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Causation and the Awareness of Agency

Andersen, Holly (2008) *Causation and the Awareness of Agency*. In: [\[2008\] Philosophy of Science Assoc. 21st Biennial Mtg \(Pittsburgh, PA\) > PSA 2008 Contributed Papers](#).



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Abstract

I criticize the tendency to address the causal role of awareness in agency in terms of the awareness of agency, and argue that this distorts the causal import of experimental results in significant ways. I illustrate, using the work of Shaun Gallagher, how the tendency to focus on the awareness of agency obscures the role of extrospective awareness by considering it only in terms of what it contributes to the awareness of agency. Focus on awareness of agency separates awareness from agency itself, and then turns it inwards to introspect distinct agentive processes. If we then assume that the causal influence of awareness is directed at the same object as awareness itself, then the only avenue for conscious causal involvement in action is to somehow interfere with the separate, even neuronal, processes leading to action. I label this the Micromanagement Model of conscious agency, because it forces awareness to micromanage other, nonconscious, processes in order to be causally efficacious. Implicit adherence to the Micromanagement Model prejudices us towards the mistaken conclusion that awareness has limited to no causal role in action.

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