

Bodily Movement and Its Significance

Will Small
University of Illinois at Chicago

ABSTRACT. I trace the development of one aspect of Fred Stoutland's thought about action by considering the central role given by contemporary philosophy of action to bodily movement. Those who tell the so-called standard story of action think that actions are bodily movements (arm raisings, leg bendings, etc.) caused by beliefs and desires, that cause further effects in the world (switch flippings, door movements, etc.) in virtue of which they can be described (as flippings of switches, shuttings of doors, etc.). Those who hold a disjunctive conception of bodily movement think that actions are bodily movements that involve intentions essentially, but they too think that when an agent raises a glass, there is an action (an arm raising, perhaps) that causes a distinct event (a glass rising), in virtue of which the action (= the bodily movement) may be redescribed as a raising of a glass. Against both views, it might be held that actions may constitutively involve the changes wrought on their patients—that action is, in the first instance, transaction. But if action consists fundamentally not in an agent's moving herself, but in her moving (or otherwise changing) something else, then how should we think about the nature and philosophical significance of bodily movement?

Much contemporary philosophy of action gives a central role to bodily movement. According to what is often called *the standard story of action*, an action is a bodily movement caused by the agent's beliefs and desires. The standard story is often disputed; but even among those who reject it, many still give bodily movements a central role. Some who reject the standard story retain its conception of bodily movement (I will call the standard story's conception of bodily movement *the standard conception of bodily movement*), while telling a different story about how, and by what, bodily movements are caused when they are expressions of human agency. Others reject the standard conception of bodily movement in favor of a *disjunctive conception of bodily movement*, while nevertheless aiming to uphold the claim that actions are bodily movements. But there is another, more radical alternative to the standard story that sets that claim aside, holding instead that (in the fundamental case) actions are *transactions*: action consists fundamentally not in an agent's moving *herself*, but in her moving (or otherwise changing) *something else*. My concern here will be with what significance the concept of bodily movement retains for philosophy of action if the standard conception of it is abandoned. In articulating the differences between standard conception of bodily movement and the disjunctive and transactional alternatives to it, I hope thereby to articulate the development of one aspect of Fred Stoutland's critique of the standard story of action, which I will argue was a development in the direction of a better philosophy of action.

The standard story says that an action is a bodily movement caused (in a way that requires further specification) by its agent's beliefs and desires. Michael Smith provides a characteristic statement of what happens when someone acts, according to the standard story:

Imagine that John flicks a switch. Is his flicking the switch an action? According to the standard story, we answer this question by first of all tracing back from the movement of the switch to some relevant bodily movement. Let's suppose that the bodily movement we discover is a movement of John's finger. If John's flicking the switch is an action then this bodily movement has to be one that John knows how to perform and his knowledge how to perform it mustn't be explained by his knowledge how to do something else. It must be the sort of bodily movement that could be a basic action for John, something he could just do. Supposing this to be so, the standard story tells us that whether or not John acts depends on the causal antecedents of that movement of the finger. (Smith 2012, 388)

The task of *tracing back* is conceived of in *event-causal* terms. Thus if (to expand the example), John alerted the prowler by turning on the light, which he did by

flicking the switch, which he did by moving his finger, then, according to an event-causal construal, the event of the prowler's being alerted was caused by the event of the light's going on, which was caused by the event of the switch's going up, which was caused by the event of John's finger's moving, which event would be an action just in case it was caused (in the way further specified in a specific telling of the standard story) by John's beliefs and desires.

Those who tell the standard story say that actions are bodily movements. They do not deny that agents turn on lights as well as move their fingers. They instead say that, because (as it happened) John needed to do nothing more than move his finger to flick the switch, turn on the light, and alert the prowler, his finger's movement can be identified with his flicking of the switch, his turning on of the light, and his alerting of the prowler—that is, they say that there is one event that may be described in all these ways. John turned on the light by moving his finger (he needed to move his finger to turn on the light) but he did not move his finger by doing something else (he didn't need to do anything else to move his finger). His finger movement may be described as his flicking of the switch because it caused the event of the switch's going up: to describe John's action in terms of what he did by performing a bodily movement is to describe it in terms of its effects. But because he did not move his finger by doing anything else, to describe his action as his moving of his finger is not to describe it in terms of any of its effects, but rather to give the basic description of the action. Quite generally, on this view, when one ϕ -s by ψ -ing there is one action describable both as a ϕ -ing and as a ψ -ing;¹ the 'by'-locution is interpreted in the event-causal way just sketched;² and the description of the action found at the end of the 'by'-chain is the basic description of the action.

The task of tracing back, then, is the task of tracing back along the chain of events that are the action's effects, and in virtue of which the action receives descriptions, to the action itself. And thus the standard story's claim that actions are bodily movements can be put more precisely: only when an action is described in bodily movement terms is it described as it is intrinsically, rather than in terms of distinct items to which it is related. *Only when*, because a bodily movement description might not provide an intrinsic characterization: if John raised his left arm by raising it with his right arm, then to describe his action as a raising of his left arm would be, according to the standard story, to describe it in terms of one of its effects, a distinct event to which it is related, namely, his right arm's rising. Intrinsic characterizations are given by basic descriptions, those found at the end of 'by'-chains. According to the standard story, basic descriptions will always be bodily movement descriptions.³

3

The part of the standard story outlined in §2 can be found in Davidson's essay "Agency" (1971). Because one of my goals in this paper is to discuss the development

of Stoutland's philosophy of action, it is worth saying something about the relationship between Davidson and the standard story. The influence of Davidson is no doubt a significant factor in that story's becoming the standard one. But whether or not Davidson himself told a version of the standard story is something that might be disputed. Stoutland came to think that Davidson's views diverge significantly from the standard story: for instance, in his 2011 essay "Interpreting Davidson on Intentional Action," Stoutland aimed "to pry Davidson's account of action apart from the standard story and shield it from criticisms aimed at it that too often do not apply to his account but to the standard story" (2011a, 318)—among which criticisms are some that he himself had made of Davidson's account in his earlier essay "Davidson on Intentional Behavior" (1985). And those who agree with Stoutland that Davidson's account should be distinguished from the standard story might nevertheless disagree with him about the location and extent of the divergences. My concern, however, is not with a correct exegesis of Davidson but with aspects of the standard story that can be traced to "Agency." In what follows, I shall pay no special attention to the question to what extent the standard story differs from the best interpretation of this region of Davidson's thought, a matter on which I here take no stand.

4

Davidson notoriously concludes that "mere movements of the body—these are all the actions there are. We never do more than move our bodies: the rest is up to nature" (1971, 59). Though it seems that Stoutland came to see a kernel of truth in this conclusion (as we will see in §7 below, but cf. §9), over the course of his career he repeatedly objected to the idea that actions could be conceived of so that descriptions of them as "mere movements of the body" could provide intrinsic characterizations of them. A relatively early objection begins with the thought that the apparent plausibility of this idea derives from focusing on examples of agency, like the one above involving John, in which it seems straightforward to identify the agent's role in what he did (alerted a prowler, lodged a bid) with a simple bodily movement such as moving a finger or raising an arm. But if we consider an action such as Fred's driving from Minneapolis to Chicago on such-and-such an occasion, then we will struggle to identify a single bodily movement that is described in terms of some of its effects when we make reference to it by saying that Fred drove from Minneapolis to Chicago:

no matter what bodily movement terms we choose, if they let us count at all, they will count *many* bodily movements. Even if there is a bodily movement term we could cook up which would count only one bodily movement in driving to Chicago, the point is that it would be cooked up. It would not identify the bodily movement about which anyone would raise the question whether *it* is intentional under some description [i.e., whether *it* is an action]. The particular about which

we raise that question can be identified only by some such description as ‘the drive to Chicago last month’, and that is not a bodily movement description. (Stoutland 1985, 56)⁴

The objection is in the vicinity of one that Davidson imagines for himself, when he considers the possibility that some actions “involve more than a movement of the body” (1971, 51). Davidson has in mind the difficulty in separating the movement of my fingers from the movement of my shoelaces when I tie them, which he traces to the difficulty of describing how I move my fingers, apart from moving the laces. But the latter (and thus the former) he thinks a pseudo-difficulty: I tie my shoelaces by moving my body in just the way required to tie my shoelaces, “the describing trick [being] turned by describing the actions as the movements with the right effects” (1971, 51). The event of the tying of my shoelaces is the effect of my action, my moving of my fingers in just the way required to tie them. But if, as Davidson thinks, “[t]o describe an action as one that had a certain purpose or intended outcome is to describe it as an effect; to describe it as an action that had a certain outcome is to describe it as a cause” (1971, 48), then it is not clear that the bodily movement description he offers—a moving of my body in just the way required to tie my shoelaces—provides an intrinsic characterization of the action, as the standard story requires.⁵

Stoutland’s objection is not that someone’s tying of her shoelaces on an occasion is essentially shoelace-involving (and thus “involves more than a movement of the body”). As far as his objection is concerned, it may be conceded that the bodily movements together cause the distinct event of the laces’ getting tied.⁶ The objection is rather that these movements can be brought together and identified as a particular (*an* event) that stands in a causal relation to the getting tied only by an implicit appeal to a “psychological” description: “As far as action is concerned, . . . physical [i.e., bodily movement] descriptions are secondary to psychological ones. Physical descriptions do not give what action consists in; they have to be tailored to psychological descriptions, not the other way around” (Stoutland 1985, 56).

It might be possible for a defender of the standard story to respond to this objection, perhaps by appeal to a theory of event individuation.⁷ That need not concern us here, however: it will be enough to see why the standard story requires an intrinsic characterization of the action in bodily movement terms. The reason is as follows. The question the standard story aims to answer is: in virtue of what is an event an action, rather than a mere happening? Or, as it is sometimes put, when is a person the agent in some event, rather than the patient?⁸ And its answer is that “the difference lies in the causal etiology of what happens when a body moves” (Smith 2012, 387). Insofar as the standard story has reductive ambitions, it requires the possibility of identifying the elements to which action is to be reduced independently of the concept of action: if a bodily movement with a certain causal etiology constitutes an action, then the bodily movement cannot be constituted as such by its being an action.⁹

The conception of bodily movement that figures in the standard story (*the standard conception of bodily movement*), then, is that of a kind of event instances

of which have causes of different kinds—the movement of an arm the causal etiology of which involves suitable mental states and events in such a way that it qualifies as an action could be intrinsically identical with the movement of an arm that is the effect of a strong gust of wind, a nervous twitch, a spasm, or a neurophysiological intervention. Those bodily movement descriptions that provide intrinsic characterizations of actions are descriptions that are perfectly in order for characterizing what happens when someone's body moves without their moving it—when the movement of their body is something that merely happens to them, an event in which they figure only as a patient.¹⁰

Thus, though the standard story identifies actions with those bodily movements that have the right kind of causal etiology, there is no agency to be discerned in the bodily movements themselves. Nor will the causality through which actions are caused be the locus of agency, for it is “ordinary event causality, the relation, whatever it is, that holds between two events when one is the cause of the other” (Davidson 1971, 49). Those who adopt the standard conception of bodily movement and the place of that conception in a reductionist philosophy of action are therefore likely to find themselves conceiving of “the problem of agency” along the same lines as David Velleman: “[whereas] the mind-body problem is that of finding a mind at work amid the workings of the body, . . . the problem of agency is that of finding an agent at work amid the workings of the mind” (1992, 469). But, as has frequently been noted, it is difficult to see how the (appropriate) causing of bodily movements by mental states and events amounts to finding an agent at work—the play of psychic forces that is appealed to seems to be something that merely happens within her.¹¹

Philosophers have responded in various ways to this difficulty. Some have sought to show that a proper recognition and understanding of the fact that the relevant mental states are *the agent's* is enough to diffuse the worry; some have thought that supplementing the standard story's basic inventory of mental states and events will do the trick. More radical responses include conceiving of actions as bodily movements caused by agents; or indeed rejecting the idea that actions are bodily movements in favor of the claim that bodily movements are the effects of actions. I will not explore these responses here. Although there are significant differences between them, they retain the standard conception of bodily movement as a kind of event that is not intrinsically an expression of agency, and correspondingly aspire to locate the distinctively agential element in the analysis of action somewhere prior to the movement of the agent's body itself. In what follows I will focus instead on two alternatives to the standard story that reject its conception of bodily movement.

The standard story begins with the indisputable fact that when I move my body, my body moves, but my body may move without me moving my body (for instance,

when it moves as a result of a gust of wind, a nervous twitch, or a neurophysiological intervention). Reflecting on this fact, it can seem natural to suppose (as the standard story does) that what happens in each kind of case is intrinsically the same (a bodily movement), and that the cases differ only in terms of their causes—or in other words, that the concept of a bodily movement will be a common factor in accounts of physical action and of mere bodily happenings. But the supposition is not mandatory. For the indisputable fact is accommodated by a disjunctive conception of bodily movement, of which Adrian Haddock has to my mind given the clearest expression:

if Jane moves her body, then there is an event of Jane's moving her body (a physical action); and if Jane's body merely moves then there is an event of a different kind—namely an event of Jane's body's merely moving (a mere movement). . . . [W]e should not think that we can reductively explain what it is for events to be events of the kinds given by the disjunction by saying that they are both suitably caused events of a more fundamental kind—namely suitably caused events of Jane's body's moving. We can still think of them as events of Jane's body's moving; we just need to insist that the kind hereby given is not fundamental and so is not capable of playing this explanatory role. Indeed, we must insist that it is a kind that an event can belong to only if it is an event that belongs to one of two more fundamental kinds given by the disjunction—in other words, only if it is either a physical action or a mere movement. (Haddock 2005, 164)

The disjunctive conception reverses the metaphysical and conceptual priority given by the standard conception to bodily movements (the genus, as it were) over actions and mere bodily happenings (its two species). Whereas the standard conception characterizes those bodily movements that are actions as being actions in virtue of their relations to distinct items, the disjunctive conception insists that those bodily movements that are actions are actions essentially.

Though he did not describe it as such, Stoutland seemed to advance a disjunctive conception of bodily movement in his later work.¹² Indeed, while Haddock argues for the conceptual priority of the species to the genus but no priority for either species to the other, Stoutland goes further:

Even bodily movements not intentional under any description are conceptually dependent on intentional action and movement if they are the movements of fingers, hands, arms, legs, or other limbs: limbs are the parts of our body . . . whose nature is to be intentionally moved. . . . Movements that result from neurological damage or artificial stimulation are *bodily* movements only if they are the movements of limbs whose essential nature is to [be moved] intentionally but whose movements are now, because of special circumstances, intentionless. (Stoutland 2009, 330–31)¹³

Stoutland's idea is that insofar as our talk of bodily movements uses 'body' not in the old sense in which stars, tables, and atoms *are* bodies, but in the sense in which humans, dogs, cows, snakes, and so on *have* bodies, far from thinking of physical

actions as mere bodily movements plus x , we should think of mere bodily movements as physical actions minus x .¹⁴

There are a number of reasons why the disjunctive conception of bodily movement might be thought to improve on the standard conception.¹⁵ Here I will focus only on the putative advantage that Haddock identifies as “the most obvious, and the most promising” (2010, 29), namely that it “avoid[s] at least one guise of the idea that we can separate the self from the bodily presence in the world which the human animal is” (2010, 30–31). The standard story, as well as those alternatives to it that retain its conception of bodily movement, can at best seek to locate the role of the agent in the mental causes of those bodily movements that thereby amount to expressions of agency. Agency recedes inward, from the body to the mind. By contrast, if, as the disjunctive conception recommends, mindedness of the form that is taken to be constitutive of human agency can “be *in* bodily activity as opposed to behind it,” as John McDowell puts it, the resulting view will make for “a vivid contrast with a familiar picture according to which a person’s mind occupies a more or less mysterious inner realm, concealed from the view of others” (2011, 17). On this characterization of it, then, the attractiveness of the disjunctive conception lies in its promising a way of avoiding the recognizably Cartesian dualism of mind and body that the standard conception of bodily movement reinforces.¹⁶

6

It is perhaps surprising that whereas there is a lively debate around disjunctivism in the philosophy of perception, few philosophers of action have, explicitly at least, taken up the idea of a disjunctive conception of bodily movement. But perhaps this is just terminological: in the context of the recent Anscombean turn in the philosophy of action it is now by no means uncommon to find philosophers defending the claim that, as Stoutland put it, “action is *essentially* intentional” (2009, 330).¹⁷ And one might think that this idea includes the disjunctive conception of bodily movement. For if a bodily movement that is an action—someone’s raising of her arm on an occasion, say—“involves intentions [for instance, an intention to get the chair’s attention] essentially” (Hornsby 2010, 65) so that “intentional bodily behaviour is itself informed by practical rationality, not just a result of its operations” (2011, 17), then just as being intentional cannot be an “extra feature” of something that is already given as an action (Anscombe 1963, §19), so being an action cannot be an “extra feature” of something that is already given as a bodily movement.¹⁸

I want to suggest, however, that the disjunctive conception of bodily movement is afflicted by a Cartesian residue—something that an Anscombean account of action is free from. The disjunctive conception’s residual Cartesian character lies not in its conception of how mind relates to body, but in its conception of how an animal inhabits the world, something that it unreflectively takes over from the standard story.

We can get this into view by first returning to Davidson's conclusion: "mere movements of the body—these are all the actions there are. We never do more than move our bodies: the rest is up to nature" (1971, 59). The disjunctive conception of bodily movement provides for an alternative to the standard story's interpretation of this thought. And the alternative interpretation is an improvement—perhaps the best possible interpretation of the idea. Nevertheless, the idea of which it is a superior interpretation must ultimately be given up.

7

Stoutland tries to clarify the claim that "we never do more than move our bodies: the rest is up to nature" in order to defend it against a misreading:

[Davidson] did not mean that we only move our bodies. He meant that we illuminate rooms, destroy buildings, start wars, make revolutions, and so on by moving our bodies, but that whether we succeed is up to nature because it is not up to us whether moving our bodies will actually result in rooms being illuminated, wars beginning, and so on. (Stoutland 2011a, 313)

Stoutland's gloss suggests that it is up to us whether we move our bodies, whereas it is not up to us whether anything we might hope or intend to achieve by moving them happens. Now, it may be granted that unless I am, say, a head of state, then it will not be up to me if by moving my body in a certain way a war is started. But is it not up to me whether my shoelaces get tied?¹⁹ And if it is not up to me whether my shoelaces get tied when, holding them, I move my fingers so as to tie them, why can we be so sure that it is up to me whether I succeed in moving my fingers? I might fail just as much because my fingers have gone numb (and isn't it up to nature whether my fingers go numb?) as because my laces are drenched in olive oil.

Such a line of thought might incline someone to think that we never do more than *try* to move our bodies, and that the rest (including whether or not an agent's body cooperates with her attempt) is up to nature; for though one may fail to do what one tries to do (including trying to move one's body), one cannot fail to try. To draw the line between what is up to the agent and what is up to nature at the limit of her body seems to draw it too far out. And the point would appear to be reinforced by noticing a parallel lack of resolve in Davidson's treatment of causative verbs. Davidson holds generally that it is an "error . . . to confuse what my action . . . does cause—the closing of the door—with something utterly different—my action of closing the door" (1971, 56). And this would suggest that it would equally be an error to confuse the closing of my mouth with my action of closing my mouth. Davidson, however, resists this "logical continuation" (Hornsby 1980, 20) of his view, holding instead that "if I raise my arm [in the normal way], then my raising my arm and my arm rising are one and the same event" (1987, 103). But if my closing of the door and the door's closing are distinct events, the

former the cause of the latter, then why aren't my closing of my mouth and my mouth's closing (or my raising of my arm and my arm's rising) similarly distinct events, the latter the effect of the former? In the analysis of causative verbs as in the conception of what is up to us (as opposed to nature), the conviction that the boundary of the agent's body enjoys a privileged status appears unwarranted and *ad hoc*.

The claim that an agent's movements of her body—her actions—are events distinct from the movements of her body—effects of her actions—was a central element of the position defended by Jennifer Hornsby in her book *Actions* (1980), a position that figures as Haddock's foil in elucidating his disjunctive conception of bodily movement. (Hornsby's position has since changed; see §8 below.) Haddock justly complains that Hornsby's view, according to which "all actions occur inside the body" (1980, 14), pictures us as alienated from our bodies:

Our bodies are pictured as entities whose powers are wholly distinct from our powers of agency, as entities that we can (at best) only cause to move—and in this respect they are the same as any other worldly object. Jane moves her body just as she moves (say) a glass of water—by exercising her agentive powers in an act . . . that, if she is lucky, has the consequence of causing the relevant object to move. Her body is no different to the glass of water, or any other object, in this respect. (Haddock 2005, 161)

Because the disjunctive conception of bodily movement represents the actionhood of those bodily movements that are actions as intrinsic to them, it avoids the alienating pressure to interiorize agency to which the standard conception is subject. Haddock can thus insist that actions "are not things that happen inside the body, but things that happen on the body's surface" (2005, 161). Just as he denies that the concept of a bodily movement can figure as a common factor in a story about what happens when someone moves her body and a story about what happens when her body moves without her moving it, so Haddock denies that the concept of trying figures as a common factor in a story about what happens when someone tries but fails and a story about what happens when she successfully acts.²⁰ And he further claims that, with the interiorizing pressure engendered by the standard conception successfully defused, we are free to resist Hornsby's (1980) attempt to impose on us the event-causal interpretation of "If Jane raised her arm, then Jane caused her arm to rise" in favor of an interpretation on which "cause" here "merely registers the presence of a logical entailment" (Haddock 2005, 167).

As his characterization of what goes wrong with Hornsby's (1980) conception of our relation to our bodies reveals, however, Haddock has no problem with the event-causal account of what an agent "[wreaks] in the world beyond his skin," in Davidson's memorable expression (1971, 55): Jane does not move her body as she moves the glass of water, the movement of which *is* a causal consequence of her moving her body. The disjunctive conception of bodily movement constitutes a reconceptualization of the way agents relate to their bodies, but it makes no dent on the standard story's conception of the way agents relate to the world beyond

their fingertips. It aspires to vindicate the conviction that it is up to us whether we move our bodies, while conceding that it is not up to us (it is up to nature) whether we make happen what we make happen by moving our bodies.

8

The idea that actions are bodily movements dominates contemporary philosophical thought about human agency. But it has not gone unquestioned. Indeed, as Hornsby and Anton Ford have each recently emphasized, Davidson's claim that all I do is move my body, the rest being up to nature, stands in stark contrast to Anscombe's slogan "I *do* what *happens*" (1963, §29, 52).²¹ If the indisputable fallibility of the body is not enough to warrant an interiorization of what is up to us, the fallibility of extracorporeal agency surely cannot warrant its corporealization. And it is by no means obvious that resistance to the event-causal treatment of causative verbs should not be pursued beyond cases in which the verb's object is (a part of) the agent's body. If these suggestions are right, then the very maneuvers that were used to defend the claim that actions are bodily movements against the objection discussed in §7—that it is unwarranted and *ad hoc* to claim that the boundary of the agent's body enjoys a privileged status—may now be turned against the claim, in order to press the objection from the other side, as it were.²²

On the Davidsonian view, I do what happens *up to and including the surface of my body*—everything else that happens happens merely as effects of my action (as effects of those happenings that are my doings). This picture might perhaps be thought apt to characterize certain kinds of cases. If, for instance, I raise my arm (in order to attract the chair's attention), and then, once my arm is raised, the chair notices it, it is perhaps natural to think that my attracting of the chair's attention may be resolved into two more fundamental events, my raising of my arm and the chair's noticing it. After all, one of these events happened before the other, and indeed had to happen before the other could happen. And perhaps it is right to say that it was up to me whether I raised my arm, but not up to me whether I attracted the chair's attention, because the chair had to do something—notice my raised arm. But if I raise my arm in order to raise the glass I'm holding, it is hard to see how my raising of the glass might be resolved into my raising of my arm (= my arm's rising) and the glass's rising, such that the former event is distinct from and the cause of the latter. After all, they are contemporaneous. And there seems no reason to say that it is any less up to me whether I raise the glass I'm holding than whether I raise the arm with which I'm holding it.²³

In a recent paper, Hornsby advances a position like this—thus retracting her (1980) view. Whereas she then took a thoroughgoing event-causal approach, distinguishing even in the case of bodily movements between an agent's raising of her arm and her arm's rising, she now thinks that there are cases "where the event of *o* being ϕ -d . . . cannot be pried apart from the event of *a*'s ϕ -ing . . . *o*" (2011, 108)

and, indeed, that these extend beyond the body: examples include carrying, pushing, squashing, and raising external objects.²⁴ Nevertheless, Hornsby maintains that there remain cases where two events *can* be pried apart: whereas someone's closing the door might be the same event as the door's closing if she closed it by pushing it gradually all the way shut, it would be a mistake to identify her closing of the door with the door's closing if she closed it by pressing a button on a remote control (2011, 112). In Hornsby's terminology, in a door-closing of the first kind, the agent did something *non-mediately*, whereas in one of the second kind, she did something *mediately*. If someone did something non-mediately, then she did what happened, whereas if someone did something mediately, what happened was the effect of what she did.

Ford (forthcoming) goes further than Hornsby, rejecting even the restricted applicability of the event-causal picture and affirming quite generally the essential unity of transaction—the identity of action and passion, of what I do and what happens. It is not necessary to settle the dispute between them here,²⁵ however, because both pictures provide a vantage point from which to see what is wrong with the disjunctive conception of bodily movement. The disjunctive conception supports an understanding of ourselves as “at one with our bodies” and thus overcomes one dimension of alienation; but in characterizing our bodily movements as merely externally related to the objects on and with which we act and the other agents with whom we interact, it silently acquiesces in another. To see this, consider some basic cases of what Ford calls “life-sustaining transactions” (2013, 609). When an animal eats or copulates, the fundamental objects of its agency are not its own limbs, but external objects and other animals. Eating and copulating would seem to be prime candidates for things done non-mediately. As far as the disjunctive conception of bodily movement is concerned, however, all an animal does non-mediately is move its body—it moves its mouth in just the way required to eat, though whether any eating happens is up to nature. Of course, human beings are animals. If Hornsby's (1980) conception of agency left us as alienated from our bodies, the disjunctive conception of bodily movement would appear to leave us alienated from the fundamental expressions of our animality, and thus must fail, after all, to make good on its promise to acknowledge properly the kind of “bodily presence in the world which the human animal is” (Haddock 2010, 30–31).

The standard conception of bodily movement portrays those bodily movements that are actions as events sandwiched between the mental causes in virtue of which they count as actions at all and the worldly effects in virtue of which they may be redescribed as our having raised glasses, eaten cakes, squeezed oranges, tied shoelaces, and so on. The disjunctive conception of bodily movement proposes to erase the boundary between the bodily movement and the mental states in virtue of which it is an action: those bodily movements that are actions are actions essentially, they involve intentions essentially. The idea of doing something non-mediately, or of an action's being essentially a transaction, erases the boundary between those bodily movements that are actions and their effects: I do what

happens.²⁶ One may erase either boundary without erasing the other, of course, but what is indicated by the preceding discussion is that a satisfactory position requires erasing both.²⁷

9

Stoutland seems to have been moving toward such a position. Recall that he had criticized the standard story on the grounds that the bodily movements that occurred when he drove from Minneapolis to Chicago could be gerrymandered together as a single event—one that could have as an effect his having driven to Chicago—only by appeal to psychological descriptions of his action. His objection was not to the idea that all actions are movements of the body, the rest being up to nature. It was to the idea that the movements of the body with which all actions were to be identified could be individuated in such a way that it could be an open question whether they were actions. Perhaps Stoutland would have had no quarrel with saying that he drove to Chicago by moving his head, arms, hands, legs, and feet in such-and-such ways at such-and-such times. The several movements thus made could be described in such a way that it could be an open question whether they were actions. But they could be treated as a single bodily movement, as required by the event-causal treatment of the rest's being up to nature, only by (in effect) presupposing that *it* was an action. We might say that the single bodily movement, gerrymandered as it might be, was essentially intentional, whereas the bodily movements it comprised were not.

Stoutland made a similar sort of criticism in the later paper, “Determinism, Intentional Action, and Bodily Movements” (2009). He again objected to the standard story's focus on cases of action in which basic descriptions in bodily movement terms such as ‘raising one's arm’ or ‘moving one's leg’ are available. He complained that though what happens in such a case—someone's leg's moving, say—“sounds like a mere bodily movement as described in neurophysiology” and only thereby so much as becomes a candidate for being taken to differ “from a knee jerk or a cramp only its cause,” nevertheless “many other primitive action descriptions are not like this” (2009, 324):

“S walked, jumped, pushed, skipped, scampered, chewed, climbed, spoke, typed, sat down, wrestled, wrote, smiled, laughed, wept, lifted, threw, pulled, kicked, strolled, scratched, bent, hit.” These describe an agent intentionally moving her body and hence entail descriptions of her body's intentionally moving: “S walked” entails that her legs intentionally moved so that she walked . . . , “S intentionally chewed” entails that her jaw intentionally moved up and down, “S typed” entails that her fingers intentionally moved as typists' do. These are not, however, . . . bodily movement descriptions suitable for neurophysiology but . . . descriptions conceptually dependent on—unintelligible apart from—primitive action descriptions. (Stoutland 2009, 324)

One might well object to Stoutland's mode of expression here, and insist that if S walked, then it is not that her legs intentionally moved so that she walked, but rather that she intentionally moved her legs so that she walked. However, if S intentionally moved her legs so that she walked, then presumably she walked by intentionally moving her legs in that way. Yet Stoutland here offers "S walked" as a primitive or basic description of S's action, so he presumably takes it that S did not walk by doing anything else.²⁸ Rather, he is interested in what sorts of characterization of what happens (for instance, *her legs moved in particular ways*) are entailed by basic descriptions of actions (for instance, *S walked*). The "intentionally" in "her legs intentionally moved so that she walked," then, is supposed to indicate that the leg movements that occur when someone walks consist of legs moving in just the way they do when an agent intentionally moves them in walking.

Whether or not the position Stoutland advanced here constitutes a deeper disagreement with the standard story than his earlier discussion, it is noteworthy that he continues in a footnote as follows:

Moreover, many [primitive action descriptions] are more than bodily movement descriptions in that they entail features of the environment beyond the agent's skin. Walking or running entails a surface on which to walk or run . . . , jumping requires a base from which to jump, climbing requires something to climb, swimming entails a liquid in which to swim, and so on. (Stoutland 2009, 336 n. 25)

On the one hand, Stoutland recognized that (*pace* Davidson and the standard story) some primitive action descriptions describe "more than a movement of the body" (Davidson 1971, 51); on the other hand, this recognition is relegated to a footnote and would thus seem to be regarded as inessential for bringing out what is wrong with the standard story's construal of "the ontology of action . . . [as] essentially the ontology of neurophysiology" (Stoutland 2009, 323). Stoutland's focus at this juncture remained on the question of how to understand the relationship between the mental and the physical, while the idea that there might be something amiss in the standard story's conception of the physical is kept off stage. And this is symptomatic of the fact that the Cartesian *problematic* continued to exert a dialectical influence on Stoutland's conception of human agency even as he rejected a dualistic account of the mental and the physical in favor of a disjunctive one.²⁹

The decisive shift in Stoutland's thinking seems to have taken place through a reconsideration of Anscombe's work. In his late paper, "Anscombe's *Intention in Context*," Stoutland presented "a contrast between two different pictures of how we are related to our world" (2011b, 18). In what he called the Davidsonian picture,

the fundamental relations human beings as such—as knowing the world and acting intentionally in it—have to the world are causal. . . . Our acting in the world is . . . indirect. We act when our beliefs and desires cause bodily movements that cause events outside our body. . . . Whatever we do in the world is the causal result of moving our bodies and limbs, and hence we might intentionally move them without intentionally doing anything in the world beyond our bodies. (Stoutland 2011b, 19)

By contrast, in what he called the Anscombean picture, action is “direct”:

To act is not to have one’s bodily movements caused by one’s beliefs and desires; it is to exercise the power to move one’s body directly and intentionally. Further, to exercise that power is not primarily to *cause* events outside one’s body; it is to perform actions that extend beyond one’s body and its movements. Walking, running, eating, drinking, pounding, skiing, greeting, writing—ordinary bodily activities all—do not consist of bodily movements plus events they cause; they *are* our moving our bodies in ways that extend beyond them. We can run or walk only on a surface, that is, only in a world outside ourselves that also acts on us. We can eat or drink only by eating or drinking something that is edible or drinkable. To use a hammer is not to cause it to move, and to ski is not to cause skis to move: those are extended bodily movements. All these bodily activities require that the bodily movements occur as constituents of a structured activity that is more than the sum of the movements. (Stoutland 2011b, 19)³⁰

The disjunctive conception of bodily movement corrects for the first kind of indirectness in the Davidsonian picture of how we are related to the world in agency, that which results from conceiving of bodily movements as actions in virtue of their being caused by distinct items (beliefs and desires)—the agent is directly in touch with her mental states, only indirectly in touch with the bodily movements that are their causally-downstream effects. But it does not correct for the indirectness that characterizes the Davidsonian picture’s conception of what we do in the world beyond moving our bodies. The Anscombean picture, with which Stoutland’s sympathies in this paper clearly lie, corrects for both, by deleting both the boundaries identified at the end of the previous section.

Notably, Stoutland traced the roots of the Davidsonian picture to the Cartesian revolution. He had long been aware of and sympathetic to Davidson’s rejection of a Cartesian conception of the mental and its relation to the physical. But Stoutland ascribed the defects of the Davidsonian picture to the fact (as he saw it) that “[Davidson] was, nevertheless, a Cartesian about the essential nature of the physical world” (2011b, 20). By this he meant that in the Davidsonian picture, the world to which human beings are related is so conceived that what happens in it can be understood in terms of a causal sequence of physical, mechanical events (“the event-causal order,” as it often is called). Because of this, no matter how subtle a story might be told about the causal explanation of those bodily movements that are actions by beliefs and desires, insofar as such a story retains an event-causal conception of the relationship between what I do and what happens beyond my skin, it must still fail to do justice to the nature of our “ordinary bodily activities.”³¹

One might agree that the conception of extracorporeal agency that is common to both the standard and disjunctive conceptions of bodily movement fails to do

justice to the nature of our ordinary bodily activities—and yet wonder whether the conception of it defended by Hornsby and Ford, and found by Stoutland in the Anscombean picture, does any better on that score. Consider a remark made by Arthur Danto: “If someone could raise a hat as one of his basic actions, the hat would be his in a philosophical, rather than a legal sense: it would be part of him” (1963, 445). The thought is that no one can “just” raise a hat as he can (assuming he is not paralyzed, etc.) “just” raise his arm. But in the Anscombean picture, I do what happens, whether what happens is my arm’s rising or the hat’s rising. As Stoutland put it, action is “direct,” and raising a hat is not to be decomposed into “bodily movements plus events they cause.” Raising the hat that I’m holding will be a case of doing something non-mediately. So, however, will be raising my left arm with my right. What, then, of “just” raising my right arm? Presumably one cannot do anything less mediately than by doing it non-mediately. Yet there is surely a difference between, on the one hand, raising one arm with the other, or raising a hat, and, on the other hand, raising an arm *simpliciter*.³²

Indeed, it seems to me that part of what motivates those who claim that actions are bodily movements to emphasize the significance of bodily movement is a recognition of, and insistence on, the essential animality of the human. (What other reason could there be for insisting that when someone raises a glass, there are two events—her arm’s rising and the glass’s rising—that stand in an event-causal relation?) Hornsby might be right that Davidson took “ad hoc measures” (2011, 113) in an attempt to respect this; and, as we have seen, an event-causal conception of extracorporeal agency in any case undermines the attempt, securing the difference between raising an arm in the normal way from raising one arm with the other at the cost of conceiving of ourselves as essentially alienated from the products of our bodily labor. But if the alienation-avoiding alternative incurs its own cost, of assimilating the two kinds of arm movements, then we seem to be faced with a choice between different but equally unappealing options. We might say that the former picture fails to characterize the kind of bodily presence *in the world* that the human animal is, whereas the latter fails to characterize the kind of *bodily presence* in the world that it is.

My aim in what remains of this paper is to show how the distinctiveness and significance of bodily movement can yet be articulated within what Stoutland called the Anscombean picture—or, in other words, to vindicate what we might call “the truth of corporealism” in the context of a rejection of an event-causal conception of extracorporeal agency.

It will be useful to begin by setting aside some of the ways in which the distinctiveness of bodily movement cannot be made out. As we saw in §§7–8, the seeming appeal of the thought that a distinction between what is “up to us” and what is

(not up to us but) “up to nature” can do the work underestimates both our power to control external objects and our liability to bodily recalcitrance. Similarly unpromising would be a distinction between “direct” and “indirect” action: though a raising of my left arm with my right might be characterized as indirect relative to the raising of my right arm, doffing my hat with my hand might equally be characterized as raising my hat directly when contrasted with pressing a button on a remote control that activated a mechanism so that a robotic claw lifted my hat off my head. The idea that there is a special kind of directness that is exemplified by raising one’s arm in the normal way and that is not exemplified by raising one’s hat in the normal way is nothing other than an expression of a commitment to the idea we are trying to elucidate.

Nor does it seem that we can get at the difference between raising an arm and raising a hat by reflecting on the use of “by”—“I raised my hat by raising my arm.” One way that sentences of the form “S ϕ -d by ψ -ing” are used in the context of intentional action is to articulate the means-end structure of the agent’s practical thought. But as has often been pointed out, an agent may have no thought of the form “I can ϕ by moving my body in such-and-such ways.”³³ The example of tying shoelaces is a case in point. Suppose that someone knows how to tie her shoelaces, but cannot give a specification of how she moves her body in tying them. Let “ ψ ” supply the content of a bodily movement description of how she moves her body in tying shoelaces. On the interpretation of “by” that singles out the structure of her practical thought, it will not be right to say that she ties her shoelaces by ψ -ing—the thoughts “I’m tying my shoelaces by ψ -ing” or “I can tie my shoelaces by ψ -ing” do not articulate the structure of her practical knowledge of what she’s doing when she’s tying her shoelaces here and now or the structure of her general practical knowledge how to tie her shoelaces. Indeed, she might acquire knowledge that “ ψ ” supplies the content of a true description of how she moves her body when she ties her shoelaces. (This might well be news to her. It would not have been news, of course, to be told that she ties her shoelaces by moving her fingers; but to know that one can tie one’s shoelaces by moving one’s fingers is hardly to have practicable knowledge, knowledge that could articulate the means-end structure of one’s practical thought. To have that, one would need to know *in what ways* to move them.) If anything, however, it seems that acquiring this knowledge would put her in a position to set out to ψ by tying her shoelaces: for instance, she is asked to ψ , and reasons that seeing as she ψ -s when she ties her shoelaces, she should tie her shoelaces—something she knows how to do without having to cast around for means to doing it. In the sense of “by” that isolates the means-end structure of practical thought, she would in this case be ψ -ing by tying her shoelaces. If we still want to say that there is a sense in which I raised my hat by raising my arm, or that she tied her shoelaces by moving her fingers in such-and-such ways, then we need to articulate a different sense for “by” to bear in such contexts.

Progress may be made if we recall the questions that inspire the standard story: in virtue of what is an event an action, rather than a mere happening? When

is a person the agent in some event, rather than the patient? And now consider the case in which I have raised my left arm by lifting it with my right arm. Was my left arm's rising an action, or something that merely happened to me? Was I the agent or the patient? The right answer, it seems to me, is *both*: I acted on myself. Considered from the perspective of my left arm, as it were, its rising is something that happened to me (or better, happened to it), though considered, again as it were, from the perspective of my right arm it is an action of mine. I was the agent, my left arm the patient. Now, although I raised my left arm by raising my right arm, it would be a mistake to think of my raising of my right arm in such a way that my right arm is construed as the patient. My left arm figures for me as something "other" when I raise it with my right, but if I think of my right arm as something other, I will shortly find myself vanishing—receding inward, where I am no longer "at one with" my body. As Ford puts it, "If a human agent is embodied, she does not stand to her body as other. . . . So her body is not a patient in relation to which she is an agent: [in cases of normal bodily movement,] she does not transact with it, as she might with an external object" (forthcoming).

It might be tempting to think that if, when I raised my left arm with my right, I was the agent and my left arm was the patient, then my right arm was the *instrument*, that *with which* I raised my left arm. But this temptation should be avoided. I will no less vanish if I think of my limbs as instruments I use than if I think of them as objects on which I act. I can, of course, use part of my body as an instrument, just as I can act on part of my body as a patient. The problems arise only if moving my body in the normal way is equated with either of these.³⁴

Thus, that "I raised the glass" and "I raised my arm" share the same surface grammar is misleading; better would be "I right-arm-raised the glass" ("I right-arm-raised my left arm") and "I right-arm-raised nothing"—or perhaps simply "I right-arm-raised." When we say that someone raised her hat by raising her right arm or that she tied her shoelaces by moving her fingers, we isolate a bodily movement neither to give the fundamental specification of what she "really" did (the rest being a mere consequence, a gift of fate), nor to identify her fundamental conception of her ultimate means, but rather to specify the dimension of her agency that was operative in her doing what she did (raised her hat, tied her shoelaces). We say which of her powers was in act: it was a finger-tying (not a toe- or tooth-tying) of her shoelaces; it was a right-arm raising (not a left-leg raising nor a head-jerk raising) of her hat. Because human beings do not have the power of telekinesis, our acting in the world of external objects requires us to actualize our bodily agentive powers. Even when I use some part of my body as an instrument, or act on some part of it, there is a part of it through which I am active in the ordinary way. This is the sense in which bodily movement is fundamental to human agency.

It is therefore important to distinguish between two things that those who have spoken of basic action are interested in. On the one hand, there is the thought that in acting intentionally, an agent relies on knowledge of the form 'I can ϕ by ψ -ing', but that there must be some other way in which one can know how to do something on pain of regress. One might know that one can ϕ by moving one's

body in such-and-such ways, but one might not—and even if one does know, one might still not *use* the knowledge when one moves one's body in those ways and thereby ϕ -s. On the other hand, there is the thought that human agents are animals, and that their fundamental contribution to what they do consists in moving their bodies—or better, that their fundamental contribution to the transactions in which they are agents consists in body-moving. It is often simply assumed that these two lines of thought converge on bodily movement (cf. the quotation at the beginning of §2 from Smith [2012]), but, as the example of the shoelace-tie's knowledge shows, this is simply a mistake.³⁵

If we want to follow Stoutland in saying that those “ordinary bodily activities . . . [that] *are* our moving our bodies in ways that extend beyond them . . . require that the bodily movements occur as constituents of a structured activity that is more than the sum of the movements” (2011b, 19), we must be careful not to fall into confusion by mistaking the kind of constituents in ordinary bodily activities bodily movements are. Not only are they not the constituents that an event-causal approach would identify, they are also not teleologically articulated constituents either: the sense in which raising my arm is a part of raising my glass is evidently not the same as that in which breaking eggs is part of making an omelette.³⁶

12

The development of the dimension of Stoutland's philosophy of action on which I have focused may be seen as a series of increasingly sophisticated attempts to overcome pernicious aspects of the legacy of Cartesian dualism, which are not restricted to constraints placed on how we might think of mind and body as interacting, but encompass how we think of natural processes quite generally. In my view, Stoutland was right to think that Anscombe's approach to agency is free of the various forms of Cartesian residue that nevertheless afflict such more-or-less self-consciously anti-Cartesian philosophers of action as Davidson and Haddock. But it is a mark of how difficult it is to shake off the Cartesian legacy that it may remain tempting to conceive of ordinary bodily movements as cases in which the agent's body is an object on which she acts—an object she moves, something other than her. If this temptation can be avoided, the distinctiveness and significance of moving one's body in the normal ways can be acknowledged in a framework that rejects an event-causal conception of extracorporeal agency and thus its alienating consequences.

NOTES

1. This is often called the Anscombe-Davidson approach to action-individuation. For an expression of doubt as to whether there really is a single account of action-individuation to which Anscombe and Davidson both subscribed, see Hornsby (2011).

2. The 'by'-locution cannot always be construed according to the event-causal interpretation: consider the case in which John scored a goal by heading the ball into the net, or that in which he ate some vegetables by eating some spinach. Those who tell the standard story will nevertheless insist that the event-causal use of the 'by'-locution is fundamental. This might still be questioned—see the important discussion of causal dependence in Lavin (2013).
3. The standard story is sometimes criticized on the grounds that there may be actions where there are no bodily movements—e.g., she ruined the show by staying in her dressing room (see, for instance, Hornsby [2004]). Defenders of the standard story respond by following Davidson in construing the concept of bodily movement with a "generosity [that] must be openhanded enough to encompass such 'movements' as standing fast" (1971, 49); thus Smith: "any way in which an agent might orient his body counts as a bodily movement for the purposes of the standard story" (2012, 389). I am not in a position to evaluate either the criticism or the response here.
4. Cf. Stoutland (2008, 548).
5. A defender of the standard story might think that Davidson's description does provide an intrinsic characterization of the action, and that that can be seen by imagining a case in which someone puts on her shoe with no intention to tie her laces, then goes onto autopilot and begins unintentionally tying them, but at the last split-second of the moving-her-body-in-just-the-way-required-to-tye-them the laces break or dissolve, so that she moved her body in just the way required to tie the laces but she didn't tie the laces nor did she move her body in that way because she wanted or intended to tie them. Even so, our confidence that she made a single unified bodily movement rather than a mere heap of micromovements depends on our conviction that she knows how to tie shoelaces, and that her capacity to do so has been actualized (albeit in a nonstandard way); thus it would appear that describing what she did in terms of a single bodily movement involves implicitly relying on (what are by the standard story's lights) the characteristic causes and effects of movements of the kind it is taken to exemplify. Whether or not this is consistent with the standard story's reductive aspirations is a subtle question that cannot be settled here.
6. I will return to this concession in §8 below.
7. It is notable, though, that those who tell the standard story seem not to suppose that its plausibility depends on any particular such theory.
8. Compare the questions with which Davidson begins "Agency": "What events in the life of a person reveal agency; what are his deeds and doings in contrast to mere happenings in his history; what is the mark that distinguishes his actions?" (1971, 43); and those that move Smith: "What makes it the case that in (say) moving his finger, an agent acts, as opposed to merely being involved in something's happening? Equivalently, when an agent moves his finger, what makes it the case that he is an agent, as opposed to being a patient?" (2012, 387).
9. Thanks to Jessica Pepp for helpful discussion of this issue.
10. Cf. Wayne A. Davis: "If you move your leg, your leg has to move. But your leg can move without your moving your leg. What else is required for you to move your leg?" (2010, 32).
11. Though Velleman thinks that the standard story leaves the agent out, he does think it possible to "locate a system of mental events and states that perform the functional role definitive of an agent" (1992, 476): namely, a desire to act in accordance with reasons. I cannot evaluate this proposal here. It is worth noting, however, that Velleman's problem with the standard story is that it "tells us, not what happens when someone acts, but what happens when someone acts halfheartedly, or unwittingly, or in some equally defective way. What it describes is not a human action *par excellence*" (1992, 462). But a halfhearted action is still an action, and a halfhearted agent is still an agent—albeit one that is perhaps not very hard at work. By contrast, Hornsby (2004) argues that the standard story fails to depict agency—halfhearted or otherwise—at all.
12. One might already see the seeds of a disjunctive account in Stoutland (1985, 57–58).
13. Stoutland characterized the "mistaken approach" of the standard story in the following terms: "Whether [bodily movements] are so caused [sc. (in the right way) by an agent's beliefs and desires] and hence constitute an action, or are not so caused and have only a neurophysiological explanation, they are essentially mere bodily movements" (2009, 323–24).
14. Only given a constricted conception of possible values for x will these equations appear the same.
15. For useful discussion, see Haddock (2010).

16. Cf. McDowell (1996, 89–91).
17. Cf. Stoutland (2011b, 16): “[T]he mental states in virtue of which bodily movements are intentional are inherent in the structure of what it is to move one’s body intentionally and not external to the movements. Neurophysiological investigation of an agent’s bodily movements do not, therefore, investigate the physical part of her intentional movements—intentional movements do not have such parts—but abstract their purely physical aspect and develop an account of that alone.”
18. For important discussion of this idea, and its place in Anscombe’s thought, see Ford (2011); Ford (ms.b).
19. Cf. Anscombe: “People sometimes say that one can get one’s arm to move by an act of will but not a matchbox; but if they mean ‘Will a matchbox to move and it won’t, the answer is ‘If I will my arm to move in that way, it won’t’, and if they mean ‘I can move my arm but not the matchbox’ the answer is that I can move the matchbox—nothing easier” (1963, §29, 52).
20. Perhaps surprisingly, Haddock does not offer a disjunctive conception of trying, but rather suggests that cases where someone “tries to move her body and succeeds in doing so . . . are few and far between” (2005, 165).
21. See Hornsby (2011); Ford (2013); Ford (forthcoming); Ford (ms.a). Hornsby and Ford each rely on aspects of Anscombe (1971) in arriving at their interpretations of Anscombe’s slogan and the way in which the picture it identifies differs from Davidson’s.
22. For a sophisticated discussion of a larger dialectic only part of which is exemplified here, see Ford (ms.a).
23. Imagine an auction where lodging a bid requires raising a paddle and having the auctioneer notice it. However natural it may be to suppose that Jane’s lodging of a bid resolves into her raising of her paddle and the auctioneer’s noticing of it, the latter causally dependent on the former, it is far from obvious that her raising of the paddle resolves into her raising of her arm (= its rising) and the paddle’s going up. The point here does not rely on a claim that causality cannot be at work between events that are taking place contemporaneously. It is enough to point out that the only reason in the vicinity, or so it would appear, for supposing that the arm rising and the paddle rising are distinct events, the one the cause of the other, is an antecedent commitment to the idea that actions are bodily movements (see §10 below for further discussion).
24. Thus despite her own change in view, Hornsby still maintains that Davidson’s position is *ad hoc*: “Raising an arm is not a special case [as Davidson thought], because an identity of the sort in question [between the raising and the rising] obtains whenever something is done non-mediately” (2011, 114). Cf. §10 below.
25. Ford’s (forthcoming) discussion of what he calls “The Problem of Imperfective Transaction” raises an important difficulty for the very idea of a causal relation, on which any event-causal conception of a transaction, including Hornsby’s *doing something mediately*, depends.
26. More carefully, the idea of doing something non-mediately (by contrast with doing something mediately) erases the boundary between those bodily movements that are actions and some of their more immediate effects. Whether some boundary should be drawn between an action and its effects, and if so, where and on what principle, are issues that lie beyond the scope of this paper (see Ford [2014] for discussion). The point here is simply that to properly acknowledge the way in which human agents are present in the world requires extending the fundamental scope of agency beyond that of bodily movements.
27. The disjunctive conception of bodily movement aims to overcome the temptation to think that the distinguishing marks of distinctively human agency lie *behind* the bodily movements that are its characteristic worldly expression. But from the vantage point reached, we can see that this temptation may take different shapes depending on the conception of bodily movement that figures in it. We might contrast two dualistic pictures, both of which a proper understanding of human agency ought to resist. One involves a dualism of the physical and the mental, the other a dualism of the animal and the rational. The disjunctive conception of bodily movement is a response to the former dualism, according to which agency finds its worldly expression in a kind of physical event, *bodily movement*, instances of which differ essentially only in their causes (belief-desire pairs, spasms, gusts of wind, neurophysiological interventions), with the upshot that what makes action action is nothing intrinsic to what happens in the world outside the agent’s mind. The dualism of

the animal and the rational is subtly but importantly different. The picture of human agency that it generates is characterized by McDowell as follows: “movings of limbs that are intentional are, in themselves, just what movings of limbs are in an ordinary animal, and the intentional character is extra to—it is natural to say ‘behind’—those goings-on, which in themselves have no more to do with rationality than bodily movements on the part of non-rational animals” (2011, 17). Whereas the dualism of the physical and the mental engenders a conception of human agency as factoring into a physical component that is intrinsically a mere happening but is constituted as an action by appropriate mental causal antecedents, the dualism of the animal and the rational engenders a conception of human agency that factors into what is intrinsically a merely animal action that is constituted as a human action by having among its mental causal antecedents operations of (practical) rationality. The worldly component of the latter dualism is not just a mechanical event that is intrinsically a mere happening, but rather something that is already an action, albeit a merely animal one. And thus what is pictured as lying behind such events, constituting them as expressions of distinctively human agency, has different work to do in each case. The closer one gets to the Cartesian conception of nonhuman animals as mere automata, and thus of their limb movements as merely mechanical events, the more the two dualisms coincide. But if one thinks that the metaphysically and conceptually prior occurrence of “the movings of limbs in an ordinary animal” resides in such behavior as eating, copulating, stalking, hunting, and so on, then an ecological or ethological approach to animal action, one oriented toward the animal’s transactions with its environment and other animals, will seem to be in order; and one will want to hold the dualisms further apart. (On dualistic [“additive”] and disjunctive [“transformative”] conceptions of animal and rational powers and their acts, see Boyle [2012]; Boyle [forthcoming].)

28. In a footnote to his introduction of the idea of a primitive action description, Stoutland wrote that “The description ‘Jacob walked’ does not describe his action either in terms of what resulted in it or what it resulted in” (2009, 336, n. 22).
29. Cf. n. 27 above.
30. In characterizing the difference between the two pictures in terms of causality, Stoutland is evidently working with the conception of causality that belongs to the Davidsonian picture, and denying that that conception has a place in the Anscombian picture. Once we see that the Davidsonian conception of causality is not mandatory, we can acknowledge that there is no need to deny that when one uses a hammer one causes it to move, though there is every reason to deny that one’s using of a hammer decomposes into two distinct events, a bodily movement and a hammer movement, such that the latter is the effect of the former. Rather than presenting it as if the difference between the two pictures of how we are related to our world lies in that in one picture we are causally related to our world whereas in the other we are not, Stoutland’s point is surely more perspicuously made in terms of a contrast between two different conceptions of causality’s being at work in our presence in the world. See Jennifer Hornsby’s paper, “A Contrast between Two Pictures: The Case of Perception,” in this volume for further discussion of this idea.
31. In a footnote, Stoutland acknowledged that his discussion of Davidson in “Interpreting Davidson on Action” (2011a) was “more sympathetic” than that in “Anscombe’s *Intention* in Context” (2011b) “partly because [he] stress[ed] different aspects of [Davidson’s] work, and partly because [he had] changed [his] mind on crucial issues as a result of writing [the latter]” (2011b, 12, n. 21). It is perhaps notable that though Stoutland had long insisted on the significance of the distinction between causation and causal explanation for making plausible Davidson’s conception of the sense in which “reasons are causes,” his description of the Davidsonian picture is one in which beliefs and desires are said not to *causally explain* bodily movements, but to *cause* them, and for that reason (so it would seem) the relation of an agent to her intentional bodily movements is said to be indirect. Whether or not Stoutland needed to take back, as he seemed to, his prior interpretation of this aspect of Davidson’s picture, his recognition of the inadequacy of its characterization of our power to change the world beyond the surface of our skins as indirect surely constitutes a crucial change of mind.
32. Hornsby suggests that cases in which someone moves part of his body “indirectly” are “cases of someone’s moving a part of his body mediately” (2011, 113, n. 11). She is thinking of a case in which someone raises his paralyzed left arm by using his right arm to pull on a pulley. Even if the idea of doing something mediately has application to that case, it evidently does not have application to all cases in which we might want to say—and yet it is not clear that the Anscombean

conception of agency that Hornsby and Stoutland are working with will allow us to say—that we move our bodies indirectly.

33. See e.g. Anscombe (1963, §30); Hornsby (1980, ch. 6).
34. Some feel a converse temptation, to suppose that insofar as the acquisition of skills may involve the instruments with which one acts becoming “transparent”—such that one thinks neither of one’s fingers *nor of the piano keys* but simply of the notes themselves, for example—the instruments become “parts of” the agent. This temptation too should be resisted. (The phenomenological point that gives rise to it must be accommodated in another way.) Instruments are instruments; they are used. Indeed, the pervasiveness of instruments in human agency strikes me as something that, quite generally, requires far more attention than it has received in philosophy of action.
35. Hornsby’s (1980) distinction between *causally basic* and *teleologically basic* keeps the two topics separate, but clearly the notion of *causally basic* will not yield a proper understanding of the fundamental contribution that a human being makes to what she does.
36. On the teleological part-whole structure of intentional action, see Thompson (2008, part 2).

REFERENCES

- Anscombe, G. E. M. 1963. *Intention*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- . 1971. “Causality and Determination.” Reprinted in her *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind: Collected Philosophical Papers Volume II*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981.
- Boyle, Matthew. 2012. “Essentially Rational Animals.” In *Rethinking Epistemology Volume 2*, edited by Günter Abel and James Conant, 395–427. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . forthcoming. “Additive Theories of Rationality: A Critique.” *European Journal of Philosophy*.
- Danto, Arthur. 1963. “What We Can Do.” *Journal of Philosophy* 60 (15): 435–45.
- Davidson, Donald. 1971. “Agency.” Cited as reprinted in his *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- . 1987. “Problems in the Explanation of Action.” Cited as reprinted in his *Problems of Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Davis, Wayne A. 2010. “The Causal Theory of Action.” In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, edited by Timothy O’Connor and Constantine Sandis, 32–39. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ford, Anton. 2011. “Action and Generality.” In *Essays on Anscombe’s Intention*, edited by Anton Ford, Jennifer Hornsby, and Frederick Stoutland, 76–104. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 2013. “Is Agency a Power of Self-Movement?” *Inquiry* 56 (6): 597–610.
- . forthcoming. “Action and Passion.” *Philosophical Topics The Second Person: Comparative Perspectives*.
- . ms.a. “The Province of Human Agency.”
- . ms.b. “The Arithmetic of Intention.”
- Haddock, Adrian. 2005. “At One with Our Actions, but at Two with Our Bodies.” *Philosophical Explorations* 8 (2): 157–72.
- . 2010. “Bodily Movements.” In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, edited by Timothy O’Connor and Constantine Sandis, 26–31. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hornsby, Jennifer. 1980. *Actions*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- . 2004. “Agency and Actions.” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 55: 1–23.
- . 2010. “The Standard Story of Action: An Exchange (2).” In *Causing Human Actions: New Perspectives on the Causal Theory of Action*, edited by Jesús H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, 57–68. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 2011. “Actions in Their Circumstances.” In *Essays on Anscombe’s Intention*, edited by Anton Ford, Jennifer Hornsby, and Frederick Stoutland, 105–27. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lavin, Douglas. 2013. “Must There Be Basic Action?” *Noûs* 47 (2): 273–301.
- McDowell, John. 1996. *Mind and World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 2011. “Some Remarks on Intention in Action.” *The Amherst Lecture in Philosophy* 6: 1–18.

- Smith, Michael. 2012. "Four Objections to the Standard Story of Action (and Four Replies)." *Philosophical Issues* 22 (1): 387–401.
- Stoutland, Frederick. 1985. "Davidson on Intentional Behavior." In *Actions and Events: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, 44–59. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 2008. "The Ontology of Social Agency." *Analyse & Kritik* 30 (2).
- . 2009. "Determinism, Intentional Action, and Bodily Movements." In *New Essays on the Explanation of Action*, edited by Constantine Sandis, 313–37. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2011a. "Interpreting Davidson on Intentional Action." In *Dialogues with Davidson: Acting, Interpreting, Understanding*, edited by Jeff Malpas, 297–324. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 2011b. "Anscombe's Intention in Context." In *Essays on Anscombe's Intention*, edited by Anton Ford, Jennifer Hornsby, and Frederick Stoutland, 1–22. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Thompson, Michael. 2008. *Life and Action: Elementary Structures of Practice and Practical Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Velleman, J. David. 1992. "What Happens When Someone Acts?" *Mind* 101 (403): 461–81.