

Practical knowledge and testimony

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Early on in *Intention*, Anscombe writes that ‘the indicative (descriptive, informative) character is not the distinctive mark of “predictions” as opposed to “expressions of intention”, as we might at first sight have been tempted to think’. (1, 3) The context of this remark is a somewhat unusual example, of a speech act used not just to express an intention and to inform an audience but also to give an order (‘Nurse will take you to the operating theatre’, said by a doctor to a patient in the presence of a nurse). But the point itself has a wider significance: what Anscombe calls expressions of intention are routinely used to share knowledge of what one is, or will be, doing. Asked how he knows he’s going to be taken to the operating theatre, the patient ‘would say that the doctor *told* him.’ (ibid.) The text of *Intention* is peppered with conversations in which agents tell an audience what they are doing, or why. The prominence of such exchanges is of course in keeping with Anscombe’s central thesis, that intentional actions are actions to which the (reason-seeking, second-person) ‘question ‘Why?’ is given application’. Evidently Anscombe thought that what she called practical knowledge could be shared with others.¹

In this respect, such knowledge would seem to be no different from any other knowledge. Yet, the purported special features of practical knowledge may make a difference to what is involved in sharing it. I think it is a key commitment of Anscombe’s view that they do make such a difference. There is a sense in which some of her central notions — including ‘expression of intentions’ and ‘practical knowledge’ — are introduced, in the first place, as part of an analysis of how we understand agents’ knowledge of their intentional actions from what might be called the ‘participants’ perspective’ — the perspective of participants in the practice of sharing such knowledge.² My aim here is to set out this suggestion in more detail and make a case for it. I also want to consider the suggestion’s bearing on one of the hard problems in Anscombe exegesis. In a gnomic passage, Anscombe blames modern philosophy’s ‘incorrigibly contemplative conception of knowledge’ for having obscured the possibility of practical knowledge. Just what that conception involves, and what is wrong with it, has been the subject of sustained debate and disagreements. Reflection on the participants’ perspective, I will be suggesting, can help to make progress with these issues. The root problem with the contemplative conception is not that it fails to heed certain insights of ‘ancient and medieval

¹ For an illuminating recent discussion of this point, see Longworth 2019.

² I borrow the term from Richard Moran’s discussion of the ‘social acts’ involved in communication and testimony: see his 2018 *passim*.

philosophers' but that, contrary to its dominant self-image, it is revisionary: it is at odds with the conception of agents' knowledge that we actually have and that informs our practice of sharing such knowledge.

1. The previous owner condition

There are two practices that matter for my argument: the practice of sharing knowledge through testimony, and the practice of questioning or challenging claims to knowledge. The relationship between them is a delicate matter, and I cannot attempt to offer a fully adequate discussion of it here. In thinking about it, we naturally encounter two kinds of consideration. On the one hand, reflection on the act of telling suggests that in telling something to someone one is liable to be held answerable in certain ways. Full participation in the practice of telling (as speaker or audience) requires appreciating that an act of telling can be open to certain kinds of normative questions, aimed in various ways at probing the credentials of the speaker's claim to knowledge. On the other hand, it seems to be a compelling thought (which has loomed large in recent work on testimony) that, at least in central cases, the possibility of testimonial knowledge depends on the audience trusting the speaker's assurance. (Faulkner 2011, McMyler 2011, Moran 2018) The two perspectives may seem to pull in opposite directions. The importance of holding a speaker answerable may seem to place the onus on the audience. Responsible uptake may seem to require subjecting the speaker's claim to critical scrutiny, where this involves making up one's own mind about the justice of her claim to knowledge. Reflection on the importance of trust may seem to suggest that testimonial knowledge, in core cases, involves basic, irreducible forms of epistemic dependence on the speaker's assurance.

I will skirt the difficult issues arising from this apparent tension by proposing a maxim that, it seems to me, is independently plausible and weak enough to command assent from both of the potentially conflicting perspectives. Typically, when A comes to know that p a result of B telling her that p, it will be *reasonable for A to think that B knows that p*. There are unusual cases, of course, as when I come to know that p because, as I recognize, your assertion that p reflects a combination of insincerity and incompetence (you are mistaken about whether p and also wish to mislead me). Again, a 1-year-old is presumably able to learn from others without being able to think of her informants as knowing the things they are telling her. And occasionally someone's testimony may sensibly be treated simply as adding to our stock of evidence for and against a certain view. Still, ordinarily we think of testimony as a matter of sharing knowledge and so in receiving testimony we take it that the knowledge we acquire had a 'previous owner'. Importantly, if the transmission of knowledge works properly, it must be reasonable for us to credit our

informant with knowledge. For ease of reference, I will call this the ‘Previous Owner’ condition.

It is not easy to say what is involved in meeting this condition, but it is worth stressing that the condition itself is not particularly demanding. One thing that is *not* required, for example, is that A should have independent reason to think that B knows whether p. It seems perfectly possible (and perhaps routine) for A reasonably to credit B with knowledge whether p simply by relying on B’s very testimony that p. That is not to say that the Previous Owner condition is idle or trivial. One way to see this is to consider a situation in which A has independent grounds for doubting B’s claim to knowledge that p, perhaps, though not necessarily, because she has reason to doubt that p is true. This would normally be enough to block the transmission of knowledge. The appropriate way for A to react to B’s testimony, in this situation, would not be to accept her testimony but to probe its credentials. Unsurprising responses would include ‘How do you know?’, ‘Are you sure?’ and ‘Why do you believe that p?’ In different ways, all of these questions can be used to ask for reassurance.

For current purposes, the first question — ‘How do you know?’ — is of particular interest. A good answer would ordinarily be expected to do two things: it would provide relevant information about how you came to know that p and it would dispel possible doubts as to whether your attitude to p — the attitude you express by telling us that p — is indeed *knowledge*, rather than mere belief or conjecture. The answer would help to explain your possession of knowledge in a way that would simultaneously establish the credentials of your claim to knowledge. Thus, the participants’ perspective combines two concerns: a concern with understanding your epistemic position and concern with the correctness of your claim to knowledge.

2. Sharing practical knowledge

To turn now to the case of sharing knowledge of one’s intentional actions: suppose B is telling A ‘I am buying butter’ or ‘I am going to buy butter’, and as a result A, believing B, comes to know that B is buying or going to buy butter. There is a well-known list of features that Anscombe suggests mark out B’s statement: it is an ‘expression of intention’ and so conveys a distinctive kind of knowledge, characterized as ‘non-observational’, ‘practical’ (as opposed to ‘contemplative’ and ‘speculative’), ‘knowledge in intention’, and so on. How much, if any, of this material should be expected to be available *to A and B*? Are the various features on the list just intended to provide a philosopher’s theory of B’s knowledge, or are they, or some of them, thought to articulate the way we think about knowledge of intentional actions from the participants’ perspective?

I think there can be no doubt that at least the first item on the list — the idea that B's statement is an 'expression of intention' — is supposed to be commonly recognized. A salient feature of expressions of intention is that they are statements that are 'justified, if at all, by a reason for acting, as opposed to a reason for thinking them true.' (I, 15) (Anscombe uses 'predictions' instead of 'statements', but her point can be extended to expressions of intentions that do not concern the future but inform one's current activities, standardly expressed in English by the use of the present progressive.) Anscombe's point here is not just that as a matter of fact, when it comes to 'expressions of intentions', people tend to justify these, if at all, by giving one sort of reason rather than another. To call a statement an 'expression of intention' is to imply that it is *correctly* or *properly* justified in a particular way, and that we would ordinarily justify it in that way (if at all) because we appreciate that this is the appropriate sort of justification to ask for and offer. Anscombe's examples bring this out. A request for evidence in response to the statement 'I am going to take a walk' ('What makes you think so?') would not just be unusual but in some sense out of place; and it would be out of place not because it would be tactless or conversationally inappropriate (as it would be in response to 'I am going to be sick') but because it would reflect a misapprehension of what you were doing in telling us 'I'm going for a walk', viz. expressing an intention.

Consider now the way A would make his own knowledge that B is buying butter intelligible to himself and others, by reflecting 'B told me.' Presumably what this means is that A takes B to have shared with him her own knowledge, in the way we commonly share knowledge through communication: roughly speaking, by addressing assertions to each other, recognized as amounting to claims to knowledge. This raises a further question about the participants' perspective: how does A understand B's epistemic position? And how does the fact that B's statement is (also) an expression of intention bear on this?

We can begin to see the difficulties here by noting that neither of two familiar models seems to be germane to the present case. I will label them the evidential model and the model of first-person authority. The evidential model says that it is reasonable to credit an informant with knowledge of some subject matter insofar as it is reasonable to assume that they have at their disposal relevant evidence or epistemic reasons, or at least were in possession of such evidence when they acquired the piece of knowledge. Might this be how A understands B's epistemic position vis-à-vis her buying butter? The trouble is that if A made sense of B's knowledge in terms of evidence available to B, then it should be a legitimate move on A's part to ask for B's evidence. Questions such as 'What makes you think you are buying butter?' should be intelligible and in certain situations apt. Yet, to ask such questions would reveal a failure to recognize what B was doing in telling A she was

buying butter, viz. expressing her intention. B's statement is one that is 'justified, if at all, by a reason for acting, as opposed to a reason for thinking [it] true.'

In the light of the failure of the evidential model, it is natural to think that A's willingness to accept B's claim to knowledge is surely connected with the first-person character of B's statement. It is a familiar suggestion that first-person self-ascriptions of attitudes or experiences are ordinarily granted a distinctive authority, often characterized by reference to (a) the idea that barring insincerity, such statements are false only in exceptional cases, (b) the idea that special resources are needed to make sense of mistaken belief (roughly, mistakes would be indicative of irrationality or confusion, rather than merely reflecting, say, insufficient evidence or perceptual error) and (c) the impropriety of second-person questions aimed at probing or challenging the credentials of such statements. Should we think of A's acquiescing in B's claim to knowledge as a matter of acknowledging her 'first-person authority'?

This model seems more promising.³ The failure to execute intentions, Anscombe writes, 'is necessarily the rare exception' (*I*, 87). Furthermore, B's statement is naturally viewed as immune to lines of questioning that would be appropriate in the case of claims to empirical knowledge (not only 'Why do you believe?' but also 'How do you know?' — I shall return to this). Yet, the model of first-person authority quickly breaks down under closer scrutiny. Even if failures to execute intentions are relatively exceptional (and note that Anscombe goes on to qualify her point by saying that 'what is necessarily the rare exception is for a man's performance *in its more immediate descriptions* not to be what he supposes' (*ibid.*, my emphasis)), they are, at least in the case of less immediate descriptions, a familiar phenomenon, and, importantly, a phenomenon that is often susceptible of a ready explanation. For example, owing to inattentiveness one may press button B when one means, and takes oneself, to be pressing button A. (See *I*, 57) This, of course, is what Anscombe calls 'Theophrastus's point': claims to knowledge of what one is doing are exposed to a distinctive epistemic risk, of being wrong owing to an 'error in performance.'

3. Two kinds of practical errors

These problems with the model of first-person authority relate to (a) and (b), the general presumption of correctness and the difficulty of making sense of error. One might try to salvage the model by tweaking the two conditions, perhaps adding clauses about the possibility of 'errors in performance.' But I think this would not be a profitable line to pursue. There is a deeper problem with the model, to do with (c).

³ Falvey 2000 argues that on Anscombe's view, agents have 'a general warrant to present their expression of what they intend to be doing as descriptions of what they are doing' (2000, 37) and refers to agents' 'first-person authority' with respect to expressions of intention (38).

Understandably, 'Theophrastus's point' has always occupied a central position in commentary on Anscombe's *Intention*. Yet Anscombe makes it clear that an 'error in performance' is not the only error that may falsify claims to knowledge of what one is intentionally doing. Such claims may also reflect a distinctive kind of 'error of judgement'. Consideration of this second kind of error, I suggest, not only brings out what is wrong with the model of first-person authority, it also suggests the beginnings of an alternative, more promising model.

In her discussion of the case of 'a man going round a town with a shopping list in his hand' Anscombe writes:

(..) the discrepancy [between the content of the shopping list and what the man actually buys] might arise because some of the things were not to be had and if one might have known they were not to be had, we might speak of a mistake (an error of judgement) in constructing the list. If I go out in Oxford with a shopping list including 'tackle for catching sharks', no one will think of it as a mistake in performance that I fail to come back with it. (*I*, 56)

I first want to suggest that the passage speaks against two not uncommon assumptions in the literature on *Intention*:

- Some expositions of Anscombe's account of practical knowledge give the impression that the risk of an 'error of judgement' only applies to claims to 'speculative', not claims to 'practical' knowledge. For example, Rosalind Hursthouse takes 'practical knowledge' (or claims to such knowledge) to be marked by this fact: 'But when I am in error, the mistake lies in the performance, not in a judgment about what I am doing.' (2000, 103) Yet in connection with the shark example, Anscombe speaks of an error of judgement 'in constructing the list', where making the list is characterized as an 'expression of intention.' (*I*,56) In these circumstances, the statement 'I am/will be buying tackle for catching sharks' would fail to express knowledge of what one is doing not because of an error of performance but because of an error of judgement.⁴
- A connected assumption is that by 'judgement' Anscombe means the act of judging or affirming or saying something. An 'error of judgement' would thus be an act of falsely or unjustifiedly judging that something is so. The assumption seems to be implicit in Hursthouse's phrase 'a judgment about what I am doing'. It also informs McDowell's gloss on the 'Theophrastus point' (the point that 'when I say 'Now I press button A — pressing button B',

⁴ The point is emphasized by Roger Teichmann in his discussion of 'Theophrastus's principle': see 2008, 23.

‘the error is not of judgement but of performance’): in this sort of case, McDowell suggests, ‘the *primary* defect is in what one is doing’, though there is a ‘*derivative* defect not in what one is doing but in what one says’. (McDowell 2010, 429) (The context suggests that the ‘derivative defect’ is supposed to be an example of an ‘error of judgement’.) But the assumption delivers a strained reading of ‘a mistake (an error of judgement) in constructing the list’. ‘An error of judgement’, it seems to me, is more naturally heard as a defective *exercise* of judgment — where ‘judgement’ is not an act but a capacity (the ‘power of judgement’). Of course, exercising one’s judgement may involve acts of judging that something is so; but it is not obvious that it has to involve such acts, and in any case it cannot be reduced to a series of judgments in the ‘act’ sense.⁵

The upshot is that we should resist the temptation to align the distinction performance/judgement with the distinction practical/theoretical. What we have in cases in which ‘one might have known’ that an item on the shopping list was not to be had is precisely an error of *practical judgement*. There is something wrong here, not with the execution of the intention, but with the intention itself: it reflects a wrongheaded choice of a means to achieve a given end, a failure properly to exercise one’s capacity for practical (specifically, calculative) reasoning. Someone who commits this sort of error will end up not knowing what she is doing. She will be apt to tell us ‘I am buying butter’ (or ‘I am going to buy butter’) when she is not, owing to her miscalculation. What undermines her claim to knowledge is not her lack of success (the statement ‘I am buying butter’ may be true even if she never lays her hands on butter — compare ‘She was buying butter when the bomb went off’), but her practical inability: ‘she was buying butter’ is arguably incompatible with ‘there was no butter to be had.’⁶ Correlatively, there are familiar questions A may direct to B to make sure no such error is operative: ‘How do you know they are selling butter?’ or ‘What makes you think the shop is open on a Sunday?’

The propriety of these sorts of question provides a basic objection to the model of first-person authority: contrary to (c), the credentials of claims to practical

⁵ See also Anscombe’s remark on the status of Aristotle’s account of practical reasoning: if the account ‘were supposed to describe actual mental processes, it would in general be quite absurd. The interest of the account is that it describes an order which is there whenever actions are done with intentions (..).’ (*I*, 80) When actions are done with intentions, it is natural to suppose, the capacity of practical reason/practical judgement is exercised; but this may or may not involve acts of judging or saying something.

⁶ For discussion of the truth conditions of attributions of activities in the present or past progressive, see Falvey 2000, Thompson 2011, Wolfson 2012.

knowledge are clearly open to intelligible questioning. True, the challenge these questions present to B's claim to knowledge that she is/will be buying butter is in a sense indirect. Their *direct* target is B's entitlement to certain assumptions informing her practical reasoning. It is significant that the question is 'How do you know they are selling butter?', not 'How do you know you are buying butter?' Still, there is an intelligible connection between B's entitlement to assume that she will be able to buy butter and her entitlement to express her intention to do so by making an assertion as to what she is or will be doing. Suppose B has nothing reassuring to say in response to A's question. This would not just mean that something has gone wrong in an area of B's thinking somehow adjacent to her intention. It would mean that there is something wrong with the statement she is making in expressing her intention, and indeed with the intention itself.

I said that reflection on the 'error of judgement' displayed in the shark case simultaneously puts pressure on the first-person authority model and points in the direction of an alternative account of the participants' perspective on practical knowledge. The direction I have in mind is this: if claims to practical knowledge are liable to be compromised by two distinctive sorts of error (errors of 'judgement' and of 'performance') — compromised, that is to say, by the agent's failure properly to exercise two requisite practical capacities (to form realistic intentions and to execute them competently) — then a recognition that no such error is being committed — that the agent *is* properly exercising both kinds of capacities — should enable us to see that and why her claim to such knowledge is correct. To put the point another way, A's grasp of what would be good questions to ask in order to probe B's entitlement to her claim to knowledge should be expected to reflect some understanding of the nature of B's entitlement to that claim — an understanding that may make it reasonable for A to credit B with knowledge.

4. Practical reason as a capacity for knowledge

I started from the observation that the participants' perspective plays a significant role in Anscombe's account of expressions of intention. That it would be inappropriate to ask B for evidence in support of her view that she is buying butter is supposed to be apparent to A and B, not just to philosophers who work on the nature of intentional action. I further suggested that participants appreciate not only the impropriety of certain questions but also the propriety of others, and I mooted the idea that this might show some understanding of B's epistemic position. We seem to be pre-theoretically familiar with a distinction between intentions that are, as we might provisionally put it, conducive to knowledge and intentions that are not — for example, the intention to buy butter vs the intention to buy tackle for catching sharks (in Oxford). Our grasp of that distinction, it is natural to assume, makes it reasonable for us to think that the agent knows what she is doing in one case but not

the other. But how is our understanding of the epistemic role of intentions here to be articulated?

The trouble is that an intention to do something and knowledge that one is/will be doing it seem to be quite different sorts of states or attitudes. How might the former make possession of the latter intelligible? One familiar idea is that reflection on one's intention to buy butter provides a basis for inferring (and so coming to know) that one will buy butter. (See for example Paul 2009.) This, though, is hard to reconcile with Anscombe's analysis of the participants' perspective. It would suggest that a request for evidence in response to B's statement 'I am going to buy butter' would be unexceptionable. On the other hand, one might suggest that it is the agent's intentionally acting that establishes a link between her intention and her knowledge: intentions make our actions intelligible, and 'practical' knowledge is 'but an aspect of intentional actions'. (Haddock 2011: 165) That way of connecting intention and action, however, would suggest that the canonical way to establish whether B knows she is buying butter is to satisfy oneself that she *is* (intentionally) buying butter. (If she is, then she must know she is, given that this sort of knowledge is 'but an aspect' of the activity.) Yet this seems to get things backward. When we learn from B what she is doing, we come to know that she is (intentionally) buying butter in a way that depends on its being reasonable for us to credit her with knowledge that she is buying butter.

My suggestion is that the link between intention and knowledge is provided by the distinctive kind of statement around which Anscombe's discussion revolves. What makes such statements special is that they simultaneously perform two roles: they are used to express an intention but also purport to be statements of fact. As Stuart Hampshire puts it, a statement of this kind has a 'double aspect'. (Hampshire 1965) The distinctness of the two aspects can be brought out by noting that there are ways of engaging with the statement that selectively target just one aspect. For example, 'Aren't you supposed to be on a diet?' challenges the intention expressed by 'I am buying butter' without questioning the statement of fact. But that is not to say that the two aspects are unconnected. For, as we have seen, there are also ways of probing the statement that simultaneously implicate both aspects. 'Are you sure the shop is open?' hints at a possible defect in the intention that would simultaneously undermine the statement of fact.

How is this possible? How is the intention supposed to be related to the credentials for the statement of fact? Anscombe's answer to this turns on her view of the nature of practical reasoning. ('The notion of "practical knowledge" can only be understood if we first understand "practical reasoning".' (I, 57)) The question I just raised — how

is it possible for an intention to bear on the credentials of a statement of fact – is naturally heard as insinuating that surely the putative bearing is puzzling, in view of X; where X may be, say, the difference between mental states with different 'directions of fit' (intentions supposedly aim for the world to fit with them, statements of facts to fit the world), or the difference between thinking concerned with what would be desirable/what one has reason to do vs thinking concerned with what is the case/what one has reason to believe. But I think on Anscombe's view, there is no such puzzle here, and the intimation of a puzzle reflects a flawed conception of practical reasoning. Not only is there nothing paradoxical about the idea that practical reasoning can warrant a statement of fact; on the contrary, it would be paradoxical to suggest that one's reasoning could be genuinely *practical* if it did not warrant (or at least aim to warrant) a statement of fact.

To bring this out, consider a view of practical reasoning on which B's reasoning about how to obtain butter cannot license the statement 'I am going to buy butter' but only weaker statements, to the effect, say, that she has most reason to, or ought to, buy butter.⁷ I think from Anscombe's perspective, the trouble with any such weakening manoeuvre is this. If B is not entitled to affirm that she will buy butter, it is (or at least should be) an open question for her whether she will, which in turn means it should be an open question whether she has identified a way by which she will achieve her objective, to secure butter. And that amounts to the admission that her exercise of calculative practical judgment has not been fully successful: given her uncertainty over the factual question of whether she will buy butter, she should surely think of an alternative plan, in case she will not buy butter. The point is that ignorance about the factual question has an immediate practical significance. Calculative practical reasoning is not simply reasoning about practical matters but reasoning 'towards action': if successful, it is the first step towards achievement of the very goal that informs the reasoning.⁸ In effect, the weakening manoeuvre, insofar as it denies that practical reasoning ever entitles us to regard the factual question of what we will be doing to be settled, denies that we ever successfully exercise practical judgement.

In the light of this, the questions to which B lays herself open in telling A that she is going to buy butter may be glossed as follows. B's practical reasoning will warrant her double-aspect statement only if she is entitled to rely on the premise that going to the shop will enable her to obtain butter. Plausibly, she is entitled to do so only if

⁷ For example, on Davidson's account, practical reasoning only licenses evaluative or normative judgements. For objections to that view from an Anscombean perspective, see McDowell 2010.

⁸ For a detailed exposition of this view of calculative practical reason, see Vogler 2002.

she knows the shop is open. If A has qualms on that front, it will not be reasonable for him to think B knows what she is doing. On the other hand, if B can produce a satisfactory account of how she knows the shop is open, this will provide reassurance that she (also, and connectedly) knows what she is doing. Admittedly, this way of putting things may be somewhat stronger than anything Anscombe says. As she characterizes the 'error of judgement' in the shark case, the agent is intending to buy certain things even though she 'might have known they were not to be had'. (I, 56) That does not imply that a flawless exercise of practical judgement would be informed by knowledge of the premises relied on. Still, I take it such a view is independently plausible⁹, and it is certainly consistent with Anscombe's account. 'Errors of practical judgement' may then be seen as falling into two kinds. One may have failed properly to utilize relevant considerations that were broadly speaking available to one (including things 'one might have known'), and thus be guilty of reasoning poorly. Or one's reasoning may have been ill-informed through no fault of one's own. Either way, one's expression of intention would not amount to a justified statement of fact.

I suggested that the participants' perspective combines two concerns: a concern with understanding the informant's epistemic position and concern with the correctness of her claim to knowledge. The role sound calculative judgement plays in warranting a double-aspect statement speaks to both concerns. If B's intention reflects sound judgement, she is entitled to express that intention by saying something that is, among other things, a statement of fact — a statement purporting to express knowledge. To see how this bears on A's understanding of B's epistemic position, it is instructive to reflect on two further elements of that understanding.

First, even an intention that is sound from the calculative point of view may fail to get executed, owing to an 'error in performance'. Of course, such an error may be easily corrected — in Adrian Haddock's phrase, it may be a mere 'hiccup or glitch' (Haddock 2011, 169). But if you tell us you are pressing button 1, yet out of carelessness or clumsiness press button 2, then — supposing these buttons can only be pressed once — your statement will be falsified by your error of performance. That is one reason why, in the case of intentions expressed by the use of the present progressive, it is important to keep an eye on 'the material one is working on'. (I, 89) Sound practical judgment warrants a statement of fact, *conditional* on the absence of errors in performance (more serious than mere hiccups).

Second, suppose an agent's well-formed intention and skillful performance are such as to warrant the double-aspect statement 'I am doing x'. Is this enough to credit

⁹ For different but converging perspectives on this, see Hyman 1999; Hawthorne and Stanley 2008.

her with knowledge of doing x? Or is such knowledge only to be attributed to her if she actually reflects, in speech or thought, that she is doing x? I think neither suggestion is quite right. Consider someone who absent-mindedly performs some routine task. Does she know what she is doing? Such cases elicit a range of intuitions, but I assume that at least sometimes, the natural verdict will be that she does. Her situation is not like that of someone who can easily learn something, though she does not yet know it; it is like that of someone who knows something, though she is not currently thinking about it. A related case is what (in 'On being in good faith') Anscombe calls 'knowledge without realisation'.¹⁰ In certain circumstances it may be correct to say that a reckless driver knows he is putting pedestrians at risk, without realizing it. He may be quite correct to say 'I did not think of that' or 'I did not think of it like that' but these statements 'do not disprove knowledge.' (GG2, 105) On the other hand, suppose an agent is *disabled* from realizing what she is doing. Suppose there are factors, such as motivation, or emotions, or a less than rational state of consciousness, that prevent her from thinking, or at least thinking clearly, about her action and its objective. She may thus, at least temporarily, be unable to express her intention in acting, even to herself. In such cases, it seems natural to say that the agent is not (or at least not properly) aware of what she is (intentionally) doing, as Anscombe seems to acknowledge.¹¹ It is here that we arguably find room, within an Anscombean approach to intentional action, for the possibility of intentional actions that fail to satisfy what is sometimes called the 'cognition condition' on intentional action.¹² In summary, while there can be practical knowledge without reflection/realisation, possession of practical knowledge plausibly requires a (non-incapacitated) *ability* to express the relevant intention.

Putting all of this together, consider the following conditions:

- (i) B's intention is informed by sound calculative practical judgement.
- (ii) B makes no (irredeemable) error in performance.
- (iii) B is able to express her intention by making a 'double-aspect' statement.

I have suggested that (i) and (ii) play a significant role in guiding A's response to B's act of telling him what she is or will be doing. It is not that A should be expected to have some independent way of ascertaining whether these conditions are satisfied. He may reasonably trust B's testimony. Still, if there are grounds for suspicion, it may

¹⁰ I am grateful to John Schwenkler for drawing my attention to this essay.

¹¹ 'It is clear that, for any deed X, you cannot have intentionally done X unless you know you are doing X, except in a psychoanalytical sense in which there can be unconscious intentions (..)' (GG2, 104)

¹² See Small 2011 for a recent discussion and defense of that condition.

be reasonable for him to request reassurance, and the request will reflect his understanding of the connection between the two conditions and B's claim to knowledge of what she is doing. The connection has both a normative and an explanatory dimension. The satisfaction of the two conditions would mean that B's claim is unobjectionable and B may reasonably be credited with knowledge of what she is doing. The satisfaction of the two conditions also makes B's possession of knowledge intelligible, at least by the lights of the participants' perspective. The relevant kind of intelligibility is of course quite different from an account of how someone knows something by reference to her exploiting a way of finding out about the relevant fact. It must be different, since a way of finding out could only warrant a statement of fact, not a 'double-aspect' statement. Rather, we might think of B's sound practical judgment and dexterous performance as enabling conditions of her knowing what she is doing. If these conditions are satisfied, and if B is not disabled from expressing her intention, she will be in a position knowledgeably to reflect on what she is or will be doing, by expressing her intention.

5. What is wrong with the contemplative conception?

I want to end by considering how my discussion of the participants' perspective bears on one of Anscombe's central doctrines, that 'practical knowledge' confutes modern philosophy's 'incorrigibly contemplative conception of knowledge'.

According to the 'contemplative conception', '(k)nowledge must be something that is judged as such by being in accordance with the facts. The facts, reality, are prior, and dictate what is to be said, if it is knowledge.' (I, 57) Anscombe's denial that the conception applies to knowledge of our intentional actions is often construed as a metaphysical claim. Practical knowledge, it is suggested, is not 'a reality distinct from what is known' (McDowell 2010, 432) It is 'an aspect of the actuality of its objects' (Haddock 2011, 163). On the face of it, though, the 'contemplative conception's' central claim is a normative one — a claim about how knowledge is to be 'judged'. Judging knowledge 'as such', I take, it is a matter of judging whether a purported piece of knowledge really is knowledge, that is: whether a claim to knowledge is correct. But what does it mean to judge knowledge as such 'by being in accordance with the facts'? Is it not obvious that the correctness of a claim to knowledge that p depends on whether it is a fact that p? I think the second clause of the contemplative conception makes it clear what Anscombe has in mind. The contemplative conception maintains not just that knowledge is factive (something Anscombe does not deny) but that the facts enjoy a certain explanatory priority. The canonical way to judge a purported expression of knowledge that p is to determine whether in saying 'p' the subject is appropriately responsive or receptive to the 'dictate' of the facts. If S knows that p, there must be a way in which she is receptive

to the fact that p. Only if there is some such way can there be a good reason for crediting S with knowledge.

It is not entirely clear, of course, why Anscombe associates this view with 'modern philosophy' as a whole. (Kant springs to mind as a counterexample.) I think the best historical fit may be with a view commonly known as 'Oxford realism'. In *Kant's Theory of Knowledge (1909)*, H.A. Prichard wrote: '(i)f there is to be knowledge, there must first *be* something to be known. In other words, knowledge is essentially discovery, or finding what already is.'¹³ A more recent statement of the view may be the suggestion that claims to knowledge are as such open to the question 'How do you know?' (Williamson 2000), supposing that 'How do you know?' asks for a way in which you were able to *find out*. In any case, the 'contemplative conception' is not primarily a thesis about the metaphysics of knowledge but about the kind of account of how we come to have knowledge that can properly underwrite claims to knowledge and so give us a reason to think that what we have is indeed knowledge. Of course, there are good reasons for knowledge-attributions that shed no light on how the agent knows what she knows. A good reason to think S knows that p may be that everyone knows that p. The contemplative conception will also allow that forgetting how one discovered that p does not necessarily compromise one's claim to knowledge that p. Still, on the contemplative conception, if you claim to know that p, it will always (in principle) be a good question how you discovered that p; and a successful defense of your claim will typically turn on the answer to that question. It is this condition that, so Anscombe insists, 'practical knowledge' fails to satisfy.

We can divide Anscombe's diagnosis into two parts. The first part is an account of the ways we ordinarily engage with claims to practical knowledge, the upshot of which is that the request for a way in which you were able to *find out* that you are buying butter would be in conflict with our conception of the kind of knowledge you are sharing with us in telling us 'I am buying butter'. Briefly, the correct way to test the epistemic credentials of your statement would be to ask questions that probe the soundness of the calculative judgement embodied in the intention expressed by your statement; it would not be to enquire into how you were able to find out what you are doing. The trouble with such an enquiry may be put in terms of an incompatibility between a practical and a theoretical 'stance' on the question whether one is (or will be) doing x. If you treat this as a matter to be determined by expressing your intention you cannot simultaneously treat it as calling for the deployment of some way of finding out whether you will do x. (See Moran 2000)

¹³ For helpful discussion of Oxford realism (to which I owe the quote from Prichard) see Marion 2000, 308.

A contemplative theorist might respond to this by conceding that her view is in a sense revisionary. Perhaps the way we ordinarily make sense of our knowledge of what we are intentionally doing does not invoke any way of finding out. But one might argue that from the perspective of a philosophical understanding of such knowledge we can and should nevertheless insist on the indispensability of that sort of explanation, and we should try to construct one.¹⁴ A common way to try to incorporate knowledge of our intentional actions into a 'contemplative' epistemology is to invoke evidence or inferences that (a) are supposed to make such knowledge philosophically intelligible as the product of some appropriate way of finding out, but (b) whose operation is supposed to be remote from the agent's awareness.¹⁵ In the light of (b) it is thought to be unsurprising that we ordinarily take such knowledge to be groundless. But acknowledging that point, it is argued, is compatible with insisting that only suitable evidence can make our knowledge (philosophically) intelligible, and claims to knowledge (philosophically) defensible.

I think Anscombe's reaction — this is what I call the second part of her diagnosis — would be that the strategy of insulating a 'contemplative' account from our ordinary practice faces a significant hurdle. The strategy would be committed to denying that the way we ordinarily make sense of practical knowledge, in the light of soundly reasoned intentions and our ability to express them in a certain way, provides a fully satisfactory reason to think that we do know what we are or will be doing. It is dissatisfaction with our naïve picture of practical knowledge that motivates the quest for some way in which we might be seen (from the vantage point of a philosophical theory) to discover what we are doing, by being sensitive to suitable evidence. The question is whether rejection or suspension of our naïve picture is compatible with acknowledging that the activities under consideration — the activities that form the subject matter of the knowledge we are trying to understand — are *intentional* activities. (At this point, a broadly metaphysical thesis about the relation between intentional action and practical knowledge comes into play — but I think it is a fairly weak one.)

Briefly, the hurdle facing the revisionary strategy arises from internal connections that are central to Anscombe's analysis, between intentional action, knowledge of what one is doing, and the participants' perspective on knowledge of what one is doing. The connection between the first two things is familiar: intentional actions are open to second-person 'reason-seeking' questions, questions whose applicability

¹⁴ See Velleman 1989 for a response along these lines. For critical discussion, see Roessler 2013.

¹⁵ For different versions of this move, see Velleman 1989 and Paul 2009.

presupposes that the agent knows without observation what she is doing.¹⁶ The connection with the participants' perspective may be less obvious but I think it is implicit in the qualification of the required knowledge as non-observational. The idea is not (just) that intentional action involves knowledge that, from the perspective of epistemological theorizing, can be seen to be non-observational. One way to bring this out is to consider a case in which A and B treat B's knowledge that she is buying butter as observational. They regard 'How do you know you are buying butter?' as a fitting question, and B's reply is, say, 'I found some butter in my trolley.' On Anscombe's view, this would be enough to show that the activity under consideration is not intentional under that description. 'Without observation' is meant to capture the way A and B need to think about B's knowledge in sharing it, if it is to be the kind of knowledge we have of what we are intentionally doing.

Acting intentionally, as we ordinarily conceive it, then, is inseparable from the capacity to know what one is doing, as we ordinarily conceive it. If that analysis is correct, it raises the question whether we could coherently embrace the 'contemplative conception'.¹⁷ The question merits more detailed investigation than I can offer here. In particular, the possibility that I think would deserve to be further examined is that the revisionary strategy would commit us, as philosophers, to rejecting or suspending explanations and validations of knowledge we are committed to accepting, as reflective agents and participants in the practice of sharing knowledge of what we are doing.¹⁸

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¹⁶ At least in the case of agents endowed with language: see Anscombe's brief discussion of our disposition to describe some species of non-human animals as acting intentionally, *I*, 86-9.

¹⁷ This way of putting the question is intended to be reminiscent of the sort of dialectic Barry Stroud pursues in *Engagement and Metaphysical Dissatisfaction*. See in particular his suggestion that it is hard to find 'enough distance [enough for the purpose of detached metaphysical theorizing] between our conception of the world and the world it is meant to be a conception of', given our 'unavoidable immersion' in that conception. (2011, 145)

¹⁸ A previous version of this paper was presented at a workshop on practical knowledge at Fribourg in 2019. I would like to thank the participants for discussion. I am particularly grateful to the editor for his helpful comments.

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