

## MOVING

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### I

Two questions which seem naturally to arise in the course of thinking about action are these: Where do actions start? And where do they stop? Some philosophers believe that they start inside us: literally inside, in the brain; or metaphorically inside, in the mind. Others hold that actions, or bodily ones at least (and they are all that we shall be considering), begin at the surface of the body. But it is of greater moment for our present purposes to concentrate for a while on the second question. Can we trace actions indefinitely across space and time, such that they can be said to end only when the effects initially set in train gradually peter out, swamped by other influences, as the ripples caused by the dropping of a stone into a pond are eventually overwhelmed by inertia and contrary currents? Or can we, perhaps, trace them only so far as is encompassed by the intention of the agent? Several recent writers have held that we cannot trace them even as far out into the world as this: that they end, at the latest, by the time the body's extremities have been moved. When a view of this kind is combined with the view that actions also begin inside us (for it would certainly be possible to hold that they began and ended at the body's extremities), we shall call the result an 'internalist' or 'conationist' theory. The most recent versions of conationism, those of Jennifer Hornsby and Brian O'Shaughnessy<sup>1</sup>, share additional features, being physicalist, in that the event which is held to be the action's beginning is a brain event, and what one might call 'essayist', in that this event can be characterised as one of trying or essaying to act. In this paper, we shall attempt to determine which is the preferable form of a physical essayist theory. We do not offer a final assessment of that form itself, for the quantity of extra discussion required demands a further paper; but the way in which the preferability manifests itself here is important, for it opens the road down which we can reach such an assessment, perhaps even of that whole tradition which sees 'actions as causes of other events' (Hornsby, p. 9; 'causes' is replaced by 'causings' on p. 14). [It would be pointless to pay such close attention to undeveloped forms of the theory like Armstrong's<sup>2</sup>, since this merely invites refinement.]

<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Hornsby, *Actions*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980. Brian O'Shaughnessy, *The Will* (2 vols.), Cambridge University Press 1980. (All references here to the latter are to Volume 2.)

<sup>2</sup> D. M. Armstrong, 'Acting and Trying', (supplemented version), in his *The Nature of Mind*, University of Queensland Press, 1980, pp. 68-88. The charge is substantiated in Candlish's 'Absque Labore Nihil', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 64, 1986, pp. 54-63.

There is, in fact, a striking amount in common between the theories of Hornsby and O'Shaughnessy, even down to their year of publication. In both, the presence of trying is universal in action, and this universal presence is proved by distinguishing truth-conditions from (and preferring them to) assertibility-conditions of attributions of trying. In both, the intra-brain location of trying is revealed by appeal to the same sort of case: that of unexpected paralysis, where the agent's surprise at his failure to, say, move his arm, is explained as would be a normal failure to achieve what one had set out to do, as his having tried without his trying's having the intended outcome. And in both, this sort of immediate outcome of action is to be characterised in the same way: when I move my leg in the familiar, direct fashion (as opposed, say, to pulling it with my hand), the outcome is a particular non-active external event, namely my leg's moving (where the first occurrence of the verb 'move' in this sentence carries a transitive sense, and the second an intransitive).

## 2

We propose, for the purposes of this paper, to assume the acceptability of these common features of the two theories, and of their common assumption that actions are a species of event, in order to explore an area of significant difference between them. This disagreement is over the relation of the inner trying to the outer bodily event (the willed event, in O'Shaughnessy's terminology) whose description affords us the content of the trying; and it displays the different answers of the two philosophers concerned to the question, Where do actions stop?

Hornsby accepts the Davidsonian view that action consists in the setting in train of causal sequences, such that only the initial member of the sequence is the action itself — the later members merely license us to apply descriptions involving them to the initiating action. On this familiar view, a killing by shooting is already over when the trigger has been pulled, even though the victim may die only days later; the event of the death is not itself part of the event of the killing but is quite distinct from it; and the seeming paradox is merely superficial, a linguistic infelicity owing entirely to the describing of causes in terms of their effects. The novel feature of her theory is that, unlike Davidson himself, she extends this view of action-individuation back inside the body. Since (she thinks) the relation of the intra-cranial trying to the outer bodily event (the willed event, the body's moving) is one of cause to effect, my body's moving is not itself part of the event of my moving it but merely an effect of that event, a distinct event, which licenses the application to the trying of the epithet 'moving'. On this view, then, the place where actions stop is well inside the body, even inside the brain; and this is Hornsby's explicitly held opinion (pp. 14, 106).

## 3

O'Shaughnessy, on the other hand, accepts the Davidsonian view of action-individuation only for what we might naïvely think of as extra-bodily actions,

and simply denies that it can be extended back to cover so-called basic actions<sup>3</sup>, holding instead that my body's moving and my moving it are not distinct events. On the face of it, this view is less consistent than Hornsby's, and certainly less economical since two different accounts of action-individuation are going to be needed; so let us look briefly at his three arguments for non-distinctness<sup>4</sup>.

3.1 The first of the three consists in drawing out four consequences of distinguishing two events when I move my body, and claiming that each consequence is absurd. The four are:

- (1) My moving my arm will precede and cause my arm's moving.
- (2) All such acts as chopping and running will take place exclusively in the brain.
- (3) All extra-bodily effects of a basic act will become mediate effects: thus pushing something never immediately moves it, touching something does not effect immediate contact.
- (4) Basic acts will become 'in some sense' instrumental.

Let us assess these four claims in turn.

3.11 In assessing the first, we must not forget against whom it is implicitly directed. It is directed against someone who, like Hornsby, wishes to extend the Davidsonian account of action-individuation back down the causal chain which leads inside the body. And such a person would clearly admit the consequence but be unmoved by the charge of absurdity. (Cf. Hornsby p. 45.) As we saw just now, the defence would be that the absurdity is superficial; and O'Shaughnessy does not argue against this defence. Rather, he loads his case by suddenly eschewing all mention of trying, and employing only complete action-descriptions in the argument. To say that it is absurd to suppose that walking causes my legs' movings is to exploit illegitimately the claimed identity of action with successful trying, for supposing that trying-to-walk causes my legs' movings is not absurd but is, for a conationist, an equally available description of the case. It is not clear that the identity leads to the cancelling of the non-absurdity by the absurdity rather than vice versa; and in any case, both can reasonably be thought to be intensional features not transferable across the identity sign. Reference to their causes is not always explanatory of effects; the question of explanatoriness hangs from the kind

<sup>3</sup> In this usage, the term 'basic action' is not required to do metaphysical work, as it was for example by Danto, who left candidature for exemplification open at least in principle. Here, candidature is closed, and the metaphysical significance left open. Thus we follow O'Shaughnessy's own usage, in which the term is merely a convenient device for referring to normal direct movings of the body. But we shall not follow him, except in quotations, in his use of Greek letters to distinguish actions from the non-active events which on his theory are involved in them as immediate results. Instead, we shall stipulate that 'my moving of my body' is to count as the transitive nominal, and 'my body's moving' as the intransitive. Sometimes we shall also use Hornsby's typographical devices, 'moving $\tau$ ' and 'moving $\iota$ ' to make the same distinction. Acceptance of such convenient grammatical conventions does not of course commit us to giving them any particular metaphysical significance.

<sup>4</sup> What follows is the summarised argument of his Chapter 13.

of reference. The point here is essentially the same one.

3.12 The second claimed absurd consequence is ambiguous. In its damaging sense, it is certainly absurd, but only doubtfully a consequence; and when it is certainly a consequence, it is only doubtfully damaging. The crucial word here is 'exclusively', and the argument functions by exploiting it. Suppose that something happens in my brain while I am in the kitchen. Are we to deny that it happened in the kitchen? In one sense, clearly not, though it did happen exclusively in my brain. For my brain is itself in the kitchen. What we can deny on the strength of the term 'exclusively' is that it happened somewhere which doesn't also include my brain; but no physicalist theory is committed to disputing this denial. Alternatively, we could suppose that 'exclusively' means that the act is confined to my brain, never gets outside it. But this now merely amounts to the first claim of absurdity, giving it a spatial rather than temporal twist; and is in fact readily accepted by those against whom it is directed.

Indeed, O'Shaughnessy's complaint can be turned on him in *ad hominem* fashion. Suppose that I break a window by throwing a stone at it. Where does the act of window-breaking take place? Exclusively at the point from which the stone is thrown? In keeping with his generally Davidsonian attitude towards the acts that the untutored regard as extending beyond the body, O'Shaughnessy would probably say that here the particular act of window-breaking is confined to a place which does not include the window itself (though he is, in fact, surprisingly unforthcoming on this matter of location). We may then ask, why should this be any less absurd than supposing that running is confined to the brain? On the face of it, the two cases are parallel. If, on the other hand, he says that the place of the act of window-breaking includes the window, we may point out that there is nevertheless an undeniably causal relationship between the throwing and the window's breaking, which then affords us an exploitable model for the basic act. And this is contrary to O'Shaughnessy's first claim, that internal trying is not the cause of the willed event.

3.13 The third and fourth claimed consequences, that the immediate effects of basic acts are rendered mediate, and the basic acts themselves instrumental, can be dealt with together. Both depend upon the employment of a metaphysical, non-neutral interpretation of the phrase 'basic act', in which it is defined not by standard exemplars of a class of events, but by a certain controversial rôle in the theory of action. This interpretation is quite at odds with O'Shaughnessy's usual (and explicitly defined) neutral sense for the term, and, because of its controversiality, demands, but does not get, an independent justification (which, in our view, is not available<sup>5</sup>, and indeed would be inconsistent with O'Shaughnessy's overall theory if it were).

Further, we should again remember the argument's target, the philosopher who wishes to extend the Davidsonian account of action-individuation back

<sup>5</sup> See Candlish's 'Inner and Outer Basic Action', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* LXXXIV, 1983-4, pp. 83-102.

down the causal chain which leads inside the body. Such a philosopher, to render this extension and its internalising of action even minimally plausible, is going to have to distinguish (as Hornsby does) the causally basic (employed in the extension) from the teleologically basic. This is the distinction between the first event in the causal chain of action, something we may know nothing about but can still be said genuinely to do, and that which we fix on epistemically as the first thing to be done, the first ingredient of a learnable action-recipe. And this latter may occur quite late in the causal sequence, as when a golfer gets his swing right by concentrating on the follow-through, though obviously the swing precedes the follow-through. The supposed absurdity can then be held to rest merely on the failure to observe this distinction: with teleological basicity, the claimed consequences would indeed be absurd but would not be consequences; while with causal basicity they would indeed be consequences but would not be absurd. So much, then, for O'Shaughnessy's first argument.

3.2 His second argument is that trying to move one's arm, one's moving one's arm, and the arm's moving are 'nominally bonded into a single event' whose origin automatically releases its later members under normal conditions and is not complete until the occurrence of the arm's moving, an event itself projected in the intention and desire to do the basic act.

Again, one must recall the argument's target, the Davidsonian internaliser. Such a philosopher employs a criterion of action-individuation which, as it were, continually contracts its subject event, expelling events as effects, rather than expanding it to embrace them as components: apparently long-term events disintegrate under inspection into atoms whose causal relationships justify their separation. One who thinks like this is going to want more argument than O'Shaughnessy provides to be convinced that the use of this criterion cannot be extended inside the body; and given O'Shaughnessy's commitment to the criterion outside the body, the argument may be hard for him to find. The one which we have just seen that he does give, moreover, assumes that if the basic action of moving the body encompasses the body's moving, then it cannot cause it. This assumption, which he shares with Hornsby, strikes us as false, and we shall come back to it.

3.3 O'Shaughnessy's third argument is that unless the basic act encompassed rather than caused bodily movement, then physical acts would not be immediately visible. Some of what we have already said against the other arguments applies here too, particularly the last point we made. But the argument has a problem of its own, in that it rests upon an extremely restricted sense of 'see': in this sense, many, perhaps most, of the things that we ordinarily say we see are not immediately seen. What has yet to be shown is that anything unacceptable follows from this. (Cf. Hornsby, p. 103.)

## 4

O'Shaughnessy's arguments for his claim that the willed event is not distinct from the willing of it, or, more intelligibly, that my arm's moving is not distinct from my moving it, do not so far look too convincing. But the case

is in fact a bit worse than this, for the internal stresses in his theory here bring it to the point of contradiction. He wants to keep a restraining leash on the drive towards the interior which characterises so many theories of action, and he does this by holding that my trying to move my body does not cause my body's movings (pp. 263-6), insisting, as we have seen, that there can be no such causal relation for there is but a single event here which finishes at the body's surface; yet on the other hand he wants to admit some of the interiorist pressure, since a large part of his book is concerned with the interruptibility of the sequence between the commencement of the trying to move and the resulting movement, this very interruptibility being exploited to prove the presence of internal and originating trying in all action. And what is this interruptible sequence if not causal?

O'Shaughnessy acknowledges the involvement of causality in this description of his theory (p. 286; his italics):

And since the event of willing actually spreads developmentally out from the brain so far as to encompass  $\phi$  [sc. the body's moving], it cannot itself be the cause of  $\phi$ ; and the nearest we can get to saying that it causes  $\phi$  is: first, that it *causally develops* so as to bring  $\phi$  into being; second, that a *non-autonomous part-event* of striving precedes and causes  $\phi$ .

(The context makes clear that the part-event is not an event which is part of a striving; but a part of an event, which part is itself a striving.) The stress is already visible here; but perhaps, we may think, it is alleviated by the introduction of the term 'striving', which, apparently unlike willing, is the cause of the body's moving but is only a part-event in the total event of willing. The escape is illusory, though. For on page 264 we find this:

[My theory] supposes that  $\phi$  is the surface tip of an event that reaches all the way back into the brain. Namely: the act of the will. Now another name for this act of the will is 'strive'. Another is 'try'.

The contradiction is clear: 'try' and 'strive' are both names of an act which when successful 'precedes and causes  $\phi$ '; when this act is successful it encompasses the surface event  $\phi$ ; but something which encompasses  $\phi$  cannot cause it. (See page 269 for a completely explicit assertion of this last claim.)

Does O'Shaughnessy's theory then collapse into an extreme interiorist theory like Hornsby's, where all actions occur inside the body? This is certainly one possible route for him to take, and it has the virtue of visible consistency in its ruthless Davidsonianism. But consistency is notoriously often achieved at the expense of credibility, and the idea that bodily actions are over before anything has even happened in the muscles is not distinguished by its plausibility. Indeed (as one of us has already argued<sup>6</sup>) this sort of theory is aptly characterised as one in which someone's raising his arm is his trying to raise it (a brain event) followed by a causal sequence in which *he does not need to do anything further*. The justification of this characterisation is supplied by Hornsby herself (pp. 9, 29), for she uses this very claim that once one has initiated the causal sequence 'the rest is up to

<sup>6</sup> 'Inner and Outer Basic Action', section V.

nature', in giving her account of 'external' actions; and her account of basic actions appeals to the very same model. What this theory obviously lacks is what O'Shaughnessy's, for all its inconsistency, undoubtedly has, namely a recognition of the apparently special place of the body in action: of the fact that the body's movings seem to appear in actions as parts, and not merely as effects which are licences for descriptions. This view has a pre-theoretical attractiveness to which justice must in some way or other be done, even if it is only to explain it away. The idea that actions start inside the body is something that many non-dualists could agree to; the idea that they stop there too is something that one would have to be gripped by a theory not to find patently absurd. (Cf. Annas, p. 202<sup>7</sup>.)

## 5

There will be those not yet convinced by our suggestion that Hornsby's extreme internalist theory is justifiably characterised in the way that we have described. But probably most would agree that this characterisation is justifiably applied (as O'Shaughnessy applies it on page 239) to a volitionism employing the notion of event-causation, for this is a doctrine in which the agent is a non-physical being whose direct actions are over once a mental event has occurred, the subsequent physical events occurring only after the agent has given up and handed the task over to the body. So if it should turn out that Hornsby risks being forced into such a dualism by her own arguments, then clearly there would be a shift of the burden of argument on this issue to extreme internalism. And then, via an attempt to free O'Shaughnessy's views from inconsistency, the way would be open to suggesting that if one is going to adopt an internalist theory in the first place, his less extreme version is the preferable kind. Accordingly, in this section we shall explore the pressures towards dualism within Hornsby's theory.

One of her arguments for the view that all actions occur inside the body can be paraphrased as follows (we have corrected what seem to be obvious misprints on her page 13):

- (1) Whatever events cause the body's movements<sub>i</sub> [sc. the body's movings] occur inside the body.
- (2) Actions that are movements<sub>T</sub> [sc. my movings of my body] cause the body's movements<sub>i</sub>.
- (3) Therefore, all actions that are movements<sub>T</sub> occur inside the body.

The first premiss is easily enough amended to make it plausibly true while still useful to the argument. The second, on the other hand, needs argument itself. Part of the support Hornsby gives it is this observation concerning verbs having transitive and intransitive senses and supporting inferences of the pattern  $aV_{Tb} \rightarrow bV_i$  (loc. cit.):

Where 'a' designates something in the category of *continuant* (rather than

<sup>7</sup> Julia Annas, 'How Basic Are Basic Actions?', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* LXXVIII, 1977-8, pp. 195-213.

event), it is a necessary condition of the truth of ' $a \phi_{T-S}$   $b$ ' that  $a$  cause  $b$  to  $\phi$ . In that case movements<sub>T</sub> of the body are *events that cause bodily movements*<sub>S</sub>. [Her italics.]

The move from the first sentence, about continuants, to the second, about events, is defended in an appendix to her book. The offered justification of the first is that it is a claim unquestioned in the literature of linguistics. We shall not question such impressive credentials. Yet one may still ask, what sorts of continuants can ' $a$ ' (and presumably ' $b$ ') stand for? The examples Hornsby gives are of clearly distinct continuants — 'Jane melts<sub>T</sub> the chocolate' having as necessary condition of its truth that Jane cause the chocolate to melt<sub>I</sub>. But then the idea is introduced, as though it were an equally unproblematic instance of the linguists' claim, that it is a necessary condition of the truth of 'Jane moves<sub>T</sub> her body' that Jane cause her body to move<sub>I</sub>. Does this mean that Jane and her body are also distinct continuants?

Consider each answer in turn. If they are not distinct, then the parallel distinction between cause (Jane's moving<sub>T</sub> her body, or her trying to move<sub>T</sub> her body) and effect (her body's moving<sub>I</sub>) is threatened. (If this strikes you as unconvincing, be assured that we shall return to the matter.) For on the face of it, 'Jane's body's moving<sub>I</sub>' is just an underdescription of the event of Jane's moving<sub>T</sub> her body, and not a designation of a separate event, just as 'heavy object' is an underdescription of a rhinoceros, and not a designation of a separate and essentially inanimate thing. But this, of course, threatens Hornsby's central claim of the internality of action. (And, incidentally, her solution of the causal loop problem of Taylor and von Wright<sup>8</sup>.)

Suppose, then, we say that Jane and her body are distinct continuants. Then someone of a non-dualist persuasion like Hornsby might want to maintain that Jane is her central nervous system, her body being the remainder of the connected physiology. This would make it possible to say, as Hornsby does, '(U)nless we push actions right back inside the body, we cannot make good sense of talking about an action as a person's contracting<sub>T</sub> his muscles.' But if my contracting a muscle can be an action, so too can be my changing my brain state. (It just occurs a bit further back down the causal chain; and is just as open to intentional production, given an appropriate recipe.) So either we face the problem of non-distinctness of cause and effect again, only this time in the brain rather than, say, in the arm; or we distinguish Jane from her brain as well as from the rest of her body. But, presuming that someone of Hornsby's persuasion will be a reluctant dualist, the problem of non-distinctness is going to have to be faced somewhere. And why, if the problem has to be resolved anyway, place its locus implausibly in the brain, when any resolution could equally apply to a more plausible theory which, like O'Shaughnessy's, puts the locus at the body's surface? The same point applies even if one tries to reject the dilemma which we have tried to press

<sup>8</sup> *Actions*, p. 22. For another application of this point, see 'Inner and Outer Basic Action', section III.

here. For one can reject the dilemma, and try to pass between its horns, only if one says that Jane and her body can be non-distinct without threatening the causal relationship between them. Well, this is surely plausible enough: after all, an event in one part of Jane's body can have an effect in another part. But this banal observation, in fact, gives us just the non-Hornsby view that we are about to argue that essayists should adopt<sup>9</sup>.

## 6

A continuant can have internal causal relations among its parts. No one denies this. But we can talk about this obvious fact in a way which disguises its obviousness and which might prove puzzling to a particularly stupid philosopher. Thus we might say, 'Jane hit herself'; and our philosopher might respond, 'How can this be? A blow involves a causal relation, and demands distinctness between cause and effect, which in turn demands a distinction between causing object and affected object. [The argument so far is structurally parallel to one in favour of a relational view of diachronic identity which gets a great deal of credence<sup>10</sup>.] Yet obviously Jane is not distinct from herself, so it must be impossible for her to have hit herself.' This philosopher's puzzle is so easily resolved that it would be embarrassing to spell out the solution. But a parallel puzzle has lured very intelligent people into maintaining a similar conclusion concerning events. Here, for example, is Hornsby again, on someone who thinks that the action of fist clenching results in a muscle contraction which is a part of that action (p. 25):

(H)e must say that the action of fist clenching results in an event of the muscles' contracting which is finished before the whole of the action has occurred, and which causes a further event (the fist's clenching) that is another part of that same action. *a* causes *e* which in turn causes *f* where *f* is a part of *a*. That does sound like a causal loop.

And, in similar vein (p. 30):

Evidently the difficulty here is quite general. How could there be an action that is both an action *a*, and also — what its acquisition of a part would require — a different action *a + e*?

Never trust an argument that uses single letters. In particular, never trust one where an actual example treated in a general way would do instead.

6.1 On the sorts of views we are considering, actions are events. So we

<sup>9</sup> There is a further possible avenue for Hornsby to take concerning the relationship of Jane and her body: that they are non-distinct, but also non-identical, the former being constituted by the latter. It should be clear enough that this avenue offers no escape from the questions we are raising here. Indeed, worse than that, it offers a model for the relations between non-basic and basic actions, and between movements<sub>T</sub> and movements<sub>I</sub> which is entirely inconsistent with the general drift of Hornsby's theory. One who thinks, as Hornsby seems to do (see section 6.1 below), that there should be parallels between the ways we speak of events and the ways we speak of continuants, is going to have to concede something here.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., D. M. Armstrong, 'Identity Through Time', in *Time and Cause*, ed. Peter van Inwagen, Reidel 1980, pp. 67-78; and David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Blackwell 1986, Chapter IV.2.

can ask whether Hornsby's claim about actions in the second quote is plausible for events in general — as it ought to be, since it depends on no feature peculiar to actions as opposed to other sorts of events —, and find out by substituting for the single letters in the rhetorical question. Here is the result of one such substitution: How could there be an event that is both an event World War II, and also — what its acquisition of a part would require — a different event, World War II plus the German counter-attack in the Ardennes? The answer to the question posed in retrospect is, of course, that there could not, in any relevant sense of 'different'. But not for a reason that would give any comfort to Hornsby. And if we imagine such a question posed just before the offensive begins, by an American serving in Belgium who thinks that the war is already over, i.e. in prospect, then it is quite easy to see how this frightful hybrid could develop. The crucial implication of Hornsby's question here is that if a part is added to an event, the outcome is a different event. (If you don't like the term 'event' being applied to a long war, then change the example; or use the term 'process' instead, and we shall be happy to shift our discussion to a framework in which actions are thought of as processes. But do you really want to risk subliming the use of 'event' out of existence by requiring events to be instantaneous?)

Professor Anscombe, in a paper entitled 'Under a Description'<sup>11</sup>, offers us the following excellent advice (pp. 225-6; and Hornsby herself says something similar on her page 19):

There is one noteworthy general point of method that has come up here. Given an argument about the individuation or identity of an event or action, we can often construct a parallel argument about the individuation of concrete things, which would be sound if the argument about events and actions were so, but which is patently unsound. Where an argument about events or actions can be tested thus it should be; we shall often be able to reveal latent nonsense in this way.

It is clear that Hornsby's argument about events and parts will not pass this test. No one disinclined to Bradleian monism thinks that you get a different bicycle if you put a piece of reflective tape on the mudguard. No one thinks that there is no such phenomenon as plant growth because nothing can *grow*, it can only be replaced by something bigger. (Actually, again there are philosophers, non-Bradleians this time, who think this; but again their resulting ontology is quite remote from the common sense one in terms of which all participants conduct this discussion.)

It might be said that our examples smother the differences between numerical and qualitative identity, and between types and tokens. But removing any such smothering only complicates the story; it doesn't relevantly change it. Certainly you get qualitatively different plants and bicycles when the former grow and the latter have parts added. But that is an innocent change; indeed, without that sort of change our own thesis would have no

<sup>11</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe, 'Under a Description', *Noûs* 13, 1979, pp. 219-233.

content. The question is whether this sort of change necessarily results in numerical change. And again the non-monistic answer (the only answer relevant in the context) is, No. Similarly, in some sense one does get a different type of thing when something acquires new parts or grows naturally. But not — unless the acquisition or growth is in some way crucial<sup>12</sup> — a relevantly different type, for the resulting objects will still fall under the same fundamental sortal concepts, viz. bicycle, and plant (or perhaps *Racemosus cytissus* or *Hemiandra pungens* or whatever). And just as similarly, it is not going to follow from some change in type that one gets a change in token. What goes for continuants here seems to go too for events (or processes). We may now re-put the substituted version of Hornsby's question: How could there be an event which is both World War II and — what its acquisition of a part would require — a different event, World War II plus the Ardennes offensive? And the final answer to this question, which does justice to both its retrospective and its prospective posings, is that there could not be such an event. But not because World War II could not acquire a fresh part at the time — we know it did — but because this acquisition did not turn it into a relevantly different event.

What goes for addition goes too, *mutatis mutandis*, for subtraction. Hornsby's crucial argument — it is nowhere, we think, presented succinctly, but is a governing idea of her book — is this:

- (1) All tryings to perform basic acts are purely internal.
- (2) Successful tryings are identical with the actions attempted.
- (3) Therefore, all basic acts are purely internal.

She, of course, moves on to the generalised claim that all actions whatever are internal via her identification of all acts with basic acts. But we are concerned here solely with the less general claim. The difference between her and O'Shaughnessy is that he rejects the first premiss of her argument, holding that only unsuccessful attempts to perform basic acts are purely internal: successful ones reach the surface of the body and encompass the event of the body's moving. Hornsby's reasons for believing her first premiss (e.g. p. 34) seem to amount to this argument:

- (a) An unsuccessful attempt to move<sub>i</sub> the body does not have the body's moving<sub>i</sub> as a part.
- (b) Whether an attempt is successful or not is contingent.
- (c) Thus the same event, an attempt, occurs whether the attempt is successful or not, i.e., whether the body moves<sub>i</sub> or not.
- (d) Therefore, the attempt even when successful does not include the body's moving<sub>i</sub> as a part.

Again leaving issues of type on one side as irrelevant, the crucial step of this

<sup>12</sup> And the fact that such acquisition *can* result in a change of sortal is irrelevant to the argument. For what is in question is the claim that it *must*. Adding a third wheel to a bicycle is not the model for adding a reflective strip.

argument seems to be (c), for if the same token attempt could have occurred whether or not the attempt was successful, then the conclusion does seem to follow. But it follows only on the assumption that events cannot grow as plants can grow. And this assumption looks to be false. A parallel argument involving a previous example would show that the Second World War didn't include the Ardennes offensive because the same (token) war would have occurred even if that attack had been aborted before it began. And this involves modal institutions about event-identity strong enough to need separate justification: it amounts to claiming that all parts of events are essential parts, so that if it is possible for something not to belong to an event, then it does not in fact belong to it. This is essentialism run wild; and no one (other than a monist) would believe it of continuants. So why believe it of events? Certainly, if it is false, the movement to (d) in this argument is unjustified.

But even if one does add it to the argument as a premiss, the only result is circularity. Suppose we start with World War II as we know it to have been, and ask whether *it* would have occurred had there been no Ardennes offensive. Then the hyper-essentialist is forced to answer, No: a numerically different war would have occurred. But that will not allow us to infer that the offensive was not in fact a part of *World War II*, and similarly, the comparable argument concerning bodily movement will not allow us to infer by subtracting the body's moving<sub>i</sub> from a successful attempt to move it that the same attempt would have occurred had the body not moved<sub>i</sub>; and thus there is comparably no licence to infer that the body's moving was not a part of an actual successful attempt to move it. The inferences will work only if the hyper-essentialist assumes at the outset that the offensive was not in fact part of World War II, and the event of the body's moving not in fact part of a particular event of my moving of my body. But this is what he is meant to be proving<sup>13</sup>.

The case against the second quotation from Hornsby, though argued in terms of tryings and events in general rather than in terms of actions, is now almost complete. And it has enabled us in the course of constructing it to see how an action *can* acquire parts without being both itself and a different action. The answer is natural enough: by becoming, growing, developing. Part of Hornsby's complaint against this view is that one can't 'say *which* is the action that takes on new parts as time progresses' (p. 30). But of course, trivially, one always can, simply by specifying the agent, the time of commencement, and his intention in the action (or the way in which the action began if, like O'Shaughnessy, one believes in sub-intentional action). Yet as we shall see in a moment, one does not need to go even to these minor lengths to deal with the problem.

6.2 We have, then, disposed of the difficulty raised in the second of the pair of quotations from Hornsby. What about the first of them? We have

<sup>13</sup> The point is argued at length in terms of possible worlds by Michael Smith in 'Actions, Attempts and Internal Events', *Analysis* 43, 1983, pp. 142-146.

already seen that O'Shaughnessy's arguments against extreme internalism are unsatisfactory. That first quotation holds an important feature of Hornsby's arguments for extreme internalism: that is, that only on such a theory can one avoid the difficulties about backwards causation and causal loops which von Wright and Richard Taylor have raised concerning the immediate causal antecedents of the external movements involved in bodily action. O'Shaughnessy does not discuss this matter directly; but when we looked earlier at his handling of the question of the relation between the inner trying and the outer willed event, we saw that he ends up in a contradiction. Now we want to show simultaneously how that contradiction can be removed, what is wrong with the first quotation from Hornsby, and how an event can cause its own parts. The solution to this last problem is simple: just as we can say that Jane hits herself when her fist strikes a blow against her face, so we can (and in fact do) say that an event causes its own parts when an earlier part of the event causes a later part. David Lewis<sup>14</sup> refers to such causation as 'piecemeal', and gives the example of our saying that a depression caused a bankruptcy that was clearly itself part of the depression and may cause other parts. What has happened in such a case is simply that earlier parts of the depression caused the bankruptcy: derivatively, the depression itself caused the bankruptcies which in part compose it, *piecemeal*. As Lewis himself points out, the relation of my moving my body to my body's moving can be treated in the same way. Using Lewis's idea, one can do full justice to the intuition which many philosophers seem to have that my trying to move my body causes my body's moving, without sacrificing either the claim that successful trying is identical with the attempted action, or the intuition which many also have that moving the body includes as a part the body's moving. One can achieve all this by stipulating that *my* moving causes *its* moving piecemeal, the earlier part of the process causing (non-piecemeal) the later part. This earlier part is the trying, and it can cause the later parts while nevertheless being identical with the whole, by growing, by developing into the full action. Hornsby's allegation of a causal loop is baseless. (Our account commits us to holding that there can be contingent identities; but in fact the phenomenon of growth in general demands contingency in identity<sup>15</sup>.)

## 7

This brings us to the contradiction in O'Shaughnessy. The way to remove it is to drop his idea (p. 269), which we can now anyway see to be false, that something which includes the willed event cannot cause it, and allow that it causes it piecemeal. This enables us to give a clear sense to his otherwise rather obscure distinction between causality and causal development (p. 286): any complex thing, whether its complexity is spatial or temporal, can have unqualifiedly causal relations among its parts, while we speak of

<sup>14</sup> David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers* Volume II, Oxford University Press 1986, Chapter 21, Postscript A.

<sup>15</sup> Candlish argues this in his 'Identity and Individuation', in *Handbuch Sprachphilosophie*, ed. Kuno Lorenz et al. (De Gruyter, forthcoming).

that thing, depending on its category, as primarily extended in space or developing in time.

We have, then, within the ground rules of physicalism, essayism, and internalism, managed to arrest the internalist drive before losing our grip on the exterior of the body. We have done this by finding a way to grasp how internal trying can develop into external action, so that we can understand how both trying and acting can involve, as we always pre-theoretically believed, events of an external kind, without being forced to deny that the person who finds himself unexpectedly paralysed can still try to move his body. The question which naturally arises now is, can we extend this understanding further? Do actions themselves encompass events which lie quite remote from the body's surface? But to open this question involves changing the ground rules, and so is not a matter for this paper.<sup>16</sup>

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