

Indexicals: What they are essential for. *

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Introduction

Are indexicals essential? If the answer is ‘yes’, *for what* are they essential, and why? Cappelen and Dever (2013) have recently defended the view that indexicals are not essential: Indexicals, the first person pronoun in particular, and what we might call the first person point of view, do not signify anything philosophically deep. We do not need indexicals for any important philosophical work, according to Cappelen and Dever.

This paper will contest their view from the point of view of an account of intentional agency. Cappelen and Dever, in their chapter 3, argue against philosophers who have maintained that indexicals are necessary for our understanding of (intentional) action. In doing so, they focus on three things. First they focus on the opacity of explanation contexts, and argue that this general feature of explanation contexts can fully explain why indexicals cannot be substituted for other co-referring terms in actions-explanations. Secondly, they argue that indexicals are not necessary for rationalizations of actions. They argue that no sound motivation has been given for the view that rationalizations in this sense need to be complete. Thirdly, they argue that no one has shown that indexicals are needed as something like a physical necessity for action to come about.

Against their general thesis, and independently of their three specific arguments, I argue that we need indexicals essentially when accounting for what *it is do something*

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intentionally and, as a consequence, *intentional action*. This is a claim in the neighbourhood of conceptual necessity: To understand these two notions (in italics), and their relations, we also need to understand practical knowledge and do that through an account of practical reasoning. I shall provide an outline of this and a view of practical reasoning in which the indexical is essential: it is essential for the correct representation of the content of the *productive* knowledge that makes up the conclusion of the practical reasoning. (The notion of ‘productive (practical) knowledge’ will be explained in due course).

The view I promote is, as I see things, part and parcel of a specific way of developing a general knowledge first approach to the mind: In order to account for content in general and for the various concepts we need to describe and account for the mind’s workings, we should start from an identification of the *two fundamental ways we relate to the world: Knowing something and doing something intentionally*.¹ Obviously, if indexicals are necessary for understanding at least one of these two fundamental concepts, then indexicals are indeed needed for something philosophically deep and important. But this is for the record. What I shall argue in this paper, however, about the role of the indexical in the account of doing something intentionally, will, or so I think, be possible to accept without accepting a general knowledge first approach to the mind. This possibility will not be explored here.

The dialectical situation in this paper is therefore this: Cappelen’s and Dever’s argumentative strategy consists in the main in arguing for the thesis that there is nothing about indexicals that takes us essentially beyond the general features of Frege’s puzzle. The heart of the matter in relation to action they find in the opacity of explanation contexts, the absence of a need for indexicals in rationalizations or physical necessities. The first point amounts to this: All that looks special in the indexical case is in fact to be explained by the general Fregean machinery of Sinn: the indexical case is special but nevertheless part of what that machinery is able to handle. This strategy is full of guts, but has some risks. One such risk is precisely its

¹ Here I am agreeing with Williamson 2015 on a quite general level. The specifics will be somewhat different, as will be manifest later.

dependency upon a rich Fregean framework. Many scholars claim that a Fregean framework itself cannot handle indexicals properly, John Perry made early on a strong case for this.² Many claim also, often on general grounds, that we should work with more austere notions, like possible worlds and perhaps centred worlds instead of Fregean Sinn.³ Questions around these issues make up one huge range of problems that will largely be left aside here. Another range of problems concern the issues that may not properly addressed by Frege, as he in his major works focused on only the first of the two main ways we relate to the world, namely on taking the world to be so and so in thought. Making the world be so and so in intentional action was not in focus.

The bigger picture.

As maintained by Williamson (2015), doing something intentionally is the fundamental concept for understanding the way we relate to the world in agency, while knowledge is the fundamental concept for understanding the other basic way we relate to the world. I share Williamson's view, at least up to a point: the best general approach to intentional action inside a knowledge first framework starts from an understanding of doing something intentionally. I shall see the latter as a way of being related to a propositional content: making that content true. This view upholds the parallels between the two fundamental modes of relating to the world, and is able to provide a full picture of their interaction. I shall further argue that just as knowledge first epistemology avoids the challenges of traditional epistemology following Gettier, this approach to intentional action avoids what might be thought of as the practical analogue of Gettier cases. Importantly, only by adopting this position can one also fully understand the type of mistake which characterizes the practical way of relating to the world, what I shall call executive mistakes. Executive mistakes

² John Perry – Frege On Demonstratives, 1977. Perry's argument traded upon a general way of understanding Sinn: Sinn as something that in principle could be grasped by all (publicness of Sinn), and the failure of this principle in the indexical case. Whether such publicness has to be a general feature of Fregean remains disputed. See also Evans 1982, and Frege's 'Logical Investigations' (Frege 1977), in particular the essay 'The Thought'. Morgan 2008 provides a very good critical discussion of these issues.

³ Lewis 1979 is the classic approach along such lines.

are failures in the execution of making the world be a certain way. In them there is no relevant cognitive error, only a purely practical and executive error, as when one pushes the wrong button in the lift, while knowing perfectly well which button to push. Such an executive mistake is failed knowledge, more precisely a failure productive (practical) knowledge.⁴

This provides the beginnings of an account of the practical way of being related to a propositional content, understood as making some proposition true. Note that the aim of this approach is precisely not to offer a reductive analysis of doing something intentionally, I do not think that can be given. My contention is that in order to understand the practical way of being related to propositional content we need to understand (1) how this account of doing something intentionally relates to accounts of practical reasoning, and crucially for this paper, (2) the exact nature of the propositional contents one is thus related to in making the world be specific ways. It is in (2), I shall claim, that the indexical has an essential role.

I do indeed suggest the view that a knowledge first approach should present doing something intentionally as a possible conclusion of practical reasoning, where that conclusion as exhibits a distinctive way of knowing, a practical and productive way of knowing. This *is* doing something intentionally.⁵ The conclusion of correct theoretical reasoning is knowledge. Practical and theoretical reasoning are to be differentiated by the type of knowledge in which they issue.⁶ In the latter case the product or conclusion is legitimately taking to world to be so and so; in the former it is legitimately making the world to be so and so. This distinction between two kinds or modes of knowledge is at the bottom of talk about “directions of fit” between mind

⁴ Here I am in general agreement with John Schwenker 2015. Questions about the role of the indexical in executive mistakes will be addressed later.

⁵ Maybe the best presentation of the view that ‘practical knowledge’ may be seen as productive knowledge, and Anscombe’s commitment to this, is Schwenkler (2015). This very illuminating paper provides excellent defence and textual evidence for acknowledging the productive aspects of this notion of practical knowledge. There is, however, in my view not sufficient appreciation of the point that this notion of Anscombe’s requires a more general knowledge first approach. The role of practical reasoning is also not seen properly, as Schwenkler supplies no detailed approach to such reasoning.

⁶ This difference in conclusions must be a reflection of differences in the premises.

and world, and to account for this difference in the conclusions of practical and theoretical reasoning, we need a difference in the premises. The approach I propose will illuminate the interaction between the two modes of knowledge: what we have when things go as they should in the interplay between the fundamental practical way of relating to propositional contents, and the fundamental theoretical one.

The most important issue in relation to Cappelen and Dever's negative claims about the significance of indexicals then concerns the propositional contents that characterize this practical reasoning. Remembering that we are dealing with genuine practical reasoning and not theoretical reasoning about practical matters, my thesis is: the propositional contents we relate to practically in doing something intentionally *all contain the first person indexical and must do so*. In short, the practical-productive way of relating to a propositional content in doing something intentionally *has* to be understood as a way of relating to contents with a first person indexical (singular or plural/collective, depending on what the agent is).

Here then is the bold hypothesis: A basic function of the first person pronoun stems from and has its home in the very nature of this practical-productive way of relating to a propositional content in intentional action. We can put this differently: we cannot have this required practical way of relating to propositions without these propositions being first person indexical propositions. Understanding indexicals, therefore, requires understanding their essential function in relation to the practical-productive way of relating to a proposition, which again *is* doing something intentionally.

Bringing in practical reasoning, this conception can see practical reasoning/inference as issuing in intentional actions, and as relating intentional actions by means of reasoning/inference, inferences that are valid by the usual logical standards for inference, but where the way we relate to the propositions has to be represented in the full representation of the reasoning, as it also was in Frege's representation of inference: Frege represented inference as moving from judgment/assertion to judgment/assertion, not as moving from one set of propositional contents or thoughts to another. The exact *way one relates* to the thought thus enters the account of

inference. I hold that there is an extremely important insight in this conception of Frege's, where he held on to a conception of 'legitimate' holding of premises, and in that case, and in that case only, of 'legitimate' transition in inference to a legitimately held (and thus detachable) conclusion.⁷

With these contours in place, I shall turn to some important considerations in favour of this conception of intentional agency. This will support and motivate the view suggested. I simply want to exhibit some attractions of the present way of thinking by provide motivations, and thereby support the thought that there is a big lacuna in the arguments of Cappelen and Dever.

Williamson's parallels.

Timothy Williamson, in a recent essay, 'Acting on Knowledge' pursues the analogy between knowledge and acting intentionally in a way that is in broad harmony with the present position, but which has been reached by somewhat different routes from mine. I fully share his more general methodology here, which approaches the investigation of mind by focussing on cases where things work well and the mind functions as it should. Williamson argues for the following analogies:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| knowledge intentionally) | action (doing something |
| belief | intention |
| truth | success |
| falsity | failure |
| fitting mind to world | fitting world to mind |
| input to practical reasoning | output from practical reasoning |

⁷ I cannot argue for this view in this context. I do believe that it is the view that best explains what a good/correct inference is. I am here leaning on Dag Prawitz's work on inference. See Prawitz (2013).

The main difference between Williamson's view and the present view is found in the way the present position aims for an account that integrates the two columns.

The first and most important way of relating to a proposition is the top one on either list, i.e. theoretical knowledge and intentional action. Seen as parallels, both are factive: Doing something intentionally is factive in the sense that you have to do it to do it intentionally. Since doing something intentionally is seen as a way of relating to a propositional content, your doing it is fitting the world to mind, i.e. fitting the world to be in accordance with that propositional content you relate to. That is what success is in this case. The two basic modes of relating to propositional contents can in slogan-terms be described as (legitimately) taking to be true and (legitimately) making true. The word 'legitimate' then marks that things go as they should inside the knowledge first framework, that there is success.⁸

Failure in the practical case is very interesting, as it can have two sources; it can either be tracked back to some failure on the theoretical side, some false belief, or it can be purely practical. In the latter case, for instance in pushing the wrong kind of button in the lift, there is the possibility of there being no relevant false belief, just a practical failure in the execution. You might of course notice right away that the execution goes wrong and correct yourself. The proposition you took yourself to relate to practically then provides the standard for success (correctness). The main point is that there is a possibility of failure/error in both columns, and that in the practical case there is also a purely executive error. This type of error demonstrates the need for this way of relating to content in production of this kind of change in the world. This way of relating to a propositional content is 'productive knowledge'.

⁸ The 'legitimately' and the 'should' introduce a type of normativity.

Here is a quite radical break this view makes with much standard thinking today. I hold, in an Aristotelian fashion, that acting intentionally can be the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning. Standard action theory typically sees the action to be caused by the output of the practical reasoning. The essential role of indexicals is typically sought in the explanation of intentional action, since the generation of action features fundamentally in the account of what doing something intentionally is. This standard view is often and perhaps typically conjoined with a view that sees practical reasoning as ending in what in fact is a theoretical conclusion about practical matters, a judgment to the effect that doing so and so would be right or best. Going this way means losing sight of practical reasoning proper. In practical reasoning proper the conclusion itself must have a practical form, not just have some practical content to the effect that you ought to do such and such or that you are doing such and such.⁹ A theoretical conclusion about such practical matters does not have a practical form; in practical reasoning as conceived of here a proposition of this form may enter as a premise, but never as a conclusion. It belongs firmly to the left hand column, and expresses theoretical knowledge about practical matters when legitimate. The practical conclusion, when it is an intentional action, has a different form, (it is productive), as will be exhibited by the picture of practical reasoning I shall provide.

Exploiting the parallels: getting closer to intentional action.

Staring from the lists above, and thinking about how to account for the top items, one very obvious question is whether we can use resources from the left hand list to illuminate the concepts on the right hand side and vice versa. That would extend the circle of knowledge concepts and provide interesting possibilities. It might in fact turn out to be an important resource in a general theory of content. It might also help in breaking the tasks down into steps: There might be substantial help from one side in determining the extension of the concept on the other side, while the further substantive issues about what something is might come on top of that determination of extension. Typically accounts of intentional action try to do two things at the same

⁹ This point is made by Anscombe when she mocks the idea that reasoning about minced pies could make up a category of syllogism. The content is not relevant for the type of categorization we are seeking.

time, both determining the extension of the concept and say something substantive about what intentional action is. If one can take one step at a time, that might not only be better, it might be the path to success. This approach can in turn be used for (at least partly) determining extensions for both top concepts.

We can think of the two steps as inviting a division of labour between determining the extension of the class, i.e. the class of intentional actions, and providing some defining trait of what they are. In Davidson and standard action theory these two things come together. If the resources one appeals to in carrying out these two tasks are different, and both tasks are carried out in a satisfactory and fruitful way, then one might achieve something one might be unable to achieve by attempting to do both things in one fell swoop. It might even be that there is an interesting lesson to be learned here, if the illumination of what something is should not by itself determine the extension of the class of things that is being illuminated.

The suggestion then is that one should *not*, when determining the extension of the class of intentional actions prior to an elucidation of what they are, make use of the notions that involve that elucidating class of concepts. There is a reason for this, and it is this: The double use (both saying what it is and determining the extension) may by itself contribute towards creating the possibility of wayward causal chains, and it is destructive for a proper account if we get Gettier results (i.e. cases that should belong to the extension but clearly do not).¹⁰ Of course, one might abstain from trying to determine the extension of the class or take the class as given; in that case there remains no problem about getting the extension wrong, as one does not even try. But then one achieves less.

¹⁰ A double use commits one both to an extension and uses somewhat independent concepts to a) account for a concept and b) determine its extension. Consider saying that knowledge is justified true belief, which meant to capture a defining trait and the extension. In this case the Gettier case is manifest when the concepts meant to determine the extension determine as the extension something which does not belong to it. One can give up the double function, but that leaves one with little explanatory power. Alternatively, one can use the interplay between the concepts at the top level in the two columns above, and achieve a sort of double function by going step-wise; the first step makes use of the other top knowledge concept. (There are some asymmetries here I cannot go into.)

Here is a strategy for the case of drawing the line between intentional action and other actions/things we do. Note the way it makes use of the concept of knowledge/awareness, i.e. the top concept in the *left hand* column, in order to determine the extension of the *right hand* concept. The strategy is close to Anscombe's:

1. Determine the class of things we know without observation.
2. Within this class, the class of things that are actions, and in particular physical actions (Anscombe's 'Intention' §4, end, page 9).
3. Get rid of the last remaining problematic cases within this class in (2): namely the subclass of involuntary actions known without observation. ('The loud bark of that crocodile made me jump' ('Intention' §8, page 15.) These involuntary actions all have a cause that is known observationally.
4. Then we have before us the class of things we do intentionally: things we do that we know without observation, and where we also know the cause without observation.

Note also the following: 'knowledge' from the left Williamsonian column/list is in fact employed *twice* in getting right the extension of the right-hand concept of doing something intentionally. It is the interaction at the top-level that here is crucial in the determination of the extension that makes room for the two-stage strategy. The concept of doing something intentionally, to be illuminated further by the connected concepts of practical knowledge and practical reasoning in the next round, is seen as explanatorily prior to concepts of 'intending' or acting with an intention. Since this concept is reached by employment of knowledge, theoretical and practical, we see why the present view is rightly thought of as a knowledge first approach.¹¹

¹¹ One extremely interesting question is of course whether one could go the other way at the top level and employ this fundamental practical concept to identify the extension of the class of those things which we have theoretical knowledge. I shall put that aside for now. I do consider this question not only interesting but also more challenging than the present question about intentional action.

Does this Aristotelian/Anscombian strategy get the extension if doing something intentionally right? If there is a problem here, it is not that it lets in things that should not be let in, as the criteria for being let in are strong. There is to my knowledge no credible example in the literature of an action we are aware of doing, aware of in the sense identified here (non-observationally), that seems like something that should not belong to the extension of 'doing something intentionally'. The issue is, as far as I can tell, whether it lets in too little. There might be some delicate issues about the required awareness, issues of whether we need to be aware of being aware, or to know that we are aware when we are aware. There are many actions we acknowledge that we are engaged in doing (intentionally) only if asked, so in some sense we need not be aware that we are aware. Are you aware that you are tying your shoelaces, we might ask, and the answer might be yes, even if the agent's mind was attending to a philosophical problem and was not attending to the tying of the shoelaces. In some other scenarios the answer might be no, and in that case the tying of the shoelaces seems rightly considered not to be an intentional action.¹²

The defining trait of doing something intentionally.

Let us then return to the next question, the question that arises if we conclude we have got the extension right. This is the question about the defining trait of these actions, the presence of which is what makes something we do into a doing something intentionally. Here I will introduce the view that the 'why question', the question as to why the action occurred, if it can be answered, is to be answered by the giving of reasons. It is always appropriate to ask for a reason even if there is none, Anscombe maintained. Davidson holds that there is always some minimal reason for any intentional action. Note that this is not an answer to the question of defining trait, but at best the beginning of a move towards an answer.

¹² It should be noted that also Davidson, for instance in 'Agency', (Davidson 1980 page 50) seems to commit to this view on the extension of the class of intentional actions: "Action does require that what the agent does is intentional under some description, and this in turn requires, I think, that what the agent does is known to him under some description." The issue then is whether a causal account of agency can account for the extension being as it is.

There seem to be some agreement at this point between Anscombe and Davidson about the central role of the why question, but there is not necessarily agreement about its exact significance. Putting aside their quite different conceptions of reasons, let us nevertheless focus on what these writers have in common, namely that an important trait of intentional agency is that intentional action is or may be (the right sort of) response to the reason that to the agent justify the action. The reason, if it exists, rationalizes the intentional action; that seems to be the main point about this trait on both views. ‘Rationalizing’ then needs explication; a very natural way of explicating what that is, is to say that there is (or could be) reasoning in support of the action, reasoning that moves from the reason(s) to the action. At this point it surely starts to matter crucially how one thinks about reasoning and inference, and how one, relatedly, thinks about the action, as a further causal result of the conclusion of such a piece of reasoning (where the conclusion might be an intention), or where the conclusion is the intentional action itself.

In the latter case, we might in an Aristotelian fashion say that the form, perhaps we should be explicit and say the formal cause, of doing something intentionally is such that doing something intentionally is or could be the conclusion of practical inference. The import of this statement is then closely bound up with how to think about practical inference and its output. The real work in providing the defining trait, however, will be done by the concepts exhibited by the output. In my view, a proper account of practical reasoning, its relationship with reasoning in general, and its significance for understanding doing something intentionally has been missing in much of the literature. It is missing in Davidson, and also in Anscombe who herself never supplied a full detailed account of practical reasoning even if she later made significant progress from *Intention*, and recognized errors in *Intention* and a need to make amends to Aristotle.¹³

Practical Inference.

¹³ See Anscombe’s paper ‘Practical Inference’.

Let us go piecemeal about this. An account of practical inference is also to be seen as part and parcel of a general account of inference. Inference is basic for both columns in the Williamson columns. Frege's approach to inference is deep and engaging, but in fact deals with inference in the left hand column. Fregean inferences must all be seen as knowledge-extending in the sense that they move from known premises to conclusion that become known and established.

Frege's approach to reasoning/inference is something like this:

Inference:

- 1a. \vdash (I am driving to Stockholm)
- 2a. \vdash (If I am driving to Stockholm, I am turning left at crossing X)
- 3a. \vdash (This place is crossing X)

- 4a. \vdash (I am turning left at this place)

Note the role of the assertion/judgment stroke. This role is essential for this conception of legitimate inference. Frege was, furthermore, one of the first great thinkers to distinguish carefully between judging and predicating. In the content of the judgement we *predicate* something of the subject of the sentence, i.e. that it falls under the concept in question. We *judge* the whole proposition to be true. Note again that Frege works with 'legitimate' inference. Seen from a knowledge first picture, he is operating with 'legitimate', i.e. true and known premises. The 'legitimate' inferential transition, represented by the long separate line under premise 3., is then knowledge extending, and the conclusion can be detached.

Here is a very natural suggestion: When we take into account both the practical and the theoretical way of being related to the world, taking to be true and making true, let us generalize on the Frege approach to inference, and index the stroke as to whether *the way the subject relates* to the propositional content is practical or theoretical ('P' or 'T'), whether it is making or taking. Here is the theoretical case.

Theoretical inference:

- 1a. \vdash_T (I am driving to Stockholm)
- 2a. \vdash_T (If I am driving to Stockholm, I am turning left at crossing X)
- 3a. \vdash_T (This place is crossing X)

- 4a. \vdash_T (I am turning left at this place)

And here is the corresponding practical case.

Practical inference:

- 1b. \vdash_P (I am driving to Stockholm)
- 2b. \vdash_T (If I am driving to Stockholm, I am turning left at crossing X)
- 3b. \vdash_T (This place is crossing X)

- 4b. \vdash_P (I am turning left at this place)

First comment: The English language may stand a little bit in the way of seeing the connections clearly, because of the need to use the progressive form of the verb, where many other languages would use a simple present or past form without the sentences being read as habituais. (Hearing them as habituais also comes easy in

English). Here is an example, not really grammatical in English, but in other closely related languages, here exhibited in (somewhat improper) English:

New theoretical inference:

- 1c. \vdash_T (I drive to Stockholm)
2c. \vdash_T (If I drive to Stockholm, I turn left at crossing X)
3a \vdash_T (This place is crossing X)
-
- 4c. \vdash_T (I turn left at this place)

This can be extended/generalized to the practical case by changing premise 1c. into a premise corresponding to 1b, and similarly for the conclusion. Let me also add there are many reasons to hold that the ' \vdash_P ' stands for what I call 'productive knowledge', i.e. making true, which may be what Anscombe meant or ought to have meant by 'practical knowledge'. It is what she seems to be aiming at in what she said about it. It is the crucial term in accounting for doing something intentionally, and it stands for propositional 'knowledge' of a sort. It is also *very* different from Ryle's notion of 'knowing how'. Ryle's notion is precisely not a practical ('making') way of relating to a propositional content, but a way of thinking about abilities that are necessary for intentional action; we need to know how to \emptyset to be able to practically know 'I am \emptyset -ing'.¹⁴ Furthermore, it is clear that Anscombe agrees with Aristotle that an action (doing something intentionally) is possibly a conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning and has the form of such a conclusion, and also that practical reasoning is propositional reasoning with the same standards for correctness as straight deductive reasoning: The difference between the practical and the theoretical resides wholly *in*

¹⁴ Putting it like this carries with it a simplification.

the use we make of the propositional content. I shall for the rest of this paper put these things aside, and focus elsewhere, on indexicality.¹⁵

‘Practically knowing – productive knowledge’.

The context introduced by the symbol ‘ \vdash_P ’ can thus be understood better:

‘ \vdash_P (I am turning left at this place)’ is in full a representation of intentionally turning left at this place in question. It is important to remember that we are not providing an account of doing something intentionally by concepts that can be understood prior to or independently of doing something intentionally, but that we instead providing a gloss or an illumination of what it is by placing it inside a big picture of how the mind works, and by identifying the concrete relations to many other things. In short we aim to provide a much more detailed picture than Williamson does in his paper of how the various elements in the two columns are to be understood and related.¹⁶ With the present approach to inference in hand we now see more clearly how ‘output’ and ‘input’ to practical and theoretic inference is to be understood, and we understand better the precise meaning of success and failure etc. We see that there is a type of failure that is purely practical, namely executive failure (the story goes back to Aristotle and his pupil and successor Theophrastus), and this provides further substance to ‘doing something intentionally’. The purely practical failure occurs when the conclusion fail to occur, but there is nothing wrong in the premises or in the transition (all are legitimate). It is a specific failure of productive (practical) knowledge, failure in production.

It is part of my claim that we should approach what it is to act with an intention and what it is to intend something from the resources we here have available, and that

¹⁵ Note the difference from the notion of ‘practical mode of presentation’ used by Williamson and Stanley in their work on ‘Knowing How’. They speak of ‘modes of presentation’, standardly used as a way of talking about Fregean senses, but claim to remain neutral on whether it applies to sub-sentential parts or to whole sentences. The practical way as yet invoked here is only at the level of ‘force’, not at the level of ‘Sinn’, only then do we get the proper interactions between the theoretical and the practical in practical reasoning. We have yet seen no need for some ‘practical Sinn’.

¹⁶ With the detail comes also the possibility of divergence from Williamson’s views.

opposite strategies will not do. There are a number of complexities about the relationship between ‘doing something with an intention’ and ‘doing something intentionally’ I cannot go into. These further issues will have to be dealt with elsewhere.

Roundup.

We have then before us an approach to doing something intentionally with the following elements: It can be the conclusion of a practical inference, and has the form of such a conclusion. It has factivity of the described sort. In case of failure there is the possibility of executive mistakes, mistakes that are not due to any mistake of yours of the sort ‘taking yourself to know something you do not know, inferring illegitimately’. The way we relate to a proposition in doing something intentionally is thus to some extent primitive. It is a practical way, and it is a productive way; this practical-productive knowledge both enters reasoning and is making the world be certain ways. It has representational content and is the making true of the content that is represented.

Cappelen and Dever could say: Granted, non-observational knowledge is needed. But why must it be first personal? Why wouldn’t ‘Olav/Herman/Josh is \emptyset -ing’ do? We are now close to an answer: Having ‘practical-productive knowledge’ *is* to be related to a proposition with an essential role for the first person pronoun. It has to be, to accommodate properly what it is to be productively related to a proposition in the relation at play in both a) making something to be the case, b) represent the making of that something as your making. Note that the first, a), is essentially to be understood from the notion of executive mistake, which can only be a failure by the executive agent. The second, b), must represent the action so that this point (a)) is plain. The proposition must represent the thing you are doing as being done by you yourself, and cannot represent you the agent in such a way that you might fail to believe it is you who are represented. The only way to achieve this is to employ the indexical. Executive failure is failure in making a proposition true, but is and can only be failure

in the predicate part. Any other failure would be theoretical, not practical. The content of the proposition is thought of as delineated by possible failures.

In the representation of the agent in the content that is entertained in practically knowing, the agent therefore cannot represent him/herself in a way, a mode of presentation, which the agent can hold not to represent the agent. All “normal” Fregean ‘Sinne’ are therefore out. It therefore looks as if this practical/productive mode of being related to a proposition is essentially characterized by its being a relation to the right sort of indexical proposition, at least if correctness-conditions are simply the other side of possibilities for (practical) failure.

Both these points flow from the recognition that **an intentional action is the action of the agent**. Single or plural agent, this holds.

Here are direct and explicit theses that sums much of this discussion up, and makes the case:

1. All actions, intentional ones too, necessarily have an agent.
2. It is necessarily true for all agents (also intentional ones) that they only (in the relevant sense) do their own actions, and they can only exhibit executive failure in their own attempts.
3. If doing something intentionally - i.e. something that can be the conclusion of practical reasoning - is making a proposition true, then 1. and 2. above have specific consequences for the content of that proposition.
4. The proposition in question must represent to the agent the action as something that necessarily she herself performs.

5. This is so because it is necessarily true that your commitment to make the world be in productive knowledge is not just to the thing being done, but to you yourself doing it.¹⁷ The proposition must capture this aspect of the commitment.

6. Therefore the representation of yourself in the proposition you are making true must ensure that the commitment you take on is to you yourself doing the thing in question.

7. No. 6 above is important because you may be credited with grasp of some Sinn that has you (perhaps necessarily) as referent, and still be mistaken about you being the referent. 'Sinn' is a theoretical cognitive notion designed to create such an epistemic possibility. In the practical context you therefore need to be presented to yourself in a way where you cannot mistake yourself as the person who is doing the action.

8. The other side of this is the point that executive mistake is only possible as a mistake of the agent of an attempted act; failing to make the predicate in the intention true of himself/herself. Any other type of mistake is theoretical mistake.

This approach to doing something intentionally introduces a distinct way of relating to a proposition about which the claim has been made (by Anscombe) that modern philosophy has forgotten all about, namely the practical-productive knowledge displayed in doing something intentionally. The further specific claim is that this productive way of relating to a propositional content brings along the indexical essentially. Another big claim that cannot be fully substantiated here is the claim is that this is the best way available for accounting for 'doing something intentionally', and that this will be shown when we approach a large number of issues in the philosophy of actions from this starting point.¹⁸

We can display the specific claim this way. Look at A and B, they look very similar.

A. \vdash_P (I am driving to Stockholm.)

B. \vdash_T (I am driving to Stockholm.)

¹⁷ For a different elaboration of this point, see Broome 2013.

¹⁸ I argue this in forthcoming work.

The point is that the *way you are related* to the Fregean thought in the parenthesis, has huge differences. One is judging (correctly), another is making true (successfully).

It is well known that you may be related to any referent by any number of Fregean Sinne. When certain identities are known, inferences are made legitimate. Let us bring in some known identities.

Known: (I) (I am Rolf),

Known: (II) (Rolf is Peter)

The known identity (I) facilitates this inference:

\vdash_T (I am driving to Stockholm) ,

\vdash_T (I am Rolf),

\vdash_T (Rolf driving to Stockholm) ,

The known identity (II) facilitates this inference:

\vdash_T (Rolf driving to Stockholm),

\vdash_T (Rolf is Peter)

\vdash_T (Peter is driving to Stockholm)

Then note that while known identity (I) facilitates this:

\vdash_P (I am driving to Stockholm),

\vdash_T (I am Rolf)

\vdash_P (Rolf is driving to Stockholm),

the inference under might be problematic:

\vdash_P (Rolf driving to Stockholm),

\vdash_I (Rolf is Peter)

\vdash_P (Peter is driving to Stockholm)

The reason this might be problematic, is that it is required for the legitimacy of the whole first premise and also the conclusion that it is known that *you* are Rolf/Peter. Only then can you be practically related the content in question. Known identity (II) would of course facilitate this last inference if the first premise *were true and legitimate*, but for that to be so, identity (I) must also be known. If it is not known, the first premise cannot be legitimate, and the inference is not legitimate. It cannot be legitimate, because there cannot, in that case, be intentional action, and that is what the first premise requires.

There is therefore an asymmetry in what it takes for these inferences to be legitimate. A practical inference requires of the premises expressing practical knowledge, i.e. making a proposition true, that you know that it is you yourself who are making it true. This marks a very clear difference, and identifies a context, namely that of practical knowledge, in which the indexical is essential. Dever and Cappelen focus on explanations of cognitive possibilities within opaque contexts. I am with them in their arguments, and agree that general Fregean mechanisms will do for this purpose. They also focus on rationalizations, but do not discuss practical reasoning as such. The latter is, however, where we make progress, rationalizations are a loose category. They focus on physical necessities for action, but not on conceptual necessities for intentional action. They overlook the possibility that the latter provides contexts that

require the indexical as such, and thus fail to argue against the proper essentiality claim.

The position thus brings along a general claim that we might construe to be about *the (Aristotelian) form of doing something intentionally*, and as such it exhibits essential properties of this way of relating to the world. The indexical is thus part of this form, and here is, I claim, *the* place where indexicality has an essential role in philosophical theory. I can put this differently again, assuming in the very formulation that the ‘I’ has a Fregean Sinn¹⁹: There is one fundamental context, namely that of practical knowing, where you are *necessarily related to yourself via the Sinn of ‘I’*. We then see the indexical as philosophically essential after all, since its ‘Sinn’ is essential for at least one basic philosophical task. The point made here does not need to be limited to the acceptance of Fregean Sinn, or to Fregeanism for propositions. I shall leave aside formulating the present insight for the other main possibilities for how to think about propositions.

What does the present approach achieve?

The present approach aims to achieve a philosophical explanation of why indexicals are essential to a major philosophical task. This task is seen as an outcome of that of accounting for intentional action, or doing something. It has also been argued that the present account contributes to the integration of the columns in Williamson (2015); a full account of that integration is not given here, but such an integration is a major desideratum on the present knowledge first approach.

That the indexical also looks necessary for many actual psychological explanations, this has been argued by many, and forcefully stated by John Perry, with support from many good and convincing examples. This it so looks is not contested by anyone.

¹⁹ This assumption is far from obvious or really innocent, but has to be made in this dialectical situation as Cappelen and Dever will have to rely upon it.

Explanatory opacity can explain why we cannot replace the Sinn of the indexical with another Sinn, and this is well argued by Cappelen and Dever.

There is, however, another issue here, and that is the account of why the explanandum in action explanation is so strongly marked by indexical. Indeed, there is question of why the position that the indexical for action is essential for intentional action has been so widely accepted. Cappelen Dever observe many a philosopher's embrace of such ideas, from Colim McGinn's claim to the effect that without the indexical we would be deprived of his "power to act", to David Velleman's claim that the indexical is need to act upon Kant's categorical imperative and so on.²⁰

This paper aims to provide a philosophical explanation of the truth of these claims by Velleman and McGinn. The indexical is necessary for intentional agency, and intentional agency is required for acting on the categorical imperative and so on. The philosophical explanation proceeds from the Aristotelian form of intentional action as laid out above. The full folk psychological explanation/rationalization of an intentional action will then have to match the practical reasoning leading to the action, and in the full representation of the practical reasoning the indexical is needed all the way, both in the premises, which may make up the *explanans*, and in the conclusion, the intentional action, which is the *explanandum*.

The paper achieves this by suggesting a metaphysical account of what an intentional action is, and in this account there is a fundamental role for the notion of practical-productive knowledge in accounting for the practical concepts. This, and the further roles of knowledge in the account, classifies it as a knowledge first approach. It aims to explain many central concepts, including that of intending, from the conception of doing something intentionally. Doing something intentionally has been shown to be 'knowingly' making a proposition true, where the relevant proposition has to contain the 'I'. The concept of (practical) knowledge that is invoked is a concept of production, productive in making the world be as represented in the proposition that is

²⁰ See Cappelen and Dever chapter three, beginning of chapter.

practically-productively known. Being practically related to this type of proposition is the action. This action can in itself be an object of (theoretical) knowledge, as it is when we see the connection from being practically-productively related to p to simply knowing (being aware of) (theoretically) that p . This connection is exploited in determining the extension of the class of the things we do intentionally without circular appeal to the concept of doing something intentionally or closely related concepts.

Providing the definition of intentional action is then something that is additional to determining the extension of the concept of intentional action. The concept of *theoretical* knowledge is employed in determining the extension of the concept of intentional action, the concept of *practical* knowledge is then employed to define the concept of intentional action. The concept of practical knowledge is illuminated by the account of practical reasoning, in which it typically is the conclusion.

Concluding remarks and further perspectives.

If the present approach to intentional action and practical reasoning is correct, indexicals have an essential place in the account of what it is to do something intentionally. The position seems not to fall within the target range the arguments given against the essentiality of indexicals by Cappelen and Dever.

The truth of this position is compatible with very many of the statements and views about indexicals, by Castaneda, Evans, Perry, Lewis and very many others. We can explain why these are right in their general claims the essentiality of the indexical by the resources arising out of the present account of intentional agency.

Finally, this paper may be seen vindicating both what Frege actually says about the Sinn of 'I' as being 'private', and also as extending the Fregean perspective quite

radically by bringing in the practical. In doing this we are messing up the cleaner standard picture of the resources on which a semantic theory or a theory of content rest. But this picture in fact started to be messed up when Frege himself turned away from the language of demonstrative science to indexicals. The present suggestion has far-reaching and radical implications for how to think about a theory of content and epistemology, besides many issues in the philosophy of action.

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