

Lyric from 'Genius of Love' by The Tom Tom Club - 'Who needs to think when your feet just go'

It's like an off-the-cuff remark made in a club. A party epiphany. A joyful insight: Your mind is being led by your body. Nonetheless I can't help thinking that an important observation is also being made. This is especially true if the phrase is considered in relation to some remarks made by Ludwig Wittgenstein in *The Blue and Brown Books*.

Ludwig Wittgenstein presented numerous arguments that cast doubt on explanations where voluntary action is seen as being caused by 'internal' experiences such as acts of will. In one of his arguments Wittgenstein describes a practical situation: "I deliberate whether to lift a certain heavyish weight, decide to do it, I then apply my force to it and lift it." (Wittgenstein, L. 1958: 150). The lifting of the weight tends to be thought of as a "full-fledged case of willing" (Wittgenstein, L. 1958: 150) however he suggests that it is a mistake to think of this situation as representative of all action.

He points out that a 'full-fledged' description of 'speaking' can be given, but this kind of description is very specific and does not usually apply to speaking. I could say I pondered on what to say, weighed up the arguments and said something, but this is too special. Speaking usually happens in an impromptu manner with little planning. Similarly with dancing. I could give a 'full-fledged' account of my dancing. I could say I planned which limbs I would move, considered the speed and duration of my dance and then proceeded to move rhythmically, but this sounds like choreography. A little too special for everyday use.

It is assumed that in the lifting case, because the various features of the action such as deliberation, decision and exertion can be differentiated that this should be done generally whenever action is explained. The impression is created that the force of the action is distinguishable from all the psychological states that occur prior to the action. This gives a sense that when you engage in action, you engage in a separate state of willing. It suggests that before acting you always think it over.

As an alternative to this image of a preceding will that causes a subsequent action, Wittgenstein claims that willing *is* action. "Willing, if it is not to be a sort of wishing, must be the action itself. It cannot be allowed to stop anywhere short of the action." (Wittgenstein, L. 1953: 160). Wittgenstein refers to numerous occasions such as speaking, writing or walking when you could ordinarily say that you do not deliberate or think of yourself as acting on the basis of a separate will. Speaking, writing and walking are central examples of action and on these kinds of occasions there is often an absence of premeditation.

It could be said that by saying willing *is* action, Wittgenstein does not turn willing into a mechanical physical event. Rather he is saying that the experience of the will in action is not necessarily something deliberate that mulls things over. He is saying that it also resembles a transitory instant of attention: "*Doing* itself seems to not have any volume of experience. It seems like an extensionless point, the point of a needle. This point seems to be the real agent." (Wittgenstein, L. 1953: 161).

In this phrase from 'Genius of Love' it could be said that The Tom Tom Club highlight the view that acts of will should not always be associated with dancing. You do not necessarily deliberate in a full-fledged sense when you speak, write or walk and the same can be said of dancing.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. 1958. *The Blue and Brown Books*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Adapted from: WALLACE, C. 2009. *Aesthetic Experience and Action in Participatory Art*.
<https://rgu-repository.worktribe.com/search/all/outputs?criteria=Christopher%2BWallace>