X*—KNOWLEDGE OF ACTION WITHOUT OBSERVATION

by Hanna Pickard

ABSTRACT This paper argues that perception of one's body 'from the inside' provides one with an awareness of acting, and that this awareness explains a previously overlooked feature of one's knowledge of one's own actions. Actions are events: they occur during periods of time. Knowledge of such events must be sensitive to their course through time. Perception of one's body 'from the inside' allows one to monitor one's actions as they unfold, thereby sustaining one's knowledge of what one is doing over the period of time in which one is doing it.

I

At first glance, G. E. M. Anscombe's slogan that one has knowledge of one's own actions without observation rings true.[1] Such knowledge seems to bear some affinity to the knowledge one has of one's own mind: in both cases, one's knowledge can have a special immediacy; and although in neither case is one infallible, one nonetheless has claim to a special authority. Observation, meanwhile, is the method by which one has knowledge of the actions and minds of others—knowledge which is devoid of any comparable immediacy and authority. So it can seem that, however we are positively to characterise one's knowledge of one's own actions, we can at least be confident in characterising it negatively: one's method of knowing is not by observing.

But 'observation' can mean different things and be put to different uses; and there are, correspondingly, different things we might be ruling out in characterising knowledge as proceeding without it. In accepting Anscombe's slogan too readily, we may blind ourselves to certain features of our knowledge; and correspondingly, to certain resources available for explaining

1. The actions with which Anscombe and this paper are concerned are bodily—not mental. Although the epistemology of bodily actions shares many features with the epistemology of mental actions, I shall not discuss the parallel here.

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these features. Or so I shall argue. The aim of this paper is twofold. First, I aim to establish that we have a previously overlooked resource. We each have a form of perception of our own bodies 'from the inside' which provides one with awareness not only of sensations in one's body, and of its current position, but of acting with it. To take a simple case, one can be aware from the inside not just of one's arm rising, but of raising it. Second, I aim to establish that such awareness can explain an equally overlooked feature of our knowledge. Actions are events: they occur during periods of time. Knowledge of such events must be sensitive to their course through time. Part of what is distinctive about one's knowledge of one's own actions is the nature of this sensitivity. Not only does one normally believe that one is acting if one is, but if one believes that one is acting, then normally one is. One's knowledge keeps near perfect time with the actions themselves.

II

I shall begin by considering how Anscombe comes to the view that one's knowledge of one's own actions is without observation. The view emerges largely in response to an account of such knowledge which would have it proceed, in part, by observation. Such an account begins innocently enough. We may remark that to act is to bring about a change or make something happen: actions typically have results which are logically necessary for their occurrence.[2] For instance, if one raises one's arm, then one's arm must rise; and one cannot know that one is raising one's arm if one's arm does not rise, for if it does not rise, then one did not raise it. But we may then remark on the fact that we often try to do things and fail: perhaps one is temporarily paralysed or restrained, and so despite one's attempt to raise one's arm, it does not rise. And so we can be led to think that, although one can no doubt know with immediacy and authority what one is intending to do, one can only know what one is actually doing if one independently ascertains that the intended result occurs.[3] If this is right, then one's knowledge of what one is doing is not direct, but

2. See McCann 1972 and 1974.
3. Cf. Donnellan 1963.

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inferential. One knows what one is intending to do in the way one knows one's own mind generally. One knows what actually gets done in the way anyone can know what gets done: by observation. And so one can then infer that one did what one intended to do. Call this 'the inferential account'.

The inferential account can seem compelling, but it is not well motivated. It slides from the truism that one cannot know that one is raising one's arm, say, if one's arm does not rise, to the claim that if one does not independently know that one's arm rose, then one cannot know that one raised it. The fact that we sometimes try to act and fail does not suffice to establish this latter, stronger claim. But the account may nonetheless be instructive to consider. For we might note two things. On the one hand, it actually fails to explain one's knowledge of what one *is* doing: although it may take but a moment to observe the required result, it is still the case that if we are precise, the account entails that all one can ever know is what one just *did*. On the other hand, it does not do justice to the intuition that one's knowledge of one's own actions bears some affinity to one's knowledge of one's own mind. One's knowledge of what one just did is not especially immediate if it is based on an inference. And it is not something about which one is especially authoritative if it is based on observing, as anybody suitably positioned can, what gets done. Both these failings seem to stem from the appeal to observation: that is what delays one's knowledge, makes it inferential, and strips one of authority. Hence the temptation to conclude, as Anscombe does, that one must have knowledge of one's own actions without observation.

Dispensing with the inferential account's appeal to observation seems to leave us with limited materials for developing an alternative. What remains, it seems, is only one's knowledge of one's own mind: what one is intending to do. Anscombe illustrates this predicament extremely vividly. She likens the knowledge one has of one's own actions to the knowledge someone has who is directing a project, like the erection of a building, which he cannot see and does not get reports on: all he does is give the orders.[4] Assuming the building is in fact erected to his specifications, he knows what results, for he directed the

4. Anscombe 1957, pp. 82, 88–9.

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project so as to obtain those results in the first place. Similarly, Anscombe's thought seems to be, assuming all goes smoothly, one knows what results when one acts, for one decided to effect that result in the first place. Of course, unlike the imagined building director, we normally use our powers of observation to facilitate the execution of our actions. Anscombe's point is that the practical use of observation in the execution of action does not entail that there is an epistemological use for observation in knowledge of action. As far as knowledge is concerned, we are like the blind and deaf project director: one's knowledge of what one is doing is based on nothing more than the fact that, as we might colloquially put it, doing it was one's own idea to begin with.

The thought that one knows what one is doing because doing it was one's own idea to begin with is extremely intuitive. But how are we to put it to philosophical work? Anscombe claims that such knowledge is 'the cause of what it understands' as opposed to being 'derived from the objects known'; and that these two sorts of knowledge cannot be assimilated to each other.[5] She would have us treat knowledge of one's own actions as *sui generis*: we must simply accept its existence. But it is hard to accept this entreaty. If knowledge that causes what it understands is genuine knowledge, then it should possess—and we should be able to explain how it possesses—the features that typify knowledge more generally, such as reliability and a sensitivity to evidence. I think the best explanation of how this is possible is David Velleman's account of 'directive knowledge'.[6]

Velleman accepts there is a distinction akin to Anscombe's: some propositional attitudes, like intention, cause what they represent; while other propositional attitudes, like belief, are caused by what they represent. This is a propositional attitude's 'direction of guidance'. But propositional attitudes also have a 'direction of fit': some attitudes, like belief, treat their object as true, while some, like desire, treat it as to be made true. What is important about intention, according to Velleman, is not only that it causes what it represents, but that it treats what it

5. Ibid., p. 87

6. Velleman 1989. See also the Introduction to his 2000. For an application of Velleman's account of directive knowledge to the epistemology of mental actions, see Soteriou (forthcoming in *Nous*).

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represents as true. In intending to act, one is decided as to what one will do: that one will do it is represented as true (although, of course, it may not be true: one might change one's mind, or fail). In this, intention is akin to belief. What this means is that, although one's intention is formed by considering what one has reason to do, as opposed to being formed by considering the evidence as to what one will do, it is nonetheless sensitive to such evidence once it is formed. For instance, one's intention cannot survive in the face of evidence that one will not, after all, do what one intends. Given that intending to act reliably causes one to act, one thus knows what one will do in virtue of intending to do it: representing that one will do it as true.[7]

This account of how intention can constitute directive knowledge of action presumes that intention is a propositional attitude. Although this presumption may be correct, it should not pass unnoticed. In English, the typical complement of an attribution of an intention is an infinitival phrase. In order to determine what it is that one represents as true in virtue of having such an intention, we must interpret this infinitival phrase in such a way that it corresponds to a proposition. This requires making explicit what is often left implicit: the agent and time of the act. So for instance, if one intends to walk home, say, then what one represents as true is that one will walk home. Unless otherwise specified, the agent is interpreted as the subject who has the intention, the time as lying in the future.

For this reason, Velleman's account of directive knowledge is, in the first instance, most naturally understood as an account of one's knowledge of one's future actions. If one intends to act, then one represents it as true that one *will* so act. If in the future one does indeed act on one's intention, then one's intention to act constitutes knowledge that one will so act. But this is not yet to have knowledge that one *is* so acting. As it stands, Velleman's account of directive knowledge has a failing which is strikingly similar to the failing of the inferential account. The inferential

7. In his 1989 and subsequent papers, Velleman also claims that we have a standing desire to know what we are doing, which is why we do only what we know that we will do. In the Introduction to his 2000, he suggests that rather than positing such a standing desire, we should think of knowing what we are doing as a constitutive aim of action, which guides our behaviour sub-agentially. Both suggestions are supposed to explain why intention is a reliable cause of action.

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account explains only how one can know what one just did. Velleman's account explains only how one can know what one will do.

Now Velleman recognises this problem. He suggests that it can be solved in either of two ways. On the one hand, one can become aware of being just about to act: one can expect or anticipate what one will do next. On the other, one can attend to acting as one starts to act: 'If you already know *what* you're going to do, then you will be able to see *that* you've started doing it, so long as you're watching at the time.'[8] Either way, one knows that one is doing what one was going to do through a form of 'self-surveillance': of one's mind, or of one's actions themselves.[9]

8. Velleman 1989, p. 51.

9. One might think that this problem could be solved much more simply than Velleman proposes: by appeal to present-directed intentions. Although it is difficult to express the content of such intentions in English, we clearly think they do exist. For instance, imagine that at some point in the day one forms the intention to walk home that evening. One has this intention for the course of the day, but it does not seem that it disappears once one is walking home. Not only does it guide one's walking so that one arrives home as opposed to elsewhere, but if one absent-mindedly takes a wrong turn, say, and is then challenged to explain what it is one thinks one is doing, one would rightly say that, in taking the wrong turn, one was at least intending to walk home. Philosophers often try to express the content of such intention simply using the indexical *now:* in walking home, one intends *to walk home now* (Cf. Bratman 1984). But an intention to act *now* is more naturally understood as an intention to act directly: it is still a future-directed intention, but the future in question is immediate. Rather, in so far as English has a natural way of expressing the content of such present-directed intentions, it would seem to be by means of the indexical *now* together with a progressive infinitival phrase: in walking home, one intends *to be now walking home*. Hence we might suggest that, just as a future-directed intention to act can constitute one's knowledge of what one will do, a present-directed intention to be now acting could constitute one's knowledge of what one is doing. This does not explain, of course, how a future-directed intention becomes motivationally efficacious: how one is prompted actually to act. But given that one is somehow so prompted, it might be thought to explain, extremely simply, how one knows what one is doing because one intends to be now doing it.

This solution depends on the assumption that present-directed intentions are like future-directed intentions in their direction of fit. It must be the case that, if one intends to be now acting, then one represents it as true that one is so acting. But intuitively, this is not the case. Although one may, of course, represent it as true that one is acting when one is acting, one does not so represent things simply in virtue of so intending things. There seems to be a striking and unexpected contrast between future-directed and present-directed intentions: intuitively, only future-directed intentions are akin to belief in this respect. So even though we have present-directed intentions which are concurrent with, and guiding of, our actions, these are not able to constitute knowledge of these actions.

The existence of this contrast between future-directed and present-directed intentions is genuinely puzzling. Note that it cannot be explained simply by appealing to the fact that one can intend to be now acting, while at the same time doubting that

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The force of Velleman's account of directive knowledge is that it is poised to explain how one knows what one is doing because doing it was one's own idea to begin with. Intending to act is knowing that one will act. But Velleman nonetheless concedes that the account needs to be supplemented; and, crucially, he does so in part by appeal to observation: one can 'see' that one has started doing what one knew one would do. Although his development of the idea is minimal, he evidently supposes that directive knowledge and observation can work in concert. I shall return to this thought to see how it can be developed at the end of this paper. But for now the point to note is that Velleman's idea of the content of such observation—of what gets observed—is different from that of the inferential account. According to the inferential account, what one observes is what gets done: the result of one's action. According to Velleman, what one observes is what one is doing: acting.

Consider again Anscombe's building director. The man gives orders, but cannot see the building, and does not get any reports on its state of construction. Imagine now that we return his sight to him, and allow the builders to report back to him. So he now has information which facilitates giving orders. But he is not himself building. He is only directing. And so there is no possibility of him observing himself building. As the case is described, returning his powers of observation does not allow him to observe himself carrying out the project of erecting the building, for he is not carrying it out.

When Anscombe suggests that one's knowledge of what one is doing proceeds without observation, she inherits her conception of what one might observe, should one be required to do so, from the inferential account. What one might observe are the results of

one is. For one can also intend to act, while at the same time doubting that one will—so long as the doubt is not sufficiently strong that one cannot continue to represent it as probably true that one will act: intention, like belief, comes in degrees. One possible explanation of the contrast appeals to our intuitions about agent causation. Having formed an intention to act, one has then done what one can do until the time comes to act: one has decided to carry out the action, and one is thereby entitled to represent it as true that one will so act. Once the time of acting is upon one, one is not longer entitled to represent it as true that one is acting simply in virtue of intending to be now acting. For so to represent things would be to obliterate one's role as the agent of the action. It is not now enough that one has decided to carry out the action and so has an intention to do so: one cannot just sit back and let the intention do its work. One must now carry it out: one must act so as to execute the intention.

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one's actions. This is to overlook the possibility to which Velleman, almost despite himself, draws attention: that what one might observe is one's acting itself. Certainly we do seem to experience ourselves acting. If one is building something, it is not just that one knows what one intends, and can see what in fact results: intuitively, one can be aware of doing the building. I want now to consider what such an awareness of acting might consist in.

III

Here is a naïve proposal. Just as we perceive the world through the five senses, we perceive our own bodies 'from the inside'. For instance, one can be aware of sensations in one's body, and of the position of its parts with respect to one another. To make this vivid, consider an example favoured by Michael Martin: imagine closing one's eyes and stretching one's arms in front of one's body, while attending to one's arms from the inside.[10] In so doing, one can bring into focus a type of bodily experience which is more often than not confined to the background of one's consciousness: the feeling of the position of one's arms, in relation to each other and the rest of one's body. Now there are, of course, many ways in which such 'body awareness', as I shall call it, is a distinctive form of perception. For instance, for each of us there is only one body which we can perceive in this way—the body which is one's own—and such perception seems to be connected to one's sense of a body as being one's own.[11] But it is nonetheless a form of perception: it is a form of awareness which represents its object as being a certain way, and so can provide one with knowledge that its object is that way. One knows that one's ankle hurts, say, because one is aware of it as hurting; one knows that one's legs are crossed, say, because one is aware of them as crossed.

The naïve proposal is that one can be aware of acting in virtue of being aware of one's body—that with which one acts—from the inside. Reflection on the phenomenology of body awareness seems to confirm this: there is all the difference in the world

10. Martin 1993. See also his 1995 and 1997.

11. I argue for the existence of a constitutive connection between body awareness and body ownership in my 'Knowing and Owning a Body'.

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between being aware from the inside of one's arm rising, say, and of raising it. For instance, if one is raising one's arm, one can be aware of directing or controlling the flow of the movement, and this is not so if one's arm is only rising. As Bernard Williams puts the point: 'It is a notable feature of our experience that our control over our limbs is not ballistic: we do not, unless partially paralyzed, throw our arm at something on a desired trajectory, but rather reach for the thing.'[12] It is possible that body awareness is not unique in this respect: perhaps sometimes when looking at one's arm while raising it, one might also have a visual sense of directing or controlling the movement. The point is simply that one can, from the inside, be aware of moving one's body, and not just of one's body moving.

No doubt this naïve proposal needs development. But we need first to address an objection which challenges its very possibility. For it depends on the claim that we have a form of perception of our own bodies from the inside; and however intuitive this claim may seem, it cannot be taken for granted. Anscombe is notorious for claiming that one has knowledge without observation not only of one's actions, but of the position of one's limbs. Indeed, her most extensive discussion of the idea of such knowledge pertains not to actions, but to limb position. And it is natural to read her as thereby denying the existence of a form of perception of our bodies from the inside. For although it is in principle possible to acknowledge that we have such perception of our bodies, but to deny that it is able to provide us with knowledge of our bodies, it is hard to see what could motivate this view. Hence Anscombe's claim that one knows the position of one's limbs without observation tends in the end to be understood as the claim that there is no internal perception of limb position at all: there simply is no such body awareness upon which knowledge of limb position could then be (or fail to be) based.[13] Anscombe herself sometimes encourages this view. For instance, she comments:

> 'I thought my leg was bent', 'To me it was as if my leg was bent', 'I should have said my leg was bent', 'I had the feeling of my leg's being bent': in a certain context all these come to the same thing.

12. Williams 1978, p. 289.
13. Cf. Braybooke et al 1962, Martin 1971, and Moran 2001.

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> If only my leg had been bent, there would very likely just have been that fact and my knowledge of it, i.e. my capacity to describe my position straight off: no question of any appearance of the position to me, of any sensations which give me the position. The difference between the two situations [the situation in which I am right about my limb position and the situation in which I am wrong] may lie only in this, that in the one case my leg is bent and I know it, and in the other it is not bent but — off my own bat — I believe that it is.[14]

Before developing the naïve proposal, we therefore need to ensure that we have no reason to deny what seems undeniable: that we have a form of perception of our bodies from the inside.

Perhaps the key point Anscombe tries to press is that our sensations of limb position are not 'separable' or 'separately describable'. She elucidates this notion in a number of ways. Sometimes Anscombe claims that there is no description of the content of the sensation of limb position which is 'internal'. Consider for instance going down in a lift. We can describe this sensation by reference to what causes it: we can refer to it as 'that familiar sensation of going down in a lift'. Or we can describe this sensation as one 'of sudden lightness and as it were of one's stomach lurching upwards'.[15] This last description Anscombe supposes to be internal. It is what we allegedly lack with respect to limb position. So one way to interpret her point is that we cannot describe our sensations of limb position without referring to their causes.

But as Anscombe herself seems to acknowledge, whether or not we are capable of providing an internal description of a sensation seems largely a matter of the conventions of our language. To describe a smell as the smell 'of onions' seems not to be an internal description, because it describes the smell by reference to its cause. But should onions stop having that smell, but other objects come to possess it, then 'of onions' might become an internal description, as 'bitter' is.[16]

Matters are not helped by another of Anscombe's attempts at elucidation. Sometimes she claims that our sensations of limb

14. Anscombe 1962, p. 56.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

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position are not 'separable' because if one is asked what it is like to give a reflex kick, say, one imagines giving a kick, not having a sensation. And even more, she seems to think, one would not know prior to investigation what sensation would accompany giving a kick. Anscombe seems to take this to show that the kick itself has some sort of priority over the sensation. But surely there is no logical impossibility in the idea that a person could be extremely knowledgeable about what the sensation of a reflex kick is like, and so could simply imagine having the sensation without further ado.

Anscombe seems to be hovering near a point she is unsure how to make: it is something to do with the content of a sensation, or the priority of actual limb position over the sensation of limb position. In the following quotation, however, she presents an argument which is both simple and correct:

> [I]f one ever did have to use the feelings of resistance in the upper leg, and of weight and pressure in the lower leg as clues going by which one judged that one's legs were crossed, one would also need assurance that the sensations of pressure, weight, and resistance were produced in one leg by the other and not by some quite different bodies.[17]

Suppose that one's legs are in matter of fact crossed. So in the lower leg, one would be aware of certain located sensations: of weight on it, and of contact with the front of the thigh. In the upper leg, one would be aware of certain other located sensations, of support, for instance, and of contact with the back of the thigh. But unless one already knows where one's legs are, that is, how they are positioned with respect to one another, these sensations provide one with no evidence whatsoever that one's legs are crossed. One leg could have a different object resting on it, the other could be resting on a different object again. So one cannot know, in virtue of having located sensations of support and resistance (etc.) in one's legs, that they are crossed, since unless one already knows that they are crossed one does not know that the support and resistance (etc.) is offered to each leg by the other.

17. Ibid., p. 55. She repeats the point on p. 56.

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What this shows is that knowledge of one's limb position is not based on the presence of particular, located sensations in one's limbs. It does not show that knowledge of one's limb position is not based on perception from the inside of one's limb position. Nor, evidently, does it show that no such perception exists. But it does help to explain what Anscombe means by saying that knowledge of limb position is without observation.

Recall the sensation of sudden lightness and of one's stomach lurching upwards typically caused by going down in a lift. If one knows that this sensation is typically present on these occasions, then one can use its presence, together with a generalisation linking stomach sensations and lifts, to infer that one is going down in a lift if one does not know this already. For Anscombe, this is to know 'by observation' of one's sensations that one is going down in a lift. The basic point is that the content of the sensation on its own cannot ground the belief that one is going down in a lift. The reason is simple. The content of the sensation is not as of going down in a lift. So possessing the generalisation, as a basis for the inference, is essential. Contrast this now with limb position. Anscombe thinks that one cannot know one's limb position 'by observation' of one's sensations. Why? On the one hand, one's knowledge that one's legs are crossed, say, cannot be based only on the presence of particular, located sensations of support and resistance, etc., in one's legs. For like the sensation of sudden lightness and of one's stomach lurching upwards, the content of these sensations, considered in themselves, has nothing to do with limb position. The content is only as of support and resistance, etc. But on the other hand, and unlike the case of stomach sensations and lifts, there is no generalisation available which would link particular sets of these particular, located sensations, to particular types of limb position. For, as Anscombe's argument suggests, the same set of particular, located sensations can be linked with different positions and predicaments. So it is not possible for knowledge of one's limb position to be inferred from the presence of particular, located sensations of support and resistance, etc., together with a generalisation. Therefore, one cannot know the position of one's limbs 'by observation'.

Hence a sensation is 'separable' if its content is not the same as that of a particular piece of knowledge which it grounds; and

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knowledge is had 'by observation' if it is inferred from a sensation together with a generalisation about sensations of that type. A sensation is 'non-separable' if its content is the same as that of a particular piece of knowledge which it grounds; and knowledge is had 'without observation' if it is based solely on taking such a sensation at face value.[18] Indeed, at one point Anscombe appears to say exactly this: 'When I say: "The sensation ... is not separable" I mean that the internal description of the 'sensation' — the description of the sensation-content — is the very same as the description of the fact known; when that is so, I should deny that we can speak of observing *that* fact by means of the alleged sensation.'[19]

18. Note that this notion of 'separability' applies only to particular sensations. It does not apply to sensations as a type or class. For instance, the sensation of sudden lightness and of one's stomach lurching upwards typically caused by going down in a lift is 'separable' when it is used as the basis for the judgment that one is going down in a lift. But this same sensation would be 'non-separable' if it were used as the basis for the judgment that one is experiencing a sensation of sudden lightness and of one's stomach lurching upwards.

19. Ibid., p. 56. One question that remains is why, if my interpretation of Anscombe is correct, she would ever say that we know the position of our limbs without 'any appearance' and 'off our own bat'. I think one reason may be a tendency she has to compare her view of knowledge of limb position to a view Wittgenstein suggests in the *Blue Book* about the locations of pains. Wittgenstein claims that 'the act of pointing *determines* a place of pain' (1958, p. 50 (emphasis in original)). This is a crude expression of what we should better think of as a dispositional view. The view would then be that what makes it the case that a pain is felt in one place and not another is that the subject is disposed to tend to that place, and also perhaps to report that it is where the pain feels to be. This view does not deny that we have awareness of located pains. But it presents an account of what this awareness consists in that would seem to deny it a rational or justifying role in knowledge of the locations of pains. For a subject's dispositions to tend to a place and to report that it is where a pain feels to be seem most naturally understood as expressions of knowledge of the location of that pain. And so if her awareness of the location of a pain consists in these dispositions—dispositions which express knowledge—then her awareness cannot itself be the basis of this knowledge. Although Anscombe does not overtly embrace such a view of knowledge of limb position, it is at least possible that her sympathy for the dispositional view of the locations of pains has infected her thinking. If so, then Anscombe claims that we know our limb position without 'any appearance' and 'off our own bat' not because she thinks there is no body awareness of limb position, but because such awareness plays no rational or justifying role in knowledge of limb position.

But, as I noted above, it is difficult to see what could motivate such a view. Consider first its model: the dispositional view of the locations of pains. This view certainly does not capture how we intuitively conceive of the locations of pains. Intuitively, what makes it the case that the subject is disposed to tend to a place, and report that a pain is located there, is that the subject feels pain there and so knows that a pain is there. In this sense, the pain's felt location is the reason why she is behaviorally and verbally disposed as she is. If the dispositional view of the locations of pains has any plausibility at all, it can only be because there is nothing more to the location of a pain than where it feels to

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If this is right, then Anscombe provides us with no reason to deny what seems intuitively apparent: that we have a form of perception of our bodies from the inside. There is no bar to developing the naïve proposal. Meanwhile, we are now in a position to see what lies at the crux of Anscombe's idea of knowledge without observation. Knowledge without observation is knowledge which is not inferential. It simply takes the content of a perception upon which it is based at face value. Importantly, it is not knowledge which is not based on perception. So it seems that, even on Anscombe's own, stark terms, it should actually be possible for observation—in the sense of awareness of acting—to play a role in knowledge without observation of one's own actions. What matters is that observation must not be a basis for inference.

IV

The naïve proposal is that, given that we have a form of perception of our bodies from the inside, one can be aware of acting in virtue of being aware of one's body—that with which one acts—from the inside. As I said above, this idea needs development. But to begin, we can bring into focus the phenomenology of such awareness by considering those activities in which one typically engages because of their inherent bodily pleasure—activities like dancing, say, or stretching or relaxing. It is clearly possible, of course, not to take pleasure in dancing; or to take pleasure only in the fact that one is dancing, as opposed to the dancing itself: perhaps the pleasure is found in finally overcoming one's embarrassment. But for many

the subject to be. She is, in this sense, infallible: where the pain seems to be is where it is (although, of course, the place where the pain seems to be may not be the place of bodily damage). Given this, an observer can only tell where a subject feels a pain to be located by her behaviour and her verbal reports. The dispositional view treats these public ways of telling of a pain's location as constitutive of its location. It is perhaps not surprising that this view can be traced to Wittgenstein. But it is at least intelligible that someone might hold this view. For these dispositions are (public) manifestations of where the pain seems to the subject to be. And where it seems to her to be is where it is. But this is precisely not the case with respect to limb position. We are not infallible about the position of our limbs: where they seem to be need not be where they are. So it is patently false, if not outright absurd, to claim that what makes it the case that a subject's limbs are positioned one way and not another is that she is disposed to behave as if they are so positioned and report that they are so positioned. There is no possible parallel here with the locations of pains; and so there is not even the semblance of motivation for a view that allows that we enjoy awareness from the inside of our limb position, but denies this awareness a role in our knowledge of our limb position.

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of us, for many activities, there is pleasure in the bodily experience of doing them: this is why we do them. Because the pleasure in the bodily experience is the aim of the activity, the aim is not served unless one is aware of one's body: one's focus of attention is drawn inwards.

The most intuitive and immediate objection to the naïve proposal is that such activities are not the norm. Typically, one's focus of attention in acting is not drawn inwards to one's body, but is directed outwards onto the world: onto the objects upon which one acts. But how precisely should we understand this objection? As it can be understood in a number of ways, we can develop it as a means of developing the naïve proposal itself.

We might first understand the objection as claiming that, because the focus of one's attention when picking up a cup, say, is directed onto the cup, one cannot be aware of one's body moving so as to pick up the cup. One is only aware of the cup. This way of understanding the objection supposes that there is an extremely tight connection between attention and awareness: attention acts as a spotlight on an otherwise dark stage, serving to bring its object to light. But although there may be much to be gained by considering the connection between attention and awareness, there is much to be lost if we presume that everything lying outside of one's attentional focus is covered in darkness. Intuitively, conscious awareness comes in degrees. When we attend to an object in one modality, we do not thereby lose all awareness of other objects in that and other modalities. No doubt one's awareness of one's body is often recessive. But this is not to say there is no such awareness, when acting or otherwise, at all.

We might then understand the objection as claiming that, even if one has some awareness of one's body when picking up a cup, one is equally aware of the cup. This awareness must be part of one's awareness of acting: after all, it is the cup upon which one is acting. But as the cup is not part of one's body, one evidently cannot be aware of it through an awareness of one's body. So one cannot be aware of acting from the inside alone; if one has any awareness of acting, it must often depend on the other senses, like vision and touch, as much as it depends on body awareness.

Thus understood, the objection should be conceded; but it is not pernicious. Even when we consider an activity such as dancing, where body awareness is at the forefront of one's

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consciousness, it is evidently not the only contributor to one's overall experience. After all, one usually dances to the music: the pleasure is to be found in moving to the beat. At the level of phenomenology, our sensory experience in different modalities is typically integrated. Body awareness is part of this integration. To claim that one can be aware from the inside of acting with one's body is not to claim that one's overall experience of acting is exhausted by such awareness: the other senses may contribute.

We might finally understand the objection as claiming that, even if one is aware of one's body from the inside when picking up a cup, the content of this awareness is exactly not as of picking up a cup. From the inside, all we can be aware of are bodily movements, strictly conceived: movements such as raising one's arm, crossing one's legs, curling one's fingers. Meanwhile, we are notoriously bad at knowing precisely which such movements we are performing when we act on objects like cups.[20] But even if we imagine that this was perfectly transparent to us, it would still be the case that one could not be aware from the inside of picking up a cup, but only of moving one's body one way or another. That such a bodily movement amounted to an action on a cup is not part of the content of the awareness.

But why should we accept this claim about the content of body awareness? Compare visual perception. There are certainly some theories of visual content which hold that we never, in fact, see the things we take ourselves to see, like, say, tomatoes; all we ever see are things that are tomato-coloured and tomato-shaped. But it is generally accepted that visual content is richer than this. On any number of theories of visual perception, things like tomatoes can figure in the content of that perception. The point holds for most if not all of the five senses: we hear not just sounds but words; we feel not just an impenetrable surface, but a table. Given that body awareness is a form of perception, we should be willing to consider the possibility that its content is comparably rich: when one acts with one's body so as to pick up a cup, the content of the awareness one has of one's body is as of picking up a cup. After all, the event which is one's picking up a cup is as real as the tomato; why not think each, in its own right, a proper object of perception?

20. For striking experimental evidence of this, see Marcel 2003.

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But, one might ask, how rich should we consider the content of body awareness to be? Again, compare visual perception. It may be that, in seeing a tomato, one sees an object which one bought just this morning at the market. Knowing this, one could certainly describe the visually presented tomato as the tomato so procured. But no theory of visual perception would allow that the content of one's visual experience represents the tomato as having this causal history. Now actions, as we know, have future effects, some intended and some not; and those which are intended explain why the action is performed, and, in this way, provide us with true descriptions of the kind of action it is. A man pumps water from a well in order to replenish the water supply in order to poison the inhabitants of a house; and his pumping of water *is* his replenishing the water supply *is* his poisoning the inhabitants. There are not three different things he does but only one, which we can describe in any of these three ways. But in doing this, what is he aware of doing from the inside? There must be a limit to the richness of the content of body awareness, comparable to the limit to the richness of visual perception: for surely the man cannot be aware from the inside of poisoning the inhabitants.

The obvious proposal is that we should limit the content of body awareness by appealing to the notion of a 'basic action'. This notion has been much scrutinized, and its role in a theory of agency much questioned, but it seems impossible to deny that intuitively, there are some descriptions of actions which inform us of the kinds of things that an agent can do 'directly' or 'immediately' or 'just like that'. Such descriptions identify the action as being of a certain kind in a way which is independent of all but its most immediately intended effects. They are thus poised to limit the content of body awareness in just the way required. Now the best way I know of capturing this notion appeals to the idea of knowing how to do something.[21] A token action is basic if it is of a type which the agent knows how to do without needing to use her knowledge of how to

21. To my knowledge, this suggestion is first made in Hornsby 1980. It has recently been carefully developed in Enc 2003. Enc appeals to theories of behaviour in cognitive science and ethology to explain the idea of knowledge how. The basic idea is that the sub-agential mechanisms or 'motor programmes' for executing actions are broadly individuated—they are cued to environmental changes and goals, not sets or sequences of particular muscle movements—and respond directly to the agent's

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do any other, distinct type of thing; and if, on this occasion of acting, the agent in fact acts without using her knowledge of how to do any other, distinct type of thing. Raising one's right arm is basic so long as one does not do it using one's knowledge, say, of how to raise an object using one's left arm. So too, for most of us, are most acts of cup-picking-up and handle-pumping: most of us know how to pick up a cup or pump a handle without needing to use our knowledge of how to do anything else—for instance, our knowledge of how to execute the movements which result in cups getting picked up or handles getting pumped. Meanwhile, poisoning the inhabitants of a house is unlikely to be basic; most of us cannot manage this without employing our knowledge of how to do other things. So we limit the content of body awareness thus: the content of the awareness one has of one's body in acting is specified by appeal to the description of the action under which it is basic. One can be aware from the inside only of those actions which one knows how to do 'directly' or 'immediately' or 'just like that', and which, on the occasion in question, one so does. Hence if one intends to performs what is a basic action, then one can be aware from the inside of doing what one intends.

V

Suppose now that we grant the naïve proposal: to put it crudely, one can be aware from the inside of one's basic actions. The question remains: does such awareness of acting have a role to play in one's knowledge of one's own actions?

It is sometimes claimed that the very idea of observing oneself acting nears incoherence: that in observing one's actions, one becomes a spectator of them and so alien to them—the sense of immersion in what one is doing, and of being its agent, goes missing.[22] No doubt the intuition behind this idea stems from the fact that observation is the method by which one has knowledge of the actions of others—actions of which, evidently, one is indeed a spectator and not an agent. But however intuitive this

intentions. So if the agent issues a 'motor command' to pick up a cup, say, or go for a walk, then a sub-agential programme for walking or grasping orchestrates the action. An action which an agent knows how to do 'directly' or 'immediately' or 'just like that' is simply an action so orchestrated. Importantly, this allows an agent's repertoire of basic actions to change over time, as the agent learns new skills, or forgets old ones.

22. Cf. O'Shaughnessy 1992 and Gardiner 1963.

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idea can seem, it is not—at least when it is so boldly expressed—true. Merely observing what one is doing as one is doing it need not create any sense of alienation. Consider, for instance, the teaching of practical skills. A surgeon may tell her students, step-by-step, what she is doing while operating on a patient; a parent may tell a child what he is doing while tying his shoelaces. Each may be capable of offering the instruction only by recourse to observation. But neither is thereby alienated from the action. The reason, it seems, is that what the surgeon and parent come to know by observation in no sense rivals what they already knew not by observation. For they do not discover through observation that what they are doing is performing an operation or tying a shoelace. What they discover through observation is simply how they perform an operation or tie a shoelace—in effect, they come to be able to describe how to perform an operation or tie a shoelace. Hence, provided that one's knowledge of what one is doing is not discovered by observation, there is no inherent incoherence in the idea of observing oneself acting. In principle, observation and directive knowledge can work in concert.

This is the explanation of why Velleman is untroubled by the need to supplement his account of directive knowledge. Recall that Velleman acknowledges that, on its own, his account of directive knowledge explains only one's knowledge of what one will do. To ensure that one knows what one is doing—that one's knowledge keeps abreast of one's actions—either of two things must be the case. One can become aware of being just about to act: one can expect or anticipate what one will do next. Or one can attend to acting as one starts to act. So what is known through anticipation or observation does not rival what is known through intention. Anticipation and observation are simply the methods by which one knows of the onset of an action whose nature is already known.

Velleman's supplementation of his account of directive knowledge raises the following question. Anticipation and observation are very different methods of knowing that one is doing what one intends to do. Are they equally viable ways of keeping abreast of one's actions? Consider first the suggestion that one knows that one is acting because one anticipates acting. How are we to understand this? On the face of it, it seems to depend on the idea of directive knowledge. Imagine, for instance, that one is lying in

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bed on a cold winter morning, intending to get up.[23] One can, it seems, lie there for quite some time before actually getting up. At some point, however, one might form an intention which is directed not just at the future, but at the immediate future: to get up *now*. Such an intention might have a double effect. On the one hand, it might motivate one actually to get up: it is the immediate cause of one's getting up. On the other, it might cause one to acquire the belief that one is getting up. For to intend to get up *now* is to represent it as true that one will get up *now*. And so immediately after forming the intention, one has good reason to believe that one is getting up. Hence one's beliefs about what one is doing might be thought to keep abreast of one's actions by being acquired because of one's intentions to act *now*.

One difficulty with this suggestion is that it seems possible to act, and to know that one is acting, without forming an intention to act at a particular moment in time, namely, *now*. Intentions to act can become motivationally effective without any such mediation: one might, for instance, simply intend to get out of bed, and at some point do so. In the absence of an intention to act *now*, the belief that one is acting would need to be otherwise acquired — for instance, as Velleman suggests, it might be acquired on the basis of observation. A more telling difficulty is that the postulation of an intention to act *now* still does not explain how one knows what one is doing for the course of the action. Grant that such an intention causes one to acquire the belief that one is acting as one starts to act. Actions are events: they occur during periods of time. The belief that one is acting is sustained as one's action progresses, and revised once one's action has finished. Anticipation cannot explain how one's knowledge of one's actions keeps time with one's actions.

The idea of knowledge keeping time with its object is quite general. Knowledge is a standing state: once one has acquired knowledge, it can be retained. Consider, for instance, acquiring knowledge about the past: imagine learning as a child that the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066. Provided certain conditions are met, one can then retain this knowledge for the course of one's life. For instance, it is a trivial requirement that one's memory must not fail. More substantially, it seems that one

23. Cf. James 1890.

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must be sensitive, at least in some way and in some degree, to new evidence that would undermine one's knowledge. But much of what we come to know is about what is the case at the time at which we come to know it: we can acquire knowledge of the various conditions and states that obtain, and events and processes that are occurring, in the present. Such knowledge is distinctive: there are two different senses in which it can be retained.

Consider, for instance, having lunch with a friend and acquiring the knowledge, through his testimony, that his marriage is in the process of breaking up. At the time **t** of acquisition of the knowledge, one knows that his marriage is breaking up. Now when the sentential complement of an attribution of knowledge is present-tensed, then the proposition that is known is about the time at which it is known. So at the time **t** of acquisition of the knowledge, one knows that one's friend's marriage is breaking up at **t**. Hence one way that this knowledge can be retained is simply as knowledge of the past. At any time after **t**, one can know that one's friend's marriage was breaking up at **t** provided that the above conditions are met. But when we think of such knowledge being retained, we more naturally think of it as being sustained, as I shall put it, as knowledge of the present. The breaking up of a marriage tends to occur over a period of time. Having acquired at **t** the knowledge that one's friend's marriage is breaking up at **t**, one can continue to know, at any later time **t′** occurring during that period, that his marriage is breaking up at **t′**. Present-tensed knowledge can keep time with its object in so far as it can be sustained for the period of time that its object exists.

Evidently the conditions that must be met for any knowledge to be retained apply equally to present-tensed knowledge if it is to be sustained. But the requirement that one must be sensitive, at least in some way and in some degree, to new evidence that would undermine one's knowledge applies in a special way. Much of what we know to be presently the case will not always be the case. For instance, the breaking up of a marriage cannot occur indefinitely: marriage break-ups have average lifespans. After a reasonable amount of time has passed since one's acquisition of the knowledge that one's friend's marriage is breaking up, it seems one cannot know that his marriage is breaking up solely on

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the basis of one's knowledge that it was breaking up, even if, as it happens, it still is. For the passage of that time is itself newly available evidence that undermines one's knowledge that his marriage is breaking up. Hence in order for one's present-tensed knowledge to be sustained over a period of time, one must be sensitive, at least in some way and in some degree, to the expected course through time of its object—otherwise one is not sensitive to new evidence.

Now it is perfectly possible for one's present-tensed knowledge to fail to be sustained through no fault of one's own. Suppose one is appropriately sensitive to the expected course through time of the break-up of one's friend's marriage. But in the meantime, and quite unexpectedly, the break-up was in fact completed some time ago: it was managed in an unusually expedient manner. Before the break-up was completed, one knew that it was occurring. After it was completed, one evidently does not. Nonetheless, there is a period of time during which one continues to believe, falsely but with justification, that the break-up is occurring. Justified present-tensed belief can be sustained, while knowledge is not.

One's knowledge of one's own actions is present-tensed: it keeps time with one's actions. Having acquired the present-tensed knowledge that one is acting, whether by anticipation or by observation, the knowledge is then sustained as one's action progresses. Hence one must be sensitive, at least in some way and in some degree, to the expected course through time of one's actions. But a salient feature of one's knowledge of one's own actions is that it is extremely unusual for there to be a lapse between the completion of an action, and the revision of one's belief about the occurrence of that action. Not only does one normally believe that one is acting if one is, but if one believes that one is acting, then normally one is. And although one may have fairly reliable general expectations about the time an action is likely to take, one's expectations are neither sufficiently precise nor sufficiently reliable to explain the datum: knowledge of action keeps near perfect time with the actions themselves.

How can we explain this datum? It is here, I suggest, that we find a substantial role for observation—for awareness from the inside of acting—in one's knowledge of one's own actions. The most obvious explanation of how one's knowledge keeps near

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perfect time with any event is that one monitors the event's progress as it unfolds over time. Consider, in this respect, the observational knowledge that it is possible to have of another's action: imagine keeping an eye on one's child as she devours an ice-cream. In this case, observation is the means by which one acquires the knowledge that she is eating an ice-cream: one sees that she is eating it. But, if one continues to observe her as the eating progresses, then one's knowledge is sustained not simply because one is, in general, sensitive to the expected course through time of the action, but because one actually sees the action unfold over time. One can observe its progress and also its finish, and so one has new evidence that it is ongoing over the period of time during which it is ongoing, and that it is over at the time at which it is over: one can then revise one's beliefs accordingly. Given that one keeps an eye on another's action, the knowledge one thereby gains of its course through time possesses the same features as the knowledge one has of the course of one's own actions through time.

Body awareness is not only unusual among the senses because it is typically recessive. It is also unusual because it is continuous. Other than the basic requirement that the subject of perception be conscious, there are no enabling conditions of perception that must be met. For instance, there is no question of being in the right place at the right time in order to perceive one's body from the inside: one is always appropriately positioned. This allows one to keep a permanent—if lazy—eye on one's actions: from the inside, one can monitor them continuously. For this reason, the awareness one has of one's body as acting not only facilitates the practical execution of action. It can also serve to sustain one's present-tensed knowledge that one is acting over the course of the action. Presuming only that the neural and physiological systems underlying one's perception of one's body from the inside are functioning normally, there is thus no possibility of one's knowledge losing time with one's actions.

Hence whether or not one's directive knowledge of what one is doing is acquired because of an intention to act *now*, we shall need to appeal to observation to explain how one's knowledge of what one is doing is sustained over the period of time in which one is doing it. This is because one knows not only when an action is starting, but also when it is ongoing and finishing. But

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this role for observation does not threaten the idea that one knows what one is doing because doing it was one's own idea to begin with. For the observation need not inform one of what one is doing, but only of when one is doing it: it can complement, as opposed to rival, directive knowledge. Nor does this role for observation alienate one from one's actions—at least in the sense which worries Anscombe. For although such knowledge depends on perception, the content of the perception is simply taken at face value: it is in no sense a basis for inference.

VI

I want to end this paper by briefly raising a question about the status of its conclusion. I have argued that one can be aware from the inside of acting; and that such awareness is what sustains one's knowledge of what one is doing over the period of time in which one is doing it. But one might agree that part of what is distinctive about our knowledge of our own actions is that it keeps near perfect time with them, but question whether the explanation of this must appeal to one's awareness from the inside of acting.

Consider, for instance, the real-life case of Ian Waterman.[24] Waterman suffers from a unique form of neuropathy: when he was nineteen a virus badly damaged most of his sensory fibres, but none of his motor nerves. As a result, he lacks virtually all feeling in, and awareness from the inside of, his body: he is 'body-blind'. When Waterman first fell victim to this condition, he could not control his movements at all: he was effectively paralyzed despite the continued functioning of his motor nerves. But, with tremendous determination, he has managed to learn to control his movements by using vision. If he looks down at his body, constantly and assiduously monitoring it through vision, he can guide his movements in this way. Presuming that, despite his difficulty in acting, his knowledge of his own actions is nonetheless normal, Waterman is a living counter-example to the claim that body awareness is what sustains one's knowledge of what one is doing over time. Rather, the natural assumption is that Waterman's knowledge is sustained by vision.

24. See Cole 1991.

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I do not wish to claim that body awareness is essential to knowledge of action. No doubt we can envisage a number of alternative ways that knowledge of one's own actions could keep time with one's actions. What I hope to have established is rather this. On the one hand, that there is a previously overlooked feature of the knowledge one has of one's own actions: that it keeps near perfect time with the actions themselves. An account of such knowledge must explain this feature. And on the other hand, that we have a previously overlooked resource. For we are not in the same predicament as Waterman or any body-blind person: we have a form of awareness of our bodies from the inside which allows us to monitor our actions continuously. For most of us, most of the time, this is what explains how our knowledge of what we are doing is sustained over the course of time in which we are doing it: we are aware from the inside of doing it.[25]

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