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Reply to Alec Hinshelwood

Alec's response focuses on what he calls the Separation Thesis: the claim that the movements one's body makes when one acts are the causal results of one's actions. Alec is right to suggest that I am committed to the thesis in *A Metaphysics*, and right also that the argument he offers in his §1 accurately delineates the reasoning which I take to support the claim. Alec offers two arguments against the thesis – as well as a diagnosis of the mistake made by the argument for it which is outlined in §1. I am fairly sure that neither of Alec's arguments against the Separation Thesis successfully defeats it; but having said that, I want to concede that I am attracted to what Alec says about a possible vulnerability in the argument *for* the claim. Though I shall defend the Separation thesis against Alec's two arguments, then, I want to do so in the context of a concession to one of Alec's positive proposals – for I believe he may indeed have suggested a way of representing the causality that is involved in bodily agency that is potentially preferable to a model which conceptualises everything in terms of the occurrence of causally related events.

Alec's first argument begins from the premise that it is natural to think that at least a large number of bodily actions are straightforwardly perceivable by means of vision. As Alec notes, this is a premise I accept; indeed, it is one for which I have explicitly argued, making it the premise of a further argument against the view that actions, in general, are things which are internal to the body. Alec's thought is that there might be a problem in understanding how one may perceive the raising of an arm unless it is identical with the event of the arm's rising: "if we were told that the obviously visible occurrence of her arm's going up is *not* her action but something distinct in which her action results, then we might be unsure whether we really can literally see it" (p.?) But as Alec, in effect, concedes straight away, this line of thought is going to seem unpersuasive to anyone who is comfortable in general with the kind of metaphysical pluralism that might, for example, lead one to agree that a statue can be distinct from a lump of clay, despite being spatiotemporally exactly coincident with it. Once we understand the view of reality which motivates such metaphysical pluralism, we will, I think, simply feel unmoved by the worry about 'where else' one should look to see the action.

The metaphysical pluralist will readily accept that there simply *is* nowhere else to look except in the same place as one looks in order to see the movement – just as, in the case of statue and lump, one looks in the same place to see both things.

Alec says that in the case of statue and lump we have the intimate relation of constitution to appeal to in order to understand the claim that two entities are co-present: "the fact that the lump and the statue are perceptually indistinguishable despite being distinct surely stems from the intimate relation in which the lump stands to statue: the relation of constitution" (p.?). In view of this idea about how we are to ground our understanding of the perceptual indistinguishability of things which are nevertheless distinct, he wonders whether views I have attempted to develop elsewhere concerning the relationships between processes and events might be put to work in order to argue that actions are in effect constituted by movements in the same sort of way as statues are constituted by lumps. In fact, though, I don't think this is the verdict that the framework I have attempted to develop delivers. That framework is based on utterly general ideas about *aspect*. As I conceive of things, there are both raisings that are processes and raisings that are events; and also risings that are processes and risings that are events (since both verbs admit of the aspectual modifications which ground the event-process distinction). If talk of constitution of one individual by another is appropriate here at all, then, raising processes will be constituted out of raising events – not out of *rising* events, as Alec's proposal has it. The process-event distinction, as I understand it, is simply orthogonal to the distinction between actions and (mere) movements.

Given that that is so, what are we to say in answer to Alec's worry that unless we can appeal to constitution or a similarly 'intimate' relation, we are left with no resources by means of which to understand the claim of non-identity between action and movement? I think my inclination is to say that it is a mistake to think that it is really the relation of constitution which helps us understand the claim of non-identity in the statue-lump case. What helps us understand the claim of non-identity, it seems to me, is a *philosophy of individuation* – an understanding of the role played by the *sortal concept* in carving up the world of thinkable objects. A sortal concept picks out a substantial individual not merely by drawing a spatial, or even a spatiotemporal, boundary around it, but by drawing, as it were, *modal boundarie*s

around it – it tells us which object of thought to have under consideration, not merely which area of the spatiotemporal world is in question. And it is this which really does the work in helping with understanding the non-identity claim. Things can happen to the lump which cannot happen to the statue – and this is ultimately what underwrites its distinctness. Leibniz's Law is the ultimate criterion for individuation – different properties imply different entities. 'Constitution' is secondary – it is a word by means of which we can talk about the relationship between the individuals that are singled out by two important kinds of sortal concept that tend to deliver coincident individuals – substance concepts and – let us call them – *portion* concepts – like 'lump' or 'piece' or 'chunk'. But we should not assume that constitution is the central – and certainly we should not assume that it is the only – case of non-identity with spatiotemporal coincidence.

If we let go of the thought that the relation of constitution itself is explanatory, and turn instead to the thought that it is rather a certain philosophy of individuation which helps us see why we need to distinguish things which might nevertheless be in the same place at the same time, then it might be clearer how to argue for the distinctness of raising and rising. Once again, it is Leibniz's Law which is key. Most obviously, the raising is *by me* - it is a *doing* – the rising is not. The raising can be e.g., eager (suppose I raise my arm to answer a quiz question) – but an arm cannot *rise* eagerly. A verdict of distinctness is, in my view, dictated by such simple facts as these – and in the face of such facts, the assumptions on which the argument for perceptual distinguishability is based must be rejected.

. What of the second argument? Alec claims that given the Separation Thesis, it is hard to see how the agent could know without observation or inference that her raising of her arm falls under that description – since it does so, on the Separation thesis, only in virtue of the raising's having caused a distinct event – a rising – and the fact that the rising has occurred would seem to be the sort of thing that could *only* be known by means of observation or inference. But the issue here seems to me quite independent of the Separation thesis. That someone is raising their arm *implies,* surely, that their arm is rising, whatever one thinks about the Separation thesis – and this propositional relationship is quite sufficient all by itself to give rise to the worry about how agents' knowledge is possible, without any help from the Separation thesis. How can one know without observation or inference that one is raising

one's arm if that implies that one's arm is rising? – and if one needs observation to know that one's arm is rising? I am unsure what to think about what the correct solution to this problem might be – but it seems to me that the problem has nothing particular to do with the Separation Thesis – it is a problem for everyone who believes that agents' knowledge is of a privileged sort and who admits the validity of the inference. Doubtless, as Alec surmises, the correct solution will involve a proper appreciation of how proprioception, as well as intention, figures in our knowledge of what we are doing. But the Separation Thesis is not the source of the problem.

Having said all this in defence of the Separation Thesis, I want to finish by conceding that I think what Alec says at the end of his paper about the vulnerability of premise (3) in the argument *for* the separation thesis is worth serious consideration. It may perhaps not follow from the fact that in raising my arm I cause my arm *to move* that I cause *an event* of my arm's moving – and if it did not follow, then we might have cause to question whether the Separation Thesis is true. I think we would need to hear more about how, when an arm is caused to move by an agent, it could fail to be the case that the agent had caused an event of an arm's moving – but perhaps there is something to be said here. Perhaps causing things to change is not always the same thing as causing changes. Or perhaps it is rather that changes are not always best conceived of as individual events. I am open to, and interested in, these suggestions – but I think they need further development before we could decide definitively to embrace them, and perhaps consequently to abandon the Separation Thesis.