

The Phenomenology of First-Person Agency

This paper is about the experience of acting voluntarily, and about some philosophical issues arising from it. We maintain that there is “something it is like” to behave in a way that constitutes voluntary action, something phenomenologically distinctive that incorporates but goes beyond the phenomenology of one’s own bodily motion. We also maintain that the phenomenology of agency is inherently *intentional*, presenting in experience a self that is an apparently embodied, apparently voluntarily behaving, agent. In the pages to follow we will argue for the phenomenology of first-person agency, and for its intentional content, largely by description. Once you pay proper introspective attention to the features we will describe, you should find such phenomenology ubiquitously present in your own experience, and you should appreciate its built-in intentionality.

Our descriptive discussion will focus primarily on three especially central elements of the phenomenology of doing: (i) the aspect of self-as-initiator, (ii) the aspect of purposiveness, and (iii) the aspect of voluntariness. But there are other elements as well. For instance, in experiencing yourself as acting voluntarily, typically you perceive certain objects in the world in a distinctive way—viz., as things toward which, or on which, you act. A fuller description of the phenomenology of first-person agency than is offered here would also attend to this phenomenological interpenetration of object-perception experience and doing-experience.

The phenomenology of doing is an important dimension of mental life that has been largely overlooked in recent philosophy of mind, a dimension that generates a range of important issues that cry out to be addressed. We will pose a number of philosophical questions that arise in light of this phenomenon. The most important of these questions concern the nature of the

veridicality conditions imposed by the intentionality of the phenomenology of doing—i.e., what is required metaphysically, in order for you to be really engaging in the kind of voluntary agency you experience yourself as engaging in. We will canvass various potential positions worth taking seriously concerning these questions, without here taking any stand on these competing alternatives.

We take it for granted that ordinary sensory-perceptual experience is richly and essentially intentional: the phenomenal character of such experience is the what-it's-like of being experientially *presented* with an apparent world full of various apparent objects that apparently instantiate numerous properties and relations—a world that includes oneself as an apparently embodied being, a being from whose apparent perceptual vantage-point the various other apparent objects appear to be perceived. (Our repeated uses of ‘apparent’ are to underscore the fact that ordinary sensory-perceptual experience would be intentional in these ways even if it were systematically nonveridical.)¹ Given the inherent intentionality of sensory-perceptual phenomenology, and given that this phenomenology includes presentations of oneself as an embodied being, there will be little need to argue separately and explicitly that the phenomenology of first-person agency is itself intentional too; rather, it will be enough to highlight its presence as an aspect of sensory-perceptual experience, broadly construed. If indeed ordinary sensory-perceptual experience is infused with a distinctive voluntary-agency phenomenal character, then such phenomenology experientially *presents* oneself, to oneself, as a voluntarily-acting embodied agent.²

1. Chisholm on Free Agency: Immanent Causation vs. Transeunt Causation

Our discussion will make contact in a number of ways with the philosophical literature on freedom and determinism. Particularly pertinent will be the classic treatment of the

freedom/determinism issue by Roderick Chisholm (1964). We begin with a brief summary of the position Chisholm advocated in that text, as groundwork for the discussion to follow. He claimed that there two fundamentally different kinds of causation:

I shall borrow a pair of medieval terms, using them, perhaps, in a way that is slightly different from that for which they were originally intended. I shall say that when one event or state of affairs (or set of events or states of affairs) causes some other event or state of affairs, then we have an instance of *transeunt* causation. And I shall say that when an *agent*, as distinguished from an event, causes an event or state of affairs, then we have an instance of *immanent* causation. (p. 494)

Other philosophers who have written on freedom and determinism, both before and after Chisholm, have drawn a similar distinction, often using the terms ‘agent causation’ and ‘event causation’. Although such terminology is usually intended to express a *metaphysical* distinction between two types of causation, talk of agent causation often seems to have phenomenological dimension too, at least implicitly. That dimension is something we will highlight below.

On Chisholm’s metaphysical picture of free agency, an agent *does* something (e.g., voluntarily raising a hand) by *immanently causing* some event (a brain-event, Chisholm presumes), which in turn *transeuntly* causes other events constitutively involved in the action (e.g., the muscle movements whereby the hand rises). The immanently caused brain-event transeuntly causes the relevant bodily-motion event(s) via a transeunt causal chain, a chain containing various intermediate events such as the firing of certain efferent neurons leading to the muscles in the hand and arm. The initial brain-event, the one that is immanently caused by the agent, is not transeuntly caused by prior events or states of affairs. But it is not a random event either, because it does have a cause—viz., the agent.

It is useful and natural, in describing this conception of the metaphysics of free agency, to extend Chisholm's terminology in a way that he does not do himself. Let us say that when an action conforms to the account, the agent has *indirectly immanently caused* the action itself by *directly* immanently causing some event that transeuntly causes the action's constitutive bodily motions. The idea is that the agent is the *ultimate* causal source of the action, by virtue of directly immanently causing some brain-event that sets in motion a chain of transeunt causes leading to the bodily motions.

One might well doubt whether there really is such a thing as immanent causation at all—that is, whether there really occur events that are not caused by prior events or states of affairs, are not random either, and somehow emanate directly from the person. More specifically, one might well doubt whether there are brain events which on one hand are immanently caused, and on the other hand have just the right transeunt effects on bodily motion to fit Chisholm's picture. There are at least two good reasons for skepticism. First, the view evidently has very strong empirical commitments—viz., to radical neural-level transeunt-causal indeterminacy with respect to brain-events which themselves initiate chains of transeunt causes terminating in action-constituting bodily motions. There is very little empirical evidence in support of such radical indeterminacy at the neural level in humans, and there appears to be lots of empirical evidence against it. Second, *prima facie* the very idea of immanent causation is seriously at risk of being outright incoherent. C. D. Broad, writing prior to Chisholm about those who advocate this kind of view, posed the incoherence worry this way:

I shall...try to state clearly what I think such people want to believe, and I shall try to show that it is impossible.... They would like to say that the putting forth of a certain amount of effort in a certain direction at a certain time *is* completely determined, but is

determined in a unique and peculiar way. It is literally determined *by the agent or self*, considered as a substance or continuant, and not by a total cause which contains as factors *events in* and *dispositions of* the agent.... Now it seems to me clear that such a view is impossible.... How could an event possibly be determined to happen at a certain date if its total cause contained no factor to which the notion of a date has any application? And how can the notion of date have any application to anything that is not an event? (Broad 1953, pp. 156-7)

Broad's basic worry, we take it, is something like this: when one conceives of immanent causation as the source of a particular event, in effect one is conceiving of a specific *exercising* by an agent of a disposition or capacity, at a specific *time*; but a specific, dated, exercising of a disposition by an agent is surely an event itself, not something outside the nexus of events.

Later in the paper we will consider a range of philosophical positions concerning the metaphysics of human agency, including views like Chisholm's. Meanwhile, we will be focusing on an aspect of phenomenology that often seems implicit in talk of immanent causation or agent causation: *agentive experience*.

2. The Phenomenology of Doing

The phenomenology of embodied agency has both a third-person aspect and a first-person aspect. The third-person aspect is the what-it's-like of experiencing others besides oneself as embodied agents—in paradigmatic cases, experiencing them as *persons* who are acting for intelligible reasons. The first-person aspect, which we call “the phenomenology of doing,” is our topic in the present paper. Both aspects are discussed in Horgan and Tienson (in press), where a taxonomy is offered that identifies various sub-species of both the phenomenology of doing and the phenomenology of understanding the other as embodied agent.)

Henceforth we will employ the term ‘behavior’ in a broad sense, one that is officially neutral about whether or not any particular instance of behavior counts a genuine *action*. Paradigmatic behaviors are certain kinds of bodily motions. (Although there can be other forms of behavior, such as remaining still or remaining silent, we will largely set them aside for simplicity.) The point of using ‘behavior’ in this broad sense is to remain neutral about the question whether the bodily motions called behavior really meet the veridicality conditions imposed upon them by the phenomenology of doing. On some of the views to be discussed later in the paper, the answer to this question will be negative.

What is behaving normally like phenomenologically, in cases where you experience your own behavior as action? Suppose that you deliberately perform an action—say, holding up your right hand and closing your fingers into a fist. As you focus on the phenomenology of this item of behavior, what is your experience like? To begin with, there is of course the purely behavioral aspect of the phenomenology—the what-it’s-like of being visually and kinesthetically presented with one’s own right hand rising and its fingers moving into clenched position. But there is more to it than that, of course, because you are experiencing this bodily motion *as your own action*.

In order to help bring into focus this specifically actional phenomenological dimension of the experience, it will be helpful to approach it a negative/contrastive way, via some observations about what the experience is *not* like. For example, it is certainly not like this: first experiencing an occurrent wish for your right hand to rise and your fingers to move into clenched position, and then passively experiencing your hand and fingers moving in just that way. Such phenomenal character might be called *the phenomenology of fortuitously appropriate bodily motion*. It would be very strange indeed, and very alien.

Nor is the actional phenomenological character of the experience like this: first experiencing an occurrent wish for your right hand to rise and your fingers to move into clenched position, and then experiencing a causal process consisting of this wish's causing your hand to rise and your fingers to move into clenched position. Such phenomenal character might be called *the phenomenology of transeunt psychological causation of bodily motion*. People often do experience causal processes *as* causal processes, of course: the collision of a moving billiard ball with a motionless billiard ball is experienced as causing the latter ball's subsequent motion; the descent of one's left forefinger onto the 'r' key of the keyboard is experienced as causing a new appearance of the letter 'r' on one's computer screen; and so on. But it seems patently clear that one does not normally experience one's own actions in that way—as causal processes consisting in the causal generation of bodily motion by occurrent mental events. That too would be a strange and alienating sort of experience.³

Note well: We are not here denying that what makes an item of behavior count as an action is a matter of its being caused by some suitable, occurrent, psychological event or state (or some combination of such events or states). This metaphysical view about the *nature* of actions will be discussed later in the paper; at the moment we are not addressing it, either pro or con. Rather, we are talking about the *phenomenology* of doing. The point is that ordinary actions are not *experienced* as transeunt causal processes consisting of a mental event's causing a bodily motion.

How, then, should one characterize the actional phenomenal dimension of the act of raising one's hand and clenching one's fingers, given that it is not the phenomenology of fortuitously appropriate bodily motion and it also is not the phenomenology of transeunt psychological causation of bodily motion? Well, it is the what-it's-like of *self as source* of the

motion. You experience your arm, hand, and fingers as being moved *by you yourself*, rather than experiencing their motion either as fortuitously moving just as you want them to move or else as being transeuntly caused by your own mental states. In seeking out an apt word to capture this distinctive phenomenology of self as source, one can hardly do better than ‘immanent’—a term whose etymological resonances make it at least as suitable for expressing the distinctive *phenomenal* character of agency as it is for expressing Chisholm’s view of agency’s metaphysical character. In acting, you experience your own bodily motions as *immanently generated*.

Note well: We are not here claiming that genuine action involves immanent causation, in Chisholm’s metaphysically heavyweight sense of that phrase. This metaphysical view about the nature of actions will be considered later in the paper; at the moment we are not addressing it, either pro or con. Rather, we are now engaging in phenomenological description. The point is that you *experience* your own actions as immanently generated. What it takes, metaphysically, for your behavior actually to accord with this distinctive phenomenal character is another matter. Maybe it takes what Chisholm calls immanent causation, or maybe not. (Hereafter we will use the phrase ‘immanent generation’ for whatever it *does* take for your behavior to be actional in the way you experience it as being, and we will use ‘immanent causation’ for the (putative) metaphysical relation envisioned by Chisholm.⁴)

The phenomenal character of actions also typically includes aspects of *purposiveness*: both a generic what-it’s-like of acting *on purpose*, and often also a more specific what-it’s-like of acting *for a specific purpose*. The phenomenology of purposiveness can work in a variety of ways.⁵ Sometimes, for instance (but not always), the action is preceded by conscious deliberation. In one variant of deliberative action, the process involves settling into reflective

equilibrium prior to acting: the overall phenomenology includes, first, the what-it's-like of explicitly entertaining and weighing various considerations favoring various options for action, then the what-it's-like of settling upon a chosen action because of certain reasons favoring it, and then the what-it's-like of performing the action for those very reasons. (Examples range from the weighty, such as deciding which car to buy or which job offer to accept, to the mundane, such as deciding what to order for lunch in a restaurant.) In another variant, the action is preceded by the occurrence in experience of an explicit psychological syllogism: the overall phenomenology includes, first, the what-it's-like of mentally going through a particular piece of practical reasoning, and then the what-it's-like of performing an action because doing so is the upshot of that reasoning. (A familiar example of such an action is a deliberative version of the philosopher's workhorse of belief/desire explanation: at a party you consciously experience a desire for a beer and a perceptually generated occurrent thought about where the beer is located; you consciously form an intention to walk to that location and grab a beer; and then you act, with the explicit purpose in mind of getting yourself a beer.)

Actions are very often performed without prior deliberation, however. Here the tinge of purposiveness, within the phenomenology of doing, is typically more subtle. For example, as you approach your office you pull your keys out of your pocket or purse; then you grasp the office key; then you insert it into the lock; then you twist it in the lock; and then you push the door open. All of this is routine and automatic: no deliberation is involved. Nonetheless, the what-it's-like of doing these things still certainly includes an on-purpose aspect, and indeed an aspect of doing them for specific purposes both fine-grained and coarse-grained: getting hold of your keys, getting hold of your office key in particular, activating the door lock, getting into your office, etc. In some cases of non-deliberative action, it appears, certain specific purposes for which one acts

are explicitly conscious but not salient. In other cases, it seems, certain specific purposes are not explicitly conscious at all, but nonetheless are accessible to consciousness. In still other cases—for instance, specific actions performed during fast-paced sports such as soccer and basketball—some specific purposes for which the agent acts in one specific way rather than another probably are neither explicitly conscious nor even consciously accessible after the fact, because of the way these specific purposes are linked to very short-lived, and very intricately holistic, aspects of the player's rapidly changing perceptual phenomenology. Nonetheless, even here the phenomenology still normally includes the what-it's-like of acting in a specific way *for a specific purpose*, whether or not one finds oneself in a position after the fact to tell what that purpose was. Purposiveness is phenomenologically present in all these types of nondeliberative action, with specific purposes coloring conscious experience even when they are not explicitly conscious themselves.⁶

The phenomenology of doing typically includes another aspect, distinguishable from the aspect of purpose: viz., *voluntariness*. Normally when you do something, you experience yourself as *freely* performing the action, in the sense that it is *up to you* whether or not to perform it. You experience yourself not only as immanently generating the action, and not only as immanently generating it purposively, but also as immanently generating it in such a manner that you *could have done otherwise*. This palpable phenomenology of freedom has not gone unrecognized in the philosophical literature on freedom and determinism, although often in that literature it does not receive as much attention as it deserves. (Sometimes the most explicit attention is given to effort of will, although it takes only a moment's introspection to realize that the phenomenology of voluntarily exerting one's will is really only one, quite special, case of the much more pervasive phenomenology of voluntariness.⁷)

In philosophy of mind, on the other hand, there has been a widespread, and very unfortunate, tendency to ignore the phenomenology of doing altogether—and to theorize about human agency without acknowledging its phenomenology at all, let alone seeking to accommodate it. It is time to get beyond this major philosophical blindspot.

3. A Menu of Philosophical Questions

We will now set forth a number of important philosophical questions that naturally arise, once one acknowledges that there is a phenomenology of doing and that it has the features lately described. We will lay out the menu as succinctly as possible, leaving until the next section a discussion of different positions that arise by way of different answers to the various questions. The menu has a tree structure, indicated by indenting: when the answer to a certain question is Yes, the indented questions listed below the Yes are ones that presuppose this answer. Here then is the menu:

1. Is there a phenomenology of doing?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
 2. Does the phenomenology of doing have veridicality conditions?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
 3. Is immanent causation required for veridicality?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
 4. Is transeunt mental causation of bodily motion required for veridicality?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
 5. Is counterfactual dependence of bodily motion on mentality required for veridicality?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
 6. Are the veridicality conditions for the phenomenology of doing ever satisfied?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes

7. Are the veridicality conditions satisfied routinely?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes

We have been arguing all along that there is indeed a phenomenology of doing; so we take it that the answer to Question 1 is Yes. We have been maintaining too that this phenomenology is richly intentional: it presents oneself, to oneself, as an agent who immanently generates one's own behavior, and who does so in a manner both purposive and voluntary. So we take it that the answer to Question 2 is also Yes. The phenomenology of doing is intentional in a way that involves veridicality conditions: there are certain ways the world might be that conform with our own experiences of ourselves as immanent sources of our own behavior, and other ways the world might be that do not conform with these experiences. Questions 3-5, then, concern the nature of these veridicality conditions. Questions 6 and 7 concern the further matter of whether or not the veridicality conditions for the phenomenology of doing are ever satisfied, and if so whether this happens routinely or only occasionally.

Further important questions could be added to this menu. For one thing, questions certainly could be added concerning the *voluntariness* dimension of the phenomenology of doing: what the associated veridicality requirements are, and whether or not these requirements are satisfied. Also, questions could be added about the relation between agency simpliciter and the phenomenology of agency: whether suitably behaving creatures could be agents even in the absence of the phenomenology of doing (or perhaps even in the absence of phenomenology of agency); whether humans might really be agents in some important sense even if their own phenomenology of doing is nonveridical; and so on. But we will not pursue such questions here, important as they are, because of lack of space. Ultimately, the range of potential philosophical package-deal positions to be discussed below would need to be further developed into a wider

range of more extensive positions, each of which takes a stand on the issue of human freedom and on the relation between agency itself and the phenomenology of doing.

4. A Menu of Philosophical Positions

We have here advocated a generic position of type (1b + 2b)—there is a phenomenology of doing, and it has veridicality conditions. Our aim now is to begin mapping the space of philosophically interesting positions each of which is a species of this genus. We will describe a variety of ways to answer questions 3-7, in each case saying something about what an accompanying rationale might look like. We will then bring together the threads of the discussion, describing a number of philosophical interesting package-deal positions, all of type (1b + 2b), that arise from specific combinations of answers to questions 3-7. We will not take a stand here on any of the various competing positions.

In order to streamline the presentation, we will often elaborate proposed answers to questions in a way that presupposes that people really are full-fledged agents, and that they really do perform genuine actions. These are tendentious presuppositions, and are denied by some of the positions we will canvass. But describing the alternative answers in a way that brackets the presuppositions would require lots of awkward circumlocution, so we will not bother to do so. Also, as we are describing a specific way of answering a question we will often simply assert claims that an advocate of the given answer would make, rather than constantly inserting qualifiers like ‘according to the view now under consideration,...’. This too will allow for smoother exposition.

Actions are experienced phenomenologically as being immanently generated.⁸ Question 3 asks whether immanent causation is required metaphysically, in order for the immanent-generation dimension of the phenomenology of doing to be veridical. An initially plausible

answer is Yes: Chisholm's metaphysical picture, or something very much like it, must be true of you when you experience yourself as acting. Otherwise, your experience is nonveridical. The idea is that your phenomenology presents your own behavior to you as having *yourself* as its source, rather than (say) presenting your own behavior to you as having your own occurrent mental events as its source. So, in order for your experience to be veridical in thus presenting your behavior to you, nothing less will suffice than full-fledged immanent causation. It must be the case that you yourself, and not your own mental events or states, *cause* the behavior—perhaps by directly agent-causing some brain event which then triggers a transeunt causal chain of events leading to suitable muscle-movements.

On the other hand, a case can be made for a No answer to Question 3, along the following lines. There is a difference between (i) *not* experiencing your own agency as involving purely transeunt causation of bodily motion, and (ii) experiencing your own agency as *not* involving purely transeunt causation of bodily motion. Also, as Chisholm himself acknowledges, there certainly are *chains* of transeunt causation involved in agency (viz., transeunt causal chains from brain events to bodily motions); and yet *these* transeunt causal processes are not phenomenologically presented to you when you act. Your immanent-generation phenomenology does not really present your own behavior to you as *not* being a product of purely transeunt causation; rather, it merely fails to present your own behavior to you as *being* such a product. Your behavior really *is* a product of purely transeunt causation, even though this fact is not itself presented phenomenologically. Moreover, when your behavior is transeuntly caused in the right way, it is *thereby* immanently generated by you. (For an advocate of this view, saying what counts as “transeuntly caused in the right way” would be a crucial part of the task of articulating

the real veridicality conditions imposed by the immanent-generation dimension of the phenomenology of doing.)

Question 4 asks whether transeunt causation of bodily motion is required for the veridicality of the phenomenology of doing. Someone who answers Yes to Question 3, thereby embracing immanent causation as a veridicality condition, might well want to answer No to Question 4. Here the thought is that the crucial mental component in human agency is not transeunt causation via mental events or states, but rather is the element of immanent causation itself. Immanent causation, if there is such a thing, surely counts as a species of *mentality*—at least when it includes the phenomenology of immanent generation and the phenomenology of purposiveness.

But someone who answers Yes to Question 3 might, instead, also answer Yes to Question 4. It might be claimed, for instance, that *intentions* are immanently-caused mental states which, once present, operate as transeunt causes of behavior. In some ways, such a view might seem more in accord with phenomenology than does Chisholm's picture, in which immanent causation generates brain states without being experienced as doing so. (We do seem to experience ourselves as immanently generating our own intentions and decisions.) Another way one might combine Chisholm's picture with a Yes answer to Question 4 would be to claim (i) that the brain-events directly immanently caused by the agent are events upon which intentions *supervene*, and (ii) that these supervenient intentions are transeuntly causally efficacious qua mental. (What to say about mental supervenience, if one believes in immanent causation, is a large philosophical topic in itself.)

Someone who answers No to Question 3 might well want to answer Yes to Question 4. Two ideas are central: first, the immanent-generation dimension of the phenomenology of doing

requires that one's behavior be transeuntly caused "in the right way"; and second, the right way is a matter of transient causation by certain mental events and states, qua mental. Different versions of this position can be envisioned, depending upon which kinds of mental events and states one stresses. Plausible candidates include (i) occurrent conative and cognitive events (e.g., occurrent wishes and thoughts), (ii) occurrent agent-phenomenological events themselves, and (iii) a total mental cause that includes both (i) and (ii).

Question 5 asks whether counterfactual dependence of bodily motion on mentality is a veridicality condition of the phenomenology of doing. It is hard to see how to make plausible an answer of No to this question. Notice, in this connection, that anyone who says Yes either to Question 3 or to Question 4 will surely say Yes to Question 5 too. For, counterfactual dependence of bodily action on mentality is bound to accompany either immanent causation of behavior or transeunt mental causation of behavior. (Immanent causation would surely be a species of mentality, as remarked already). On the other hand, someone might answer Yes to Question 5 while answering No to both Question 3 and Question 4.⁹ Here the thought is that the veridicality conditions for the immanent-generation dimension of the phenomenology of doing are really quite weak. Such phenomenology requires neither immanent causation nor the transeunt causal efficacy of mental events and states qua mental; rather, all it requires is systematic, non-accidental, counterfactual dependence of behavior on various mental events and states. Once again, different versions of this position can be envisioned, depending upon which kinds of mental events and states one stresses.

So far we have considered various potential views about what is, and what is not, built into the veridicality conditions for the phenomenology of doing. Question 6 asks whether these veridicality conditions, whatever they are, are ever satisfied. Question 7 asks whether the

veridicality conditions are *routinely* satisfied—which would have to be the case in order for the phenomenology of doing to be systematically veridical, since this phenomenology is an utterly ubiquitous feature of human experience. It is useful to consider the two questions together, with an eye toward how they might be answered by advocates of various different answers to the preceding questions.¹⁰ Among those who answer Yes to Question 3, we can distinguish three different ways of answering Questions 6 and 7. The first way says Yes to both questions, asserting that immanent causation is ubiquitous (as is the immanent-generational aspect of the phenomenology of doing). The second way says Yes to Question 6 but No to Question 7, asserting (say) that only in special and unusual circumstances do humans really immanently generate their own behavior; on this view, the phenomenology of doing is largely, but not entirely, nonveridical. (For instance, one might claim that genuine immanent causation is really only manifested in cases of effort of will—a view that has sometimes been espoused concerning the exercise of metaphysical freedom.) The third way says No both to Question 6 and Question 7, asserting that the phenomenology of doing is always nonveridical.

For those who answer No to Question 3 and Yes to Question 4, the veridicality issue largely reduces to the familiar issue in recent philosophy of mind of the (transeunt) causal efficacy of mental events and states, qua mental. Those with a (3a + 4b) position are likely to answer the same way to both Question 6 and Question 7 (although in principle they need not do so). One group will answer Yes to both questions, asserting that mental events and states are transeunt causes of behavior in just the way they are required to be by the phenomenology of doing. Another group will answer No to both questions, and will embrace epiphenomenalism concerning the putative transeunt causal efficacy of mental events and states.

Finally, those who answer No to Questions 3 and 4 but Yes to Question 5 presumably will also say Yes to Questions 6 and 7 as well. On this (3a + 4a + 5b) view, essentially all it takes for the phenomenology of doing to be veridical is that human behavior be systematically counterfactually dependent upon human mentality—which it surely is. Some who take this position might well be epiphenomenalists about transeunt mental causation; but they will maintain that the fact that mental events and states do not (*qua mental*) cause human behavior does not actually undermine the veridicality of our own experience of ourselves as the immanent-generational source of our own deeds.

Let us now bring together the threads of the preceding discussion by describing a range of potential positions, each of the general type (1b + 2b). First are *immanent causation* views; these are of type (1b + 2b + 3b + 5b). Among such views, one dimension of variation centers on question 4. A 4a version of the immanent causation view will reject transeunt mental causation altogether, insofar as the etiology of behavior is concerned. A 4b version, however, will say that some mental events (say, intentions or decisions) on one hand are immanently caused, and on the other hand are transeunt causes of behavior. An orthogonal dimension of variation centers on questions 6 and 7. A (6b + 7b) version of the immanent causation view will assert that the phenomenology of doing is routinely satisfied: humans immanently generate their own behavior all the time, just as they experience themselves as doing. A (6b + 7a) version will assert that the phenomenology of doing is often, but not always, nonveridical: often our experience of immanently generating our behavior is illusory, but occasionally it is not—perhaps, for instance, when we overcome our strongest desires by exerting effort of will. A (6a + 7a) version will assert, pessimistically, that the experience of immanently generating one's own behavior is always illusory.

Second are *transeunt mental causation* views; these are of type (1b + 2b + 3a + 4b + 5b). Here the principal dimension of variation involves Questions 6 and 7. A (6b + 7b) version will assert that typically certain mental events and states, qua mental, transeuntly cause behavior, and will assert that this is just what is required for humans to immanently generate their own behavior in the way they experience themselves as doing. A (6a + 7a) version, on the other hand, will be a harsh version of epiphenomenalism, and will assert that the immanent-generation aspect of the phenomenology of doing is completely illusory.

Third is the *counterfactual dependence* view: type (1b + 2b + 3a + 4a + 5b + 6b + 7b). Since this view demands so little by way of veridicality conditions for the phenomenology of doing, the view confidently asserts that those veridicality conditions are satisfied. Some advocates of the counterfactual dependence view might very well believe that mental events and states transeuntly cause behavior, qua mental; but they will deny that this is required in order for the experience self-as-source-of-behavior to be veridical. (They are not likely to believe in immanent causation, however.) Other advocates of this view might well be epiphenomenalists about transeunt mental causation of behavior. But theirs would be a kinder, gentler, epiphenomenalism, because it would assert that humans really are the kinds of agents they experience themselves to be—epiphenomenalism notwithstanding.

Once the existence and pervasiveness of the phenomenology of doing is acknowledged, each of the philosophical positions just canvassed becomes worthy of consideration. Much discussion in recent philosophy of mind has proceeded without considering any of them. But the right answer to Questions 1 and 2 is Yes: there is a phenomenology of doing, and it has veridicality conditions. We hope that this fact soon becomes more widely recognized, and the issues it raises more widely appreciated.

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¹ See Horgan and Tienson (2002), and Horgan, Tienson and Graham (in press). In these papers we argue that for conscious (as opposed to unconscious) human mentality in general, there is a pervasive kind of phenomenologically constituted intentionality—we call it *phenomenal* intentionality—that is an inherent feature not only of perceptual experience, but of thought, conation, and the rest of conscious mental life in humans. Our discussion here does not presuppose our view that phenomenology is both pervasive and pervasively intentional. Rather, all we are assuming here is that *perceptual experience* is suffused with an inherently intentional kind of intentionality—since the phenomenology of first-person agency can be construed as a dimension of perceptual experience, broadly construed. On the other hand, we do think that what we say below about what it’s like to experience one’s own agency—in particular, what we say about *purposiveness* and *voluntariness* as aspects of the phenomenology of acting—reinforces the case for the pervasiveness of (inherently intentional) phenomenology.

² As noted already, infusion by voluntary-agency phenomenal character also affects the phenomenology of perceiving objects towards which one acts: this kind of perceptual experience has its own somewhat distinctive phenomenal character because of its involvement in guiding the purposive, object-oriented actions of the agent.

³ For discussion of a range of psychopathological disorders involving similar sorts of dissociative experience, see Stephens and Graham (2000). It is worth noting that some phenomena that are experienced as causal processes can become absorbed into the phenomenology of agency. You experience your behavior as *sinking the 10-ball into the corner pocket*—something you do by hitting the cue-ball a certain way with the cue. You experience yourself as *hitting the cue ball that way*—something you do by *grasping the cue* a certain way while *moving your arm* a certain way. You experience yourself as *typing the letter ‘r’ onto the screen*—something you do by *pressing down on the ‘r’ key*. There are certain kinds

of action, though, that are experienced phenomenologically as more basic, and as not incorporating a transeunt-causal aspect. One performs the other kinds of acts *by* performing basic ones. Such matters were extensively discussed in the philosophical literature on “action theory” in the 1970’s, although usually without explicit attention to phenomenology.

⁴ We realize that we risk courting confusion with this usage, since the pre-theoretic meanings of ‘immanent causation’ and ‘immanently generation’ are extremely close; but the language of immanent bringing-about is so suitable for phenomenological description that on balance, the risk seems worth taking. The ever-lurking tyranny of philosophical terminology lies in the dialectical background: Chisholm appropriated the phrase ‘immanent causation’, which pre-theoretically seems to mean essentially what we mean here by ‘immanent generation’, and he effectively *stipulated* that his metaphysically heavyweight picture was to be part of what ‘immanent causation’ shall mean. Here we are (grudgingly) honoring his terminological stipulation, mainly as an expository convenience.

⁵ The points we will make in this and the next paragraph, about different ways the phenomenology of purpose can work, are closely connected to the typology of different kinds of phenomenology of doing in Horgan and Tienson (in press).

⁶ With respect to successively more fine-grained details of action, specific purposes tend to be progressively less explicit phenomenologically, and progressively less accessible to consciousness—even for actions that result from conscious deliberation. For instance, when you consciously and deliberately decide to get yourself a beer by walking to the fridge in the kitchen and removing a beer from the fridge, the specific purpose in virtue of which your perambulatory trajectory toward the fridge angles through the kitchen doorway, as opposed to taking you directly toward the fridge and smack into the intervening wall, normally will color the phenomenology of your action without becoming explicitly conscious at all. And in some cases, sufficiently fine-grained aspects of one’s action might lack even this kind of subtle, non-explicit, phenomenological tinge of specific-purpose phenomenology. For instance, when you grab a can of peas from the grocery shelf, there might be nothing in the phenomenology that smacks even slightly of

a specific purpose for grabbing the particular can you do rather than any of several other equally accessible ones. (Indeed, maybe there *is* no specific purpose for grabbing this can rather than any of the others, let alone a purpose that leaves a phenomenological trace.)

⁷ This is not to deny, of course, that there is indeed a distinctive phenomenology of effort of will that *sometimes* is present in the phenomenology of doing. The point is just that this aspect is not always present. A related phenomenological feature, often but not always present, is the phenomenology of *trying*—which itself is virtually always a dimension of the phenomenology of effort of will, and which often (but not always) includes a phenomenologically discernible element of uncertainty about success. (Sometimes the phenomenological aspect of voluntariness attaches mainly to the trying dimension of the phenomenology of doing. When you happen to succeed at what you are trying to do—e.g., sinking the 10 ball into the corner pocket of the pool table—the success aspect is not experienced as something directly under voluntary control.) There is more to say about this topic—inter alia, about the interconnections between voluntariness, trying, and the distinction between basic and nonbasic actions (see note 3)—but we will not pursue these matters here.

⁸ Actions *experienced* as immanently generated need not be *conceptualized* by the experiencing subject as immanently generated, and need not be *categorized* in thought as phenomenally generated. Indeed, a subject can have the relevant experiences without possessing the concept of immanent generation at all.

⁹ Whether one takes a No answer to Question 4 to be compatible with a Yes answer to Question 5 will depend upon one's view of the metaphysics of causation—in particular, upon whether one holds that transeunt causation itself is analyzable as some form of counterfactual dependence among events or states.

¹⁰ Our discussion actually will focus on how these questions might be answered *insofar as one ignores the voluntariness aspect* of the phenomenology of doing. Someone might hold, for instance, that although the veridicality requirements of the immanent-generation aspect are satisfied in typical instances of human behavior, the veridicality requirements of the voluntariness aspect are not. The idea behind such a view

could be this: although immanent causation is not required for immanent generation per se, it is indeed required for genuinely *voluntary* immanent generation; and yet immanent causation does not occur.