

First-Personal Aspects of Agency

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The Standard view of action is an event-causal view. It holds that actions are events caused by reasons and that reasons are combinations of intentional attitudes (e.g., beliefs, desires, intentions).¹ Most significantly, it holds that in order to cause behavior, intentional attitudes must be neural events.² Since neural events seem wholly understandable from a third-personal perspective, the Standard View has no room for any ineliminable first-personal elements at all.

I suspect that one reason that philosophers endorse the Standard View is that they fear that if intentional attitudes were *not* neural events, then we would be unable to make sense of their causal role in action. I think that this fear is misplaced, and that we can give up the Standard View without abandoning the intuitive idea that reasons cause actions.

My aim here is two-fold: First, to offer an account of action that emphasizes first-personal aspects of human agency; and second, to suggest a view of intentional causation that allows reasons to cause actions without being neural events.

Aspects of Agency

Being an agent and having a first-person point of view are intuitively connected, but it is not obvious just *how* they are connected. On my view, as I'll show, all agents have first-person perspectives. Even so, the connection between being an agent and

¹ There are, of course, complications in various theories. Donald Davidson, for example, famously held that neural events do not causally explain actions, but that they do cause actions. Actions are causally explained by mental events, which are just neural events described in a mental vocabulary. See his "Mental Events" (1970) and "Actions, Reasons and Causes." (1963), both reprinted in his *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980): 207-24 and 3-20, respectively.

² In *Explaining Attitudes: A Practical Approach to the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and elsewhere, I have argued at length against this Standard-View thesis.

having a first-person perspective is not altogether straightforward. There are different kinds of agents, and there are different kinds of first-person perspectives. On the one hand, all persons are agents, but not all agents (e.g., chimpanzees, dogs) are persons; on the other hand, all rational and moral agents are persons, but not all persons (e.g., human infants) are rational and moral agents.

There are four intertwined concepts to explore first: agency, action, intentional explanation, and practical reasoning. Begin with agency: An agent is an entity that is able to do things, where we may understand the relevant sense of ‘doing things’ as follows:

(DT) An entity *x* does something [in the sense relevant to agency] if and only if *x* brings about something that can be adequately explained only by reference to *x*’s beliefs, desires or intentions.

Anything that has the ability to do things in the sense of (DT) is an agent. The things that agents do may be characterized correlatively as actions.³ (Some of the things that we do—e.g., digesting food or growing older—are not explainable by beliefs, desires and intentions and hence are not actions at all; such things are not relevant to this discussion.) Actions are things that can be done in conformity with (DT), and agents are entities that can do things in conformity with (DT). If someone does something that conforms to (DT), then she does something that is explainable only in terms of her attitudes. I’ll call explanations that explain actions in terms of attitudes ‘intentional explanations’.⁴

What connects the agent’s attitudes to her actions in intentional explanations is that the agent’s attitudes can be used in—perhaps primitive—practical (means-end) reasoning that concludes with the agent’s acting. So, we have the following thesis:

³ Actions are events constituted by other events. Events (and hence actions) are property-instantiations.

⁴ Although the range of intentional phenomena is much broader than phenomena involving intentional attitudes, I am here restricting the use of ‘intentional explanations’ and later of ‘intentional causation’ to phenomena involving intentional attitudes.

(AE) If x brings about something that can be adequately explained only by reference to x's beliefs, desires or intentions, then x can engage in primitive practical (means/end) reasoning.

From (DT) and (AE), it follows that the ability to do things [in the sense relevant to agency] is conceptually tied to the ability to engage in primitive practical (means/end) reasoning. These coupled abilities make the link between practical reasoning and intentional explanations.

The explanatory power of intentional explanations derives from the fact that intentional explanations capture practical reasoning from the agent's point of view.⁵ The practical reasoning that typical intentional explanations capture may be simple, hardly worth spelling out: I want to get warmer and believe that the best way to get warmer is to move closer to the fire; so I move closer to the fire. Let me make four further points about practical reasoning:

First, practical reasoning is always first-personal: The agent reasons about what to do on the basis of her own first-person point of view. It is the agent's first-person point of view that connects her reasoning to what she actually does. Nevertheless, the agent need not have any first-person concept of herself. A dog, say, reasons about her environment from her own point of view.⁶ She is at the origin of what she can reason about. She buries a bone at a certain location and later digs it up. Although we do not know exactly what it's like to be a dog, we can approximate the dog's practical reasoning from the dog's point of view: Want bone; bone is buried over there; so, dig over there.

⁵ I'll put aside the possibility of self-deception here for two reasons: (1) Cases of self-deception, in which an agent's practical reasoning is not a reliable guide to the correct intentional explanation of her behavior, are parasitical on the more ordinary and uncontroversial kinds of cases that I discuss. (2) Self-deception is a problem only in a special class of cases, in which the agent has an interest in concealing what she really thinks, and hence can be bracketed.

⁶ Vonk and Povinelli argue that chimpanzees' minds are limited to their environment. J. Vonk and D. J. Povinelli, "Similarity and Difference in the Conceptual Systems of Primates: The Unobservability Hypothesis," in *Comparative Cognitive Experimental Explorations of Animal Intelligence*, E. Wasserman and T. Zentall, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 363-387.

The dog is automatically (so to speak) at the center of her world without needing any self-understanding.

Second, as the dog example also illustrates, primitive practical reasoning does not require that the agent have a natural language. Although, as I'll argue later, there is an important difference with respect to agency between entities that have a language and those that do not—theorists and ordinary people alike successfully explain behavior by attributing practical reasoning to creatures that have no natural language. Without assuming that such creatures engage in primitive practical reasoning, we are left with no explanation of their behavior at all.

Third, the practical reasoner—primitive or not—may be unaware that she is reasoning. Even beings like you and me are often unaware of our own reasoning. When I get to the building where the conference is held, I open the door. And I open it intentionally: I want to get inside and believe that the best way to get there is to open the door. Although I do not think about my attitudes or the door, my action is explained by the intentional explanation and the simple practical reasoning that it captures.

Fourth, some actions are accidental or unintended, but insofar as they are actions at all, their explanations invoke attitudes used in practical reasoning. Suppose that a nurse who was to bathe a toddler accidentally scalded the toddler in her care. Suppose that the nurse did not intend to scald the baby but mixed up the hot-water-tap and the cold-water-tap. Even though she did not do what she intended, her scalding the baby still has an intentional explanation: She wanted to give the baby a bath, and believed that turning the hot-water-handle 90 degrees and the cold-water-handle 180 degrees was the best way to give the baby a bath. So, she turned one handle 90 degrees and the other handle 180 degrees. However, since she mixed up the taps, she ended up scalding the baby.⁷ So, the scalding—although wholly accidental—needs an intentional explanation that invokes a mistaken belief. One cannot do anything by accident unless one can also do things intentionally. In this way, we may also see mistakes as manifestations of agency.

⁷ This example derives from one in J.L. Austin's "A Plea for Excuses" in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961): 123-152.

In sum, there are several interrelated concepts—agency, action, practical reasoning and intentional explanation—that may be characterized as follows:

An agent =_{df} an entity that is able to do things (as in (DT)) that are adequately explained only in terms of her attitudes

An action =_{df} something that an agent does (as in (DT))

Practical reasoning =_{df} first-personal reasoning that connects an agent's attitudes to her actions (as in (AE))

An intentional explanation =_{df} an explanation of an agent's action in terms of the agent's attitudes used in practical (means-end) reasoning (as in (DT) and (AE))

Agency comes in various degrees. The generic agent as I have just characterized her might be thought of as a minimal agent. So,

minimal agency =_{df} the ability to do things explainable only by attitudes used in practical (means-end) reasoning.

Some agents are more than minimal agents. A rational agent (as I'll call her) is a minimal agent who has the second-order ability to evaluate her beliefs and desires. She not only has beliefs, desires and intentions, but also she knows that she has beliefs, desires and intentions. A rational agent not only reasons about what to do, but also can rank preferences and goals, evaluate her beliefs and try to resolve conflicts among them. She can decide what kind of person she wants to be, and make efforts to achieve the character that she wants to have. She can have (second-order) desires about the (first-order) desires that she wants to have.⁸ So,

rational agency =_{df} minimal agency + possession of appropriate second-order attitudes (e.g., desires about one's own desires)

⁸ See Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-20.

Another more-than-minimal agent is a moral agent. To be a moral agent is to be accountable for what one does, to be subject to judgments of praise and blame. Moral agency requires not only that one have second-order attitudes generally, as a rational agent does, but also that one have a very specific second-order attitude: To be a moral agent, one must be able to appreciate the fact that she does things and has done things in the past (as in (DT)). So,

moral agency =_{df} rational agency + realization that one does things and has done things in the past

So, we have three varieties of agency: minimal agency, rational agency, and moral agency. Now let's turn to first-person perspectives in order to connect them to the various kinds of agent.

First-Person Perspectives

On my view (I call it 'the Constitution View'), it is definitive of persons that they have first-person perspectives essentially. You and I have robust first-person perspectives; we have a unique conceptual ability to think of ourselves as ourselves—not just to discriminate between ourselves and others, but to conceptualize the distinction between ourselves and others. We have the conceptual ability to think of ourselves without the use of any name, description or other third-person referring device. I can distinguish between the thoughts 'I am glad that I'm happy' and 'I am glad that LB is happy'. I could still be glad that I was happy even if I had amnesia and did not know that LB was happy. To distinguish thoughts about myself as myself from thoughts about myself as LB or as the tallest woman in the room or as the person in the mirror, I must have a robust first-person perspective.⁹

We are not only subjects of experience, but we also know that we are subjects of experience. We not only have beliefs and other attitudes; we also know that we have

⁹ We can signal attribution of a robust first-person perspective either to oneself or to someone else by the device of an asterisk '*'. To attribute a robust first-person perspective to myself as in 'I believe that I am in England,' I'll say 'I believe that I* am in England; to attribute to you a robust first-person perspective as in 'You believe that you are in England,' I'll say 'You believe that you* are in England.'

them. We not only interact with things in our environment, but we also know that we do. It is a robust first-person perspective that enables us to know that we (we, ourselves) interact with things in our environment, and to know that we (we, ourselves) are subjects of experience. A robust first-person perspective is a property that requires a rather sophisticated conceptual ability.

I anticipate a strong objection: A human infant does not have the conceptual ability to think of herself as herself. She is a subject of experience and she interacts with things in her environment, but she does not have a first-person concept of herself as herself. Does this imply that human infants are not persons, that a person does not come into existence until there is a conceptual ability to think of herself as herself?

No. Although we language-users have robust first-person perspectives, human persons begin existence with rudimentary first-person perspectives.¹⁰ A being has a rudimentary first-person perspective if and only if (i) she is a sentient being, (ii) she has a capacity to imitate, and (iii) she behaves in ways adequately explainable only by attribution of beliefs, desires and intentions. These are the kinds of properties—person-making properties, unlike, say, the property of having a heart—that we specifically associate with being a person. Note that I do not define rudimentary first-person perspectives in terms of potentiality. The property of being a sentient, intentional entity with a capacity to imitate is not to have any kind of potential. The term ‘capacity’ should be understood as an in-hand capacity, not just a capacity to develop a capacity.¹¹

There is a good deal of evidence from developmental psychologists that human newborns meet these conditions for having rudimentary first-person perspectives. (i) Human infants are obviously sentient. (ii) They have been shown to naturally imitate tongue protrusions and mouth openings as young as 42 minutes old.¹² (iii) And human

¹⁰ There is no precise moment when a person comes into existence. Everything in the natural world comes into existence gradually—persons, organisms, artifacts, artworks.

¹¹ The distinction between an in-hand capacity and a capacity to have a capacity is made vivid by Robert Pasnau in *Thomas Aquinas On Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 115.

¹² “These data directly demonstrate that a primitive capacity to imitate is part of

infants display obviously defensive behavior in response to an approaching object.¹³ Since they are sentient, intentional beings with an ability to imitate, human infants have rudimentary first-person perspectives and are persons.

This conclusion invites another objection: Many nonhuman mammals—not only nonhuman primates, but also dogs and cats and other animals—also meet the conditions for having rudimentary first-person perspectives. If the onset of a rudimentary first-person perspective in a human organism marks the beginning of a person, why does the onset of a rudimentary first-person perspective in a chimpanzee, say, *not* mark the beginning of a person? The answer is that chimpanzees are not of kinds that support robust first-person perspectives.¹⁴ What distinguishes a human infant from a chimpanzee is that the human infant is *of a kind* that typically supports a robust first-person perspective. The human infant is a person constituted by a human organism, as I'll explain. The chimpanzee is simply an organism.¹⁵ The relation between the human organism and the human person is what I call 'constitution': Constitution is a perfectly general relation of unity-without-identity between things of two basically different kinds: A piece of bronze and a statue; a piece of plastic and a driver's license; a human organism and a human person. An organism is essentially biological, but not essentially first-personal; a person is essentially first-personal, but not essentially biological. (With nanotechnology, we could come to be constituted by bodies that are at least partly bionic.

the normal child's biological endowment," say Alison Gopnik and Andrew N. Meltzoff in "Minds, Bodies, and Persons: Young Children's Understanding of the Self and Others as Reflected in Imitation and Theory-of-Mind Research," in Parker, Mitchell and Boccia, eds., *How Babies Think: The Science of Childhood* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1999): 30.

¹³ The defensive behavior by 10-day-old infants had three components: eye widening, head retraction, and interposing of hands between face and object. *Development in Infancy*, T.G.R. Bower, (San Francisco: W.H Freeman and Co., 1974): 84.

¹⁴ Daniel J. Povinelli and Christopher G. Prince report that "there is little evidence that chimpanzees understand anything at all about mental states." "When Self Met Other," in *Self-Awareness*, Ferrari and Sternberg, eds.

¹⁵ Perhaps in the evolutionary history of the Great Apes, there came a tipping point, at which organisms with significant cognitive faculties came to constitute persons who can have robust first-person perspectives.

A post-mortem person could have a nonbiological resurrection body.)¹⁶ So, a person is not identical to the organism that constitutes her.

The difference between a human infant and a chimpanzee may be made clearer by a distinction between having a property nonderivatively and having a property derivatively.¹⁷ An entity *x* has a property *F* derivatively if and only if *x* has *F* in virtue of its constitution relations to something that has *F* nonderivatively. When a human organism develops a rudimentary first-person perspective, a new being—a person—comes into existence. The human organism then constitutes a person, who has the rudimentary first-person essentially. The organism then has the rudimentary first-person perspective derivatively—in virtue of constituting something (a person) that has it nonderivatively. When a chimpanzee develops a first-person perspective, no new being comes into existence. So, the chimpanzee's rudimentary first-person perspective is not derivative—that is, it does not depend on any constitution relations. Fundamentally, a chimpanzee is an animal—a being with a first-person perspective contingently; fundamentally, a human infant is a person—a being with a first-person perspective essentially.

[To put it metaphorically, when a human organism develops a rudimentary first-person perspective, she passes it off to the person that the organism comes to constitute; and the organism has the rudimentary first-person perspective derivatively (in virtue of constituting a person) and contingently (in virtue of existing before being able to support a first-person perspective). Whereas the person has the rudimentary first-person perspective nonderivatively and essentially. When the chimpanzee develops a rudimentary first-person perspective, the chimpanzee has nothing to pass it off to; nothing further is constituted.]

A rudimentary first-person perspective is a property that has different roles in

¹⁶ See my “Persons and the Metaphysics of Resurrection,” *Religious Studies* 43 (2007): 333-348.

¹⁷ Not all properties may be had derivatively. See my books, *Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life: An Essay in Practical Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

human and nonhuman organisms. In nonhuman organisms, a rudimentary first-person perspective has a purely biological role in survival and reproduction. In human organisms, a rudimentary first-person perspective has an additional role: to bring into existence a person that the organism then constitutes. Then, the newly-existing person has a rudimentary first-person perspective nonderivatively, and the human organism has it derivatively. Typically, the newly-existing person goes on to develop a robust first-person perspective.

So, although a mature person has a robust first-person perspective, a person comes into existence when a human organism develops the ability to support a rudimentary first-person perspective. In short,

(HP) x constitutes a human person at t if and only if x is a human organism (nonderivatively) and x has a rudimentary or robust first-person perspective at t.

If a human organism does constitute a human person at t, then the organism has a rudimentary or robust first-person perspective at t derivatively (in virtue of constituting a person who has it nonderivatively). (HP) concerns the conditions under which human organisms constitute *human* persons, who are necessarily embodied (though they do not necessarily have the bodies that they in fact have). (HP) is silent about nonhuman persons.

I suspect that the development of a robust first-person perspective goes hand-in-hand with learning a natural language. Certainly, the evidence we have of robust first-person perspectives is linguistic: The being who asserts, “I wish that I were a movie star,” not only refers to herself (by means of the first occurrence of ‘I’), but also attributes to herself a first-person reference (by means of the second occurrence of ‘I’). This kind of assertion manifests a robust first-person perspective.

As a toddler learns more about her physical and social environment, and as she learns to talk, her conceptual abilities explode. She can entertain many more and different kinds of thoughts. When she discovers that she is a subject of experience

among other such subjects, she acquires a robust first-person perspective. But the person she is has existed since the organism that constitutes her developed to the point of supporting a rudimentary first-person perspective.

In sum, persons have first-person perspectives essentially. Persons are constituted by organisms, but not identical to organisms. The organisms that constitute your infant and you, respectively, are organisms nonderivatively and persons derivatively (in virtue of constituting persons). The infant and you are both persons nonderivatively and organisms derivatively (in virtue of being constituted by organisms).

Tying Agency to First-Person Perspectives

The big dividing line among agents is between those who have robust first-person perspectives and those who have only rudimentary first-person perspectives. In brief, all agents have rudimentary first-person perspectives and all beings with rudimentary first-person perspectives—human or not—are minimal agents; but only beings with robust first-person perspectives are rational and moral agents.

Let me produce some evidence for the conclusion that all persons and some nonpersons are minimal agents. First, consider some evidence that human infants (persons with rudimentary first-person perspectives) are minimal agents. Infants as young as two months engage in problem-solving behavior. When an experimenter sets up a light so that an infant can turn it on by moving her head to the left, most infants learn quickly that moving their heads to the left turns on the light. They turn on the light over and over and then the rate of left-head-turning drops dramatically. Then the experimenter changes the contingency to right-head-movement. When the infant turns her head left again, the light fails to come on. Then the infant makes a rapid succession of left-head-turnings. Sooner or later the infant turns her head to the right and the light comes on. This is followed by a high rate of right-head-turnings, which then subside. With changes in the contingencies, an infant can master complex series of movements, such as right-right-left-left.

The infant seems to have little interest in the light itself; she merely glances to see

whether it is on, without paying further attention. As one experimenter remarked, “The infant seems to be testing hypotheses and trying out sequences of movements in order to discover which one operates at the moment. When the correct sequence is discovered, it is tested a few times and then dropped....It is quite obvious from the behavior of the infants that the light source is not the motivating factor....[It] seems that the pleasures of problem solving are sufficient to motivate behavioral and mental activity in young infants.”¹⁸ As problem-solvers, human infants are minimal agents.

Now consider some scientific evidence that some nonhuman animals are minimal agents. The journal *Science* reported on work that showed that bonobos and orangutans not only can use tools to get a fruit treat from a mechanical apparatus, but also they can plan ahead.¹⁹ They were first trained to use a tool to get a fruit treat from a mechanical apparatus. Then, the apes were given tools, some suitable and some unsuitable for the task of getting the fruit; next, they were taken out of the test room into a waiting room and brought back to the test room after an hour. Significantly more often than predicted by chance, the apes took with them a suitable tool for getting the treat and brought it back with them after the waiting period.

So, we have strong evidence that both human infants (persons) and nonhuman higher animals (nonpersons) are agents. From the definitions of ‘rudimentary first-person perspective’ and ‘minimal agent’, together with the thesis (AE), it follows that any entity that has a rudimentary first-person perspective—whether human or not—is a minimal agent.²⁰ I take the evidence about human infants and chimpanzees to give

¹⁸ T.G.R. Bower, *Development in Infancy* (San Francisco, W.H. Freeman and Co., 1974): 8-9. Thanks to Gareth B. Matthews for showing me this source.

¹⁹ “Apes Able to Think Ahead,” *Scientific American.com*, May 19, 2006. http://www.sciam.com/print_version.cfm?articleID=000C4698-F1DE-146C-B1DE83414B... Accessed 5/23/06. The apes “selected, transported, and saved a suitable tool not because they currently needed it, but because they would need it in the future.”

²⁰ Here is the argument:

1. If x has a rudimentary first-person perspective, then x is able to engage in behavior explainable only by attribution of beliefs, desires and intentions. (by definition of ‘rudimentary first-person perspective’)
2. If x is able to engage in behavior explainable only by attribution of beliefs,

empirical content to my definitions.

From the point of view of my theory of persons, there is an enormous difference between minimal agents on the one hand, and rational agents and moral agents on the other hand. Rational and moral agency require second-order attitudes; anyone who has a second-order attitude has a robust first-person perspective. It follows then that all rational and moral agents have robust first-person perspectives. Moreover, the converse is true for rational agents: all beings with robust first-person perspectives are rational agents. But I'm not sure about the converse for moral agents. I don't know whether all beings with robust first-person perspectives are moral agents or not. If it is possible to have a kind of amnesia in which one does not know that she has done things in the past, although she still has other kinds of second-order thoughts, then a person so afflicted would not be a moral agent.²¹

In sum, entity x is a minimal agent if and only if x has a rudimentary first-person perspective; x is a rational agent if and only if x has a robust first-person perspective, and x is a moral agent only if x has a robust first-person perspective. Since all rational and moral agents have robust first-person perspectives, all rational and moral agents are persons. I'll sum up these relations in three figures:

Fig. 1 illustrates that all and only beings with rudimentary first-person perspectives (persons or not) are agents; Fig. 2 illustrates that all rational and moral agents have robust first-person perspectives. Fig. 3 illustrates that all persons (beings with first-person perspectives essentially) are minimal, rational and/or moral agents.

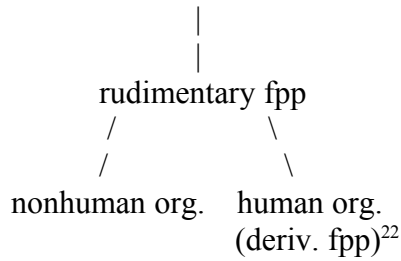
desires and intentions, then x is able to engage in practical (means-end) reasoning. (by PR)

3. If x is able to engage in behavior explainable only by attribution of beliefs, desires and intentions used in practical (means-end) reasoning, then x is a minimal agent. (by 1,2 and definition of 'minimal agent')

∴ 4. If x has a rudimentary first-person perspective, then x is a minimal agent.

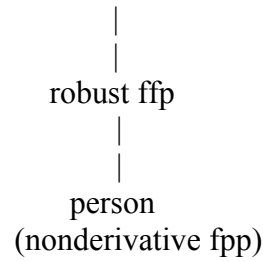
²¹ However, a schizophrenic with a robust first-person perspective and the knowledge that she had done things in the past would still be a moral agent; but if for everything she did, there was a morally defeating condition, there may be nothing for which she is morally responsible.

Minimal Agency

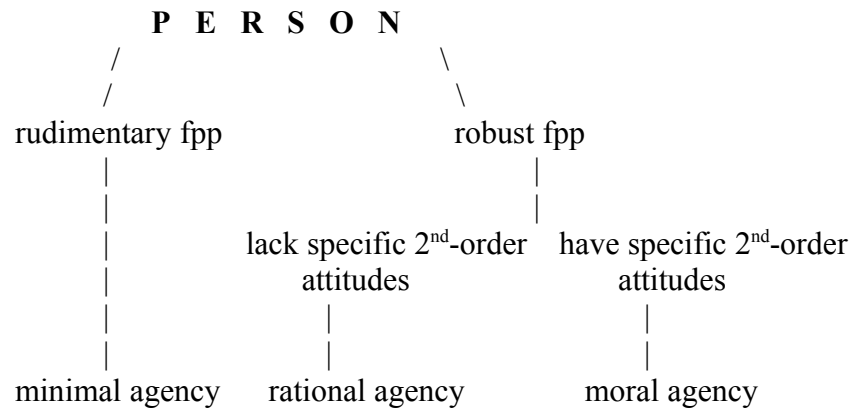


(fig.1)

Rational & Moral Agency



(fig. 2)



(fig. 3)

So, all beings with rudimentary first-person perspectives are minimal agents, and all beings with robust first-person perspectives are rational and/or moral agents. All persons are agents, but not all agents (e.g., chimpanzees, dogs) are persons; all rational and moral agents are persons, but not all persons (e.g., human infants) are rational and moral agents.

These complications are justified by the fact that the Constitution View of persons simultaneously captures the seamlessness of the animal kingdom and the ontological uniqueness of persons. Rival views either affirm the seamlessness of the animal kingdom and leave out the ontological uniqueness of persons (as animalism typically

²² That is, the human organism has a (rudimentary) first-person perspective derivatively in virtue of constituting something (a person) that has it nonderivatively.

does) or affirm the ontological uniqueness of persons and leave out the seamlessness of the animal kingdom (as dualism typically does). I know of no view besides the Constitution View that affirms both the unity of the animal kingdom and the ontological uniqueness of persons.²³

Intentional Causation

As I mentioned at the outset, my view of agency is at odds with the Standard View that takes actions to be events caused by neural events. Nevertheless, I believe that a causal view based on commonsense causation can accommodate the first-personal aspects of agency. The commonsense idea of causation is of ordinary objects' having effects in virtue of bearing certain properties: the cook's adding peanuts to the sauce caused the guest's allergic reaction. There are countless causal verbs whose application entails causal transactions: 'attract', 'tear apart', 'open', 'remove', 'enlarge', and so on. The root idea of commonsense causation is *making something happen*. To cause is to bring about, to produce, to give rise to something.

All causation is event-causation, but, unlike Davidson, I do not take events to be particulars. Rather, like Kim, I take an event to be an object's having a property at a time: 'x's having F at t.' But unlike Kim, I take the relation between motivating reasons and action to be causal.

The Constitution View, applied to property-instances, allows intentional phenomena to have causal efficacy. I can only suggest the argument here.²⁴ The basic idea is that when properties are instantiated in certain circumstances, they constitute higher-level property-instances. Bodily motions in various circumstances constitute various actions: Smith's raising her arm at a certain time t in a school-board meeting constitutes Smith's voting at t for the school budget, and Smith's arm's rising at t constitutes her raising her arm at t; and Smith's muscle-contractions and other

²³ I am indebted to Gareth B. Matthews, with whom I taught a graduate seminar on the first-person perspective, and from whom I have learned so much.

²⁴ For details, see my *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life*, Ch. 5, and "Nonreductive Materialism," forthcoming in *The Oxford Handbook for the Philosophy of Mind*, Brian McLaughlin and Ansgar Beckermann, editors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

physiological events at t constitute her arm's rising at t, and so on. Smith's arm's rising constitutes Smith's voting for the school budget,²⁵ and Smith's neural states constitute Smith's wanting the school budget to pass. Smith's neural and other physiological states cause Smith's arm's rising, but Smith's intentional states (that include Smith's wanting the school budget to pass) cause Smith's vote for the school budget. That is, Smith's voting for the school budget at t has an intentional cause, regardless of what properties constitute that intentional cause.

Property-constitution should be distinguished from both identity and supervenience. Property-constitution is a relation between property-instances; supervenience is a relation between properties themselves. Unlike supervenience, which is necessary and context-independent, constitution is contingent and highly context-dependent: On the one hand, extension of Smith's arm in different circumstances may be not a vote at all, but a request to ask a question. On the other hand, the potential constituters of someone's voting for the school budget are limitless. They may have nothing in common except their suitability to constitute a vote for the school budget.

Constituted property-instances (like Smith's voting at t for the school budget) confer causal powers that are "over and above" the causal powers of their constituters. They have what I call 'independent causal efficacy.' A property-instance (x's having F at t) has independent causal efficacy iff:

- (i) x's having F at t has an effect e, and
- (ii) x's having F at t would have had the effect e even if its constituting property-instance had been different, and
- (iii) x's having F at t confers causal powers that could not have been conferred by its constituting property-instance alone.

Smith's voting at t had the effect of adding to the total count of like votes; and her vote would have had the same effect even if she had raised her other hand or the vote had been taken by secret ballot; and the effect of the vote exceeded the effect of the arm extension

²⁵ Constitution is transitive, as well as irreflexive and asymmetrical.

alone.²⁶ (An arm extension per se does not contribute to the passage of a school budget; a vote for the school budget does—no matter how the vote was taken.) I have spelled this out in detail elsewhere.²⁷

Intentional events generally have independent causal efficacy. If so, then intentional explanations generally are causal explanations; and as I argued earlier, intentional explanations of actions are explanatory in virtue of their connection to an agent's (perhaps primitive) practical reasoning from a first-person perspective. Even a rabbit who sees danger to the left and hops away to the right believes that the location of the danger is relative to her own location, and wants to avoid the danger; and so, hops in the other direction. What connects the rabbit's attitudes to her hopping away is her rudimentary first-person perspective: the danger is believed to be relative to the rabbit's own location (from the rabbit's point of view), and the rabbit hops in a direction relative to the danger.

In sum, I want to make two claims about ordinary intentional explanations of action: (1) They are causal and (2) they presuppose that agents whose actions they explain have first-person perspectives. The rabbit's belief, coupled with her desire to survive, move the rabbit to hop in a certain direction; Smith's desire to pass the school budget, coupled with relevant beliefs, motivate her to vote as she does. *Moving* and *motivating* are causal concepts: the attitudes that move and motivate entities have independent causal efficacy. In the second place, both actions presuppose that the agent reasons from a first-person perspective (whether rudimentary or robust). An entity with an exclusively third-personal outlook could not be moved or motivated to do anything. The rabbit would not be moved to hop away unless she located the danger relative to her own position; Smith would not be motivated to vote for the school budget if she (herself)

²⁶ The identity of the vote is indifferent to what constitutes it. If the vote had been taken by secret ballot, Smith's token vote would have been the same token vote that he actually cast by raising his arm. For an excellent discussion of "token-constitution," see "The Metaphysics of Irreducibility" by Derk Pereboom and Hilary Kornblith in *Philosophical Studies* 63 (1991): 125-46.

²⁷ There is mounting empirical evidence for "downward-causation" of intentional properties generally. See the *Metaphysics of Everyday Life*, p. 110.

didn't want it to pass.²⁸

Conclusion

Although standard causal theories of action do not capture the first-personal aspects of agency, reasons may yet be causes. Intentional explanations of action are conceptually tied to practical reasoning, and all practical reasoning is from a first-person point of view. So, on a property-constitution view of causation, the view of agency on offer here is a causal view that automatically includes first-personal aspects of agency.²⁹

²⁸ For an exploration of some of the issues here, see John Perry, "The Problem of the Essential Indexical," *Noûs* 13 (1979): 3-21. Also see Perry's "The Self, Self-Knowledge, and Self-Notions" in *Identity, Personal Identity and the Self*, John Perry (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2002): 189-213.

²⁹ There is much more to be said about the exact relation between first-person perspectives and causal explanations, but I can't pursue these further issues here.