
UNREFLECTIVE ACTION AND THE ARGUMENT FROM SPEED

BY

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Abstract: Hubert Dreyfus has defended a novel view of agency, most notably in his debate with John McDowell. Dreyfus argues that expert actions are primarily unreflective and do not involve conceptual activity. In unreflective action, embodied know-how plays the role reflection and conceptuality play in the actions of novices. Dreyfus employs two arguments to support his conclusion: *the argument from speed* and *the phenomenological argument*. I argue that Dreyfus's argumentative strategies are not successful, since he relies on a dubious assumption about concepts and reflection. I suggest that Dreyfus is committed to a minimal view of conceptuality in action.

Introduction

Hubert Dreyfus has defended a novel view of agency in recent years, most notably in a series of exchanges with John McDowell.¹ Dreyfus acknowledges a subset of actions in which agents are 'experts', 'at their best', or as Dreyfus sometimes puts it, 'in the zone'.² Although Dreyfus typically examines the phenomenologies of experts, such as Grandmasters and athletes, when it comes to everyday actions like walking across the street, opening doors, and reading the newspaper most individuals are experts. The basic idea Dreyfus defends is that such actions are primarily unreflective and do not involve mental representations, planning, or conceptual activity. These unreflective actions require, as Dreyfus argues, no 'contribution' on the part of the ego, I, self, or subject to be successfully performed.³ In fact, Dreyfus believes the activities associated with the I, activities he considers to be reflective and conceptual, often inhibit the successful performance of actions or undermine the quality of the performance. On Dreyfus's view, in expert unreflective action, embodied skills and know-how play the role reflection and conceptuality play in the

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actions of novices. The contribution or involvement of skill, to use Dreyfus terms, enables unreflective actions' successful performance. Dreyfus generally agrees with thinkers like Heidegger, who, as Dreyfus understands him, 'points out that most of our activities don't involve concepts at all'.⁴ Dreyfus disagrees with McDowell, who he believes is committed to the conclusion that 'human action is conceptual "all the way down"'.⁵ I am not interested in assessing Dreyfus's interpretations of these and others philosophers. Instead, I aim to evaluate whether the nonconceptualist thesis about action Dreyfus defends is supported by reasonable argumentation.

Dreyfus employs two arguments in support of his position. The first argument I call *the argument from speed*. For certain expertly skilled actions there is no time for reflection, concepts, or the I, to contribute to the action, so, he concludes, they are not, as McDowell tends to say, 'operative' in action.⁶ Since most of our actions involve this level of skill, most of our actions are unreflective and nonconceptual.⁷ The second argument Dreyfus employs is what I will call *the phenomenological argument*. When acting, I'm not phenomenologically aware of reflecting on my action, or generally planning it, and I'm not typically aware of myself as a subject, self or I. Phenomenologically, I appear to be absorbed in the action and not to be reflecting on my action. Hence, these actions do not require contributions on the part of reflection or the I. Dreyfus uses the phenomenological argument to support the argument from speed since one refutation of the argument from speed would be a fact along the following lines: subjects phenomenologically report that in speedy actions they find themselves reflecting on how to perform the action or attending to their bodily movements. Since reflection is typically absent in quick, speedy or fast actions, and, according to Dreyfus, reflection is required for concepts to be operative in action, the actions must be nonconceptual.

While the exchange between Dreyfus and McDowell has garnered a respectable amount of attention, it is important to recognize the broader philosophical relevance of the debate. To do so I will highlight three ways I see my critical analysis of Dreyfus's views on action bear on philosophical concerns that extend beyond simply an interest in understanding the details of Dreyfus and McDowell's exchange: 1) conceptualism about action, 2) the rationality of know-how, and 3) assumptions about the role speed plays in action.

The question of whether experience is conceptually shaped has for the most part focused on whether perceptual experience requires some conceptual content or the possession of a concept to represent the objects or items of experience. Little attention has been given to whether actions require a conceptual component as well. John McDowell's defense of conceptualism about perception takes Kant's well-known remark that 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are

blind' (A51/B75) as an orienting principle. The extent to which he extends this orienting principle to action has been largely overlooked, yet this extension is evident in *Mind and World*. After restating Kant's remark, McDowell says, 'Similarly, intentions without overt activity are idle, and movements of limbs without concepts are mere happenings, not expressions of agency'.⁸ It is this position Dreyfus takes issue with, since according to his lights, unreflective actions exhibit agency, yet do not require reflection or attention, the type of activities he associates with conceptual activity.

The exchange between Dreyfus and McDowell, while focused on the issue of conceptuality, dances around another central issue at the intersection of philosophy of mind, philosophy of action, and epistemology: how to understand the relationship between knowledge-how and knowledge-that.⁹ Dreyfus's argumentative approach is essentially aimed at defending a view of know-how that finds its origins in the writings of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Gilbert Ryle.¹⁰ Developing on his studies in the phenomenological tradition, Gilbert Ryle framed the issue by famously arguing that know-how is irreducible to know-that.¹¹ For Ryle, this means primarily two things: know-how is not a form of propositional knowledge and if a person knows how to perform some action, then the person has a certain ability. With Stanley and Williamson's more recent foray into the thicket, the issue has gained even more attention.¹² Stanley and Williamson develop a propositional theory of know-how that detaches the entailment of ability from one's knowing how to perform some action. What is unique about the exchange between Dreyfus and McDowell is that their considerations about know-how do not primarily address whether know-how entails ability; instead, the upshot of their exchange concerns the extent to which know-how counts as a rational or conceptual form of understanding. For this reason, the issue of the rationality of unreflective action is at the heart of their debate. Their positions could not be more polarized with Dreyfus defending the view that actions involving know-how are not responsive to reasons, permeated with rationality, or conceptually informed and McDowell defending the position that actions involving know-how are responsive to reasons, permeated with rationality and conceptually informed. I've characterized the exchange as dancing around the issue of know-how since neither Dreyfus nor McDowell exploits this philosophical terminology. The term Dreyfus often uses in the place of know-how is 'intuition' and actions involving know-how he calls 'absorbed coping'.¹³ Another term both Dreyfus and McDowell substitute for know-how in the exchange is 'embodied coping'.

The term 'embodied coping' is worth elaborating upon, particularly with respect to the issue of speed. Dreyfus argues that many speedy actions, especially those performed by experts, are 'mindless' because the attentive or reflective mind is not operative in planning the action in a

specific situation or even during the action.¹⁴ The obvious conclusion would be that these actions are not intelligent, yet, following the lead of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Ryle, Dreyfus understands the intelligence exhibited in speedy actions as a type of embodied intelligence rather than a mental intelligence.¹⁵ Since it is not a mental form of intelligence, he claims the action is mindless. Because the intelligence is not exhibited in mental operations, but bodily movements, the intelligence is an embodied form of coping with what a specific situation requires. Both Dreyfus and McDowell accept that many actions involve forms of embodied coping, however they differ with regard to whether the embodied coping is conceptually shaped and, thereby, rational. The argument from speed I attribute to Dreyfus concludes that speedy embodied copings, or simply speedy actions, are not conceptually informed, but nonconceptual actions.

It is useful to take note of the pervasive role the argument from speed plays in our thoughts about speedy actions. The argument operates in the background of how we often think about action, particularly spur of the moment actions, athletic actions, and many actions that resemble reflexes.¹⁶ The late David Foster Wallace, for instance, assumes the soundness of the argument from speed in his thoughtful essay 'Federer as Religious Experience':

Mario Ancic's first serve, for instance, often comes in around 130 m.p.h. Since it's 78 feet from Ancic's baseline to yours, that means it takes 0.41 seconds for his serve to reach you. This is less than the time it takes to blink quickly, twice.

The upshot is that pro tennis involves intervals of time too brief for deliberate action. Temporally, we're more in the operative range of reflexes, purely physical reactions that bypass conscious thought. And yet an effective return of serve depends on a large set of decisions and physical adjustments that are a whole lot more involved and intentional than blinking, jumping when startled, etc.¹⁷

Wallace's comments exhibit a common thought: some actions occur so quickly mental operations do not inform how the action is performed since there is not enough time for them to get going.¹⁸ However, Wallace is wise enough to recognize that speedy actions are different from reflexes since they appear to involve an intentional or at least some mental component. Wallace is fully aware of the difficulty in reconciling the speed of the action with the mental component that raises the action above the realm of reflex. Stephen Jay Gould reflects upon the same difficulty in a *New York Times* opinion piece about the former Yankees second baseman, Chuck Knoblauch. In remarking on batters Gould says:

The required action simply doesn't grant sufficient time for the sequential processing of conscious decisions . . . Batters just don't have enough time to judge a pitch from its initial

motion and then to decide whether and how to swing. Batters must ‘guess,’ from the depths of their study and experience.¹⁹

I take it that Gould’s colloquial way of putting things, one ‘must “guess,” from the depths of their study and experience’ is another way of saying that batters rely on know-how, or intuition, a bodily activity putatively lacking in mental or conceptual activity. Recent research shows that expert athletes benefit from the requirements speed places on action, though it is far from clear that the benefit results from a lack of conceptual capacities at work or attention in action. Sian Beilock *et al.* report in their study of golf players that:

Novices perform worse under instructions to putt as quickly as possible relative to instructions that do not limit execution time. The opposite is true for experts. Expert performance, at least in the type of sensorimotor task we have studied, is *enhanced* by speed constraints, in comparison with performance when time pressure is not an issue. Novices need time to attend to and control performance. The proceduralized performances of experts do not require, and appear to be adversely affected by, unlimited execution time – perhaps because that time affords them the counterproductive opportunity to explicitly attend to and monitor automated execution processes.²⁰

Beilock *et al.* argue that attention in action affects the action of novices either by decreasing the level of skill or causing the person to choke, yet the opposite is the case with experts. Roy Baumeister reports similar findings when agents perform under pressure.²¹ The situation of pressure forces agents to consciously attend to their actions, which adversely affects their performance by interrupting the automaticity of the action’s execution. There are grounds to question the generality of conclusions in studies like Baumeister’s and Beilock *et al.*’s, since as Barbara Montero suggests, attention to one’s bodily actions, in some cases, increases the quality of one’s performance.²² There is also a problem with the continuity such studies find between the attentive actions and the non-attentive action, but adequately addressing this issue would take us too far afield from the issue of how speed affects conceptuality, a concern not reflected in these studies.²³

In what follows I examine Dreyfus’s view of non-attentive, unreflective actions and the role speed plays in his defense of the claim that embodied copings, a type of unreflective action, are nonconceptual. While my remarks primarily target Dreyfus’s argument from speed, they also address the shortcomings of the phenomenological argument. I reconstruct Dreyfus’s argument from speed in order to show why it fails. I also highlight how Dreyfus employs the phenomenological argument in support of the argument from speed. I then argue that Dreyfus is committed to accepting some minimal role for conceptual activities in his view of

agency, a view that accepts the possibility of agents to self-ascribe actions as their own doing. Since the kinds of actions I discuss are mostly actions occurring in games, in the final section I extend the claim that conceptuality contributes to action by examining actions outside of games.

Before turning to the details of the two arguments, it will be useful to bring into view an example of unreflective action. A case of action Dreyfus often examines is that of a chess Grandmaster playing lightning chess, a form of chess in which all valid moves are carried out within a two minute timeframe.²⁴ Since lightning chess leaves no time for players to contemplate and judge which moves are advantageous, they must unreflectively move their pieces across the board, typically at a speed clocking in under less than a second. Even when they are moving pieces at these great speeds, the Grandmasters are able to play Master level chess. Dreyfus remarks, 'When the Grandmaster is playing lightning chess, as far as he can tell, he is simply responding to the patterns on the board. At this speed he must depend entirely on perception and not at all on analysis and comparison of alternatives'.²⁵ The first sentence of this quotation is supported by Dreyfus's phenomenological argument, while the second sentence employs the argument from speed.²⁶ Since the action occurs so quickly there is no time for the subject to reflect on its actions – the subject's actions are mindless or without reflection – they are absorbed skillful actions. Furthermore, the subject is unaware of reflection or the conceptual activity of the I operating in the action precisely because these activities have dropped out of the experience.²⁷

The argument from speed

There are a few problems with the argument from speed. Before addressing these problems, it is important to clarify the structure of the argument. Dreyfus believes that speed and skill trump the role of conceptuality in action. His idea is that some actions happen at a speed so great that reflection and conceptuality cannot get a footing. Skill, habit, and expertise are enough for these actions to take off. The argument from speed, an argument Dreyfus implicitly employs, concludes that reflective and conceptual actions are slower than non-reflective and nonconceptual actions, and so, speedy actions are nonconceptual.²⁸ The argument can be reconstructed along these lines:

- 1) If action A involves reflection, then action A cannot be speedy.
- 2) If an action involves concepts, then it involves reflection.
- 3) Action A occurs speedily.
- 4) Therefore, action A does not involve concepts.

I think this argument is questionable for a number of reasons.²⁹ First, the argument employs the concept of speed indeterminately. Secondly, it is highly questionable that reflection and concepts are intimately linked in the way Dreyfus assumes them to be linked in the second premise of the argument.³⁰ Thirdly, if I am right about the dubious nature of the second premise, then the conclusion is not licensed. Dreyfus is at best licensed to conclude, as I will argue, that in speedy actions reflection drops out, not conceptuality. If reflection is not involved in some conceptual capacities, and if it is reflection that slows down certain actions, then we do not yet have a reason to think conceptually informed actions are slower than so-called nonconceptual actions.

In the argument from speed the term 'speed' is indeterminate. 'Speedy' and other terms like 'fast' and 'quick' are relative terms.³¹ Speediness is relative to domains of action. What is speedy for mental actions (mentally reciting the alphabet) and brain events (neurological firings) differ from what is speedy for the movement of an arm, turtle, or car. When employing the idea of speed a domain for speedy actions must be fixed. Once the domain is fixed, empirical constraints on speedy and slow movements for various actions within a domain (e.g. reflective actions, unreflective actions, bodily actions) must be specified. The problem is that speed holds, in an indeterminate way, for two domains in Dreyfus's analysis: reflection and bodily action. In *Mind over Machine*, a book Dreyfus coauthored with his brother, Stuart Dreyfus, the indeterminacy is apparent. Dreyfus and Dreyfus write, 'The two highest levels of skill . . . are characterized by a rapid, fluid, involved kind of behavior that bears no apparent similarity to the slow detached reasoning of the problem-solving process'.³² There is an equivocation in the use of speed between two domains of action, reflective and bodily actions. Dreyfus must specify that the speed of reflection is fixed, or can only be *so fast*. He must then show without equivocation that bodily actions can outstrip reflection.

The second problem concerns premise 2, which states, 'if an action involves concepts, then it involves reflection'. Linking concepts and reflection in the way he does gets Dreyfus into some trouble. To bring this trouble into view, some terms must be clarified. There are different, but important notions of 'concept' at work in the premise. Philosophers tend to consider concepts in terms of contents a class of representations have which systematically and in a general way represent features of the world. On an inferentialist view of concepts, for instance, an agent possessing a certain concept is sensitive to and capable of making certain reasonable inferences, based on the content of the concept, which connect to representations containing related contents.³³ The content of the concept 'pawn' is tied to other concepts like chess, chess piece, king, queen, chess move and so on. On this view, it might be thought that it is by virtue of these systematic connections an object is a pawn. In premise 2, the term concept

can refer to either perceptual concepts, 'is white' or 'pawn', or practical concepts. Practical concepts refer to the contents of intentions, e.g. 'moving the king' or 'winning'. Unlike perceptual concepts, practical concepts represent a possible feature of the world that is directly linked to an agent's action. Practical concepts are, as McDowell says, 'concepts of things to do'.³⁴ These concepts are linked to other concepts in systematic ways. For instance, the content of 'capturing the king' is connected to 'winning', 'king', 'playing', and 'object of the game'. Perceptual concepts and practical concepts exhibit distinct ways of understanding features of the world. Perceiving a pawn as a pawn exhibits an understanding, at least, of some aspects of the game of chess. Realizing the practical concept 'capturing the king' also exhibits an understanding of the game, one that, in some cases, involves a more complete understanding of the game than does perceiving a pawn as a pawn. The issue of debate between Dreyfus and McDowell is whether these modes of understanding involved in actions should be considered conceptual when the actions are unreflective and absorbed. The argument from speed I'm attributing to Dreyfus concludes that because some actions are so speedy reflection must drop out and since reflection drops out, so must conceptuality. For Dreyfus, neither perceptual concepts nor practical concepts contribute to the action. The action, according to Dreyfus's lights, exhibit a nonconceptual understanding of the game chess, a mode of understanding philosophers tend to call know-how.

The argument from speed, as it appears in Dreyfus's thinking, contains in premise 2 what I refer to as his *general assumption* about concepts and reflection: for concepts to contribute to experience, reflection must be involved. I call this a general assumption because Dreyfus fails to defend it and he takes the assumption to hold for all concepts.³⁵ My argumentative strategy is to undermine Dreyfus's general assumption by arguing that perceptual concepts can contribute to perceptual experiences independent of reflection. Once the assumption is dispensed with, I turn to examining how practical concepts can contribute to action independent of reflection.

Reflection and perceptual concepts

In the case of perceptual activities in which it is perfectly obvious that concepts are involved, e.g. in seeing a book as a book, no explicit reflection, analysis, or comparison is required. Even if there is a nonconceptual content in the experience, there is, on some views, a conceptual content as well. One might defend a strong version of nonconceptualism by arguing that it is only in judgment that concepts contribute. An even stronger position holds that there are autonomous nonconceptual

experiences that represent the world without any contribution on the part of concepts.³⁶ On the strong version, one is not committed to the claim that judgments involving concepts cannot occur except with reflection. Dreyfus, unfortunately, does not see that strong nonconceptualism has room for the view that the conceptual activity of judgment can occur without explicit comparison and analysis. When Dreyfus refers to reflection, he means the activity of comparing and analyzing information received through perceptual experience.³⁷ Perceptual concepts then become operative in judgment for Dreyfus once this activity of comparing and analyzing occurs. If these activities are not at work, then concepts are not operating in the experience, and the experience is purely nonconceptual. Dreyfus, therefore, accepts strong nonconceptualism about perception. His nonconceptualism, combined with his general assumption about concepts and reflection, results in the view that conceptual activity not only requires judgment, but a form of reflective judgment. Dreyfus is committed to an overly intellectualized view of judgment. What makes Dreyfus's view of judgment intellectualist is that he exaggerates the role of reflection in making judgments. According to the view Dreyfus defends, judgments, by virtue of involving concepts, *also* involve the activity of reflection, which he tends to characterize as the comparing and analyzing of alternatives.

Perceptual experiences and judgments, however, can be conceptual and non-reflective at the same time. Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, for instance, is an argument about how perceptual experience should be conceived as conceptual and non-reflective at the same time. Sellars's view of judgment, in contrast to Dreyfus, does not exaggerate reflection's role in judgment, and so should be seen as an anti-intellectualist view of judgment. The conceptual, inferential activity required for experience becomes, through habit and learning, non-reflective so that it operates at a level under the radar of reflective consciousness.³⁸ The result is that thought, action, and experience is conceptual, having the structure of judgments, but without the conscious activity of comparison and analysis. Perceiving something as a book, for instance, does not involve inferring a conclusion from a comparison and analysis of other possible objects the thing might be. That there is no conscious inferential or reflective activity involved in the experience does not discount the fact that concepts are involved. The point is that if reflection falls away, whether because of speed, habit, skill, or for some other reason, at least when it comes to perceptual concepts we have no reason to claim that concepts are not contributing to the experience. If this is right about perceptual concepts, we can at least reject Dreyfus's general assumption that concepts require reflection, since there are perceptual concept employments where the reflection Dreyfus considers is not required.

Reflection and practical concepts

It is a separate issue whether reflection is necessary for practical concepts to contribute to action. In the case of the Grandmaster we can now grant that in perceiving the pawn there should be no commitment to the operations of reflection for the pawn to be perceived as a pawn. Once we accept this point, I think it becomes clear that the kind of concepts Dreyfus believes fall away in action are primarily practical concepts, since there might be reason to essentially connect practical concepts and reflection. Here is Dreyfus again on the Grandmaster:

A chess Grandmaster facing a position, for example, experiences a compelling sense of the issue and the best move. In a popular kind of chess called lightning chess, the whole game has to be played in two minutes. Under such time pressure, Grandmasters must make some of their moves as quickly as they can move their arms—less than a second a move—and yet they can still play Master level games. When the Grandmaster is playing lightning chess, as far as he can tell, he is simply responding to the patterns on the board. At this speed he must depend entirely on perception and not at all on analysis and comparison of alternatives.

Thus, phenomenology suggests that, although many forms of expertise pass through a stage in which one needs reasons to guide action, after much involved experience, the learner develops a way of coping in which reasons play no role.³⁹

I have already noted that Dreyfus means by reflection the cognitive process involved in the ‘analysis and comparisons of alternatives’. When determining which action to perform during a chess match, an average player reflects on a set of possible actions in such a way that practical concepts are operative in the player’s practical reasoning. A simple case might concern whether it is more advantageous to move the queen in retreat or to sacrifice it strategically. In this case, the practical concept might be ‘move the queen in retreat’ or ‘sacrifice the queen’. These are *practical concepts* because they are concepts of things to do. According to Dreyfus, Grandmasters typically perform actions of these kinds mindlessly and without reflection, yet with expertise. It is important to recognize that when Dreyfus says ‘many forms of expertise pass through a stage in which one needs reasons to guide action’ he is referring to a sequence of stages in the development of skill that involve reflection. He has specified five stages in the acquisition and development of skill: novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise.⁴⁰ It is not until one reaches the level of expertise that reflection fully drops out. About the stage of proficiency Dreyfus notes, ‘The proficient chess player, who is classed a master, can recognize a large repertoire of chess positions. Recognizing almost immediately and without conscious effort the sense of a position, he sets about calculating the move that best achieves his goal. He may, for example, know that he should attack, but he must deliberate

about how best to do so'.⁴¹ Yet at the level of expertise, 'it has been estimated that a master chess player can distinguish roughly 50,000 types of positions'.⁴² As Dreyfus sees it, at the stage of expertise, discrimination or 'recognition . . . is an immediate intuitive response'.⁴³ Dreyfus does not explicitly call the expert actions nonconceptual when outlining these stages. That he thinks of the activity involved in discrimination and recognition as 'immediate' and 'intuitive' reveals that he believes the discrimination involved in perception and action lacks conceptual mediation.

In order for the idea of speed to play a role in Dreyfus's argument, the activity of reflection must occur for a specific duration of time in a singular action. When one's skills advance to a level of expertise, this stage of reflection drops out, which means the actual time required for carrying out one and the same action decreases. For example, a young chess player might need to analyze and compare the pros and cons of each move prior to moving a chess piece, whereas a Grandmaster immediately sees where to move a piece, much like how when walking in a crowd we immediately see, without deliberation or reflection, where to walk so to avoid running into people. While for the less advanced player an action might take a few seconds, for the Grandmaster the same action can be carried out in less than one second since the stage of reflection has dropped out.

In the Grandmaster case of unreflective action, although a practical concept may not be realized in reflection or explicit judgments, the agent may not even be fully conscious of the contribution of a concept at each moment in the action, a practical concept is, I argue, a structural component of the action, one that distinguishes it from 'mere happenings' as McDowell puts it. Practical concepts do sometimes slip away from one's awareness.⁴⁴ To see this point, it is helpful to turn away from the Grandmaster example for a moment, and examine more mundane actions. You might, for instance, walk into the kitchen, open the refrigerator, immersed in your actions and without reflection. In front of the fridge you stand confused about why you approached the refrigerator in the first place. Typically, after a few seconds of reflection you remember you wanted a cold soda. The practical concept informed your action by being realized in action, although your attention was not directed at it. You might on a different occasion approach the fridge unreflectively and remove a soda without even attending to what you are doing. Anthony Marcel provides an important distinction, developed within the context of some reflections on our unawareness of intentions, that helps to clarify the relationship of practical concepts to actions and intentions. In recognizing that intentions are often forgotten or implicit in 'temporally extended actions', Marcel makes a distinction between an awareness of intentions and awareness of the content of intentions:

In immersed ongoing action, where we are not in a detached, self-reflective state, we may not only have a general sense of acting intentionally but be aware of each intention. But we are often unaware of the specific content of each intention. When focused, in sport or a craft, the expert acts intentionally but may be unaware of the specifics of tactical intentions, for example, in tennis whether one intends to play a drop volley or a drive volley even when the postural aspects of one's approach to the net is a selective preparation for one rather than the other. Indeed, this is why even when such experts sincerely claim unawareness of their intention, their opponent can anticipate the shot, though the opponent himself may not know how he did so.⁴⁵

I find Marcel's point here congenial to my general thesis that reflection is not required for the realization of practical concepts and to my final point that concepts are structural components of actions. Marcel's point is that an awareness of a tactical intention need not be an occurrent item of reflection for it to shape or inform the action's overall goal. When it comes to actions, they have intentions, the content of which is a practical concept, a concept of a thing to do. If the intention does not require attention or reflection, then neither does the content of that intention. One can grant an unawareness of intentions and their contents, but in doing so we are not forced to admit they fail to play a role in the action itself.

Returning to chess, there are with each move various practical concepts. Moving a chess piece during a game of chess might involve two practical concepts. The first-order practical concept involves the physical moving of the piece to the position the piece should land on the board, say moving the pawn one space forward. The second-order practical concept might be accomplishing checkmate. If the last practical concept in no way informs the moves and actions of the players it is not clear the action counts as an action in chess; that is, the action does not exhibit an understanding of the immediate features of the player's world. The second-order practical concept need not be an occurrent object of reflection to be realized. Regardless of whether the agent reflectively thinks about a practical concept, the pawn qua pawn, or the rules that hold for pawns, the practical concept must inform the action, and it must be tied to the concept 'pawn' and the rules. Without the conceptual framework of the game binding possible actions and the normatively licensed practical concepts realized in the game, without some general cognizance of this framework, one's actions would not exhibit an understanding of the features that make up one's immediate world.

The phenomenological argument

The dubious premise in Dreyfus's argument from speed is the second premise, which assumes the realization of concepts requires reflection.

Dreyfus often appeals to agents' phenomenological descriptions of their action-experiences. Agents do not generally report an awareness of reflection in expert and speedy actions. Since Dreyfus accepts the general assumption about concepts and reflection, he takes these phenomenological reports as reason to reject conceptualism about action. Dreyfus's phenomenological argument, then, is meant to discount the contributions of reflection and concepts in action. Dreyfus does not only deny conceptualism about action, he also concludes that the subject, I, ego-pole or self falls out altogether as well, since judgment, comparison and synthesis, the activities of the I are simply not required.⁴⁶ As he writes, 'when one is in the flow as athletes say – there is no experience of this body as *mine* but simply the experience of ongoing coping . . . I then retroactively attach an "I think" to the coping and take responsibility for my actions. But in the experience itself no "I" was present'.⁴⁷ In this quotation, as in the above quotation about the Grandmaster, Dreyfus appeals to the phenomenologies of agents, that is, to agents' descriptions of what it's like to undergo a certain experience. When it comes to reflection, there might be something right about these phenomenological descriptions, at least in some cases. However, I don't think a phenomenological argument of this kind can be ushered in support of Dreyfus's nonconceptualist view of action, since if it can be used to undermine the role of concepts, it can also be used to discount the role of skills. When I unreflectively act, I have no phenomenological awareness of the contribution of skills, but this does not license me to discount their general contribution. Dreyfus employs the phenomenological argument in support of the argument from speed. Since phenomenological reports tell us reflection is not occurring in expert actions, then on the basis of Dreyfus general assumption about the connection between reflection and concepts, he believes he is licensed to conclude concepts are not operative in the action.

The phenomenological argument runs into its own trouble insofar as it commits what can be termed *the phenomenological fallacy*. The phenomenological fallacy is to make negative existential claims (e.g. there is no x) when all that is licensed by the method are positive descriptive assertions about appearances or manifestations in consciousness or experience.⁴⁸ Dreyfus makes the move from 'it does not appear phenomenologically' to 'it is not there, operative, or does not contribute'. Dreyfus's phenomenological analysis does not allow him to move to a level of generality where the conditions contributing to the possibility of absorbed action in general can be specified, conditions that designate some role for conceptuality and the I. The move to a further level of generality would consist in recognizing what does appear in a phenomenological description of experience, and then specifying at a more general level of analysis not available to phenomenological description the conditions required for the possibility of that phenomenon. I believe we should be careful in drawing conclusions

based on our phenomenological analyses. While they are often suggestive of how things might hang together, they are far from conclusive.

A relevant case in which Dreyfus employs the phenomenological argument and the argument from speed together is the case of Chuck Knoblauch, former second baseman for the Yankees:

As second baseman for the New York Yankees, Knoblauch was so successful he was voted best infielder of the year, but one day, rather than simply fielding a hit and throwing the ball to first base, it seems he stepped back and took up a 'free, distanced orientation' towards the ball and how he was throwing it – to the mechanics of it, as he put it. After that, he couldn't recover from his former absorption and often – though not always – threw the ball to first base erratically – once into the face of a spectator.

Interestingly, even after he seemed unable to resist stepping back and being mindful, Knoblauch could still play brilliant baseball in difficult situations – catching a hard-hit ground ball and throwing it to first faster than thought. What he couldn't do was field an easy routine grounder directly to second base, *because that gave him time to think* before throwing to first.⁴⁹

Knoblauch, according to Dreyfus, when catching a hard grounder has no time for the reflective and conceptual activities of the mind to turn on. When performing the action successfully he is not aware of reflecting, yet when the action is unsuccessful, he is aware of reflection. For some reason, when his reflective activities do work, they interfere with his abilities.⁵⁰ We are given no reason to think that conceptual capacities ought to diminish the possibility of successful action, but that in some cases reflection diminishes success.⁵¹ The fact that one can even suggest some capacities diminish success is to recognize that a practical concept is a structural component of the action. That something can go wrong, not according to one's intention, not how things were conceived is to recognize a practical concept involved in the action.

One important objection to my claim that Dreyfus commits the phenomenological fallacy of inferring from the nonappearance of something to its nonexistence is that he never actually makes such an inference.⁵² His phenomenological argument, according to the objection, aims to place the onus on the conceptualist to argue that concepts are necessary in action. The burden-shifting move seems reasonable given that phenomenology fails to report the operation of such capacities. A possible response would be to shift the burden back by recognizing that in perceptual experience concepts operate in experience but fail to be phenomenologically salient, yet we do not take ourselves to be justified in inferring the nonexistence of these concepts. I take it such a move is unproductive. There are two points I want to make in response to this objection. First, Dreyfus does indeed make the kind of inference the phenomenological fallacy suggests is troubling. The inference is on exhibition when he writes: 'Thus, phenomenology suggests that, although many forms of expertise pass through a stage

in which one needs reasons to guide action, after much involved experience, the learner develops ways of coping in which reasons play no role'.⁵³ In this case, Dreyfus takes phenomenological reports to license the claim by experts that reasons are absent. Secondly, before accepting a burden-shifting move there is reason to question the reliability of experts' phenomenological reports, the reliability of which is required to shift the burden onto the conceptualist. Dreyfus often stresses the point that a phenomenology of expert performance reveals that conceptual awareness interrupts the successful performance of quick actions. The idea is that when experts perform skillful, speedy actions they are not attending or reflecting on what the situation requires, but letting know-how, a type of procedural knowledge, control their performance. In contrast, when experts perform badly, they are aware of the reflection or attention operating just before or during the realization of the action. Dreyfus's point depends on the reliability of a kind of introspective phenomenology experts have of their movements and the appropriateness of movements to what is required by the particular situation. Beilock and Carr report, however, that experts suffer from 'expertise-induced amnesia'.⁵⁴ The idea here is that performances operating with declarative knowledge (particularly those of novices who rely on know-that or heuristics) in specific situations are recalled in greater detail than skilled performance controlled by procedural knowledge, or know-how. Since procedural knowledge or know-how is not taken to be propositionally structured like know-that, it is, as Rob Gray puts it, 'by definition less accessible to verbal recall than declarative knowledge structures used by novices'.⁵⁵ The phenomenon of expertise-induced amnesia, therefore, gives us reason to question the reliability of experts' phenomenologies.

It is important to remember that the kind of unreflective actions Dreyfus finds interesting are not reflexes, ticks, missteps, falls etc., but the meaningful actions humans carry out daily, exhibit an understanding of their world and situation, and which they self-ascribe and take responsibility for. To take responsibility for an action, one must be capable of individuating the action as a particular action. Some actions may not be rule bound, yet there will nonetheless be success-conditions and individuation conditions that are normatively established and required for an action to count as a certain kind of action. Whatever these conditions turn out to be, they at least designate a minimal level of practical conceptuality operative in action and, thus, the possibility that a particular action can be self-ascribed as a particular action. Without acknowledging the role practical concepts play in the individuation and discrimination of actions, I do not see how Dreyfus can account for the possibility of self-ascribing an action as one's own. Dreyfus recognizes as much when he writes, 'the phenomenologists can't account for what makes it possible for us to step back and observe' or, as I have put it, to self-ascribe an action.⁵⁶ If there is not some

minimal mindedness during the action, and the action is truly mindless, on what grounds can I take the action to be mine? Without some minimal form of mindedness how is it possible for me to immediately recognize an action as my own or as a particular action?

What I have argued is that actions are conceptually structured. That actions are informed by concepts is to recognize that concepts are involved in action. For an action to be informed by concepts does not require explicit reflection during the experience. Dreyfus might be right that at certain levels in the development of skill, reflection on different practical concepts might be needed, and that it is possible in some cases for this act of reflection to eventually drop out. What must be recognized is that when, in some cases, reflection drops out, this does not necessarily mean perceptual or practical concepts drop out, since in the case of perceptual concepts there is no necessary link to reflection, and in the case of practical concepts, the concept is constitutive of the action itself. Premise 2 then must be rejected.

Concluding remarks

Before concluding I want to examine a case that does not rely on the framework of games in order to establish that actions involve a minimal form of conceptuality. In an essay criticizing Searle's view of intention in action, Dreyfus remarks:

Once we see that the role of an intention in action is simply to trigger absorbed coping, the question arises whether one always needs an intention in action to initiate absorbed coping. Phenomenology then reveals that there are many comportments that do not have success conditions but only conditions of improvement. For example, the distance one stands from one's fellows in any particular culture depends on being socialised into what feels appropriate. Sometimes, this sense of getting the appropriate distance is a part of an action with success conditions, as when someone trying to have a conversation stands the appropriate distance so as to have one, but sometimes, as when several people find themselves together in an elevator and each simply moves to the distance from the others that feels comfortable, no intention in action seems to be required to initiate the bodily movements involved. In general, we don't have intentions to comport ourselves in socially acceptable ways.⁵⁷

In general, many people, including 'outcasts', 'introverts', and 'geeks' do form such intentions sometimes via reflection. Acknowledging this fact does not get to the heart of the matter. The issue is whether concepts inform our actions and behavior when we behave in socially acceptable ways. If we can locate practical concepts that are linked to other conceptual contents and which contribute to the behavior of agents in situations like standing in an elevator, then we will have established the minimal form of conceptuality I argued contributes to action.

What is misleading about the elevator example is that when we bring into view the socially acceptable ways of acting in an elevator independent of what counts as socially acceptable in other contexts or situations then the content contributing to our actions might appear to be nonconceptual. When Dreyfus says success conditions are absent, and in their place we find only improvement conditions, he is attempting to locate a nonconceptual element contributing to the action, an intuitive feeling of sorts where we say it just feels right. There is not, when standing in a crowded elevator, a rule we apply that specifies, for instance, each person should stand a distance of two inches from each other. We do just feel it out. In order to adjust, we might consider that we are 'too close' to another person. A conceptualist might argue that 'too close' is a concept operating in our actions. Against this point, a nonconceptualist might highlight the spatial content of 'too close' and, on this basis, take it to be nonconceptual. Concerning the issue of spatial proximity in socially acceptable behavior, on Dreyfus's view, an aim towards improvement contributes to experience. For improvement to play a role, the content 'too close' or some spatial content like it, whether conceptual or nonconceptual, must be involved in determining when improvement is required. For the content to inform an experience in socially acceptable ways, then there must be occasions where being close is not socially acceptable. Knowing that when standing in a standard sized, crowded elevator it is socially acceptable to stand extremely close to other people in the elevator requires knowing that it is not socially acceptable to stand extremely close to a person when only two people are in the elevator, and knowing that there are other activities like playing a one-on-one basketball game where it is socially acceptable to stand extremely close to another person. The norms of etiquette are organized as systematically structured inferential connections.

Dreyfus's point is not, on the face of it, about the norms of etiquette. Instead, he is concerned with an absorbed agent who non-reflectively feels out the right position. Improving one's position happens without reflection, yet the movement requires improvement conditions like 'too close' that may have a nonconceptual content. My point is that feeling out whether we are too close requires awareness of the actual situation one finds oneself in, for example, standing in an elevator and not, for instance, playing basketball. Whether involving reflection, this awareness is conceptually structured around general norms of etiquette. To put it in a rough and ready way, 'too close' piggybacks on a broader conceptual frame that contributes to action.

Dreyfus's view of action is important because it offers a novel interpretation of unreflective action, a mode of human comportment often overlooked. While much of human action is unreflective, Dreyfus has not defended the view that these actions are nonconceptual in a satisfying manner. While my primary aim was to establish the dubious nature of the

argument from speed, I have also pointed out deficiencies in his general phenomenological approach. My aim was not to discount phenomenology, but to insist that the elimination of the conceptual need not follow from our phenomenological insights. My main point, however, was to show how concepts contribute to action independent of reflection. Finally, I suggested a way of considering actions as conceptually structured in a manner not unlike the architecture of thought.⁵⁸

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NOTES

¹ The debate between Dreyfus and McDowell begins with Dreyfus's 2005 APA Presidential Address (Dreyfus, 2005) in which he takes up McDowell's conceptualist views of perception and action developed in McDowell, 1994. The issues Dreyfus raised in his address were debated by Dreyfus and McDowell in the pages of *Inquiry* Vol. 50. Dreyfus has followed up elsewhere, see Dreyfus, 2007c. Two responses to Dreyfus and McDowell have appeared (Montero, 2010 and Rietveld, 2010), and a forthcoming edited volume is expected (Scheer, 2011).

² Dreyfus, 2007b, p. 373. Erik Rietveld points to various terms used to capture the phenomenon of being in the flow or absorption characteristic of unreflective action: 'Actions of this type get pigeonholed in various ways: "pre-reflective", "non-representational", "intuitive", "habitual", "instinctive", "unreflective bodily coping", "impulsive", "non-propositional", "tacit", "pre-thematic", "involved skillful coping", "know-how", etc' (Rietveld, 2008, p. 3).

³ Dreyfus, 2007b, p. 374. Dreyfus here speaks of the contributions of the I to action. In a similar vein, Dreyfus speaks of concepts, the I, or reasons being 'involved' or not involved in actions. See, for instance, Dreyfus 2007c, pp. 104–105.

⁴ Dreyfus, 2007b, p. 371.

⁵ Dreyfus, 2007c, p. 102.

⁶ McDowell, 2007a.

⁷ There are, indeed, other arguments against nonconceptual content discussed in the debate. McDowell defends his position from an argument from animals (McDowell, 2007a, p. 343), Dreyfus raises a fineness of grain objection (Dreyfus, 2007a, p. 358), and McDowell finds Dreyfus's argument from the body unconvincing (McDowell, 2007b, p. 368). I discuss the argument from speed, instead of these others, in part because it does not receive the attention it deserves, and it plays a significant role in Dreyfus's thinking about concepts, detachment, reflection, and action.

⁸ McDowell, 1994, p. 89.

⁹ I write 'know-how' and know-that' in place of 'knowledge-how' and 'knowledge-that'.

¹⁰ Dreyfus acknowledges a debt to Ryle in Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986 and to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty throughout his corpus, including the exchange between him and McDowell (Dreyfus, 2005, 2007a,b,c).

¹¹ See both Ryle, 1971d and Ryle, 1949. Ryle's 1929 review of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Ryle, 1971c) as well as his 1932 essay (Ryle, 1971a) examining Husserl's phenomenological developments, reveal a close study of the phenomenological movement. In 1959, he even characterizes his *The Concept of Mind* as a study in phenomenology (Ryle, 1971b).

¹² Stanley and Williamson, 2001. Noë (2005) defends the view that know-how entails ability against Stanley and Williamson, while Bengson and Moffett (2007, Forthcoming; Bengson, Moffett and Wright, 2009) develop a modified position that resembles in its conclusion points I make here about the relationship between know-how, understanding, and action. Bengson and Moffett argue that know-how involves a form of conceptual understanding. Bengson and Moffett term their position ‘objectualist intellectualism: to know how to act is to understand a way of so acting, where such objectual understanding involves grasping a (possibly implicit) conception which is poised to guide the successful, intentional performance of such an act – hence, to possess a cognitive state with a distinctively practical character’ (Bengson and Moffett, Forthcoming).

¹³ In his book, *Mind Over Machine*, co-authored with his brother Stuart Dreyfus, Dreyfus and Dreyfus stipulate that intuition and know-how are synonymous for them: ‘We we speak of intuition or know-how, we are referring to the understanding that effortlessly occurs upon seeing similarities with previous experiences. We shall use “intuition” and “know-how” as synonymous, although a dictionary would distinguish them, assigning “intuition” to purely cognitive activities and “know-how” to the fluid performance of a bodily skill’ (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986, p. 28). They also write that ‘intuition or know-how, as we understand it, is neither wild guessing nor supernatural inspiration, but the sort of ability we all use all the time as we go about our everyday tasks’ (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986, p. 29). In the exchange with McDowell, Dreyfus uses the same term ‘intuition’ to characterize expertise: ‘In the case of tactical rules, however, the master may make moves that are entirely intuitive and contrary to any preconceived plan’ (Dreyfus, 2005, p. 54). Use of ‘intuition’ in this way is not uncommon in the psychology literature on expertise and expert knowledge. See for instance Gobet and Chassy, 2009.

¹⁴ Dreyfus writes for instance, ‘Where I differ from McDowell is that I hold that situation-specific mindedness, far from being a pervasive and essential feature of human being, is the result of a specific transformation of our pervasive *mindless* absorbed coping’ (Dreyfus, 2007a, p. 353, emphasis his).

¹⁵ The type of intelligence or knowledge exhibited in speedy actions is know-how, and for these figures it is a mistake to conceive of this practical intelligence in mental terms. Ryle writes, for instance, ‘In judging that someone’s performance is or is not intelligent, we have, as has been said, in a certain manner to look beyond the performance itself. For there is no particular overt or inner performance which could not have been accidentally executed by an idiot, a sleepwalker, a man in panic, absence of mind or delirium or even, sometimes, by a parrot. But in looking beyond the performance itself, we are not trying to pry into some hidden counterpart performance enacted on the supposed secret stage of the agent’s inner life. We are considering abilities and propensities of which this performance was an actualisation’ (Ryle, 1949, p. 45). Heidegger’s discussion of ‘readiness-to-hand’ [*Zuhandenheit*] and our everyday ‘dealings’ [*Umgang*] with equipment [*Zeug*] are relevant to how Dreyfus understands embodied intelligence or knowledge. For instance, Heidegger writes, ‘The Being of those entities which we encounter as closes to us can be exhibited phenomenologically if we take our clue everyday Being-in-the-world, which we also call our “dealings” in the world and *with* entities within-the-world. Such dealings have already dispersed themselves into manifold ways of concern. The kind of dealing which is closest to us is as we have shown, not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of “knowledge” [*Erkenntnis*]’ (Heidegger, 1962, p. 95/H66). Heidegger carefully avoids choosing mentalistic terms like ‘consciousness’ [*Bewußtsein*]. He prefers terms like *Verhalten*, which is often translated as ‘comportment’, but could be translated as ‘behavior’ as well. However, when Heidegger refers to our dealings or handling of entities in the world as a kind of knowledge he calls it *Erkenntnis*, which is

typically considered a type of cognitive act of knowing. That Heidegger thinks of dealings as *Erkenntnis* and not as an ability or skill should position us to question Dreyfus's claim that Heidegger thinks of the type of knowledge involved in know-how as a nonconceptual or non-cognitive type of knowledge (Dreyfus, 2005, p. 51 and note 26). For Merleau-Ponty, motor intentionalities enacted through what he calls the 'habit-body' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 95) are a form of embodied intelligence.

¹⁶ In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle writes, 'Actions we do on the spur of the moment are said to be voluntary, but not to accord with decision' (Aristotle, 2000, 111b). As I understand this passage, Aristotle is making a claim about actions that occur quickly. An instance of such an action might be a pitcher catching a hard line drive in the spur of the moment, or hastily. One might expect the pitcher to duck, thus avoiding the ball, and allowing the second baseman to field it and toss it to first. Such an action is quickly realized, but without decision, since in the moment there might not be enough time to make a reasoned decision or one jettisons the need of reflective decision-making to act spontaneously.

¹⁷ Wallace, 2006.

¹⁸ There is an ongoing discussion about how long it takes consciousness to become aware of some event. The case of tennis turns out to be useful. While some have concluded that consciousness does not have time to become aware of the tennis ball when served at the speed Wallace discusses (See J. Gray, 2004), others have disputed the evidence behind such conclusions (Montero, 2010). One way of understanding the position I defend is that the issue of whether consciousness has time to become aware of a fast-moving tennis ball is orthogonal to the issue of conceptualism in action.

¹⁹ Gould, 2000.

²⁰ Beilock *et al.*, 2004, p. 378.

²¹ Baumeister, 1984.

²² Montero, 2010. See for example her discussion of dance.

²³ Baumeister and Beilock *et al.* take for granted that there is a continuity between attentive actions and non-attentive actions such that it is right to consider them the same type of action tokened twice, but of different performance quality. One reason to think that they are not the same type is that in attentive actions there is a mental intentional act not at work in the non-attentive action. If intention individuates actions according to action type, then it is not clear they are licensed to conclude the attentive action is a degraded tokening of one type of action. One might reasonably accept there are two types of action involved, an attentive and non-attentive action. Under such a description, it is misleading to say that attention interrupted the execution of a type of action, since there are two distinct types of action each of which can be performed badly or skillfully.

²⁴ Dreyfus, 2005, p. 54.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Here is another passage that suggests Dreyfus is leaning on the argument from speed: 'the speed of lightning chess suggests rather that the master isn't following rules at all' (Dreyfus, 2005, p. 55). Rules in this case do not refer to the rules of the game, but to practical concepts, or concepts of things to do. I discuss practical concepts below.

²⁷ For another example consider one provided in Webber, 2002: 'A ball heads for Hubert at breakneck speed. His racket shoots out to meet it, perpendicular to the court as it crosses the ball's trajectory at exactly the right moment, hitting the ball firmly and squarely. Perfect; an unanswerable return. Yet ask Hubert about the speed and trajectory of that oncoming ball, and the best angle and motion of the racket to respond to it, and he cannot answer you.

He used to think about such things as a beginner, but now he is expert he does not. He simply feels his arm and racket respond appropriately'. This example is used by Webber to motivate his claim, in defense of Dreyfus, that actions lack conceptuality, though they do require on Webber's view nonconceptual representations. Webber appeals to phenomenological considerations, which I will call into question below, to support the argument from speed.

²⁸ The argument is central to many of the claims Dreyfus makes in the debate with McDowell. It also appears in his earlier work on skill. For instance, in *Mind Over Machine* Dreyfus claims, 'The two highest levels of skill . . . are characterized by a rapid, fluid, involved kind of behavior that bears no apparent similarity to the slow detached reasoning of the problem-solving process'.

²⁹ Conversations with James Dow were helpful in formulating the argument.

³⁰ Thanks to James Dow and Alex Madva for helping me see the divergent ways Dreyfus and McDowell link concepts and reflection. The issue with Dreyfus is that conceptually informed actions must involve reflection in the moment or occurrently, whereas for McDowell, the concept involved must be available to reflection, reason, or in responding to reasons (See McDowell, 2009, p. 130).

³¹ See Unger, 1971 for a discussion of relative and absolute terms.

³² Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986, p. 27.

³³ In what follows I discuss concepts within a broadly inferentialist framework. The points I make about reflection hold independent of any inferentialist commitments about the structure of concepts.

³⁴ McDowell, 2007b, p. 367.

³⁵ McDowell signals this assumption in the debate with Dreyfus when he says of Dreyfus that he '[assumes] that to involve reason in action could only be to apply to the situation in which one acts some content fully specifiable in detachment from the situation' (McDowell, 2007a, p. 340).

³⁶ See Peacocke, 1992; Bermúdez, 1994; and Peacocke, 1994 and 2002.

³⁷ That this is typically what Dreyfus means by reflection can be gleaned from how he negatively characterizes unreflective actions. One instance of such a characterization is found in a passage I've already noted: 'When the Grandmaster is playing lightning chess, as far as he can tell, he is simply responding to the patterns on the board. At this speed he must depend entirely on perception and not at all on analysis and comparison of alternatives' (Dreyfus, 2005, p. 54). A response to patterns is not mediated by an activity of reflection that analyzes, for instance, the worthiness of the action or other worthy possibilities.

³⁸ Sellars, 1997.

³⁹ Dreyfus, 2005, p. 53.

⁴⁰ Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986, ch. 1; Dreyfus, 1990.

⁴¹ Dreyfus, 1990, p. 8

⁴² Dreyfus, 1990, p. 9.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ See Marcel, 2003, pp. 60ff for an interesting analysis of this phenomenon. Marcel does not use the term 'practical concept', although he is concerned with the unawareness of intentions and the content of intentions. He highlights a number of ways in which we are unaware, not conscious, or not attentive to our intentions in action that are relevant to unreflective actions: 1) unawareness of subgoals involved in reaching an intended end; 2) intentions in some cases are forgotten when the realization of action occurs over an extended period of time; 3) unawareness of an intention's content or tactical intentions (Marcel, 2003, pp. 60–61).

⁴⁵ Marcel, 2003, p. 61.

⁴⁶ J. G. Fichte argues for a defensible minimalist view of pre-reflective awareness that claims all consciousness involves some form of self-consciousness, so any actions I am capable of being aware of require the activity of the I. On Fichte's view, without such a form of self-awareness operative in action, one could not immediately and non-inferentially self-ascribe the action as one's own: 'I cannot take a single step, I cannot move my hand or foot, without the intellectual intuition of my self-consciousness in these actions. It is only through such an intuition that I know that *I* do this. Only in this way am I able to distinguish my own acting (and, within this acting, my own self) from the encountered object of this acting. Every person who ascribes an activity to himself appeals to this intuition' (Fichte, 1994, p. 86).

⁴⁷ Dreyfus, 2007a, p. 356.

⁴⁸ Place in (Place, 1956) refers to a phenomenological fallacy in which there is a 'mistake of supposing that when the subject describes his experience, when he describes how things look, sound, smell, taste, or feel to him, he is describing the literal properties of objects and events on a peculiar sort of internal cinema or television screen'. This fallacy differs from the fallacy I'm pointing to in the work of Dreyfus. Dreyfus's use of phenomenology stems from the technical methods developed by Husserl and Heidegger and is based on a critique of the kind of representationalist position Place accuses of committing the fallacy. Furthermore, the fallacy Place refers to is making positive claims, where I'm claiming the fallacious move is to negative claims. In linking Dreyfus's use of phenomenology to Heidegger, it is worth recalling Heidegger's programmatic remarks on the phenomenological method in his 'Introduction' to *Being and Time*, especially the section on 'The Phenomenological Method of Investigation' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 49/H27). In these remarks Heidegger stresses Husserl's maxim calling for a return 'to the things themselves'. He then goes on to suggest that phenomenology involves '[letting] that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself. This is the formal meaning of that branch of research which calls itself "phenomenology"' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 58/H34).

⁴⁹ Dreyfus, 2007a, p. 354.

⁵⁰ There is also a second issue I do not intend to address which has to do with the claim that thinking disrupts activity. That reflection interferes, I would argue, is a contingent fact about Knoblauch's case, and not a general fact holding for all cases. It is perfectly imaginable that Knoblauch could have acquired the skill to deftly field balls when reflection on his activities is employed. My intention is only to highlight that Dreyfus connects thinking about acting with the passage of time needed for reflection and conceptuality to contribute to action.

⁵¹ One reason we are not given a reason is because Dreyfus just takes this to be obvious: 'Such stepping back is intermittent in our lives and, in so far as we take up such a "free, distanced orientation", we are no longer able to act in the world. I grant that, when we are absorbed in everyday skillful coping, we have the *capacity* to step back and reflect but I think it should be obvious that we cannot exercise that capacity without disrupting our coping. Moreover, even when we step back and reflect involved coping is necessarily still going on in the background' (Dreyfus, 2007a, p. 354).

⁵² I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this type of objection.

⁵³ Dreyfus, 2005, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Beilock and Carr, 2001.

⁵⁵ R. Gray, 2004, p. 43.

⁵⁶ Dreyfus, 2007a, p. 364. What Dreyfus has in mind is the ability of a subject to move from an ego-less, pre-reflective mode of awareness to a reflective mode in which the subject

can take an objective stance toward the ‘world of facts, features, and data’ (ibid.). In skillful absorbed coping, the objective features of the world fall into the background and are not considered, thematized or judged by the agent. Heidegger’s well-known example of the hammer being ready-to-hand captures this point. But what appears to elude Dreyfus is how we are to characterize the transition from absorption to detached reflection. I am concluding that he has the same problem when it comes to our own actions. What the phenomenologist cannot do is characterize how agents move from egoless and nonconceptual absorption to the more reflective standpoint in which facts about one’s own absorbed actions are judged.

⁵⁷ Dreyfus, 2000, p. 300. See also Webber, 2002 for a defense of the role of nonconceptual representations as contributing to the general experience and ability exemplified by Dreyfus’s elevator example.

⁵⁸ The earliest version of this paper was presented at the University of Cologne. Thanks to Krisitina Engelhardt and Dietmar Heidemann for inviting me to present my research. I’m indebted here to the many conversations I’ve had with James Dow over the years on the debate between McDowell and Dreyfus and McDowell’s work in general. Thanks also to the comments and encouragement from Alice Crary, J. M. Bernstein, Frederick Neuhouser, Erik Rietveld, Zed Adams, Janna van Grunsven, Joe Tinguely, Alex Madva, Erin Prus, Kathy Ryan, and my colleagues at Xavier who participated in the Fall 2010 philosophy reading group.

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