

*How We Act: Causes, Reasons, and Intentions*, by Berent Enç. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003. Pp. xiii + 252. H/b £39.50.

Before his untimely death, Berent Enç was able to submit the typescript of this book to the publisher. Afterwards, Fred Dretske guided the book through to publication. We should thank Dretske for allowing this serious, sensible work to see the light of day.

Enç defends what is sometimes called the 'standard view': action is explicable as bodily movement caused in the right way by appropriate mental states. Most of the territory covered in the book is either an elaboration of this view, as in the chapters on deviance, basic action, deliberation, and intentions, or a critique of alternative views, as in the chapter on volitions, or an attempt to show that certain ideas are consistent with the analysis, as in the chapter on freedom of the will. Perhaps the most salient characteristic of the book is its painstaking elucidation of some of the requirements of the standard view.

A central question for any theory of action is this: what makes an action a basic action? The answer cannot be that there are no events of any sort that cause them, since even if indeterminism is true, its truth cannot be a presupposition of the very idea of a basic action. On the volitional theory which Enç dismisses, a basic action is one which has no event intrinsic to it, or which, in the jargon of action theory, has no result. But that solution leaves us, for various reasons, with an irreducible account of action, and in particular, leaves the theory with irreducible volitional acts that proceed from and account for the agency of every other, non-basic action. Enç's solution is to offer a different account of basicness. Enç's basic actions do have intrinsic events and their intrinsic events are caused by a prior intention of the agent. Omitting Enç's bells and whistles, what makes a basic action basic is not that it has no cause and not that it has no intrinsic event, but that its intrinsic event can be brought about by the agent without the agent using his knowledge of how to bring about any other event.

The idea is interesting. Consider my whisking of egg whites, and all the particular hand movements that go to make up the whisking. Why is the whisking the basic action rather than each individual hand movement that goes to make it up? Enç would say that this is so because, in the normal case, the agent knows how to whisk the egg whites but he does not need to utilize his knowledge of how to make the various hand movements in order to whisk. So in such a case, the whisking but none of its constituents is basic. In another case, perhaps one in which I teach my son how to whisk egg whites, I might utilize my knowledge of how to move my hand in each way in order to teach him how to whisk, so in that different case each constituent movement would be basic and the whisking be but a derivative action.

There are two problems with Enç's account of basicness. First, in one obvi-

and I do utilize that knowledge in whisking the egg whites. So this idea of the agent utilizing no knowledge of the constituents in order to perform the 'larger' or whole act does not quite capture Enç's intuition. What he surely meant is that the agent does not utilize his knowledge of the individual hand movements explicitly or consciously. Or perhaps that knowing how to whisk egg whites is knowledge at the personal level, whereas the knowledge of how to move my hand is, in the normal case, a feature of some sub-personal system. Something more must be introduced beyond the contrast of utilizing and not utilizing knowledge; the contrast Enç needs is under-theorized.

Secondly, early in the chapter, Enç says that the causes that trigger a whole walk (of a cockroach) are different from the causes that trigger each particular movement. Enç says that the causes belong in different systems. Perhaps, if applied to cases of human agents, this might cash out as personal and sub-personal levels. But Enç also says that 'the token walking is identical with the multitude of sequences of specific leg movements' (p. 64), and so it is not easy to see how the whole walk and the sequence of constituents can have different causes, if the walk is identical with that sequence of constituents.

Prior to chapter four, Enç's standard analysis is presented as an analysis of 'S's behaviour *b* is an action'. But in chapter four, on deviance, the analysandum becomes 'S does *a* intentionally', and the deviance problem is phrased as a difficulty for that latter analysis. The chapter conflates two different contrasts: action versus mere bodily movement, and intentional action versus unintentional action. Both cases of unintentional action and cases of mere bodily movement could make it false that *S* does *a* intentionally. For example, in describing Frankfurt's case of the inexperienced accomplice who spills his drink and Davidson's case of the rock climber, Enç says that the rock climber produces a basic act in a way that he is not supposed to. Davidson's own example is ambiguous between acting unintentionally and a bodily movement that is not an action at all, intentional or unintentional, but not so Frankfurt's. It can only be a case of unintentional action.

Enç's basic idea is this. The simple standard analysis would say that *S* does *A* intentionally only if *S*'s intention to *A* causes *S*'s bringing about an event intrinsic to *A* 'in the right way'. Enç thinks he can spell out the qualification 'in the right way' non-circularly, without reusing any idea of agency.

Start with the case of deviancy that Enç first introduces, slightly modified (by me) to produce a clearer case: an actor wishes for his hand to shake in a performance, to give him the appearance of being nervous. He intends that his hand shake and having that intention makes him so nervous that his hand shakes. This is not 'the right way'. Enç says 'his appearing nervous was not intentional' (p. 101). We, in contrast to Enç, can be clearer. His hand's shaking was no action of his at all, either intentional or unintentional. It was a mere bodily movement.

Enç's diagnosis is to distinguish between what a system is supposed to do and how it is supposed to do it. Enç offers a functional account of the latter

idea. In general, claims Enç, no requirement *R* on the causal chain leading to the movement can itself make the difference between deviance and non-deviance. According to Enç, there is a non-deviant case of the nervous actor that uses precisely the same causal pathway as does the deviant case. In the non-deviant case, the actor knows that forming the intention that his hand shake will result in his hand shaking because his so intending will make him nervous, and so he forms this intention with the result he plans. In this case, his hand shakes intentionally. 'One and the same causal path is deviant in the first scenario and non-deviant in the second' (p. 105). 'In the non-deviant case of the nervous actor scenario, the actor exploits the deviant causal path of the first scenario, and in so doing transforms his appearing nervous into an intentional act' (p. 115).

The attentive reader will notice that I have had to reword Enç's examples: 'appearing nervous', the phrase Enç uses instead of 'hand shaking', is not the name of any action at all. But once we describe the case more carefully, certain ambiguities arise. In the first, deviant, scenario *S* does not act at all; his hand merely shakes. What occurs in the second, non-deviant, case? There too, there is no action intentional or otherwise—the movement is not intrinsic to, or the result of, any action of *S*'s. What *S* does is to knowingly put himself into a position such that he knows that his body will move in a certain way. This is what could happen when I go into a doctor's office and he taps my knee with a hammer. Suppose that I know what is meant to happen and am anxious to obtain the right reflex results, say for a medical exam for a new insurance policy. I therefore intend for my knee to jerk. As a result of my intention that my knee jerk, I let the doctor tap my knee and my knee jerks. That does not make my knee-jerk a movement intrinsic to any action of mine—I do not jerk my knee, just because the movement is the result of my plan. The knee-jerk is what is supposed to happen and it happens in the way it is supposed to do so. But it is no action of mine, let alone an intentional action.

Similarly for the actor in what Enç calls the non-deviant case. The hand shaking happens as it is supposed to happen, along the 'right' causal pathway. The hand shaking can even be explained in the functionalist way Enç requires. But none of those facts converts the shaking of the hand into an action, and so none accounts for what makes a causal chain deviant in action theory.

In chapters five and six, Enç describes both deliberation and intentions in a way that is friendly to the standard account. On his account, actions are 'typically' preceded by a deliberative process that leads to an intention to act, the latter of which causes the action. The intentions are conceived as very full (Enç calls them 'holistic') items: the intention 'represents ... the whole act-tree that includes the act plan as well as the side-effects that were considered in the deliberative process' (p. 182). To my taste, Enç over-intellectualizes action. I would have thought that deliberation only precedes a rather restricted subset of the actions I perform each day. Further, what is the argument for this holistic approach to intentions? Essentially, the idea is that intentions must guide

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actions, and if, for example, the side-effects were not part of the intentions, then should something untoward happen and the agent need to revise his plan, the intentions could not perform the very guidance role for which they are required.

To be sure, such information must be in some way encoded and retained by the agent for possible use. But it seems to me that there is no reason why this information must be retained at the personal level at all; it may be hard-wired in, and be potentially accessible to the agent in certain circumstances. But if intentions are to be placed at the personal level, there is then no argument for over-inflating the size of intentions themselves to contain such information. The song says that Casey's mind was so loaded that it nearly exploded. Eng's account of action seems to me to have Casey's problem.

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*Decisions, Uncertainty, and the Brain*, by Paul W. Glimcher. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003, Pp. xx + 375. H/b £25.50.

This book aims to give a new framework for neuroscience by banishing the concept of the reflex and making an economic model central to explanations of the behaviour of organisms and their components. I very much doubt that it accomplishes these aims, but along the way some interesting issues are raised.

The first half of the book is a lively history of attempts to explain complex actions in simple terms, from Descartes to connectionism. I will not discuss this, as the material is familiar and no really new points are made. Glimcher