Intentionally Doing and Intentionally Not Doing

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Here are a couple of things I did yesterday: I turned on my computer and in reaching for the phone I knocked a stack of papers off my desk. The first is something I did intentionally. The second is not something I did intentionally. Most things we do are things we do intentionally.

Here are a couple of things I did not do yesterday: I did not open an attachment to a certain unsolicited email message that appeared in my Inbox and I did not type the word "Washington" backward. The first is something I intentionally did not do. The second is not something I intentionally did not do. Most of the things we do not do are not things we intentionally do not do.

I wish here to address the following two questions. (1) What must be true of a particular action for it to be one that the agent performed intentionally? (2) What must be true of an instance of not performing a certain action for it to be a case where the agent intentionally did not perform that action?

I.

First, then, what makes an action intentional? I will restrict attention to body-involving actions, that is, ones that are or involve voluntary exertion of the
body. In my view, every voluntary bodily exertion involves a simple mental action causing the body to exert, but I do not wish to assume that controversial view here. Later, when addressing the question of what it takes for a causally and circumstantially simple, or basic, action to be intentional, I will consider what difference it makes whether basic actions are taken to be voluntary bodily exertions or mental volitions. A causally or circumstantially complex, or non-basic, action consists of a simpler action plus that action's causing a certain result or its occurring in a certain circumstance. Thus my turning on my computer consisted of my pressing a certain button on the computer plus that action's causing the computer to turn on. My pressing the button was also a non-basic action and it consisted in my exerting a certain force with my hand and finger and that action's causing the depression of the button. Or, to take a different sort of example, my voting for the motion consisted of my thrusting my hand in the air in the circumstance that the chair had just uttered the words "All those in favor please raise their hand."

We should restrict our attention to descriptions of actions that are neutral in that they imply neither that the action was intentional nor that it wasn't. The action descriptions used in the preceding paragraph—"pressing a certain button on the computer," "turning on the computer," "thrusting my hand in the air in the circumstance that the chair had just uttered . . . ," "voting for the motion"—are all neutral in this sense. (Examples of non-neutral action descriptions are "calling for help," "beckoning," "searching the drawer for the key," as well as, of course, ones like "intentionally turning on the computer" and "unintentionally voting for the motion.")

Our question can be put this way: Given that a statement of the form 'S V-ed at T' gives a neutral description of a particular action of S's, what informative, general condition can we formulate which will be such that if we conjoin the proposition that S V-ed at T the result will be equivalent to the proposition that S intentionally V-ed at T? In other words, given the schema

\[ \text{S intentionally V-ed at T if and only if S V-ed at T and Q} \]

what replacement for Q will yield a schema such that, if the variables in the schema are replaced in such a way that "S V-ed at T" neutrally describes a particular action, then the resulting instantiation of the schema must be a truth?

I believe that the most elegant answer to this question, the most elegant formulation of Q, is likely to take a recursive form, a form that takes advantage of the fact that actions are either simple (i.e., basic) or complex (composed of a simpler action plus a consequence or circumstance). Taking this approach, our task will be twofold: first, to specify a relation such that when a complex action, S's V-ing at T, has this relation to a simpler component action, S's A-ing at T, and the simpler action was intentional, then the more complex action was intentional; and, second, to specify a condition necessary and sufficient for a simple action to be intentional.

1.1

To the first task: Given that S V-ed by A-ing, how must S's V-ing be related to S's A-ing for S's V-ing to be intentional provided that S's A-ing was? What relation between the simpler and the more complex action will convey the property of being intentional from the former to the latter?

A plausible claim—which has come to be known as the "Simple View"—is that an essential part of this relation is that S intended of her A-ing that she would thereby V. Plausible though it may seem at first, this claim is wrong.

One sort of case that shows it to be wrong is one where an agent knowingly caused a harm but did not intend to cause the harm: the complex action, V-ing, was causing some harm by performing the simpler action, A-ing, and the agent knew that by A-ing she would cause the harm but did not intend of her A-ing that she would thereby cause the harm. One familiar example is that of a bomber pilot who wishes to destroy an enemy munitions factory by dropping a large bomb on it but knows that if he does so he will also cause serious harm to a nearby children's school; he chooses to drop the bomb anyway, knowing that he will thereby harm the school, but harming the school is not among the things he intends to bring about by dropping the bomb. In this and many other cases of knowingly causing harm it seems quite right to say that the agent brought about the harm intentionally, even though he did not intend to bring it about.

Some defenders of the Simple View have denied that it is strictly accurate to say of such a case that the agent brought about the harm intentionally. They concede that this sort of thing does commonly get said but only because speakers want to convey that the agent is morally reprehensible for knowingly bringing about the harm and they sloppily seize upon, or accept, the strictly inaccurate advb "intentionally" as a way of doing so. This is unconvincing, since "S knowingly caused the harm" seems as condemnatory as "S intentionally caused the harm" and so there is no need for speakers to resort to "intentionally."

But there is another sort of case, not involving harmful action, where this sort of attempt to defend the Simple View won't apply at all. It is possible to try to perform a certain sort of action while believing mistakenly that it is quite impossible for one to perform it (by means of the sort of action that constitutes one's attempt). If one believes this, then one does not intend of one's attempt that one will thereby perform the action: one can intend to do only what one believes there is at least some chance one can do. But the case may be such that if, to one's surprise, one's attempt succeeds, then one
will have performed the action intentionally. And the case may be such that there is no question of moral blame or condemnation for the action. It might, for example, be a simple clenching of the fist, in response to the request, "Try to clench your fist," which causes and was expected to cause no harm whatsoever.

It might at first seem counterintuitive to suppose that one can try to do something without believing that there is at least a slight chance that one might succeed. But in fact there are various motives one might have for trying to do something while not believing that there is any chance that one's attempt will succeed. A person might, for example, try to move a large boulder by pushing on it in order

1. to find out whether he can move that boulder by pushing on it,
2. to demonstrate to someone else that he cannot move it by pushing on it,
3. or to comply with a request or order to try to move it by pushing on it.

Having any of these reasons for pushing on the boulder is compatible with lacking the belief that one has a chance of moving it by pushing on it (though having the first is, of course, not compatible with having the belief that one cannot move it by pushing on it). And having any of them entails that one tried to move it by pushing on it and, therefore, that, if one were to succeed in moving it, one intentionally moved it by pushing on it. But *intending to* move it by pushing on it is *not* compatible with lacking the belief that one has a chance of moving it by pushing on it. We can conclude that intentionally moving it by pushing on it does not entail intending to move it by pushing on it. And we can reject the Simple View that, for any sort of action fitting the schema 'V-ing by A-ing', intentionally V-ing by A-ing entails intending to V by A-ing.

So the general relation that, in a case where S V-ed by A-ing, transfers the property of being intentional from S's A-ing to S's V-ing does not, as the Simple View would have it, require that S intended by A-ing to V. What then does it require?

In *On Action*, I proposed that what was necessary and sufficient for the relation to obtain was just that S satisfy a certain cognitive condition, namely, that S have the *belief-plus-justification-for-it* that is entailed by (but does not entail) her intending to V by her A-ing. And I spelled this out as follows:

S believed of her A-ing that she would or might thereby V, and in what S knew that had then not slipped her mind S had justification for this belief that was not at the same time justification for believing a proposition too far from the truth as to how she was actually going thereby to V. (1990, ch. 4)

(The belief was required to have a justification satisfying this complex condition in order to rule out certain sorts of cases, and to rule in certain other sorts of cases, which would otherwise be counterexamples.)

I now think that this cognitive condition fails to be either sufficient or necessary for the obtaining of the desired relation (that is, for the agent's having intentionally V-ed by A-ing if she intentionally A-ed).

That it is not sufficient is shown by an example like the following. As he shaved S believed, with the right sort of justification, that he might by shaving cut himself (that there was some non-miniscule chance that he would), but it seems definitely wrong to say that this is enough to make it the case that, if he did cut himself by shaving, he did so intentionally. The remedy for this insufficiency of our cognitive condition is simple. We strengthen the content of the belief required. Instead of requiring S to believe of her A-ing merely that she would or might thereby V, we require her to believe of her A-ing (with appropriate justification for the belief) that she would or very likely would thereby V.

But this revised cognitive condition, like the original, is not necessary for the desired relation to obtain. No purely cognitive condition of this sort will cover all of the alternative sufficient conditions for intentionally V-ing by A-ing. As I've already pointed out, it is possible for an agent to try to do something without believing that there is any chance at all that she will succeed in doing it. That is, it is possible to try by A-ing to V while believing that there is no chance that one will V by one's A-ing. And there can be such cases where the agent is mistaken and, to her surprise, does V by her A-ing; and in some of these cases it will be right to say that the agent intentionally V-ed by A-ing, despite failing to believe that she would, or even that she might, V by A-ing.

Consider, for example, someone who pushes on a large boulder with the intention of showing a companion that she cannot move the boulder by pushing on it: she tries to move the boulder by pushing on it in order to demonstrate, as she believes, that she cannot move it by pushing on it. But she is mistaken and, to her surprise, she does move the boulder by pushing on it. (Perhaps the boulder is not as heavy as it looks or the agent is stronger than she thinks.) In such a case, it seems to me, it would be right to say that the agent moved the boulder intentionally.

Shall we then just disjoin with our revised cognitive condition the condition that S was trying to V by A-ing? It would be nice if it could be that simple. The problem is that, in contrast with the case just considered, there can also be cases where S was trying by A-ing to V, and succeeded in doing it, but it would be wrong to say that S intentionally V-ed by A-ing; and so, adding the "trying" disjunct would take away the sufficiency of the whole condition.
Suppose as before that S tried to move a large boulder by pushing on it in order to demonstrate, as she believed, that she could not move it by pushing on it. But suppose that the boulder has been rigged so that a relatively small pressure on the part of the surface where S pushed would cause a roller device placed under the boulder to move the boulder. Here S has moved the boulder by pushing on it but it doesn't seem that she has done so intentionally, despite the fact that she was trying to move it by pushing on it. Why not? The reason seems to be that the way in which S's pushing on the boulder caused it to move is not the way, indeed far from the way, in which S was trying to move it by pushing on it, not the way in which S intended to show that her pushing on it could not move it, namely by the sheer force of her pushing overcoming the inertia of the boulder. It is not a way her pushing on it moved it of which she believed (with suitable justification) that if she were to move it by pushing on it then it would be in that way. S failed to satisfy the following condition: The way in which S actually moved the boulder by pushing on it was (one of the ways) such that S believed (with justification) that if she were to move the boulder by pushing on it then it would be in that (one of those) way(s).

Generalizing this, we get the following condition:

The way in which S actually V-ed by A-ing was (one of the ways) such that S believed (with justification) that if she were to V by A-ing then it would be in that (one of those) way(s).

S's believing that, if she were to V by A-ing then it would be in such-and-such a way, is quite consistent with her believing that she has no chance of V-ing by her A-ing in that way (or in any other way)—that is, the contents of the two beliefs are compatible. As far as I can see, satisfaction of this belief condition brings in just those cases of S's successfully trying to V by A-ing, while not believing of her A-ing that she would or might or could thereby V, that are intentional. If this is right, then if we conjoin this belief condition with the condition that S was trying to V by A-ing, we will get a condition that is sufficient for the obtaining of the relation we are interested in. That is, we get the following claim:

If S V-ed by A-ing and S's A-ing was intentional, then S's V-ing was intentional

if

S was trying to V by A-ing, and

the way in which S actually V-ed by A-ing was (one of the ways) such that S believed (with justification) that if she were to V by A-ing then it would be in that (one of those) way(s).

Note that this sufficient condition is entailed by cases of S's intentionally V-ing by A-ing where S intended to V by A-ing but believed only that she might succeed in doing so. Suppose, for example, that when S pushed on the boulder she was far from confident that she could thereby move the boulder but she believed—correctly, as it turned out—that there was a chance that her strength was up to the task. She believed that if she were to move the boulder by pushing on it, it would be because the force of her pushing on it would overcome the boulder's inertia. Such a case does not satisfy the belief condition we formulated earlier, because S fails to believe that she very likely would move the boulder by pushing on it. It does, however, satisfy the sufficient condition just formulated. For in such a case S was trying to move the boulder by pushing on it and the way in which she actually moved it was a way such that S believed (with suitable justification) that if she were to move it by pushing on it then it would be in that way.

The sufficient condition just formulated is, however, not necessary for the relation we seek to define. It does not cover (is not satisfied in) the sort of case of S's intentionally V-ing by A-ing discussed earlier, where S did not intend and was not trying to V by A-ing but knew, or believed it very likely, that by her A-ing she would V. For example, S drove her car on a muddy road knowing that she would thereby get the car muddy. She did not intend in driving on the muddy road to get the car muddy, nor did she try to do so; but she did thereby intentionally get it muddy. In order to cover this sort of case and obtain a condition that is both necessary and sufficient, we need to disjoin our recently formulated condition with the strong belief condition formulated earlier.

The upshot is that the answer to the question about non-basic actions that I now propose is this:

If S V-ed by A-ing and S's A-ing was intentional, then S's V-ing was intentional

if and only if either

(a) S was trying to V by A-ing, and

the way in which S actually V-ed by A-ing was (one of the ways) such that S believed (with justification) that if she were to V by A-ing then it would be in that (one of those) way(s),

or

(b) S believed of her A-ing that she would or very likely would thereby V, and in what S knew that had then not slipped her mind S had justification for this belief that was not at the same time justification for believing a proposition too far from the truth as to how she was actually going thereby to V.

1.2

Our next question concerns basic actions, ones such that the agent did not perform them by performing some other action. What makes such an action intentional? There is not general agreement on what sort of action is basic. Some think that voluntary exertions of the body are basic. I, on the other hand, think that voluntary exertions are actions one performs by performing
mental acts of volition which cause the body to exert; and it is these simple mental acts that are basic. What difference does it make for the account of what makes a basic action intentional which of these views we hold? Surprisingly, very little.

If one holds that causally simple mental acts of volition are at the base of bodily actions, as I do, one should hold that these simple mental acts are intrinsically intentional. It must be conceptually impossible to perform such acts of volition, of willing to exert, unintentionally. There are not two contrasting cases possible: intentionally willing to exert and unintentionally willing to exert. There is nothing that would count as willing, say, to exert force forward with one's arm and hand but not intentionally willing this. On this view of what basic actions are, all we can or need say about what makes them intentional is that it is intuitively clear that they cannot be other than intentional.

On my view, voluntary exertions of the body, though non-basic, are also necessarily intentional. They are so because, necessarily, when one has voluntarily exerted in a certain way one has tried to exert in that way. This is so because, necessarily, one has voluntarily exerted in a certain way only if one has willed to exert in that way and this has caused the corresponding exertion via a match-ensuring mechanism (as it does in the normal case). And, necessarily, in willing to exert in a certain way one tried to exert in that way. This last holds even if the agent did not intend of her willing to exert that she would thereby exert, as when she tries to exert while believing mistakenly that the efferent nerves from her brain to the relevant muscles have been rendered inoperative and that her attempt to exert will therefore be unsuccessful. (Note that in such a case the way in which the agent succeeded in exerting by willing to do so, the normal way, will always be at least one of the ways [if there were more than one] such that the agent believed that if she were to exert by her willingness to do so then it would be in one of those ways.) Hence voluntary exertions necessarily fall under clause (a) above of our specification of what makes a non-basic action intentional (where 'A-ing' is 'willing to exert' and 'to V' is 'to exert'). Hence, of the agent who tries to voluntarily exert while mistakenly believing she is unable to do so it will be right to say that she did so intentionally without intending to do so.

If one holds that acts of voluntary exertion are basic (are not, as I contend, performed by performing acts of willing to exert), one should still say, I think, that voluntary exertions are necessarily intentional. For one will still have to acknowledge that, necessarily, whenever an agent has voluntarily exerted they have tried to do so and that, if they tried to do so then they did so intentionally (even if, in trying to exert, they did not intend to do so).

To summarize: Our discussion of what makes a body-involving action intentional has led to the following answer to this question:

If S's V-ing was a body-involving action (i.e., it was either S's voluntarily exerting her body or something S did by voluntarily exerting her body), then S's V-ing was intentional if and only if either

1. S's V-ing was S's voluntarily exerting her body in a certain way,

2. S V-ed by A-ing, S's A-ing was intentional, and either
   (a) S was trying to V by A-ing, and the way in which S actually V-ed by A-ing was (one of the ways) such that S believed (with justification) that if she were to V by A-ing then it would be in that (one of those) way(s), or
   (b) S believed of her A-ing that she would or very likely would thereby V, and in what S knew that had then not slipped her mind S had justification for this belief that was not at the same time justification for believing a proposition too far from the truth as to how she was actually going thereby to V.

Let us turn now to the question of what makes not doing something intentional. This morning I did not open a certain email message that showed up in my Inbox and I intentionally did not do that. This morning I also did not type the word “Washington” backward, but it is false that I intentionally did not do that. What's the difference?

George Wilson addresses this question in The Intentionality of Human Action (1989). One suggestion Wilson makes (though he does not make much of it) is that S intentionally did not V implies that S intentionally refrained or prevented himself from V-ing. This seems less than clear to me. It may be (though this is not clear to me) that refraining or preventing oneself from V-ing implies that one was tempted to V or had some reason to V. But being tempted or having a reason to V is not, I think, implied by intentionally not V-ing. I was not tempted and had no reason to open the email I intentionally did not open this morning.

The main suggestion Wilson develops seems to be free of this questionable implication. He formulates his suggestion this way:

'Ag intentionally did not φ' has the logical form of
(∃e)(Ag performed e & ~φe & e was intentional qua not φing)

where

e is intentional qua not φ-ing just in case either
(a) Ag intended of e that it ~φ; or

II.

102

103
Suppose S has intentionally not mowed the grass in her backyard this summer because she wanted to let the backyard revert to a wild state. It is implausible in the extreme to suppose that among all of S's actions this summer there is one of which we can say that it is because S intended of it that it not be or include her mowing her grass, that S intentionally did not mow her grass this summer.

Someone might reply that all of S's activity throughout the summer constitutes one big "stretch of behavior" of which Wilson's condition holds. (Wilson considers this sort of suggestion at one point, pages 139–40.) But this, besides seeming a bit desperate, fails to apply to other putative counterexamples to the necessity of the condition. Suppose S awakened in the morning and wanted to get out of bed but decided to wait until she heard R leave the house. Suppose that in the interval between her so deciding and her hearing R leave S not only did not get out of bed but did not perform any (bodily) actions at all; she lay quite motionless. So S intentionally did not get out of bed before she heard R leave but in that interval there is no action she did perform of which she intended that it not be or include her getting out of bed.

Wilson considers an example essentially like this one where "you are sitting in a chair quietly when I order you to turn on the light, and, defying me, you just keep sitting there" (140). He proposes that this satisfies his condition at disjunct (b*) in being a case where S intended of something she did (sitting in the chair) that it be done instead of her turning on the light. This requires saying that being inactive for a period is an action one performs during that period. That is, I should think, something we'd rather not have to say if we can help it. Or else Wilson was not being strict and literal when he spoke of the event in question here as being "performed." Perhaps we should attach more significance to the fact that he couched his own general formulation of his condition in terms of performing an event. Perhaps we should discount the action implication of "perform" and take him to mean an event of which the agent is the subject (whether or not it is an action). So understood, his suggestion (in a supplemented and reduced version) would be accurately expressed in the following way:

\[ S \text{ intentionally did not } V \quad \text{if and only if} \]
\[ S \text{ did not } V \quad \text{and} \]
\[ \text{there was some action } S \text{ performed, } S\text{'s A-ing, which was not a V-ing and } S \text{ intended of her A-ing that it not be or include a V-ing.} \]

Will this do? I cannot think of any example of not V-ing that satisfies the second conjunct but is not a case of intentionally not V-ing. Wilson's condition, supplemented as suggested, does seem to be sufficient for the truth of "S intentionally did not V." But it seems not to be necessary. For the condition appears to require that there be some action S performed of which S intended that it not be or include a V-ing. But there can be cases of S’s intentionally not V-ing where there is no such action S performed.
really no plausibility in the suggestion that S must have intended that the summer-long event, consisting of all the events of which S was the subject during the summer, not be or include her mowing her backyard. Surely it is clear that S need never have had any intention the content of which referred to that extensive event.

So what did make it the case that S intentionally did not mow her yard this summer, that S intentionally did not get out of bed before R left, or that you intentionally did not turn on the light in response to my command? In the first example wouldn't it have been sufficient that throughout the summer S intended that the summer (or some longer temporal interval that includes it) contain no mowing of her yard by her, or that during each week of the summer S intended that that week contain no mowing of her yard by her? In the second example wouldn't it have been sufficient that during the time between her waking and R's leaving the house S intended that that interval not contain her getting out of bed? And in the third example wouldn't it have been sufficient that during the time when your turning on the light might be taken by me as complying with my command you intended that that interval contain no turning on of the light by you?

Or consider a negative case, where S's not V-ing was not intentional. I did not type the word "Washington" backward this morning, but it is false that I intentionally did not do that. Isn't the reason the fact that during no interval this morning did I have the intention that that interval not include my typing the word "Washington" backward?

These thoughts suggest that what is necessary for the truth of a statement of the form 'S intentionally did not V during T' is simply that (i) during T S did not V and (ii) the interval T is composed of a sequence of intervals such that throughout each of those intervals S intended that it contain no V-ing by her. So, for an example mentioned earlier, what made it the case that I intentionally did not open that email I received this morning is that throughout the time between my noticing it and my deleting it I intended that that time contain no opening of that email by me.

Many, perhaps most, true statements of the form 'S intentionally did not V' that we have occasion to make are ones in which no particular time or interval is explicitly mentioned. For such statements it will always be possible to gather from the context of the statement the time the speaker had in mind during which S intentionally did not V. Thus, for example, if I say to you, "I intentionally did not open an email I received today from Nigeria," you will take me to mean that I intentionally did not open it during the time from when I first saw the message in my Inbox and decided not to open it until it was deleted (if it ever was), and, therefore, that I intended during that interval not to open it. If in response to R's question, "Where were you half an hour ago?" I called and you didn't answer," S says, "I intentionally did not answer the phone," S may be taken to mean that he intentionally did not

answer the phone when it rang half an hour ago and that, therefore, he intended not to answer it during the interval from when he first heard it and decided not to answer it until it stopped ringing.

So the truth requirement for any statement of the form 'S intentionally did not V' in which the relevant temporal interval is not mentioned will be the same as that for the implicated statement of the form 'S intentionally did not V during T' in which the relevant interval is specified.

And the condition we proposed for the latter form of statement, recall, was this:

\[ S \text{ intentionally did not } V \text{ during } T \quad \text{only if} \]
\[ (i) \quad S \text{ did not } V \text{ during } T \quad \text{and} \]
\[ (ii) \quad \text{the interval } T \text{ is composed of a sequence of intervals such that throughout each of those intervals } S \text{ intended that it contain no } V\text{-ing by her.} \]

Some may wonder whether it is really plausible to suggest that (ii) is necessary. In the example of S's intentionally not getting out of bed, or the example of your intentionally not turning on the light, the agent may well have been conscious throughout the relevant interval of an intention not to do the thing in question during that interval. But in a case of S's intentionally not mowing her lawn all summer, it is highly unlikely that throughout the summer S will have been conscious of an intention not to mow her lawn during the summer. Perhaps she decided at the beginning of the summer, or even months earlier, not to mow her lawn this summer; and she recalled this decision only when noticing how high the grass was or when asked about it by her neighbors; at other times (most of the time) during the summer the topic of mowing her grass was not on her mind at all. Can we nevertheless hold that she had that intention at all times throughout the summer? I think so.

What is required to make it the case that S had an intention over a particular period of time, if not S's being aware of the intention throughout the period?

The simplest plausible suggestion would be this: At the beginning of, or before, the interval S acquired the intention, either by making a decision or in some other way, and throughout the interval S neither forgot the intention nor changed her mind. I have been unable to think of any counterexample, so this is the suggestion I propose to adopt. As it applies to the sort of intention we are currently interested in, an intention not to do something during a particular time, the proposal spelled out more precisely is this:

\[ S \text{ intended throughout interval } T \text{ not to } V \text{ during } T \quad \text{if and only if} \]
\[ \text{as of the beginning of } T \ S \text{ acquired the intention not to } V \text{ during } T \text{ and throughout } T \ S \text{ neither forgot this intention nor decided to abandon it.} \]
There is one more necessary condition that we have not yet mentioned. For S to have intentionally not V-ed during T it must be the case that S could have V-ed during T (or could have done something such that by doing it she might have V-ed during T). Suppose, for example, that our subject who intended not to get out of bed until R left was, unknown to her, paralyzed and unable to get out of bed. Though she intended not to get out of bed before R left, it cannot be right to say that she intentionally did not do so. We can say that she intentionally did not try to do so but not that she intentionally did not do so.

It is also necessary that S have believed that she could have V-ed during T. Suppose someone mistakenly believes that she is paralyzed and cannot move and so does not even try to move. It cannot be right to say that she intentionally did not move, even if she wanted very much not to move. In fact, if she fails to believe that she could move, then she cannot intend not to move. Intending not to V, like intending to V, requires believing that one could V (or at least that one could do something by which one might V). So the requisite belief is already entailed by the requirement that S intended during T not to V during T.

As far as I can see, there are no other conditions necessary that are not already implied by those we have mentioned. So I venture to suggest that the following is a complete answer to our question of what must be the case for a particular instance of not performing a certain action to be one where the agent intentionally did not perform that action:

S intentionally did not V during T if and only if
(i) S did not V during T,
(ii) the interval T is composed of a sequence of intervals such that throughout each of those intervals S intended that it contain no V-ing by her, and
(iii) S could have V-ed during T (or at least could have done something by which she might have V-ed during T).\(^{15}\)

III.

To recap, the results of our investigation are as follows:
Given that S's V-ing was a body-involving action,

S intentionally V-ed if and only if either
(1) S's V-ing was S's voluntarily exerting her body in a certain way,
or
(2) S V-ed by A-ing and either
(a) S was trying to V by A-ing, and
the way in which S actually V-ed by A-ing was (one of

the ways) such that S believed (with justification) that if she were to V by A-ing then it would be in that (one of those) way(s), or
(b) S believed of her A-ing that she would or very likely would thereby V, and in what S knew that had then not slipped her mind S had justification for this belief that was not at the same time justification for believing a proposition too far from the truth as to how she was actually going thereby to V.

S intentionally did not V if and only if for some interval T S intentionally did not V during T.

S intentionally did not V during T if and only if
(1) S did not V during T,
(2) the interval T is composed of a sequence of intervals such that throughout each of those intervals S intended that it contain no V-ing by her, and
(3) S could have V-ed during T (or at least could have done something by which she might have V-ed during T).

It is perhaps worth noting that if all this is right then we have a partial vindication of the Simple View. Whereas the view that "intentionally" implies "intended" does not hold for intentionally doing, it does hold for intentionally not doing.

NOTES

I am grateful to David Widerker for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

1. S's A-ing at T is a simpler component of S's V-ing at T just in case S V-ed at T by A-ing at T in the sense in which I turned on the computer by pressing a button on the computer.
2. Here and later I will often omit the modifier "at T," but it must be remembered that we are talking of particular actions located at particular times, not of habits or anything like that.
4. Joshua Knobe and Hugh McCann have surveyed samples of ordinary speakers of English and found that, when presented with an example where it is clear that an agent knowingly caused harm without intending to cause it, their respondents mostly (by a significant margin) judged that the agent intentionally caused the harm. See Joshua Knobe, "Intentional Action and Folk Psychology: An Experimental Investigation," Philosophical Psychology 16 (2003): 309–24; Joshua Knobe, "Intentional Action and Side Effects in Ordinary Language," Analysis 63 (2003): 190–93; and Hugh McCann, "Intentional Action and Intending: Recent Empirical Studies," Philosophical Psychology (forthcoming).


7. S must have a justification for the belief that is not at the same time a justification for believing a proposition too far from the truth as to how she was actually going thereby to V in order to exclude from the class of actions done intentionally cases like the following one: Getting up early on a dark morning, S flips a light switch in order to turn on the light; but unknown to her that switch is defective; however, there is another switch on the opposite wall connected to the same light and S's partner, because she sees S about to flip the defective switch, flips the nondefective switch and the light goes on; S caused the light to go on by flipping the defective switch, but not intentionally because the way she had justification for believing she would thereby turn it on was too different from the way she actually turned it on. Further, the justification must lie in what S knows that has not slipped her mind in order to include in the class of actions done intentionally cases like the following one. Getting up early on a dark morning, S flips a light switch in order to turn on the light, forgetting that last night the light bulb burned out and she decided to put off replacing it until this morning; unbeknownst to her, her partner replaced the bulb after she was asleep; so by flipping the switch S did succeed in turning on the light; and she did so intentionally, despite the fact that everything relevant that she knew, including that the bulb burned out last night (which had then slipped her mind), failed to justify her (true) belief that by flipping the switch she would turn on the light in the normal way, however, what she knew other than what had then slipped her mind did justify that belief.


10. For details of and an argument for this view, see Ginet, *On Action*, ch. 2.

11. Those who hold that voluntary exertions are basic cannot deny that it is possible for a person to *try unsuccessfully* to exert. It's not clear to me how they will be able to answer the question of what such an unsuccessful attempt to exert consists in. It is clear that on their view it cannot consist in a mental action that also occurs whenever a subject successfully tries to exert, as it does on my view.

12. If (b') S intended of her A-ing that it be done instead of her V-ing then S intended of her A-ing that it not be or include a V-ing; if (c) S intended of her A-ing that it be allowed to not be her V-ing, then S intended of her A-ing that it not be or include a V-ing; if (c*) S intended of her A-ing that it not allow her to V then S intended of her A-ing that it not be or include a V-ing.

13. Let "I" abbreviate "S intentionally did not V," "N" abbreviate "S did not V," "A" abbreviate the disjunction of (a) and (b), and "B" abbreviate the disjunction of (b'), (c), and (c*). The sentences 

\[N \land (A \lor B) \rightarrow I\]

\[B \rightarrow A\]

together truth-functionally entail "N \land A" \(\rightarrow I\).

14. I take the logical form of statements of the form 'S intentionally did not V during T' to be 'S intentionally: did not V during T'. It could be taken differently, namely, to be 'During T: S intentionally did not V'. On this latter reading the statement would be made true if there was at least one subinterval of T such that throughout it S intended of it that it contain no V-ing by her. But I take the first reading, the one I intend, to be the more natural.

15. Michael Zimmerman gives an account of intentionally omitting to do roughly like the account given here of intentionally not doing. He says that in a "broad sense of 'omit'" one omits to do something just in case one does not do it and one could have done it, and that one intentionally omits to do it if, in addition, one intends not to do it. Michael Zimmerman, *An Essay on Human Action* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), ch. 8.