IS THE KNOWLEDGE A MAN HAS OF WHAT HE IS INTENTIONALLY DOING NECESSARILY NON-OBSERVATIONAL?

By

Huaming Xu

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Supervisor: Professor Ferenc Huoranszki

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Abstract

According to G. E. M. Anscombe, a person who is intentionally up to something must always know without observation what he is up to. In this thesis, I provide a critique of Anscombe's claim. I argue that observation on the part of an agent can play a justificatory role in the agent's acquisition of the knowledge about what he is intentionally up to: if we are intentionally changing the public world we would need observation to keep our actions on track, and thus observational reasons are needed to warrant our judgements as to what we are intentionally doing. But the practicality of the knowledge an agent has of what he is intentionally doing—i.e., the knowledge's being the cause of its object—seems to entail the unqualified non-observational character Anscombe imputes to such knowledge. I show that the entailment does not hold, for the reason that our capacity for agent's knowledge of intentional action is fallible.

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Introduction

According to one tradition, knowledge is always a matter of passively representing how things are in the mind-independent world (in some appropriate sense of mind-independence). By contrast, the expression "practical knowledge" is meant to denote a kind of knowledge that involves our active practice of changing the world and represents the way things are to be changed. Thus, the concept of practical knowledge entails an opposite "direction of fit" from the traditional conception of knowledge, according to which the concept of practical knowledge appears to be incongruous: no representation can ever be both practical and a bit of knowledge.

In opposition to this traditional conception of knowledge, G. E. M. Anscombe defends in *Intention* (hereafter, *I*) the view that practical knowledge is a distinctive form of knowledge. In particular, she argues for the following three claims about the knowledge an agent has of what he is intentionally doing (or agent's knowledge of intentional action, as I will call it throughout my thesis). First, she argues for the claim that **(*C1*)** if an agent is intentionally acting in a specified way, the agent *knows* that he is doing it (e.g. *I*, 50-51). Second, Anscombe maintains that **(*C2*)** an intentional action is known by its subject *without observation* (e.g. *I*, 14). Third, according to Anscombe, **(*C3*)** agent's knowledge of intentional action is *practical* to the extent

that it is "the cause of what it understands", as opposed to speculative knowledge which is "derived from the objects known" (*I*, 87).[1]

In this thesis, I argue against Anscombe that observation on the part of an agent can play a justificatory role in the agent's acquisition of the knowledge about what he is intentionally doing. My argument proceeds as follows. In the first chapter, I provide a critique of claims **(*C1*)** and **(*C2*)**, arguing that not all intentional actions are known independently of observation by their agents: insofar as we are intentionally changing the external world, observation is called for to keep our actions on course, which allows a justificatory role of observation in our knowing what we are intentionally doing. However, the practicality of agent's knowledge of intentional action—i.e., the knowledge's being the cause of its object—seems to entail the unqualified non-observational character of such knowledge. So in the second chapter, I address the question of whether such an entailment holds and argue for a negative answer to it.

[1] Following ancient and medieval philosophers, Anscombe labels the traditional conception of knowledge as the speculative (or contemplative) conception of knowledge (*I*, 57).

Chapter 1: Agent's Knowledge of Intentional Action and Observation

In this chapter, I will critically explore the unqualified non-observational character Anscombe ascribes to agent's knowledge of intentional action: i.e., a person who is intentionally doing something must always know without observation what he is doing. The first section will be devoted to (1) a presentation of the key passages of *I* where Anscombe relates the intentional character of an action to the way through which the action is cognitively accessible to its agent, and (2) an objection to the unqualified non-observational character of agent's knowledge of intentional action, which has its root in intentional actions described by *causative verbs*. In the second section, I will demonstrate why Anscombe's attempts to meet the challenge posed by intentional actions described by causative verbs fail, by rebutting two responses which are excavated out of §28 and §29 of *I*. In the third section, a knockdown objection to claim **(*C1*)** will be considered, which motivates me to put forward a non-knowledge epistemic condition on intentional action as a substitute for Anscombe's knowledge requirement. If the proposed epistemic condition rings true as I think it does, our lacking knowledge of our intentional actions does not necessarily result in our lacking self-awareness of them.

1.1 The Unqualified Non-observational Character of Agent's Knowledge of Intentional Action and Causative Verbs

Regarding the notion of agent's knowledge of intentional action, Anscombe writes:

> By the knowledge that a man has of his intentional actions I mean the knowledge that one denies having if when asked e.g. "Why are you ringing that bell?" one replies "Good heavens! I didn't know I was ringing it!" (*I*, 51-52)

But if that is the case, the man should not be described as being ringing the bell *intentionally*.[2] Because intentional actions, in Anscombe's view, are "the actions to which a certain sense of the question 'Why?' is given application; the sense is of course that in which the answer, if positive, gives a reason for acting" (*I*, 9).[3] To put it generally, if an agent who is acting in a certain way is asked the question, "Why are you doing it?", and replies honestly, "I didn't know I was doing it" (or "I don't know I am doing it"), then the agent's being acting in that way does not count as an intentional action of the agent. Thus, we can understand Anscombe as arguing for a knowledge condition on intentional action: an agent who is intentionally doing something must know that he is doing it (i.e., claim **(*C1*)**).

[2] I am using the phrase "*being* ringing the bell" in place of the more natural expression "ringing the bell" to emphasize the present progressive feature of agent's knowledge of intentional action. The same goes for all cases of the form "being *A*-ing" or "being getting *A*-ed" in what follows.

[3] It is important to note that no actual application of the relevant "Why?" question is necessary for an action to be intentional (under some description); what Anscombe has in mind is rather the *applicability* of such a question. Hence, a negative answer to the relevant "Why?" question such as "For no particular reason" or "It was an idle action" does not constitute a rejection of the applicability of that question, just as "the question how much money I have in my pocket is [not] refused application by the answer 'None'" (*I*, 25).

Furthermore, she insists on the unqualified non-observational character of agent's knowledge of intentional action:

> Now the class of things known without observation is of general interest to our enquiry because the class of intentional actions is a sub-class of it. I have already said that "I was not aware I was doing that" is a rejection of the question "Why?" whose sense we are trying to get at [i.e., the sense in which a reason for doing so is given]; here I can further say "I knew I was doing that, but *only because I observed it*" would also be a rejection of [the question "Why?" in the relevant sense]. (*I*, 14, my emphasis)

Besides cases in which an agent is doing something without knowing that he is doing it, here Anscombe singles out situations of another sort where the relevant "Why?" question is refused application: namely, cases in which the agent knows *only on the basis of* observation what he is doing. Given her conception of an intentional action as an action to which the relevant "Why?" question has application, the knowledge condition she imposes upon intentional action turns out to be a non-observational knowledge condition: an agent who is intentionally acting in such-and-such a way must always know without observation that he is doing it (i.e., claim **(*C2*)**). This idea is intuitively quite plausible. When I am up to something intentionally, say, making an omelet, it seems that I do not have to observe what I am doing to know that I am making an omelet; by contrast, someone else in the kitchen has to rely on his observation to figure out

what I am doing. The way in which an agent comes to know what he is intentionally up to seems different from that in which others are capable of figuring out what the agent is doing. But is agent's knowledge of intentional action always a kind of knowledge without observation?[4]

It will be instructive at this point to consider first the opposing view that one acquires the knowledge of what one is doing at least sometimes through observation. Such a view has its root in the fact that acting in a specified way normally causes something to transpire in the external, observable world.[5] This is particularly true of actions described by *causative verbs*, i.e., transitive verbs each of which has its distinctive (efficient) causal implication. For instance, when a person is described as having raised his arm, it is implied that the person caused the rising of his arm; if someone is described as having killed another one, then it is implied that the former caused the death of the latter; when we describe a man as having opened the window of his room, we imply that the man caused the window's being open. Although these three formulations make use of the perfective aspect, describing agents as having done something, I think there can be no grounds for refraining us from using the progressive aspect in each case to describe each agent as being acting in a certain way which implies the agent's being causing

[4] Anscombe introduces the class of things that an agent knows without observation by referring to another sub-class of it: namely, the position of the agent's limbs when it is known by the agent in the *usual* way in which he comes to know it (*I*, 13). For a careful and detailed discussion of Anscombe's view on bodily self-knowledge, see John McDowell (2011).

[5] Purely mental acts do not seem to necessarily involve any causal consequences characteristic of the acts; e.g., pure meditating with no accompanied bodily movements.

something characteristic of his being acting in that way; for normally it takes time for an agent to complete an action, and it must be that at least at some time point in between the starting and the ending points the agent is performing the action which involves his being causing into existence whatever effect that is distinctive of his action.[6] In a similar vein, therefore, when we describe a person as being raising his arm, we imply that the person is causing his arm's being getting raised; if we describe someone as being killing another person, we imply that the former is causing the latter's being getting killed; if a man is described as being opening the window of his room, it is implied that the man is causing the window's being getting opened.[7]

If this is right, an agent can only know that he is opening the window if the window is really getting opened by the agent's bodily movements.[8] For opening the window involves as a

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[6] It does not require that the agent be engaging in the action at each time point, since it can be said of someone that he is, say, writing a book during a stretch of time but not writing continuously at every time point of the period. As Michael Thompson points out, "we happily affirm, of someone who is napping, that she is organizing the peasantry; of someone who is sitting reading the paper, that she is baking a loaf of bread; and of someone who is playing a hand of poker, that she is building a house. If confusion arises, we once again concede that our agents aren't baking or building or organizing *at the moment* or *right now*, but rather reading, playing poker or napping" (2008, 141, original emphasis). All this echoes the so-called openness (or broadness) of the present progressive observed by Anscombe (*I*, 39-40), an issue I shall address in section 2.2 in connection with claim **(*C3*)**—i.e., agent's knowledge of intentional action is practical.

[7] The substitution of "being getting killed" for "death" is intended to stress that, when a person has killed another person what the former caused is a completed event or a state of the latter: the latter's death, whereas if the former is still in the process of killing the latter, what the former is causing is an ongoing event: the latter's being getting killed.

[8] Some might counter this by appealing to the openness of the present progressive: even if the window is not getting opened at this moment (because there is something wrong with it), we can still say of the agent that he is opening the window. That is true; but it cannot be that the window is not getting opened at any time point of the period during which the agent is opening the window.

necessary component of it the window's being opened, so that if the window is not getting opened the agent cannot be said to be opening it. Even if the window is not getting opened, however, the agent still knows what he intends to do: he intends to open the window. In order to know that he is opening the window, it might be argued, the agent has to find out *independently* of his knowledge of what he intends to do whether the event of the window's being getting opened is indeed occurring. How is he to figure out that? By observing whether the window is getting opened. Thus, although the agent knows immediately that he intends to open the window, he can only acquire the knowledge that he is opening the window by observation, or at least partly by observation.

It is but only one step to fall into the temptation to confine what is known by an agent when the agent is moving his body in some way with a certain intention only to "*the intention*, or possibly also the bodily movement [of the agent]" (*I*, 51, my emphasis).[9] If when an agent is moving his body in a specified manner with the intention of doing something what he *always* knows—regardless of whether or not the intended causal result is getting actualized (e.g., whether or not the window is getting opened)—is his intention (e.g., he intends to open the window) or possibly also his bodily movements, then it would seem tempting to hold that all the agent knows is his intention or possibly also his bodily movements. For, it might be contended, the knowledge the agent has of what he is doing when he is making the movements

[9] Anscombe resists this temptation with a great deal of effort by maintaining that "I do what happens" (*I*, 52). More details on the slogan will be provided in section 1.3.

must remain the same no matter whether or not the desired causal consequence is being successfully caused into actuality as he wants.[10] This is not a valid inference, however. From the fact that when one is making certain bodily movements with the intention of doing something what one always knows is one's intention or possibly also one's bodily movements, it does not logically follow that one's intention or one's bodily movements constitutes *the only thing* one knows.

That said, observation seems necessary for an agent to ascertain whether his being moving his body in a certain manner is actually bringing about into existence the implied causal result of the action he is performing by moving his body. If this is true, what drives Anscombe to maintain that one always knows non-observationally what one is doing?

1.2 The Unqualified Non-observational Character of Agent's Knowledge of Intentional Action?

Anscombe's main argument for claim **(*C2*)**—i.e., the knowledge one has of what one is doing is always acquired independently of observation—can be found in the following passage:

[10] As one might notice, it is an argument from the request for a highest common factor—a factor which is present in both successful and unsuccessful performances of an action.

> Say I go over to the window and open it. Someone who hears me moving calls out: What are you doing making that noise? I reply "Opening the window". I have called such a statement knowledge all along; and precisely because in such a case what I say is true—I do open the window; and that means that the window is getting opened by the movements of the body out of whose mouth those words come. But I *don't say* the words like this: "Let me see, what this body is bringing about? Ah yes! the opening of the window". Or even like this "Let me see, what are my movements bringing about? The opening of the window". (*I*, 51, my emphasis)

If the agent answers the question "What are you doing making that noise?" in the two ways mentioned above, the knowledge he has of what he is doing would definitely be justified by bits of perceptual intake in him: he has to observe what his body or his movements are bringing about in order to know that he is opening the window. In other words, answering the question in these two ways would imply that the agent's knowledge that he is opening the window is "derived from the [object] known [i.e., what he is doing]" (*I*, 87), the acquisition of which must undoubtedly proceed through observation.

Based on this, Adrian Haddock develops a general account of knowledge with observation, which he thinks is in agreement with Anscombe's thoughts on the subject: a bit of knowledge is knowledge with observation, he proposes, if and only if the subject of the knowledge needs, in addition to the presence of the object known, "an observational reason, acquired through the

operation of a perceptual faculty, which shows or suggests that [the object known] is indeed actual" (2011, 149). Negating the right-hand side of the biconditional yields a general account of knowledge without observation: a bit of knowledge counts as knowledge without observation if and only if it does not require that the subject of the knowledge possess, in addition to the presence of the object known, any observational reason the acquisition of which proceeds by the operation of some perceptual faculty, warranting that the object known is in fact as the subject thinks it is.

As long as the passage just quoted is concerned, I agree with Haddock that the account he advances does capture what Anscombe means by "knowledge without observation", viz., knowledge without observation is precisely knowledge the possession of which does not call for observational reason, or as some might put it, the possession of which need not be epistemically grounded in observation. Now Anscombe reminds us of the fact that we *do not* answer the question "What are you doing?" in any of the aforementioned two ways (or in any ways similar to them), which she takes to imply that we do not have to observe so as to verify whether by our bodily movements we are doing what we mean to do; rather, we know directly and thus without observation what we are doing when we are intentionally doing something. Put otherwise: observation on the part of an agent *need not* play any justificatory role in helping the agent come to know what he is doing when he is making certain bodily movements with the intention of, say, opening the window. Well, as a matter of fact, we do not say words in the

ways Anscombe imagines or any ways similar to them. But does that suffice to establish the unqualified non-observational character of agent's knowledge of intentional action?

As Anscombe already realizes, the unqualified non-observational character of agent's knowledge of intentional action will be very likely to provoke the following disquiet:

> "Known without observation" may very well be a justifiable formula for knowledge of the position and movements of one's limbs, but you have spoken of all intentional action as falling under this concept. Now it may be e.g. that one paints a wall yellow, meaning to do so. But is it reasonable to say that one "knows without observation" that one is painting a wall yellow? And similarly for all sorts of actions: any actions that is, that are described under any aspect beyond that of bodily movements. (*I*, 50)

In questioning if "actions […] that are described under any aspect beyond that of bodily movements" can be known without observation, Anscombe's interlocutor suggests that only things which are (in some sense) within an agent can be known by the agent non-observationally, such as his intentions and (possibly) bodily movements. To the extent that one is painting a wall yellow, the description of which is "at a distance from the details of one's movements" (*I*, 54), it would appear that one cannot know without observation that one is painting the wall yellow. Precisely because what one is changing when one is painting the wall yellow extends beyond the confines of one's body to the wall, and thereby some of one's

perceptual faculties must be operating so as to assure oneself that the intended causal result is being brought about into actuality—i.e., that the wall is getting painted yellow. This brings us back to the consideration on which the opposing view mentioned in the last section rests: observation is needed in order for an agent to determine whether the implied change of the agent's being acting in some way—something that is going on in the external, public world rather than simply something interior to the agent—is being successfully caused to take place by the agent's bodily movements. If so, observation on the part of an agent does sometimes play a *justificatory* role in helping the agent acquire the knowledge of what he is doing, since the agent may be justified by an observational reason in *judging* that he is doing what he says he is doing.

In response, Anscombe immediately writes in §28 of *I*:

> My reply is that the topic of an intention may be matter on which there is knowledge or opinion based on observation, inference, hearsay, superstition or anything that knowledge or opinion ever are based on; or again matter on which an opinion is held without any foundation at all. When knowledge or opinion are present concerning what is the case, and what can happen—say Z—if one does certain things, say ABC, then it is possible to have the intention of doing Z in doing ABC; and if the case is one of knowledge or if the opinion is correct, then doing or causing Z is an intentional action, and it is not by observation that one knows one is doing Z; or in so far as one is

> observing, inferring etc. that *Z* is actually taking place, one's knowledge is not the knowledge that a man has of his intentional actions. (*I*, 50)

Here she is admitting that one's observationally grounded knowledge about "what is the case, and what can happen—say *Z*—if one does certain things, say *ABC*" makes it possible for one to form the intention of doing *Z* by doing *ABC* and hence to be doing *Z* intentionally when one is doing *ABC*. One's previously acquired observational knowledge of one's surroundings usually plays the role of enabling one to form a certain intention that one is going to execute by doing something else. For instance, absent the observationally based knowledge that a wall will become yellow by applying paint of some sort to its surface, one cannot even form the intention to paint the wall yellow, let alone execute it afterwards. Despite this, Anscombe is insisting that one knows without observation that one is doing *Z* (provided one is doing *ABC*); one's observationally grounded knowledge that doing *ABC* can bring *Z* into being in no way affects the non-observational character of one's knowledge that one is doing *Z*.

Anscombe is certainly right to attribute to observation an enabling role in the context of intentional intervention into matters in the world. Yet her response does not at all address the point I have been urging: when an agent is intentionally intervening into the course of nature, the operation of some of his perceptual faculties furnishes the necessary justificatory source for the agent's judgement concerning what he is doing to qualify as a bit of knowledge. Even worse is that in saying "in so far as one is observing, inferring etc. that *Z* is actually taking

place, one's knowledge is not the knowledge that a man has of his intentional actions", she imposes a very strong requirement upon agent's knowledge of intentional action, so that if one's judgement as to what one is doing is to be counted as a bit of agent's knowledge of intentional action it *can never* be warranted by any observational reason. So Anscombe can seem to propound a stronger general account of knowledge without observation than that brought forward by Haddock: a bit of knowledge counts as knowledge without observation if and only if the subject of the knowledge can never possess, in addition to the presence of the object known, any observational reason justifying the subject's judgement about the actuality of the object known.[11]

Rather than supporting the unqualified non-observational character of agent's knowledge of intentional action, saying that observation can never play a justificatory role in securing one's thought about what one is doing even if matters in the world are involved in one's intentional activity would amount to saying that one's knowledge concerning what one is doing is entirely *insensitive to* whether or not the world is actually being changed in the way one means to change it.[12] If so, the knowledge an agent has of an intentional action he is engaging in by making certain bodily movements would be independent of whether or not his bodily movements are bringing about the implied causal consequence of that action, and hence follows

[11] Here the implicit assumption is that (by Anscombe's lights) "the knowledge that a man has of his intentional actions" is a kind of knowledge without observation.

[12] I owe this point to McDowell (2010, 430).

the indifference of the agent's knowledge to whether or not he is actually doing what he thinks he is doing. In that case, what is known without observation (in its stronger sense) by the agent can be nothing but his intention or possibly also his bodily movements, and "the rest is known by observation to be the result" (*I*, 51). The problem is that Anscombe clearly opposes such a "mad account" (*I*, 52). Then, given the failure of her immediate reaction to the justificatory role observation can play in one's acquisition of the knowledge about one's intentional actions, how is she to avoid falling into such a "mad account" without meanwhile rejecting the stronger sense of knowing without observation?

One avenue through which Anscombe attempts to escape the predicament, I think, can be found in §29 of *I*:

> [I]sn't the role of all our observation-knowledge in knowing what we are doing like the role of the eyes in producing successful writing? That is to say, once given that we have knowledge or opinion about the matter in which we perform intentional actions, our observation is merely *an aid*, as the eyes are an aid in writing. Someone without eyes may go on writing with a pen that has no more ink in it; or may not realise he is going over the edge of the paper on to the table or overwriting lines already written; here is where the eyes are useful; but the essential thing he does, namely to write such-and-such, is done without the eyes. So without the eyes he knows what he writes; but the

> eyes help to assure him that what he writes actually gets legibly written. (*I*, 53, my emphasis)

By the analogy between observation functioning as an aid in the context of intentional action and eyes functioning as an aid in writing, it seems to me, Anscombe wants to ascribe to observation, besides its enabling role in the formation of intention, an assisting role *only* in the execution of intention,[13] which is supposed to deprive observation of any justificatory role in helping one come to know that one is, say, writing such-and-such on a piece of paper, as opposed to merely judging that one is doing so. While I agree with her to the extent that observation assists us with the actualization of what we intend to do, I do not see why there is not also an assisting, justificatory role observation can play in our gaining of the knowledge that we are doing what we intend to do.

The rationale Anscombe offers for her claim is to be excavated out of the passage from "Someone without eyes may go on writing with a pen that has no more ink in it" onwards, especially the following remarks: "[T]he essential thing he does, namely to write such-and-such, is done without the eyes. So without the eyes he knows what he writes". Yet what if what

[13] In this way, my interpretation differs from that Richard Moran proffers in that, he understands Anscombe as making a distinction between "knowledge of one's action being based on observation and being aided by observation" (2004, 53), according to which observation can function as an aid not only in the execution of intention but also in the acquisition of agent's knowledge of intentional action.

the person without eyes wants to write does not get written because there is no ink in the pen he uses? In that case, does the person's judgment that he is writing such-and-such still count as a bit of knowledge? I think not, and neither does Anscombe. Return to the passage I quoted at the beginning of this section. There she says: "I have called such a statement [i.e., 'I am opening the window'] knowledge all along; and precisely because in such a case what I say is *true*—I do open the window; and that means that the window is getting opened" (*I*, 51, my emphasis). What I gather from this is that Anscombe does not deny the *factivity* of agent's knowledge of intentional action: if someone knows that he is doing such-and-such a thing, then it must be a fact that he is doing it.[14] For the person's judgment that he is writing such-and-such to amount to knowledge, it must be true that he is writing the words, which in turn requires that those words be getting written. Thus, not only do "the eyes help to assure him that what he writes actually gets […] written", but they help to assure him that his judgement concerning what he writes is true. The two assisting roles of observation—one operative in the execution of the person's intention and the other operative in the acquisition of his knowledge of what he is doing—is inseparable from one another; instead, they are operating hand in hand with each other in the context of intentional action.[15]

[14] However, it will become manifest in section 2.2 that what Anscombe says in connection with her example of writing "I am a fool" (*I*, 82) is inconsistent with the factivity of agent's knowledge of intentional action.

[15] As will emerge in section 2.3, the assisting role of observation in the execution of intention is integrated with what I call the directing role of practical thought in the execution of intention.

Insofar as these two passages are concerned, therefore, nowhere does Anscombe provide a plausible argument for the conclusion that observation cannot function as a justificatory source for agent's knowledge of intentional action. What is more, it has been contested, against Anscombe, that one may be doing something intentionally and, nonetheless, not know—let alone know without observation—that one is doing it. Let me now turn to consider this objection.

1.3 A Weakened Epistemic Condition on Intentional Action

To begin with, "a man may even be doing something intentionally and not know that he is", says Donald Davidson, "so of course he can be doing it without knowing that he is" (1980, 50). For instance, "a man may be making ten carbon copies as he writes, and this may be intentional; yet he may not know that he is; all he knows is that he is trying" (ibid.). This is because the carbon-copier may not even believe, let alone know, that he is making ten carbon copies, for the reason that he may be uncertain if, say, the force of writing is strong enough to penetrate down to the tenth carbon copy.

However, Kieran Setiya contends that the challenge posed by the carbon-copier example is limited. For, he observes, even though the man may not believe that he is making ten carbon copies, he believes e.g. that he is writing as hard as he can on the first paper sheet *by means of which* he may be making the copies (2008, 390). Setiya takes this line of thought to implicitly echo an insight Davidson shares with Anscombe. When an agent is doing something

intentionally, according to Davidson, what he is doing is "known to him under some description" (1980, 50); likewise, Anscombe notes that "a man may know that he is doing a thing under one description, and not under another" (*I*, 11). Building on these considerations, Setiya goes on to advance the following principle to replace Anscombe's knowledge condition on intentional action: an agent who is intentionally doing φ believes that he is doing it, or else he is doing φ by doing other things in which he believes (2008, 390).

Though it appears to be appealing, it seems to me that Setiya's principle is not so much plausible as he thinks. He does not take into consideration seriously Davidson's words "[T]his [i.e., the man's being making ten carbon copies] may be intentional". If the carbon-copier does not even take himself to be making ten carbon copies, I doubt whether we can still say of him that he is intentionally making the copies. Of course, he may not be so sure that by writing as hard as he can on the first paper sheet he will eventually end up with making ten carbon copies. Nonetheless, when asked the question "Are you making ten carbon copies?" he would surely reply "Yup, though I am not so sure that I will succeed", but not "Oh! I do not realize that I am doing that". Setiya can find no room for rebutting the point I am making, since as long as the carbon-copier believes that he is writing as hard as he can on the first paper sheet—an action by means of which he is making the copies, it must be that he thinks that he is making the copies; otherwise, the means-end relation in question would turn out to be a mere accidental connection, or to put it differently, the carbon-copier would not have performed the

corresponding means-end calculation.[16] Accordingly, while Setiya is right to hold that the carbon copier does not believe—in the sense of believing without any doubts—that he is making ten carbon copies, it does not hence follow that he does not even take himself to be making the copies, or so I am urging.

As I see things, Davidson's carbon-copier example raises a further concern of which Setiya is not aware.[17] While we should concede that the carbon-copier is intentionally making ten copies when he is moving his hand in such-and-such a manner with the intention to make the copies, the man cannot be regarded as knowing that he is making the copies provided the doubt he casts upon whether he is successfully doing what he takes himself to be doing. If this is so, it might be contended as Davidson does, all the carbon copier knows is that he is trying to make ten carbon copies, or that he intends to make ten carbon copies. Moreover, the argument goes, *in general* all one knows when one is making certain bodily movements with the intention of doing something is that one intends or is trying to do the thing—a temptation already mentioned in the previous sections. It is partly for the sake of countering the temptation, in whatever forms, to internalize—i.e., to abstract whatever is taking place in the external, public world from—what is known by one when one is making certain bodily movements with the intention of

[16] I will take up investigating the teleological structure of our intentional activities in the next chapter.

[17] To this extent, I think Setiya underestimates the challenge posed by Davidson's objection.

doing something that Anscombe adheres to, in addition to the knowledge condition on intentional action, the following identity claim:

> I *do* what *happens*. That is to say, when the description of what happens is the very thing which I should say I was doing, then there is no distinction between my doing and the thing's happening. (*I*, 52-53, original emphasis)

Given the identification of what one is intentionally doing by moving one's body in a certain way with what is going on in the external world, if one knows what going-on is identical to that action,[18] then what one knows when one is making the movements is not restricted to one's intention of doing something, or, as some might say, one's trying to do so, but rather extends into the external, objective world.

The problem with Anscombe's proposal which, I hope, has been convincingly revealed lies precisely in that she puts too strong an epistemic condition on intentional action—i.e., one must always know without observation (in the stronger sense of knowing without observation) the very thing one is intentionally doing by making certain bodily movements, so that our capacity for agent's knowledge of intentional action becomes infallible: viz., our knowledge of what we

[18] This further qualification, which is absent in Anscombe's argument, must be met because of the intensionality of epistemic contexts.

are intentionally doing would be completely independent of whether our bodily movements are bringing about the implied results of our actions. And starting from the fact that one may be skeptical of whether one is actually causing the implied result of what one takes oneself to be doing, the internalization of the object of agent's knowledge of intentional action aims to search for whatever is always present in and thus infallibly cognitively accessible to one when one is moving one's body in a certain way with the intention of doing something, which results in the entire insensitivity of agent's knowledge of intentional action to whether one's bodily movements are indeed causing the implied result of what one takes oneself to be doing. So both accounts have the same questionable implication. Nonetheless, there is much truth in them: on the one hand, what Anscombe says in connection with her formula "I do what happens" is correct—the knowledge one has of what one is intentionally doing is not independent of whether by making certain bodily movements one is actually doing what one means to do; on the other hand, what is always and infallibly known by one when one is making certain bodily movements with the intention of doing something is one's intention of doing that thing (or that one is trying to do it, or whatever is in some sense interior to and known by one in such a case).

A weakened epistemic condition on intentional action paves the way for capturing the truth of both accounts without rendering agent's knowledge of intentional action utterly unanswerable to what is in fact taking place in reality. In dealing with Setiya's response to Davidson's carbon-copier example, I point out that the carbon-copier who is intentionally making ten carbon copies must *take himself to* be making the copies, though he *does not know*

that he is doing it (because he doubts that the copies are indeed getting made). To generalize it: an agent who is intentionally doing something must take himself to be doing it (or think/judge that he is doing it). Of course, it is possible for the agent to *rightly* conceive of himself as being, say, making ten carbon copies while not knowing that he is, as is shown by the carbon-copier example.[19] In that case, the agent still knows that he intends or is trying to make the copies (or possibly also his bodily movements). However, if the agent verified on the basis of observation that the tenth copy is indeed getting made and hence did not cast doubt on whether he is doing what he thinks he is doing, then he would surely know not only that he intends to make the copies, but also that he is doing so.[20]

Combined with the justificatory role of observation I have been defending, the proposed epistemic condition on intentional action constitutes a radical departure from Anscombe's treatment of agent's knowledge of intentional action. Against claim **(*C2*)**, not every intentional action of an agent is known by the agent without observation (even in the weaker sense of knowing without observation); rather, when the agent is intentionally intervening into the course of nature by moving his body in a specified way, observation furnishes the needed justificatory source for the agent's conception of what he is doing to be expressive of knowledge. Relatedly, counter to claim **(*C1*)**, an agent who is making certain bodily

[19] It is also possible for an agent to conceive *falsely* of himself as being, for instance, writing "I am a fool" on a blackboard with his eyes shut; for more on this point see sections 2.2 and 2.3.

[20] My thought on the subject matter has been benefited from McDowell's brief mention of what he calls the disjunctive conception of knowledge in intention (2010, 431).

movements with the intention of doing something may rightly take himself to be doing the thing yet not know that he is doing it; his conception will only count as a bit of knowledge if it is supported by an observational reason which shows that he is doing what he means to do. Behind both is the consideration that insofar as we are engaging in certain activities of changing the world, it is always possible that the intended goals are not being caused into actuality by our bodily movements, which opens up the gap between what we take ourselves to be doing and what are actually being brought about by our bodily movements.

There is, nevertheless, a difficulty for the fallibilist picture of agent's knowledge of intentional action I endorse: the *practical* character of agent's knowledge of intentional action (i.e., claim **(*C3*)**). According to Anscombe, agent's knowledge of intentional action is practical in the sense that it is "the cause of what it understands [i.e., the object known]" (*I*, 87). If the knowledge one has of what one is doing is the cause of the very action then, on the face of it, one's capacity for the knowledge would seem infallible, an idea I vehemently deny by replacing Anscombe's knowledge condition on intentional action with the weakened epistemic condition. Can my fallibilist picture accommodate the practical character of agent's knowledge of intentional action? It is to this question that I will turn in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: The Practical Character of Agent's Knowledge of Intentional Action and Observation

Towards the end of the last chapter, I anticipated a *prima facie* plausible objection to the fallibilist approach to agent's knowledge of intentional action which allows a justificatory role that observation can play in one's gaining the knowledge of what one is intentionally doing. The objection rests on the practical character of agent's knowledge of intentional action (i.e., claim **(*C3*)**). And Anscombe seems to think that the practical character of agent's knowledge of intentional action explains why such knowledge is non-observational,[21] when she illustrates the concept of practical knowledge with the following example:

> Imagine someone directing a project, like the erection of a building which he cannot see and does not get reports on, purely by giving orders. His imagination (evidently a superhuman one) takes the place of the perception that would ordinarily be employed by the director of such a project. He is not like a man merely considering speculatively how a thing might be done; such a man can leave many points unsettled, but this man

[21] From now on I will restrict my discussion to the weaker sense of knowing without observation, not only because the relevant passages of *I* cited in this chapter do not lend support to the stronger sense of knowing without observation, but also because if the concept of practical knowledge does not entail the weaker notion of knowledge without observation then trivially the former does not entail the stronger notion of knowledge without observation. See section 1.2 for the distinction between the weaker and the stronger senses of knowing without observation.

must settle everything in *a* right order. *His* knowledge of what is done is practical knowledge. (*I*, 82, original emphasis)

But does the concept of practical knowledge by itself entail the concept of knowledge without observation? I will address this question in the first and the second sections. In the first section, I will develop a *formal causality* account of the practicality of agent's knowledge of intentional action: the knowledge an agent has of what he is intentionally doing is the formal cause of his action in the absence of which the bodily movements the agent is making with the intention of doing something and what they are bringing about cannot be individuated as an intentional action of the agent. With the account in hand, I will turn in the second section to the question of whether the practicality of agent's knowledge of intentional action alone suffices to establish the unqualified non-observational character of such knowledge. I will argue for a negative answer to it, by pointing out that our capacity for agent's knowledge of intentional action is fallible and so observation is necessary for us to be successfully executing our intentions with which we are moving our bodies in specified manners. Nonetheless, the fallibility of our capacity for agent's knowledge of intentional action—in particular, Davidson's carbon-copier example—appears to undermine the formal causal role of agent's knowledge of intentional action I endorse. I admit the threat raised by Davidson's example. But I will argue in the third section that the threat should not be overestimated. For the reason that (as I have shown in section 1.3) even though the carbon copier lacks the knowledge about

what he is intentionally doing, it could not be the case that he does not take himself to be making ten carbon copies. It is the thought the carbon copier has of what he is doing, I will argue, that constitutes the formal aspect of his intentional action. And I will contend that there is also an efficient sense of "cause" in which the thought one has of what one is doing is practical: the thought plays an efficient causal role in realizing one's intention.

2.1 Practical Reasoning, Practical Reason, and Practical Knowledge

The concept of practical knowledge, says Anscombe, "can only be understood if we first understand 'practical reasoning'" (*I*, 57). However, she continues, the true nature of practical reasoning has been misconceived:

> It [i.e., practical reasoning] is commonly supposed to be ordinary reasoning leading to such a conclusion as: "I ought to do such-and-such". By "ordinary reasoning" I mean the only reasoning ordinarily considered in philosophy: reasoning towards the truth of a proposition, which is supposedly shewn to be true by the premises. (*I*, 58)

In Anscombe's view, then, the conception of practical reasoning as reasoning towards the truth of a proposition obscures its true character. What is the true character of practical reasoning, then? Anscombe remarks:

> There is a difference of form between *reasoning leading to action* and reasoning for the truth of a conclusion. […] And there is the practical syllogism proper. Here *the conclusion is an action* whose point is shewn by the premises, which are now, so to speak, on active service.[22] (*I*, 60, my emphasis)

Unlike reasoning towards the truth of a proposition (i.e., theoretical reasoning), practical reasoning is reasoning towards intentional action as its conclusion. Of course, the reasoner can invent "a form of words by which he accompanies this action, which we may call the conclusion in a verbalized form" (*I*, 61), e.g., "So I will do such-and-such", "So I should do such-and-such", etc. Besides, in order for it to lead to any action, practical reasoning must involve something (e.g., an object or a state of affairs) actually wanted by the reasoner that is mentioned in its starting point. But Anscombe holds that "it is misleading to put 'I want' into a premise" (*I*, 65), for it is not the reasoner's wanting but rather the goal he aims at achieving that features in his calculation.[23] Thus, neither does practical reasoning involve the reasoner's actual wanting as one of its premises, nor is its conclusion merely a verbal expression. Rather,

[22] For Anscombe, "practical reasoning" and "practical syllogism" refer to one and the same thing (*I*, 57-58).

[23] Yet "[w]e must always remember that an object is not what what is aimed at is; the description under which it is aimed at is that under which it is called the object" (*I*, 66).

the starting point of practical reasoning is the thing wanted, and its conclusion an action that is sufficient, albeit may not necessary, for actualizing that thing.[24]

To illustrate, consider an example constructed out of Anscombe's water-pumping case (*I*, 37). Suppose I think it will be good to put some good men in the government so as to take the place of those bad politicians who are in control of my country and are currently in a house, because the good men will secure a good life for everyone. On Anscombe's account, my thought would constitute the starting point of a bit of practical reasoning in which what I want—namely, to put the good men in the government—gets expressed. Suppose further I calculate as follows: in order to achieve my goal, I will poison the bad politicians; to accomplish that, I will replenish the water supply; and in order to replenish the water supply I will operate the pump, which in turn will require me to move my arm up and down with my fingers round the pump handle. So a verbalized conclusion, such as "I will move my arm up and down" or "I should move my arm up and down", can be drawn out from my calculation.

Moreover, Anscombe maintains, the order displayed by each step of my reasoning is identical with that which is exhibited by a chain of answers to questions of the form "Why are you *A*-ing (where '*A*' stands for a verb)?" (*I*, 80): "Why are you moving your arm up and down?", "I am operating the pump" (or "I am moving your arm up and down in order to operate the pump"); "Why are you doing that?", "I am replenishing the water supply" (or "I am doing

[24] My understanding of Anscombe's conception of practical reasoning has been benefited from Frederick Stoutland's succinct discussion of it (2011, 29).

that in order to replenish the water supply"); "Why are you replenishing the water supply?", "I am poisoning the bad politicians" (or "I am replenishing the water supply in order to poison these bad people"); and "Why are you poisoning them?", "I am doing this in order to put the good men in the government".

There is, however, a subtle difference between the two orders so long as the temporal dimension is taken into consideration. While the former is *forward-looking* (i.e., from what I want to what I will do in order to achieve my objective), the latter *backward-looking* (i.e., from what I am doing under the least remote description to my objective). If a line representing the former order is to be drawn, on the leftmost will be found the starting point of my reasoning in which the object of my wanting gets expressed, and moving rightward, each step of my reasoning will be located as a means to realize its predecessor, and on the rightmost will be its verbalized conclusion (i.e., "I will move my arm up and down") or its genuine conclusion (i.e., my actually being moving my arm up and down). A line representing the latter order will be the other way around: at the far left will be my actually being moving my arm up and down, and at the far right will be located my objective. But this does not mean that the identity in question does not hold. For the latter order, despite unfolding in an opposite direction from the former, amounts to a *reconstruction* of the practical reasoning represented by the former

order.[25] In this way, the reason one has for what one is doing is just as practical as one's practical reasoning leading to the action.

It becomes clear that by locating one's being doing something in a certain means-end structure,[26] one's practical reasoning leading to the action and the practical reason one would elicit when the question "Why are you doing it?" is posed to one *rationalize* that action. It is specifically in this sense of rationalization that Anscombe takes intentional action to be something which is *understood*. Evidently, however, it is not practical knowledge itself but rather the subject of practical knowledge who understands intentional action. To this extent, the description of practical knowledge as "the cause of what it understands" should be read metaphorically.

The remaining question then is: what kind of cause does Anscombe have in mind in construing practical knowledge as "the cause of what it understands"? In explicating the sense of "cause" at issue, Anscombe writes:

> This means more than that practical knowledge is observed to be a necessary condition of the production of various results; or that an idea of doing such-and-such in such-and-such ways is such a condition. It means that *without it what happens does not come*

[25] Thanks to Ferenc Huoranszki for making me aware of this.

[26] As will become manifest below, the means-end structure is *internal* to my action.

> *under the description—execution of intentions—whose characteristics we have been investigating*. (*I*, 87-88, my emphasis)

It can seem that here she is drawing a contrast between the relations agent's knowledge of intentional action standing to what is merely happening—"the production of various results"—on the one hand and to what one is intentionally doing—what is happening under a certain description which counts as the execution of some intention—on the other.

Richard Moran, in understanding the passage just cited, turns on the distinction to develop his conception of agent's knowledge of intentional action as the formal or constitutive cause of intentional action (2004, 54-55). He takes Anscombe's remarks to mean that if one does not possess the practical knowledge that one is, say, beating out a particular rhythm with a pump handle, then what is taking place under the description "beating out a particular rhythm" does not count as what one is intentionally doing, but merely something one's bodily movements are making happen. The object of agent's knowledge of intentional action—the "what" that is understood—is not just what is being caused to transpire by one's bodily movements, but rather an intentional action one is performing by making the movements.

Nevertheless, Moran notes, the ascription of agent's knowledge of intentional action to someone depends on how the object of the knowledge is described. As Anscombe points out:

> Since a single action can have many different descriptions, e.g. "sawing a plank", "sawing oak", "sawing one of Smith's planks", "making a squeaky noise with the saw", "making a great deal of sawdust" and so on and so on, it is important to notice that *a man may know that he is doing a thing under one description, and not under another*. […] He may know that he is sawing a plank, but not that he is sawing an oak plank or Smith's plank; but sawing an oak plank or Smith's plank is not something else that he is doing besides just sawing the plank that he is sawing. For this reason, the statement that a man knows he is doing X does not imply the statement that, concerning anything which is also his doing X, he knows that he is doing that thing. So to say that a man knows he is doing X is to *give a description* of what he is doing under which he knows it.[27] (*I*, 11-12, my emphasis)

If one knows that one is beating out a particular rhythm with a pump handle, the description "beating out a particular rhythm" counts as one of the descriptions under which what one is making happen is what one is intentionally doing. Based on the intensionality of knowledge ascription in the context of intentional activity, Moran continues to argue that the knowledge a person has of what he is doing "*determines* which descriptions of 'what happens' may count

[27] Relatedly, a single action "can be intentional under one description and unintentional under another" (*I*, 28). But the intentional character of one's actions and one's knowledge of them need not be inseparable from one another; see section 1.3.

as descriptions of what the person is intentionally doing" (2004, 54, my emphasis). Thereby the sense of "cause" is concerned with "the formal or constitutive role of the description embedded in [the person's knowledge of what he is doing] making it the case that *this* description counts as a description of the person's intentional action" (ibid., original emphasis). Specifically in this formal or constitutive sense of "cause", according to Moran, is agent's knowledge of intentional action the cause of intentional action. [28]

Moran is certainly right to insist on the formal or constitutive role of agent's knowledge of intentional action: the knowledge an agent has of what he is doing makes what is being brought about by the agent's bodily movements one of his intentional actions, specifying which description of the going-on occurs in the agent's knowledge statement as to what he is doing.[29] But it seems to me that there is more to the formal role of agent's knowledge of intentional action than what Moran observes.

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[28] The formal causality reading coheres with, among others, the following analogy with linguistic meaning: "[When we are interested in human actions, it] is not that we have a special interest in the movement of these molecules—namely, the ones in a human being; or even in the movements of certain bodies—namely human ones. The description of what we are interested in is a type of description that would not exist if our question 'Why?' did not. It is not that certain things, namely the movements of humans, are for some undiscovered reason subject to the question 'Why?' So too, it is not just that certain appearances of chalk on blackboard are subject to the question 'What does it say?' It is of a word or sentence that we ask 'What does it say?'; and the description of something as a word or a sentence at all could not occur prior to the fact that words or sentences have meaning. So the description of something as a human action could not occur prior to the existence of the question 'Why?', simply as a kind of utterance by which we were then obscurely prompted to address the question" (*I*, 83).

[29] I will argue in section 2.3 that practical knowledge plays an efficient causal role in "the production of various results".

To see what is missing in his account, let me return to the water-pumping case: I am moving my arm up and down in order to operate the pump, which in turn serves as a means of replenishing the water supply, and I am replenishing the water supply for the sake of poisoning the inhabitants in the house. Am I engaging in four distinct actions: moving my arm up and down, operating the pump, replenishing the water supply, and poisoning the inhabitants? No; rather, I am performing only one action which admits of four different descriptions. For *under the given circumstance*, poisoning the inhabitants consists in nothing but replenishing the water supply, and replenishing the water supply operating the pump, and operating the pump moving my arm up and down. In other words, there is one single action with four distinct descriptions, each of which is related to the next as the description of a means relative to the description of an end, and the last description "poisoning the inhabitants" picks out the intention with which my action under the other three descriptions is being performed (*I*, 45-46).[30] As Moran points out, my knowledge that I am poisoning the inhabitants provides the formal cause in virtue of which under this circumstance the goings-on—my bodily movements and what they are causing into being (e.g., the movements of the pump)—are integrated into *one* thing: namely, my being poisoning the inhabitants. Now the missing element in Moran's account is the means-end structure inherent in my action. That is to say, not only does my knowledge that I am poisoning the inhabitants make what is going on one intentional action of mine, but it makes it

[30] See e.g. Alvin Goldman (1970) for the competing view on the individuation of actions, according to which I am performing four distinct actions.

an intentional action *with a certain internal means-end structure*, the mark of which lies in the fact that, if I know that I am poisoning the inhabitants I must also know that I am replenishing the water supply, that I am operating the water pump, and that I am moving my arm up and down.

To sum up, if my knowledge that I am poisoning the inhabitants is to be subtracted from the fact that I am poisoning the inhabitants, then what remains would no longer be an intentional action (of mine) with a certain means-end structure inherent in it.[31]

2.2 Practical Knowledge and Observation

I am now in a position to consider the question I raised at the beginning of this chapter: does the concept of practical knowledge on its own entail the notion of knowledge without observation? The conception of agent's knowledge of intentional action as the formal or constitutive aspect of its object might prompt some to bring forward an argument like this: since the knowledge one has of what one is doing constitutes the formal aspect of one's action, given that the practical reason one has for the action explains the actuality of that action, it explains as well why one possesses the knowledge, and thereby no additional observational

[31] However, Davison's carbon-copier example poses a threat to the formal causal role of agent's knowledge of intentional action; see section 2.3 for my way to meet the challenge.

reason is needed to explain why one's statement as to what one is doing is expressive of knowledge.[32]

Although it appears to be plausible, the reasoning is faulty. For one thing, in Davidson's carbon-copier case, while by moving his hand in a certain way the carbon-copier takes himself to be making ten carbon copies, he does not know that he is making the copies; if he were to know that he is making the copies, he would need to draw upon observation to assure himself that by his bodily movements the tenth copy is getting made. And for another, one may even fail to be performing the action one takes oneself to be performing as long as the activity one is engaging in involves matters in the external world, and as a result one's statement as to what one is doing may fail to express knowledge. In that case, no practical reason would be enough to guarantee that the intention with which one is making certain bodily movements is actually being executed.

Anscombe does not seem impressed by the possibility of failure in the execution of intention. At one point, she imagines herself being writing "I am a fool" on a blackboard with her eyes shut and knowing that she is doing it. But she remarks:

> Orders, however, can be disobeyed, and intentions fail to get executed. That intention [i.e., the intention of writing "I am a fool" on the blackboard] for example would not

[32] Haddock (2011, 162-165) develops an argument along this line.

> have been executed if something had gone wrong with the chalk or the surface, so that the words did not appear. And *my knowledge would have been the same even if this had happened*. If then my knowledge is independent of what actually happens, how can it be knowledge of what does happen? Someone might say that it was a fumy sort of knowledge that was still knowledge even though what it was knowledge of was not the case! On the other hand Theophrastus' remark holds good: "the mistake is in the performance, not in the judgment".[33] (*I*, 82, my emphasis)

If Anscombe would still know that she is writing "I am a fool" even if the words were not appearing on the blackboard, failure in the execution of intention would never deprive an agent of the knowledge about what he is doing. One's knowledge of what one is intentionally doing remains the same regardless of whether one is really doing what one takes oneself to be doing; if this were correct, obviously Anscombe would need no additional observational reason to assure herself of the obtaining of the empirical fact that she is writing "I am a fool" on the blackboard. Well, this position—that failure in the execution of intention never prevents one from possessing practical knowledge—will be defensible if by "practical knowledge" Anscombe means to signify the knowledge one has of what one should be doing (with a view to some objective). But in the present case, "practical knowledge" denotes the knowledge one

[33] Anscombe characterizes the contrast between the mistake in performance and that in judgement with her famous shopping-list example (*I*, 56). See the next section for more on the relevant passage.

has of what one *is* doing, which cannot be knowledge if what it is knowledge of is not the case.[34]

In citing Theophrastus' remark, Anscombe can seem to supply a defense for the objectionable position to which she appears to be committed: the hypothetical failure in the execution of her intention to write "I am a fool" would not invalidate her claim to the practical knowledge that she is writing the words, because the failure would not lie in her judgement about what she is doing, but instead in her performance, i.e., the execution of her intention. However, if those words were not getting written on the blackboard, why wouldn't there be a mismatch between her judgement concerning what she is doing on the one hand and what she is actually doing on the other?[35]

The only promising attempt to avoid replying positively to the question is to appeal to the so-called openness of the present progressive:

[34] Anscombe's example of writing "I am a fool" is different from Davidson's carbon-copier example in that, while in the former what accounts for the lack of knowledge about what the subject is doing lies in what the putative knowledge statement is supposed to represent—there is no such a fact to be represented, in the latter the knower lacks the knowledge of what he is doing on account of the fact that he doubts whether he is successfully performing the action he takes himself to be performing. See the next section for more on this point.

[35] McDowell calls a mismatch of this kind "a derivative defect […] in what one says", as opposed to a "primary defect […] in what one is doing" if one is not doing what one means to do (2010, 429).

> A man can *be doing* something which he nevertheless does not *do*, if it is some process or enterprise which it takes time to complete and of which therefore, if it is cut short at any time, we may say that he *was doing* it, but *did not do* it. (*I*, 39, original emphasis)

The statement "I am writing my Master's thesis" can be true even if the person who utters it is at the moment watching a movie, sitting in front of his computer. Similarly, even if the words are at the moment not getting written on the blackboard because there is something wrong with the chalk, it can still be true that one is writing "I am a fool", given the implicit assumption that if by observation one finds that the words are not appearing on the blackboard one will pick up a new bit of chalk and try to get the job done. Nevertheless, in the case Anscombe imagines, she is writing those words *with her eyes shut*. If due to the malfunctioning of the chalk the words were not getting written on the blackboard, she would not pick up a new bit of chalk to finish writing those words and thus would not have been doing what she thinks she is doing.[36] This means that the openness of the present progressive is not applicable to the present case. So if the words were not appearing on the blackboard, there would be a mistake in her judgement: "I am writing 'I am a fool'" would not at all amount to a knowledge statement.

Contrary to what Anscombe thinks, whether or not one's intention is being successfully executed is not irrelevant to the practical knowledge one has of what one is doing: one has the

[36] This point is made by McDowell (ibid., fn. 6).

knowledge only if one is indeed doing what one thinks one is doing. Furthermore, the possibility of failure in the execution of a man's intention to do something requires observation on the part of the man to play an assisting role in executing the intention with which the man is moving his body in such-and-such a way and, if it turns out that the intention is being realized, observation surely plays an assisting, justificatory role in the man's gaining of the practical knowledge about his action. As I see it, even the scenario Anscombe imagines is objectionable; it is dubious that she knows that she is writing "I am a fool" on the blackboard, for the reason that with her eyes shut she could hardly ascertain whether those words are indeed getting written on the blackboard.

I thus conclude that the practical character of agent's knowledge of intentional action does not necessarily deprive observation of playing a justificatory role in the acquisition of such knowledge; on the contrary, because we may fail to be executing our intentions with which we are making certain bodily movements, we need to rely on our perceptual faculties to bridge, albeit not infallibly, the gap between what we say we are doing and what we are actually doing, from which the justificatory role of observation stems. To say that an agent can still have practical knowledge of something he is intentionally doing even when he is not actually doing the thing would amount to regarding the knowledge as non-factive.

2.3 Practical Thought, Its Directing Role in the Execution of Intention, and Observation

Davison's carbon-copier example and Anscombe's example of writing "I am a fool" together illustrate two ways in which our capacity for agent's knowledge of intentional action is fallible: in the former case, an agent is doing something intentionally without knowing that he is doing it, because of the subjective uncertainty with respect to the object of the putative knowledge; in the latter case, a man does not know, say, that he is writing "I am a fool" on the blackboard with his eyes shut, since the words are not appearing on the blackboard and thus he is simply not doing the thing he takes himself to be doing. Now unlike Anscombe's example, Davison's example stands in tension with the practical character of agent's knowledge of intentional action. Following Moran, I developed in section 2.1 a formal causality account of the practical character of agent's knowledge of intentional action, according to which one's knowledge of what one is intentionally doing plays a formal or constitutive role in integrating one's bodily movements and their causal (in the sense of efficient cause) results under a given circumstance into an intentional action with a certain internal means-end order. But provided that a person may be, for instance, intentionally making ten carbon copies yet not know that he is doing it, the formal aspect of the person's intentional action cannot be the putative knowledge that he is making the copies—something he does not possess.

Are we forced to reject the practical character of agent's knowledge of intentional action, then? I think not. I have contended that although the man in the carbon-copier case does not

know that he is making the copies, he must at least conceive of himself as being doing so in order for what is going on to count as one of his intentional actions. It is the thought the man has of what he is doing, rather than the putative practical knowledge he does not have, that supplies the form in virtue of which his bodily movements and their causal consequences constitute his being making the copies. If the man did not cast any doubts upon the execution of his intention to make the copies, the content of his conception of what he is doing would be identical with that of the knowledge he would have of what he is doing. Given the identity in content between one's thought as to what one is doing and the corresponding knowledge (suppose one has such knowledge), we can say that the thought provides the *primary* ontological source for integrating one's bodily movements and their causal results (in a given circumstance) into the intentional action (with a certain internal means-end structure) one is performing, and from that thought one's knowledge of what one is doing *derives* its practical character as the formal cause of the object known.

In this way, it should become manifest, the weakened epistemic condition on intentional action I endorse is central to the practical character of agent's knowledge of intention action: an agent who is intentionally doing something must conceive of himself as being doing the thing, a practical thought which supplies the formal cause of the intentional action and which the formal or constitutive role of the knowledge the agent has of what he is doing—if he possesses that knowledge—has its root in. The weakened epistemic condition on intentional action meets what I see as the deeper worry raised by Davidson's carbon-copier example. For

it is consistent with the possibility that an agent conceives *rightly* of himself as being, say, making ten carbon copies while not knowing that he is doing it as he is skeptical of whether the copies are getting made. If he were sure that the copies are actually getting made, he would know the thing he takes himself to be doing, which paves the way for not falling into the view that all one can know when one is moving his body in some specified manner with the intention of doing something is that one intends or is trying to do the thing (or possibly also that one is making certain bodily movements). Neither does Anscombe's example of writing "I am a fool" commit us to espouse such a position. Because it is possible for an agent to conceive *falsely* of himself as being, for instance, writing "I am a fool" on a piece of paper sheet, when e.g. there is no ink in the pen the agent is using; if there were no lack of cooperation on the part of the world and it turned out that the words are getting written, the agent would be indeed writing those words and, through observation, know that he is doing it.

A question I want to raise at this stage is this: isn't there also an *efficient causal role* that practical thought plays—in addition to its formal causal role—in one's active intervention into the course of nature? After all, the key passage on which the formal causality conception of being practical is based says only that the sense in which practical knowledge is the cause of intentional action "means *more than* that practical knowledge is […] a necessary condition of the production of various results" (*I*, 87-88, my emphasis), which does not deny but rather assigns to practical knowledge an efficient causal role in "the production of various results".

Furthermore, if it is merely because absent one's practical thought what is taking place—one's bodily movements and their results—cannot count as the execution of one's intention that practical thought is the cause of intentional action, then it would seem as if without one's practical thought what is taking place could still be occurring: one's practical thought would be just "an unnecessary accompaniment" (*I*, 6) to what is taking place, playing no role in the actualization of one's bodily movements and their results. For the sake of illustration, consider the following passage:

> I once saw some notes on a lecture of Wittgenstein in which he imagined some leaves blown about by the wind and saying "Now I'll go this way . . . now I'll go that way" as the wind blew them. The analogy is unsatisfactory in apparently assigning no role to these predictions other than that of an unnecessary accompaniment to the movements of the leaves. But it might be replied: what do you mean by an "unnecessary" accompaniment? If you mean one in the absence of which the movements of the leaves would have been just the same, the analogy is certainly bad. (*I*, 6-7)

Though this passage does not concern the issue of practical thought, the example can be easily modified to suit my purpose, by replacing the leaves' prediction "Now I'll go this way . . . now I'll go that way" with their thought "I am going this way … I am going that way". The analogy of the leaves' thought about their movements with the practical thought an agent has of what

he is doing is certainly bad: the leaves' thought about their movements only accidentally accompanies their movements, for the leaves would still be blown around in exactly the same way even if they did not entertain the thought concerning where they are going. By contrast, the practical thought an agent has of what he is doing does not simply accidentally accompany what is being caused into existence by the agent.

Compare the following two scenarios: in one case, I conceive of myself as being beating out a particular rhythm with a pump handle and by moving my arm in such-and-such a way I am beating out the rhythm; in the other case, with my fingers round the pump handle I take myself to be replenishing the water supply of my house, and by moving my arm in such-and-such a way I am actually doing so with a particular rhythm being beaten out as an unintended result of my movements. If in the first scenario my thought that I am beating out a particular rhythm (which is expressive of knowledge) were to be subtracted from the fact that the rhythm is being beaten out by the bodily movements I am making, then surely I would not be intentionally beating out the rhythm but instead simply be intentionally moving my arm in such-and-such a way with an unintended rhythm being beaten out, as the second scenario shows. That is right, given the formal causal role of practical thought. Nevertheless, the formal causal role of my practical thought cannot be the only role that the thought plays under the given circumstance: it could not be the case that the fact that the particular rhythm is being beaten out by my bodily movements merely *accidentally coincides with* my practical thought that I am beating out the rhythm. If the clicking noises which constitute the particular rhythm I intend to bring about

were not being made, I would check what is wrong with the pump handle and try my best to fix it and then, having gotten it fixed, continue moving my arm up and down.[37] A similar counterfactual is not true of the second scenario. Even if the clicking noises which constitute the very rhythm were not being caused by the bodily movements I am intentionally making, so long as the water is getting pumped into the cistern of my house I would not stop moving my arm to check whether there is something wrong with the pump handle which causes it not to produce the clicking noises. In other words, the implied result of my action in the first scenario—the particular rhythm's being getting beaten out—does not accidentally coincide with my practical thought that I am beating out the rhythm. My thought plays an efficient causal role in the execution of my intention to beat out the rhythm: it *directs* the actualization of the intentional activity I am engaging in,[38] motivating me to make modifications whenever necessary, so as to ensure (albeit never infallibly) that the implied result of my action is being brought about into actuality.[39]

Anscombe's famous shopping-list example, I think, can be read as demonstrating the directing role of practical thought in the execution of intention. The example is as follows:

[37] On account of the openness of the present progressive, it can still be said of me that I am beating out the rhythm during the period when I am fixing the pump handle.

[38] My use of the verb "direct" is intended to echo Anscombe's example of directing a project (*I*, 82).

[39] The directing role of practical thought in the execution of intention lend strong support to the identification of *intention in action* with practical thought. See McDowell (2010) for a detailed exploration of what the content of an intention in action is.

> Let us consider a man going round a town with a shopping list in his hand. Now it is clear that the relation of this list to the things he actually buys is one and the same whether his wife gave him the list or it is his own list; and that there is a different relation when a list is made by a detective following him about. If he made the list itself, it was an expression of intention; if his wife gave it him, it has the role of an order. What then is the identical relation to what happens, in the order and the intention, which is not shared by the record? It is precisely this: if the list and the things that the man actually buys do not agree, and if this and this alone constitutes a mistake, then the mistake is not in the list but in the man's performance (if his wife were to say: 'Look, it says butter and you have bought margarine', he would hardly reply: 'What a mistake! we must put that right' and alter the word on the list to 'margarine'); whereas if the detective's record and what the man actually buys do not agree, then the mistake is in the record. (*I*, 56)

The contrast Anscombe draws between the relations what the shopper buys standing to the shopping list on the one hand and to the list recorded by the detective on the other has since Anscombe been commonly labelled as the opposite "directions of fit". Although the things written on the shopper's and the detective's lists may turn out to be identical, the shopper's mental representation of his own list which is an intention to buy the things written on the list

differs from the detective's mental representation of his own list which is a belief about what the shopper buys in respect to their respective directions of fit. While in the case of the shopper's mental representation of his own list the direction of fit goes outwards from the mind to the world such that the shopper's intention to buy those things aims at bringing the world into agreement with the mind and the world should fit the mind, in the case of the detective's mental representation of his own list the direction of fit flows inwards from the world to the mind such that the detective's belief about what the shopper buys aims at bringing the mind to correspond to the world and the mind should fit the world. If there is a mismatch between what the shopper buys and the things that are included in his list, and if "this and this alone constitutes a mistake",[40] then this will not be a mistake in his list but rather a mistake in his performance, i.e., a mistake in what he does—he fails to buy what he should buy. In contrast, if there is a discrepancy between what the shopper buys and the things that are included in the detective's list, then this will constitute a mistake in the detective's list, i.e., a mistake in what he records—the record fails to include what it should include.

Moreover, it seems to me that the contrast between the relations what the shopper buys standing to his own list and to the detective's list does not just consist in the opposite directions

[40] This further qualification is necessary, for "the discrepancy might arise because some of the things were not to be had and if one might have known they were not to be had, we might speak of a mistake (an error of judgment) in constructing the list. If I go out in Oxford with a shopping list including 'tackle for catching sharks', no one will think of it as a mistake in performance that I fail to come back with it. And then again there may be a discrepancy between the list and what the man bought because he changed his mind and decided to buy something else instead" (*I*, 56).

of fit exhibited by the shopper's and the detective's mental representations of their own lists. It also consists in the efficient causal role that, when the shopper is shopping, the practical thought the shopper has of what he is doing plays in executing his intention to buy whatever is included in his list. Suppose for instance that the shopper is shopping at a Spar supermarket. He intends to buy butter rather than margarine, and he is at the moment looking for butter. If the shopper finds butter on a shelf, he will pick up, say, a piece of butter and put it in his shopping cart; if he realizes that what he is holding in his hand is not at all a piece of butter but a piece of margarine, he will not put it in his shopping cart but will instead put it down and go on looking for some butter. In contrast, someone who does not hold the practical thought that he is buying butter rather than margarine is just curious to know what it is that he is holding in his hand. If he *prima facie* comes to believe that it is a piece of butter, and if after reading the words on the wrapper he realizes that it is not a piece of butter but instead a piece of margarine, then he will certainly alter his belief about the identity of what he is holding in his hand; yet since he does not conceive of himself as being buying butter rather than margarine, which means the intention *in* what he is doing is not expressed by "I am buying butter but not margarine", he will not put the piece of margarine back on the shelf and not go on looking for some butter. To this extent, the shopper's practical thought that he is buying butter and not margarine plays a directing role in the actualization of the intentional activity he is engaging

in, manifested by whatever behavioral modifications he has to make in order for him to be successfully performing the action.[41]

It is evident that the directing role of practical thought in the execution of intention must be operating with the help of observation. In the shopping-list example, absent the operation of some of his perceptual faculties the shopper can hardly come to judge that what he is holding in hand is not a piece of butter but rather a piece of margarine, a judgement together with his practical thought that he is buying butter motivates him to put the piece of margarine down and continue looking for butter. Suppose that the shopper picks something up from a shelf and by observation he comes to know that what he is holding in hand is a piece of butter, then given his practical conception of himself as being buying butter he will surely put the piece of butter in his shopping cart. Similarly, if in the water-pumping case there were a hole in the pipe causing the water to leak so that the water were not being pumped into the cistern of my house, which by observation I came to realize, then given my practical thought that I am pumping water I would switch to another pipe (suppose there is one). The directing role that practical thought plays in the execution of intention hence goes hand in hand with the assisting role that observation plays in the execution of intention: observation furnishes information as to whether

[41] The efficient causal role that practical thought plays in the execution of intention might prompt some to suggest another reading of the conception of practical *knowledge* (not practical thought) as "the cause of what it understands", according to which the "cause" signifies the final cause. See Appendix for a brief discussion of such an interpretation.

the implied result of an intentional action is getting actualized for one's practical thought of what one is doing to direct—by motivating one to alter the ways of executing the intention of doing the thing whenever necessary—the actualization of the action one takes oneself to be doing.

Furthermore, observation is necessary not only for practical thought to play its directing role in the realization of its object but for practical thought to be expressive of practical knowledge. A man who is intentionally making ten carbon copies by moving his hand in such-and-such a manner actively seeks an observational reason, acquired through the operation of some of his perceptual faculties, to justify his practical thought that he is making the copies by assuring himself that the copies are indeed getting made. Likewise, a person who is intentionally painting a wall yellow actively searches for an observational reason for his practical thought that he is painting the wall yellow to amount to knowledge, a reason assuring himself that the wall is in fact being painted yellow. For this reason, I conclude, the directing role of one's practical thought in executing one's intention of doing something (by making certain bodily movements) is inseparable from the justificatory role of observation as a source for one's practical thought to be qualified as practical knowledge.

Conclusion

It is a *prima facie* plausible idea that way in which an agent comes to know what he is intentionally up to differs from how others are capable of figuring out what the agent is doing in that, while the agent knows independently of his perception what he is doing, others can come to know what the agent is up to only on the basis of observation. When I am up to something intentionally, say, writing such-and-such on a blackboard, it does not seem that I have to observe whether the words are appearing on the blackboard to know what I am doing; by contrast, someone else who is standing next to me has to rely on his perception to figure out that I am writing such-and-such.

In this thesis, I criticized such an idea. In particular, I argued against the unqualified non-observational character Anscombe imputes to agent's knowledge of intentional action—i.e., an agent who is intentionally doing something must always know without observation what he is doing. The core of my argument is rooted in the consideration that as long as what an agent is intentionally doing involves causing the external world to change in some way, it is always possible that the change necessary for the agent to be truly doing what he means to do is not being brought about by his bodily movements. Hence, observation on the part of the agent plays an assisting role in executing the intention with which he is making the bodily movements and, if it turns out that the intention is being realized, observation surely supplies the needed justificatory source for the agent's practical thought of what he is doing to express practical knowledge.

Meanwhile, in refuting the idea that the practicality of agent's knowledge of intentional action necessitates the unqualified non-observational character of such knowledge, I argued for both a formal and an efficient causal roles that practical thought plays in the context of intentional intervention into the course of nature: one's practical thought provides the formal cause in virtue of which one's bodily movements and their causal results are individuated as what one is intentionally doing; moreover, one's practical thought directs the realization of the intention with which one is making the bodily movements.

Appendix

The knowledge an agent has of what he is intentionally doing, it might be proposed, is the end—or at least one of the ends—for the sake of which the agent is performing the action. At first glance, this may seem too counterintuitive a proposal. Consider the water-pumping case again. Is it natural to regard the acquisition of my knowledge that I am poisoning the inhabitants in the house as one of the ends for the sake of which I am poisoning them, I am replenishing the water supply, I am operating the pump, or I am moving my arm up and down? It seems not. For surely I will not answer the question "Why are you poisoning the inhabitants in the house?" (or any of the relevant "Why?" questions with respect to what I am doing under any of these four descriptions) in this way: "I am poisoning them (or I am replenishing the water supply, etc.) in order to acquire the knowledge that I am poisoning them".

However, I think, there is a sense in which the acquisition of my knowledge that I am poisoning the inhabitants can be considered as one of the ends of the action. When I am poisoning the inhabitants by moving my arm up and down, I am performing the action with the aim of being *truly* poisoning those men, of getting my intention in action executed successfully, so to speak. It would be normally so rare an exception that one is intentionally doing something and nevertheless does not have the least intention to be executing one's intention in action successfully. One kind of the exceptions consist of coerced intentional actions; for instance, an agent is intentionally poisoning his virtuous neighbors while intending not to be actually poisoning them, as a mad criminal is pointing a gun at the agent's head and forces him to poison

his neighbors. In such a case, the agent's intention not to be poisoning his virtuous neighbors is but a *second-order* intention: he intends his intention of poisoning his neighbors not to be getting executed successfully; otherwise, we cannot say of him that he is intentionally poisoning his neighbors.

Under normal circumstances, we do not hold second-order intentions which stand in conflict with our first-order intentions to do certain things. If a man is intentionally making ten carbon copies, then he is moving his hand in such-and-such a way with the intention of making the copies but does not intend his intention in action not to be actualized; one is intentionally raising one's arm absent an intention of not realizing one's intention to raise one's arm; a person is making certain bodily movements with the intention of opening the window of his room while not holding an intention not to execute his intention to open the window, etc. If, as a matter of fact, one's intention in action is getting executed successfully, e.g., one is actually poisoning the inhabitants, then other things being equal one's practical thought of what one is doing would be expressive of practical knowledge: one would possess the practical knowledge that one is poisoning the inhabitants.

So although the acquisition of one's practical knowledge concerning what one is doing is *not explicitly* intended as one of the ends for the sake of which one is intentionally doing the thing one takes oneself to be doing, insofar as one conceives of oneself as being doing the thing throughout the time it takes to complete the action—which is just one's intention in action, the

acquisition of the knowledge can be seen as being *implicitly* involved in the aim of getting one's intention in action executed successfully.[42]

[42] Thanks for Huoranszki for inviting me to consider the final causality interpretation of the "cause" in the description of practical knowledge as "the cause of what it understands".

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