

Practical Knowledge and Fallibility – Some Pitfalls



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Abstract

The following considerations deal with a suggestion on how to conceive of knowledge of one's own intentional doings as a kind of knowledge that is somehow infallible. The proposal discussed in this paper holds that there is no way to get the content of one's own practical knowledge claim wrong but that we might err in ascribing practical knowledge to ourselves. The upshot of my argumentation will be the following: if we assert that conjunction, that is, if we adhere to the subject-content-disanalogy, as I will name it, we are faced with a dilemma. Therefore, it seems, the subject-content-disanalogy needs to be rejected. But, as will show up, rejecting it comes at high costs, too: to reject the subject-content-disanalogy forces us to equally reject at least one basal action theoretical insight we aim at accounting for.

1 Introduction

Within the last decades especially since Anscombe's masterpiece *Intention* ([1]) a lot of work has been done to develop an understanding of intentional action that is not causal or reductive in kind but essentially teleological. The many problems the so called *standard approach*¹ of intentional action faces are widely discussed² and taken to have a lot going for Anscombian accounts. But those accounts as well do face problems and there remains a lot of work to be done in order to reveal what they amount to. The following discussion is meant to shed some light on one of the questions Anscombian conceptions of intentional action must be able to answer: is there a way to get self-ascriptions of one's own intentional doings wrong?

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that is somehow infallible. The proposal discussed in this paper holds that there is no way to get the content of one's own practical knowledge claim wrong but that we might err in ascribing practical knowledge to ourselves.

The upshot of my argumentation will be the following: if we assert that conjunction, that is, if we adhere to the *subject-content-disanalogy*, as I will name it, we are faced with a dilemma. Therefore, it seems, the subject-content-disanalogy needs to be rejected. But, as will show up, rejecting it comes at high costs, too: to reject the subject-content-disanalogy forces us to equally reject one basal action theoretical insight we nevertheless aim at accounting for.

2 *Self-Ascriptions of Intentional Doings as Fallible*

What about self-ascriptions of one's own intentional doings? Is there a way to get them wrong? Some philosophers answer that question in the affirmative by holding that we revise descriptions of our own intentional doings in light of conflicting observations. Keith S. Donnellan ([3]), for example, uses the following dialog to illustrate that assumption:

What are you doing?

– I am turning on the radio.

That's not the radio, that's the record player.

– I *thought* I was turning on the radio.³

What is going on here, according to Donnellan, is the following: in realizing that it is not the radio but the record player button I was turning, I realize that I have not been turning on the radio at all. I revise the belief I do have of my own intentional doings in light of evidence. Thus, the dialog above might be rounded up as follows:

What are you doing?

– I am turning on the radio.

That's not the radio, that's the record player.

– I *thought* I was turning on the radio, now realizing that in fact I was turning on the record player.

With regard to Donnellan's claim of fallibility, there are at least three questions to be discussed:

- (1) Is Donnellan right in analysing the dialog as an instance of a mistaken self-ascription?
- (2) If he is, what follows with regard to the idea of a necessary connection between an agent's intention and his intentional doings?
- (3) If he is not, what about the possibility to get self-ascriptions of one's own intentional doings wrong?

These questions are intimately interrelated so I will discuss them at once.

In order to understand one of the main problems of the fallibility claim, we need to have a look at the revised action-description that might be given here by Donnellan and others: if the agent has not been turning on the radio but just *thought* he would be, what did he do instead? Did he turn on the record player? But if that description is taken to be the appropriate one, that is, the description under which his doing is intentional, then we seem to lose grip of the central notion of acting intentionally for we now have an action description that does not fit the intention of its agent.

That seems to pose a general worry on each account that takes the dialog above to plausibly be revealing some kind of first-personal action-description revision: to say that the agent in the radio-case did not do anything intentionally at all would obviously be wrong⁴ so that there needs to be some revised description of his doing as an intentional doing that does not entail his intention to be turning on the radio. Thus, by holding the claim stated with Donnellan above, it seems to be impossible to avoid the following conclusion: *S* might be doing something intentionally without there being a correct description of his action that entails *S*'s intention. But if we conceive of the intention of *S* as being only in some cases and therefore only contingently related to *S*'s intentional doings, we cannot avoid becoming the target of serious criticism insofar as we are no longer able to give an answer to deviant causal chain problems.⁵ Those problems arise as long as we take the causal explanation of an action to be independent of the content of the agent's intention and thus, to conceive of the content of an agent's intention to be no part of the causal story that is told to explain the relevant action.⁶

As long as we take it to hold true that in order to get rid of deviant causal chain problems we need to assume a necessary connection between an agent's intention and his intentional doings, that is, as Paul (2011) puts it, we need to understand the content of the agent's intention as an inextricable part of the causal story describing its actualization, we are forced to reject the analysis Donnellan gave with regard to the radio

case, for such a necessary connection unavoidably rules out the truth of the fallibility claim as becomes clear within the next sections.⁷

These considerations at hand, we arrive at the following: as long as we do not assume a necessary connection between the content of an agent's intention and the causal story describing the actualization of his intentional doings, we are not able to avoid the problem of deviant causation. To take self-ascriptions of intentional doings to be fallible the way described above is to deny there being such a necessary connection and therefore to fall prey to the problem of deviant causation. The idea of there being a way to get the knowledge of one's own intentional doings wrong should not be established at such a high price.

3 *Practical Knowledge as Infallible*

Accounting for the idea of there being the relevant necessary connection is exactly what Anscombe's account of acting intentionally is supposed to do. Its central notion is *practical knowledge* as a special kind of knowledge that goes with each intentional action. Practical knowledge as Anscombe ([1]) puts it, is knowledge that does neither depend on observation nor inference: insofar as I am crossing the street intentionally, I know immediately, that is, without a need to observe my doings or to infer from some of my mental states, what I am doing – crossing the street. That subjects of practical knowledge know immediately what they are doing, is in part due to practical knowledge being the “cause of what it understands” ([1]). The central idea of that assumption can be put as follows: for there to be an intentional action that is expressed by the description *X*, it must be an action known by its subject under the description *X*.⁸ To know my own doings as falling under the description *X* is not to realize a truth there is independently of my knowing about it, but it is to conceive of my doings in a way that is responsible for its being adequately describable as an instance of *X*-ing. To be the subject of practical knowledge of one's own intentional doings is to be the source of that knowledge's content actuality. Knowledge of one's own intentional doings is knowledge of something present.⁹ Thus, the notion of practical knowledge as determined so far is able to account for the relevant necessary connection introduced above: the content of my intention becomes intelligible as an inextricable part of the causal story that explains the things I am doing as long as we conceive of my practical knowledge to not only contain the content of my intention in action, but to being the cause of its actualization as well as the source

of the appropriate individuation of the things I am doing.

But if that description is correct, then there seems to be no room for any failure in practical knowledge at all: being subject of practical knowledge is not to be separated from being engaged in the actualisation of that very knowledge's content and vice versa. If practical knowledge is knowledge of something present, then there is no way to get the content of one's own practical knowledge claims wrong.

In taking these assumptions to be appropriate, we are left with the following way of explaining what went wrong in the radio-case: if we take the agent to be doing something intentionally, we are forced to take him to be turning on the radio despite the fact of his turning some record player button. Of course, he made a mistake in misconceiving the record player for the radio but not in misconceiving of himself as being turning on the radio. His knowledge of his own intentional action is still knowledge of something present and therefore true: while turning on some record player button the agent is nevertheless – and due to his knowledge of what he is doing being *practical knowledge* – turning on the radio.

Generally speaking: in taking the assumption of there being a necessary connection between being the subject of a practical knowledge claim and the actuality of its content seriously, we seem to be forced to take each first-personal practical knowledge claim at face value – observation is not a candidate for revision or criticism.¹⁰

Obviously, to take each first-personal practical knowledge claim at face value would lead to extremely counterintuitive consequences. To see this, imagine someone whose arms had to be amputated and who takes himself to be clenching his fists. For there not being any hands he might move any longer, he cannot be the subject of practical knowledge that has any hand movings as its object. In such cases, we do not allow for first-person authority: whatever goes on here, the agent cannot be intentionally clenching his fists, his self-ascription must be wrong.

Some philosophers recently tried to account for such cases by introducing some criterion allowing for criticism of the relevant self-ascriptions. According to David Horst ([9]) and Kevin Falvey ([4]), we should describe the case above by taking the following assumption to reveal what went wrong here: we might err about *being subject* of a certain practical knowledge claim in specific circumstances. In such cases we are criticisable for judging ourselves to be the subject of some specific practical knowledge claim on grounds of there being no way to realize the content of the relevant practical knowledge claim as such. Such impossibility of realization

might be due to there being some necessary but absent circumstantial condition or personal capacity for doing the thing in question. Thus there are cases in which we claim to be doing *X* without there being anything we can do in order to realize *X*.¹¹

If we follow Horst and Falvey in accepting the considerations above, we arrive at the following: with regard to knowledge of one's own intentional doings there is no way to get it wrong. To know what I am doing practically is to know something present. We might fail in taking ourselves to be subject to practical knowledge but if *S* is subject of a practical knowledge claim, then *S* is subject of something present. Thus, there is room to misconceive of ourselves as practical knowledge subjects but there is no room for getting the content of our practical knowledge claims wrong.

I will name that conjunction the **subject-content-disanalogy (SCD)**. The rest of the paper will be dedicated to discussing it. As will show up, it leads into a dilemma.

(SCD): In case of acting intentionally, there is no way to get the content of first-personal practical knowledge claims wrong; but we might err in being subject to a first-personal practical knowledge claim in specific circumstances at a given time.

4 *Practical Knowledge and the Subject-Content-Disanalogy*

The subject-content-disanalogy seems to face a similar problem Donnellan's thesis was confronted with above: in holding myself to be the subject of some specific instance of practical knowledge I am doing something intentionally. What might that be? In taking myself to know that I am clenching my fists while there are no hands I might move any longer, what am I doing?

According to Horst and Falvey, I am wrong here in conceiving of myself as being the subject of practical knowledge insofar as that knowledge has *my clenching of my fists* as its object. But here again, it seems implausible to hold that I am not doing anything intentionally at all.¹²

One option would be to assume that I am *trying* to clench my fists – but in order to be trying to clench my fists intentionally I either need to be conceiving of myself as someone who is clenching his fists, but fail in doing that very thing. Or I need to know myself to be trying to clench my fists. Which option we take depends on our answer to the following question: does intentionally *A*-ing involve some instance of trying to *A*?

We arrive at the following: *S* erroneously conceives of himself as being

the subject of the practical knowledge claim “I am clenching my fists”. Because of there being no hands anymore *S* might move intentionally, there is no way for *S* to be the subject of the relevant practical knowledge claim. Thus,

(1) *S* is not subject of any practical knowledge claim at the relevant time.

Or (2) *S* is subject of some different practical knowledge claim that might be the claim (2a) “I am trying to clench my fists”.

Obviously *S* is not taking himself to be trying to clench his fists. Therefore (2a) cannot be an appropriate description of the things *S* is doing intentionally. This holds as long as we do not assume that each intentional action involves some instance of trying. If we take each intentional action to involve such an instance, then we are able to describe the case discussed here as proposed by (2a): although *S* is conceiving of himself as intentionally clenching his fists, *S* is not clenching his fists, but *S* is trying to clench his fists. In accepting the **componential view**, that is, the view that each intentional action involves an instance of trying, we can hold that claim by adding the following implication: in being subject of the practical knowledge claim “I am X-ing”, I am necessarily at the same time subject of the practical knowledge claim “I am trying to X”. In cases of failure, *S* is subject only to the latter although *S* conceives of himself as being subject to the former as well.¹³

To take (2a) as an appropriate description of the case at hand, Horst and Falvey would need to admit that we might be wrong with regard to the content of our practical knowledge claims. But that would violate the idea of there being a necessary connection between an agent’s intention and his intentional doings and thus the subject-content-disanalogy.

To avoid that consequence, we need to reject either the assumption of there being any practical knowledge claim *S* is subject to, that is: opt for (1). Or we need to reject the componential view by holding the following: for there to be an instance of intentionally trying to *A*, its subject must be conceiving of himself to be trying to *A*. This does not hold with regard to the case of fist clenching and therefore (2a) must be a wrong description.¹⁴

What goes on here instead might be the following: *S* is subject to a claim that is not a practical knowledge claim and therefore, *S* is not doing anything that might be explained with regard to the relevant claim. What *S* is doing instead of clenching his fists or trying to clench his fists is (2b) misconceiving of himself as doing the thing in question.

If such a misconception is to be taken for an intentional action, then this description faces a problem as well: what *S* conceives of himself to be intentionally doing is not *conceiving of himself as being the subject of some specific knowledge claim* but *clenching his fists*. One might answer this worry by insisting that conceiving of oneself as being clenching one's fists is not something different from conceiving of oneself as being subject to the practical knowledge claim "I am clenching my fists" and therefore take the description at hand to be appropriate. But that alleged conclusion must rest on a mistake: if *S* is taken to be subject of the practical knowledge claim: "I am conceiving of myself as being subject to the practical knowledge claim X" while assuming that being subject of that very practical knowledge claim is not something different from being subject of the practical knowledge claim "I am X-ing", then we need to admit that *S* is subject to that very knowledge claim. But that is exactly what should be ruled out.

On the other hand, taking those two practical knowledge claims to differ in content either forces us to violate the subject-content-disanalogy once more by assuming that *S* is wrong about the content of the practical knowledge claim that accounts for *S*'s doing something intentionally or we are led back to option (1).

To put the point more systematically, the assumption of there being the possibility to misconceive of oneself in the way illustrated above needs to admit the following: the relevant assumption at hand – we might call it the *assumption of there being the possibility to misconceive of oneself as being subject to some practical knowledge claim*, short: the **misconception thesis**¹⁵ – we are forced to assume that there is no intentional action at all in cases of misconception. Otherwise we would need to assume that there is a different practical knowledge claim in play and that would be to allow for the possibility of taking the content of one's own practical knowledge claim wrong – A possibility the subject-content-disanalogy wants to rule out in order to maintain that there is a necessary connection between being the subject of a practical knowledge claim and the actuality of its content.

Thus, we can allow for the misconception thesis to be true in taking *S* to be subject of the claim "I am conceiving of myself as being subject of the practical knowledge claim X"¹⁶ as long as we do not take that claim to be practical in kind and we make sure that there is no different practical knowledge claim in play. Hence, if we are to hold the subject-content-disanalogy to be true, we are forced to conceive of cases of failure or deception as cases in which there is no acting intentionally at all.

But, as one last proposal to be discussed here might hold, *S* can be subject of more than one practical knowledge claim at a time. So, I might be writing a book, raising my children and drinking a glass of wine at once. Therefore, according to the proposal, *S* might be doing something intentionally even though *S* is claiming to be *A*-ing while falling under the misconception thesis with regard to *A*-ing. Take the radio case example modified: *S* is claiming to be turning on the radio while in fact he is not – there is no radio available and therefore no way for *S* to be turning it on. According to the considerations above, to conceive of *S* as falling under the misconception thesis is to conceive of *S* as not doing anything intentionally at all. But, so the proposal goes, if we take *S* to be subject of more than one practical knowledge claim at once, we can account for *S*'s doing something intentionally while falling under the misconception thesis by pointing to one of the other practical knowledge claims *S* holds at the same time. With regard to the radio case, we can take *S* to be holding the claims “I am turning on the radio” and “I am touching that button” as well as “I am turning that button” and the like. If it turns out that there is no way for *S* to be turning on the radio, we can take *S* to fall under the misconception thesis with regard to the claim “I am turning on the radio” but to nevertheless be doing something intentionally that is expressed by the claims “I am touching that button” and “I am turning that button”. Thus, the proposal holds, we can avoid being forced to conceive of *S* as not doing anything intentionally at all: there will always be some more fine-grained description of something the agent is doing intentionally.

I doubt this latter claim: Although there might be cases that allow for the description of the proposal, as the radio-case might do, the proposal under discussion needs a stronger claim. It depends on the truth of the following assumption: in each case of misconception, there will be a more fine-grained description of something the misconceiving agent is doing intentionally at the relevant time. As long as such an alternative description is not to violate the subject-content-disanalogy by simply revising the content of the originally considered practical knowledge claim, it must either be a further description of the relevant ongoing under which it is intentional and of which the agent has practical knowledge right from the beginning of his performance in dispute; or it must be the description of a different action the agent performs within the time under consideration.¹⁷ To vindicate the proposal at hand, it is therefore necessary to assume the following: with regard to each case of misconception of the relevant form, there will either be a further descrip-

tion of the things going on under which they are performed intentionally and which does not revise the content of the original self-ascription of the agent, or there will always be an appropriate more fine-grained description of something else the agent is doing instead and thus knows practically to be doing.

Take the case of someone who is spotting a friend in a crowd, claiming to be greeting him. If we assume that there is no greeting at all, we might, as the proposal wants to have it, refer to the movements the agent is nevertheless performing intentionally: he might for example be shaking his hand intentionally, thus there seems to be a description of something else the agent is doing intentionally available here.¹⁸ But what about someone who claims to be raising his arm up to his head? Or simply raising his arm? Is there as well a more fine-grained description of his doing under which it is an intentional doing? I doubt that: even though we can separate the claimed movement (raising one's arm (up to one's head)) by dividing it into sub-movements such as raising one's arm up to one's shoulder and the like, we are not thereby necessarily also giving descriptions of intentional doings. The crucial point here concerns the question of action individuation: as long as we take the agent's practical knowledge to be the source of individuation of intentional actions, the proposed search for more fine-grained descriptions of intentional doings will sooner or later come to an end.¹⁹ What, if I claim to be raising my arm while in fact my arm does not rise because of some paralysis it suffers from or because it is tied to a chair? What more fine-grained description are we to refer to here? Shall we describe the agent to be misconceiving of himself as raising his arm but to nevertheless being intentionally contracting his muscles or generating certain substances in his nerve fibres or something alike?²⁰ Whether these are descriptions of intentional doings of the agent depends on the things he knows practically and of the reasons he has. That is to say: to claim that the agent is doing something intentionally although he misconceives of himself as being raising his arm, namely, generating certain substances in his nerve fibres, is to say that he knows of this ongoing immediately and is able to give reasons for his doing the things in question. Usually, if we are performing simple actions like walking, pointing to something, counting, observing something, raising our arms, nodding, and the like, we are not doing these things by doing something else intentionally.²¹ Likewise, we do not always intend to be doing more than one thing at a time, that is, we do not necessarily always have more than one practical knowledge claim with regard to a certain single action. Therefore, I

strongly doubt that in each case of misconception of the relevant sort, we will be able to refer to some more fine-grained description of things the misconceiving agent is nevertheless performing intentionally. If we hold that what makes a certain doing an intentional action is its subject's practical knowledge of the things going on, then we need to admit that the more fine-grained descriptions of intentional doings at a time must be restricted as much as we take the things practically known by the relevant subject to be restricted. But if that assumption is correct, then there will not always apply a more fine-grained or differing description in each case of misconception that is not simply a revision of the original description, so that we have to conclude that the proposal at hand does not provide a general solution to the puzzle as well.

5 *In Sum: The Dilemma*

The considerations above reveal that the subject-content-disanalogy leads to the following dilemma: in taking the agent described above to fall under the misconception thesis we are faced with the following alternatives: either we opt for the quite implausible assumption that he is not doing anything intentionally at all, or we take him to be doing something intentionally while erroneously claiming to be *A-ing*. Then we need to answer the question what *S* in fact is doing. As we have seen, there are at least four options in answering that question: first, we might answer by referring to the componential view in holding the relevant subject *S* to be *trying* to do the thing he misconceives of himself to be doing intentionally. But if that is to say, in cases of misconception *S* is subject of the practical knowledge claim "I am trying to A" without thereby being subject of the practical knowledge claim "I am *A-ing*" as well, to take that option would be to allow for the possibility to get the content of one's own practical knowledge claims wrong and therefore to violate the subject-content-disanalogy. If we assume instead that being subject of the practical knowledge claim "I am trying to A" is of the same content as the practical knowledge claim "I am *A-ing*" than we are forced to reject the misconception thesis and to therefore violate the subject-content-disanalogy just as well. The same holds with regard to the option of taking *S* to be subject to the practical knowledge claim "I am conceiving of myself to be *A-ing*": if such a practical knowledge claim is supposed to maintain the same content as the practical knowledge claim "I am *A-ing*" than *S* would need to count as *A-ing*. Once again we were to reject the misconception thesis. If, on the other hand, we

answer the question by taking the practical knowledge claim “I conceive of myself to be A-ing“ to state something different from the claim “I am A-ing“, than we are taking *S* to be wrong about the content of its practical knowledge claim – A conclusion that would equally violate the subject-content-disanalogy.

Therefore, it seems that we should give up one of the claims the subject-content-disanalogy is composed of. That is, we can reject the claim of there being cases falling under the misconception thesis at the costs of taking each first personal practical knowledge claim as a correct one. Or we can reject the impossibility of getting the content of one’s own practical knowledge claims wrong. But that would be to reject the idea of there being a necessary connection between being the subject of a certain practical knowledge claim and the actuality of its content.

To choose the latter option would be to fall back into being the appropriate target of deviant causal chain problems. To give up the idea of there being mistakes in taking oneself to be subject to some practical knowledge claim is to take each first personal practical knowledge claim at face value. But to not reject one of these claims is to fall prey to the dilemma presented above. Each of these options does come at high costs and should therefore be avoided.

If these considerations are correct, then there needs to be an answer to the question whether self-ascriptions of one’s own intentional doings are fallible that is basically different from the answers discussed above. In order to adhere to the idea of there being a necessary connection between being the subject of some practical knowledge claim and the actuality of its content, and to thereby strengthen the case for Anscombian accounts of intentional action, a lot more research has to be done with regard to the questions considered within the paper at hand.

Notes

¹ For this notion, see: [2]; pp.77, 79 and [9]; pp.15-23.

² For an overview of the discussion, see; [8].

³ Compare: [3].

⁴ To describe the agent as doing the thing in question (here: turning on the record player) unintentionally would not be of much help as long as we take the fallibility claim concerning self-ascriptions of intentional doings to hold that the revised description of the relevant ongoing is still the description of intentional doings and not of something else. Thus, the revision that concerns us here is the revision of the content of a specific action description and not a revision that has the way of doing whatever is claimed to be done as its object. So the idea is, that we might

be doing something intentionally while being wrong about the correct description of the thing(s) we are doing intentionally; but not, that we might be wrong with regard to the appropriate description of our doings as intentional or unintentional. Thus, what the revision required by the fallibility claim provides, is a description of the things done intentionally that is different from the description the agent ascribes to himself at first. According to the proposal at hand, we can say, that the agent is turning some (unspecified) button intentionally, while he is turning on the record player unintentionally. If we take these two descriptions to refer to two different actions or doings (turning the button and turning on the record player), we will not arrive at a revised action description of the required form, due to this assumption forcing us to conceive of the description the agent claims to be appropriate (I am turning on the radio) as not being a mistaken description of an intentional action, but as a description of some unintentional doing instead (turning on the record player unintentionally). If his unquestioned intentional turning the button is taken as an action on his own, its correct description is not a revision of the agent's self-ascription because as a separate action it is accompanied by a separate self-ascription (I am turning that button), so that the description under discussion (I am turning on the radio) must be conceived of as one description too much, as a description that is not of the wrong content, but that should not appear in the circumstances described here at all. But to describe the case like this is not to revise the relevant self-ascription in light of observation, as the fallibility claim wants to have it, but to bring it under the misconception thesis I am going to discuss below. If, on the other hand, we take these two descriptions to refer to one single doing only (turning on the record player by turning some (unspecified) button), then there is no revision of the agent's claim (I am turning on the radio) that describes his doing as intentional either: neither are we to say the agent is intentionally turning that button and thereby intentionally turning on the record player, because that is not what he intends to be doing. Nor are we to say the agent is intentionally turning that button and thereby turning on the record player unintentionally in order to fulfil the requirement of the fallibility claim. If the turning on the button is taken to be a phase of the turning on the record player or identical with it and we are, as the proposal holds, to conceive of the agent as turning the button intentionally but turning on the record player unintentionally, then we do not arrive at a revision of his claim (I am turning on the radio) that describes his doing as intentional for he is turning on the record player unintentionally. That is: either way, there is no correct revision of the content of the agent's self-ascription that provides a description of his doing as an intentional doing.

- 5 Due to space restrictions, I cannot present a detailed discussion of that problem within this paper. In general, the problem contains an argument aimed at demonstrating that reductive explanations of the concept intentional action fail to comprise what they claim to comprise. To reduce the relevant concept of acting intentionally to seemingly more basal concepts – as is done within the so called *standard approach* – will, so the argument holds, lead to an understanding of acting intentionally that does not fit its object due to there being cases of deviant causation that fulfil the condition the standard approach requires for there to be intentional action without counting as such. The general structure of those cases can be put as follows: a movement is caused in a deviant way, when there is an intention that causes an involuntary bodily response that satisfies the content of the intention that caused it purely by accident. Here is an example from [10]: A philosopher intends to knock over his glass of water in order to dis-

tract his commentator. However, his intention so upsets him that his hand shakes uncontrollably, striking the glass and knocking it to the floor. The problem of deviant causation arises as long as we try to explain intentional action by referring to seemingly more basal concepts (e.g.: causation by and conformity with the agent's intention) that are taken to be explicable independent of each other and of the concept of *intentional action* as well. For a more detailed discussion of the problem of deviant causation, see: [9]; [2] and [11].

- 6 For a similar diagnosis, see: [11], p.2-4 and [9].
- 7 What is meant by *necessary connection* will be explained there as well.
- 8 One clarifying remark might be appropriate here: to say that for there to be an intentional action that is an instance of *A-ing*, its subject must conceive of or know about the relevant ongoing as an instance of *A-ing*, is not to say, its subject must spell out or even think of the right word. That is: for there to be an instance of riding a bike or cutting something, its subject need not necessarily know or use the words *bike* or *cutting* but it must know about the relevant concepts. So, the claim here is one concerning knowledge of concepts, not the appropriate use of words.
- 9 That is to say, practical knowledge is the source of action individuation as well as the cause of there being an action at all. For the claim of the actuality of the content of practical knowledge, see: [12], p.209 and [6], p.35. The characterization of the term *practical knowledge* given so far is by no means taken to be exhaustive. This is not only due to space restrictions but much more to the aim of the paper as such: Insofar as a discussion of the question, if, and if so, in which sense practical knowledge is to be taken as a fallible kind of knowledge is itself an undertaking whose upshot has a bearing on our correct understanding of the term in question, there is no way to start with an exhaustive characterization.
- 10 There are a lot of cases illustrating that assumption in a plausible way. Compare discussions of the *broadness of the progressive*, for example: [4].
- 11 See: [9]. Horst presents a case different from the one discussed above, see especially: p.195.
- 12 How are we to know, whether the agent described above is doing anything intentionally? Of course, he takes himself to be doing something intentionally, so we need a reason to dispute his claim. Even though we can dispute his claim to be clenching his fists by pointing to those circumstances that foreclose the possibility of him being clenching his fists, it is far from obvious that we should take him to be unable to try to clench his fists or to be doing something else instead. What reason do we have to conclude that *S* – insofar as there is no way for *S* to be doing the thing in question – cannot be doing something else instead as he claims to be? As far as discussed, I do not see what reason that might be.
- 13 Please note that according to the *componential view*, the practical knowledge claim “I am *A-ing*” does entail the claim “I am trying to *A*” but not the other way around: The practical knowledge claim “I am trying to *A*” does not entail the claim “I am *A-ing*”. Thus, the componential view is not an identity claim.
- 14 Of course, there is a third option: we might hold the identity thesis, that is, the idea of trying to *A* being not only a component of *A-ing* intentionally, but being identical with it. But taking this option would be to reject the assumption of there being a misconception and to therefore miss the case discussed here. For the identity thesis, see also en 13.

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- 15 To put it straight: The misconception thesis is one part of the conjunction named the subject-content-disanalogy above.
- 16 This holds for the following claims as well: “I am A-ing”, “I am trying to A”.
- 17 As such it cannot be a phase of the action the agent erroneously originally claimed to be performing, insofar as there being a *phase* of A-ing is, unlike there being a *part* of A-ing, logically dependent on there being some instance of A-ing.
- 18 But this claim as well does not go without problems: isn’t the alternative action description (shaking his hand such and so) a description that needs to count as a revision of the content of the agent’s original self-ascription (greeting a friend)? As long as both descriptions refer to the same movements, one might object, it is far from clear what accounts for the alternative description to be a description that does not revise the content of the original one.
- 19 One more problem this proposal faces concerns the composed unity of actions it is meant to make use of: To assume that actions are composed of different parts or phases and to make the radio case agent’s touching and turning that button intelligible as a more fine-grained description of something he is doing intentionally, we need to refer to the unit those movements are parts of - the action of turning on the radio. That does hold for a lot of different examples as well. Take the fist clenching case or someone who claims to be greeting a friend he spots in a crowd, someone baking a cake or crossing the street – All these actions can be described as being composed of an (endless) multitude of movements the agent might be referring to as parts or phases of the action he is claiming to perform. With regard to cases in which S is claiming to be A-ing while in fact falling under the misconception thesis, the proposal discussed here needs to describe those single parts or phases (the more fine-grained descriptions of what is going on) without appeal to the action the agent is claiming to perform, simply because he is not. But that is to describe those parts or phases in a way that does not fit the description the agent himself is prepared to give, so that we arrive at descriptions that do not depend on or even reflect the agent’s intention. Thus, we would need to describe the radio case agent as being touching *that / some / the record player* button but not *the radio* button. In general: if representatives of the proposal discussed here do not take each agent to be holding more than one practical knowledge claim with regard to each of the parts or phases his A-ing or apparent A-ing is taken to be composed of, the idea of there being appropriate descriptions of those parts or phases that are descriptions of intentional doings and independent of the relevant unity-description falls prey to violating the subject-content-disanalogy by taking the agent to get the content of the relevant knowledge claims wrong. In Addition, to take subjects of intentional doings to be holding exactly one separate intention and therefore (at least) one separable practical knowledge claim with regard to each of the parts or phases their A-ing is composed of, would be to multiply the intentions at work in each intentional action up to an implausible extreme that runs counter to the way we usually conceive of our intentional doings completely.
- 20 For this example, compare: [1]; par.23.
- 21 These remarks adress the problem of basic actions, but are not restricted to those, as the discussion above reveals. For this point, compare en. 18 and 19 as well.

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