9. The Pleasure of Movement and the Awareness of the Self

All acquisition of knowledge is an enlargement of the Self.
Bertrand Russell

In a paper entitled “The Way of the Wanton” (2008), the philosopher David Velleman suggests that we achieve excellence only after we have moved beyond reflective agency. What he means by this is that although reflective agency—that is, thinking about and deliberating over our occurrent actions—is a stepping-stone to developing expertise, we perform at our best when we attain what he refers to as “self-forgetful spontaneity,” or “flow.” Expressing a version of the view I have been referring to as the just-do-it principle, he tells us that in highly-skilled actions, “the capacity to monitor…performance, to consider how it falls short of an ideal, and to correct it accordingly…is no longer exercised” (p. 188, Practical Identity and Narrative Agency, Routledge Studies). Rather, after the requisite training, according to Velleman, “evaluative judgment is suspended” and experts act “without deliberate intention or effort” (185).

In previous chapters, I have argued for the importance of monitoring, evaluation and effort in expert action. In this chapter, I want to explore the role of self-awareness. There is a sense in which monitoring, evaluation, and effort go along with a sense of the self: when you are monitoring your actions, for example, there is a sense that it is you who are doing the monitoring. In this chapter, however, I want to scrutinize the type of self-forgetful spontaneity that Velleman sees as essential to optimal performance, as well as discuss the experience of pleasure in movement: is the pleasure of movement due in part to losing the self?

Some of my thoughts on this topic have come about through collaboration with the physiatrist Jonathan Cole, a collaboration which resulted in a paper on the pleasure of bodily movement, entitled “Affective Proprioception.” Jonathan is a leading researcher on proprioception, and I have learned a great deal from both my collaboration with him and his insightful and engaging books and papers. However, I now no longer fully agree with some of what we said, for it seems to me that some of our claims were, alas, beholden to the just-do-it principle, in particular to the idea that in expert movement the self is lost. Cole and I started with the premise that highly skilled bodily movement is often pleasurable, a view I still agree with, even though I would now place more emphasis on the fact that it can often be painful as well. We were then interested in what makes it pleasurable, and one of various features we identified is that in highly skilled movement one is sometimes blissfully unaware of the self. I think that how we expressed this view was not quite right: yes, there is an aspect of the self that is lost, I would now say, but not the self entirely. Hence, I would like to take this chapter as an opportunity to both recount some of my work with Jonathan as well as amend aspects of it that I now think were under the thrall of just-do-it. I thank Jonathan for graciously allowing me reprint

1 Or at least this is true, barring, as I shall do, any general worries about whether we even have a sense of the self at all.
some passages from that work in this chapter as well as for being open-minded enough to understand how our views differ.

The pleasure of movement:

The 19th century anatomist and neurologist Sir Charles Bell (1833) held that the exercise of the muscular frame is the source of some of our chief enjoyments. ² And as any gym rat will tell you, moving your body can be a highly pleasurable experience. Numerous possible factors might account for this. Going to the gym, playing tennis, taking a ballroom dance class are social activities and so one might derive pleasure from the social aspects of these activities. Other activities, like mountain climbing, enable distinct pleasures, such as the pleasure of spending time in nature, while taking a ballet class allows you to enjoy listening to the often delightful piano accompaniment. More generally, you might enjoy what Bell, himself, refers to as an “almost voluptuous” feeling that follows fatiguing physical activity, a feeling, as he points out, that is “diffused throughout every part of the frame.” And then there is the so-called “endorphin high” that accompanies prolonged exercise, such as marathon running. But there is also something pleasurable in the experience of bodily movement itself. And it is this pleasure of movement, some think, that washes away the self.

Perhaps not everyone experiences pleasure in movement. “Physical activity is enjoyable?” one philosopher I know commented, “I get enough exercise simply working my brain.” I of course wanted to respond with something like “don’t knock it till you’ve tried it.” However, I kept my mouth shut, for as much as I wanted to, I didn’t need to, since my concern is not the layperson’s pleasure in movement, but the pleasure that is experienced by someone who is an expert in physical activities, such as the expert dancer or expert athlete. Moving, I really do believe, can be a source of pleasure for most anyone; however, for the highly skilled movements of an expert, I submit, it is especially so.

Cole and I speculated that activities such as dance and yoga, which are more internally focused, may be greater sources of pleasure in movement than sports which are often focused on an external factors, such as making a goal, catching a ball, or winning a point. I, of course, find this to be so, however, as I can barely throw a football, to say nothing of throwing on in a perfect spiral, I am not one to judge. I do not doubt that the actions of the professional athlete, like the professional dancer, can be pleasurable, as well as painful, but the comparative judgment is more difficult to make.

One can also find pleasure in acts of mental expertise, such as chess, or poetry, or philosophy, for that matter. The thrill of coming up with a surprising checkmate, or a keen poetic phrase, can be pleasurable. One even finds pleasure in those rare moments when one seems to have formulated surprising necessary condition for something (such are the thrills of the analytic philosopher!). However, there is also often a considerable amount of pain involved in such activities; one perseveres sometimes merely because it will feel so good to be done. Having been seriously involved in both the life of the mind (as a philosopher) and the life of the body (as a ballet dancer), here I feel a bit more qualified to make comparisons and can say that (for me) the

² This, as well as the health benefits of exercise, was a topic of great interest to both my parents. See, for example, Montero, J. C. (1966), “Physical Fitness—Who needs it?” Medical Tribune, 7, 15, and “Vanity is Good for Your Health” Montero, J.C. And D. Montero (1966); Veterans Administration Reports.
occurent pleasure of bodily movement is more salient than the occurrent pleasure of exercising the mind, though the afterglow tends to last longer with the philosophy.

There are possible evolutionary explanations for why the exercise of bodily skills should be, as Bell puts it, rewarded by pleasure. Obviously, escaping from danger sometimes requires fleetness of foot. Since being physically fit is conducive to such fleetness, it would seem that those who find pleasure in activities that promote physical and mental fitness are more likely to practice them. Thus, a selective advantage would seem to accrue to those who find pleasure in challenging physical activities. Yet evolutionary explanations for the existence of a trait are notoriously easy to come by, so let me leave this issue aside. Besides, my concern is not with the evolutionary explanation of why certain movements are pleasurable but rather with what it is about such movements that makes them pleasurable, and in particular with whether it involves a loss of the self.

The philosopher Julia Annas, in her book *Intelligent Virtue* (2011), tells us “we lack a vocabulary for explicating just what is enjoyable about the exercise of expertise” (p. 81). I think that this is true to a degree; however, although me many not be able to say “just what is enjoyable about it” (and as a matter of fact, if philosophy is any guide, we lack a vocabulary for saying just what anything is), I also think it is possible to say something informative about it. For example, the writer David Foster Wallace, seems to capture at least an aspect of this enjoyment when he writes about tennis star Roger Federer: “Rather like certain kinds of rare, peak-type sensuous epiphanies (I’m so glad I have eyes to see this sunrise!” etc.), great athletes seem to catalyze our awareness of how glorious it is to touch and perceive, move through space, interact with matter” (2006, Federer as a Religious Experience, NY Times) I think Wallace expresses something correct here: expertly moving through space and interacting with matter can be glorious. But again, one should not forget that it can be sheer hell as well and from what I have read, this may be moreso in tennis than in many other endeavors. Tennis, for example, does not have the sorts of dynasties one finds in other athletic endeavors—professional tennis players apparently do not want their children to follow in their footsteps—and one possible reason for this is that professional tennis is remarkable not just for its peak-type sensuous epiphanies but also for its excruciating pain. Ballet can also be excruciatingly painful, yet, in my memory—which admittedly is often rosy—the pleasures outweigh the pain.

Although Wallace captures something correct about at least some types of expert movement, some of what he says suggests a view that I oppose. In speaking of the amazing physicality of Federer’s movements, Wallace—and this is one reason why Dreyfus and Kelly cite him approvingly—seems to understand Federer’s superior athletic skill as bestowed upon him from the outside. “It’s hard to describe,” Wallace says, “and one wouldn’t want to make too much of it…. [b]ut the truth is that whatever deity, entity, energy, or random genetic flux produces sick children also produced Roger Federer.” While a deity, entity, flow of energy, or random genetic flux may be the primary causal force behind birth defects and illness in children, on my view, the primary causal force behind Roger Federer—that is, Federer, the athlete—is Roger Federer himself.

**Propriocceptive immersion**

Let me, however, leave my disagreement with Dreyfus and Kelly about Federer aside and return to the question of pleasure in expert bodily actions. I said that expertly moving one’s
body can be pleasurable. One way I believe dancers at least experience the pleasure in movement is in feeling as if they are in contact with every point of their own bodies.³ Britt Juleen, a dancer with Dutch National Ballet, explained to me that during a performance she aims to engage fully in the quality of her bodily movements. In her words, the goal “is to be totally immersed the feeling of my body moving.”

The relevant sense involved in Juleen’s experience of being immersed in the feeling of her body moving is, I submit, proprioception; Juleen is feeling, for example, her arms lifting, her upper back arched, her fingers extended. In contrast to Fitts and Posner’s view about expert action, according to which experts ignore kinesthetic information, far from ignoring such information, she is deeply aware of it.

I too felt that this type of bodily immersion was an essential element of a good performance: the best performances typically involved being immersed in the feeling of movement. I am not sure if this was the most important aspect of a good performance for me since the experience of being in dialog with the music was incredibly important as well as pleasurable (and Juleen also commented on how she loved the experience of dancing to music), and the intimate form of communication one has with one’s partner or fellow dancers can also be delightful. Nonetheless, the experience of bodily immersion was certainly one highly important aspect of performing. Some of the pleasure comes from the bare quality of abstract movement itself, but sometimes an idea behind the movement facilitates the experience. For example, during the white swan pas de deux, the ballerina’s partner wraps the ballerina’s arms around her as he embraces her. The movement itself feels sensuous, and the idea of the embrace adds to the sensuality. When all is going well, I claim, a dancer will feel immersed in this experience of movement.

Musicians, it seems, also become immersed in their bodily movements, as Charles Rosen, a philosopher as well as professional musician, explains. In his book *Piano Notes* (2002), he talks about the sheer pleasure of moving his hands, going even so far as claiming that one cannot even become a professional pianist if one does not deeply enjoy the physical movements of one’s fingers on the keys:

> **Pianists do not devote their lives to their instrument simply because they like music: that would not be enough to justify a dreary existence of stuffy airplanes, uncomfortable hotel rooms, and the hours spent trying to get the local piano technician to adjust the soft pedal. There has to be a genuine love simply of the mechanics and difficulties of playing, a physical need to contact with the keyboard, a love and need which may be connected with a love of music but are not by any means totally coincident with it**.

This love and need, if not constitutive of, is at least accompanied by pleasure: the pleasure of moving one’s hands. “Part of the pleasure of playing the piano…is purely muscular,” and that

³ One might even say, that in highly skilled movement, one experiences a pleasurable unity of mind and body, not through any philosophical argument, but through experience. However, it is certainly not clear that fewer philosophers would be dualists if they were highly skilled in a physical activity. Plato, for example, at least advocated gymnastic training for the youth yet dualism was prevalent in ancient Greece.
“in general pianists neither have to look at nor listen to themselves”(pg. 34). But this does not mean that the pianist’s mind or self is not there. Rather, the mind, it would seem, is on the feeling of movement and this experience of movement comprises, among other things, a sense of self.

**Being in flow**

The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmialyi, who has done extensive research into the concept of “flow,” which is variously described as full immersion, or complete enjoyment or absorption in one’s activities or peak experience, uses the term “autotelic” to refer to action that is rewarding in and of itself and is done at least in part for this reason. Certainly, there is an autotelic element in what Juleen describes as being immersed in movement, but I do not think that such an element implies that there is no experience of the self: when one is fully immersed in an action, it is the self that is fully immersed.

David Vellman argues that because experts are in flow, peak performance involves the suspension of evaluative judgment. He quotes Csikszentmialyi’s work in support:

> In normal life, we keep interrupting what we do with doubts and questions. “Why am I doing this? Should I perhaps be doing something else?” Repeatedly we question the necessity of our actions, and evaluate critically the reasons for carrying them out. But in flow there is no need to reflect, because the action carries us forward as if by magic.

And he also relies on Csikszentmialyi’s research to support his view that in expert action awareness of the self disappears. Quoting again from Csikszentmialyi:

> One of the most universal and distinctive features of optimal experience [is that] people become so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing…[This involves] a loss of consciousness of the self.

But does Csikszentmialyi’s research, which is based the “experience sampling method,” wherein at random times during the day subjects are prompted to write down what they are doing and what they are thinking about and then rate their state of consciousness, show that expert action is unreflective and involves no awareness of the self?

As Csikszentmialyi himself makes clear, his research is not an investigation into peak performance, but rather an investigation into peak experience. And these two might not always line up. First off, in contrast to autotelic actions, I think that in expert performance, actions are sometimes not rewarding in and of themselves, but are performed because they might lead to a future reward, such as winning a tournament or even improving. Second, as I have been emphasizing throughout the book, the expert action does not and should not carry us forward as if by magic. In some types of expert actions there might not be much time to ponder questions such as “Why am I doing this?” and “should I be doing something else?” (though as we’ve already seen in Chapter 5 and will see again in Chapter 11, in high speed actions there is still some time to think and ponder); however, answering such questions seems to be a very important part of writing expertise: “Why am I putting this idea here?” “Might it not be better in an earlier section of the paper?” “Should I be giving a definition here rather than simply an illustration?”
Repeatedly questioning the necessity of our actions and critically evaluating the reasons for carrying them out is helpful in creating a good piece of writing and perhaps this is why writing is particularly un-autotelic. Of course, if what Csikszentimialyi means by interrupting our actions with doubts and questions is that we are wondering why we should be doing this at all—for example, if I were to start wondering whether I should train to be a pastry chef rather than trying to write a book—this is probably not conducive and is even detrimental to optimal performance, as well as optimal experience. However, the former types of doubts I think are often quite conducive to optimal performance.

In flow, Csikszentimialyi tells us, actions are spontaneous and one stops being aware of the self as separate from the action; it is like Yeats’ dancer becoming her dance. Yes, this sounds lovely and enjoyable, and I do not doubt that some of our most intrinsically pleasurable actions involve such spontaneity (even if afterwards you might look back and say, why didn’t I think before I acted!). However, I do not think that this melding of the self into the action is necessarily characteristic of expert performance. The cello player I quoted in Chapter 4, Inbal Segev, told us that she was trained to avoid letting the music lead her and instead to direct it; similarly, the dancer needs to direct his movement. Perhaps the audience can’t tell the dancer from the dance, but the dancer knows. I wonder if Yeats ever danced?

**Getting lost in the movement**

Being totally immersed in the feeling of movement is, I think, an experience of focus on the movement. However, in my work with Cole, we suggested that in bodily immersion, the self disappears. Here is what we said,

> When absorbed in movement there may even be what might be described as a loss of self, a feeling that, at least as a locus of thought, one hardly exists at all. And of course the best performances are those where one is not thinking about the steps at all but is rather fully immersed in the experience of moving itself. (Indeed, thinking about the steps may lead to “blanking out” and forgetting the steps.)

But not thinking about the steps—in the sense of trying to remember the choreography—is not the same thing as not thinking about the movement at all. Doing the steps is really a small part of any dance performance; it’s how you do them that matters. Moreover, as I’ve pointed out, I think now that a good way to avoid blanking out is to make sure that the steps are accessible to conscious reflection.

On the supposition that sometimes one does not really appreciate something until it’s gone, we also supported our view that in skilled movement one loses the self by referring to comments made by some individuals who have lost their ability to move.

We quoted Robert Murphy, a professor of social anthropology, who became quadriplegic as an adult. Murphy, who before becoming quadriplegic was very able bodied, claimed that “a quadriplegic’s body can no longer speak a ‘silent language’… the thinking activity can no longer be dissolved into motion, and the mind can no longer be lost in an internal dialogue with physical movement.” (Murphy, 1987, p. 101).

How should we understand these claims? Cole and I commented that what Murphy seems to miss is having “one’s mind—in the sense of oneself as a reflexive thinking agent—dissolve in the movement” (Cole and Montero 312). This, we saw as an important element of the pleasure of movement and we said that when it results from sufficient skill, it may even be
that “attention to movement is no longer required at all even though movement continues.” It
seems that we too, alas, had fallen victims to the allure of just-do-it. How could we have done
so?

I think that when Cole and I were thinking about what occurs in pleasurable movement
we noticed that it can stop you from thinking painful thoughts, or worrisome thoughts or simply
the same old thoughts that tend to crowd your mind. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear in the
life-story of a professional athlete or performing artist that part of the reason why they dedicated
themselves so fully to practice was that they wanted to block out painful aspects of their lives. I
think this was probably behind some of my single minded dedication to ballet, for example. So
the utter focus, the type of focus that in Chapter 4 I quoted Steve Blass as claiming that he lost
after developing his control problems, does prevent some types of unpleasant thoughts, but the
self is still there in the focus on the activity itself. Yet although there may be pleasure in “losing
the self” in movement in the sense of not worrying about death, taxes, and other necessary evils,
as well as unnecessary evils, that does not mean that, for an expert, the self is not present in the
awareness of the movement.

If we go back and look at what Murphy says, it seems at least possible that this is what he
was commenting on as well; for he says not only that “the mind can no longer be lost,” (pg. 102)
but that it can no longer be lost “in an internal dialogue with physical movement”; that is, it is
this dialogue with movement that silences the unwanted worries. Is the self lost? No; rather, one
type of mental activity ceases and a much more pleasurable type takes over.

Now it may be that for someone who has reached a certain level of competency and is no
longer pushing to improve, the self, in a sense, may disappear altogether. Such individuals might
just do it, and not recall what occurred. But for the type of experts that I am concerned with,
experts that are continuously pushing themselves to improve—and I take it that most of those
who are at the top of their game are like this—this type of performance would at least not be
typical and would not be the type of performance at which they aim. Of course, sometimes when
an athlete is interviewed right after an amazing performance, he or she will comment, “I don’t
know what I did.” But I think it is at least possible that such a remark has more to do with
wanting to get the interview over with than the lack of autobiographical memory. And in any
event there are numerous examples of experts who remember every aspect of their amazing
performances. The baseball player Pete Rose was known for this. As Steve Blass explains it,
“Regardless of what one thinks of Pete Rose, he knows the game. And he doesn’t just remember
every hit he ever got but probably every pitch he ever saw… He had total recall of his career.”

**Proprioceptive Awareness**

I claim that experts may be both present and immersed in the experience of movement.
And the means by which such immersion occurs, I would like to now suggest, is via
proprioception, our sense which provides information about the positions and movements of our
own bodies, via receptors in the joints, tendons, ligaments, muscles and skin. I shall have a good
deal more to say about proprioception in the next chapter. But here let me say a few words about
why we should accept the idea that we have proprioceptive awareness in the first place; for some
have argued that proprioception is not a form of conscious experience. Yet if part of the pleasure
of movement, as I have argued, comes from a sense of being immersed in movement, and if
proprioception is the sense by which we experience such immersion, I am committed to the view that such experience is conscious.

Proprioception is a relatively little studied sense, among both scientists and philosopher, and among those philosophers who do talk about it, a number of philosophers claim that we are rarely aware of proprioceptive information. For example, according to Brian O'Shaughnessy, “proprioception is attentively recessive in a high degree, it takes a back seat in consciousness almost all of the time” (1998, p. 175). And Gallagher tells us, “when I am engaged in the world, I tend not to notice my posture or specific movements of my limbs” (2003, p. 54). If this is correct, then perhaps expert athletes and performing artists are not attending to proprioceptive input.

I question, however, whether proprioception is typically more recessive than any of our other senses. While working at your computer, your attention is typically not on your posture, but neither is it on any sensory information; rather it is on the content of what you may be writing or reading. So O’Shaughnessy and Gallagher may not be correct, if they mean to suggest that proprioception is more recessive than our other senses. Nonetheless, proprioception (along with all other sensory information), may be typically recessive and if so, the perception of the expert, on my view, is often not typical.

There is also a rather knotty debate in the philosophy literature about whether proprioception is perceptual at all. According to Elizabeth Anscombe, we know the positions of our limbs without observation; nothing shows us, she tells us, the positions of our limbs. Anscombe explains this by an analogy to the knowledge possessed by the director of a building project, who may know what a finished building will look like, not because she has observed it, but because she has designed it. Others have argued that that although we can be conscious of proprioceptive input, we are only conscious of it when the motor command fails to match the proprioceptive input (so that when all is going well, there is no sensory aspect to proprioception). For example, according to Anthony Marcel, “awareness of a voluntary action appears to derive from a stage later than intention but earlier than movement itself” (Marcel, 2002, p. 71). And Patrick Haggard claims “awareness of movement appears to be less related to the actual motor production than to preparatory process” (Haggard, 2004, p. 121).

However, I understand proprioception as a sense, which is sometimes conscious and which plays an important role in movement awareness. It may be that in everyday movement, one primarily notices mismatches between motor command and proprioceptive input, but I think that experts in bodily movement are often intent on monitoring proprioceptive input. Moreover, one must remember that such experts have a much higher standard for what counts as a match; because of the self-critical nature of dancers, for example, mismatches are common. Thinking of proprioception as a sense is standard in physiology textbooks (Patton 2009 Anatomy and Physiology). And Hannah Pickard (2004) (though she does not use this term) seems to see proprioception as a form of perception. As Pickard, in defense of what she calls her “naïve proposal”, says, “just as we perceive the world through the five senses, we perceive our own bodies ‘from the inside’” (p. 210).

It seems that when proponents of the just-do-it principle warn against proprioceptive awareness, they typically have in mind sensory knowledge from the inside. But Anscome’s “director’s knowledge” comes under fire as well, if we understand it as knowledge of our movement based on consciously directing our bodies to move. The idea that an expert dancer

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4 See also Hamilton (2005) who argues against thinking of proprioception as a sense and as providing information of which we are ever conscious.
may experience pleasure in bodily immersion depends on Pickard’s idea of sensory knowledge from the inside. This, I claim, can be conscious and can involve a sense of self: you are consciously experiencing via proprioception yourself as moving in a certain way. However, I also believe that Anscombe’s director’s knowledge may be part of expert action as well, and indeed might provide for another form of pleasure in movement, for as Cole and I also speculated, part of the pleasure of movement arises from a close coupling between intention and movement. Directors’ knowledge provides one of awareness of what you are doing without observation, and proprioceptive feedback provides observation knowledge of what you are doing; when these two line up, one has a sense of harmony.5

But does the coupling between intention and movement implicate a loss of the self? Cole and I had said that given sufficient skill, “attention to movement is no longer required at all even though movement continues.” And this is true inasmuch as an expert often can perform certain actions in her domain of expertise without attention to her movements. Yet such actions are not necessarily done best without such attention. Moreover, when one has total focus on one’s movement, other aspects of the mind do dissolve, but this does not mean that the mind is absent for it is the mind that is focused on the movement.

The Debate over the loss of the self in 19th century Germany

At the turn of the 19th century in Germany one can find a discussion about whether the self is present in expert action that mirrors some of the present day discussions of this topic. At this time, there was a fairly widespread conception of consciousness as comprising three parts: an awareness of an object, of the self, and of the self’s representation of the object. Reinhold (1790, p. 167) referred to this as the “principle of consciousness,” which he stated as follows: “in consciousness representation is distinguished through the subject from the subject and object and related to both.” What exactly this means is, of course, a difficult question, however, let us focus on the idea that consciousness was thought to contain a representation of the subject, or what I would say, the self.

This tripartite model of consciousness was seen as general model of consciousness not simply a model of consciousness in expert action. However, an objection that was voiced to it at the time was that in expert action, there is no awareness of the self because we sometimes we get “lost,” in thought, in sensation, or in action.6 James Messina (2011) points out that this objection was made by Johann Schwab, who, commenting on Reinhold’s principle of consciousness, asks, “Is there not a consciousness where we do not distinguish ourselves from the object; and is this not the case when we lose ourselves, as one says, in a sensation?” For example, when we are engrossed in a philosophical problem and making progress (which may happen occasionally), are we not lost in thought? And, when all is going well, might not the self disappear in running a marathon or dancing Swan Lake?

The contemporary philosopher Uriah Kriegel (2003, p. 104), who has a view that is similar to the nineteenth century tripartite model, addressed such objections by making the awareness of the self in conscious experience implicit rather than explicit. On Kriegel’s view, for

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5 Some might balk at use of the term “knowledge” in “directors knowledge” since sometimes so called “director’s knowledge” is mistaken. If so, the term “knowledge” in this context should be thought of as in scare quotes.

6 James Messina (2011) points out that this objection was made by Johann Schwab, who, commenting on Reinhold’s principle of consciousness, asks, “Is there not a consciousness where we do not distinguish ourselves from the object; and is this not the case when we lose ourselves, as one says, in a sensation?”
example, “in your auditory experience of [a] bagpipe you are aware primarily, or *explicitly*, of the bagpipe sound [the object]; but you are also *implicitly* aware that this auditory experience of the bagpipe [your representation of the bagpipe] is *your* experience[the self].” (Kriegel, 2003a, pg. 104) But as I have suggested, one need not concede as much since a more accurate description of such situations is not that one gets lost, but rather that all those uninvited worries about death, taxes and the like that have been crowding your mind vanish. The self is there when movement flows and you feel lost; but it is a self unencumbered by distractions.  

7 For similar reasons, we can question the idea that the self gets lost. Does one really lose the self, or does one experience oneself as focused on a particularly engaging topic? Again, as with bodily movement, I would say that intense thought can be an escape not because one loses the self in it, but it prevents one from thinking unpleasant thoughts.

(At the time, another objection to the idea that the self is present in consciousness was that we lose the self in overwhelming pain. But is it true that when we experience overwhelming pain, is it not true that the only thing present to our minds is the pain? The case of the self getting lost in pain is a tangential issue, but even here it might be said that at least when pain is not overwhelming, one has a sense of an object—the painful sensation in, say, your foot—and your awareness of such object—if only, you might think, I could turn my awareness away from it.  

8 As for overwhelming pain, a defender of the RHF model of consciousness might resort to making the awareness of the self implicit, however, there is another line of defense: since, arguably, one can’t actually remember what goes on in extreme pain, one might argue that one cannot know whether the self is present. Perhaps, a defender of the RHF model of consciousness might say, that in pain, one has the experience, *I* am in pain; yet one forgets.)

9 From sensuous pleasure to aesthetic pleasure

I have been exploring the idea that expert action involves an experience of pleasure in movement and that such pleasure need not be explained in terms of a loss of the self. But what exactly is it? Partly this pleasure is simply the voluptuous, sensuous feeling of movement. However, there is another component in at least the art of ballet and that is that it involves aesthetic pleasure. Hence, in the next chapter, we move on the idea of aesthetic pleasure in movement.

7 Or rather, I would argue that when experts perform at their best, in general the self is not lost. See Montero (forthcoming), for discussion of this issue.

8 This might not always be a helpful thought since it might be that that in some situations, focusing on pain, rather than distracting oneself from it, reduces it. See Johnston, Atlas, and Wager TD (2012).

9 Another line of defense might even be that as there is no memory, there was no conscious experience.