



BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Hornsby, Jennifer (1998) Dualism in action. In: O'Hear, A. (ed.) Current Issues in Philosophy of Mind. Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 43. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 377-401. ISBN 0521632971.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/14648/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>
contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

or alternatively

Dualism in Action

JENNIFER HORNSBY

We know what one dualist account of human action looks like, because Descartes gave us one.¹ I want to explore the extent to which contemporary accounts of physical action are vulnerable to the charges that may be made against Descartes's dualist account. I have a long-standing interest in philosophy of action, and have always maintained that my view about the basic shape of a correct 'theory of action' can be accepted by someone resolutely opposed to dualism. But the genuineness of my opposition has been doubted, and it will remain doubtful until we have a better understanding of what makes an account objectionably dualistic. In this paper, I hope to deflect some of the criticisms aimed against my account, and to show that when they are turned onto their proper path their actual target is a kind of physicalism.²

I shall have to rely on one intuitive understanding of physical action here. According to this, where there is a physical action, a person moves, and there is a psychological explanation of a certain sort of something that she thereby does. This takes it for granted that human agency is evinced when someone does something intentionally,³ and that when people do things by moving their bodies, they are involved in events.⁴ Using this conception, and assuming a certain account of events' individuation,⁵ one can say that any action is some person's moving her body (usually her moving of a bit of it). This understanding will serve in the present context, because the debates about action which are of concern here take place in the domain that it carves out.⁶

¹ Since delivering the lecture on which the present paper is based, I have come across Descartes' Dualism, by Gordon Baker and Katherine J. Morris (London: Routledge, 1996), in which the authors argue that Descartes did not hold the doctrine (sc. 'Cartesian Dualism') which contemporary philosophers attribute to him. If they are right, then we may be less well placed than I suppose to base knowledge of a dualist account of action on our understanding of Descartes. I have responded by adding Appendix B.

² The account I gave in Actions (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) has often been accused of Cartesianism: there are more details in §5, and see note 30 infra.

³ The general idea that human agency is evinced when a person intentionally does something is relatively uncontroversial. It can be sustained by seeing what sort of trio the concepts of belief, desire and intention form, and thus what kind of psychological explanation an action explanation is.

⁴ Some resist the assumption that an action is ever an event. Resistance may stem from the thought that actions should not be reckoned among 'mere happenings'. I hope that it will become clear why, on my own view, there could be no reason to treat actions as 'mere happenings'.

⁵ See e.g. D. Davidson, 'Agency', in R. Binkley et al (eds.) Agent, Action and Reason (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1971); repr. in his Essays on Actions and Events (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 43–61.

⁶ When actions are defined by reference to a class of physical events, the general idea of human agency is restricted in two different ways. (a) Left out from the account are things that fall into an intuitive category of mental. Consider mental arithmetic; or consider the view that agency is evinced whenever there is an exercise of practical reason. (b) Left out from the account are things people intentionally do, the doings of which are not events. Consider an occasion on which a intentionally fails to greet b, and on which we might be apt to say that a did nothing, or say that nothing happened. Here a's intentionally not greeting b may be thought not to be an event; and, if it is not, then we have an example of agency—according to the intuitive conception of agency—, but we do not have an action—not according to the restrictive conception of actions. For present purposes, it need not be a question whether restrictions (a) and (b) ought to be lifted by a correct conception of agency, because charges of dualism are faced by accounts of action which impose the restrictions and deal with 'physical actions'.

1: Dualism vs. Physicalism

Before I come to allegations of dualism made against accounts of action, I should say something about what dualism itself amounts to. I think that in the present state of play, many philosophers have an inadequate conception of this.

Naturally enough, dualism is contrasted with physicalism.⁷ We know that there are various versions of physicalism advocated in the philosophy of mind. For a start, there is the mild sort—token–token identities physicalism—, and there is the stronger sort—so called type–type identities physicalism. And then there are versions of physicalism which hold that composition or constitution, rather than identity, is the relation holding between mental and physical states and events. Whatever the details, it can seem as if we might put physicalist doctrines onto some sort of scale—a scale on which dualism might be supposed to feature at the opposite pole, as it were, from the strongest physicalist doctrine. It seems, then, as though we could ask a person: ‘How physicalist are you?’. One possible answer would be ‘Not at all’; and then, if this were the right way to think about things, we could place the person as a dualist. But this cannot be the right account of the matter. If dualists are to be contrasted with physicalists, then that is not because they reject rather a lot of the doctrine which we have come to associate with ‘physicalism’ at the end of the twentieth century. Dualists are distinguished from physicalists inasmuch as a dualist answers Two to a certain question, to which any monist—including a physicalist—answers One. The question to which Descartes’s answer of Two earns him the title of dualist is the question ‘How many sorts of substance inhabit the world?’.

Not only is he a dualist, but also (what matters here) Descartes’s account of action is dualistic in a straightforward and obvious sense. It is true that when *res cogitans* first appears in the Second Meditation, ‘it is in the strict sense only a thing that thinks’: ‘I am a mind or intelligence or intellect or reason’, Descartes says. But Descartes widens ‘thought’ to include volitional, as well as intellectual, activity. ‘What is a thing that thinks?’, he asks; and answers ‘A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing or is unwilling’.⁸ Volitions—in which a *res cogitans* participates insofar as it ‘is willing’—belong to substances which are entirely separate, and radically different in their nature, from any bodies.

Let us call such substances ‘souls’.⁹ Then one disavows dualism of Descartes’s sort by saying that there are no such things as souls. In that case there cannot be any need to locate oneself on any scale of ‘physicalism’ in order to avoid dualism. But by the same token, there must be more to Descartes’s way of thinking about persons than is elicited in contrasting it with contemporary physicalists’ ways of thinking. We are often encouraged to think that ‘Cartesianism’ still rears its ugly head. From a variety of sources, we are familiar with attacks on the idea of mental states as inner, private states, whose content can be specified without

⁷ Throughout, I use ‘physicalism’ as the name of a kind of monism. I might have used the word ‘materialism’, or, introducing another bone of contention, ‘naturalism’, instead.

⁸ My italics. Descartes actually adds imagining and having sensory perceptions onto this list of attributes characterizing a soul, but these come (by the Sixth Meditation) to be treated in a special category of their own, so that Descartes’s account of perception is not straightforwardly dualist. See John Cottingham, ‘Cartesian Trialism’, Mind XCIV, No. 374 (April 1985), 218-230. The question how straightforwardly dualist Descartes’s account of action is comes up in Appendix B.

⁹ I use ‘souls’ throughout to stand for what Descartes called sometimes ‘esprit’ (or ‘mens’), at other times ‘âme’ (or ‘anima’). We are familiar enough with ‘minds’ used as a façon de parler, supposed to make no commitment to non-physical substances, that ‘souls’ serves better to register such commitment.

appeal to anything outside the consciousness of the person whose states they are: these are attacks on Cartesianism.¹⁰ Cartesianism is arguably implicit in Descartes's method, and is usually supposed to be secured by substance dualism of Descartes's sort. But if charges of Cartesianism are still with us today, it seems that Cartesianism cannot actually require substance dualism of Descartes's sort.

One can see that contemporary physicalist orthodoxy might not be proof against Cartesianism by noticing an ambiguity in 'substance dualism'. Substance dualism is often understood as the doctrine that mind and body are two different kinds of substance—so that, in the terminology being used here to register Descartes's view, there are souls as well as bodies, souls being of a different kind from physical things.¹¹ But substance dualism might be understood more broadly—as the doctrine that a mind, whatever kind of thing it may be, is a substance different from any animal body. In this broader sense, substance dualism is compatible with versions of physicalism. Indeed any physicalist who tells us that minds are brains would seem now to be a substance dualist (no matter what he has to say about states and events).¹² Underlying substance dualism in the broad sense is the idea that those persisting things which have mental properties are separable from all such things as lack mental properties (no matter whether the things having mental properties are actually physical things). This idea does not require souls to be present in the world. And it may be that some of the hostility to Cartesianism is not hostility to souls as such, but is directed towards treatments of the mental as a self-standing, inner realm. One does not automatically escape such treatments by adopting the tenets of contemporary physicalist orthodoxy.

Two possibilities have emerged here. First, it may be that one can be anti-Cartesian without endorsing any orthodox physicalist doctrine. Secondly, it may be that some of those who go in for orthodox physicalist doctrine are still Cartesian. I myself think that both of these possibilities are actual. At any rate, you will need to appreciate them both in order to understand how it can be that, in resisting the charge that my own account of action lines up with Descartes's, I should avoid endorsing any of the going versions of physicalism.

2: A very short history of action theory

We can look at a very truncated history of action theory in order to reveal where questions about Cartesianism impinge upon debates about action.

¹⁰ By 'Cartesianism', I mean a conception of mind which, for instance, has been taken to be the butt of many of Wittgenstein's remarks. Assuming that a doctrine of substance dualism of Descartes's kind is to be avoided, I want to encourage the thought that some of its errors may actually attach to a Cartesianism which it brings with it, and which may attach also to other doctrines.

¹¹ The matter is more complicated than this allows, because Descartes, though he thought that individual souls were substances, took individual bodies to be modifications of stuff, not substances proper. (Those who speak of Descartes simply as a mind/matter dualist ignore his different treatments of individuals in the realm of mind and individuals in the realm of matter. And I too ignore them pro hac vice.)

¹² I make the assumption here that brains are substances. In the literature on personal identity, one sometimes encounters the claim that persons are brains; those who advance it do not intend to deny that persons are substances (in the relevant sense). Presumably those who say that minds are brains (who are rather more numerous than those who say that persons are brains) do not have their own special understanding of 'brain'. And we do not need Descartes's demanding notion of a substance to understand substance dualism in the broad sense (or even in the narrow one: see note 11 supra): 'persisting things' might serve for 'substances' here.

This should start with Descartes. We have seen already that he thought that volition is a faculty of souls. Here is what he said about the soul's production of movements.¹³

The soul has its main seat in the little gland which is in the middle of the brain, from where it radiates throughout the rest of the body by means of the animal spirits, the nerves, and even the blood [T]he machine of the body is made [so that] ... this gland's being moved by the soul drives the surrounding spirits into the pores of the brain, which conduct them through the nerves into the muscles, by means of which it causes them to move the members [of the body].

Only the dualism here needs emphasizing now. The human body is one thing, a machine whose members are caused to move by the muscles which (*via* the spirits) are driven by the gland wherein the soul resides. The soul itself is another thing: intellectual and volitional properties attach to it. The resulting picture of human action has been called volitionism. According to this, when there is an action:

A soul's volition IS CAUSALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR a movement of a body

In order to move to contemporary debate, we need to skip three hundred years. This takes us to recent opposition to volitionism. The anti-volitionists of the 1950s and 1960s thought it an error to suppose that the question 'What makes a bodily movement voluntary?' should receive a causal answer.¹⁴ They wanted to avoid the soul and its modes of affecting things; and they thought that these could be avoided if causal connections were left out of an account of the explanatory relations involved in understanding what people do. Their opposition to volitionism, then, was anti-causalist.

In the 1960s, the tide turned. Donald Davidson's paper 'Actions, Reasons and Causes' was largely responsible for that.¹⁵ Nowadays this paper is read as providing arguments for a particular causal thesis, rather than as reacting specifically against the anti-causalism of the anti-volitionists. But situating it by reference to the thinking which prevailed when it was written, we can be aware of the care which Davidson took to avoid any events that might have been supposed to play the causal role that volitions play in Descartes's picture. Davidson thought that there is no need for any volitional items in order for causality to have its rightful place in an account of action. (His view was, and is, that beliefs and desires cause actions.¹⁶) Although the anti-causalism which Davidson was reacting against was popular at one time, it is not very popular any longer:¹⁷ our powers as agents surely are powers to change things; it can seem absurd to suppose that we might capture the idea of human agency without treating

¹³ The Passions of the Soul , ARTICLE 34.

¹⁴ This is not a question that Descartes himself ever attempted to answer. But it is plausible that the attractions of a volitionism like Descartes's may have derived from thinking that having a mental cause could serve to distinguish the bodily movements that occur when there is voluntary (or intentional) action from all other bodily movements.

¹⁵ Journal of Philosophy 60, 1963; repr. in his op. cit. note 5, 3–19, and in A. Mele (ed.) The Philosophy of Action (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27–41.

¹⁶ I criticized this view in 'Agency and Causal Explanation', in J. Heil and A. Mele (eds.) Mental Causation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); repr. in The Philosophy of Action, op. cit. note 15, and in my Simple Mindedness: A Defense of Naive Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). The criticisms leave intact a broadly causal picture of human action by allowing that one can provide a causal explanation of what an agent does by saying what her reasons for doing it were. (Although this leaves me opposed to the anti-causalists, I object not only to Davidson's version, but also to all of the usual versions, of causalism: see §6 infra.)

¹⁷ Although it is still defended: see Michael Morris, in this volume.

human beings as part of the causal world within which they operate. If Davidson showed that we can have causation on the scene without volitions there, then he might seem to have put an end to the debate about volitionism.

There must be more to be said, however. We can pose questions which are simply not addressed in Davidson's account. In the first place, there are other concepts than 'belief' and 'desire' which apparently have a peculiar relation to action; and we can ask how those concepts fit in. Secondly, Davidson spoke to the causation of actions, not the causation of the bodily movements of Descartes's picture; and we can ask about this—about such events as arms' going up, movements of lips, or whatever¹⁸. Action theory of the 1970s and 1980s provided accounts which attempted to answer questions of these two sorts, by going into detail about the relations between the various events that there are when someone moves her body and thereby does something intentionally. The account I defended myself exploits a connection between what is done intentionally by an agent (i.e. what may be explained by allusion to what she wants and what she thinks) and what the agent tries to do:

(T) She V-d intentionally → she tried to V

In the presence of the understanding of an action that we are working with (sc. an event of a person's doing something intentionally), (T) ensures that every action is a person's trying to do something. Allowing, then, that in the case of physical action, it is because she is trying to do something that a person's body moves, one reaches an account which can be summarized thus:

A person's trying to do something is CAUSALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR a movement of
her body....

Evidently this account is readily associated with Descartes's: at first blush it might seem simply to rename Descartes's volitions using 'trying to —'. It could appear, then, as if the result of filling in a causalist account were to return one to the very volitionism that the anti-causalists had reacted against. But I think that this is a false appearance. And I want to free myself from guilt by association. So I shall defend (T) against charge of Cartesianism (§3). And I shall show how superficial the similarity is between Descartes's account and the one I have just summarized (hereafter 'my account'¹⁹).

¹⁸ At least it is natural to suppose (i) that the phrase 'bodily movements' subsumes events such as these, and (ii) that these events are not actions (where an action is an event of someone's intentionally doing something). I used to say that 'bodily movement' is ambiguous—so that it could mean either (say) the movement of a person's arm or a person's moving her arm (op. cit. note 2, Ch. 1). But I now think that I was over-generous to my opponents when I suggested that their claim that actions are movements relied upon an ambiguity. The verb 'move' is ambiguous, of course—between transitive and intransitive occurrences: 'move' plays different roles in 'She moved her arm' (where it is a transitive verb) and in 'Her arm moved' (where it is intransitive). But this ambiguity appears not to carry over to the nominal 'movement'. When a trace of the transitive verb occurs in a description of an event, we have (say) 'a person's moving her leg', and it is not evident that the word 'movement' can serve for this. If it cannot serve, then it would take a serious argument to show that a hand's going up (which is a bodily movement) is the same event as a person's raising her hand (which is apparently not a movement). Someone equipped with such an argument will say—as Davidson and others do—that actions just are bodily movements. But the arguments seem to me ill-motivated: see §5 infra.

¹⁹ I call it 'my account' for the sake of having an easy label for what I defend. Despite the label, I do not mean to suggest either that it originates with me, or that it is the whole of an account of anything. Brian O'Shaughnessy defended something similar in The Will (2 Vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); and he and others had previously argued for something like (T). I note that I think that we have to reject some of what O'Shaughnessy said in support of the account he gave: see note 23 infra.

3: The import of thesis (T)

By introducing ‘try to’, (T) brings in antecedents of bodily movements which fall into an intuitively mental category. So my account’s seeming similarity with Descartes’s appears to come in through its endorsement of (T). I need to explain why (T) should not be thought responsible for any items’ being conceived of in Descartes’s way.

Notice, firstly, that it is not only someone who accepts (T) who might have to guard against objections of Cartesianism. (T) makes a very general claim about what is required to do something intentionally.²⁰ But even someone who rejects this general claim will surely accept that there are occasions when a person moves her body, therein trying to do something or other. On such occasions at least, a movement of a bit of the person’s body arguably depends upon her trying to do whatever it is.²¹ Suppose, for example, that someone moves her finger against the keyboard trying to type a ‘£’ sign, but because the key has been reassigned she actually types an ‘@’. Her finger’s movement then depends upon her trying to type a ‘£’ sign. If there were objections to the very idea that the movement of a person’s body might depend upon her trying to do something, then the objections would apply in this case. And this means that a charge of dualism (if such a charge can really be made) is likely to crop up in particular cases even if it is denied that ‘try to’ has the pervasive application which someone who endorses (T) believes that it does. There is really more at stake here than the correctness of (T).

Notice, secondly, that although we are assuming generally that actions require bodily movements, and although (T) makes a very general claim in respect of actions, (T) does not make a claim about moving the body. You might hold that a person moves her body whenever there is a physical action of her doing something, and hold (as (T) says) that a person tries to do everything she intentionally does. That does not amount to your holding that people try to move their bodies whenever they do something intentionally. For it might be that people’s intentions sometimes take off at points beyond their bodies. (T) can be acceptable, then, even where it is denied that something an agent always does is to try to move her body. Endorsing (T) does not force one to speculate about what it is to move the body.

Notice, thirdly, that someone who accepts (T) will think that nearly all of the things that agents try to do are things that they actually succeed in doing; and that even where an agent fails to do something that she tries to do, she usually succeeds in doing *something* (there is something else she does—other than what she tries to do). Thus an ordinary case of someone’s trying to do something, whether successful or not, is just an ordinary case of action. (T) should not lead anyone to believe in things called ‘mere tryings’.²²

²⁰ (T) is to be read as a schema: in any instance ‘V’ is to be replaced by a verb, and the tense of the verb at its left-hand-side occurrence is to match the tense introduced into the ‘try to’ that occurs before the verb’s infinitive occurrence on the right-hand-side.

‘My account’ actually requires only that whenever there is an action, there is at least one thing that the agent intentionally does which is something she tries to do (at least one substituent for ‘V’ gives a truth). My ‘quick and simple’ argument (*infra*) suggests that agents try to do everything they intentionally do; but this fully general claim, which schema (T) catches, actually need not be at issue.

²¹ An argument would require the distinctness of actions (e.g. her depressing the key marked ‘£’) and bodily movements (e.g. her finger’s moving against the key). Cp. note 18 *supra*.

²² When ‘tryings’ (simply) are spoken of, people conjure up a picture of ‘mere tryings’: they forget the adverbial characters of ‘try to’. (See my ‘Reasons for Trying’, *Journal of Philosophical Research* XX, 1995, 525-539.) It is hard to find a natural terminological policy which enables one both to speak generally and to avoid the misleading impression that there might be ‘mere tryings’. The policy I have adopted here where the context allows is to use

By accepting (T) and a claim about the causal dependence of agents' effects in the world upon events in which agents participate, one arrives at a quite natural account of the difference between successful and unsuccessful attempts. Thus: someone who tries-to-have-an-effect-and-succeeds is someone who participates in an event which has some result she intended, whereas someone who tries-to-have-an-effect-and-fails is someone who participates in an event which doesn't have some result she intended. On this account, 'try to —' appears as a sort of common denominator, which is present both in intentional doings and in unsuccessful tryings. But those who have their doubts about (T) will wonder why 'try to' should be supposed to have any application at all when an agent actually does what she means to. The doubters may think that anyone committed to 'try to''s having such a pervasive application as (T) suggests must have been involved in a search for a common denominator—a sort of search which prescind from the world surrounding the agent and considers only the agent herself and how things might have seemed to her. Well, it is certainly true that philosophers have given arguments for (T) in which such considerations are very much to the fore.²³ But there is a quick and simple argument for it which requires no speculations about the phenomenology. All that this argument needs is that 'try to do something' can be glossed as 'do what one can to do the thing'. The agent who is influenced by having a reason to do something does what she can to do it. But what one does for a reason, one does intentionally. And in doing what one can to do something, one tries to do it. So agents try to do what they intentionally do.

This argument will be too quick to satisfy.²⁴ But my purpose is not to vindicate the account I outlined, but only to distance it from Descartes's. Suffice it here to say that (T) will seem plausible only when it is understood that it can be true that someone tries to do something without the fact that she tries to do it being at all a usual or useful thing for anyone to say or to think. Usually, of course, people simply can do the things which they-do-what-they-can-to-do. Otherwise life would consist mainly of frustrated attempts. That is why there is usually no point in thinking of the person who has done what she set out to do as having done what she could. Certainly there is no need for the agent herself to think of herself as trying to do that which (in fact) she tries to do. So (T) need not be responsible for the musings of those philosophers who conceive of 'tryings' (as they call them—cp. note 22) exclusively from the standpoint of the agent.

These points all help to show that (T) is not an accomplice in Cartesianism. But they do not speak directly to the similarity of my account and Descartes's. What I shall do next is to consider lines of objection which might be thought to have application equally to both accounts. I hope to show that their proper target is Descartes's account alone (§§4 and 5).

'try-to' (rather than just 'try') for shorthand, and to use 'try to —' as a sort of schematic verb: the intention is to keep it in mind that to try is always to try to do something.

There is a particular case where 'mere tryings' have seemed to be in question—the case of an agent who tries to do something but actually does nothing. I discuss this in Appendix A: On Landry's Patient.

²³ In volume 2 of The Will, O'Shaughnessy announces that a Gricean argument supports the claim about 'trying to' which he and I accept. But he proceeds to give (among others) an argument from illusion, whose tenor is certainly Cartesian. Suffice it here to say that I do not think a defence of (T) (still less of the weaker claim which is really at issue: see note 20 supra) need advert to 'trying to do seeming \emptyset ', or take a view on the 'epistemological status of bodily tryings'. A properly Gricean argument can certainly be much simpler than O'Shaughnessy's argument from illusion: see note 24 infra.

²⁴ A Gricean argument which I stated in my op. cit. note 2, 34–5 (which is an argument from ignorance, rather than an argument from illusion) also seeks to show that the background facts which conduce to an instance of 'She V-d intentionally' suffice for the truth of the relevant instance of 'She tried to V'.

4: A mysterious gulf?

In Gilbert Ryle's description of Descartes's account, 'mental thrusts, which are not movements of matter in space, can cause muscles to contract'; and mental thrusts work 'in some way, which must remain forever mysterious'.²⁵ Ryle is one of the anti-causalist anti-volitionists. He wanted to know how something purely mental could have a causal influence in the material world where muscles contract. How is the gulf between mind and matter bridged?

Descartes for his part saw no problem here. He once said 'if "corporeal" is taken to mean anything that can in anyway affect a body, then mind too must be called "corporeal" in this sense'.²⁶ Of course, we are unlikely to be much impressed by this: a philosopher who tells us, as Descartes did, that the properties of thought and of extension are mutually incompatible can hardly be entitled to claim that there is any sense in which a thinking thing 'must be called "corporeal"'. But the possibility of using the claim in response to Ryle shows that an objection of 'mental thrusts' on its own is only as powerful as the very familiar general objection to Descartes's sort of substance dualism—the objection which says that souls, being of a different kind from physical things, are alien to the world of causes and effects.

Descartes hoped that his detractors might be persuaded to stop thinking of volitions as alien to movements by constructing a category, the 'corporeal', to which volitions and movements both belong. Evidently an analogous step could be taken in respect of my account if it seemed to need defence. In order to demonstrate that there is a category to which events of trying-to and movements both belong, one could say that an event of a person's trying to do something is, in some sense, physical. That would be enough to put any version of the familiar general objection to Descartes to rest. But Ryle's objection is actually more powerful than this allows. To see this, imagine someone who says that she can only conceive of electrochemical impulses as 'thrusts', and that she is puzzled about how their causing muscles to contract could illuminate human action. No doubt one sort of difficulty is alleviated if she is brought to see that there is a level of physical description which subsumes both the electrochemical and the mechanical. But even when the operation of neural transmission is made to seem unmysterious to her, she is not helped in understanding what a person's intentionally doing something consists in. If you hope to be better placed to understand those powers of persons which allow them to get things done by moving their bodies, then you would seem to be no better served by an account of neural transmission than by an account of a gland's being moved by a soul.

Descartes's elaborate story (quoted above, invoking the animal spirits) is presumably meant to help us to understand the rational soul's active powers. The problem which Descartes faces and which could never be solved by calling the soul corporeal begins to emerge when we consider that story. In order for the soul's action to be found intelligible, the goings on around the pineal gland must be related to an understanding of human agency. The soul is a rational being, having intentional states. So we can ask Descartes: What does it will? The answer to this cannot be that the pineal gland moves. For a rational soul need not concern itself with the gland (just as ordinary active people need not concern themselves with neural transmission). It must be, then, that a soul is supposed to will (say) that a finger moves. But in that case the soul seems to have a magical power—the sort of power that we should attribute to a person if

²⁵ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949), 62.

²⁶ Letter to Hyperaspites, August 1641, at 112 in *Descartes' Philosophical Letters*, tr. and ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

we could believe that she could directly move something remote from her. This is why Descartes's account of ordinary physical agency has been said to involve psychokinesis.²⁷ The only thing that a soul can move directly is the pineal gland. But we can understand a rational being's capacity to move x indirectly, only by thinking of it as having knowledge of how x can be affected by something that it can move directly.²⁸ The trouble then is that souls do not have knowledge of how glands have to be affected for body parts to move, so that we lack any understanding of how something placed as the Cartesian soul is could be in a position to move (say) the little finger of a certain body. This remains, as Ryle said, 'forever mysterious'.

The mystery here is created by the situation of the soul, and is independent of its non-physical nature. And my own account would introduce a mystery if 'try to —' were taken to apply to something that lacks capacities for movement. But there is no possible basis for supposing that 'try to —' could apply to something lacking such capacities.²⁹ When accounts like mine are described, one often finds that 'try to —' is applied to nothing: philosophers often speak simply of 'tryings'—as if these might be unowned and (as it were) free-floating events. But of course what has to be meant by 'a trying', in any particular case, is someone's trying to do some particular thing. In my account, then, there is a place for things to which we actually predicate 'try to —'. Such things are human beings, whom we can readily conceive as having capacities to move their bodies. In order to conceive of them thus, we have only to think of ourselves, and to hold fast to the truth that there are no souls that our selves are.

Whereas human agents are lost sight of in Descartes's picture of human action, they feature in mine. One can think that a person's action requires an event of her trying to do something without thinking of the person as composed from a proper part which tries. The claim that a person's trying to do something is distinct from her body's moving does not involve one in the idea that a person can be decomposed into a thing that tries and a body.

5: A Mysterious Inner Realm?

A different sort of Cartesian malady has been thought to afflict my account. The allegation is not that I am involved in a distinction between mental and physical substances, but that I am involved nonetheless in a distinction which was bound to be present in Descartes, given his separating of souls from bodies. The distinction now is between a mental realm—wherein events of people trying to do things, or of souls' willing things may be supposed to occur—, and a physical realm—wherein bodies move. In consequence of my holding that an agent's trying to do something results in a bit of her body's moving, it has been said that I am (i) Cartesian, and (ii) 'a mental action theorist'; and it has been said that, on my account of them, actions (a) are not 'overt', (b) are identified with 'purely mental acts of will', and (c) have their 'essence located in the will'.³⁰ The critics who say these things recognize that even when

²⁷ See Bernard Williams, *Descartes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 288–292.

²⁸ To use the terminology of basicness: everything an agent has in her power to do is either something basic, or requires knowledge of how non-basic things can be done by doing basic ones. The relevant notion of basicness here is a teleological one: see my op. cit. note 2, Ch. 6. (I put the matter slightly differently from Williams [op. cit. note 27], thinking as I do that a teleological notion of basicness is different from a causal one.)

²⁹ In my op. cit. note 2, I claimed that 'actions [and thus events of trying-to] occur insider the body'. The claim is misleading at best. But notice now that the idea was never that there is something insider the body to which predications of 'trying to —' attach. And see further the end of Appendix A infra.

³⁰ See (i) R.A. Duff, *Intention, Agency and Criminal Liability: Philosophy of Action and the Criminal Law*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); (ii) Myles Brand, *Intending and Acting: Towards a Naturalized Action Theory*

persons are not problematically decomposed, the phenomenon of agency may still be. (Even where substance dualism is absent, Cartesian thinking may still be present—as we saw in §1.) Certainly, if these things were true, there would be more of an affinity between Descartes’s account and mine than I have just allowed.

In fact the allegations bring to light a difference between Descartes and me. I say that a person’s trying to do something is an action (is her doing something that she does intentionally),³¹ whereas Descartes does not say that a soul’s volition is an action. There is thus no question on my account, as there is on Descartes’s, of an action’s being ‘partly in the mental realm’, ‘partly in the physical’.³² Still, this difference by itself will not impress the critics. For they think that a problem is exposed in my account as soon as a distinction between mental and physical is registered there. ‘Even if actions themselves do not straddle the mental/physical divide,’ they may say, ‘it is objectionable that an account of action should straddle it. And as for actions themselves, these should be located firmly in the physical realm, not a mysterious inner one.’

To get to the bottom of the objections envisaged here, we need to know why a claim of identities of actions with events of trying—to should be thought to make actions ‘mental’ and to place them beyond what is ‘overt’. Suppose that you accept such identities—you accept, say, that her hitting the ball into the net was her trying to make a winning shot. Will you be led to say that her action of hitting the ball into the net must really be mental (seeing that it is describable using the word ‘try’)? Would you not rather say that her trying to make a winning shot must be physical (seeing that it is describable using the word ‘hit’)? You might equally well say either of these things. The claim of an identity of a putatively mental item (a person’s trying to do something) with a putatively physical one (an action) might just as well be taken to reveal the physical character of the putatively mental item as the mental character of the putatively physical one.

The objections can now be seen to rely upon the idea that a distinction between mental and physical corresponds to an actual division in the spatiotemporal world. If there were such a division, then no doubt one would be obliged to answer questions about which side of it actions, events of trying—to, and bodily movements fall on. But an event describable using both a piece of mental vocabulary (‘try to —’) and a piece of physical vocabulary (‘hitting’), since it can equally well be said either to be mental or to be physical, might perfectly well be said to be both mental and physical. So the question ‘Mental OR physical?’ has to be refused. The distinction between mental and physical does not partition the events that there are. And the assumption that there are boundaries in space between mental events and physical events

(Cambridge Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1984), and Michael Moore, Act and Crime: The Philosophy of Action and its Implications for Criminal Law, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); (a) Brand (op. cit.); (b) Bill Brewer, ‘The Integration of Spatial Vision and Action’, in Naomi Eilan, Rosaleen McCarthy and Bill Brewer (eds.), Spatial Representation, 294-316 (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993). (c) Duff, op. cit.

³¹ If there are cases in which a person tries in vain to move a part of her body, then the claim here is not a universal one. For present purposes, it makes no odds whether one accepts that there are such cases: the claim might be that where someone tries to do something and thereby intentionally does something, her trying to do the thing is her doing it. I discuss vain attempts to move the body in Appendix A.

³² Descartes might have said that a volition is part of an action, the other part being a bodily movement. Not talking the explicit event language, Descartes did not in fact address questions about parthood. But some contemporary philosophers are explicit about actions having both mental and physical proper parts, taking this to be a sine qua non of action’s psychophysical character.

must be rejected. Once the split between soul and body has been renounced, there is no real divide for an account of action to straddle.

If an assumption of a spatial mental/physical divide is made, then denying that actions are bodily movements appears to exclude them from the physical world. If an action is not a bodily movement but is someone's trying to do something, then, thinking of it with the putative divide in place, one conceives of it as hidden from view, as something which somehow initiates movements of a body. Actions then belong to a mysterious inner realm, separate from the outer realm inhabited by people's bodies. But when the assumption is rejected, there is no reason to think that actions belong anywhere in a picture containing the putative divide.

Recognizing the identity of actions with events of trying—to helps to show (as we saw) that an intuitive distinction between mental and physical is inimical to such a divide. Refusing the identity of actions with bodily movements (we can now see) cannot create the mysterious realm which the divide introduces. For suppose that one really did have to say that actions, being causally anterior to bodily movements, must take up residence in a mysterious inner realm. Would it not then be in exactly such a realm that beliefs and desires were located by theorists who identify actions with bodily movements and who say that actions are caused by beliefs and desires? (Presumably beliefs and desires would be supposed to fall on the mental side of any mental/physical divide.) It is true that such theorists usually claim that the beliefs and desires which they take to cause actions are components of the same natural world as the physical things which they take all movements to be. But they are not entitled to such a claim if there is a problem with the idea that exercises of our powers as agents can be revealed in the items alongside which bodily movements are classified when the putative mental/physical divide does its work.

There is a genuine difficulty about bringing events which are the doings of sentient beings who do things for reasons into relation with events conceived as on the farther side of a mental/physical divide. And bodily movements are often thought of as belonging on the farther side by philosophers: the claim that actions are bodily movements is often glossed as the claim that they are 'mere movements of the body', or that they are 'no more than bodily movements'.³³ Bodily movements then come to be assimilated to items which might be there even if there were no persons whose bodies they were movements of. It is this assimilation, rather than anything in my account, which is the source of the genuine difficulty. If a difficulty sprang simply from denying that actions can be identified with bodily movements, then we should expect it to go away as soon as the identity was asserted. But in the presence of the difficulty, the step of identifying actions with bodily movements seems like subterfuge. The problem is to understand how a person's role in getting done the things that she does for reasons could be a matter of her operating on inanimate nature. The problem cannot be made to go away by declaring that an action (a person's doing whatever it is when she does something for a reason) is itself the operation of inanimate nature.

A typical action theorist of today sees no problem at this point. Just as Descartes was content to call souls corporeal 'in a sense', in order to ensure that we should not have to think of causal transactions across alien kinds, so a typical action theorist of today is content with a homogeneous conception of those events which occupy the spatiotemporal world and participate there in causal relations. (Such a conception informs orthodox physicalism, as we

³³ See Davidson, *op. cit.* note 5, at 59 in reprinted version; and Moore, *op. cit.* note 30, at 83, who announces that 'actions are no more than bodily movements' is a 'reductive' thesis.

shall see.) But perhaps even a typical action theorist has an inchoate sense of the problem. At least if he does, that would explain why it should be thought that distinguishing actions from bodily movements is tantamount to relegating actions to a mysterious inner realm (or to denying that they are ‘overt’, or to locating ‘their essence in the will’).

The problem (to repeat) arises from supposing that the bodily movements that there are when there are actions might be located in a world bereft of beings who do things for reasons—a world where so-called ‘mere movements of bodies’ belong. The supposition prevents one from treating movements in such a way that they can be rightly related to the agents who produce them. (And it makes no difference to this whether or not one says that bodily movements are the same as actions.) Those who make the supposition may see a point, as Descartes did, in calling a human body ‘a machine’. They may forget that Descartes can be faulted for his assumption that corporeal substance excludes the features of thinking beings as much as for his more familiar assumption that the bearers of mental properties are not the sort of things to which physical properties attach.³⁴

Ryle’s objection to Descartes was that souls cannot be rightly related to what they are supposed to act upon. I said that the Rylean objection can be seen not to touch my account once it is allowed that a human being is not detachable from an event which is her trying to do something. In allowing this, one rejects a Cartesian conception of people’s possession of (intuitively) mental properties. What I say now is that the objection of a mysterious inner realm will present itself unless it is allowed that human beings are the bodily beings they are, and that the movements which they make are theirs. In allowing this, one rejects a Cartesian conception of people’s possession of (intuitively) physical properties.

6: Mental Causation: Dualism and Physicalism in Action

I hope to have shown that there are no Cartesian assumptions in my account of action (§3), and that if there seem to be, that is because others read them in to it (§5). I want to suggest in conclusion that it is actually the orthodox physicalists’ treatment of action, not mine, which lines up with Descartes’s.

The similarity of my account to Descartes’s is partly to be blamed on their common focus of attention—on the agent’s body. But notice that there are different reasons for this narrow focus. The reason for the apparent shortsightedness of my own account is simply a desire to generalize. If one hopes to say anything general about physical action, it is no good having one’s sights on the world surrounding agents, because there are so many things of such various sorts that agents do. The thread running through them all is that the agent has to move to do them, and that is how the focus comes to be turned towards the agent’s body. (The outlook of my own account is actually broader than the narrow focus suggests, because the things that agents can try to do are as many and various as the things they do.³⁵ The point emerged in §3: my account does not deal only with people moving their bodies, but speaks also to all the more

³⁴ Descartes’s belief in souls is normally thought of as arrived at through the introspective route he took in the Meditations. But part of his reason for attaching mental properties to a soul was a difficulty he thought he saw about attaching them to a substance whose principles of operation are purely mechanistic. See ‘Descartes, Rorty and the Mind-Body Fiction’, repr. in Simple Mindedness, op. cit. note 16, 24-41.

³⁵ There are plenty of substitutes for ‘something’ in ‘the agent’s trying to do something’, plenty of verbs besides ‘move the body’ which can replace ‘V’ in (T); and (T) introduces the agent’s trying to do any of the things which she does intentionally.

interesting things that they do.) In Descartes's account, attention to the agent's body has a different rationale. When the soul has been introduced, we are owed some account of its doings; and given the soul's situation, the close-up story of the production of movements is bound to be told. Descartes cannot simply acknowledge, as I do, a kind of being that has basic capacities of movement.

But here the similarity, such as it is, shows up. Although I acknowledge that human beings have capacities of movement, I nevertheless discern a sort of causal complexity in exercises of those capacities. Human beings are complex beings; some of the events in which they participate depend causally upon others. The dependencies in the case of action, are dependencies of movements of parts of agents' bodies upon events of their trying to do things. So I think, as Descartes does, that when there is an action, a movement of the agent's body can be seen to depend causally upon something which is (intuitively) mental.

This may be put in slightly different terms: both Descartes and I think that action involves 'mental causation'. Put in these terms, what I have been trying to establish, in order to show that the similarity does not go deep, is how very differently Descartes and I treat 'mental causation'. Since nearly everyone accepts that action involves 'mental causation', what distinguishes Descartes from me is something of which nearly everyone must take a view.³⁶ 'Mental causation' has been of great concern recently, especially among orthodox physicalists.³⁷

None of the claims of orthodox physicalism was required to avoid Ryle's objection of a mysterious gulf. We saw that this objection is avoided by insisting on the sameness of that which tries to do something and that whose parts it can move. The movements which are caught up in the understanding of such a thing—of a human being—are then individuated as events in which someone's participation is crucial, and not as the subject matter of physics or of any other science. Bodily movements *are* physical of course. But the sense of 'physical' in which it is obvious that they are physical is not that which has informed the recent debate on 'mental causation'.

Most contemporary philosophers think that physicalism requires one to be able to see the mental's causal operation as an example of the world's working causally in such a way as to reflect its law-like workings. Their treatments of 'mental causation' encourage one to take the close-up view of the agent which Descartes took. They may say that events of trying-to, if they are causally responsible for movements of bodies, are, or are constituted by, 'brain events'. But an objection of Cartesianism arises however this is interpreted.

If a brain event is something in which a brain participates, then the orthodox physicalist tells us that the causal transitions involved in human action are transitions between brain and

³⁶ I say 'nearly everyone' to allow for the anti-causalists (see §2 *supra*). The treatment of mental causation is a question for all causalists. It might seem that there is a special question for Descartes and me, because we accept, what many don't, that the agent's body is a locus of 'mental causation'. (Many think that one has to look to actions' antecedents—to what occurs before anything bodily—in order to find anything which is both psychologically describable and causally operative.) Still, we saw in §3 that even someone who rejects my general claims about action may accept that there are occasions when a person moves her body therein trying to do something. So perhaps nearly everyone accepts that the agent's body is *sometimes* a locus of mental causation. That would ensure that there is in fact no special question for Descartes and me. But however this may be, nearly everyone allows that there is 'mental causation'.

³⁷ And it has been the topic of a massive literature: see, e.g., the papers in Heil and Mele (eds.), *op. cit.* note 16. I attach scare quotes to 'mental causation', being reluctant to think of the causal dependencies which correspond to persons' causal complexity as marking out any *kind* of causation: see note 40 *infra*.

body. In that case he accepts a version of substance dualism in the broad sense identified in §1. We saw in §4 that the principal objection to Descartes does not actually depend upon the nature of the soul; and this means that if one thinks of a person's trying to do something as the brain's doing something, one renders physical action mysterious as Descartes did. There is a kind of causal dependence encountered when effects are produced by a being with contentful states (a being that can will something, or try to do something); and this kind of dependence is not found intelligible when causal properties are attributed to something located inside a body.

The other possibility is that calling something a brain event is a matter of locating it in the domain of neurophysiology (rather than of thinking of it specifically as the brain's doing something). Brain events in this case are among the flux of events in nature, unowned and free-floating, as it were; and the causal connections which are examples of 'mental causation' are discoverable without finding something to which 'try to ——' can be predicated. But this is equally problematic. We have seen that the items of Descartes's story—the volitions which belong to souls, and the movements which belong to mind-excluding substances—are foreign to a proper account of physical action. Equally foreign must be the unowned and free floating events. For the underlying difficulty is to think about the production of bodily movements as human action even when the causes of those movements are supposed to be identifiable without making reference to any bodily being. If one takes bodily movements to be robust presences 'in the physical world', then, in searching for their antecedents with the agent removed from the scene, one thinks of inner items, and then one may conjure up an inner realm for those items to inhabit. Here a Cartesian difficulty stems from attempting to find what are actually changes in a rational being inside a world which one had hoped to conceive of as physical in some exacting sense. The orthodox physicalist, in avoiding the mysterious gulf, puts herself under pressure to introduce the spurious divide between mental and physical.³⁸

The problem here, for the orthodox physicalist, is the one we saw in §5—about understanding how causal transactions in inanimate nature could account for a person's role in getting done the things that she does for reasons. Causal dependencies which reflect the causal complexity of a human being are not examples of the world's working causally in such a way as to reflect its law-like workings. The phenomenon of 'mental causation', in which human beings show up as causally complex beings, cannot consist in pairs of particulars standing in a relation of causation as this is typically conceptualized by philosophers.³⁹ So the dependencies encountered in human agency are not the 'physical causation' to which orthodox physicalists have wanted to assimilate 'mental causation'.⁴⁰

³⁸ Cp. John McDowell, Mind and World (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), at 90. Put in the terms that McDowell takes from Sellars, what the present paper argues is that human physical action is situated in the space of reasons, where the space of reasons is to be contrasted not with the space of causes but with nomological space (and where the space of reasons, evidently, is not the space just of cognition).

³⁹ For reasons to reject the typical conceptualization, see Helen Steward's arguments against what she calls the network model of causation in her Ontology of Mind: Events, States and Processes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁴⁰ In 'The Mental Causation Debate', Aristotelian Society Supp. Vol. 69 (1995), 211-236, Tim Crane argues that the dominant contemporary versions of physicalism implicitly reject the assumption of 'homogeneity'—the assumption 'that mental and physical causation are the same kind of relation'. It seems then that I am on the side of contemporary physicalists in my treatment of mental causation. Well, I am more than happy to acknowledge Crane's point that there is a homogeneity assumption which provokes contemporary physicalist treatments of mental causation but which they find themselves forced to abandon. (I take their abandonment of the assumption to be symptomatic of a problem which is inherent in the orthodoxy and which I have tried to expose here.) But it would be an oversimplification of my own view to say that mental and physical causation are different kinds of

We saw in §1 that someone might be anti-Cartesian without endorsing any orthodox physicalist doctrine, and that someone might be a Cartesian orthodox physicalist. What we see now is that endorsing physicalist doctrine is actually just a way of being Cartesian. Orthodox physicalism's attitude to causation is a source of Cartesian thinking.

END.

APPENDICES FOLLOW.

relation. It is rather that we have to stop thinking that all causation can be understood by reference to the going model of 'physical causation' (cp. Steward, *op. cit.* note 39, and my 'Causation in Intuitive Physics and in Commonsense Psychology', in *op. cit.* note 16, 185–194); and that we have to allow for the species of intelligibility that is peculiar to rational sentient beings.

I should note that my arguments here—about treating events of trying—to as brain events—are directly addressed to a version of physicalism which does not flout the homogeneity assumption as Crane sets things up. But when I say that it is part of the orthodoxy that one must be able to see the mental's causal operation as an example of the world's working causally in such a way as to reflect its law-like workings, I intend to speak to other versions of physicalism, including what Crane calls 'the constitution view'.

I thank Paul Boghossian, David Papineau, Scott Sturgeon, and (especially) Tim Crane (who prompted me to re-read his *op. cit.*) for questions asked after the lecture on which this paper is based.

APPENDIX A: On Landry's Patient

In defending (T) against charges of Cartesianism, I pointed out that a person's trying to do something can usually be identified with an action. But if there are cases in which a person tries in vain to move a part of her body, then a person can try to do something without there being an action of hers. It has been thought objectionable that I should allow such cases. Bill Brewer puts an objection to my account of action, saying that 'the subject is distanced from movement in her body in such a way as to threaten her status as agent' (op. cit. note 30, at 306).

The case to which Brewer and others speak is the case of Landry's patient. The patient had lost all sensation in one arm. When his eyes were closed, he was told to raise his arm; unknown to him, his arm was held down—it was prevented from rising; and when he opened his eyes, he was surprised to find that it had not risen. It seems natural to say that, although he didn't raise his arm, he tried to.

It may be that in contemplating Landry's patient, one starts to think in phenomenological terms about events describable using the word 'try': one thinks that it must have seemed to the patient just as it would have seemed if he had moved his arm (if the arm, in which he had no sensation, had not been prevented from rising); and then one may start to think of events of trying to do things under the aspect of seemings. But in fact one does not need to focus on the phenomenology to judge that the patient tried to move his arm. The judgment might be based on knowledge that he is obedient to instructions: obedient as he is, he does what he can to raise his arm when told to do so; and his belief that he has raised his arm, evinced in his surprise that it had not moved, is then a further piece of evidence that he tried to raise it.

It is not that we should necessarily go wrong if we considered how things seemed to the patient. But there is no reason to think that we must be working with some purely phenomenological notion when we think of Landry's patient as having tried to raise his arm. And of course it cannot be right generally to think about events of trying—to as seemings. (We could not have acquired the concept of trying to if we had had only phenomenology to work with.) We must not forget what an extraordinary epistemic and practical situation Landry's patient was in: he was not allowed to see; he was proprioceptively incapacitated; and his movements were obstructed. We can agree with Brewer that 'his status as agent is threatened'. Thoughts that we have about his case cannot be expected to generalize to other cases. Landry's patient's failed attempt is at least as unsuited to providing a model for action as the case of a false belief is unsuited to providing a model for knowledge.

Still if we do accept that Landry's patient did try to move his arm, then the account I gave in §3, of the difference between successful and unsuccessful attempts, applies in this case. Thus: a person's trying to raise her arm is her raising it if it is causally responsible for her arm's rising, but is her unsuccessfully trying to raise it if no event of her arm's rising ensues. It is this to which Brewer really objects. Brewer wants to be able to say that someone's unsuccessfully trying to raise her arm is of a fundamentally different kind from her raising it. And he suggests that we need a 'disjunctive conception of tryings'. The trouble is that a disjunctive conception of tryings seems quite implausible in general. Remember the case of the typist who typed an '@' sign when the key had been reassigned. Is her moving her finger against the keyboard of a fundamentally different kind from the kind it is of when the key has not been reassigned and she actually types a '£' sign? Surely not.

I believe that it is a disjunctive conception of bodily movements, not of events of trying to, that we need if we want, as Brewer and I both do, to keep the subject in touch with movements of her body. (Such a conception is implicit in what I have said at §5 and echoed in §6 supra, and it is explicit in my 'Postscript' to 'Bodily Movements, Actions and Epistemology', in Simple Mindedness, op. cit. note 16, 102–110.)

Landry's patient's case was one of the things that encouraged me to say (as I did once upon a time, cp. note 29 supra) that actions occur inside the body. That claim, though misleading at best, need not be Cartesian, because it could be that predications belong properly to a whole substance, even where the events whose occurrence actually makes those predications true are locatable in a volume smaller than the whole substance. Consider: when I varnish the table, the event of its coming to be shiny is plausibly located at the surface of the table, even though being shiny is a property that the table comes to have. (This is only analogous in some respects of course. And one will not see the point in such an analogy until one has rid oneself of the orthodox physicalists' way of thinking about causation.)

APPENDIX B: On Descartes' Dualism

The distinction I made in §1, between dualism and Cartesianism, is different from the distinction Baker and Morris make between Descartes's dualism and Cartesian dualism (op. cit. note 1). 'Cartesian dualism' in the sense of Baker and Morris is certainly Cartesian; the argument of their book is that Descartes did not hold the doctrine known as, and criticized as, Cartesian dualism. Here I make some remarks about how Baker and Morris's challenge to the nowadays usual reading of Descartes might affect what I say.

Baker and Morris's distinction shows that we can understand 'Cartesianism' if we know only the recent secondary literature. And for the argument of my paper, it would not matter if no-one actually held the views I attribute to Descartes (so long as they are wrong, and they line up more with orthodox physicalists' views than with mine). But I am inclined to think that the historical Descartes actually has slightly more in common with the Descartes to whom I attribute views than Baker and Morris would allow.

Part of Baker and Morris's attack on the idea that Descartes was a Cartesian dualist is their claim that he was neither a volitionist, nor an interactionist (in the senses usually meant). They suggest that the view 'that voluntary action is to be analyzed in terms of volitions that are efficient causes of bodily movements' is ascribed to Descartes without any grounds. There are three things here of which Descartes's present-day expositor might be guilty: (a) crediting Descartes with analytical ambitions, (b) assuming that the volitions of which Descartes spoke are (to put it in my terms) unowned and free floating events, (c) assuming that Descartes held that 'cause' relates volitions and movements. On (a): I have not said that Descartes attempted to analyze voluntary action (see note 14 *supra*). On (b): I have been careful (as Ryle perhaps was not) to see the volitions of which Descartes speaks as some soul's volitions. On (c): I have deliberately used 'is causally responsible for' (which I take to be more open-ended than 'causes') in my statement of Descartes's account. I acknowledge that there is much more to be said on the subject of Descartes and causation, and that most expositors say very little. But I do not think that there can be any doubt that Descartes took his dualism to be the upshot of a correct understanding of causal transactions in the physical world (as I contended as the end of §5). That does not establish that Descartes was an interactionist, rather than an occasionalist. (And Baker and Morris endorse Russell's claim [which certainly seems sustainable] that occasionalism is derivable from premises in Descartes.) But the question for Descartes—about how to accommodate human action in a world of bodies as he conceived them—remains, whether or not, in giving his own answer to it, Descartes resisted a crude interactionism and plumped for occasionalism.

Baker and Morris say that Descartes simply conceded that 'there could be no intelligible connection between soul and body' (56, their italics). Well, presumably if Descartes was an occasionalist, then he might have allowed that a connection between the two was intelligible to God. And even if, as Baker and Morris say, Descartes did not expect us to understand soul/body transitions, we find Descartes trying to make them less unintelligible to us, e.g. when he says that the soul might be called corporeal. If Descartes had not been at all inclined to make any attempt to find the connection intelligible, then we should not expect to find the Passions passage (quoted in §2 *supra*), which contains the close-up story. In any case, the stock criticism of Descartes, on which I rely, says only that the connection is not intelligible to a follower of Descartes's. (Here again there is much more to be said—now under the head of 'the substantial union of soul and body'.)

What I call volitionism can probably be attributed to Descartes simply on the basis of the passage I quoted. To the extent to which it can be shown to be doubtful that he held that account, Descartes was a less consistent philosopher of mind—albeit it a more interesting one—than is commonly supposed.