fire may be what burns down

[123] In fact, Waterlow (pp.186-7, (1982)) ascribes to Aristotle a view close to this one. However, she tries—unpersuasively, it seems to me—to avoid treating the agent's moving of their body as a genuine change. Coope (p.217n.29, (2005)) registers puzzlement at Aristotle's silence, in the relevant passages of the *Physics*, on what role if any bodily movements are supposed to play in his account.

[124] See, for example, Davidson (2001b).

a house. More generally: meteorology and physical geography, for example, constitute explanatory practices that concern themselves with causally potent—and causally *liable*—kinds of thing which are not standard continuants. Rivers, volcanoes, storms and glaciers all have an impact on, and may often be changed by, the things with which they come into contact.[125]

The first thing to say here, I think, is that whether or not any of these cases constitutes an example of a genuinely potent kind of thing is not a matter to be philosophically prejudged.[126] It is a question, ultimately, of what conceptual resources the relevant explanatory practice can or cannot afford to do without. This is not to say, however, that such things—as, say, fires—will not be composed out of smaller things: things which may be the object of some lower-level science, and whose operations again conform to the agent-patient structure to which I have alluded.[127] But whether or not the higher-level kinds of thing are only the mereological-sums of their parts is another matter, and not one which may be settled, so far as I can tell, without taking the cases individually. Of course, there *is* a philosophical question about what is involved in something's having capacities that would not be possessed in aggregate by its parts, were they not parts of that thing. I shall have more to say about this in Chapter 5.

Another concern here may be that certain changes seem to lack the proposed agent-patient structure altogether. One conspicuous kind of example is provided by cases in which agents move in some way, but where our reporting of such movements makes no mention of a patient that is moved. Human or animal locomotion provides one telling kind of case. Jones may walk to university intentionally, and his walk certainly seems to constitute a change in his location; and yet no mention is made of any patient which suffers the walk. Now, I think that cases such as these must be taken to be derivate in a certain sense, so that changing one's location is seen to be effected by

[125] Cf. Wiggins (p.198, (2016)): '[a] river is a changeable but long-persistent feature of a terrain that extends between mountain and sea. It has a lawlike mode of activity by reference to which its several tendencies and varying states can be understood'.
[126] Cf. Anscombe (p.13, (1961)): 'It can be [an empirical question whether such-and-such is a substance]; for example, in the case of the sky, or rainbows'.
[127] Compare Anscombe's description of how the heat-producing friction of one thing against another may be understood in terms of the 'banging of molecules upon one another' (p.149, (1981b)).

means of the concerted changing of the position of one's parts.[128] However, let me make a more general and more defensive point here.

The rationale for the block view of changes, as I have elaborated it, is that changes are what may be causally explained by reference to a preceding change, so that together the changes are taken to instantiate some law of nature. However, even an adherent of the block view, despite their conceiving changes in this way, may have to allow that there are *bona fide* kinds of change, instances of which are in some sense intelligible, but which do not themselves obviously figure in causal laws of the relevant kind, or have obvious event-causes. Perhaps the growth and decay of a whole animal, or one of its organs, would constitute examples. Of what kind of event is an animal's growth an event-causal consequence? My thought, then, is that such changes may be allowed, on the block view, only to the extent that we can see how they comprise genuine instances of event-causation at a lower level. And if this is right, then the Aristotelian view ought to be able to insist, likewise, that certain changes are what they are only because they comprise *bona fide* changes—cases of some agent's changing of a patient—as parts.

A final kind of case to consider, different from those mentioned in the last paragraph, is also one in which the relevant agent-patient structure is not obviously manifest. But rather than thinking about the locomotion of living things, we should consider the apparently agentless motions of inanimate objects. Perhaps in many such cases we have some grip on what changed the object so as to put it in motion in the first place—the brick was thrown, say, or the ball dropped—but after that, the object's continued passage may not obviously be a case of some one thing's continuing to move it. And on reflection, our everyday causal interactions will involve a great many such examples.

One general point to make is that movement to which something is passively subject might, nevertheless, be considered to be the work of various things in that object's environment. After receiving some initial impetus, how the brick flies might be determined, in part, by how the wind and the rain bear upon it. To that extent, where we can discern an agent at all, we shall likely have to discern many. But this need not

[128] As Aristotle claims in *De Motu Animalium* 1. Reid (p.49, (1969)) supposes that an individual thing *might* locomote without having to move some of its own parts to do so, but that this is not *our* situation. I imagine Reid has angels in mind. I doubt whether angelic locomotion makes sense.

create an issue if we can see the patient as being affected in aggregate by various agents across time. Saying exactly what kind of change the patient was suffering would then require, ultimately, appeal to a number of co-present and variously potent agents. But upon identifying them, we can attribute to them, in aggregate, a power to change the patient in the respect in question. Before that, perhaps we will have to express our ignorance by means of an *atelic* predicate, saying only that the patient is moving but to which point, absent interruption, we know not.

More problematic here, I think, is the question of the operation of the fundamental forces, and of gravity in particular. Common-sense seems to be equally confounded by the idea that the Earth "pulls" objects towards it and by the idea that the Earth makes a dent in space-time itself, into which things "fall". However, it might at least be said that on either of these pictures—those suggested by Newton and Einstein, respectively—we clearly attempt to comprehend the operation of gravity in terms of the familiar idea of one thing's affecting another. Perhaps the pictures are misleading, and an understanding of either theory lies only in a grasp of its equations. But it may be that either picture is the best we can currently do in discerning causality in the way in which an inanimate thing's movement is determined by gravity.[129]

§3

3.1: A challenge to the Aristotelian view of changes

At the end of §1.2, I mentioned a concern about the causal dimension of the Aristotelian picture of changes. Let me introduce that concern by noting Davidson's implicit opposition to how the Aristotelian view of changes incorporates causation.

Davidson writes:

[129] Compare here Strawson's remarks on magnetism and other forces: p.119, (1992). Cf. Coope (p.217, (2005)). Coope, however, seems to think that multiple agents could affect a single patient at once, on the Aristotelian picture, only if they each successfully exercise that power to change the patient which they would exercise were they acting alone. The patient must then be subject to multiple, possibly "opposed", changes—and this Aristotle cannot allow. But why not think that such agents together possess, merely in aggregate, a power to affect the patient in some way—which particular way just reflects, and may be exhaustively accounted for in terms of, the various mutually conditioned powers of the co-present agents? The kind of thing those agents do together on the patient is not, then, the very same kind of thing any of them would do were they acting alone, and there occurs just a single change in the patient. On the latter possibility, in effect, see Geach (pp.102-3, (1961)).

> We explain a broken window by saying that a brick broke it; what explanatory power the remark has derives from the fact that we may first expand the account of the cause to embrace an event, the movement of the brick, and we can then summon evidence for the existence of a law connecting such events as motions of medium-sized objects and the breaking of windows. The ordinary notion of cause is inseparable from this elementary form of explanation. (p.53, (2001b))

Now, Davidson really ought to say that the explanatory power of remarking that a brick broke the window derives—by his lights—not just from our ability to find an event in which the brick participates, but also one in which the window alone participates. After all, the remark makes no explicit reference to an event of either kind. In any case, here Davidson does not even consider the possibility of the kind of agent-patient structure that Strawson claims our untutored judgements about causality reflect. For Davidson, there is simply no question but that we are concerned to explain the existence of some particular change in terms of the existence of another, rather than to ascertain the nature of some particular change, and the causality internal to it, by discovering what its agent was.[130]

In Chapter 5, I shall describe a way in which *some* appeal to law should be common to any account of causation, so that Davidson may be partly right in his remarks on that score. Nevertheless, I take it that the description of the Aristotelian alternative ought to at least give someone sympathetic to Davidson's thought here pause. Is it so obvious that our ground-floor explanatory concerns can only begin to be met unless we see a way of finding an event-causal nexus within, say, a brick's breaking of a window, or a human being's moving of their hand? Why can it not be that we understand why a window is the way it is, in the first instance, by recognizing how it participated in a change of which a brick was the agent? What is going on here, I suggest, is a laudable association between change and causation, on the one hand, and an unfortunate association between causation and the creation of particulars, on the other. The latter association can seem to recommend Davidson's point and make the alternative seem totally wrongheaded.

[130] Of course, Davidson's (2001e) would have led him to think that there must be *some* event over which a true sentence, in which the predicate 'x broke y' is deployed, quantifies. But Davidson's point about causation and explanation does not depend on that, and is simply asserted.

To see how the association between causation and creation can make the Aristotelian view seem bizarre, consider this claim of Hornsby's: 'A is not causing a cart if A is pushing a cart; nor has A caused the book if A lifted the book. These verbs evidently do not express a relation of causation between two substances'.[131] Of course, Hornsby is quite right that if one moves a book, then one has not therein *made* the book. Indeed, the book's prior existence is a precondition on one's moving it in the first place.[132] But the idea that no causal relation obtains between two substances when one changes another seems to follow only if causation is understood in a certain way: as, most fundamentally, *causing a particular to exist* or *creating a particular*. And though she does not put it this way, I argued earlier that Hornsby's processual view of action may be understood in terms of the thought that agents create their *actions* over time, rather than any substance or object. Presumably Hornsby thinks that changing an object—or, indeed, creating one—is then to be understood as derivative upon an agent's creation of particular changes that culminate in certain ways.

So what motivates this association between causation and the creation of particulars, especially temporal ones? I think it is underwritten by nothing other than the block view of changes. For the basic idea here, once again, is that a change just is a temporal particular whose existence may be understood by appeal to the existence of another change—the cause—so that changes are, as such, singled out as what instantiate some law of nature. On this view, then, a change is such as to be "created by" some cause, and it is, to that extent, an entity whose existence is such as to be intelligible in this way. So for Hornsby, an agent who moves their hand to a certain place changes something, their hand; and the existence of the particular change which the hand undergoes must admit of *some* kind of causal explanation.

Of course, Hornsby's own view, I argued, was that the openness of the future meant that there could be no *present* change whose existence could explain the later existence of a hand-movement. Hence Hornsby appeals to processual activity. It was, however, impossible to see how this story could work. For the basic concern, as we may now put it, was that a later change can depend on some activity only if that activity first exists. But activity is then conceived in such a way that it precisely has no existence, and we enter a regress if its existence is supposed to be explained by its being related to

[131] p.131, (2015).
[132] 'Each kind of motion […] necessarily involves the presence of the things that are capable of that motion', Aristotle *Physics* VIII.1 251a10-1.

some other activity. The block view and the openness of the future are, I pressed, at odds with one another.

At this point, the functionalist adherent of the block view seems to have a better story to tell. For them, the hand-movement is something whose existence depends on a preceding attempt—a change, or something containing a series of such, in the agent's brain and nervous system. The functionalist, then, would certainly sign up to the remark of Davidson's with which I began this section: for them the future is not open, and present changes with actual future parts must be that on whose existence the existence of succeeding changes depends.

If one keeps fixed the idea of causation as the creation of particular changes, as the block view would recommend, then one may well remain sceptical about the Aristotelian alternative I have been trying to sketch. How could one continuant's changing of another be, just as such, an instance of causation? To that extent, one might feel some sympathy for Davidson's remark about what is involved in seeking an explanation of why the window is in pieces on the floor. If the state of the window is the culmination of some change, as all parties agree, then what other option do we have but to look for another particular change which created the change in the window? However, I have already given reason for us to drop the block view. Moreover, it may be thought to encounter its own troubles in making sense of causation. I elaborate on these points in the next section.

3.2: A rejoinder: can the block view accommodate the reality of causation?

Now, it is arguable that the creation of one change by another, or the dependence of an effect on its cause, is an idea that takes on a highly attenuated sense in the context of the block view in its full dress version. The thought that the existence of one change can be *explained by* the existence of its cause is retained, of course; and I allowed that the categories *change* (or *event*), *cause* and *law* may not even admit of reductive definition. Nevertheless, the block view ultimately imports a picture of changes as blocks within a vast four-dimensional wall—the entirety of which is timelessly actual and whose basic constituents are non-interruptible items related by strict laws. So however irreducible and necessary to the finite agent the categories of *change*, *cause* and *law* might then be said to be, one may feel that talk of one change's creation of another has now been drained of objective content, and rendered a merely epistemic or otherwise perspectival matter.

Indeed, from this vantage point, it can look like we are forced to question the very mind-independent reality of particular temporally extended changes, along with the determinate *ceteris paribus* laws relating their kinds. After all, on the received view, a change's very identity is bound up with its being a potential, or indeed an actual, cause—and the objective reality of causation has, so this line of thought goes, come into question. Not for nothing, then, it may be said, did Davidson claim, as we saw earlier, that 'we *decide* what counts as a change, on the basis of what we *want* to explain […]. [And in] deciding what to count as a change we also to decide which generalizations to count as lawlike'.[133]

If some such line of argument could be developed, then an adherent of the block view would seem to face a choice. On the one hand, they could insist on the open future and secure the idea that causation genuinely involves the dependence of new particular changes on some kind of activity which occurs in the present, but at the cost of a regress which destroys the intelligibility of there being any changes. On the other, they could deny the open future so that they can find existent changes on which the existence of new changes can then depend, but at the cost of claiming that the creation of one new change by another is really just a subjective projection onto a reality that contains no such things. Either way, the block view looks to be self-defeating, for on either horn causation has no place within temporally unfolding nature, and particular changes disappear with it. If this is right, then the idea that causation just is the creation of particular changes would seem to be in trouble.

Now, that the block view might be charged with such a difficulty is not something I pressed before. Earlier I simply allowed the functionalist the idea that the block view of changes makes proper sense in the context of a commitment to the closed future. Against that backdrop, I suggested that the functionalist might try to diagnose Hornsby's error as one of reifying the epistemic indeterminacy involved in the agent's perspective on their own future. And in response to this possibility, I sought a different rationale for the interventionist's position more generally: by appealing to considerations about practical thought's relation to action. But if the foregoing could be made to persuade, then the interventionist may have more complaints to bring against

[133] p.212, (2005). My emphases. See Putnam (1983) for some discussion of the alleged infection of causality by our explanatory interests.

their opponent than I allowed, even if such complaints would do nothing to improve the situation of their own view.

However, even though I think that there is mileage in the charge, this dilemma for the block view is not something on which I wish to place much weight. Here I cannot properly argue for the claim that the full dress version of the block view, complete with a commitment to the closed future, ultimately collapses the categories of *cause* and *change* into subjective projection. Indeed, even if this charge could be maintained, stating what kind of problem it is requires much more careful elaboration than I am able to offer.[134] After all, that we merely project the category *cause* onto a causeless world is a conclusion at which some philosophers' arguments explicitly aim.[135] My concern, instead, is with practical thought and its relation to intentional action; and the argument from Chapter 3 was that the block view must be jettisoned on that score. From the vantage point of the conclusion of that argument, then, the thought that causation must be the creation of particular changes looks question-begging: for that thought seems to rest upon the block view.

Apart from the role it can eventually play in underwriting the possibility of self-conscious action, however, the Aristotelian view may be thought to offer a further benefit to someone who is sympathetic to the thought that the block view engenders the foregoing dilemma; for the Aristotelian view would seem to allow one to avoid it. Let me briefly advertise this possibility in the next section, before going on to say more about how the Aristotelian view incorporates causation. As I shall point out, this raises an important further question.

§4

4.1: Causation as change

I think we do want to treat causation and genuine change as intimately connected, as the full dress version of the block view maintains. Such a connection is mediated by the

[134] The question here, were one to take it forward, should not, I think, be put in epistemic terms: about whether we ever have enough evidence to treat one rather than another event-description as a genuine event-*kind*, fitted to feature in a law; and if not, then on what pragmatic or Platonic basis the decision might be made. The real question is: what is experience now supposed to be so that it may be thought of as affording a subject occasion to project anything at all 'on to the world'? This line of thought is pursued by Rödl (2012), and it is prefigured at the end of McDowell's (1998).

[135] See Stroud (ch.2, (2011)) for an excellent, albeit sceptical, discussion of the prospects of such subjectivism.

thought that genuine change is, as such, explicable in some way. What is more, we also want to be able to think of causation as a real relation between two independently existing and only contingently related things, so that how one of them is at one time can be seen, informatively and intelligibly, to depend on the other and how it was at an earlier time.

However, by insisting that changes are the existing things that causation relates, so that causation is the creation of particular changes, the block view produces a conflict between the demand that causation be a relation, and the demand that one of its *relata* depend in some way on the other. The foregoing dilemma may be seen as an expression of this, with the interventionist being seen to drop the idea that causation is a relation, for activity is said to be able to go on without any resulting change, and with the functionalist being seen to drop the idea that causation involves genuine dependence, for the two related changes are just timelessly actual. On either horn, however, causation itself seems to be forced outside of nature's temporally unfolding order: into a noumenal realm or into the perspective of the finite agent.

If instead what causation relates are two existing continuants, or things which approximate to such, and if in being so related the one does not create but rather *changes* the other, then we seem to make progress. On this view, *how* the second *relatum* is depends on the first, rather than *that* it is; there is then no conflict between causation's being a relation and the second *relatum*'s depending on the first. The agent and the patient can, indeed must, be related in this way from the beginning until the end of the change. Here changes are seen to be those relations between continuants in which causation consists; and causation itself is then seen to take, and so be *in*, time. It does not get forced outside of nature's order. Outside of theological contexts, then, I think that creation should be treated as the giving of form to pre-existent material, and *causing to change* can be metaphysically prior to *causing to exist*. After all, one only builds a house by, amongst other things, moving some bricks.[136]

[136] Thus Aristotle (*Physics* II.9 200a24-6): 'If then there is to be a house, such-and-such things must be made or be there already or exist, or generally the matter relative to the end, bricks and stones if it is a house.' Compare the final speech that Anscombe, with knowing irony, puts into the mouth of the 'counsel for the prosecution' against Hobbes, and his view that the coming into existence of a new thing requires some kind of causal explanation (pp.161-2, (1981b)). All Anscombe's examples are of continuants; and in every case she makes clear, though she does not use these words, that change underlies creation.

Here we might note in passing that we could now, if we so wished, re-introduce the terms 'cause' and 'effect'. For we might let the culminating state of a change be the effect, and then label either the change or the change's agent the cause. There is no harm in this, so long as it is borne in mind that the culminating state of the patient is not a particular item that has been produced or created, either by the change or the agent of that change.[137] To think so would be no improvement on the block view.[138]

Rather, I think, the agent acts on the patient over time, changing how it is therein. Thus it is no accident that the patient is how it is, and it will be no accident if the patient comes to be in the culminating state of the change it is undergoing, should nothing interrupt. This structure should, or at least can, be taken to be the fundamental one, on which any understanding of the terms 'cause' and 'effect' may hang. For I do not think it is available to an objector to claim that 'cause' and 'effect' have accepted meanings that run counter to this. Such terms are highly abstract and I doubt their usage is especially disciplined amongst users of English. That only particular events are causes and effects, for example, as the block view claims, is hardly a mere reflection of common sense. 'Cause' and 'effect' are fair game, I think, for anyone able to tell a coherent story about the metaphysics of change and causation.[139]

Now, even if we distinguish causation as such from creation in the way I am suggesting, this hardly answers all the pressing questions. For one thing, even if one were to allow the conception of changes that I am advancing, is there not still a question about why any particular change occurs when it does? Strawson recognizes the need to say something here, of course,[140] and the block view would seem to build in such an answer.

If the Aristotelian view of changes is right, then the question about why some particular change happened when it did boils down to the question of why, at a particular time, one thing or a number of such *did* something to another. Of course, our answers to that will need to reflect the kinds of agent and patient in question. Some water might dissolve a portion of salt at particular time because it was then that the

[137] I suspect that Coope (2007) commits the latter error, in Aristotle's name.
[138] Ford (2014) is helpfully clear on this.
[139] Compare here Anscombe's remarks on the word 'cause': (p.137, (1981a)). I think what I say here is compatible with Steward's (pp.212-6, (2012a)) 'causal pluralism', although I wonder whether I am discerning a more rigid structure underlying the plurality than she would allow.
[140] p.120, (1992).

water was brought into contact with it; a feeding antelope, on the other hand, may tear some grass from the riverbank only when it hears a nearby leopard slink away. In Chapter 6, I say something about the special features of the self-movement in which animals engage. Here, though, the point need only be that in both cases the agent of the change in question is affected in some way before it acts, and we increase our understanding of why it acts when it does by noting so much. And whilst the form taken by that affection is markedly different in either case, we must remember that there may be causal chains in which a series of continuants affect one another, as I noted in §1.2, even though it is not the occurrences involved which stand in the causal relation.[141]

Secondly, and more seriously, it must be said that the possibility of linking change and causation in the way in which I am proposing may still be difficult to see. What kind of relation is such that, in virtue of being in it, one of its *relata* is in different states at different times? How should we understand the way in which something relational can be, as we might put it, such as to unfold in a particular direction over time? This dynamic character of changes is something about which more must be said, especially once it is denied that changes are caused—either by agents or other changes. Apart from its abstract possibility, which is all I have so far offered, we need a more concrete grip on what it means to say that causation obtains *within* changes, so that causation itself takes time. Before doing so in Chapter 5, however, let me briefly consider the view of Anton Ford. His view is similar to the one I mean to advance—except that, even though he appreciates the need to say something about it, he ultimately fails to allow for this dynamic dimension of change.

4.2: Ford's view

Ford wants to deny that agency over time can be understood in terms of the creation of a particular change,[142] and he claims that creation generally must ultimately rest upon one thing's changing of another.[143] Ultimately, then, he understands one thing's changing of another in something like the relational terms I have been recommending: as something which joins two continuants.

[141] Here I use 'affection' and 'occurrences' rather than 'change' and 'changes' because it is not obvious to me that the event of seeing something is well-thought of as a change the animal undergoes. See Burnyeat (2002) for an exposition of Aristotle's scepticism on this score.
[142] pp.35-6, (2014).
[143] p.36, (2014).

However, Ford also seems to commit, albeit implicitly, to the idea that causation *is* the creation of a change,[144] and so he, in line with the Hornsby quotation from §3.1, needs to deny that an agent's changing of a patient is, just as such, a causal matter. He is committed to excising causality from agents' fundamental interactions with other things. And whilst, it must be said, Ford thinks that a claim using the predicate '*x* caused *y* to change' is entailed by a true claim using '*x* changed *y*', he also seems to think that the content of the predicate '*x* caused *y* to change' is exhausted by, because merely abstracted from, the content of various transitive predicates: '*x* lifts *y*', for example, or '*x* pushes *y*'.[145] As he puts it, 'the talismanic word "cause" is nothing but an auxiliary verb that helps to express a transitive thought'.[146] For him, one's thing's changing of another is, so to speak, causation in name alone.

I do not think we can rest content with this position. If Ford really does harbour an implicit commitment to the block view, then he faces the question, no less than the interventionist does, of how there come to be particular changes: whether or not they are relations—of, say, pushing or raising—that obtain between continuants. And whilst, on my reconstruction, the interventionist may be seen as offering a regress-inducing answer to that question, Ford leaves it unanswered. By denying the causal character of changes, Ford fails to tell us what is involved in a change's developing and then culminating—or better, given his view, simply coming into being—when a patient finally reaches a certain state.[147] But we need to understand what is involved in thinking that causal dependence obtains between the agent and the patient within a change, so that how the patient is now and will be in the future, supposing nothing interrupts, can be explained by the fact that agent is doing what they are doing. Indeed, unless change can *be* a form of causation in this way, there is nothing to be made of the idea that creation is secondary to it.

Relatedly, then, I think we ought to doubt Ford's point about the meaning of '*x* causes *y* to change'. As he himself suggests, '*x* causes *y* to change' might serve to express

[144] p.35, (2014). Here it looks as if Ford just supposes for the sake of argument that causes create their effects, but nowhere in his text does Ford offer an account of causation as anything except the relation of creating a change. Further evidence: he claims that there can be no changes in the present (p.33, (2014)), and that interventionist commitment rests on an acceptance of the block view of changes.
[145] pp.29-30, (2014).
[146] p.30, (2014).
[147] Ford (p.36, (2014)) does see the force of the relevant questions here, but not that he is committed to answering them. Again, at p.33 he commits to the claim that changes exist only in the past.

a determinable genus of which the various determinate kinds of change are species. But if that is right, then the former cannot be abstracted from the latter: there may be no finite list of determinates from which the relevant determinable is abstracted, and then the predicate which expresses the determinable would import some content beyond that of the determinates taken together.[148] Returning to the material mode, then, we can say that a brick's breaking of the window need not involve the presence of any independently specifiable factor *in addition to* the brick's causing of a window to change. Its breaking the window is just the manner of its causing. Compare the way in which a ball's possession of its scarlet hue does not involve the presence of some independently specifiable factor in addition to its redness; its scarlet hue is its manner of being red. Nevertheless, I think we are recognizing something substantive about *breaking* when we recognize that a causal connection may be thought through it. *Causing to change* may constitute, as we might put it, a genuine formal concept or category—one that is not reducible to all the specific kinds of causal transaction which determine it. That can be so even if, as Ford is surely right to insist, '*x* changes *y*' is just a form of words apt to express the very same concept.

Ford would not need to endorse the possibility of a reductive, albeit disjunctive, definition of '*x* causes *y* to change' if he allowed that cases of genuine change simply are an agent's causing the patient to change in whatever determinate respect. And he could allow that if he dropped his implicit commitment to the block view, and the attendant thought that causation is the creation of a change. Then his insight that change underlies creation could take its proper shape.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to present the outlines of the Aristotelian view of what a change is, at least according to one of its fundamental aspects. I have also tried to defend the view from some counter examples and one serious objection.

Again, the basic idea is that a particular change just is an agent's doing of some determinate action-kind to or on that patient: moving it across the desk, say. The change the patient undergoes *is* the agent's work on that patient. Whilst changes instantiate causation, then, they are not themselves causes and effects. Fundamentally, it

[148] Cf. Williamson (p.551, 1995)); Wiggins (p.197, (2001)).

is agents and patients who are at either end of the causal relation: that relation is what is expressed by '*x* changes *y*'.

I located opposition to this picture in the idea that, fundamentally, causation must be seen to be the creation of a particular change. Apart from the block view, I do not know why one must accept this. Indeed, even when one does accept the block view, it is hard to see how, ultimately, thinking about causation in this way is compatible with its reality. The Aristotelian view does a better job, I think, of showing how causation is part of reality: it is there inside every change.

Of course, this raises the serious question with which I closed the chapter. How should we think about a change's development over time? What is involved, that is to say, in our thinking that it is no accident that a patient will end up in some particular state, and will pass through a number of others, in the light of the fact that the agent is changing it in the relevant way now? In order to comprehend this, I think we need to turn to the other aspect of the Aristotelian view: we must appeal to the idea that changes are the exercises of capacities.

Chapter 5: Change as the exercise of power

Introduction

In this Chapter I focus on the idea that if an agent is changing a patient in some determinate way, then although the patient is not in it now, it will be no accident if the patient eventually ends up being in the state characteristic of the kind of change that is occurring. If an agent is moving their hand across their desk, then it will be no accident if their hand gets there in the end; and if a boulder really is flattening a hut, then it will be no accident if eventually the hut is no longer standing upright. So much is involved, it seems to me, in our thinking that changes embody causation, as I described it in the last chapter. The question is: how are we thinking about the agent and the patient of a change, so that how the patient will later be is thought to be rendered no accident in the light of what the agent is currently up to?

Recall how the block view involves a particular story about what one thinks in reckoning that a change of some kind *is* occurr*ing*. If I think that someone is currently moving their hand to a particular place, on this view, then I think that, *for all I know*, there exists a change which has—timelessly, and so "already" from my point of view—parts which lie in the future. From this vantage point it is, of course, unsurprising that I think it will be no accident if the hand ends up being in the relevant place, when I think that someone is moving it there. It is only if the hand reaches the relevant place that there is a change of the kind in question; and although I allow that my evidence does not rule out the absence of such a change, I am thinking that there may in fact *be* a change whose causally related parts culminate in the hand's being at the location in question.

In opposition to this, Sebastian Rödl expresses the alternative I wish to advance. The presence of a change, he says, 'is internally extended and open'. Thus, as he later goes on, '[a] movement may fail to conform to its form. If it breaks off, it fails [fully] to satisfy its form. But it does not on that account cease to be of this form'.[149] This idea is crucial to understanding how an agent may know what they are doing but without knowing that they will have done it. But what is involved in maintaining it?

As I advertised in the last chapter, when we think of a change's kind as specified in terms of its agent and patient—in terms of how the one is changing the other, rather

[149] p.169 and p.175, (2012).

than the causes and effects that are typical of a change of that kind—we need not think that the change falls under its kind in virtue of its actual duration. Of course, if one thing is changing another, then *those* two things must exist; and this much is required, I have suggested, for us to think of the transaction as causal. But now what can be involved in a change's falling under a kind that marks out, as proper to any instance of it, one culmination as opposed to others—even though, as we may now suppose, for any such change it is at some point metaphysically open whether it will actually so culminate? Given that a merely possible future can hardly be what settles the kind of action an agent is actually doing *now*, what more needs to be in place?[150]

The crucial thing to appeal to here is the second of Aristotle's ideas that I highlighted in the last chapter: that a change is the exercise of correlative capacities possessed by its agent and patient. Once we no longer think of changes as necessarily fully determinate—items which exist only insofar as they have an actual beginning and end point—neither should we treat laws as something expressed by universally quantified claims that range over an independently constituted domain of events. Rather, as we shall see, I think laws reflect the powers or capacities characteristic of the kinds under which the agent and patient fall, these capacities then affording the measure in accordance with which one substance acts on another over time, and in the light of which the outcomes of its actions are non-accidental.[151]

In §1 I put in place the basic idea: that we can understand how a certain state may be the proper culmination of change in the light of that change's being the exercise of a capacity. I go on to describe how I am thinking about such capacities, and what is involved in our attribution of them to particular substances. Crucial here is that we think of empowered substances as material individuals that have parts and fall under a kind. In §2 I raise the question of what, more positively, is involved in our thinking of any particular change as the exercise of such a capacity. Specifically, I query how we should think about the priority of a capacity over its exercises, and I ask how we should think about a change's development across time. I press that the block view hinders our

[150] Both Boyle and Lavin (2010) and Rödl (p.173 (2012)) motivate their appeal to the generality of powers by posing a question such as this. However, I think that the full force of it only comes out once one has the possibility of an open future in view and contrasts that with the block view's conception of change. These elements—whilst, I think, present in both works—are not emphasized by these authors. Having said so much, though, let me note that what follows is deeply indebted to them. See also Valaris (2015) and Wolfson (2012) for similarly inspired contributions.

[151] These ideas are, I should note, also in Strawson's paper: see pp.115-6 and pp.120-2, (1992)).

understanding on both fronts. In §3 I then try to describe some of what *is* involved in our characterization of a change as the exercise of a capacity; thus I say something in response to the two foregoing questions. I close in §4 with some brief remarks about the open future, a commitment to some form of which, it seems to me, the Aristotelian view must involve.

§1

1.1: The basic idea about the role of capacities expounded, by means of an example

Let us take as an example a brick, and its smashing of a window; and let us suppose that one witnesses such a change and knows that one does so. The fundamental idea is that in taking the brick to be smashing the window—in recognizing the window's smashing to be the brick's smashing of it—we are thinking something quite determinate *about the brick*. For we are not just supposing there to be a possible state of affairs involving a broken window and a moving brick, or that such may be regularly present together: we are thinking that how things are going with the window is the work of the brick. The block would view would say that, in such a case, we take the window's breaking to be *caused by* the brick's motion, the two changes being taken by us to instantiate the relevant *ceteris paribus* law. In contrast, however, the Aristotelian view is that we think, of the brick itself, that *it* possesses the power (or capacity) to break things like windows.[152]

In taking the brick to be smashing the window here and now, then, we equally predicate the action-kind *smash* of the brick in a different way: thinking of the brick—as we might put it—that it smashes windows, or can smash windows. Thereby we think of the brick as being able, in principle, to break other things, at other times and in different places; we think that, *being what it is*, this brick may participate in indefinitely many smashings. And the idea is that it is only because we so think of the brick that we take the change that is happening to fall under a kind which marks out for it, among the many that could transpire, a privileged possible culmination.

Moreover, what goes for the brick goes for the window. For the idea would be that in this case we think, of the window, that *it* is liable to be smashed by things like bricks. Only thus could we take the window to be apt, given what it is, to participate as the patient in this change—one which, if nothing interrupts, will culminate in its being

[152] Cf. Burnyeat (p.42n.38, (2002)): 'the concept of potentiality on which Aristotelian physics is founded is not the bare concept of possibility'—as Brentano pointed out (pp.27-8, (1975)).

in pieces. Of course, this liability of the window may not be one it is likely to manifest again in the future; the window itself may not survive its encounter with the brick. Nevertheless, the window might not have manifested its liability in this smashing but rather in another, one that occurred at a different time or with a different agent.

The crucial point that bears emphasizing here is that in recognizing that an agent and a patient are realizing some *kind* of change, here and now, we recognize them as realizing something that could in principle be realized elsewhere or elsewhen. So much is involved, even an adherent of the block view would agree, in our taking it that there occurs some one determinate change.

The claim now, though, is that our recognition of the instantiation of this general kind is really dependent on our recognition of the participating agent and patient as being, in principle, the possible participants of other changes of the same kind. For, again, the realization of a general kind of change, as we are now thinking about that, involves the demarcation of one merely possible and yet privileged future culmination for the change in question. This, the thought goes, only makes sense insofar as we think of the agent and patient as being so natured that were the relevant culmination not to transpire, we would be forced to conclude that something had intervened. On this view, a kind of change is something which an agent and a patient realize together, so to speak, and the repeatability of kinds of change depends on there being individuals that are in principle able to realize them on occasions other than the one with which we happen to be concerned.

Now, as noted, the foregoing remarks make use of the idea that we might relate a particular agent to a kind of change in two quite different, albeit deeply connected, ways: as something that is realizing that kind of change on a particular patient, in a particular time and place, and as something that is generally able to realize that kind of change on patients of a suitable kind. In §3 I return to the first of these ways; here in §1 my focus is still on the second. So what more can we say about what is involved in our thinking of an individual as empowered, so that, given what the individual is, it would be no accident if the changes in which it participates were to culminate in their characteristic way?

To begin by putting it metaphorically: in thinking of an agent or patient as capable or liable in some way, it seems to me that we think something both above and

below the level of that individual.[153] For I think that we bring the individual under a kind, and we take it that the individual has the capacity in question only because of how it is constituted, or because it possesses the parts that it does. It is only in thinking thus, the thought goes, that we think of the capacity as *belonging to* that individual, so that engaging in the kind of change in question is not something in respect of which the individual is limited to any particular occasion, but is rather a general possibility which inheres in it. I expand on these points in the next two sections, and then raise the question, in §2, of what is involved in the characterization of particular changes themselves when we understand them to be the exercises of capacities.

1.2: One attributes causal powers only to changeable material individuals

In its full dress version, the block view maintains that a temporally extended change instantiates its kind-characteristic laws only in virtue of possessing the right parts. Indeed, I suggested that the relevant notion of parthood might be understood in broadly functional terms.[154] Likewise the Aristotelian view ought to insist, I think, that a brick is enabled to smash windows—or that a window is rendered liable to be smashed by bricks—only because it comprises the matter that it does.

Of course, this point generalizes. After all, it is not supposed to be a mystery why particular things can do what they can do; and in thinking of one thing as empowered in some determinate way, we commit, it seems to me, to thinking that it does what it can only because it is "put together" in a certain way. Or at least, I suggest that we so commit except in regards to the absolutely fundamental particles—those whose possession of their powers may, in the nature of the case, constitute a kind of explanatory bedrock. Now, this latter point also echoes a conclusion I drew in connection with the received view; but it is important to emphasize that explanatory bedrock here would consist in facts about things that persist through time, rather than in facts about what are supposed to constitute changes.

In any case, at this juncture we must resist any temptation to reduce a particular thing's possession of its capacities to its possession of the matter in virtue of possessing

[153] I borrow this directional talk from Rödl (p.180, (2012)). However, he does not consider the, as it were, downward direction. I think appeal to a thing's matter is essential to a full characterization of the individuality of the agent, and so the generality of power.
[154] As Hornsby puts it, events are singled out as falling under kinds which figure in causal laws; and 'support for particular claims about [event] parthood is given by facts internal to some event ideology, and never by purely spatiotemporal facts' (p.59, (1997a)).

which it enjoys those capacities.[155] For I suggest that it is a condition on the genuine attribution of causal power to something that it be an individual thing, an instance of a kind and something distinct from—and able to persist through at least some change in—its matter.

Here it is helpful to draw a distinction. On the one hand, a thing might enjoy a capacity derivatively, because it could be possessed in aggregate by its matter, or parts, were those parts not to constitute the thing's matter. On the other hand, a capacity might be attributable to that thing alone, because the thing is so enabled by its matter *only* insofar as the parts in question constitute the matter of that thing. Perhaps even if they were not formed into the brick, the various quantities of stuff comprised by a brick's matter would still enjoy, in aggregate, the brick's capacity to depress a pillow by a certain amount. That the brick can smash a window, however, is a fact whose explanation requires us to appeal to the way in which the brick is an outcome of various changes, to which the quantities in question have been subjected. We force the quantities of stuff to interact, that is, so that we produce something which can do something over and above what those quantities, taken together, could do by themselves. Only the brick has the relevant hardness, we might suppose, and only it is apt to be thrown at windows.[156]

In suggesting that causal power—the capacity of one thing to change another—is properly attributed only to genuine individuals, I had in mind the attribution of non-derivative powers like the brick's capacity to smash windows. These capacities are attributed to an individual only as such, and our attribution of them presupposes our drawing a distinction between that individual and the matter it possesses.

This, I think, is crucial to our understanding of the generality of capacities. For, as said, in attributing the capacity to smash windows to a brick, we think of the brick as something that is not limited to any particular smashing in which it participates. And the point to emphasize now is that our thinking of the brick in this way relies on our taking it to be an individual that can persist through changes across time. In turn, I suggest, this requires that we identify the brick as liable, in principle, to lose or gain some of its

[155] Cf. Hacker (pp.103-5, (2010)).
[156] Here I am indebted to Hyman (pp.46-50, (2015)).

matter whilst remaining the same thing.[157] Of course, some such gains or losses will be compatible with the brick's retention of its window-smashing capacity, but we can perhaps imagine the brick's matter decaying in quality to such an extent that, upon being thrown at a window, the brick itself would shatter or fall apart. In any case, whilst it might be true that a brick is able to smash windows only because it possesses matter that is arranged in the right way, I suggest that it as something distinct from, and liable to change in respect of, its matter that we treat it as harbouring the general capacity not just to participate in "this" window-smashing, but in other possible window-smashings.

Now the proper way to put this, I think, is that however rough or inchoate the conception of the kind may be, it is only *as* an instance of some kind that we attribute causal powers to a particular brick; for it is as a bearer of a certain shareable form that we recognize the brick as distinct from and able to persist through changes of matter. We recognize that bricks as such, having the constitution that they do, break windows; and recognizing so much is compatible with any particular brick's becoming defective, and no longer being so constituted that *it* can do (at least some of) what its kind of thing typically does. A particular brick can lose some of the characteristic capacities of a brick. Again, the point is just that attributing causal power to something involves taking it to be a changeable material individual, and that this involves thinking that it can do something of what the things which share its nature do.[158]

1.3: The conceptual circle of *kind*, *individual* and *power*

That the empowered, causally-related individual must be taken to fall under some general kind was, of course, already implicit in my remarks in §1.1 of this chapter. For the specification of the brick's power, however tacit, must appeal to *kinds* of patient beyond the brick itself. In the case of the brick's power to smash things, I had recourse to windows—a species, no doubt, of the wider genus of brittle things. What is more, the same point may be made in reverse, in respect of the window and brick-like things.

Thus, although the causal transaction between our brick and the window may be thought to depend on their being distinct and only contingently related material

[157] This aspect of something's being an individual is emphasized by Steward (2013a). Cf. Jones (2012).

[158] Cf. Rödl (p.207, (2012)): 'What holds of a substance form holds of particular substances of this form, but it holds of them not as particular substances distinct from others, but as instances of the form: a movement form is said of a substance because and insofar as it is said of its form.'

individuals—so that their correlative powers and liabilities are held severally between them—still, in taking the one to be smashing the other, one's incipient explanatory insight presupposes that *both* are identified as falling under kinds instances of which are taken, in being so identified, as apt to interact. When conditions are right, as we say, *bricks smash windows*—a generic claim relating kinds of substance, and one which no doubt specifies a claim that is more abstract yet.[159]

What is especially clear here, however, is that *in advance* we take certain powers and liabilities to be characteristic of the kind in question, so that being an instance of the relevant kind is something that is specified in terms of the possession of the relevant powers. The firmness with which we deem something to be of the kind question is reduced, then, along with our confidence that it possesses any of the relevant powers. Let me elaborate on this.

With the idea of non-derivative capacities in view, we might insist that whilst a given individual may gain or lose various parts, *what it is* for an individual to possess matter from which it is distinct must be elaborated, at least partly, in terms of that matter's being so arranged that the individual is enabled to do what members of its kind typically do.[160] That is to say, then, that whilst a thing's distinction from its matter may be presupposed to our crediting it with non-derivative capacities, that distinction itself may not be fully intelligible apart from our grasp of what it is so to credit something. For where *all* of something's capacities could be predicated of its parts alone, taken together, it is to that extent unclear that we have a genuine individual which is distinct from its matter; and it is unclear that our talk of there being one isn't just shorthand for a more complicated story about those (so-called) parts.[161]

One might even go further in this direction, and explicitly deny that a thing's matter constitutes a self-standing individual even though it is possessed by one. Depending on the case, some of the thing's *parts* may be candidates for being considered individuals. But insofar as a thing's matter is basically a set-theoretical construction out of those parts—which construction, we might add, presupposes our having first identified the relevant enmattered individual—it is unclear, at least to me, whether it is a real individual that equally inhabits the space taken up by what possesses

[159] Cf. Lowe (1980).
[160] A thought very close to this, though made much more precise and developed more carefully, is defended by Jones (2015).
[161] Cf. Madden (2016).

it.[162] Any particular thing's matter, the thought would go, is not a bearer of non-derivative capacities and so does not itself instantiate, in aggregate, a lawfully related substance-kind.

In any case, along with the concept of one substance's changing another, as I mentioned at the end of Chapter 4, I suggest that the categories of *individual substance*, *substance-kind*, *part* and *causal power* are equally basic and mutually dependent elements of the fundamental network of concepts through which alone we apprehend changing nature.[163] So although possession of a certain sort of power might be a condition on something's being an individual of some determinate kind, I do not claim that this condition could be elaborated in a way that affords a strict definition of *individual substance*. As I suggested in the foregoing section, I think an understanding of *causal power* just as much depends on that of *individual substance*.

Now, a thorough-going defence of all the foregoing is, of course, beyond the scope of my argument. Apart from whatever role they may ultimately play in making sense of intentional action—and, perhaps, the reality of causation—I can only point to whatever accord my remarks have with common sense. We might note, though, that an adherent of the block view advances a comparable package of claims in connection with their favoured categories.

Between the Aristotelian view and the block view, however, there is one difference in particular that it is worth bringing out here. In the case of a change, on the block view, what modal robustness we suppose it to have is revealed in our thinking that, in some possible world other than the actual one, the change might have been composed differently—and then that it may well have had the numerically same, albeit differently constituted, effects. A particular brick, on the other hand, is apt to enter into indefinitely many window-smashings in the actual world; in order to do so, it only needs to change its spatial location over time and not, so to speak, its *modal location*. Indeed this much, I have been proposing, is internal to our taking it to possess *bona fide* causal

[162] Wiggins (1968) seems to take a thing's matter to be a *bona fide*, if set-theoretically constructed, individual. Laycock (2006) makes an extended attempt to cast doubt on whether such constructions ought to be considered genuine individuals.
[163] See Strawson's talk of a 'connective analysis' of concepts (ch.2, (1992)).

capacities. It is unsurprising, then, if this is right, that some have been doubtful of the coherence of talk about the possession of causal powers by events.[164]

With this much said about causal capacities, let me now raise a pair of related questions about what might be involved in our treating changes as the exercises of them. In what sense is a causal capacity prior to its exercises? Does it cause them, for example? And do the exercises of such a capacity exist or occur—that is, how should we think about their development over time? In §2 I canvass some answers to these questions which I think we ought to avoid, and then in §3 I try to articulate some of the main features of the Aristotelian alternative.

§2

2.1: In what sense is a capacity prior to its exercises?

Recall my characterization of the full-dress version of the block view, in Chapter 1. There I insisted that an adherent of such a view can insist on the irreducibility of the concepts *law* and *kind*. Nevertheless, these were not supposed to be taken to introduce any causally-potent entities, over and above the course of particular changes, which might then be thought of as additional causes which determined that course in some way. Although such categories are supposed to play an ineliminable explanatory role for the finite and so epistemically limited agent, ontologically speaking general laws and the change-kinds specified through them are only meant to reflect patterns across the wall of timelessly actual change-blocks.

By contrast, however, the Aristotelian alternative insists on a certain priority which general powers or capacities are meant to enjoy over the particular changes which are their exercises. A brick's capacity to smash windows is not supposed by the Aristotelian simply to consist in the particular window-smashings which are—then only dubiously so-called—its exercises. For one thing, a capacity might remain forever unexercised. It is of a piece with this that the fundamental form taken by a statement of causal law, the Aristotelian will think, is a *generic* claim relating kinds of substance: something which says what the one kind of thing does to another, rather than a universally quantified claim, however hedged, which ranges over particular changes.

[164] See, for example, Lowe (pp.141-6, (2007)).

At this point, however, it is imperative to guard against a misunderstanding. We must not suppose that a capacity causally intervenes between an agent and the change which is their action, somehow serving to bring about the latter. To think of the priority of a capacity over any of its particular acts in terms of its serving as cause, of which those acts are effects, is to commit to a version of interventionism.

After all, how should we conceive the causing of a change by a capacity? In order for, as we must now suppose, the *new existence* of the capacity's exercise not to seem mysterious, we shall need there to be some distinct exercise in which the capacity's causing of the first consists; but then plainly we shall face the familiar regress. And if the capacity is not metaphysically distinct from its acts, so conceived, then the idea that it causes or is in any way prior to them is ruled out. In effect, to think of the priority of a capacity over its acts in this way is precisely to refuse to think of changes in the way we must, if we are to think of them as the exercises of causal capacities at all. It is to think of them as the block view does. But if not as temporally-extended artefacts, so to speak, whose existence requires causal explanation, then how are we to characterize changes when we understand them to be the exercises of capacities? And what kind of priority of a capacity over its exercises *is* involved in such characterization?

It seems to me that the absolutely fundamental thing to keep in view here is that in thinking of a change as the exercise of a capacity, we think of the change itself as the *doing* of an individual thing (or as the doing of a number of such) *on* another. This level of characterization is, I suggest, bedrock: the change is not an exercise of a power only in virtue of being the effect of another exercise. A change *is* the exercise of its agent's power to change what undergoes it, *punkt*.

Of course, as I have noted, we may think that, say, a window-smashing occurred in the past, or that a window-smashing was occurring but was interrupted before it culminated; we may think that a window-smashing is in the midst of occurring now. In each of these cases the relevant thought is articulated without mentioning any agent of the change, and instead our focus is simply on the occurrence of that change itself. It is imperative that we should have such ways of thinking available to us, for clearly we will not, simply in recognizing its past or present occurrence, always know who or what the agent of a change is. We need such conceptual resources, then, even to pose the relevant questions in pursuing an understanding of what happens. Nevertheless, such

ignorance in any particular case aside, we may—at least so I have been urging—still say that a change *is* a patient's being made to be some way by an agent.[165]

But now, how does keeping in view this Aristotelian idea about the relational character of changes help us to understand what is involved in thinking of a change as the exercise of a capacity? It tells us *not* to locate the activity of the empowered agent outside of the change, of course. But to answer this question properly, we must look more closely at the character of those changes themselves. And before offering some of the positive characterization which I think we need, in §3, it will be helpful to consider first whether talk of the *existence* of changes is really apt. The block view encourages this way of thinking; but I suggest that it is damaging. It stands in the way of understanding what it is for a change to develop across time, and relatedly encourages the idea that a capacity must cause its exercises. Indeed, we find, in effect, just the same dilemma.

2.2: Do changes—the exercises of capacities—exist or occur?

More than one philosopher has denied that, strictly speaking, particular changes (or events) may be said to *exist*. Rather, they are said to occur.[166] Is this, however, a superficial observation that just records a piece of English usage about change? An adherent of the block view may well think so; but it seems to me that there is a deeper point here, and that such usage may be seen to reflect the Aristotelian view of changes. How, though, should one characterize the meaning of 'existence' so that withholding its application to changes is seen to make sense?

A number of ways might suggest themselves here—but, supposing that it were even possible, offering a general and informative account of *existence* is not something I am in a position to do. Nevertheless, I think we can still shed light on the question by returning to the idea that changes have parts: a central tenet of the block view.

An individual substance can, as such, gain or lose parts. But does the same hold for changes? One might be tempted to think that at least *actions* can acquire temporal parts. As someone moves their hand to a particular location, so one might think, their on-going action comes to possess as parts changes in the position of that hand, which changes their action did not possess as parts before. But as we have seen, this cannot

[165] Cf. Ford (p.27 and n.33pp.40-1, (2014)).
[166] Whilst coming from very different philosophical outlooks, both Hacker (1982) and Cresswell (1986) make this claim. Cresswell seeks to offer a theoretical foundation for Hacker's more everyday observations.

make literal sense. The relevant parts cannot exist before being parts of the action, only getting added to it in a second step; and it is by now familiar that an action cannot somehow produce its own parts. Any such story requires, on the one hand, some isolable and temporally-extended change as the produced part, and on the other, the changeless activity in virtue of whose presence the entire product arrives into the past. The attempt to render the putative link between these elements only induces a regress, and actions cannot "grow" in temporal extent if this is how to conceive such growth.[167]

By contrast, of course, the functionalist adherent of the block view side-steps these issues. They keep the block view of change, but deny the view of time which underwrites the idea that actions may come to possess new parts. Familiarly now, the functionalist thinks that changes have all their parts timelessly and that actions are just complex changes.

What does all this have to do with the question of whether changes exist? Well, one might claim that only what can lose or gain parts may truly be said to *exist*, so that even if we treat changes in accordance with the block view, it is substances rather than changes which attract that predicate.[168] By contrast, however, so long as the block view is held in place, I think there is a respect in which it is quite natural to speak of the existence of changes.

On this view, even if it be allowed that they only happen *in* substances, changes are treated as, so to speak, self-standing *wholes*. For the received view imports the idea that particular changes alone are the ultimate units to whose existence causal explanations make reference: a substance is effective, on this view, only if it participates in changes which cause effects.[169] With this much in place, we then underwrite a conception of changes as what possess temporal parts, in virtue of possessing which they are liable to cause what they do. Only thus do changes fall under their kinds. On this view, then, kinds of change are like kinds of substance, for they are either fully

[167] I think that Steward's (2013a) individual processes fall victim to this concern. In effect, the problem facing the interventionist afflicts each given change Steward thinks an individual process comes to incorporate as a part. Or else Steward can claim that such causal links as may be found in the picture do not obtain between the process and its parts but only horizontally, as it were: between the parts of the process. But then individual processes are just complex changes. For an early anticipation of concerns of this sort, see Danto (pp.61-2, (1973)).
[168] This seems to be the position of Fine (2008). Cresswell's (1986) account of why events occur rather than exist seems to me assimilate them to facts. Officially, I am ignoring such a position: but anyway, it hardly fares any better with respect to capturing the dynamism of change.
[169] Cf. Davidson (p.227, (1985)).

instantiated or not at all, and the changes which fall under them must be complete: *all there*—even if, unlike substances, they are extended in time.

However, insofar as it *is* felt that changes cannot be truly said to exist and instead that they occur, I suggest that this has to do with the way in which 'occur' connotes *dynamism* in a way that 'exists' does not. Change is, I have suggested, a patient's being made to differ in some specific way by an agent, and so it involves that patient's non-accidental development into a state which before it exhibited only potentially. This latter aspect is of course missed by the block view of change; and we shall not get it back by holding on to that view whilst adding a new kind of occurrence to our ontology—one that grows through the acquisition of changes as parts. So let me now try to characterize more positively how I think we should understand the development of a change across time, and how this relates to the priority of a capacity over its exercises.

§3

3.1: Preliminary remarks on the particularity of particular changes

Notice the three ways in which I said we might think of a change at the end of §2.1 of this chapter: as having occurred, as being in the midst of occurring in the past—though without, necessarily at least, having culminated—and as being in the midst of occurring in the present. Underwriting the intelligibility of these ways of thinking, the thought goes, is a division between three ways in which an individual agent may be thought of in connection with a kind of change which they realize in a particular patient, and so in a particular time and place. An agent may have completely changed the patient in the relevant respect; they may have been in the middle of so changing it but have stopped or have been interrupted; or they may only be in the midst of changing the patient now. Together these ways of thinking constitute, I suggest, the fundamental frame through which alone we are able to apprehend some kind of change in its application to a particular agent-patient pair that realize it.[170]

However, even if these latter ways of thinking are what underwrite the former, it does not follow, I want to insist, that we should not think of changes as particular occurrences which reality genuinely contains. Some have been tempted by this move.[171]

[170] Here I am drawing heavily on Rödl (pp.151-9, (2012)).
[171] See, for example, Prior (2003).

But rather than urging the elimination of particular changes from our conception of reality, my point is that the mode of particularity that changes enjoy must be comprehended through the idea of an empowered substance acting on another over time.

Now, it takes time for an agent to realize completely some one kind of change in a patient; and what takes time here is not the agent themselves or the kind of change they realize, but rather, it may be thought, their realizing of that kind in the patient. It is only the *doing* which has temporal extension. Thus when an agent is changing some patient, it is natural to think that there occurs *a* change—in the patient—in which the agent's temporally extended activity consists. Moreover, when the agent has realized completely the kind of change in question, they may do *again*, in principle, the kind of change which they just did. So once the agent has finished, it is natural to take their so changing of another patient to be a numerically different change—albeit one of the same kind as that which occurred before.[172]

These considerations arise, we should note, in connection with the need to spell out what one substance's acting on another involves, rather than with the block view's idea that changes are causes and effects.[173] And whilst I cannot pretend that these considerations are conclusive, they may nevertheless encourage us in retaining the idea that particular changes are themselves a part of reality. But again, how should we think about that particularity?

3.2: It takes time for a particular change to be what it is

Recognition of the possibility that an agent may only partially engage in some kind of change is indispensable, I suggest, to our apprehension of change. Such progress as the

[172] Cf. Rödl (pp.162-3, (2012)).

[173] Someone might well say: did Davidson not show that it is considerations about the logical form of action-sentences that govern our conception of the particularity of changes? Well, as Taylor (1983) points out, all Davidson's arguments on that score could show is that there are particular events; and although Davidson needs to say more about those events, he does not. As a matter of Davidson-exegesis, though, I would suggest that concerns about causal explanation, and its role in making sense of others, are what really drove Davidson's conception of particular events. It is partly because of this latter thought that I nowhere consider the syntax of action-sentences, or the question of whether such must be seen to quantify over particular events. Perhaps they must; it is for the linguists to tell us. What *those* events are like and what they have to do with the metaphysics of change is another matter. Here I attempt to say something about the latter directly, so to speak. In any case, I am with Rödl (p.164, (2012)) in thinking that the sense we can make of quantifying over events is really secondary to an implicit understanding of change, of the sort I am trying to articulate here.

agent does make turns on the extent to which the patient they are changing *has changed*, an extent measured against the kind of the change in question and the culminating state it specifies. And as the agent acts on a patient over time, and so as the state of the patient approaches the culmination specified by the kind of change in which the agent is engaged, we may think of the occurrence which is the agent's doing as becoming a more fully determinate instance of its kind.

It is not that, having been interrupted by an unseen barrier, say, before successfully moving my hand to where I wished to move it, there has occurred something which would have only been, all well, the first half of an action of moving my hand to the relevant place. An incomplete change is not, I suggest, only what might have been *a part of* a change of the relevant kind; it is, rather, *a partial* such change.[174] As I quoted Rödl saying earlier: '[a] movement may fail to conform to its form. If it breaks off, it fails [fully] to satisfy its form. But it does not on that account cease to be of this form'.

At this point, I think it helps to return to what is implicit in the idea that changes may be said to occur rather than to exist: the deep difference between substances and changes. This difference has to do with the way in which a particular of either category is a single unified instance of its specific kind. A particular horse, for example, is not *of* its kind *at* or *for* any period of time; if the horse *is* at all, then it is of its kind and timelessly so. Compare, in this regard, such states of the horse as its colour or the length of its hair. And if a particular horse sadly loses a limb in an accident, then there is a sense in which the horse is missing a part, relative to its kind; but it is no less *a horse* for that. Being a horse is all or nothing.[175]

By contrast, whilst a change's kind is not an accidental state which it may be in at one time but not at another—if a change occurs, then it is of its kind no matter what—nevertheless, the manner in which a change is of its kind, and so is a particular change at all, is *in time*. To put it lyrically, a change, as an instance of becoming rather

[174] It looks like Danto (p.77, (1973)) is after some such distinction at this, but I do not think he succeeds in making it out; his thinking about actions is too much determined, albeit implicitly, by (what I am calling) the block view. Interestingly, Thompson (p.137n.19, (2008)) appears to rule out the importance of partial changes for the theory of action. Clearly I think the opposite; and I suggest that Thompson's stance on this question is not unrelated to his implicit acceptance of the block view.

[175] As Aristotle says, distinguishing the category *substance* from the others in *Categories* 5: 'any given substance is not called more, or less, what it is' (3b32-4a10).

than being, can be more or less *what it is* depending on the length of time for which it occurs. For a change to be a window-smashing, say, is for it to extend through time long enough, *all being well*, for the window to be in pieces. If all *is* well, then a change will fully satisfy its kind—the window finally shatters, say—and then that change has occurred and is past. However, if something interrupts, then the window-smashing that occurs is only partially what it is; in principle, a change can be what it is only incompletely. So being a window-smashing is not an all or nothing matter, for a change's instantiation of its kind, its *being* a single such change, itself takes time.

At least, so I suggest. But without powerful philosophical arguments to the contrary, I think that a deep metaphysical distinction between changes and substances, such as this one, ought to be expected. I suspect that it is what Aristotle has in mind when he says that '[time] measures both the movement and its essence, and this is what being in time means for [movement:] that its essence should be measured'.[176] It is worth re-emphasizing, however, as I suggested above, that we shall not comprehend a change's non-accidental development across time in accordance with the claim that changes have parts. Let me reflect on this further in the next section, for doing so will then return us to the importance of capacities in understanding change.

3.3: Fundamentally, changes do not have actual changes as parts

Again, with the block view in place, we shall treat changes themselves as causes and effects. And then the fact that what suffers a change must be a patient relative to some agent—relative to something that changes it—can come to no more, really, than the fact that the change happens *in* that patient, and is caused by another change in another substance. We are not then armed with any understanding of the development over time of the change in the patient. To put it ironically, all the action comes before the change itself. However, claiming then that it must have parts to be the change that it is, the adherent of the block view faces the familiar two unsatisfying options in respect of the question of how to understand the change's development. As the agent and patient in their causal relation to one another drop out of the picture, the occurrence of the change seems to take on a life of its own: either growing new parts in a bid to complete

[176] *Physics* IV.12 221a1-7.

itself,[177] or inertly extending through time whilst only one's perspective on it shifts. Such is the situation as I described it in §2.2 of this chapter.

Now, it is true that as time passes and the brick, say, comes closer to having shattered the window completely, the change the window undergoes becomes more determinate. It becomes, as I am putting the matter, a more fully particular instance of its kind; for less and less is left open about the course this particular window-smashing could take—for example, the order in which different parts of the window may crack. (It helps to imagine this happening in slow motion.) What is more, one can take the particular change at some point during the brick's progress, or when it has finished, and then divide that change in thought into arbitrarily many slices. After all, if the brick really is changing the window in some determinate respect, then how the window is now will be different from how it was earlier. So whilst across that time the brick need not, say, have smashed the window completely, the window will have changed in some respect and the change it suffers will have some particularity and temporal extension.[178] The brick will have done *something* to the window, and the same line of thought then re-applies to any earlier portion of this partial change in the window.

However, even as the agent progressively changes the patient over time and so has done progressively more things to the patient, I think we should deny that an actual change must correspond to each discernible portion of the change in which the agent's work on the patient consists.[179] We can divide in thought some portion of the change, and describe it in such a way as to avail ourselves of a kind of change which the agent has realized in the patient—*cracking the window from here to there*, as it might be. But these kinds are done by the agent merely *in* doing the overarching kind of change in which

[177] Thompson's account of action in Part 2 of his (2008) looks like it might be guilty of this charge, as does McDowell's account in his (2011a). Indeed, Thompson's description of actions as 'causes of themselves' (p.112) is taken from Kant's description, in the third *Critique*, of living things. This is to be expected, I think, in light of Thompson's seeming acceptance of the block view of changes and his related failure to emphasize that changes are the doings of an empowered substance. (Bishop (2011) draws attention to Thompson's omission of the agent from the details of his account.)

[178] Cf. Rödl (pp.164-6, (2012)).

[179] Whether this is Aristotle's view is somewhat unclear, but Coope (2009) claims that it is. Interestingly, Kant too makes a similar point in the Antinomies (A524/B552), about the merely potential rather than actual infinity of parts in any phenomenon. Thompson (p.110, (2008)) seems wrong, then, to claim Kant's support on behalf of his idea that every action contains an *actual* infinity of actions as parts.

they are engaged; they are mere abstractions from a doing whose fundamental kind alone gives the change its identity.[180]

The best way to put this, I think, is in terms of the causal capacities and liabilities of the agent and the patient. Fundamentally, the brick has the causal capacity *to smash windows*. This capacity belongs to the brick as an individual of the kind *brick*, for it is in the nature of bricks to smash windows, conditions providing. Now, in the concrete realization of the brick's causal capacity in any particular window, there will be exhibited, as said, a non-denumerable series of more specific ways the brick changes the window; but we should not then think that a distinct causal capacity corresponds to every such way. There is just a single causal capacity possessed by the brick, intelligible in the light of its nature and the conditions it is in; and it is only in terms of that capacity that the outcome of the relevant change is specified.[181] Thus, I think, which *bona fide* changes of whichever specific kinds are seen to occur—as opposed to those whose occurrence is exhausted by our finding them within a given change—is a matter which depends on the causal capacities of the acting substance, the correlative liabilities of the patient on which they act and so, in turn, their natures as the kinds of material substance they are.

Note, by the way, that due to our interest in windows and what happens to them we have a ready form of words to describe the brick's capacity. But of course an agent, or a number of such in aggregate, might have a capacity to change a patient in some specific way—and may indeed be so changing it—but where our description of that way would require a detailed investigation of the substances involved: of what they are, and so what they do in circumstances such as those in which we find them.

In any case, the development of a change is not, then, I suggest, to be understood in terms of its acquiring temporal parts; rather, I think it is only to be understood as an agent's progressive changing of the patient in accordance with their fundamental kinds. When an agent has only partially changed a patient in some specific way, their action on the patient only incompletely falls under its kind. But such incompleteness is not something which the change itself overcomes, so to speak; nor is that incompleteness merely a projection of the ignorance of the one confronted by the

[180] Hornsby (2013) also denies that a change has infinitely many actual parts. However, she thinks that changes can only be past, due her acceptance of the block view.
[181] Cf. Small (2017).

change. In being the exercise of the relevant causal capacity, a change therein falls under its kind; and the incompleteness of any such change is a reflection of the correlative interruptible potentialities of the agent and the patient.[182] The development of a change, then—its becoming a complete single instance of its kind—just *is*, as said, the agent's progressive exercising of their capacity to change the patient in the respect in question, whatever that may be.

Now, even at first sight, there is a way in which the foregoing may seem to be inapplicable to a rational agent's capacities for self-movement; and making sense of the latter is my ultimate goal. For a human being's capacities for moving their limbs do not supply, at least when characterized simply as such, any single end-point for the changes which are their exercises. Rather than expressing a fixed nature whenever put in certain circumstances, human capacities exhibit a flexibility that reflects the categorical difference between living and inanimate agents, and so the presence of perception and means-ends activity. What is more, I have claimed that, fundamentally, a change does not contain others as parts; and this is not true of complex, means-ends structured activity. I shall return to these points in Chapter 6 and the Coda, respectively.

3.4: The priority of a capacity over its exercises

From vantage point we have now reached, I think we are a position to be more precise about the issue raised in §2.1 of this chapter: about the way in which a causal capacity is prior to the changes which are its exercises.

On the Aristotelian view which I have been trying to advance, a change is not a fully determinate instance of its kind whilst it is occurring; thus its falling under that kind cannot be explained by its temporal extension. Rather, I pressed, a change's being of some kind is a matter of its being an exercise of a capacity to engage in just that kind of change. So what sort of priority over its exercises does a capacity have? In what sense does a capacity "give" its exercises their kind, if not by causing them? Reaching for some Aristotelian terminology here, we might say that whilst a change is an instance of efficient causality—*of* the agent *on* the patient—the correlative capacities of which the change is an exercise together constitute its *formal cause*. That the change is an exercise of those capacities does not explain why it, as a change of that kind, occurs; rather, that the

[182] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* III.2 201b21-3: 'motion is thought to be a sort of *actuality*, but incomplete, the reason for this view being that the potential whose actuality it is is incomplete'. Cf. Kosman (p.66, (2013)).

change is such an exercise explains what it is for the change even to *be* a change of that kind.

However, the fundamental point here, really, is that *is the exercise of* cannot be taken to express a relation that mediates two separate things, a change and a capacity. Earlier in the chapter, in §1.1, I said that we can think of an individual agent both as generally able to engage in some kind of change, and as engaging in that kind of change in a particular time and place. The latter manner of thinking may then be seen to divide into three, I suggested in §3.1, through which we apprehend the development of an agent's changing of a particular patient over time. What this reflects, I think, to put the point in a metaphysical register, is that a capacity's exercises just *are* that capacity: not because it can somehow be reduced to them, but because each such change just is that single capacity's *being-in-exercise*. To borrow an uncharacteristically lyrical phrase of Aristotle's, we might say that the occurrence of a change is a causal capacity's 'developing into itself'.[183] So again, the priority of a capacity over its exercises does not reside in its being a separate thing that stands over and against them.

Indeed, and by the same token, rather than serving as an independently efficacious item inside the agent, paradoxically causing the changes that are supposed to be its doings, such a capacity, when understood aright, should be seen simply to be that agent's own causal potency: an aspect of itself which *it* manifests in its doings.[184] For as I have been insisting, a causal capacity is an aspect of a material agent's being the kind of individual that it is—its nature—only in the light of its being which, then, is it intelligible that the agent changes the correlative kinds of patient in certain specific ways and not others. The "formal causality" of a capacity over its exercises is just a matter of the specific shape taken by the actions of a particular material agent when it acts on

[183] *De Anima* II.5 417b7-8. Cf. Kosman (ch.2, (2013)). Kosman thinks that Aristotle understands change only on analogy with substance. As *per* any analogy, the difference between change and substance, which I have been at pains to stress, is as important as any similarity. This difference is reflected in how the "being" of a particular change is understood in terms of that of a substance, but not *vice versa*: changes are substances' doings. So much accords with the practice of the *Categories*, I take it; cf. Rödl (p.32, (2012)). And it might also explain why action and passion are found there, but not change. In any case, Kosman seems right insofar as a substance *is* its kind in something like the way a change *is* the capacity of which it is an act. Obviously, more can and needs to be said here. On substances, see Anscombe (p.32, (1961)).

[184] A point Locke emphasizes in the *Essay* (p.243): 'it is the Mind that operates and exerts these Powers; it is the Man that does the Action, it is the Agent that has power, or is able to do'. Cf. Hacker (p.101, (2010)).

other such particulars, which shape must be explained by the fact that interacting material substances of those kinds will by nature so interact.

§4

Is the future open?

Now, I have claimed that, *modulo* the objection I considered in Chapter 4 concerning causation's reality, the block view best makes sense as ultimately involving a view of time on which the past and the future are equally actual and fixed. But how must an advocate of the Aristotelian view of change think about time, or the open future?

Despite the importance of this question, it is something I have to leave largely unsettled in this thesis. The topic is, obviously enough, vast. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the Aristotelian metaphysics of change, a bit of which I have been trying to recover, *does* depend on a view on which the future is open. Compare, in this connection, Stephen Clark:

> On a *B*-theory [of time] taken in its most interesting and serious form, a kitten that does not in fact become [an adult] cat could only have been said to have been going to be [an adult] cat by virtue of our ignorance of its fate. […] Only if possibly unrealized potential is a real feature of the world, not a product of our ignorance (that is, only on an *A*-theory [of time]), can formal as against positive description be more than a chimera. Only so can failure to 'conform' be given a convincing sense. (p.128, (1975))

I am in broad agreement with Clark's claims here, insofar as he takes a B-theory of time to entail the equal actuality and so fixity of the past, present and future; whereas an A-theory, he thinks, at least involves the idea that 'some, but not all, [alternative futures] are [metaphysically] possible'.[185] Such is required, he thinks, in order for 'unrealized potential to be real feature of the world', and that seems to me to be correct. In the light of his remarks, however, let me to register some caution in respect of how the Aristotelian ought to conceive the openness of the future.

It is the interventionist which I have throughout cast as being committed to the open future, and I have been critical of their view. Of course, crucial to interventionist's view, and my criticism of it, is its inclusion of a further commitment: to the block view of change. At several points I have insisted that, whatever the deeper motivations for its

[185] p.114, (1975).

acceptance might be, this is not a compatible package of ideas. This is reflected in the way in which the interventionist treats the openness of the future: as, so to speak, the metaphysical negative of the fixity which the block view of change imports. It is as if, in the first instance, *anything* could happen from the perspective of the present, for it can contain no actual changes which are headed into the future in one direction rather than another. One then needs to appeal to specific kinds of potency—Hornsby's on-going processes, say—in order to try, unsuccessfully as it turns out, to make sense of why what happens should develop in one particular direction rather than another. Indeed, without the present's containing any temporally extended development, in combination with the idea that the present is metaphysically prior, this view of time ultimately seems to be just as timeless, so to speak, as the opponent's view.[186]

This conception of openness is equally destructive of the idea of a manifold of interacting material substances: things which act in regular albeit interruptible ways over time. After all, I have urged that it will be no accident if, in exercising their powers, agents do completely the various kind of change which it is in their nature to do. So although things may not always work out as they would have had nothing interrupted, it is essential to our comprehension of change that the future at least be that into which changes non-accidentally develop: in a structured way, towards a particular end-point. Even mechanical changes are essentially such. Future possibilities must be constrained, then—compare Clark's talk above, about 'some but not all possible futures'—but the relevant constraint cannot come from what the interventionist proposes: the alleged production of future changes by purely present activity.

What we need is a more fully developed picture of modality on which, as it were, the actual and the potential are entangled.[187] Rather than contrasting a fixed plane of timelessly actual changes with the blank and total possibility of the open future, we need a conception of possibility that is rooted in the potentialities of acting substances, with those substances' then being characterized in turn precisely by their possession of such potentialities. I suggest, then, that our understanding of the way in which the merely possible future becomes actual, so to speak, must ultimately be determined by an understanding of how, here and now, powerful material particulars express their natures over time. As Sarah Broadie puts it, 'According to this way of modal thinking, the

[186] Cf. Fine (pp.286-8, (2005)), and Rödl (pp.103-8, (2012)).
[187] Cf. Steward (pp.187-8 and p.195 (2012a)).

possible is possible-at-a-given-time, because it is the conditions prevailing at a time that define the range of alternatives possible then'. 'With this kind of contingency', she says, 'it must first be indeterminate which way [an] outcome will be'.[188]

Of course, working out of any such picture will obviously raise a number of serious questions, and let me finish by registering two. For one thing, if tense is here being treated as "real" in some important respect, then any such picture will have to find something to say about McTaggart's argument to the effect that accepting so much can only lead to the postulation of a contradictory reality.[189] For another, the picture of reality which I am advocating is one in which the fundamental level consists in things which persist through time, not the ultimate "change-atoms" which I claimed, in Chapter 1, the block view introduces. One then confronts a question about whether it is *exceptionless* laws that describe what those inhabitants do. Now, I do not think those laws will be exceptionless—as, for example, Nancy Cartwright claims they are not.[190] But again, I leave these questions unanswered. If I am right, then the Aristotelian view is required in order to make sense of a capacity that we each know ourselves to possess: the capacity to practically represent action-kinds.[191] So—somewhat rashly, I suppose—I shall proceed for now as if satisfactory answers to these questions exist.

Conclusion

I cannot pretend that my presentation of the Aristotelian view of changes is complete, or answers every important question: there is more to say about a number of serious issues. However, my aim in this chapter and the last has been to do enough to make plausible the idea that there is a workable alternative to the block view of what a change is. All that is needed, really, is a view which is not obviously *worse* than the block view, but which is privileged in holding out the promise of allowing us to make sense of self-conscious action. Hopefully I can claim so much on behalf of the Aristotelian view.

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[188] pp.52-3, (2007b).
[189] For some interesting and broadly congenial remarks about this problem see Lloyd (1977) and, more generally, Rödl (2012).
[190] See her (1983) especially. See also Geach (1961), Bhaskar (1975), Anscombe (1981a), von Wright (1984) and Rödl (p.198, (2012)).
[191] It is unsurprising that one of Aristotle's own arguments for the openness of the future, such as it is, seems to turn on the nature of deliberation, and the potency we must know ourselves to have as engagers in it: *De Interpretatione* 9 18b31-3.

The view claims that a particular change *is* an agent's changing of what undergoes that change—namely, the patient. The agent and the patient are material substances which possess correlative capacities and liabilities to change and be changed in whatever respect it might be. They possess these capacities and liabilities in being the kinds of material things that they are. With this in place, we can maintain that a temporally-extended change may fall under its kind, and thus have a privileged future culmination marked out for it, even if either the agent or the patient is so affected by something else during the course the change that it does not come to completion. With our appreciation of the kinds of the agent and the patient in the background, we know what would count as a change's breaking off incomplete; such an outcome is what would be contrary to the natures of the interacting material substances.

In terms of the particular changes themselves, I urged that we shall only comprehend their development across time if we keep in mind that a change is an agent's progressive changing of a patient. This is bedrock, and reflects my claim from Chapter 4 that changes *are* causation. As the agent progressively changes the patient, in whatever respect it is, then the change which is their action on the patient becomes, I said, a more determinate instance of its kind. Thus a change's very instantiation of its kind progresses over time, and in this resides the difference between changes and substances. However, by dropping the block view, and the related idea that changes must comprise actual changes as parts, we are free to refuse the idea that we must understand a change's development over time in terms of its acquiring new *bona fide* changes as temporal parts. Once again, I think that the idea of one material substance exercising a causal capacity on another over time, the one manifesting what it is by changing the other, is part the foundational categorial scheme through which alone we apprehend nature.

Chapter 6: Self-consciousness in action and capacity

Introduction

Recall, my ultimate aim is to provide a defence and elaboration of what I call the Identity Account, which claims that the fundamental form taken by practical thought itself is acting intentionally. On this view, in representing an action-kind as to-be-done in the fundamental way, I am doing it and therein know myself to be so. Intentional actions are practical thoughts. The block view, however, stands in the way of this. Given the block view's idea that a change, and so an action, falls under its kind in virtue of its actual duration, it follows that an agent who knows what they are doing must take themselves to know what they will have done. But that, I urged in Chapter 2, is incompatible with the agent's taking themselves be realizing an action-kind, rather than passively suffering a change.

In Chapter 3 I offered a direct argument for the Identity Account and so, conversely, against the block view. I urged that insofar as practical thought was seen to be thought, then it involved the deployment of concepts; and such deployment, I claimed, can only be understood, in what has to be the fundamental case, in terms of the application of concepts to actual objects. A concept *is* what may be applied to an object in knowing how it is. Thus one who can practically represent an action-kind, I claimed, must, in the fundamental case, think that they can knowingly apply it to themselves. As I put it, one who can practically represent an action-kind knows that they can do it self-consciously.

With the Aristotelian view before us, we have made room for this possibility. However, I presented a challenge to the Identity Account in the form of the hybrid theorist. They concede that practical thought is possible only if the thinker is in possession of various concepts. Moreover, the hybrid theorist concedes that if one possesses such concepts as action-kinds, then one grasps the possibility of knowing that they apply to oneself whilst one is doing them. So the block view must be wrong. Nevertheless, the hybrid theorist denies that intentional action just is the self-application of an action-kind. In the first instance, the hybrid theorist thinks, one's conceptual grasp of an action-kind is theoretical. That enables one, in conjunction with one's beliefs about one's basically animal capacities for action, to frame reflexive practical thoughts.

These thoughts are distinct, however, from one's basically pre-intentional actions, which only count as intentional in being related somehow to such thoughts.

In this Chapter, I want to rebut the hybrid theorist's position, and further elaborate Identity Account. In particular, meeting the hybrid theorist's challenge serves as a means by which I can, whilst drawing upon the Aristotelian view, emphasize the first-personal character the knowledge we have of our intentional actions, and how only the Identity Account can make sense of this. In doing so, I shall indicate how the Identity Account's incorporation of the Aristotelian view must be seen to require an appreciation of how practical thinkers are self-conscious self-movers: categorially different from agents like bricks. Here I only partially characterize this difference: at several points I shall indicate where I think further elaboration is needed and in what direction it should be pursued.

The plan for this chapter is as follows. In §1 I question the motivation for the hybrid theorist's position, and insist that its view about practical thought is not coherent. I then describe how the hybrid view puts out of reach the first-personal character of knowledge of action. In §2 I ask how, in the light of the first-personal character of our knowledge of intentional action, we should think about the way an action-kind can serve as a guide for one's doing of it. Here I expand on some of the key differences between mechanical agents and self-movers. In §3 I press that the practical thinker's capacities for intentional action must be self-conscious in just the way their intentional actions are, and I try to answer a pair of questions which arise in connection with this claim. I discuss the fallibility of our capacities for intentional action, along with the practical way in which self-conscious self-movers must represent themselves as empowered particulars.

§1

1.1: The hybrid theorist's argument from animals

The hybrid theorist's motivation for their position takes off from the undeniable claim that animals act in a goal-directed albeit unself-conscious way.

In some sense of 'take', animals take means to long range ends; and their activity over time exhibits the complex articulation reflective of this fact. However instinctively, and in response to perceptually-presented particulars, animals *put themselves* into a

position to exercise their capacities for moving parts of themselves. Consider how each step taken by a heron stalking a fish makes possible the next. Thus animals exercise their capacities for moving parts of themselves in a distinctively co-ordinated way, all for the sake of the perceptually-informed long-range kinds of change in which they are engaged—catching prey, for example, or making a nest.

In contrast to bricks, then, animals are *self*-movers. Nevertheless, they are not self-conscious self-movers. Whatever kind of non-conceptual analogue of practical thought these animals enjoy, and whatever peculiarly agentive sense they might have of the changes which are their actions, the hybrid theorist denies that animal agents are, as such, self-conscious. Their goal-directed doings do not involve the animal's application to themselves of concepts of such doings, in which application, then, the animal would know what they are doing. Such conceptual mastery of what one is doing is the privilege of rational, self-conscious animals.

I agree with all of the foregoing. The hybrid theorist's distinctive claim, then, is that the rational animal's capacities for intentional action are no different from the capacities for action possessed by non-rational, or unself-conscious, animals. The rational animal enjoys, the hybrid theorist maintains, a suite of capacities for moving parts of themselves which may be exercised without the application of any concept of their being exercised. The rationality of the rational animal consists in their harbouring a set of conceptually-articulated beliefs about those capacities, in the light of which, then, those capacities may be said to count as capacities to act intentionally. For the hybrid theorist, exercises of a capacity to represent some action-kind practically are reflexive thoughts in which doing that kind is represented as to-be-done. However, this capacity is distinct from the animal capacity to do that kind: the exercises of the latter are merely animal actions which count as intentional in the light of their standing in some relation to practical thoughts. Practical thought does not enter into the doing itself.

We encountered this idea in Chapter 3, in connection with functionalism. The motivation here is different, however, and my initial point, borrowed wholesale from John McDowell, is directed against that.[192] The hybrid theorist's underlying thought is that however rational we are, we human beings are animals; hence 'rational *animal*'. This can hardly be denied. However, the hybrid theorist assumes that *rational animal action*

[192] He makes this point about perception in his (1996). See his (p.151, (2015)) for an application of the point to action.

determines the genus *animal action* in just the same specific way as *non-rational animal action* does; it just that in our case, there also apply some independently specifiable features in addition. Compare the way *three-legged chair* and *four-legged chair* relate to the genus *chair*.

McDowell's negative point is simply that this assumption cannot be made without further ado. Indeed, in the context of a dispute with the Identity Account, it is question-begging; for the Identity Account claims that the intentional action characteristic of rational animals is not animal action which is related to some independent and additional thing. Intentional action is animal action alright, but it is *rational* animal action; and this, the Identity Account must maintain, is a quite different determinate species of the determinable genus, *animal action*. Being rational is unique way of being an animal, and it differs in kind from the non-rational way of being animal.

Now, it must be said that this response raises some deep and difficult questions about how exactly one is to think about the common genus *animal*, and in what relation the two species "*mere" animal* and *rational animal* are supposed to stand to one another.[193] I do not want to pretend that this is anything except extremely puzzling. Nevertheless, I shall not take up the task of clarifying this issue in this thesis. Indeed, as things stand, such a task is beyond me. Here I only want to appeal to McDowell's negative point, which is surely fine so far as it goes, and thereby indicate that there is something to say against the hybrid theorist's motivation. I shall place more weight on the critical remarks which I am going to direct at the view itself. If those remarks succeed, then the case for making out McDowell's possibility in greater detail will be strengthened.

1.2: How does the hybrid theorist think about practical thought?

It is crucial to the hybrid theorist's overall position that practical thought, the representation of an action-kind as to-be-done, involves deploying or somehow operating with a concept. So much is internal to the concession which I represented the hybrid theorist as making—namely, that one who can practically represent an action-kind grasps the possibility of knowing that they are doing it. The hybrid theorist's idea is that in its theoretical office, thought is that in which, most fundamentally, the thinker applies concepts to actual objects. The *practical* thinker is in possession of such a concept, an action-kind, which they may then apply to objects in theoretical judgements

[193] For some wonderful explorations of these issues, see Boyle (2012) and Haase (2011).

based on grounds. Nevertheless, whilst one deploys such a concept in thinking practically, practical thought itself is not something in which one aspires to apply concepts to actual objects, thereby knowing how they are. In one's office as practical thinker, one represents, in whatever sense, merely possible actions.

But now with what right can the hybrid theorist help themselves to the claim that practical thinking involves deploying concepts? Our only grip on what it would be to deploy a concept depends on the idea that such might applied to actual objects. Of course, in the theoretical case, one might doubt whether an object is some way, or suppose that it is. But these plainly rest upon a grasp of the more fundamental case: applying the concept to an object in a judgement.[194] After all, what one doubts or supposes is that the concept applies. So again, deploying a concept just *is* applying it to something; other postures of mind are derivative. To say, then, that there is a distinctively "practical way of deploying concepts" which is not understood, at root, through the idea that practical thought itself involves the application of concepts to objects, is to use a form of words in search of a sense.

Consider again the supposed practical thoughts of the thinker who is restricted to representing merely possible actions, and so, I urged, merely wishing that they do something. If that is *all* practical thinking amounts to—'it would be good if there were an F-ing'; 'it would be good if there were a G-ing'—then, as I pressed in Chapter 3, it is hard to see how what remains could be a distinctively practical posture of mindedness. Rather, supposedly *practical* thought degenerates into a series of idle representations of possible states of affairs in which some animal does something, wherein the kinds of action which that animal is represented as doing are no longer grasped by the thinker as things which *they* can do. It seems to me, then, that the hybrid theorist ought either to deny that there is a distinctively practical way of deploying concepts, or else allow that, most fundamentally, thinking practically is applying an action-kind to oneself. That is, I think that one can maintain the idea that there is practical way of deploying concepts of actions, and the consequent idea that the practical thinker must take themselves to be able know what they are doing, only if the Identity Account is true and the practical thinker takes themselves to be able to self-apply, or self-consciously do, those concepts.

Now, in the next section I want to challenge the hybrid theorist's idea that the agent of intentional action could know what they are doing only in a theoretical

[194] Cf. Rödl (pp.140-2, (2010)).

deployment of an action-kind: something which involves an additional step beyond actually doing the action-kind intentionally. I try to show that this makes no sense and that instead a practical thinker's application of action-kinds to themselves, and so their knowledge of what they do intentionally, can only be as the Identity Account describes.

1.3: For the hybrid theorist, knowledge of intentional could not be originally first-personal

To begin with, let us return to our example and look at it through the lens of the Aristotelian view of changes. Our agent intentionally moves their hand across their desk in order to push a book from one side of it to the other. They do this in order to send a signal to their friend. For now, let us focus only on the action of hand-moving.

The Aristotelian view has it that the change in our agent's hand is the agent's changing of their hand in the respect in question. This change takes time but it nevertheless falls under its kind throughout. Thus, even if our agent is prevented from moving their hand all the way across their desk, still, what they are doing is *moving their hand across their desk*. In such a case, what occurs is only a partial or incomplete such doing. And now, of course, there is no difficulty at all in an agent's knowing what they are actually doing—a genuine kind of change, and not the interventionist's extensionless activity—whilst it remain true that the agent does not know, therein, that they will have done, or will do completely, what they are doing. They will know *that* only after they succeed through their intentional activity.

The abstract possibility of such knowledge of action is common ground between the Identity Account and the hybrid theorist. The question is, how does either account think about that knowledge? Let me describe the hybrid theorist's picture.

We can imagine one of two accounts, I think. On either, in representing an action-kind as to-be-done, an agent merely thinks that it would be good if an action of theirs of the kind in question *were* to occur; whether or not such an action of theirs *is* occurring is a matter which the thinker of such a thought leaves open. Coming to know what one is actually doing requires a second-step. On the first account, the agent then exercises some perceptual faculty—vision, say, or proprioception—by means of which they come to know that an action of theirs of the wished-for kind is occurring; thus

they know what they are doing.[195] On the second, against some defeasible background assumptions about, say, the typical causal relevance of practical representations, the agent infers, on the basis of the fact that they practically-represent some action-kind, that there is indeed occurring an action of theirs of the wished-for kind.[196]

What goes wrong with these accounts, I suggest, is that they put out of reach the idea that an agent's knowledge of what they doing intentionally might be *originally* first-personal. That is, on either account, supposing that it could be acquired at all, an agent's knowledge of what *they themselves* are doing—what they would express using 'I'—depends on a further step beyond an initially third-personal knowledge of action. Call this mediated first-personal knowledge. However, the possibility of originally first-personal knowledge of action is something which the hybrid theorist ought to grant.[197]

Now, an intentional action is someone's—is an intentional doing of theirs—only if they practically represent the kind under which it falls. So much the hybrid theorist concedes. In coming to believe that there is occurring an intentional action of *theirs* of the relevant kind, then, the agent must believe that the action's agent is they who wished to do its kind. However, on either of the hybrid theorist's accounts, the manner by which the agent comes to know of the action's occurrence leaves open the question of whether they wished for an action of that kind, and so whether they are the agent of the action about which they now know. This has the consequence, however, that the agent cannot know, without further epistemic work, that *they themselves* are doing the action-kind in question.

This is clear for the perceptual account of knowledge of action. If I see an action of some kind occurring, then I do not know, simply in seeing so much, that the action is *my* action. To arrive at a piece of first-personal knowledge of what I am doing, I would need another thought linking the seen-agent with myself: the one who wished to do the action-kind which I have seen this agent doing. Perhaps the train of thought would run thus: "this" animal is moving their hand across the desk, and I the wisher *am* this moving animal; thus I am moving my hand across the desk.

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[195] See Gibbons (2010) for an appeal to vision and Pickard (2004) for an appeal to proprioception.
[196] See Paul (2009) and Peacocke (2003) for similar views to this.
[197] Haddock (2011) insists on this character of our knowledge of our intentional actions; cf. Rödl (2007).

This point would still apply even if one knew about the action by means of proprioception. Proprioception may present what it does as spatially located within the whole embodied thing one is. Nevertheless, one can coherently wonder whether a felt limb is really one's own, or whether one is suffering an illusion. Thus whether a particular limb-movement is a doing of one's own is left open by proprioception's presenting as a part of oneself, say, a moving limb.[198] One would need an extra premise to get from the occurrence of such an action to the thought that it was wished for by *oneself*.

In connection with the inferential account of knowledge of action, the same point might seem harder to make out. If I infer from the fact that *I* wish to do something, then surely I could only infer to the fact that *I* am doing that thing. The problem here, though, is that if I take a wish as something whose being held makes, as matter of mere causal relevance, the occurrence of an action of the wished for kind more likely, then I cannot treat the wish as my own in the requisite way. The holding of such a wish may figure in the premise of an inference—as, so to speak, a fixed cause—whilst the one who infers to the conclusion no longer wishes to do the action-kind in question.[199] Properly speaking, then, the inference is of the form: so-and-so wishes to do F, therefore so-and-so is doing F. The one who comes to know about the occurrence of an action needs a further premise—about the identity of the action's agent with they themselves who represent its kind as to-be-done—in order to know that they themselves are doing the action-kind in question.

In the first place, then, the objection I would put to the hybrid theorist is that they surely want to maintain the possibility of originally first-personal knowledge of action. After all, the hybrid theorist concedes that a practical thinker, in grasping various action-kinds, takes themselves to be able to know what they are doing. And even though the hybrid theorist supposes that such a thinker will only come to know what they are doing by making a judgement that is distinct from their intentional action, still, the hybrid theorist surely supposes that the knowledge which the agent takes themselves to be able to acquire in this way is—in the first instance—knowledge of what *they themselves* are doing. But if such first-personal knowledge of action can be acquired at all,

[198] On this point, see Martin (1995) and O'Brien (ch.11, 2007)).
[199] The possibility of relating to one's mental life in this way, and the loss it involves, forms the topic of Moran's wonderful (2004).

then the hybrid theorist cannot maintain that is acquired in the *first instance* but only, as it were, in the second. In the first instance, the knowledge acquired is third-personal.

One's knowledge of what one is doing can be originally first-personal only if how one knows what one is doing settles it that the action-kind's doer is oneself, the one who represents that kind as to-be-done. And of course, this is just what the Identity Account maintains. On that account, there is a fundamental way of representing an action-kind as to-be-done which just is doing it: knowing oneself to be doing it therein. Originally first-personal knowledge of what one is doing is possible only where one's intentional actions *are* one's practical thoughts.

1.4: Against the idea of mediated first-personal knowledge of action

Now, the foregoing might seem to leave room for the possibility that *some* of one's intentional actions are practical thoughts, and are so are known by one first-personally, but that others conform to the hybrid theorist's account. An adherent of the Identity Account needs to deny this: for them, an intentional action is a practical thought. Now, any first-personal knowledge of what we are doing on those occasions could only be what I called mediated first-personal knowledge; but on reflection, I think we should insist that knowledge of what one is doing intentionally could only be originally first-personal. Put the other way around: an intentional action is occurring at all, and so may be known to be so, only if its agent *already* first-personally knows it to be occurring.

Of course, one might be doing something intentionally and know oneself to be so, but then come to know what was previously unknown to one: that *by* doing the first thing, there is something else one is doing *un*intentionally. For example, I may know that I am moving my hand across my desk, but only later discover that in doing so I am moving that spot of light, reflected from my watch, across the opposite wall. But what is being envisaged is much more radical than this.

From the perspective of the agent who wishes that they do something and knows, in whatever theoretical way, that someone is doing that action-kind, it is still an open question for them whether they themselves are actually doing *anything*. And I think that the practical thinker in such a situation would surely deny that the action of which they know *could* be their own intentional doing. Imagine an agent who wishes to do something, but only knows by perception that such a kind is being done anarchically—by their hand, say. Perhaps having attributed the action to themselves via the envisaged

linking identity-premise, the agent may *say*, surely hesitantly, that they are doing the thing in question. But such words are not, I suggest, being used by their speaker to express the same kind of thought as one they would express in speaking knowledgeably about their own intentional action.[200] Indeed, it is not clear that they really think any *action* is occurring at all, rather than thinking that it merely seems as if one were.

If this is right, then our knowledge of what we are doing intentionally can only be originally first-personal. As practical thinkers, if we know that an action-kind is being done on the basis of grounds which then leave it open whether it is we who are doing it, then we cannot apply it to ourselves in the manner of thinking that we are doing it intentionally. Rather, if we practical thinkers apply such a concept to ourselves in thinking that we are doing it intentionally, then we apply it in practical thought itself. Such thought *is* self-conscious, intentional action. Thus the hybrid theorist is prevented from making sense of the knowledge we have of what we are doing intentionally, whilst the Identity Account captures it exactly.

Now, this might make one wonder about whether one could ever falsely think that one was doing something intentionally. But the claim is only that *if* one is doing something intentionally, then one knows first-personally that one is. The claim is not that whenever one thinks that one is doing something intentionally, then one is actually doing so. Now, one falsely thinks that one is doing something intentionally where one sets out to do what one mistakenly thinks one *can* do. This raises the question, then, of the kind of knowledge we have of our capacities and what role it plays in our intentional action. I come back to this in §3.

§2

2.1: In what sense does a practically represented action-kind guide action?

In Chapter 2 I introduced the very idea of practical thought by mentioning the way in which a practically represented action-kind is supposed to serve a measure, guide or model for the particular action which realizes it. What is more, one might suppose that an action-kind which one represents as an end, and so practically represents, therein serves as a guide, in some sense, for one's adoption of some other action-kind as a means.

[200] Anscombe comes close to claiming this (p.51, (2000)).

Now, I think it is a mistake to suppose that one can address these topics entirely independently of each other. I think we comprehend the very idea of adopting an action-kind as a means to a further end only insofar as we understand what it is to intentionally realize a means action-kind. I comment on this in the Coda. On the other hand, I think that we do not fully comprehend what it is for an agent to intentionally realize an action-kind without understanding how their doing so may be determined by their broader aims. In any case, it is the first topic which I take up here; the pressure to address the second will re-emerge below in §2.3. So, given the self-conscious character of intentional action, as I have described it, how should we understand the way in which a practically represented action-kind serves as a measure for the action which realizes it?

We can make this question more forceful. Whilst the separation of practical thought from intentional action, accepted by both adherents of the block view and the hybrid theorist, renders it obscure how the practically represented kind can truly be seen to guide intentional action, nevertheless, one might think that presupposed to the idea of guidance is a distinction between at least two things: that which guides, and that which is guided. If, rather, the thought in which one represents an action-kind as to-be-done just is one's doing of that kind, then must we not suppose that intentional actions are somehow meant to accord with themselves? And how could they fail to do that?

The force of this question dissipates once we recall the Aristotelian view of changes. Recall our example: in order to push the book to the other side of their desk, our agent also moves their hand across it. In this case, let us suppose for now that our agent has the capacity to move their hand across their desk, and knows that they do so; I shall return to this supposition in §2.3 below. The crucial thing about the appeal to capacities is how a change falls under its kind—and so *is* a change of that kind, at all—in being the exercise of a capacity to do that kind. With this in place, the agent's action of moving their hand across their desk can fall under its kind despite being an incomplete instance of it; and there can be, as it were, a gap between the actual and the ideal within the change itself.

Of course, in having the Aristotelian view before us, we can guard against lapsing into Nietzschean abandon here, declaring that the intentional action strives to fulfil its own self-applied goal: to become what it is! We need only recall the difficulties surrounding the question of how to think about a change's development over time which I canvassed in Chapter 5.

What we must recall is how talk of a change's development across time is really a way of talking about an agent's progressive changing of a patient over time, but with the reference to the agent bleached out. An agent's action is not, to that extent, a bizarre self-consciously self-guiding occurrence, wherein a change deliberately adds news parts to itself in a bid to fulfil its kind. The point is that in exercising their capacities for intentional action, the agent sets *themselves* a measure which *they* follow in progressively changing a patient: a measure which they may then accord with only through their continued activity and which they may not, by their own lights, fulfil.

To manifest a capacity to *intentionally* change a patient, then, is to represent as *to-be*-changed, in such a way that one knows oneself to be changing it, a particular patient which one takes oneself to be able to change. In our example, this would be for there to occur, in the agent's proprioceptively-given hand, a change which is, and is known by them to be, their action of changing that hand. Of course, the agent's power to change their hand is conditioned, in the here and now, by that particular hand and the state it is in, and it takes time for them to change it completely. So whilst proprioception informs them of by how much they have changed their hand, the agent knows that they have not yet done completely the action-kind which they know they are doing. Thus they know that they might yet be interrupted or be given reason to do something else.[201]

The gap between actual and ideal within a change, as I just put it, reflects the fallible character of a material agent's self-ascribed capacities: the fact that, as dependent for their possession and successful exercise on how the agent and patient are, such capacities may be impeded in their temporally-extended actualization. By treating the changes which are intentional actions as the self-conscious exercises of causal power, then, I think we reveal how the agent's aiming to change the patient and their actually changing it are two sides of the same coin. This characterization of change permits, one might say, the identity of a normative and a factual thought: that something is to-be-done and that one is doing it. Here, the setting of the measure and the following of it are one and the same.[202]

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[201] Sartre (p.505, (1957)) summarises all this with fine concision: '[an] end can be conceived only as a state-to-come of the real existents which separate me from it'.

[202] I wonder whether the thought that this must be possible is what Wittgenstein means to express when he says that 'there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases' (§201, (*Philosophical Investigations*)).

2.2: A note on the potentially inarticulate character of one's knowledge of action

In the next section I shall take up a set of concerns that turn on the fact that we can understand the Identity Account's reliance on the Aristotelian view of changes only if we are sensitive to the difference between mechanical and self-consciously self-moving agents. As we shift to a "higher" category of material substance, so we shift the way the Aristotelian view applies. Before that, though, let me mention a different issue.

Our hand-mover does not deliberate about whether and how to move their hand. Indeed, they may well forget the precise way they moved their hand just as soon as they have done so. Moreover, it may be that the kind of action the agent represents as to-be-done, in doing it intentionally, is one that they can *only* do as a means to some further end. Perhaps the relevant way the agent moves their hand is something which they can exhibit only if they are actually pushing a book. And certainly, the agent need not be able to *describe* in any great detail just how they move their hand when they move it for the sake of moving the book. Perhaps they can only *say* that they move it in just whatever way they need to in order to move the book. This is reflected in the inept words I have sometimes used: 'the agent moves their hand against the book'.

The point, though, is that none of these points impugn the idea that the agent represents a determinate kind of change as to-be-realized in their hand, on the basis of the fact that by realizing such they would move the book.[203] So long we think that they have not forgotten, we take ourselves to be able to ask our agent how they moved their hand—and we assume that their knowledge of what they did is not based on an inference, however quick, that one gets to be a book-mover only if a part of oneself moves. Rather, our agent may purport to show us, if they cannot describe it, how they moved their hand. So there was, internal to their moving of their hand, a grasp of an action-kind which may be done again, or taught to another. Indeed, had the agent's hand-moving action been interrupted before it was completed then *they*, the hand-mover, would have been surprised. There was a point to which, however inarticulately, they knew they were moving their hand.[204]

[203] Compare here O'Shaughnessy's (ch.10, (2008ii)) recantation of his earlier commitment to the possibility of sub-personal actions. Part of his point, I take it, is that one might do something intentionally whilst having extremely meagre resources for saying what one is doing.
[204] Compare Merleau-Ponty (p.141, (2012)): 'Each moment of a movement embraces its entire expanse and, in particular, its first moment or kinetic initiation inaugurates the link between a

The kind of guidance by an action-kind which intentional action involves need not, then, involve various episodes in which one says to oneself that one is doing what one is doing intentionally. The charge that the Identity Account entails an unfortunate "intellectualism" reflects, I think, an unfortunate misconception of how the practical intellect manifests itself.[205]

2.3: 'Setting oneself a measure'

The first point to make here concerns the supposition I made about the hand-moving capacity of the agent in our example. After all, it is not plausible to think that such an agent's capacity is, essentially, a capacity to move their hand *across their desk*—or is even, supposing a more abstract description of it could be provided, essentially a capacity to their move hand in whatever specific way through space. What the agent has is a capacity to move their hand, *punkt*—and they exercise such when they intentionally move their hand across their desk. We should not think that for each specific way of changing a part of themselves which their capacity affords them, there corresponds a *distinct* capacity.[206] Every time someone moves their left hand, say, they exercise the same capacity.

So whilst a human being is, all well, able to move their hand—and their hand is correlatively liable so to be moved—it is clear that, even as their physical frame constrains what is possible for them, the specific ways in which a human being changes the position of their parts is not settled, in conjunction with their perceptually-presented circumstances, merely by their capacities for moving them. How the agent exercises their powers for moving parts of themselves depends what their further aims are.

Contrast this with the brick. Whilst a window's breaking may *be* the action of the brick, as the Aristotelian view insists, the brick's being in a position so to act on the window is not the outcome of a doing on its part. In our case, someone hurled the brick at the window. More generally, bricks break windows only in the right circumstances and it is, so far as being a brick is concerned, an accident whether or not some particular brick finds itself in those circumstances. Something else must change a brick in order for it to be in a state which is propitious for the exercise of its characteristic powers—in

here and a there, between a now and a future that the other moments will be limited to developing.' Cf. Rödl, (p.228, (2011)).

[205] This is a charge McDowell repeatedly brings against Dreyfus in their extended exchange over the nature of intentional action. See their essays in Schear (ed.) (2013).

[206] Cf. Small (2017).

order for it to be next to a window, say, whilst moving at speed. Relatedly, once the brick has been placed in the right circumstances, which kind of change it realizes in the window is settled by its being the kind of material thing that it is. Being a brick, and so having the enabling constitution that it does, there is no question but that *smash the window* is the kind of change in which it will engage—even if it gets interrupted whilst doing so.

Now, it is *because* it does not belong to mechanical agents to be in the conditions under which they exercise their capacities that we can only specify their capacities by mentioning those conditions. That they happen to be in such conditions is further piece of information. By contrast, it is by exercising their *own* capacities for moving parts of themselves that self-movers provide the conditions whereby they can exercise capacities of just that kind.[207] Animals do this with feeling but without thought: earlier I gave the example of a heron, each of whose steps in pursuit of a fish makes possible the next; rational animals do it self-consciously.

It is of a piece with this that such capacities are not, relative to some condition, capacities to engage in just one kind of change. Put in certain conditions, a human being does not just blindly express a fixed nature. Rather, the self-conscious self-mover knows themselves to be one empowered particular confronting an array of perceptually-given others. Such an agent exercises their basic bodily capacities in the specific ways that they do in the light of their appreciation of how their further aims might get realized on, or in spite of, the particulars in their environment—over which particulars they have no immediate control. Thus it is essential to a basic capacity for moving a part of oneself that it be flexibly exercised in concert with other such capacities.[208] The way a self-conscious self-mover interacts with objects outside of them differs fundamentally from

[207] Cf. Thompson (pp.70-1, (2008)).

[208] Let me note here the presence of topic which deserves more attention that I am able to give it. (For some discussion, see Broadie (2007a).) Reflection on self-movers makes it clear that an agent can keep things from changing just as much as they can change things. As Aristotle claims in *De Motu Animalium* 1, locomotion depends on this: one needs only to recall what the heron does with the leg which it is not currently moving. Now, whilst I have claimed that all changes must be seen to be exercises of causal capacities, there occur, I think, exercises of causal capacities which are not changes. Keeping a leg fixed against gravity's pull would be an example. I think we need to see a capacity's settling of the *termini* for such exercises not in terms of the eventual state of the patient if nothing interrupts, but rather in terms of its settling for how long the patient will be held fixed if nothing interrupts. Why the agent is holding the patient fixed for that long is a question which will be handled differently depending on whether the agent is mechanical or a self-mover.

how a mechanical agent does. They are not just related to such objects; they knowingly relate themselves to them.

Now, it is because our bodily capacities are exercised in our taking *means* in this way—because they are our basic capacities for self-conscious self-movement—that I described our agent in the last section as 'setting *themselves* a measure to follow in acting'. This was not supposed to suggest that it was arbitrary or inexplicable that our agent was moving their hand across their desk; it indicates the distinctive kind of explanation one has to give of why a self-mover is realizing some kind of change when they are taking it as a means.

However, do we not, in saying so much, depart somewhat from the Aristotelian view of changes as I characterized it in Chapter 5? The whole point of the earlier discussion of causal capacities was that an agent enjoyed a capacity to change a certain kind of patient in a certain way, when placed in the right circumstances, only in so far as it was a material substance of some specific kind. Only then was it clear why, even as the change could be interrupted, it would be no accident if an agent *did* change a patient in just the respect in question. So even if the idea of an agent's setting themselves a measure—something which they follow in their very setting of it—does not involve the paradoxical idea of a self-causing change, nevertheless, does it not sever this link between the terminus-setting character of an agent's capacities and their being a material substance of a certain nature?

Now there simply is, I have been insisting, this deep difference between mechanical agents and self-moving agents; we must recognize it. Indeed, there is plenty more to say about it: my remarks have been scattered and dogmatic—although not, I hope, untrue.[209] Most importantly, perhaps, we need to know more about what it is to have a further aim. I say something about this in the Coda. More generally, though, I think that unfolding the category *self-mover*, or that of *self-conscious self-mover*, would require us to spell out more systematically the distinctive way in which instances of either possess their powers, have parts or fall under their kinds.[210]

[209] For some recent more systematic treatments, see Thompson (pt.1, (2008)), Rödl (pp.114-20, (2007)), Haase (2011) and Boyle and Lavin (2010); and, in a somewhat different vein, Steward (2012a).
[210] On some of this, see Boyle (2012).

Nevertheless, our appreciation of the fact that we are self-conscious self-movers does not get in the way of the basic point here. Any explanatory slack left by the absence of a straightforward appeal to a mechanical agent's nature is taken up, in this context, by the rational agent's knowledge of what they can do, and their understanding of the action-kinds which they then bring to bear in acting intentionally.[211] The agent's capacities are still terminus setting in the way the Identity Account requires: that is, without prejudicing the agent's eventual success

However, this should not be the final word on the matter. In §3.3, after considering the kind of *practical* self-representation involved in being a practical thinker, I shall make a suggestion about how, even in the case of the self-conscious self-mover, an appeal to their kind might be thought to be relevant to understanding why they do what they do. Before that, then, I need to address the prior question of how to characterize our knowledge of our capacities. After all, such knowledge is part of being a self-conscious self-mover, and I have appealed to it freely throughout this section and the last. Let me now say something about it.

§3

3.1: Our first-personal knowledge of our capacities to do things intentionally

I have maintained that one who is able to represent an action-kind practically—in the fundamental case, at least—takes themselves to be apply that action-kind to themselves in representing it as to-be-done. That is, they take themselves to be able to do it, where their ability to do it just is their ability to represent it as to-be-done. In the fundamental case, then, to represent an action-kind as to-be-done is to do it intentionally.

What I want to consider here is the agent's representation of their capacity to do something intentionally. And just as an agent's doing of some kind of action intentionally *is* their thought of themselves as doing that kind, so I want to maintain that the agent's representation of their own capacity to do something intentionally just is that capacity. Self-conscious changes are the exercises of self-conscious capacities. So much accords, of course, with what I said about the priority of a capacity over its exercises in Chapter 5: the exercises of a capacity just *are* that capacity, in-exercise. No wonder, then, that someone who is doing something intentionally knows that they can.

[211] Cf. Rödl (p.181, (2012)).

I want to bring out why we should think this by considering how the hybrid theorist would consider these matters. For the hybrid theorist, an agent might enjoy a theoretical grasp of an action-kind without supposing that they have the capacity to do it. In that case, they may only wish to do it. If they truly believe that they have the capacity to carry out the action-kind in question, however, then their merely animal capacity counts as the capacity to do it intentionally. Then the agent is supposed to be able to frame *bona fide* practical thoughts about doing the action-kind. In §1 of this chapter, I cast doubt on the alleged practicality of these thoughts, so conceived. Here my focus is on the agent's belief in their capacity.

Recalling the dilemma I presented in Chapter 3, about how we come to know what we can do, let us suppose that the capacity in question is the agent's capacity to move their hand; and let us suppose that their belief in their possession of it is innate. Here the question about how the agent comes to know what they can do is not at issue. Instead, the question is *what* they are supposed to know, or believe. And the crucial thing, of course, is that the belief is reflective of, or is supposed to record, an independently obtaining matter of fact: that a particular animal can move its hand. This is so even if the agent is supposed to come to believe that they have such a capacity at the same time as the capacity's maturation in them, with such co-incidence being the work of innate mechanisms in the brain, say, rather than experience.

Given that the relevant belief represents the hand-moving capacity as independent of it, the practical thinker must take their ability to represent the action-kind practically as distinct from the capacity to actually do the action-kind; for their capacity to represent *moving their hand* practically is allegedly based on that belief. So far as the practical thinker is concerned, then, the one to whom they credit the ability would retain it even if they, the thinker, were no longer able to represent practically the kind which it is an ability to do. From their perspective as one who can represent the action-kind practically, then, there is no necessity that they themselves *are* the one who they believe has the ability to move their hand. They need the further thought that the one who they believe can do the action-kind in question is identical with they themselves who can practically represent it. At best, then, the belief of such a practical thinker would be that, say: 'the empowered animal, with whom I as a practical thinker am identical, can move *its* hand; thus I can move my hand'.

After all, recall the degeneration which I claimed practical thought suffers when it is denied that action-kinds can be applied by it. Then it seems as if the practical thinker is only availed of representations of what the animal to which they are attached can do, so that it seems as if more would be needed for that thinker's beliefs in the animal's abilities to become beliefs in their *own*.[212]

I think, then, that the necessity of representing themselves as able to do the action-kind must be something the practical thinker grasps simply *in* being able to represent that kind as-to-done. Now, the Identity Account insists that an agent's ability to do an action-kind intentionally just is their ability to practically represent it. The idea, then, is that this ability must be self-conscious. For if being able to do something intentionally *is* one's knowledge of that ability, and if that ability just is one's ability to practically represent that action-kind, then it is no surprise that one who can practically represent an action-kind, in the fundamental case, knows that *they themselves* can do it. There could be, in this fundamental case, no gap between being able to practically represent an action-kind and knowing oneself to be able to do it.

Now, I take it that once we have before us the difference, to return to the earlier phrasing, between original and mediate first-personal knowledge of one's capacities, then we shall naturally seek to make sense of the possibility of the former. Mirroring my earlier argument concerning knowledge of action, however, I think we must question the very idea of mediate first-personal knowledge of an ability to do something *intentionally*. When one gets clear about the thoughts of the practical thinker in the envisaged scenario, how plausible is it that they could come to attribute to themselves the agential capacities of the animal to whom—again, it is hard to resist saying—they are *attached*?[213] If my representation of someone as possessing an ability leaves it open that they are identical with I myself who can practically represent its kind, then, it seems to me, I cannot treat that representation as a basis for coming to know of myself that the practically representable kind is indeed something which I, as practical thinker, can intentionally do. Rather, I must conclude that I cannot do the action-kind in question, and must instead learn how to do it.

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[212] McDowell (p.91, (1996)) similarly describes the coming-apart of these capacities, consequential upon the distancing of practical thoughts from changes: '[our] powers as agents withdraw inwards, and our bodies with the powers whose seat they are—which seem to be different powers, since their actualizations are not doings of ours but at best effects of such doings—take on the aspect of alien objects.'

[213] Cf. McDowell (pp.200-3, (2008)).

If this is right, then our capacities for doing things intentionally must be one with our—therefore, first-personal—knowledge of them. One can know oneself to be able to do something intentionally only if one knows that *in* being able to do it intentionally.[214] And in that case, our coming into such capacities and our coming into first-personal knowledge of them must be the very same transition.

Now, there are two questions this raises which I want to consider. In the first place, where I said that a self-conscious action is identical with its agent's thought that its kind is to-be-done—so that the action's self-conscious character lay in this—with what kind of representation on the part of the agent is their ability to do something intentionally to be identified? All I have said so far is negative: that an agent's representation of their own capacity is not a distinct belief about it. I return to this in §3.4. Secondly, the idea that one's agential capacities are identical with a certain manner of representing them might seem to suggest an unpalatable voluntarism: as if one can simply decide what one is able to do. I take this up in §§3.2-3.

3.2: The fallibility of our capacities for intentional action

We can make the challenge that we do not simply decide what we are able to do intentionally more precise. The thought might be that this is an implausible story about the route through which we come into a capacity and that, relatedly, were such a story true then we could come into almost any capacity when plainly we cannot. But the idea that our powers of intentional action are self-conscious does not involve making any such claim about how we acquire those powers. It may set constraints on how any such story could go. I have maintained that it is plausible to think that our knowledge of our basic capacities for moving parts of ourselves must be innate. And I suspect that we shall not comprehend how we mature into such self-known capacities except by appealing to the distinctive manner of self-conscious relatedness that obtains between human beings.[215] But that is another thesis.

I want to consider a different charge of voluntarism. The worry here is that if my capacity for doing something intentionally is identical with my knowledge of it, then I could not be wrong about whether I am able to do that thing intentionally. Of course,

[214] Cf. Danto (p.119, (1973)): 'if we turn instead to the point of view of the agent himself, and look for a moment *within*, then it seems to me we have a very clear idea of what power and impotency must come to, and our knowledge in such matters cannot be inferential but must be direct'.
[215] Cf. Kern (ch.10, (2017)).

we *can* be wrong about such matters; but the self-consciousness of our capacities for intentional action does not tell against this. The point is that *if* one possesses the capacity to do something intentionally, then one knows that one does. If one does *not* possess such a capacity, however, then it does not follow that, thereby, one knows that one does not possess it. One can be mistaken.

To begin here, we should mark an important difference between our basic capacities for moving parts of ourselves and our non-basic capacities for changing extra-bodily objects. As I understand it, an agent's self-conscious capacity to move things like books consists in their self-conscious capacities to move parts of themselves, in addition to their knowledge of how those parts are liable, when moved in various ways, to change extra-bodily kinds of objects. Such additional knowledge can be extremely inarticulate, of course, as I noted in §2.2 of this chapter. In any case, the important point concerns the *objects*, or typical patients, of capacities of either kind. A basic capacity is a capacity to move just the particular body part which it is a capacity to move. There is no potential manifold of left-hands set over and against *my* basic capacity to move my left hand.[216] By contrast, my book-moving capacity is a capacity to change a general *kind* of patient, one which is exercised on one perceptually-given particular out of a manifold of potential others.

In the case of our extra-bodily capacities for changing objects, then, we understand how an agent might retain such a capacity in the absence of being provided with an opportunity to exercise it. Perhaps there are no books around; or perhaps the nearby books are such defective instances of the kind *book*—old manuscripts, say, which would fall apart if lifted—that one's book-moving capacity cannot be properly exercised on them. By contrast, if one is unable to exercise one's basic capacity to move one's left hand, then one's possession of that very capacity is in question.

Given the dependence of non-basic capacities on the basic ones, let me start with the latter. Now, what could have put into question an agent's possession of their self-conscious capacity to move their left hand? Recall here my remarks in Chapter 5; an agent's possession of a capacity depends on their material parts: for example, in this case, a working brain and nervous-system. Once again, that such parts so enable an

[216] It would be worthwhile to explore the ramification of this. I do not do so here. For some discussion see Danto (pp.138-43, (1973)) and, more recently, Rödl (2016). Fichte's discussion of the rational agent's embodiment in the 'Deduction of the applicability of the concept right' in his *Foundations of Natural Right* seems to me to address this topic.

agent does not mean that the agent's capacity reduces to those parts. Nevertheless, those parts, *inter alia*, do enable the agent in the respect in question. We can thus imagine a situation in which an agent still has feeling in their left hand and takes themselves to be able to move it, but where something has happened to their brain so that, in fact, they cannot move their hand. When they set out to push the book across their desk, all the agent succeeds in doing is *trying* to move their hand; their hand does not move and so the agent does not even partially realize the action-kind *moving one's left hand across one's desk*.

With such examples, one must bear in mind that the action-kind which the agent practically represents is *moving their left hand across their desk*. They do not, that is to say, set out to move their left hand *by means of* trying to move it, and only succeed in doing the latter. Indeed, even if our agent, having learnt of their paralysis, does set out to try to move their hand, the project they practically represent is: testing to see whether they can move their hand, by moving their hand.[217] On reflection, what would it even be to try to get one's arm to move *by means of* trying to move it?[218]

In any case, the epistemic point I want to make about the example is this. It shows, of course, that an agent may mistakenly take themselves to be able to do, intentionally, what they cannot. This does not mean, however, that when conditions *are* in place, an agent cannot know what they are able to do unless they first find out whether those conditions obtain: a set of facts which are further to their possession of some more limited, epistemically secure, capacity—for trying, say.

In the good case, the agent has the capacity to move their arm and *therein* knows that they do so. It is a self-conscious capacity. Of course, part of what it is to have such a capacity is to have a working brain, amongst other things; and the agent does not, in knowing that they are able to move their hand, know about their brain. But they do know that the conditions are met for their being able to do what they know they can do. Self-consciously possessing a capacity includes the meeting of those conditions—the list of which, we might add, is infinitely long and not specifiable independently of the capacity itself. It is only when one of those conditions fails to obtain that simply possessing the capacity, in however tenuous a sense, no longer suffices for the agent to

[217] Here I am indebted to Ayers (pp.144-50, (1968)). For a wonderful first-personal account of the difficulties involved in describing such cases, see Sacks (1982).
[218] Anscombe (p.52, (2000)) called any putative such attempt a 'bombination in a vacuum'.

know what they can do. From within the bad case, then, and within it alone, one cannot tell that one is in it except by undertaking further epistemic work.[219]

Now, if I am right about this, then similar considerations will apply *mutatis mutandis* to the agent's capacity to move books: their possession of that partly depends on their self-conscious capacities to move parts of themselves. Of course, an agent's book moving capacity also relies upon their perceptual faculties, only through whose exercise, I take it, could the agent recognize particular books. That such faculties might misfire in a certain case opens up the possibility of an agent's knowing themselves to have the capacity to move a book, but wrongly supposing that they have the opportunity to exercise it. Imagine an agent hallucinating that a book is before them. However, whilst investigating and properly describing such cases is an interesting task, I shall not do it here. I aim only to have done enough to indicate how the relevant charge of voluntarism might be met.

Before turning, then, to a discussion of the kind of representation involved in self-consciously possessing a capacity, in §3.4, I want to say something about how to think about the exercises of our bodily capacities. In particular, I want to warn against supposing that they should be identified with, or should even be seen to contain as parts, changes in one's brain or nervous system.

3.3: The exercises of those capacities, and their distinction from what happens in the brain

As said, if an agent self-consciously possesses a capacity to move a part of themselves, they must possess *a lot* of other parts which are variously interconnected, in extremely complex ways. Moreover, as the agent exercises such a capacity, those parts must change and be changed by one another in a complicated albeit systematic web of interactions at various levels—the organ, say, and the cell. The question, then, is how to think about the relation between an agent's self-conscious action of moving their arm and those changes, or at least some of them.

Now, this is, of course, an extremely large and delicate topic. To do it full justice, one would need to spend more time unfolding the distinctive manner in which self-movers in general, and self-conscious self-movers in particular, possess their parts and so, correlatively, possess their powers. One would need, I think, something like a

[219] In this last paragraph I am leaning heavily upon Rödl (ch.5, (2007)) and Kern (2017).

philosophical account of the concepts *organ* and *limb*, and no doubt others besides.[220] Here I am going to restrict myself to making some largely negative remarks.

Recall the functionalist's position. They treat the agent's action of intentionally moving their hand, say, as a complex change. This includes as parts a series of changes in the agent's brain and nervous system which together constitute an attempt to move that hand, and it also includes a series of changes in the agent's muscles and bones, *inter alia*, which together constitute the movement in the hand. The Aristotelian view differs from this.

On the Aristotelian view, the agent's action of moving their hand is not to be taken as a complex change but rather a simple one: the agent's changing of the position of their hand. This is both the agent's action and the movement the hand undergoes. Moreover, such a change, although its temporal extension allows us to divide it into as many parts as we please, in fact contains no such actual infinity of smaller changes as parts. It is the exercise of a single capacity, and contains no other such exercises as parts. Thus this change does not contain as parts a series of changes in the agent's brain and nervous system, or a series of changes in their muscles or bones. A change in a body-part need not contain as *temporal* parts the changes in the bones or muscles which are some of the changing body-part's *spatial* parts. What is more, of course, the Aristotelian view involves a denial that the agent's action in any sense causes those internal changes.

Now, I think we ought to say here that the only part of themselves on which the agent *themselves* acts is their hand; and I think we can allow that the hand itself is changed only by the agent. This is compatible with allowing that *parts* of the hand are changed by other parts of the agent. In order to understand the non-accidental co-occurrence of the agent's action of moving their hand with that web of internal changes, we must bear in mind at all times that a change is the action *of* an empowered material agent *on* a material patient, and that material things are correlatively potent and liable only because of their parts. Of course, then, *as* an agent changes a part of themselves,

[220] For an interesting and subtle exploration of the concept *organ*, see ch.4 of pt.2 of Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*.

just those internal parts which underwrite their capacity to move that part will change at the same time.[221]

Of course, however, there must be a great deal more to say here. Again: we need a sustained investigation into what manner of having parts is involved in being able to move a part of oneself. Moreover, it goes without saying that aside from any such conceptual undertaking, it is ultimately up to the scientists to tell us in virtue of which actual parts we enjoy our basic capacities; and it is up to the scientists to tell us how those parts actually interact when we exercise those capacities.

Nevertheless, in the light of the foregoing, let me close this section by saying something more positive about attempts to a move a part of one's body. Now, one thing to note immediately is that when an agent is actually moving their hand to some place intentionally, then they can be described as trying to move their hand there. In this case, we are supposing, the agent has the self-conscious capacity to move their hand; they are not exercising it under any limitations incurred by damage to their brain or nervous system. Of course, our agent has not yet finished moving their hand to the relevant place, so the exercise of their capacity is not a perfect instance of its kind: it is only an incomplete or partial moving of the hand from one place to the other. What should we say about the agent's attempt to move their hand in this case? In light of the Aristotelian view, I think the most natural move here is to just to insist that the agent's attempt to move their hand in the relevant respect just *is* their incomplete intentional action of moving it there.[222] So used, 'attempting to do F' and 'is intentionally F-ing' both serve to express the concept of a partial or incomplete exercise of a self-conscious causal capacity.

The attempt on the part of the paralysed agent has to be handled differently from this. Given that our agent was awake and in a position to try to move their limbs, we might suppose that they did not suffer so much internal damage that all of what underwrote their capacity to move their hand was completely denatured. Nevertheless, in accordance with the foregoing, I do not think we should identify their failed attempt with any collection of changes in the brain. Here I think we must simply recognize a different kind of imperfect exercise which a causal capacity might have: not imperfect

[221] This holds out the promise of explaining why a sane materialism would require no stronger a relation between intentional actions and changes in agents' brains than supervenience—as, for example, Marcus (2012) claims.
[222] Cf. Hornsby (2010).

because it is only incomplete, but imperfect because the conditions are not met for one to do, in the first place, what one has the capacity to do.[223] In these cases no change of the relevant kind occurs. Nevertheless, it is only as one who used to know that they fully possessed the capacity to move their hand, but whose loss in that respect is not manifest to them, that we can make sense of the agent's trying as they do. All the agent does in such a case is *fail* to do what, perhaps, they retain the limited capacity to do. Soon that may be gone, and then they will no longer be in a position even to try.

3.4: The manner in which we represent our own capacities for intentional action

I argued that our capacities for doing things intentionally must be self-conscious: our possessing them and our knowing ourselves to possess them must be the same. Now, the Identity Account claims that an intentional action manifests a distinctive manner of representing an action-kind. One so represents an action-kind as to-be-done that one is doing it, and therein knows oneself to be doing it. The question I raised earlier in the chapter, at end of §3.1, was in what correlative manner of representing one's capacities for intentional action did their self-consciousness reside? It is not enough just to say that one does not have a separate belief in those capacities.

Here, once again, I think we need be sensitive to the difference between mechanical agents and self-movers—and self-conscious self-movers especially. Indeed, I want to close this section, and so the main body of this thesis, by pointing to what seems to me to be a difficult idea concerning the practical manner in which practical thinkers must represent themselves. For I think we need the idea that the practical thinker self-applies their own kind, representing it as what they are to-*be*.

Recall what is involved in the attribution of a causal capacity, if what I said in Chapter 5 is right. Just as we must not forget that changes are the doings of material substances, so we must remember that a capacity is not an independently efficacious item within an agent. To attribute *a* capacity to an agent is to recognize that there is a single kind of change in which that agent may engage across an indefinite number of occasions, given the kind of material thing they are. It follows that when an agent possesses a power self-consciously, so that their possession of it and their representation of their possession of it are the same, that agent must represent themselves as being a material agent of a kind whose conspecifics, all well, possess that

[223] Small (p.200, (2012)) notes this difference.

capacity. As a practical thinker, one must represent oneself as possessing the power only *in* being the kind of thing one is; and the manner of representing a capacity internal to its self-consciousness must be bound up with this representation of oneself.

Now, suppose, *per impossibile*, that the brick we considered in Chapter 5 possessed its power to smash windows self-consciously and represented itself as a thing of a kind which, in the right conditions, smashes windows. Plainly, this self-consciousness on the brick's part is not genuinely practical, or properly agentive.[224] It would be as if the brick, inexplicably, was forever bound to passively monitor itself, its powers and its doings. The problem, of course, is that bricks are not self-movers. The practical thinker's manner of representing their own empowerment, and the representation of themselves internal to that, must reflect the fact that they are a self-conscious self-mover.

So consider again what the self-consciousness of intentional action consists in, if I am right: a manner of representing some action-kind as to-be-done which *is*, and is known by one to be, one's actual doing of that kind. It seems clear that we need to characterize the self-conscious character of our capacities by appealing to a *practical* manner of representing them: something which is continuous with the manner in which their exercises' kinds are represented by the agent. However, one cannot represent one's *capacity* to do something as to-be-*done*: one's capacities are not changes. Indeed, what a change *is* can only be understood in terms of power. The natural suggestion, then, is that one represents one's capacities for intentional action as to-be-*had*. But what could that mean? It must mean more than what it meant in the case of our imagined self-conscious brick, which at least represented its window-smashing capacity as belonging to itself as a member of the kind *brick*. The question, again, concerns the distinctive way self-movers possess their capacities, and the self-conscious analogue of this.

Here is a suggestion. It may be said that what it is for a self-mover to *be* an instance of its kind is for it to engage in a series of interconnected activities through which it keeps itself in being. Together these constitute its life-form, each activity supporting the others so that together they constitute a single activity—living—which the creature undertakes so long as it *is* at all. For a self-mover, it may be said, *being is*

[224] Compare Anscombe's discussion (pp.6-7, (2000)) of Wittgenstein's example of some self-conscious leaves, who think 'now we'll go this way, now that' as they are blown by the wind.

living.[225] Relatedly then, one might think that a self-mover will possess some distinctive range of capacities for changing things, only in the concerted exercise of which will it realize those activities through engaging in which does it get to *be* a particular of its kind at all. In the case of unself-conscious animals, one might suppose them to enjoy some *felt* appreciation of the capacities in question. It is hard not to think so when one witnesses a dolphin leaping from the waves, or a dog playing in the park.

In any case, the idea would then be that the self-conscious self-mover, or practical thinker, represents as to-be-engaged-in those activities through which they are a particular of their kind at all, and that this sheds light on what it means to say that they know their own powers in representing them as to-be-had. For the idea would be that to represent one's powers in this way is to represent them as those powers through whose exercise one gets to be what one represents oneself as being—a human being, say, or a living person. In that case, in representing an action-kind as to-be-done in the manner of doing it, the practical thinker would ultimately take themselves to be answerable to their own self-applied kind: their humanity, say, as that gets specified by them through whatever range of activities it might be.[226]

I said in §2.3 of this chapter that by reflecting on the self-representation involved in the practical thinker's self-conscious possession of their capacities, we might find a role for an appeal to such an agent's kind in explaining why they exercise their capacities in the ways they do. However, developing the idea at which we have now arrived is a task that lies beyond the remit of this thesis. It is a difficult idea, I think, for it is not obvious what the relevant activities would be or what the kind *humanity* imports. Indeed, asking after it looks like Socrates' question: How should one live? Nevertheless, I do think that internal to being a practical thinker—to being one who self-consciously possesses capacities for self-movement—there is a distinctively agentive or practical representation of oneself as a substance of one's kind. Articulating what that practical representation consists in must await a fuller development of the category of self-conscious self-mover.

Conclusion

[225] There is not, in addition to its being what it is through its life-sustaining activities, some further thing: *existing*—'something that things do all the time, like breathing, only quieter—ticking over, as it were, in a metaphysical sort of way' (Austin (p.68n.1, (1962)).
[226] Boyle and Lavin (2010) defend this possibility, as do Thompson (2004) and Rödl (2007).

In this chapter I have sought to meet the hybrid theorist's challenge to the Identity Account. In response, I have highlighted the first-personal character of our knowledge of our intentional actions. Such knowledge must, I argued, be the work of practical thought itself: there must be a distinctive and fundamental way of representing an action-kind as to-be-done, wherein one is doing the kind and knows oneself to be so.

The Identity Account is made possible by the Aristotelian view of change, and I went on to describe how we should think about the guidance of a particular action by the practically represented kind which it realizes. This allowed me note how we can see the Identity Account as incorporating the Aristotelian view only to the extent that we appreciate how the latter applies differently to self-movers from how it applies to mechanical agents. Providing a full and systematic characterization of this difference must remain beyond this thesis.

Nevertheless, I argued that as practical thinkers—as a self-conscious self-movers—our knowledge of our capacities for intentional action must be first-personal, so that our possession of those capacities and our knowledge of them is one. This does not, I pressed, make it impossible for us to be mistaken about what we can do. However, I suggested that the self-consciousness of those capacities ought to be seen to depend on the practical thinker's representing themselves as an empowered continuant in a distinctively agentive or practical way. Achieving a proper comprehension of this must remain outside this thesis; it belongs to that more systematic characterization of the difference between mechanical agents and self-movers.

Coda: The fundamental form of practical thought

In this concluding part of the thesis, I want to expand on the claim which I have described as being internal to the Identity Account: that self-conscious, intentional action is the *fundamental* form taken by practical thought, in terms of which the others may be understood.

In particular, I want to say a bit more about the means-end structure of the activity of practical thinkers in §1. The question I am concerned with here is whether the idea of doing something in the light of—or for sake of—some further end can, or even must, be understood in terms of forms of practical thought that are not acting intentionally but which, nevertheless, can at least claim to be as fundamental as it is. To these questions, I shall give some reason for thinking—although not, I think, conclusively demonstrate—that we ought to respond in the negative. After that, in §2, I want to return to a question I raised at the end of Chapter 3. In what sense is merely wishing that one do something derivative upon the more fundamental form of practical thought, or intentional action?

§1

1.1: Ends and the possibility of means-ends structured activity

In Chapter 6, I was at pains to emphasize the categorial difference between mechanical agents like bricks and self-conscious self-movers, or rational animals. One central difference I pointed to, but did not further elaborate, was how the self-conscious self-mover settles the specific ways in which they exercise their bodily powers only in the light of their further aims.

Now, there is a great deal to be said about further aims, or ends. For example, supposing that they are plausible, how should one understand my references to 'activity' as the sort of thing which an animal's life-form comprises? After all, we do not have in mind here the special active practical thoughts which the interventionist seeks to introduce. Rather, we have in mind—in the case of *non*-rational animals, at least—certain generic ways of behaving: migrating, say, or mating and hunting. Although the animal of course completes particular manifestations of them, these are activities which an animal is never *done with*, so speak, so long as it remains a living instance of its kind.

Putting that to one side, though—along with the difficult question of what, if anything, the self-consciously applied human life-form might be—other questions remain. For example, what role should the passive dimension of rational animal life play in providing our ends, or even in just providing our access to them? I mentioned in Chapter 2 that we might recognize a distinction between desire as it belongs to the appetitive side of our nature, and desiring-to-act. The latter, I said, should be seen to be an instance of practical thought. There is a lot to say about the former, though; and here, I shall not say any of it. Pleasure, pain, appetite and the emotions each need proper and systematic treatment.

However, this last reference to desire as practical thought does bring me to the narrow question on which I should like to focus in this Coda. For someone might well insist: even if an intentional action is identical with the agent's practical thought of its kind, we must recognize that when one self-consciously realizes such an action-kind for the sake of some *further* action-kind, that further end must be the content of a distinct act-desire or intention. These latter are manifestations of practical thought that differ from, but are as fundamental as, intentional action itself. If that were right, then recognition of our being self-conscious self-movers would tell against a central tenet of the Identity Account.

In the first place, though, we should wonder about whether such a claim could be maintained in full generality. Consider the kind of example on which a lot of Michael Thompson's reflections on intentional action have focused.[227] Here an agent intentionally walks from their doorway to the end of their street. In this case, the agent is intentionally doing one *end* action-kind—*walking to the end of their street*—by means of several others—*moving their feet*, in whatever specific ways are necessary.

Now, whilst I have urged that fundamentally, an individual change does not have actual changes as parts, I think that the teleological structure of means-end activity requires the possibility of complex changes which are "built up" out of simple changes. And I think that the individual steps which our agent takes are properly seen to be parts of the overarching walk of theirs. Nevertheless, we ought to feel no pressure to claim that, because we can explain why the agent moves their legs as they do by citing the fact that they are walking to wherever they are, we must see the individual steps as being caused in some special way by the walk. To think in this way is to miss that causation

[227] See his (pt.2, (2008)).

consists in one continuant's changing of another, so that it is within the agent's individual steps that causation is to be found.[228] The agent's change in position is not one in which they act on themselves as a patient; rather the agent understands that *by* moving their legs as they do, they will change where they are located.

In this case, the agent's taking of means is series of self-conscious changes in which they change the position of their limbs. Likewise, the agent's actual pursuit of their end is a self-conscious change: the end being the practically represented kind of walk which they are doing. I submit that there is no pressure here to find a separate practical representation of the means-end order which the walker's action instantiates: the agent's structured practical thinking *is* their structured intentional activity.

Of course, we need not disagree with the objector when they maintain that the agent must *intend* to move their legs in the ways that they do, or *desire* so to move them. Likewise, we should allow that the agent intends or desires to walk to the end of their street. But recall my suggestion from Chapter 6 about a certain sort of attempt to move one's hand: these just are one's incomplete intentional hand-moving actions, I urged. Following Thompson, then, we might press that 'desiring to move a leg', 'intending to move it', 'trying to move it' and 'intentionally moving it' are all forms of words which are apt to express or describe the same: the actual if incomplete exercise of a self-conscious capacity to change the position of one's leg.[229] Moreover, we are equally free to claim that the walker's intention to walk to the shop, or their act-desire to walk there, should be similarly treated: an incomplete exercise of their *non*-basic capacity to walk.

If all this is plausible, then it not clear that simply noting the fact that we do some action-kinds for the sake of others requires us to acknowledge a fundamental form of practical thought beyond intentional action itself. But now, it might be said that this is just one example and that there are others which are much better suited for making the objector's case.

1.2: A different example, and a challenge to the objector

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[228] I think Thompson himself might be guilty of this confusion about causation: see n.177 (Ch.5), above.

[229] ch.8, (2008). I note here that just as we use 'trying' to describe the agent who simply fails to do something, so, if the foregoing is right, might we use 'desire' or 'intention' to mark the same. Marcus (p.90, (2012)) picks up on this. Sometimes we say someone wants or intends to do what they are not even on the way towards getting done, for they are mistaken about whether they can.

Suppose that today an agent represents *moving their hand* as to-be-done tomorrow. Can one not plan to do such? But then in planning or intending or desiring to move their hand in a particular way tomorrow, an agent is certainly not moving it in that way now. Let's say that the objector calls this practical thought a future intention. Perhaps it will be said that, against the background of this future intention, the arrival of the relevant "perceptual input" will, when the time comes, somehow lead the agent to begin to move their hand. It is the possibility of such cases, the objector might maintain, which shows that there must be must be a form of practical thought that is as fundamental as intentional action itself.

Now, one thing to note here is that the action-kind which is the content of the putative future-intention is just that which, when the time comes, the agent does intentionally. It is a 'further aim' for the eventual hand-moving action in a way that differs from how walking to the end of the street stands to taking this or that step. Having said that, we should then note that it is hard to imagine a case where an agent does intend to move their hand tomorrow—as opposed to idly considering the possibility of doing so, say—but without having any grounds for representing, in whatever way, *moving their hand* as to-be-done.[230] So let me consider a more fully described example.

Say that the agent means to prove to themselves certain philosophical theses about a rational agent's ability to act over time. In that case, there is an overarching kind of action in which the agent is engaged: for example, *proving to themselves that they can act out of a resolve made the day before*. If our agent does mean to prove such, then there are certain ways they must act before tomorrow comes. Insofar as it is in the kitchen that our agent plans to move their hand, then they had better not burn the kitchen down in the interim. If a friend calls asking to meet up at the time of the hand-moving, then our agent had better refuse. There are, then, a host of things our agent must do if they are genuinely committed to carrying out the relevant test at the allotted time, which kinds of action they will ultimately do by moving their bodies in certain ways. When

[230] Of course, we might allow that an agent can represent an action-kind as to-be-done when there is *no* further end, recognized by them as such, which doing that action-kind would serve: not even the end of just feeling like doing it, which does at least import *some* self-conscious teleological structure. These examples are difficult to describe, and difficult to understand. But in any case, these examples of intentional action are surely ones in which the agent is profoundly alienated from what they are doing, which alienation we comprehend only by reference to the more fundamental case in which the agent does understand why they are doing what they are doing. Obviously, there is much more to say about this.

tomorrow comes, the agent will of course do something else. First they have to enter the kitchen; but then they move their hand in relevant way. Thus our agent satisfies themselves that they have done what yesterday they set out to do.

The point, of course, is that in this case the agent is, as *per* the walker, engaged in an overarching kind of action their doing of which comprises a number of parts. Moving their hand stands to the agent's overarching end, in this new case, as taking a later step stands to the walker's end of walking down the street. The case of our book-mover will be the same: there surely must have been some agreement struck between our agent and their friend—which agreement was forged in writing or in words—if the moving of a book was known by both of them, in advance, to be what amounted to the sending of a signal. The complexities of any given case aside, then, I suggest that we have the resources to describe any putative case of purely future intending along similar lines. In which case, we can maintain that quite generally practical thinking is, in its fundamental guise, intentional action.

In addition to this suggestion, I would also put a challenge to the objector. Insofar as there is an equally fundamental form of practical thought that differs from intentional action, then the objector is committed to distinguishing this form of practical thought from mere wish. However, it is not obvious how this can be done. I have pressed that once practical thought is no longer seen to be that in which a practical thinker know themselves to be exercising their causal capacities, or capacities to change things, then practical thought is reduced to a representation of merely possible action. And I urged that even if such a representation was "all-out", self-referential and causally potent, still it would merely be a wish and so not something in terms of which we can truly understand the *practicality* of practical thought.

Let me re-emphasize: the point here is not to deny that we desire or intend to act, in the present or for the future. The point is that such are distinctively practical postures of mind, and I think that their practicality can only consist in their being exercises of self-conscious capacities for change, be those capacities basic or non-basic. The question should be: *what is it* to intend or to desire to act? We can answer, I think, only once we know that they are what acting intentionally *also* is: self-conscious change. I turn now to the phenomenon of merely wishing that one do something.

§2

Now, I am going to put to one side cases where one wishes to do what one knows to be impossible: change the past, say. Perhaps these are only very tenuous examples of practical thought. Of more pressing concern are those cases in which one wishes that one do something, or would like to do something, but where one supposes that eventually one might intentionally do it—even though one does not, as things stand, know how to do it. I assume that what I say in this latter connection might be extended in some way to the former. The question is: how should we understand the derivative character of this form of practical thought?

There are, of course, different kinds of case even under this more narrowly circumscribed rubric. For example, I may have the non-basic capacity to do something but be unsure about whether I am presented with an opportunity for exercising it. Thus I may think about how to secure such an opportunity in the light of the changeable patients in my environment. Alternatively, I might wish to do something which I do not think I have any kind of capacity to do. Instead, then, I may think about what I could do in order to acquire the capacity in question. I gave an example of this latter kind at the end of Chapter 3, when I described someone who wished to do what they had seen a ballerina do.

In the end, of course it is plain what is missing in these cases of mere wish: a self-known capacity, along with the knowledge of an opportunity for its exercise.[231] The practical thinker possesses a suite of self-conscious causal capacities, not least among which are their capacities for moving parts of themselves. These latter the practical thinker possesses simply in having matured into being the kind of material thing they are. Intentional action just is the self-conscious exercise of these, and other, self-conscious capacities. However, when one does not enjoy such a capacity to do something, then one's practical thought about it is truncated or merely incipient: something is missing.

The idea, then, is that the practical thinker is in position to practically represent, in some diminished sense, what they do not yet know themselves to be able to do only because they must self-consciously possess capacities for realizing *other* kinds of change.

[231] I think this is Kant's answer too. In the second introduction to the third *Critique* (5:177-9), Kant considers an objection to his claim that desire involves a consciousness of its own tendency towards realization—to his claim, basically, that desire is a practical thought. The objection is that wishes are desires—are practical thoughts—but involve no such consciousness. Kant agrees, but presses that they are derivative cases in the sense in which I claim they are.

With this in place, it can be seen to belong to wishing to do something that one seek, all else equal, some way of doing what one wishes to do. Some of this seeking may take the form of intentional action itself, of trial and error; some of it will take the form of calculating how to do what one wishes to do. So whilst the practical thinker is not already doing what they wish to do in undertaking such calculation as this, nevertheless, it is internal to it that the calculation be undertaken by a rational and so self-consciously empowered agent: one whose wish will, all being well, become a *bona fide* practical thought—an intentional action—upon concluding.[232]

Now, in Chapter 6 I mentioned that the question of how an agent is guided by an action-kind which they practically represent might seem to suggest, in fact, two questions. On the one hand, there is the question of how an agent's representation of some means serves as a guide for their doing of that very action-kind. On the other hand, one might think that there is a further question about how an agent's end determines their selection of means. Cases in which an agent deliberates about how to do what they do not already know how to do might encourage one to treat the questions as if they were about different topics.

However, in the case of the agent who is walking to the end of their street, their selection of their means is no different from their taking of them—from their being guided by those means action-kinds *in* following them intentionally.[233] After all, they already know how to do the action-kind which they are in the midst of doing—*walking to the end of their street*—for they just need to move their legs in the requisite ways. In accordance with the foregoing, then, I think that this must be seen to be the fundamental case. It is only when the agent does not know how to realize some end that they then select some intermediary means to it without yet taking those means.

Here it is salutary to remember what is perhaps easy to forget when doing philosophy: that whilst awake, we human beings are all the time intentionally active. As Stuart Hampshire said:

> The mode of performance may vary through many degrees: but if conscious, then necessarily performing […]. [Between] consciousness and unconscious lies the necessity

[232] Cf. Small (pp.167-74, (2012)). See also Marcus (p.83, (2012)).
[233] Compare here Steward's claim (p.19n.41, (2012a)) that one's doing something can just *be* one's deciding to do it.

> of intended action in the one case and of mere natural movement without intention in the other. (pp.93-4, (1959))

From the moment we get up to when we finally go to sleep, we are engaged in realizing a series of overlapping kinds of long-range change; and we are all the time moving parts of ourselves in various ways for the sake of those ends. The case in which one stops, calculates, and figures out how to do something which one does not know how to do is a case that happens against—and *only* against—this background. We could not make sense of such cases at all, I think, unless we appreciated that the practical thinking that goes on in them aspires to be, as we might put it, fully fledged practical thought: namely, intentional action. In *this*, on the other hand, we self-conscious self-movers are engaged for all our waking lives. Our thought is in motion; only thus, I have tried to show, is *practical* reason possible.

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