The
Logical Connection
Argument

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Contents

Summary

1. FORMULATIONS OF THE ARGUMENT

1.1 Various versions of the logical connection argument (LCA) have often not been properly distinguished.

1.2 The Humean distinct existences requirement (DER) is a basic assumption of LCA.

1.3 Melden, and others, have taken DER to imply certain independence requirements on the description of cause and effect. Collectively, these requirements are designated as 'RID'.

1.3.1 We may designate various formulations under RID as 'D_n'. A first group of arguments, based on various D_n, can now be distinguished and their logical structure formalized.

1.3.2 Sometimes it is explicitly claimed that the statement of a motive or reason for an action in fact <u>redescribes</u> the action, so that the descriptions are not <u>appropriately</u> independent.

1.4 Melden also draws a version of LCA from the claim that DER makes it sensible to suppose that any cause might not have been the producer of its actual effect; but that this supposition is not sensible for desires and the actions they are said to cause.

1.5 According to G. H. von Wright, the proponent of LCA would hold that the premises of a properly formulated practical syllogism logically entail its conclusion, whereas the causal theorist would deny this. Von Wright presents a version of LCA based on the claim, roughly, that the premises and conclusion of a practical syllogism are not independently verifiable.

1.6 Some of von Wright's comments suggest an entailment version of LCA, and indeed this version has been widely argued.

1.7 Only formulations of LCA which rely upon <u>de dicto</u> principles are to be considered, although comments are offered on <u>de re</u> necessity interpretations of the argument.

2. CAUSAL THEORIES OF ACTION

2.1 Not all causal theories of human behaviour are concerned with the causes of <u>actions</u>. Some conflate the notions of action and bodily movement. Others take the causes of observable

behaviour to be inner occurrences like desires, motives, and so on, but consider the occurrences in these causal relations to <u>constitute</u> actions.

2.2 This thesis defends those causal theories which take these putative inner occurrences to be causes of actions. It is especially concerned to defend a Davidsonian causal theory.

2.3 The proponent of LCA has to contend with causal theories which incorporate a materialist Identity Theory.

3. SOME REPLIES TO LCA

3.1 Consider the arguments based on RID:

3.1.1 It may be claimed that the causal theorist can satisfy RID.

3.1.1.1 If the Identity Theory is acceptable, an abundance of descriptions is available; although tieing specific neurological descriptions to intentional counterparts would be a Herculean task.

3.1.1.2 Desires, volitions, and so on, are datable, and hence describable by using a variety of temporal markers. We might also canvass the possibility of introducing a primitive vocabulary. Contrary to arguments raised against them, these descriptions satisfy the first two formulations under RID.

3.1.1.3 Desires, for example, also seem to be describable along a variety of intrinsic parameters. This has been recognised by some supporters of LCA. The reply seems to be that they cannot be given <u>adequate</u> intrinsic descriptions.

3.1.2 We return to the argument of 1.3.2.

3.1.2.1 Davidson has argued that explantion by redescription is compatible with causal explanation; and, in any case, that the proponent of LCA mistakes what is merely a grammatical link between independent descriptions for redescription.

3.1.3 Davidson's last reply applies with equal force to the arguments based on D_1 and D_2.

3.2 Davidson considers that, given a dispositional analysis of wanting, his thesis that reasons are causes of actions comes under attack from the entailment version of LCA, introduced in 1.6. Davidson's main defense here is to reject the dispositional analysis of wanting.

3.2.1 While Davidson's earlier arguments can be defended against further attacks, he has not made out his case against the dispositional analysis, nor, hence, against the entailment version of LCA.

3.2.2 Davidson can be further criticised, however, for thinking that the descriptions of reasons are fixed under C1, and that C1 is a condition on their description in the first place. Thus his defense against the entailment argument seems unnecessary.

3.2.3 Moreover, if we suppose that the entailment argument rests upon the assumption that there are no alternative descriptions, under which the implication fails, then that argument is easily shown mistaken.

3.3.1 The development of an argument given by David Pears suggests that either DER does not imply D_1—D_4, or else DER is false.

3.3.1.1 This suggests a comment on the argument of 1.4.

3.3.2 J. L. Mackie has an argument against the implication from DER to D_2.

3.3.3 It seems plausible to suppose that DER implies D_1, and is therefore false.

3.3.4 However, DER does not imply D_3 or D_4.

3.3.5 If DER did imply D_3 or D_4 it would be false.

3.3.6 Moreover, DER would be false if it implied D_1, D_2, or a condition (P). But DER does imply D_1 and (P), and therefore is false.

3.4 DER falls into two parts, the first of which is obviously recoverable.

4. VERIFICATION AND ENTAILMENT

4.1 Let us consider a reformulation of the entailment argument.

4.1.1 Two common lines of criticism are worth considering.

4.1.2 However, the entailment argument does not, in any case, survive the criticism that RID is not a condition on cause and effect.

4.2.1 This leads us to consider von Wright's construal of the issue between the causal theorist and the defender of LCA in terms of the practical syllogism (PI).

4.2.2 Whatever the nature of the "entailment" relation between the premises and conclusion of the practical syllogism, it cannot deliver the LCA conclusion.

4.3 We may now consider von Wright's requirement of independent verifiability (RIV) and its place in his argument.

4.3.1 Von Wright has not shown that RIV is not satisfied.

4.3.2 Indeed, it can be argued that RIV is satisfiable for standard cases.

4.3.3 Examination of von Wright's arguments for the inter-
dependence of verification of the premises and conclusion
of the practical syllogism reveals (a) that the practical
syllogism is an inappropriate device for establishing
the LCA conclusion via RIV; (b) that von Wright relies
upon a Wittgensteinian argument which, if it were acc-
epted, makes the whole of the rest of his argument
otiose, and (c) that, in the way he construes them, the
premises and conclusion of the practical syllogism are,
strictly speaking, not verifiable.

4.3.4 The Wittgensteinian analysis itself is cloudy or even
confused.

4.3.5 The whole of von Wright's argument is undercut by
considerations of Chapter 3, which show that neither
DER nor, indeed, RIV are conditions on cause and effect.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any University.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.