ORIGINAL ARTICLE

On having control over our actions

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Abstract
In this essay, I investigate the longstanding philosophical problem of whether we have control over our actions in a deterministic world. In working through a range of every-day situations in which this problem could arise, I come to the realisation that determinism has no bearing on whether we have control over our actions, because having control over our actions and determinism only make sense under different aspects.

I. | INTRODUCTION

Today, I had tea and toast for breakfast. But could I have done otherwise? And, in any case, was I the ultimate source of this early morning action? Like many other philosophical problems, the problem of whether we have control over our actions arises from the pervasiveness of a picture that seems appealing (even natural or inevitable) but which leads us to say something we do not want to say. In this instance, the picture of the world as causally determined, which leads us to say that we have no control over our actions.[1] Given that most people feel deeply that we *do* have control over our actions, we are left in a quandary. In this essay, I intend to investigate this longstanding problem by reflecting on every-day situations in which questions concerning whether we have control over our actions arise.[2] I expect to discover that the problem of having control over our actions in a deterministic world is, on reflection, really no problem at all.

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[1]Or, if not completely deterministic, one whereby indeterminism is causally irrelevant to human agency.

[2]My approach can be conceived as a version of the later Wittgenstein's (2009) descriptive method of conceptual clarification—which he sums up very succinctly in the methodological imperative to 'Describe language-games!' (§486)—in particular, as cashed out by Frank Ebersole (2002). This approach has since been coined *Investigative Ordinary Language Philosophy* (Cook 1999; Levi 2004). For a recent explication, see Hardman and Hutchinson (2022).

II. | RAISING ONE'S ARM

Given the purported complexity of the problem, I think it best to start with a simple action: raising one's arm. Let us consider some everyday situations in which such an action occurs.

1. 'Can any of you', asks Mr Jones, 'tell me the sum of the interior angles of a triangle?' Four hands on the front row shoot up in unison.
2. Alex is taking his daily walk around the block, which he does every evening at the same time. 'Hi Alex', calls his neighbour from across the street. 'Hi Ed', Alex replies whilst waiving at him, 'nice evening for it'.

Example (1) is the kind of situation that anyone who has attended school can easily comprehend. Mr Jones asks his maths class a simple question, which any of the children could answer if they have been paying attention. In response, four children immediately raise their arm to signal that they know the answer. They have, it seems, been paying attention! '180 degrees Sir', replies Anna. In this instance, we can, for now, simply say that Anna intentionally raised her arm because she knew the answer.

In Example (2), we have a situation that is equally commonplace, but, for our purposes, perhaps not quite so clear. In this situation, Alex is responding to Ed's greeting in a conventional manner. There is nothing odd or special about this situation. As I mentioned, Alex takes his evening walk at the same time every day, so Ed will have seen him many times; both he and Alex have lived on the street for years. Alex's response to the greeting—'Hi Ed'—is almost automatic (he doesn't have to think about such a response). Accompanying his verbal response, Alex raises his arm to wave at Ed across the street. Yet, unlike in Example (1), it seems too much to say that Alex had an intention or motive— something like 'to respond to Ed'—that caused his response and accompanying waiving. Responding in such a way, and concurrently waiving, is just a convention that is embedded in being a neighbour in Alex and Ed's shared cultural environment. In this case, motives or intentions do not seem like an essential part of the action of waiving to Ed.

This reflection now makes me reconsider my summary account of Example (1), insofar as raising one's hand in class in response to a question is also a cultural convention. Indeed, as any primary school teacher can attest, many children raise their hand in class even if they do not know the answer and have no intention of answering the question! In some instances of a child raising their hand, such as Anna's, intention might sensibly account for the action. But in others, intention might just not be relevant. Intention thus seems to be a local factor that pertains only to particular actions, not a global explanation for all action. In light of this puzzlement, perhaps I was mistaken in thinking that the

action of raising one's arm would prove simple to understand (i.e., as caused by a motive or intention). Let us try to resolve this by thinking through some more examples.

3. Nesrine sits quietly on the park bench eating her lunch when, out of the corner of her eye, she sees a tennis ball flying towards her. With no time to think, her arm shoots up and the ball sticks hard in her palm. A perfect catch!
4. Steve suffers from a rare neurological condition that causes twitches and spasms. As he makes his way home from the library, his arm twice flicks up involuntarily. 'Damn arm!' thinks Steve, as he waits by the side of the road until it is under control.

In Example (3), the action of Nesrine raising her arm seems even more automatic than Alex waiving to Ed. She has no time to think but still manages to raise her arm quickly and accurately enough to catch the fast-moving ball. In this instance, it does not seem right to say that Nesrine 'intended' to catch the ball. But neither does it seem right to say that catching a rogue ball in a park is any sort of cultural convention. It seems better just to say that Nesrine *reacted*. What, though, does this mean for our initial question of whether we have control over our actions? What sort of control does Nesrine exert if her arm raises without her even thinking? Perhaps one way out of this problem is to think of this instance not as an action at all. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that it was merely a *bodily movement*; a bodily reaction to the ball flying towards her. Given that such movements can occur without one seeming to have any control over them, we can simply say that Nesrine had no control over this instance of raising her arm precisely because it was not an action in the first place.

This distinction between actions and bodily movements seems even clearer in Example (4). In this instance, Steve's arm flicks up involuntarily. Steve's arm involuntarily flicking up at inopportune moments is exhausting and infuriating. If he could, he would stop it from happening. Therefore, it seems clear to say that Steve has no control over this instance of his arm raising. His arm raising is caused by a neurological condition. Again, however, this does not raise a problem for the question of whether we have control over our actions, because this instance is (again) not an action at all but a mere bodily movement. Perhaps, belatedly, we have a useful distinction to get us started: a distinction between actions on the one hand and bodily movements on the other. Whereas it makes sense to say that we can control our actions, it does not make sense to say that we can necessarily control our bodily movements. Some of the problems we have gotten into seem to be related to treating simple bodily movements as more complicated actions.

III. | MOVING A PAWN

Armed with the distinction between actions and bodily movements, let us now consider some more complex actions. In so doing, we will hopefully get away from the problem of confusing bodily movements for actions and be able to focus on what we are really interested in.

5. Orla looks across at her competitor before purposefully picking up the pawn and moving it to c4. The game begins!
6. 'No, no Jos, you can't move it to that one!', rebukes his father gently. 'At the start of the game these little ones can't move more than two squares forward'. Jos looks up inquisitively at his father before putting the pawn back to its starting square. 'Like this?,' he asks, moving his pawn carefully to e4. 'Exactly!', replies his father. 'Well done, we're off and running.'

Example (5) gives us a richer action to consider—that of moving a pawn to begin a game of chess. In this instance, surely no-one would deny that Orla most certainly had control over her action. She moved the pawn to c4 because she favours the English Opening. She is well versed in its theory and likes both its flexibility and its use as a transpositional device. She has used it to great effect over many years and expects that today will be no different. Furthermore, although she does sometimes use other openings, given that she has played this particular opponent before using the English and won, she sees no reason to abandon it.

In Example (6), Jos's father is teaching him how to play chess. At this stage, Jos barely knows what the pieces are called, never mind that there is an array of things called 'openings' and that one of these is called the 'English'! On initially hearing his father's instruction to 'start the attack', Jos moves his pawn right up to one of his father's and knocks it over. 'Ha!', his father laughs and tells him he has made a wrong move. After being told what he is allowed to do with a pawn, he tries again and makes a valid—perhaps even prudent—move. Clearly, we cannot account for Jos's actions in the same way as Orla's. Jos knows nothing of openings, systems or lines. In the first action—where he moves the pawn right up the board—we could say that Jos had control over this action insofar as he intended to 'attack daddy's pawn!'. But what about the second action? In this case, it is not so clear. Jos moved the pawn in response to his father's instruction that 'At the start of the game these little ones can't move more than two squares forward.' In moving the pawn, is it better to say that Jos controlled his action or that he just did what his father told him? Reflecting on these two actions also raises a more troubling issue. In the previous section, I proposed a distinction between actions and bodily movements, and, as I have described them so far, both instances of moving a pawn make sense as actions. But could we not equally make sense of them as bodily movements? Consider a further situation.

7. 'The movement of a pawn in chess, as we see this child doing in the video', notes Dr Clark to his students, 'is a good example of what we call a precision grip. In such a grip, as opposed to the power grip we saw earlier, the object, in this case a chess piece, is held between the tips of the fingers and thumb, as you can see. The concept of "virtual fingers" has been proposed to describe one or more digits working together as a single unit.'

In this account of the same instance of Jos moving a pawn, Dr Clark describes it from a completely different aspect or perspective. Dr Clark is a lecturer whose research interests lie in developing anthropomorphic robotic hands. Modelling the complex movements of thumbs and fingers effectively is an integral part of developing a successful robotic hand. Dr Clark is not interested in pawns moving as instances of actions taken in a game, but as examples of physical movements. His account of moving a pawn is grounded in morphology and kinematics; from what we might term a *physicochemical* aspect. Of course, describing the instance of moving a pawn from such an aspect will tell us nothing about why Jos moved the pawn with respect to the game he is playing, but it will give us details about the bodily movements involved in such an action. This reflection seems to have given us a problem that I did not previously consider. Earlier, I wanted to set out a clear distinction between actions and bodily movements. But now, it seems that any instance can be described as both action *and* bodily movement, depending on which aspect we take. Another way to think about it is that actions and bodily movements are not different in kind; rather, a bodily movement can *enter into* an action: we can see the bodily movement in the action if we consider the particular instance from a particular aspect. I have noted that bodily movements seem to make sense from a physicochemical aspect. Perhaps we can do something similar with actions.

IV. | SEEING ACTIONS

When describing an action I initially thought of as simple—raising one's arm—, I first thought that such an action involved an intention or motive, and that this accounts for how we control our actions. However, I then found that there are actions for which it makes no sense to invoke an intention; in particular, those that are better explained by cultural convention (such as waiving) or those that are involuntary (such as a spasm). I thought that I could account for non-intentional actions by simply denying that they are actions at all—instead proposing they are mere bodily movements. But having now seen that any instance can be conceived as both action and bodily movement, depending on which aspect we consider it from, this does not seem to work. Furthermore, there are many other actions we could consider that also do not seem to be well accounted for by intention: for example, idle behaviour, such as throwing a ball

up and catching it whilst watching TV, tapping out a rhythm to a song on the radio and making a funny shadow on the wall; or actions we ordinarily see as automatic, such as recognising someone familiar, or turning left at a junction whilst driving a route we know very well and can navigate without thinking. We can easily understand how we see all of these examples as bodily movements. What I want to consider now is how we can also see them as actions.

As I noted earlier, particular actions, in particular situations, can be accounted for in a number of ways, and these do not have to be global explanations applicable to all actions. Nevertheless, perhaps it is useful to say that all of these local accounts are available to us under a different aspect to that which allows us to see bodily movements. One idea that springs to mind is that actions—with their gamut of local explanations—are instances that we can make sense of from a *social* aspect. Actions make sense in the social order of things; in the human forms of life that shape how we interact with one another. Bodily movements, as I have already implied, are just not the kind of things that make sense from this aspect (they make sense from a physicochemical aspect). Let us consider how this proposed social aspect might help us to consider some non-intentional actions I introduced previously.

8. Lara is slumped on the couch watching a documentary on sharks. She is tired from working all day and is relaxing after eating her dinner. She has no particular interest in sharks, but the documentary is interesting and, in any case, she has no energy to choose another show. As she watches, she aimlessly flicks a baseball from one hand to another, cursing if she drops it and has to move off the sofa.
9. As James turns the corner into the long corridor that runs past his office, he almost bumps straight into a colleague. 'Ava!', he says after stepping back, 'how are you doing? I haven't seen you for ages.'

In Example (8), we could easily make sense of Lara flicking a ball from one hand to another from a physicochemical aspect, as a bodily movement (just ask Dr Clark!). Although making sense of it from a social aspect—as an action—is perhaps not quite so clear, we can nonetheless still provide a sensible account. Lara grew up playing baseball, and although she has now stopped playing, there are always baseballs lying around. When playing baseball, she developed a habit of throwing a baseball around whilst engaged in sedentary tasks in order to improve her feel for the ball. Despite no longer playing baseball, this habit persists, and she will still often play with a baseball whilst watching TV, listening to the radio, or daydreaming. The action of Lara throwing a baseball from one hand to the other is thus simply accounted for by her history of playing baseball, which led to the formation of a habit. We could, I suppose, also say, as a precursor, that Lara *intended* to throw the baseball from one hand to the other. But really this is no explanation at all. In this instance, invoking intention adds

nothing to the simpler statement that 'Lara throws the baseball from one hand to the other'. In this instance, Lara's control over her action is grounded, not in an explicit intention, but in her history as a baseball player and the development of a habit. A history of playing baseball and the resultant habit formation does not make sense from a physicochemical aspect but does from a social aspect. Thus, in invoking this explanation we situate it under an aspect from which we will account for the instance as an action (not a bodily movement).[3]

In Example (9), James bumps into his colleague Ava and says hello. Implicit in this process is that James recognises who Ava is. In this situation, it does not make sense to say that James intended to recognise Ava—recognising Ava is an automatic action that occurs without overt thought. Again, we could make sense of this as a bodily movement, invoking neuroanatomical correlates and whatnot, but this will not help us make sense of it as an action. To make sense of it as an action, we need an alternative explanation; for example, that James and Ava have known each other for a long time, that this is a situation where James expects to see Ava, and that they have seen each other quite a lot recently and so can recognise each other even when unusually close up.[4]

Having now worked through a range of different examples, this seems like a good point to take stock of the investigation. We started with an appealing picture (that the world is causally determined), which led us to say something we do not want to say (that we have no control over our actions). In working through some examples of what I initially thought of as a simple action—raising one's arm—, I proposed that instances where it seems that we do not have control over our actions are not actions at all but mere bodily movements. However, on working through some more examples—related to moving a pawn in chess—, I realised that this distinction between actions and bodily movements is mistaken, because any instance can be seen as either an action *or* a bodily movement, depending on which aspect we see it from. I further proposed that bodily movements can be seen from a physicochemical aspect and actions from a social aspect.[5] This conception of actions and bodily move-

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[3]For an excellent explication of actions and bodily movements, see Ebersole (2001b), in which he carefully works through a problem that is related to questions Wittgenstein poses in PI: for example, 'when "I raise my arm", my arm rises. And now a problem emerges: what is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm rises from the fact that I raise my arm?' (§621).

[4]One can, of course, come up with situations of recognising a person that are less automatic. For example, if James is walking through a shopping mall and sees a woman standing outside a shop whom he recognises but cannot place. After a while it comes to him, 'Of course! It's Ava from work.' Such actions would have their own local explanations.

[5]The related problem of confusing different language games was raised in a number of places by Wittgenstein. For example, in the Whewell's Court Lectures on Volition, in accounting for when one says that one comes out of a room to fetch some bread, he notes that it is 'enormously important that I don't say… "See, I have an idea and my legs come"' (Wittgenstein 2017: 277).

ments—that is, as being available only under certain aspects—has important consequences for the problem we started with.

The problem we started with is, of course, a famous one. Causal determinism tells us that everything that happens is an inevitable result of what happened previously (according to the laws of nature). But if this is the case, then everything we do is a consequence of what happened in the past, and thus how can we have control over anything? However, although this problem is a famous one, if we accept the picture of actions and bodily movements as being available only under different aspects, then it dissolves: causal determinism, like bodily movements, is a concept that only applies under a physicochemical aspect, whereas having control over our actions is a concept that only applies under a social aspect. One cannot, therefore, make sense of one concept in direct relation to the other, so determinism has no bearing on whether it makes sense to say that we have control over our actions.

The realisation that having control over our actions and determinism only make sense under different aspects does seem to have dissolved the longstanding problem of having control over our actions in a deterministic world. Nevertheless, the examples I have so far investigated are ones which do not overtly relate to an important and troubling consequence of the problem; namely, that if we have no control over our actions then it is doubtful that we can be held morally responsible for them. Given that this consequence is one of the main concerns of the problem, in the next section I explore a set of examples more overtly related to moral responsibility. Although I envisage that this will not present any issues for my picture of what having control over our actions entails, I hope that it will provide further support for it by expanding its applicability more overtly to examples where moral responsibility is foregrounded.

V. | HONOURING A PROMISE

I do not intend here to wade into the messy waters of defining moral responsibility. I think it is enough just to invoke some examples of the kind of instance any sensible observer would agree foregrounds moral responsibility in some way: namely, honouring a promise.

10. 'Ok Bilal', says Alan, 'that all sounds great. I'm happy with what you have proposed for the extension and that you'll get it all finished in two months. As agreed, I will transfer half of the money now, and the other half on completion.' Being the kind of people who do not generally see the need for written contracts, Bilal and Alan shake on the agreement, and Bilal agrees to start on the groundwork next week.

11. Remona drops off her friend Polly at the temporary accommodation she has arranged for her. 'Don't worry Polly, I promise I'll be back tomorrow morning to see how you're settling in.'

12. 'It's totally normal to feel nervous about tomorrow', says Leyla to her daughter, as they pack her kick for a football trial. 'But I promise you are going to do great!'

In Example (10), Alan pays Bilal half of the money in advance and then promises to pay him the rest once the work is completed. We can conceive of this kind of promise as a contractual promise, which is conditional on Bilal completing the work to a reasonable standard. If Bilal does complete the work to a reasonable standard but Alan refuses to pay him the outstanding money, then it seems reasonable to say that Alan has not honoured the promise he made. When considered under a social aspect, we can say that Alan does have control over the action of honouring his promise and that, if he does not honour it, then he can be held responsible. We can also, if we so wish, sensibly add that Alan is *morally* responsible for paying Bilal, if the relevant conditions are met and thus, if he does not, he has acted immorally.[6]

In Example (11), we have a different kind of promise to that we encountered in (10). Remona's promise to Polly is not an explicitly contractual promise, but a commitment to take all reasonable means to come back tomorrow morning. Thus, if external events prevent Remona being able to get there in the morning—a traffic accident, her child falling ill, etc.—, then it is not reasonable to say that she has failed to honour her promise in the same way that Alan did. Nevertheless, we can still say, under a social aspect, that if external events do not intervene and Remona still does not turn up—say, she just decided not to bother when she woke up—, then she did have control over her action and can be held responsible for it. In any case, this complication about whether we can or cannot hold Remona responsible for her action—and thus whether she did or did not have control over it—is not in any way dependent on whether we accept that the world is causally determined. We can still hold that (i) the world is causally determined (under a physicochemical aspect), and (ii) Remona has control over her actions (under a social aspect). This conclusion is made even clearer if we consider Wittgenstein's advice to 'take a look around', insofar as we pay attention to the kinds of questions we might ask of Remona in this situation: for example, 'Did she act freely?', 'Are we going to hold her responsible?' and 'Are we going to blame her for what happened?' We can easily answer all of these practical questions without reference to causal determinism.

In Example (12), we have yet another kind of promising. This third kind of promising is neither a contract nor a commitment to take all reasonable means.

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[6]Although it seems reasonable to say that we can add this moral addendum, one could also argue that it does not really add anything to our extant description of the situation, which does not explicitly invoke morality. This debate, however, is beyond the scope of the paper.

Rather, it is merely a means of expressing confidence and support. If Leyla's daughter does not perform well at her football trial, no reasonable observer would suggest that Leyla has 'not honoured' her promise. In this instance, the issue is not that promises must be honoured, or even that all reasonable means must be taken to honour a promise. In this situation, the notion of honouring a promise simply does not apply. Again, however, even though in this case the notion of honouring a promise does not apply, the function of the promise Leyla makes can easily be understood under a social aspect (of offering support, etc.). And, moreover, the sense of this is in no way undermined by a picture of the world as deterministic.

In this section, I have explored three instances of promising, two of which can be related to honouring a promise and one that cannot. In all instances—which can all reasonably be conceived of as moral—it seems clear that, as in the previous examples, whether someone can be held responsible for their actions is unrelated to determinism. Thus, the picture of actions only making sense under a certain (social) aspect seems applicable even to examples where moral responsibility is foregrounded. This conclusion is related to that alighted on by Wittgenstein, whereby he challenges the view that freedom of the will is merely ignorance of the laws of nature. For example, in the Whewell's Court Lectures on Freedom of the Will, he argues neither for nor against the freedom of the will, but merely points out that 'certain circumstances will make it easy for me to be patient; other circumstances will make it very difficult.'[7] Suppose one says that our decisions are determined by our education and anatomy and thus follow natural laws. As Wittgenstein notes, 'this is no reason for our saying that if the decisions follow natural laws… they are, therefore, in some way *compelled*.'[8] No reasonable person would, for example, say that 'the thief who steals a banana moves as inevitably as a stone falling.'[9] If we respond by saying that there are natural laws that apply to the thief as much as the stone, what would be the point in saying this? Again as Wittgenstein notes, 'unless we philosophize, we don't talk this way.'[10]

VI. | GLOBAL SOLUTIONS FOR LOCAL PROBLEMS

In this essay, I have investigated the longstanding philosophical problem of whether we have control over our actions in a deterministic world. In working

[7] Wittgenstein (2017: 290).

[8] Wittgenstein (2017: 283).

[9] Wittgenstein (2017: 285).

[10] Wittgenstein (2017: 287).

through a range of everyday situations in which this problem could arise, I have come to the realisation that determinism has no bearing on whether we have control over our actions, because having control over our actions and determinism only make sense under different aspects. This conclusion can perhaps be fruitfully related to two existing sets of philosophical accounts. First, certain Anscombean accounts of action grounded in the nature of practical knowledge. And second, extant Strawsonian compatibilist accounts in philosophy, which are famously grounded in a respecification of moral responsibility.[11] I now consider each of these in turn.

In opposition to the classic causal account of intentional action, Anscombe replaced the dominant notion of causation with that of practical knowledge.[12] For Anscombe, an intentional action has reference to a form of description, insofar as an action can be described in many different ways and, moreover, will not be intentional under all those descriptions. For example, in her famous account of a man pumping water, the action of a man moving his arms up and down could be described as pumping water, making a shadow on the wall, sounding out a steady rhythm, doing his job, etc. In this case, it is only under the description of pumping water that the action makes sense as intentional. Furthermore, in every case of intentional action, one does not need to observe oneself in order to know what one is doing. Rather, one knows it in a distinctive—first-personal—way. Anscombe called this intrinsic knowledge of one's actions *practical knowledge*, which is understood by grasping what it is to reason practically. Several arguments have been presented to support Anscombe's account. One such argument is an appeal to the connection between action and assertion.[13] On this view, if one is acting intentionally, then one is able to correctly assert that one is acting. Given that one can correctly assert something only if one knows it, if one is acting intentionally, then one knows that one is acting. Another such argument is the claim that intentional action is action for a reason, whereby the reason is itself another action[14] (e.g., I am moving my hands up and down because I am pumping water).[15]

With respect to extant Strawsonian compatibilist accounts, whether one holds another (morally) responsible for their actions should not be grounded in the objective judgement of intention or suchlike, but in the propensity towards

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[11]Strawson (1962).

[12]Anscombe (2000).

[13]Setiya (2010).

[14]Thompson (2008).

[15]There are, as in any topic in philosophy, counter-arguments to both of these arguments. These, however, are beyond the scope and interest of this essay.

(morally) reactive attitudes. Given that such attitudes are both (i) constitutive of our interpersonal relations and expectations, and (ii) entangled with our human forms of life, it is inconceivable that they could be given up. Thus, it is inconceivable that we could forego holding someone responsible for their actions. This basic line of argument has been propounded in a number of different ways. For example, Wolf has defended Strawson's thesis by foregrounding the notion that an interpersonal perspective is the only one from which (morally) reactive attitudes have force, and thus it is only from such a perspective that they make sense.[16] Watson has developed a communication theory in which the competence of a morally responsible agent relies on being a potential interlocutor to moral conversations in their community.[17] And Russell, drawing from Hume, has proposed that moral responsibility can only be understood from the standpoint of our sentiments and social expectations; therefore, as determinism cannot be understood in this way, it has no bearing on such matters.[18]

There are particularly clear parallels between my findings and both Wolf's and Russell's compatibilist accounts and classic Anscombean accounts of action grounded in practical knowledge. One could, if so inclined, perhaps retrospectively apply such accounts to the examples I have worked through in order to make sense of them. However, it is important to note that the realisation I alighted on through my investigation—that having control over our actions and determinism only make sense under different aspects—should not be considered a global theory of or framework for understanding whether we have control over our actions in a deterministic world. The force of my findings is, unlike the theoretical accounts outlined above, grounded not in a global explanation but in the descriptions of and reflections on the local situations from which my realisation emerged. In other words, the problem of whether we have control over our actions is not one that can be overcome through the application of a global theory or account, be that related to reactive attitudes, communication, practical knowledge, or anything else. Rather, if we pay close enough attention to the local instances in which the problem purportedly manifests, we can—as I hope to have demonstrated—make sense of them without recourse to such extraneous explanations. Perhaps then, even my skeletal account of aspect seeing is unnecessary. As Ebersole pleaded, if the descriptions alone are enough to bring us to a perspicuous understanding, then 'Why not stick with the details? Why not?'[19] In

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[16]Wolf (1981).

[17]Watson (2004).

[18]Russell (1995).

[19]Ebersole (2001a: 147).

this, as with any other philosophical problem, the details are where any useful philosophical realisations will emerge from, so, indeed, why not just stick with them?

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