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The Logical Connection Argument

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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 redescribes the action, so that the descriptions are not appropriately 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 de dicto principles are to be considered, although comments are offered on de re 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 actions. 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 constitute 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 tying 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 adequate intrinsic descriptions.

3.1.2 We return to the argument of 1.3.2.

3.1.2.1 Davidson has argued that explanation 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 $D_1 \text{---} D_4$, 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 interdependence 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 accepted, 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.

I am indebted to M. C. Bradley, who has patiently supervised this thesis, and from whom I have learnt most of what I know about philosophical analysis.

Formulations of the Argument

1.1 The various arguments which may be subsumed under the rubric "The Logical Connection Argument" have undoubtedly sustained one of the most vigorous debates in the philosophy of action. A mark of this is the now established convention, which I shall adopt, of referring to such an argument by the acronym 'LCA'. LCA aims primarily to show that human actions do not have psychological causes, and hence are not causally explicable in those terms, because psychological occurrences do not have the requisite logical qualifications to count as the causes of actions. Yet, in spite of considerable exchange in the literature, many of the issues involved have remained hazy. As I hope to make clear, this is partly due to the fact that the various versions of LCA differ in ways which have not always been properly distinguished, either by proponents or antagonists. Our first task, then, is to separate these various versions of LCA and, where appropriate, to indicate their relationships.

1.2 One much quoted source of LCA is A. I. Melden's book Free Action.¹ Indeed, Melden puts a number of formulations of

¹(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961). Views similar to Melden's have been expressed by a large number

the argument as forcefully as any writer, so that we may, without prejudice to LCA, begin by considering what he has to say. In Free Action, and elsewhere,² Melden attempts to establish that causal theories of action are not only false, but radically confused. He claims that reference to a person's motives or desires, for example, does not explain that person's actions by indicating inner causes, but rather by redescribing the action. Thus, he tells us:

Traditionally, [motives and desires] have been construed as causal factors, internal thrusts or pushes that issue in movements or actions, the distinction between which has generally been obscured by the muddying term 'overt behaviour'. But the connection between these and action is . . . a logical connection, not causal. It is impossible to grasp the concepts of motive and desire independently of the concept of an action. And, further, the sense in which a motive or a desire explains an item of conduct is altogether different from the sense in which, say, the presence of a spark explains the explosion of a mixture of petrol vapour and air. Our concern with matters of conduct, in inquiring into a man's motive or desire, is not . . . to discover how it is that a case of a bodily movement, now understood as an action, has been produced. Our concern, rather, is to learn something more about the character of both the man and his action.³

Behind these claims, and others like them, lies a general requirement, attributed to Hume, that contenders for the

of writers. See, for example, in the same series, R. S. Peters, The Concept of Motivation (1958), pp. 18-26; Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy (1958), Chap. 5; Anthony Kenny, Action, Emotion and Will (1963), p.60.

²Notably in 'Desires as Causes of Actions,' in Current Philosophical Issues: Essays in Honour of Curt John Ducasse, comp. and ed. Frederick C. Dommeyer (Springfield, Ill: Thomas, 1966).

³Melden, Free Action, pp. 171-72.

relation of cause and effect be "distinct existents such that the occurrence of either is logically independent of the other".⁴ So Melden's claim is that this requirement is not satisfied by motives, desires, and so on, and the actions which they explain.

In Book I of the Treatise, Hume, commenting on the idea of necessary connection, says that:

. . . nothing is more evident, than that the human mind cannot form such an idea of two objects, as to conceive any connexion betwixt them, or comprehend distinctly that power or efficacy, by which they are united. Such a connexion wou'd amount to a demonstration and wou'd imply the absolute impossibility for the one object not to follow, or to be conceiv'd not to follow upon the other: which kind of connexion has already been rejected in all cases.⁵

Later, in Book II, he says more specifically of cause and effect that:

All those objects, of which we call the one cause and the other effect, consider'd in themselves, are as distinct and separate from each other, as any two things in nature, nor can we ever, by the most accurate survey of them, infer the existence of the one from that of the other.⁶

Such statements, I presume, provide the warrant for what Melden takes as the distinct existences requirement, which I shall call 'DER' and formulate as follows:

DER If C causes E, then C and E are distinct existences, such that it is conceivable that either one can occur without the other.

⁴Melden, 'Desires as Causes of Actions,' p. 130.

⁵David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888), pp. 161-62.

⁶Ibid., p. 405.

1.3 Melden's standard move is to take DER to imply that there are certain requirements on the description of cause and effect, which may be summarized as the requirement that they be independently describable. I call this requirement 'RID', but the details must await further discussion.

The way is now paved for a number of applications of LCA, based on the following general line. The occurrences which the causal theorist claims are cause and effect cannot satisfy DER because they cannot satisfy RID; so causal theories fail. The applications differ, however, in the reasons given for the failure to comply with RID. Sometimes it is claimed that the appropriate descriptions are not to be found in our language. More often, however, the claim is the stronger one, that the needed descriptions logically cannot be produced. A third line of argument maintains that to refer to the motive or intention with which the agent acted is merely to give a further account of the action. That is, it is claimed that we do not have two events under consideration, as the causal theorist suggests, but only one under two different descriptions. The first two of these claims occur in a bundle of arguments which arise frequently throughout Free Action, and therefore will be taken together. The third I shall treat separately.

1.3.1 For the purposes of reformulating the first group of arguments we may, without undue distortion, impose the following structure. Let D_n be any condition placed on the description of cause and effect such that either

$D_n = \text{RID}$, or RID implies D_n . Since DER is a necessary condition on cause and effect,⁷ and given that DER implies RID as claimed, D_n is a necessary condition on cause and effect. Given all this, failure to comply with D_n is also failure to comply with DER . LCA may now be stated formally as follows. Let \underline{c} and \underline{e} , respectively, stand for the causal theorist's putative cause and effect, and let ' $\text{CR } x, y$ ' stand for ' x is the cause of y ', ' $\text{DER } x, y$ ' for ' x and y satisfy DER ', ' $\text{RID } x, y$ ' for ' x and y are describable in such a way as to satisfy RID ', and ' $D_n x, y$ ' for ' x and y are describable in such a way as to satisfy D_n '. Then,

- (1) $(x)(y)(\text{CR } x, y \rightarrow \text{DER } x, y)$
- (2) $(x)(y)(\text{DER } x, y \rightarrow \text{RID } x, y)$
- (3) $(x)(y)(\text{RID } x, y \rightarrow D_n x, y)$
- (4) - $D_n \underline{c}, \underline{e}$
- (5) $\text{CR } \underline{c}, \underline{e} \rightarrow \text{DER } \underline{c}, \underline{e}$ (1)
- (6) $\text{DER } \underline{c}, \underline{e} \rightarrow \text{RID } \underline{c}, \underline{e}$ (2)
- (7) $\text{RID } \underline{c}, \underline{e} \rightarrow D_n \underline{c}, \underline{e}$ (3)
- (8) - $\text{RID } \underline{c}, \underline{e}$ (4,7)
- (9) - $\text{DER } \underline{c}, \underline{e}$ (6,8)
- (10) - $\text{CR } \underline{c}, \underline{e}$ (5,9)

Let us now turn to the conditions D_n . Melden claims that "the pairs of events we come to identify as cause and effect must be identifiable and hence describable independently of that causal property that each has

⁷In taking cause and effect as "Humean" it is only this part of Hume's analysis which is adopted. This much of Hume's analysis is also assumed by all versions of LCA . To insist, as against Hume, that there is a necessary connection between cause and effect, renders LCA entirely misguided.

with respect to the other".⁸ Thus, in presenting his case against the theory of volitions, Melden says:

How shall we describe the alleged action of willing? Surely a description of this action independently of the consequence alleged for it—the production of a muscle movement—must be forthcoming. Let us call the act of willing A: then A produces B (a muscle movement), this being taken as a causal sequence. Now in general if A causes B, a description of A other than that it has the causal property of producing B must be forthcoming, otherwise 'A causes B' degenerates into 'the thing that produces B produces B'.⁹

Here we have a requirement falling under RID, which I will call 'D₁':

D₁ For C to be the cause of E, C must be describable other than as 'the cause of E'.¹⁰

Later in his discussion of volitions, Melden says that if volitions can only be understood as "the willing of a muscle movement", then "the willing in question cannot be a cause of the muscle movement, since the reference to the muscle movement is involved in the very description of the willing".¹¹ Again, arguing against the causal efficacy of desires, he states: "If the relation [between desire and action] were causal, the wanting to do would be describable independently of any reference to the doing".¹² Hence D₂:

⁸Melden, 'Desires as Causes of Actions,' p. 131.

⁹Melden, Free Action, p. 46. See also, D. A. Browne, 'Can Desires Be Causes of Actions?' Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary Volume 1, Part 2 (1974), pp. 145-58.

¹⁰For present purposes we need only frame the requirements to cover descriptions of putative causes, since this is where the deficiency is claimed to lie.

¹¹Melden, Free Action, pp. 54-55.

¹²Ibid., p. 128. See also, Richard Taylor, Action and Purpose (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 72, 222-23.

D₂ For C to be the cause of E, C must be describable without reference to E.

However, Melden also makes the stronger claim that the desire, as Humean impression, "must be describable without reference to any event or object distinct from it".¹³ And a little later, when discussing the suggestion that endeavour might be a causal factor in obtaining what is desired, he says that if this were so, "it would be possible to describe [the endeavour] without referring in any way to anything else in or out of the proceedings".¹⁴ Elsewhere, Melden infers this same requirement from the claim that "every entity that does or can stand in causal relations not only has relational properties, but intrinsic properties as well".¹⁵ This gives us D₃:

D₃ For C to be the cause of E, C must be describable by reference to its intrinsic properties.

Later (in Chapter 3) we will find that Melden must be interpreted as insisting on a yet stronger interpretation of RID. For now, however, and favourably to Melden, we may take him as claiming that, in any given case, RID is satisfied only if each of these three conditions is satisfied. It should be noted, moreover, that if D₃ is satisfied then both D₁ and D₂ are satisfied also.

Let us turn to the arguments for the claim that D_n is not satisfied for c and e. We should note that the

¹³Melden, Free Action, p. 114.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁵Melden, 'Desires as Causes of Actions,' p. 131.

reasons given for the failure to satisfy D_n fall into two groups. Sometimes it is claimed that the needed descriptions are not forthcoming; in other places it is claimed that is not logically possible to produce them. Thus we should distinguish between the claim that D_n is not satisfied, and the stronger claim that it is not satisfiable.

In the case of volitions, Melden concludes that descriptions independent of the volition's putative causal efficacy are not forthcoming.¹⁶ The claim is that D_1 is not satisfied. When he does finally raise the issue of the logical possibility of independent descriptions of volitions, we find that Melden is addressing himself to D_2 rather than D_1 . He says that "no account of the alleged volitions is intelligible that does not involve a reference to the relevant bodily phenomena".¹⁷ Parallel claims for other putative causes of actions also occur throughout Free Action. Melden says in his discussion of desires as causes, for example, that:

If the relation were causal, the wanting to do would be, indeed must be, describable independently of any reference to the doing. But it is logically essential to the wanting that it is the wanting to do something of the required sort with the thing one has.¹⁸

Of course, claims of this sort also provide a ground for the stronger thesis, that a desire, for example, logically

¹⁶More accurately, Melden considers that there are no satisfactory alternative descriptions. He does discuss the suggestion that volitions are to be considered as sui generis and, hence, as describable by a set of primitive terms introduced for the purpose. See Free Action, Chapter V. For further comment on this see Chapter 3 below, and M. C. Bradley, 'Two Logical Connection Arguments and Some Principles about Causal Connection,' Erkenntnis, forthcoming.

¹⁷Melden, Free Action, p. 53.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 128.

cannot fulfil the condition that "as Humean cause or internal impression, it must be describable without reference to anything else", which is the requirement D_3 .¹⁹ Indeed, claims which imply that D_3 is not satisfiable abound. Thus, for example, we are further told of desires that "no account is intelligible that does not refer us to the thing desired", and that "any description of the desire involves a logically necessary connection with the thing desired".²⁰ These sorts of claims are a feature of Melden's discussion, and it is perhaps unnecessary to give further examples at this stage, taking those above as representative.

1.3.2 I now come to the version of LCA based on the claim that, since ascription of reasons, intentions, motives, and so on, is in fact redescription of actions, we do not have distinct events but simply two descriptions of the one event. In discussing a driver's motive in signalling a turn, for example, Melden claims that:

As the alleged cause of the action, it cannot serve further to characterize the action. As motive it must—for it tells us what in fact the person was doing. It informs us, qua motive, that the action of raising the arm was in fact the action of giving information to others to the effect that the driver was preparing to make a turn In short, citing the motive was giving a fuller characterization of the action; it was indeed providing a better understanding of what the driver was doing.²¹

¹⁹Ibid., p. 114.

²⁰Ibid., p. 114. Other proponents of LCA as formulated in this section are Charles Taylor, in The Explanation of Behaviour (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 11; T. F. Daveney, 'Intentions and Causes,' Analysis 27 (1966), p. 23; Alan White, The Philosophy of Mind (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 147.

²¹Melden, Free Action, p. 88.

Again he says:

The incoherence involved in the doctrine of acts of volition is the confounding of two quite distinct senses of 'explanation': causal explanation with the familiar explanation of conduct in terms of motives. To the extent to which Humean causes of anything taking place when a person acts are cited, no action is being explained in this familiar and important sense. To the extent to which an action is being explained in this same sense of the term, no reference to an interior mental occurrence is being made.²²

In short, it is being claimed that those so-called psychological descriptions which we use in explaining an agent's conduct are in fact action descriptions. They are therefore not appropriately independent descriptions (even on D₂). DER is not satisfied, and the positing of a causal relationship is fundamentally confused.

- 1.4 Donald Gustafson identifies yet another form of LCA in Melden's writings.²³ Melden claims that DER allows, not just that causes can sensibly be supposed to occur in the absence of their effects (and vice versa), but that it is at least conceivable that this should always be so. However, according to Melden, the claim that desires, say, might never have accompanied the actions that they are supposed to cause, is incoherent:

If there is a Humean causal relation between our desires and our doings such that, given our desires, certain relevant doings invariably occur, then it is

²²Ibid., p. 90. See also C. Taylor, The Explanation of Behaviour, p. 37.

²³Donald Gustafson, 'A Critical Survey of the Reasons vs. Causes Arguments in Recent Philosophy of Action,' Metaphilosophy 4 (1973), pp. 269-97.

at least thinkable that no desire should ever have this consequence. But, since this is the alleged elucidation of the sense in which desires cause agents to do something about what it is that they want, the independence requirement amounts to the claim that it is at least thinkable that no desire of any kind ever causes any agent to try to do anything about it. This is not merely false, odd or fantastic; it is incoherent.²⁴

It is difficult to make sense of this argument—at least, given that it is supposed to establish that desires cannot be causes. Even so, we need to ask why Melden thinks it incoherent to suppose that desires never "cause" actions. Surely we can conceive of the world as being vastly different from what in fact it is. What Melden maintains, however, is that "the supposition does more than pose a radical change in the actual course of nature; rather, it presents us with circumstances in which our concept of desire no longer has any application"²⁵—hence the incoherence.

- 1.5 In his book Explanation and Understanding, G. H. von Wright argues that, while Melden and others who have advanced LCA are substantially correct, the articulation of the argument has been, to varying degrees, defective.²⁶ He attempts to remedy this by reformulating LCA using the notion of verification:

A good way of tackling the logical connection argument is in terms of verification. Let it be asked how, in a given case, one ascertains (verifies) whether

²⁴Melden, 'Desires as Causes of Actions,' pp. 132-33.

²⁵Ibid., p. 133.

²⁶(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 93-94.

an agent has a certain intention, "wills" a certain thing—and also how one finds out whether his behaviour is of a kind which his intention or will is supposed to cause. Should it turn out that one cannot answer the one question without also answering the other, then the intention or will cannot be a (humean) cause of his behaviour. The facts which one tries to establish would not be logically independent of one another.²⁷

In order to tackle the problem of verification, however, von Wright first introduces a practical syllogism (PI):

(PI) A intends to bring about p.

A considers that he cannot bring about p unless he does a.

Therefore A sets himself to do a.²⁸

He then argues that the issue between the causal theorist, or "causalist", and the proponents of LCA, whom he calls "intentionalists", can be seen by considering their respective views as to the validity of the practical syllogism. Von Wright tells us that, according to the latter, the premises and conclusion of the practical syllogism, when properly formulated, exhibit an entailment relation. Presumably, then, von Wright holds that when (PI) is properly formulated it becomes deductively valid. Not so according to the causal theorist, however, for he would require at least the addition of a relevant covering law to the list of premises before allowing that they entail the conclusion. But then (PI) would have the form of an ordinary covering-law explanation. In any case, according to the causal theorist, (PI) is a causal inference.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 94-95. Cf. R. Taylor, Action and Purpose, pp. 51-52. According to Taylor, an action entails a want because it is our entire criterion for saying what an agent wanted.

²⁸von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, p. 96.

Von Wright proceeds to modify (PI) in various ways in order to account for a variety of possibilities which render the original formulation inadequate. Finally he arrives at the following schema which, I take it, is held to be logically binding:

From now on A intends to bring about p at time t.

From now on A considers that, unless he does a at no later than at t', he cannot bring about p at time t.

Therefore, no later than when he thinks time t' has arrived, A sets himself to do a, unless he forgets about the time or is prevented.²⁹

Coming to the issue of verification, von Wright informs us that the problem of whether there is a causal or a logical relation between the premises and conclusion of the practical syllogism can be settled by attention to the further problem of how the statements which go to make up the syllogism can be confirmed or disconfirmed. Roughly, he argues that there is no way of verifying the premises of the practical syllogism without also verifying the conclusion and, conversely, that we cannot verify the conclusion without also verifying the premises. Von Wright concludes that the interdependence of the verification of the premises and conclusion of the practical syllogism shows that the facts to be established are not logically independent, and hence exclude a causal relation between the intention-belief complex and the action which it explains.

²⁹Ibid., p. 107.

1.6 While von Wright's is the only comprehensive treatment of LCA in terms of verification, the claim that the statement of intention and belief entail the action statement has been widely argued in support of the LCA conclusion. For example, M. F. Cohen writes:

Motive explanations of human behaviour violate the contingency principle of empirical causality because there is an internal relationship between a motive explanation and the statement of the action which it is an explanation of. This internal relationship holds because of the way in which (1) motives, (2) beliefs about how things may be brought about in the world, and (3) actions are related. The intimate connection between these . . . is this: a motive explanation of a particular action ascribes not only a motive (a want, or desire, etc.) but a belief or beliefs to the person who performed the action. That is, the action does not follow from a desire or want alone but from the desire or want together with a particular belief or set of beliefs. But the motive and belief taken together determine in an a priori fashion what action can be said to follow from the desire. Hence the connection between the motive explanation and the statement of the action which it explains is not empirical but analytic, and the motive explanation fails to satisfy the contingency principle of empirical causality.³⁰

Hence we may also treat the entailment claim separately from the issue of verification.

1.7 Finally, I note that there is yet another version of LCA, although I will not be considering it below. As we have seen, it is a common theme of proponents of LCA that there is a necessary relation holding between descriptions of psychological occurrences and descriptions of actions, and that this precludes a causal relation between the events described. However, some advocates of LCA are prone to slide

³⁰Mendel F. Cohen, 'Motives, Causal Necessity, and Moral Accountability,' Australasian Journal of Philosophy 42 (1964), p. 331. See also Melden, Free Action, pp. 88, 90; R. Taylor, Action and Purpose, pp. 51-52; C. Taylor, The Explanation of Behaviour, p. 33.

into talking about necessary relations between the occurrences themselves—not just between descriptions of them. In positing a relation of de re necessity, which then precludes a causal relation, a quite distinct version of LCA is formed.³¹

In Melden's discussion of motives, for example, we are presented with the case of a driver who raises his arm as he approaches an intersection. After some discussion Melden concludes:

From the driver's statement that he raised his arm in order to inform others of what he was about to do [i.e., turn at the intersection], it follows logically that he was signalling or at least attempting to signal. If, then, the motive were some event either concurrent with or antecedent to the action of raising the arm, there would need to be a logically necessary connection between two distinct events—the alleged motive and the action, however it is described. This is impossible if the sequence motive→action is a causal relation.³²

First we are told that, from the fact that the driver's motive in raising his arm was to inform others that he was about to turn at the intersection, it follows logically that he was signalling. From this Melden concludes that, if the motive and action are to be conceived of as occurrences in an appropriate temporal relation, the occurrence which is the motive and the occurrence which is the action are connected by logical necessity. That the logical necessity is a relation between occurrences, and not between descriptions of them, is reinforced by the claim that this

³¹For a discussion see W. D. Gean, 'The Logical Connection Argument and de re Necessity,' American Philosophical Quarterly 12 (1975), pp. 349-54, and Robert C. Richardson, 'A Revised "Logical Connection" Argument,' Philosophical Studies 27 (1975), pp. 217-20.

³²Melden, Free Action, pp. 88-89.

relation holds independently of how the occurrences are described. Finally, it is the logically necessary connection between the occurrence of the motive and the occurrence of the action which precludes a causal relation between them.

As the considerations involved in assessing the essentialist claim embodied in this version of LCA diverge from those which arise from the other arguments presented above, I shall set this case aside. However, it is worth noting that a general essentialist doctrine asserting necessary connections between distinct occurrences is the very doctrine which Hume argues against in his discussion of necessary connection.³³ One cannot consistently argue both for it and LCA. Even a restricted essentialist claim, which is presumably what would be required here, would run counter to Hume. For Hume's doctrine, that there is no necessary connection between the occurrence of the cause and that of the effect, is, at least in part, founded on an independence claim taken to apply quite generally to all distinct occurrences.

³³Treatise, Book I, Section XIV.

Causal Theories of Action

2.1. Before attempting to evaluate the arguments of the first chapter, we should establish precisely what causal theorists are maintaining. Indeed it is especially important to do so, for, as we shall see, there is not just one causal theory of action. Rather, quite different, even incompatible, theories are offered; so that while some version of LCA might well hold against one causal theory it may well fail against another.

As a preliminary point, we should note that not all theories of human behaviour aim to give a causal account of actions. Instead, it is sometimes maintained that our ordinary notion of human action has no place in the scientific study of behaviour. Or, more radically, it is denied that there are any such things as actions to be explained in the first place. Now, regardless of their tenability, these views have attracted firm adherents in psychology and elsewhere. One result of this is the widespread use of terms like 'overt response' and 'organism' in place of the ordinary words 'action' and 'person'; and, on the other hand, the reorientation of words like 'behaviour' and 'performance' when employed as technical terms. At the very least, the adoption of this vocabulary marks a refusal to distinguish between bodily movements

and actions. However, whether a case can be made for this way of talking, or whether, as Melden complains,¹ the categories of action and bodily movement have been wantonly conflated, is an issue I shall not consider here. At least for present purposes, I shall assume that this distinction needs to be maintained and so concentrate on those causal theories which attempt to account for human action.

We must be careful to distinguish here between causal theories which, like those mentioned above, do not recognise actions as a special class of occurrences, and those which reduce actions to bodily occurrences, such as movements of limbs and muscles, on the basis of their causal antecedents. For an action may be taken as a bodily sequence which has certain causal antecedents, quite different in kind from those of, say, a reflex jerk or spasmodic display. Thus David Pears tells us that the causal theorist

. . . is using the word 'action' proleptically. That is to say, when he says that practical desires cause actions, he means that they cause bodily movements, which, because they are so caused, are the actions that they are.²

Secondly, there is another formulation of a causal theory which I shall not be defending below. According to this theory an action is a bodily sequence together with

¹See Free Action, p. 200f.

²David Pears, 'Desires as Causes of Actions,' in The Human Agent: Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, Vol. 1 (Glasgow, 1968), p. 92. Cf. Frederick Stoutland, 'The Logical Connection Argument,' American Philosophical Quarterly, Monograph Series, 4 (1970), pp. 117-29, esp. pp. 118-19. On Stoutland's interpretation, the causal theory does not seem to be an action theory, at least in as much as it fails to specify the causes of actions.

certain of its causal antecedents. Thus a causal sequence of the kind volition→bodily movement may be held to constitute an action.³ For I raise my arm, for example—as opposed to my arm's merely going up—by moving certain muscles (and having the muscle movements cause the arm to rise). According to the theory of volitions, I do this by willing my muscles to move (and having them move as a result). So I raise my arm by moving my muscles, and I move my muscles by an act of will. The causal sequence volition→muscle movement→arm movement constitutes the action of raising the arm. On this account we must look further afield for the causes of the action. Perhaps, immediately, to certain neurological events, and then beyond to a wide range of environmental factors.

I wish to contrast this theory with those which take desires, motives, beliefs, and so on, or some combination of these, as the causes of actions. Following Mackie,⁴ that contrast can perhaps best be put as follows. "A's raising of his arm" is taken by what we may call the constitutive theory to be redescribable as the causal relation,

A's desiring to raise his arm→A's arm rising.
According to a causal theory of this kind, one is mistaken in taking the effect of the desire to be describable as "A's raising of his arm", for that is, in effect, to incorporate the description of the desire in the descrip-

³See, for example, J. L. Mackie, The Cement of the Universe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 288.

⁴Ibid., p. 288.

tion of the effect. That is to say, to state the causal relation as,

A's desire to raise his arm \rightarrow A's raising of his arm is taken as stating the peculiar claim that,

A's desire to raise his arm \rightarrow (A's desire to raise his arm \rightarrow A's arm rising).

As this analysis shows, these two sorts of causal theory are not logically compatible. The statement of the causal relation as one where desires are causes of actions, analyses as a nonsensical claim given the redescription of "A's raising of his arm" which is proffered by the constitutive theory.

By not supplying a defence of the constitutive theory I do not mean to imply that the theory is not worth defending. Rather, I do not do so because LCA is not usually an attack upon it, but upon causal theories of the contrasting sort. Moreover, it is the other sort of formulation that most causal theorists have been taking themselves to defend (pace Mackie).

- 2.2. Traditionally, the causal account takes actions to be caused by inner mental processes or events. An agent's actions are variously held to result from such things as his motives, reasons, intentions, and desires. It is now generally recognized, however, that, strictly speaking, these inner mental events could not by themselves be causally productive of the actions they are taken to explain, but must be accompanied by some appropriate belief or beliefs. A well known formulation of this view is that defended by Donald Davidson in his paper 'Actions,

Reasons, and Causes'.⁵ Davidson maintains that, when an agent acts for a reason, the agent's reason is the cause of that action. More precisely, if R is the primary reason why an agent performed an action, then R is the cause of that action; where a primary reason consists of a pro-attitude of the agent towards actions of a certain kind, and his belief that the action in question is of that kind.

While I shall mainly be concerned to defend a Davidsonian version of the causal theory against the onslaughts of LCA, I also hope to show that the simpler theories (such as, that desires are a cause of actions) do not fall to those arguments.

2.3. It is proper here to briefly consider further the part bodily functioning is held to play in a causal theory. Obviously positing a simple causal relation of the sort desire→action or (desire, belief)→action is taking a somewhat schematic or synoptic view of the proceedings. It is not seriously in doubt that mention of efferent nerve firings, muscle contractions, and so on, must be written into the fine print of an adequate causal theory; but let us take this for granted.

A more controversial contention, and one obviously relevant to LCA, arises from materialist accounts of mental occurrences. According to a standard materialist line, if intentions, desires, and so forth,

⁵Journal of Philosophy 60 (1963), pp. 685-700.

are to figure in our causal theory at all, then they are to be seen as identical with certain physical occurrences (usually taken to be brain-processes). Alternatively, some materialists argue that, given suitable progress in neurophysiology, these mental entities will come to be seen as non-existent, and that the function we now take them to perform is in fact performed by certain brain-processes. The view that desires, for example, are nothing over and above certain brain-processes gives us an Identity Theory of desire along the lines proposed for sensations by J. J. C. Smart and others.⁶ The second position suggests the theory of Eliminative Materialism, first proposed by Richard Rorty.⁷ In following Rorty, we might say, not that desires are identical with certain brain-processes, but that what people now call 'desires' are nothing but brain-processes.

On an eliminative theory of desire there are no desires, no matter how they are conceived; and, by an extension of the theory, no reasons, volitions, intentions, and so on.⁸ Thus causal theories which propose desires, say, as a cause of actions are taken to be mistaken. For

⁶See J. J. C. Smart, 'Sensations and Brain Processes,' Philosophical Review 68 (1959), pp. 141-56.

⁷See his 'Mind-Body Identity, Privacy and Categories,' Review of Metaphysics 19 (1965), pp. 24-54.

⁸It has been suggested that Rorty's account does leave us with sensations, in some sense of 'sensations' (and, by analogy, in the present case we would be left with desires, and so on, in some sense of 'desires'). However, this is clearly a misinterpretation of Rorty. See my "'Rorty Revisited' or 'Rorty Revised'?", Philosophical Studies, forthcoming.

this reason we may put eliminative theories aside in the present discussion. On the other hand, the proponent of LCA does have to contend with reductive materialism.

Some Replies to LCA

3.1 Recall from Chapter 1 that one group of the arguments from the Requirement of Independent Descriptions rests upon four premises:

- (1) $(x)(y)(CR\ x, y \longrightarrow DER\ x, y)$
- (2) $(x)(y)(DER\ x, y \longrightarrow RID\ x, y)$
- (3) $(x)(y)(RID\ x, y \longrightarrow D_n\ x, y)$
- (4) $\neg D_n\ \underline{c}, \underline{e}$

The first premise represents the Humean claim that cause and effect must satisfy the Distinct Existences Requirement, and must eventually be brought into question. First, however, premises (2) to (4) are subjected to a number of challenges. It should be borne in mind that the inclusion of premise (3) is just a formal procedure which allows us to take the conditions D_n separately. Otherwise premise (3) would read,

- (3) $\neg RID\ \underline{c}, \underline{e}$

and the argument would be correspondingly shorter.

3.1.1 The first line of reply which I wish to consider is that the charge that the descriptions required under RID are not forthcoming, let alone that they cannot be produced on logical grounds, is plainly false.

3.1.1.1 Firstly, whatever problems confront the defender of a materialist Identity Theory for psychological occurrences, they do not lie with D_1 — D_3 . For the identity theorist, desires, volitions, and so on, have an abundance of neurological properties. So he will have little trouble providing descriptions which meet D_1 — D_3 . Of course, as David Pears points out,¹ neurophysiology is not yet in a position to give substantial support to the materialist, let alone provide the specific descriptions that he requires for particular cases. However, the materialist can plead for time here, by maintaining that the needed descriptions will be forthcoming, and in abundance.

3.1.1.2 Short of tendering a materialist account of action, can we still show that the descriptions required on D_1 — D_3 are available? Let us consider just D_1 and D_2 to begin with, and see if descriptions satisfying these conditions can be produced.

One reason for thinking that they can be given is that desires, volitions, and so forth, are datable. Thus, suppose that I had some volition v_1 ; then it follows that I had that volition at some time t_1 . So v_1 is not only describable in terms of the willing of a muscle movement, but also by reference to an appropriate temporal marker. Indeed, quite a variety of such descriptions may be available, depending upon the case. For example, take the volition which putatively caused me to raise my bed-

¹David Pears, 'Are Reasons for Actions Causes?' in A. Stroll (ed.), Epistemology, New Essays in the Theory of Knowledge (Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 204-28.

room blind this morning. This may, in turn, be described as 'the volition I had at 7.34 this morning', or as 'the volition I had on last stepping from my bed', or again as 'the volition I had immediately upon rising today'. Presumably similar sorts of descriptions are, in principle, available for motives, desires, and the rest. Clearly, none of these descriptions need make any reference to the relevant bodily phenomena, or object (of desire, etc.), or to the action of getting or trying to get anything at all via the volition, desire, and so on; so that they appear to satisfy D_1 and D_2 .²

I suspect that the most likely rejoinder by the proponent of LCA would be to the effect that these so-called "descriptions" are inadequate. Agreed, they tell us when the volition or desire is supposed to have occurred, but, significantly, they tell us nothing about its character. Surely, if we have had that volition or desire, we must be able to say more about it than that.

Now certainly we may be hard-pressed to provide yet further descriptions of these supposed inner goings-on. Although, perhaps, we might begin by explaining this as being due to the fact that volitions, and so on, are sui generis. Indeed if we do adopt this stance we are provided with a means of introducing the additional descriptions. For, while it is admitted that we do not already have the appropriate terms in the language, we

²This argument can be found, for example, in Jerry A. Fodor, Psychological Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Psychology (Random House, 1968), p. 35, and in M. C. Bradley, 'Two Logical Connection Arguments...'

could always introduce a primitive vocabulary for that purpose, and it would, presumably, satisfy both D_1 and D_2 .

Now Melden does consider this move in his discussion of volition.³ However, he comments that the resort to indefinables, in maintaining not only that volitions are themselves indefinable, but that the differences between them are indefinable as well, "carries philosophical pretension beyond all limits of credulity" and "makes a mystery of the most commonplace matter."⁴

Both the charge of inadequacy and of obscurantism can be given quick reply, however, for although it would be desirable to have further descriptions, and while talk of indefinables may be regarded as deplorable, neither charge is relevant to the claim that D_1 and D_2 have been satisfied. Both the use of the temporal marker and the primitive terms enable the causal theorist to satisfy D_1 and D_2 ; for D_1 and D_2 specify requirements relating to the independence of descriptions—not to the richness of the characterisations given, or to the exercising of certain philosophical scruples. It may, of course, be claimed that D_1 and D_2 can be amended to exclude satisfaction by these (admittedly minimal) descriptions; but it should be pointed out that any such revision would have to be grounded in DER, and not

³See Free Action, pp. 47-50. It is also briefly touched upon in his discussion of desire; see pp. 181-82.

⁴Ibid., p. 50, p. 182.

arbitrarily introduced.⁵

3.1.1.3 Rather than trying to amend D_1 and D_2 at this stage, let us look at the argument based on D_3 . For, unless we were prepared to take temporal location, or what is captured in the primitive vocabulary, as intrinsic properties of volitions, desires, and so on, our proffered descriptions do not satisfy D_3 . Even so, we should note that they do falsify many of the claims made in Free Action which are supposed to show that the causal theorist's putative causes logically cannot be described in such a way as to satisfy D_3 . Both sorts of descriptions meet the charge brought against desires as causes, that "no account is intelligible that does not refer us to the thing desired"⁶; and at least the second meets that brought against endeavours, viz., "that the endeavour cannot possibly be a causal factor in the proceedings that issue in the getting of what is desired, since if it were, it would be possible to describe it without referring in any way to anything else in or out of the proceedings."⁷

Moreover, it seems that desires, beliefs, and so on, do have intrinsic properties, and that descriptions satisfying D_3 can be produced. At least we do speak of

⁵See D. A. Browne, 'Can Desires be Causes of Actions?' for further discussion. Browne utilizes a condition which is in effect a modification of D_1 , and argues that these minimal descriptions do not allow us to understand what desire is being referred to unless we also identify the desire as the cause of its putative effect.

⁶Melden, Free Action, p. 114. ⁷Ibid., p. 115.

desires, for example, as being strong, fleeting, swelling, and so forth; and surely this enables us to form descriptive statements in accordance with D_3 . (Of course, this fact also counts against the arguments based on D_1 and D_2 .) However, Melden does not overlook the fact that these descriptions are available. He states:

. . . such descriptions will not enable me to distinguish between the desire for wine and the desire for caviar, since predicates of this sort can be applied equally well to both of them. Here are two embarrassing questions similar to the ones raised [earlier] concerning the doctrine of acts of volition: How do desires in general differ from other mental events like expecting, hoping, wishing? And how does this desire—the one for caviar—differ from that one—the desire for wine?⁸

Now unless we are prepared to take Melden as claiming that the descriptive terms in question do not refer to intrinsic properties of desires and volitions at all, then we must now take him as saying, not that descriptions referring to intrinsic properties (for convenience, "intrinsic descriptions") cannot be given, but that no adequate intrinsic descriptions can be given. Where, following Melden's comments, we may take an adequate intrinsic description of an occurrence as one which, by reference to that occurrence's intrinsic properties alone, (a) identifies it as a member of its class (i.e., as a desire, say, rather than a hoping), and (b) differentiates it from other occurrences within that class. In short, an adequate intrinsic description of an occurrence uniquely selects it in terms of its intrinsic properties alone. So Melden is here, in effect, supp-

⁸Ibid., p. 113.

lanting the requirement D_3 with the stronger D_4 :

D_4 For C to be the cause of E, C must be amenable to adequate intrinsic description

with 'adequate' taken as roughly defined above.

Is Melden implicitly claiming that there are logical grounds for thinking that adequate intrinsic descriptions cannot be given, or merely that they are not forthcoming? What he actually does at this point is, first, to admonish us not to resort to indefinables as a means of avoiding the challenge; then, to proceed directly to the statement of D_3 and the supposed logical grounds for holding that this requirement cannot be satisfied. However, regardless of Melden's views about the resort to indefinables, I have already shown that this ground is not available. Further, when we looked for an alternative support, we found that Melden, in effect, strengthens D_3 to D_4 . He gives no further argument to show that D_4 is not satisfiable—although, doubtless, he would maintain that the needed descriptions are not forthcoming.

It is worth noting at this point that it is the stronger claim, namely, that RID is not satisfiable, which is required for the purposes of LCA. D_1 , for example, would be false if it required that we must have descriptions of C other than 'the cause of E' at hand. As with the case of the gene, we may have to wait for them.

- 3.1.2 As noted in Chapter 1, a further version of LCA stems from the claim that the descriptions taken by the causal theorist to denote inner causes of behaviour do not in fact refer to such explanatory antecedents, but rather describe the behaviour itself as a certain kind of public performance. So it is claimed that the causal theorist mistakes two descriptions of the one event for descriptions of two events, and hence confuses what is really explanation by redescription with causal explanation.⁹
- 3.1.2.1 In his widely acclaimed paper, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes', Donald Davidson provides a reply to this argument. Davidson admits that in explaining an action by giving the agent's reasons for acting we do often redescribe that action. However, he argues that it does not follow that reasons cannot be causes, for reasons, which Davidson takes as combinations of a belief and pro-attitude, are certainly not identical with the actions they explain. Moreover, he tells us, redescription of events in terms of their causes often occurs in unexceptional cases of causal explanation, where we redescribe the whole scene, or a part of it, in more detail. For example, we might explain a certain alpine

⁹The status of this line of argument is not always clear in Melden's presentation; see, for example, Free Action, page 213. This is perhaps due to the fact that it often occurs within the context of the statement of his positive Wittgensteinian thesis (that such things as desires and motives are not inner events or processes), where he is not concerned specifically with pursuing LCA.

accident by saying that the bus skidded on the icy road. Here the explanation is overtly causal, and even though we have described the effect in terms of its cause, we do not identify the effect with the cause.

While Davidson's points may appear to take the sting out of the argument from redescription, they form only a partial reply. Recall what Melden says in the case of a motive, for example:

As alleged cause of the action, it cannot serve further to characterize the action. As motive it must—¹⁰for it tells us what in fact the person was doing.

So while Davidson may have shown that Melden's first point here is mistaken, he still has to contend with the second. For it can be replied that, although in the case of ordinary causal explanations we can provide descriptions of the cause which do not refer to or characterize the effect, no such independent descriptions can be given for motives and the like.

However, Davidson argues to the effect that this second claim is also false. Say that I wanted to turn on the light and did so by flicking the switch at the door. My action may be described as 'my flicking the switch', and as having been caused by what is describable as 'my wanting to turn on the light'. Here, Davidson claims, there is not even the appearance of a logical connection between the want statement and the action statement. Further to this, W. D. Gean¹¹ argues that it

¹⁰Melden, Free Action, p. 88.

¹¹W. D. Gean, 'Reasons and Causes,' Review of Metaphysics 19 (1965), pp. 667-88. See page 680.

is only in a few cases even plausible that reason explanations provide us with a logical relation through redescription. That is, that the kind of description of reason and action which Davidson gives as an example is standard in reason explanations.

Even so, it might be claimed that there is in the want statement some reference to the action, and that this can be seen more clearly when we consider that the action which has been conveniently described as 'my flicking the switch' is the same action as that described by 'my turning on the light'.¹² But even if the action were to be described as 'my turning on the light', Davidson does not agree that the desire statement makes reference to the action. 'My turning on the light' refers to a particular event, with all its minute details, yet these are not implied by the want statement; the want would be equally well satisfied by widely differing events fulfilling the same function. Thus the action performed cannot be the object of my want. The relation between 'my wanting to turn on the light' and 'my turning on the light' is, appearances to the contrary, merely grammatical or verbal.

¹²Indeed Davidson claims that the two descriptions do refer to the same event. Also, it should be noted that the issue of rationalization is not relevant here, for we are now concerned with whether the desire statement refers to the event which is the action, rather than whether it does this under the description of the action which has explanatory force.

3.1.3 This last reply of Davidson's applies with equal force against the arguments based on D_1 and D_2 , for it is now claimed that those very sorts of descriptions which Melden and others take to illustrate their claims can in fact be shown to refute them.

3.2 Davidson does not think that he has satisfactorily dealt with LCA as yet. We must appreciate here that Davidson's thesis is that primary reasons are causes of actions—where a primary reason consists of a pro-attitude together with a belief of the agent—and that to explain an action by giving the agent's reason is to give a causal explanation of the action. Now Davidson notes that a reason only explains, or "rationalizes", an action when the action is appropriately described. The intensionality of action descriptions is to be captured by specifying the following necessary condition on primary reasons:

C1 R is a primary reason why an agent performed the action A under the description d only if R consists of a pro attitude of the agent towards actions with a certain property, and a belief of the agent that A , under the description d , has that property.¹³

Given this, Davidson envisages the objection that, under C1, R is the primary reason for an action only relative to some fixed description d of the action, and that the appropriate descriptions are not logically independent. That is, when set out in accord with C1, the primary reason will be seen to imply the action. So Davidson

¹³Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes,' p. 687.

is now plagued by the entailment version of LCA.¹⁴

Suppose, to return to the example, that 'A wanted to turn on the light' meant 'A would perform any action which he believed would result in the light going on'. Then the primary reason,

⟨A's wanting to turn on the light; A's belief that flicking the switch would turn on the light⟩

is identical with,

⟨A's being disposed to perform any action which he believed would result in the light going on; A's belief that flicking the switch would turn on the light⟩

and implies that A flicked the switch. What is now being argued is that 'wanting' is a dispositional notion and that, on a dispositional analysis of 'A wanted to turn on the light', it would be found that (at least ceteris paribus) the statement of the primary reason entails that the action is performed.

Davidson goes on to suggest that this consequence would not be as disastrous as it at first might seem. Dispositional statements in general, given the appropriate circumstances, logically imply the occurrence of their effects. Consider, for example,

- (1) It's water-soluble
- (2) It was placed in water

- (3) It dissolved

Although (1) and (2), together, imply (3), they form a genuine causal explanation of the dissolution. The dis-

¹⁴This version of LCA was introduced in 1.6.

advantage of this defence, however, is that if the explanation of actions in terms of reasons paralleled that of the solubility example, it would be relatively trivial. Solubility, being merely a simple dispositional property (i.e., being defined in terms of the single test of solution formation), is somewhat trivial as an explanation of the dissolution.¹⁵

However Davidson has another reply to the argument based on a dispositional analysis of wanting. Even though the relation between desire and action is admitted by him to be not just empirical, Davidson claims that desires cannot be defined dispositionally. For a start,

¹⁵The triviality of the solubility case should not be overestimated according to Davidson. As he points out, "'Placing it in water caused it to dissolve' does not entail 'It's water-soluble'; so the latter has additional explanatory force" ('Actions, Reasons, and Causes,' p. 696). Davidson also suggests how, given certain scientific knowledge, the explanation might lose its triviality altogether:

"... the explanation would be far more interesting if, in place of solubility, with its obvious definitional connection with the event to be explained, we refer to some property, say a particular crystalline structure, whose connection with dissolution in water was known only through experiment" ('Actions, Reasons, and Causes,' p. 696). Following Quine's comments in Word and Object (MIT Press, 1960, Sect. 46), this might be done in somewhat the following way. Suppose that it was discovered that only substances with a certain crystalline structure (or structures with certain characteristics) dissolved in water. Then, given the relative term \bar{C} , corresponding to 'alike in crystalline structure' (where 'alike' has been appropriately specified), 'x is soluble' could be paraphrased as

($\bar{C}y$)(Cxy and y dissolves).

The application of this move to actions has been criticised by Charles Taylor — see 3.2.2 below for a discussion.

they find expression in feelings and in various actions that they do not rationalize. Furthermore, desires and wants are quite intelligible in introspection and known in this way even when behavioural evidence is absent. Thus, according to Davidson, the dispositional account fails to show that the appropriately fixed descriptions are not logically independent because that account is itself defective.

- 3.2.1 Let us now consider Davidson's argument that there is no logical relation holding between 'my flicking the switch' and 'my turning on the light'. It has been argued that a logical relation between desire statements and action statements can be shown even where the descriptions are of the kind Davidson presents.¹⁶ The crux of this reply is that, in any case where we explain a person's doing X by saying that he wanted to do Y, it is necessary that the agent believed that doing X was a way of, or a step on the way towards, doing Y. Hence, explanation of an action X in terms of the agent's wanting to do Y implies that, for the agent, doing X was identical with, or at least a part of, accomplishing Y.¹⁷

¹⁶See, for example, Charles Taylor, 'Explaining Action,' Inquiry 13 (1970), pp. 54-89, and Richard Swinburne, The Concept of Miracle (Macmillan, 1970), p. 54.

¹⁷The same argument presumably applies to reasons. Indeed there is a close tie between this argument and Davidson's C1, so that a proponent of the argument might well point to C1 as favouring his claim. Thus, suppose that A under description d is 'my wanting to turn on the light', then, according to C1, the belief component of the primary reason must specify a belief of mine that flicking the switch has the property of turning on the

Whatever else may be said against this argument, I think that it can be replied on Davidson's behalf that it does not show that 'my wanting to turn on the light' is logically connected to 'my flicking the switch'. At most, it shows that they are so related if 'my wanting to turn on the light' and 'my turning on the light' are logically connected. But Davidson has already shown that, even here, the relation is not logical, but rather merely grammatical.

In 'Explaining Action', Charles Taylor takes Davidson's grounds for the claim that 'my wanting to turn on the light' and 'my turning on the light' are logically independent as those connected with Davidson's appraisal of the dispositional analysis of wanting. But, to reiterate, Davidson's ground for the independence claim is made earlier in his paper,¹⁸ when he tells us that we should not be taken in by the verbal parallel between 'my wanting to turn on the light' and 'my turning on the light' into thinking them logically connected.

Still, it might be thought that Taylor's observation is substantially correct, for Davidson tells us that if the dispositional analysis of 'my wanting to turn on the light' were correct, then the statement of the primary reason would entail that the action is

light, viz., 'my belief that flicking the switch would turn on the light'. Moreover, in considering an agent's explanation of his action, even in cases where we cannot ourselves see the connection between X and Y, we do not automatically reject the rationalization, for we must allow for the possibility that the agent saw, or (albeit mistakenly) thought he saw, a connection between X and Y which we do not.

¹⁸'Actions, Reasons, and Causes,' p. 687.

performed. However this concession would be a mistake; for, on the dispositional analysis of wanting, 'my wanting to turn on the light' analyses as a statement which implies the action only given, as a further premise, the appropriate belief statement. All the same, this does force us on to Davidson's further defense of his thesis. For although the pro-attitude statement may be logically independent of the action statement, as per the earlier arguments, this does not show that the pro-attitude statement and the belief statement, together, are not logically connected to, indeed imply, the action statement. And, especially in view of the claims of the entailment version of LCA, it is this latter claim that must be denied in maintaining that reasons are the causes of actions.

This brings us to an argument developed by Taylor in which he defends a dispositional analysis of wanting against Davidson's objections. Firstly, Taylor claims that Davidson's objections are "based on the belief that we can find another way of identifying the state of desiring X which does not involve recognizing it as a state of being disposed to do X."¹⁹ That is, Davidson is now being construed as maintaining that, although under the description of wants provided by the dispositional analysis the statement of the primary reason implies that the action occurs, the dispositional analysis is unsatisfactory because there are other, independent, descriptions of the want. And Taylor's

¹⁹Taylor, 'Explaining Action,' p. 62.

objection is that there simply are no such alternative descriptions. "We cannot", he says, "even imagine what such a mental state could be like which (a) would be picked out by a description which made no reference to dispositions, and yet (b) would be called 'the desire for X'."²⁰

Taylor contemplates that what Davidson might have had in mind here is a parallel between non-dispositional desire statements and cases like that of the solubility example. As noted in the last section, we might support the dispositional explanation of dissolution in water by reference to the crystalline structure of the substance. Alternatively, Taylor suggests, we might perform the same function by using a substitution such as 'This is S' (i.e., salt, or some other substance known by experiment to dissolve in water). The effect of either move is the same: substitution of a contingently linked term for one logically tied to the event to be explained—from pointing to the dispositional property of solubility, to mentioning other properties such as molecular arrangement. The trouble with this suggestion, Taylor argues, is that the analogy does not hold—mental-object terms do not denote multi-proprieted states or entities which can be picked out in introspection. Of course, Taylor admits that the claim that there are such entities has had a long philosophical history; but he suggests that, at least since Wittgenstein, they have been the subject of not only sustained but effective criticism. That it

²⁰Ibid., p. 63.

is only to be lamented that in the doctrine of "the furniture of the mind" we have had bequeathed to us one of the most "deeply entrenched traditional aberrations" of the old empiricism.²¹ So Taylor thinks that the quest for a non-dispositional language of desire would be as fruitless as the phenomenalist's search for a sense-datum language; that there is no scope for an appropriate primitive language to which the dispositional language of desire is secondary.

In reply to Taylor it might be noted that he only presents a partial argument to show that an alternative, non-dispositional, analysis of desires cannot be had; that the argument rests upon whether an alternative could in principle be found, and that here he finally presents the matter as a fait accompli. However, notwithstanding arguments to the contrary in 3.1.1.3 above, there is no need for us to adjudicate at this point. For even if we were to decide in Davidson's favour, it can be shown that, contrary to what Davidson takes himself to show, on his own view of the analysis of desire statements, the statement of the primary reason has not been shown not to imply the action.

Recall that according to Davidson the reason why desires cannot simply be defined dispositionally in terms of the actions that they rationalize is that (a)"there are other, equally essential criteria for desires—their expression in feelings and in actions that they do not rationalize, for example", and (b) that behavioural

²¹Ibid., p. 64.

criteria are not even necessary for identifying a desire, because "the person who has a desire . . . generally knows, even in the absence of clues available to others, what he wants, desires, and believes."²² Let me briefly gloss these points. On (a) Davidson appears to claim that desires cannot be defined in terms of the propensities of agents to perform the actions which they may rationalize. In part, this is because they are also characterized by the feelings with which they are associated. A dispositional analysis leaves this out of account. On (b) we are told that desires can be identified by the agent independently of any behavioural criteria at all; presumably, that is, in consciousness. Now (a) and (b) taken together are supposed to show that the definition of desires in terms of the actions they may rationalize is somehow inadequate. The trouble is that, if this is Davidson's argument, then it is not clear that the dispositional analysis is inadequate in the sense he requires.

Let us begin with (b)—the claim that reference to dispositions is, in general, not necessary for an agent to identify his wants and desires. Presumably it is not necessary because the agent knows his desires directly: "he normally does not need criteria at all". Now the qualification "normally" cannot be dispensed with here, for an agent can be mistaken about the

²²Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes,' p. 696.

nature of his real desires, or not even be especially aware of them, whatever may be the general rule. It cannot be denied that we sometimes only manage to identify our desires when someone points to the behavioural evidence. The main point, however, is that it is consistent with what Davidson says under (b) that what we are aware of (albeit vaguely) in being aware of our desires is, partly at least, that we have certain dispositions to action.

Now it may well be replied to this that what we are aware of in being aware of our desires is vague indeed, and not the sort of thing which can be specified in analysis at all.²³ Indeed, it may even be claimed that what (b) shows is that desire statements cannot be fully analysed. We know our own desires internally and immediately, so that here the question of criteria does not arise—we just know. No analysis of this aspect of desires is forthcoming, and to that extent they go unanalysed. Very well; but the only point that I need to make here is that, in so far as desire statements are analysable at all, there is nothing in (b) to show that disposition statements do not form a proper part of the analysis.

Turning now to (a), we find that Davidson claims that there are other "equally essential criteria"

²³This admission would of course be to concede to Taylor that no alternative description of desires is forthcoming from the considerations of (b), and so push the issue essentially back onto the relation between desires and feelings.

for identifying desires. One such criterion is supposedly the feelings in which desires find their expression. Now Taylor claims that the feelings which may accompany a desire are not specific to that desire and so do not really help in its identification. He says of a desire for peanuts, for example, that "throbs and pangs may accompany the desire . . . but qua throbs and pangs there is nothing to distinguish them from the throbs and pangs occasioned by some other desire, or even some other emotion."²⁴ This is reminiscent of Melden's criticism of descriptive terms applied to desires themselves (as we saw in 3.1.1.3 above), and it must be admitted that there is a general lack of specificity in both cases. Even so, it might be argued that these feelings do characterize a desire to some extent; some feelings being more desire specific than others. But whatever the case about other criteria like the relation between desires and feelings, Davidson does not seem to have shown more than that the analysis of desire statements would have to consist of a number of components: one component being a dispositional analysis; another a statement about the kinds of feelings associated with that sort of desire, and then perhaps some others. Once again we see that the analysis of desires in terms of the dispositions to actions that they may rationalize forms a part, if not the major part, of the analysis of want statements.

The upshot is that, while Davidson may be correct in maintaining that the envisaged dispositional analysis

²⁴Taylor, 'Explaining Actions,' p. 63.

is inadequate as a thoroughgoing analysis of desires, and that for a full account we need to support it with other statements, the analysis has not been shown to be inadequate in the sense he requires. Recall that Davidson's claim is that if desire statements were able to be defined in terms of certain dispositions to action, then "to say that a man wanted to turn on the light [would mean] that he would perform any action he believed would accomplish his end."²⁵ But Davidson has not shown that 'he wanted to turn on the light' does not mean 'he would perform any action he believed would accomplish his end'; it means that and more, for all Davidson has shown.

Thus Davidson fails in his attempt to refute LCA by showing that a dispositional analysis of wanting is inadequate. However, in that case it would seem that Davidson's whole argument against LCA fails. For even if 'my wanting to turn on the light' is logically independent of 'my flicking the switch' (or 'my turning on the light'), it is the want statement conjoined with the appropriate belief statement which must be shown independent of the action statement in denying that reasons cannot be causes. Yet, in the case he considers, Davidson has not shown that the appropriate descriptions of the want and belief are not logically connected to the action statement even in the strong sense of entailment.

²⁵Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes,' p. 696.

3.2.2 Davidson may be further criticised for supposing that to refute LCA one must not only supply descriptions fulfilling some independence requirement, but that these same descriptions must also satisfy Cl. This point has been raised by M. C. Bradley,²⁶ who takes the independence requirement on descriptions of cause and effect underlying these versions of LCA to be encapsulated in a condition (P):

- (P) If C causes E then there are definite singular terms \underline{t} , \underline{t}' , such that \underline{t} designates C, and \underline{t}' designates E, and—letting "T" abbreviate \underline{t} and "T'" abbreviate \underline{t}' —the following holds:
 $\overline{\text{T occurs and T' does not occur}}$ is logically possible.²⁷

Note that, if we were to follow Davidson, $\overline{\text{T occurs and T' does not occur}}$ is not logically possible straight off if "T occurs" entails "T' occurs" as the entailment version of LCA claims. For Davidson restricts T and T' to descriptions supposedly fixed by Cl. So (P) is just that condition which must be satisfied by the descriptions given under Cl in order to show that there is no entailment. Now Bradley is right to criticise Davidson here, for Cl is extraneous to (P). Even supposing that it is admitted that to perform the function of rationalization descriptions must satisfy Cl (where Cl is taken as a requirement which fixes descriptions), and that if the events to which these descriptions refer are cause and effect those events must be describable in a way satisfying (P), there is still no requirement that the same descrip-

²⁶In 'Two Logical Connection Arguments . . .'

²⁷Ibid.

tions do both jobs.

Further, as Bradley also points out, Davidson is in any case mistaken in taking C1 to be a condition which fixes descriptions of primary reasons, for C1 is not a condition on the description of primary reasons at all. Instead, C1 lays down a necessary condition on what events or states may count as a primary reason; it does not tell us how those events are to be described. C1 says that a primary reason must consist of (a) "a pro attitude of the agent toward actions with a certain property", and (b) "a belief of the agent that A, under the description d, has that property."²⁸ Hence a primary reason consists of a pro-attitude of the agent towards actions of a certain kind (say, having the property P), and a belief of the agent that the action under the appropriate description has P. How those events which satisfy C1 are to be described might depend upon the purpose to which the descriptions are to be put—but that is not a concern of C1.

In view of these two points, C1 is wholly irrelevant to the claim that descriptions of primary reasons need to be logically independent of the descriptions of their putative effects. Hence, while Davidson's attack on the dispositional analysis of wanting was found to be faulty, it would seem that it is not required in this context because it turns out to be motivated by an erroneous assumption.

²⁸Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes,' p. 687.

3.2.3 The proponent of the entailment version of LCA is not likely to be so easily satisfied. For he may deny that he is claiming merely that the entailment holds under some description of the primary reason. Rather, the claim is that it holds under all descriptions.²⁹ His confidence in asserting this stronger claim may be thought not obviously misplaced if we allow him the dispositional analysis of desire—and this is precisely what Davidson has failed to counter. Thus it is claimed that, under a dispositional analysis, any descriptions which are given of the primary reason will imply the action because of the meaning of 'desire', 'want', and so on.

Taking the dispositional analysis as it is found in Davidson,

²⁹Indeed that an entailment relation cannot hold under any description of cause and effect is obviously false. Say that a flash of lightning killed a cow. The flash is describable as 'the flash of lightning that killed the cow' and, under that description, the statement that such a flash occurred entails a statement which signifies the death of the cow. Hence it is the stronger claim which is required, viz., that the entailment holds under all descriptions.

The case is parallel when we consider the argument based on D₂. T. F. Daveney (in 'Intentions and Causes,' Analysis 27 (1966), pp. 23-28) at one point says,

"The causal relationship is a contingent one, and if one event identifies another as a term with which it is in relation, then that relationship cannot be causal" (p. 24).

If we are to make sense of this argument, the assumption here seems to be that if the descriptions of two events are such that there is a logical relation between them, then the events cannot be causally related. Yet as W. D. Gean points out (in 'The Logical Connection Argument and de re Necessity'), such a relation cannot preclude a causal relation. In the above example, the two events are so described that the logical relation, which Daveney speaks of, holds. But, given that these two events are causally related, surely they remain so no matter what description of them is offered. So the logical relation Daveney brings to our attention is compatible with a causal relation.

⟨my wanting to bring about P; my belief that A, under description d, would bring about P⟩

is identical with,

⟨my being disposed to perform any action which I believe would result in P; my belief that A, under description d, would result in P⟩

and implies that I do A. However, as we saw in 3.1.1.2 above, there are other descriptions of my want and belief. Suppose that my wanting to bring about P is the only want I had at t_1 , and my belief that A under d would bring about P is the belief I formed on first reading Hume's introduction to the Treatise. Then my want is describable as 'the want I had at t_1 ', and my belief is describable as 'the belief I formed on first reading Hume's introduction to the Treatise'. Thus,

⟨my wanting to bring about P; my belief that A, under description d, would bring about P⟩

is identical with,

⟨my having the want I had at t_1 ; my belief that I formed on first reading Hume's introduction to the Treatise⟩.

Yet the statement of my (primary) reason for acting, under these descriptions, does not imply that I perform any action whatsoever.

3.3.1 Let us return to the arguments based on D_1 — D_4 , and begin by taking up an argument presented by David Pears in his paper 'Are Reasons for Actions Causes?', where he attempts a swift reply to LCA as based on D_2 by claiming that certain sorts of "fairy story" provide counterexamples to D_2 itself. He tells us that:

. . . fairy stories, which treat wishes as causes and describe a wish simply as concentrated willing that such and such should happen, may be incredible but they are not conceptually incoherent. There is no conceptual incoherence even if a wish cannot be identified except under such a description.³⁰

While Pears seeks to attack this version of LCA by denying D_2 , Donald Gustafson³¹ contends that Pears' argument relies upon a distinction between conceptual incoherence and the incredible which the counterexample does not afford. However, at least to commonsense, Pears is surely right. For it would seem that even a child has no trouble imagining what it would be like for such wishes to come true just by wishing them. Moreover, the distinction to which Gustafson refers looks a lot less troublesome if we vary the example.

Consider the case of telekinesis. The agent purports to move an object at a distance (i.e., without material connection) by an exertion of will. Suppose that the willing is not describable independently of the movement of the object, as is needed to satisfy D_2 . We may put this roughly by supposing that the willing involved is describable only as 'the willing that such-and-such an object move'. Now this is similar enough to Pears' example. Are we to say that telekinesis gets ruled out because it comes into conflict with D_2 ? One might have supposed, rather, that this is a case for observation and rigorous experimentation. Telekinesis may not be a fact, and the study of telekinesis may even

³⁰Pears, 'Are Reasons for Actions Causes?' p. 214.

³¹Gustafson, 'A Critical Survey . . .', p. 279-80.

be held in low repute amongst large sections of the scientific community, but the suggestion that it can be dismissed simply by consulting D_2 is absurd.

If the argument against D_2 is accepted, then not only is D_2 false, but so are D_3 and D_4 , since both D_3 and D_4 imply D_2 . Moreover, if DER implies any of these supposed requirements, as the proponents of LCA claim, then DER would be false as well. Further, descriptions of the form 'the willing that such-and-such occur' or 'the desire for so-and-so', and the like, either satisfy D_1 or they do not. If they do, then D_1 is so obviously satisfied by volitions, desires, and the rest, that it must be wondered why anyone would seriously try to argue to the contrary. However, the claim is rather that 'the volition that such-and-such occur' comes to just 'the thing that produces such-and-such an occurrence'.³² But if such descriptions do not satisfy D_1 then, as a consequence of the above argument, D_1 is also false; and the same consequences for DER as we have noted with D_2 — D_4 apply again.

This leaves us with an important question. Does DER imply any of the conditions D_1 — D_4 ? If it does then it seems that the Humean analysis of the causal relation is in serious doubt.

³²See, for example, Free Action, p. 46.

3.3.1.1 The cases of the fairy story wish and telekinesis suggest, by the way, the error of Melden's argument of 1.4. Melden argues that it follows from DER that "it is at least thinkable that no desire of any kind ever causes any agent to try to do anything about it", but that this claim "is not merely false, odd or fantastic; it is incoherent."³³

As I hinted in 1.4, this version of LCA has an air of self-refutation. If it is incoherent to maintain that desires are never causes of actions, then the LCA conclusion is itself incoherent. However, why should it be incoherent to think that desires are never efficacious? Is epiphenomenalism an incoherent view? Alternatively, suppose that the believer in telekinesis is in fact mistaken. This suggestion, surely, is not incoherent. And, while it seems to me to be plainly false that acts of will are never efficacious, it does not seem to be unintelligible to suggest that, in this matter, I am as deluded as the telekineticist.

3.3.2 The claim that RID is a condition on cause and effect has now been questioned by a number of writers.³⁴ J.L. Mackie, for example, argues against the implication from DER to RID in The Cement of the Universe, using one of

³³ Melden, 'Desires as Causes of Actions', p. 133.

³⁴ See: B. Berofsky, 'Determinism and the Concept of a Person,' Journal of Philosophy 61 (1964), pp. 461-75; R.C. Richardson, 'A Revised "Logical Connection" Argument,' comments on Davidson's views on this matter; W.D. Gean, 'The Logical Connection Argument and de re Necessity'; B. Goldberg, 'Can a Desire be a Cause?' Analysis 25 (1964-65), pp. 70-72, and G.H. von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, pp. 93-94.

Melden's formulations of LCA to make his point. Let us first look at Melden's argument, which is designed to show that volitions cannot be causes:

Let the interior event which we call "the act of volition" be mental or physical (which it is will make no difference at all), it must be logically distinct from its alleged effect—this is surely one lesson we can derive from a reading of Hume's discussion of causation. Yet nothing can be an act of volition that is not logically connected with that which is willed—the act of willing is intelligible only as the act of willing whatever it is that is willed. In short, there could not be such an interior event like an act of volition since. . . nothing of that sort could have the required logical consequences.³⁵

To gloss this argument, Melden begins by giving what seems to be a version of DER—the act of volition must be logically distinct from its alleged effect. He then claims that, if there were volitions, they must fail to satisfy DER because they cannot satisfy RID. Hence, conceived as causes, there can be no such things as acts of volition. Again, it is the claim that DER implies RID which directly underlies the restatement of the argument in the final sentence.

Mackie's reply to this is as follows:

What we can learn from Hume's discussion is that cause and effect must be logically distinct occurrences (or 'existences'), that it must be logically possible that either should occur while the other does not. But the supposed act of volition would need to be connected with its alleged effect (in a successful voluntary performance) only by the appearance of some true description of that effect in the content of the act of volition. . . . But of course this 'logical connection' would not prevent the act of volition from being a logically distinct occurrence from its effect, it would not make it logically impossible that either should occur without the other. There is no more logical

connection here than there is between someone's hoping that Leeds will win the Cup Final and Leeds's winning the Cup Final, and though these two may not be causally connected, it is no lack of logical distinctness that prevents this.³⁶

As Mackie's argument makes clear, he does not think that RID follows from Hume's analysis of causation.

Now I have been using the expression 'RID' in connection with Mackie's argument but, more specifically, Mackie attacks D_2 , claiming that DER may be satisfied while D_2 is not. But can Mackie's argument be brought against the other conditions D_n , as I might seem to suggest? After all, it is D_4 in particular to which no satisfactory reply (outside a physicalist framework) seems available.³⁷ The whole question of whether Hume's analysis of causation lends support to conditions on the description of cause and effect such as D_1 — D_4 is of such obvious and fundamental importance that I shall enlarge upon it over the next four sections.

3.3.3 According to Hume:

All those objects, of which we call the one cause and the other effect, consider'd in themselves, are as distinct and separate from each other, as any two things in nature, nor can we ever, by the most accurate survey of them, infer the existence of the one from that of the other.³⁸

Such statements, you will recall, provide the warrant for what Melden takes as the Distinct Existences Requirement, which I have formulated as DER:

36 Mackie, The Cement of the Universe, pp. 287-88.

37 There is also, of course, the argument of 3.3.1.

38 Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, p. 405.

DER If C causes E, then C and E are distinct existences, such that it is conceivable that either one can occur without the other.

The question before us is whether DER implies any of D_1 — D_4 . Let us begin with D_1 . Recall that one of Melden's arguments for D_1 is as follows:

How shall we describe the alleged action of willing? Surely a description of this action independently of the consequence alleged for it—the production of a muscle movement—must be forthcoming. Let us call the act of willing A: then A produces B (a muscle movement), this being taken to be a causal sequence. Now in general if A causes B, a description of A other than that it has the causal property of producing B must be forthcoming, otherwise 'A causes B' degenerates into 'the thing that produces B produces B'.³⁹

Admittedly the causal theorist does want to be saying more than that the cause of B causes B when he says that A causes B. However, this fact alone does not seem to establish D_1 . Nevertheless, there is further support for D_1 , for it is thought that if A is only describable as 'the cause of B' then we are forced into conflict with DER. This is, in effect, the contention of D. A. Browne when he says:

Since, let it be granted, the causal relation is a contingent relation, any genuine causal relation must satisfy the following principle . . . If A, under conditions C, is the cause of B, we must be able to identify A in some way that is logically independent of the description 'the cause of B, given C'.

That this principle does state a requirement that any genuine causal relation must satisfy is shown by the following argument. The causal relation is a contingent relation. Thus if it is a fact that A, under conditions C, is the cause of B, it is a contingent fact. This means that it cannot be self-contradictory to suppose that A and C occurred and yet B did not. If, however, we cannot identify A except as falling under the description 'the cause of B, given C', then it would be self-contradictory to suppose that A and C occurred and yet B did not. For in this case, in saying that A occurred, we are saying

³⁹Melden, Free Action, p. 46.

that the cause of B, given C, occurred; and it is self-contradictory to say that the cause of B, given C, occurred, C occurred, and yet B did not. And since this is self-contradictory, it could not be true that A, under conditions C, is the cause of B.⁴⁰

Now, upon inspection, we find that, as he states it, Browne's argument ensures that A, under conditions C, is the cause of B. For suppose, as Browne says, that we cannot identify A except as 'the cause of B, given C'. Then A is describable as 'the cause of B, given C', so that A is the cause of B, given C, and there is an end to the matter. To suppose, then, that no further identification is available would not seem to be relevant. Presumably, however, this problem can be overcome by glossing Browne's argument as maintaining that if we supposed that A is describable as 'the cause of B, given C', although it is admitted that it is not otherwise describable, then we have erred. Indeed D₁ reflects this claim, since D₁ could be reconstrued as maintaining that C is not describable as 'the cause of E' unless it is otherwise describable.

Even so, it may be maintained that there is a far more serious objection to Browne's argument. Right at the beginning Browne argues that, since the causal relation is a contingent relation, "if it is a fact that A, under conditions C, is the cause of B, it is a contingent fact."⁴¹ But why should we accept this? That is to say, granted that the causal relation is a relation between events or occurrences, why should we then accept that the fact that those occurrences are contingently

⁴⁰Browne, 'Can Desires be Causes of Actions?', pp. 145-46.

⁴¹Ibid.

related is a contingent fact. It is only if we accept this that we are likely to agree with Browne that it must be non-contradictory to assert that A occurred, C occurred, and yet B did not under some descriptions of A, B, and C.

I think that the answer to this question is that Browne's assumption is implied by DER, and so ensured by the Humean analysis of the causal relation. If I am right in this then Browne's argument seems to show that DER does imply D_1 (or something very like it). I should add to this that if D_1 is false, as was argued at the end of 3.3.1, then DER is false as well. However, let us stay our judgement for now, and go on to consider the plight of the other conditions D_n .

3.3.4 Melden argues for D_2 and D_3 , both being made to follow from the claim that "every entity that does or can stand in causal relations not only has relational properties, but intrinsic properties as well."⁴² Here is a further tension: Melden claims that both D_2 and D_3 can be established from DER, but if Mackie's argument is correct D_2 does not follow from DER. Moreover, since D_3 can be shown to imply D_2 , Mackie's argument would also show that D_3 cannot be obtained from DER. The same again would follow for D_4 , since D_4 implies D_3 . Now one might suppose that Mackie's argument is quite decisive, so that none of D_2 , D_3 , or D_4 is implied by DER; but, surprisingly, Mackie argues in another passage in such a way that he may be thought to claim otherwise. He says:

⁴²Melden, 'Desires as Causes of Actions,' p. 131.

. . . neither the principle that every event has a cause, nor any singular causal statement connecting particular events, is an analytic truth. Of course, we can find descriptions of causes and effects such that the description of a cause is analytically connected with the description of its effect, but this is a trivial point on which no time need be wasted. What matters is that there is no logically necessary connections between the events themselves, or between any intrinsic descriptions of them, however detailed and complete. On this Hume's argument is conclusive and beyond question.⁴³

Now admittedly Mackie does not say that there are intrinsic descriptions (however we are to understand that term). However, suppose he holds that there are; then he seems to hold D_3 —and, moreover, that this follows from DER. But D_3 implies D_2 ; yet Mackie claims that D_2 may not be satisfied in the case of causally related events so far as Hume's analysis is concerned. This, I take it, is a contradiction. Let us suppose, then, that Mackie holds that there are no intrinsic descriptions of events. Then no argument of Hume's is required to establish the point he makes, since D_3 would obviously be false; its truth ruling out the possibility of there being any causal relationships at all. The problem of interpreting Mackie is further exacerbated by his claim that the search for such descriptions is irrelevant to the whole issue of LCA.⁴⁴ To say the least, Mackie's line of argument is not obviously consistent.

Some of the stress in Mackie's claims can perhaps be removed by giving him a suitable reinterpretation.

⁴³Mackie, The Cement of the Universe, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 289.

We could take Mackie to be claiming the following:

(1) DER does not imply D_2 , but (2) DER does imply that where there are intrinsic descriptions of C they must be logically independent of descriptions of E, and vice versa. Let us state this second claim more formally as Ma:

Ma If C causes E, then (\underline{d})(\underline{d}')(if \underline{d} and \underline{d}' are intrinsic descriptions of C and E respectively, then " \underline{d} occurs" does not imply " \underline{d}' occurs", and vice versa.)

Turning now to Melden's interpretation of Hume, we find that he says:

. . . as Hume and those who have followed him in adopting his causal model have supposed, every entity that does or can stand in causal relations not only has relational properties, but intrinsic properties as well If, then, desires are Humean causes of doings, they must be describable as the entities they are independently of any reference to the doings in which, normally, they are manifested or to any other entities with which, normally, they are associated or otherwise connected.⁴⁵

Hence D_2 and D_3 . Now the difference between D_3 and Ma can be brought into sharper focus by respecifying D_3 as follows:

Me If C causes E, then ($\exists \underline{d}$)($\exists \underline{d}'$)(\underline{d} and \underline{d}' are intrinsic descriptions of C and E, respectively, and " \underline{d} occurs" does not imply " \underline{d}' occurs", and vice versa.)

clearly Ma and Me differ to the extent that, while Me asserts that there are intrinsic descriptions, Ma leaves the matter open. The question of which condition, if either, can be shown to follow from Hume's analysis

⁴⁵Melden, 'Desires as Causes of Actions,' pp. 131-32.

first requires that the notion of 'intrinsic description' is given some suitable definition. However, all that we can gather from Melden is that intrinsic descriptions stand for intrinsic properties; but this just shifts the problem. Mackie offers us nothing at all. Nevertheless, it may be instructive to turn to an analysis which A. J. Ayer gives in his book Probability and Evidence.⁴⁶

Ayer offers us a definition of 'intrinsic description' which he claims enables us to formulate a principle at the heart of Hume's reasoning. On Ayer's formulation:

. . . a description of a state of a subject S at t is intrinsic to S at t iff nothing follows from it with regard to the state of S at any time other than at t, or with regard to the existence of any subject S' which is distinct from S, in the sense that S and S' have no common part.⁴⁷

From this, Ayer claims, it follows analytically that:

Hu If two events are distinct [in the sense of having no common part], an intrinsic description of either one of them entails nothing at all about the existence or character of the other.⁴⁸

Now it should be noted that the definition of 'intrinsic description', as it stands, does not render Hu analytic as Ayer claims. The definition specifies necessary and sufficient conditions for intrinsic descriptions of states of S at t, whereas it is intrinsic descriptions of events which are mentioned in Hu. However, suppose this defect were remedied, what then would be the bearing of Ayer's findings on LCA? Ayer seems to think

⁴⁶(Macmillan, 1972), pp. 6-10.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁸Ibid.

that a causal theorist must show (a) that there can be intrinsic descriptions in the given sense, and (b) that they are sufficient to describe every event; which is to take Hu roughly as analogous to Me. But surely Hu should not be taken this way, for neither the definition of 'intrinsic description', nor Hu, say that there must be intrinsic descriptions of distinct events. Rather, as Hu makes clear, they leave the matter open. Hu simply says that whenever we have intrinsic descriptions of distinct events they are marked by a certain logical independence. Thus in the case of cause and effect Hu comes down, not to Me, but to Ma. But Ma is not the condition on descriptions that is required for the purposes of LCA.

- 3.3.5 We should further note that there is good reason why a Humean analysis should be taken only to imply that where there are intrinsic descriptions of distinct events they must be logically independent, rather than that they must always be obtainable and logically independent. For Hume's analysis would have to be rejected if it implied this latter kind of condition.

To begin with, D_4 relies upon the principle that every distinct event which may enter into a causal relation is identifiable and hence describable independently of any other event. But as Hume's discussion of causally related events is set within the broader domain of merely distinct events, the warrant for the above principle, if it is to be gathered from Hume, would also

allow the more general principle that every distinct event is identifiable and hence describable independently of any other. Indeed, it is from the more general principle that the former principle is derived. Yet this general principle is almost certainly false. The principle says that for every distinct event E there must be some appropriately independent designation \underline{d} . Now while it is granted that there will be only denumerably many designations \underline{d} , there will be indenumerably many events. Suppose that an object O moves from point A through B to C ; A , B , and C being points along some finite line segment. This may be taken as one event (O 's moving from A to C), or as two events (O 's moving from A to B ; O 's moving from B to C). However, there is an uncountable infinity of points between A and C , so that there will be an uncountable infinity of events. In that case there are not sufficient designations to satisfy the principle. Thus, if a Humean analysis allowed the move to the general principle, it would be faulty. Moreover, the restricted principle relating to cause and effect is obtained from the general principle, and therefore if the Humean analysis is sound it does not imply either of these principles. Hence, if sound, it does not imply D_4 .⁴⁹

- 3.3.6 The above argument could indeed be generalized to cover D_1 — D_4 and Bradley's (P). For all of these conditions require that there are independent descriptions of cause

⁴⁹The argument of this section is adapted from M. C. Bradley, 'Two Logical Connection Arguments . . .'

and effect of some sort or other. This now brings us back to the argument at the end of 3.3.3, where it was claimed that Hume's analysis does imply D_1 .⁵⁰ I will now finally argue that DER does imply D_1 (and (P)), so that, in the face of a number of the above arguments, it must be rejected.

The Humean analysis does imply D_1 . At least this is so provided that we are to interpret DER meta-linguistically, rather than along essentialist lines—and, of course, the latter is not really an option for Humeans. For, according to DER, if C is the cause of E, it is conceivable that C can occur without E occurring, and vice versa. However, meta-linguistically, this comes to:

($\exists d$)($\exists d'$)(d and d' are descriptions of C and E, respectively, such that " d occurs" does not imply " d' occurs", and vice versa).

Now this condition on descriptions of cause and effect does imply the consequent of D_1 (and is equivalent to the consequent of (P)), so that DER does imply D_1 and (P).⁵¹ There is, therefore, an overwhelming case for the falsity of DER. There is, likewise, an overwhelming case against those versions of LCA which rely upon it.

3.4 In dismissing DER it is important to note that DER can be taken to consist of two parts. One part, as we have seen, consists in a requirement placed on the description of cause and effect. The other part is a statement of

⁵⁰See also 3.3.1.

⁵¹For D_1 and (P) see pages 6 and 46, respectively.

non-identity. Let us have DER before us again:

DER If C causes E, then C and E are distinct existences, such that it is conceivable that either one can occur without the other.

DER tells us that if C causes E, then (1) C is an occurrence distinct from E, and (2) that it is conceivable that C can occur without E occurring, and vice versa. Now, when appropriately analysed, (2) was found to be untenable. However, this does not give us any reason for rejecting (1). Indeed, unless we are prepared to treat seriously the idea that some occurrences can be the causes of themselves, then (1) seems secure.

Verification and Entailment

4.1 In 3.3 we discussed at length Davidson's attempt to combat what I have called "the entailment version of LCA". One way of stating the entailment argument is as follows.

Consider (T):

(T) If A wants to bring about p, and A believes that he cannot bring about p unless he does a, then A will do a.

It is claimed that although, strictly speaking, (T) is not analytic, it can be made analytic by the addition of suitable qualifications which rule out the presence of countervailing factors. Let the suitably amended (T) be (T'). The analyticity of (T') is thought to be assured by the meaning of 'wants' in 'A wants to bring about p', as given by a dispositional analysis. Roughly speaking, 'A wants to bring about p' analyses as 'A will do whatever he believes is necessary in order to bring about p'.¹ Similar claims could be made for other statements resembling (T); for example, those statements where 'wants' is replaced by 'intends', 'desires' or 'decides'. The argument

¹Of course this analysis would make (T) itself analytic, given the substitution; but the analysis is obviously not acceptable without considerable qualification. Note that these qualifications will have to match those appended to (T) itself to give the required (T').

is then completed by maintaining that, since it follows logically from the fact that A has a certain want and belief that (ceteris paribus) he performs a corresponding action, the want and belief in question cannot be the Humean cause of the action. For causes, at least on the Humean tradition, are only contingently linked with their effects.

4.1.1 Now there are two interconnected lines of argument commonly brought against the contention that statements of type (T) can be made analytic in the way suggested above. One points to problems with proposed amendments to (T); the other takes issue with dispositional analyses of psychological terms.

Firstly, it is sometimes contended that no qualificatory clauses could be constructed which would ensure that all counterexamples are ruled out. But if we can never be sure that (T') is true, then we certainly do not know that it is analytic. However this point is easily rebutted. (T') may be analytic even though it is not known to be analytic. Secondly, it should be noted that not any amendment to (T) which renders it analytic will do. The analyticity of (T') would need to be assured by a satisfactory dispositional analysis. Suppose that the amended (T) were,

If A wants to bring about p and A believes that he cannot bring about p unless he does a, then A will do a, provided that he has no conflicting overriding want

and that this is analytic by virtue of the analysis of 'A wants to bring about p' as 'A will do whatever he

believes is necessary to bring about p, unless he has some conflicting overriding want'. Admittedly (T') is now analytic, but the dispositional analysis is obviously circular, and hence unacceptable. Indeed, the problem of circularity presents quite a difficulty in the dispositional analysis of want statements. For it does have to be ruled out that A has any more powerful conflicting wants which he believes he can satisfy as easily as his want for p. Yet any attempt to remove this use of 'wants' in the analyses of the want statement would seem to face the same problem of circularity.

Finally, as we have seen in the case of Davidson, it may be objected that there are good reasons for maintaining that psychological terms are not to be analysed dispositionally in the first place.²

4.1.2 My main concern now, however, is to make it clear that the central argument of 3.3 also counts against the argument from the analyticity of (T') and is, indeed, decisive. That is, even given that (T') is analytic, it is not thereby shown that A's reason (want and belief) and his action are interdependent occurrences such that they cannot be cause and effect. Since RID is not a condition on cause and effect, the analyticity of (T') does not show that the occurrences are not appropriately independent

²It will be recalled, of course, that Davidson's grounds for maintaining that a dispositional analysis of wanting is not appropriate were criticised in the second half of 3.2.2. For further discussion of these issues see W. P. Alston, 'Wants, Action, and Causal Explanation,' in H-N. Castaneda, Intentionality, Minds and Perception (Wayne State, 1966).

even if the want and belief specified in (T') cannot be otherwise described. In brief, the entailment argument, like all other versions of LCA considered so far, succumbs to the claim that RID is not a condition on cause and effect. Consequently, if LCA is to be salvaged, some new ground must be supplied for claiming that the causal relation is not satisfied.

4.2.1 The inadequacy of earlier versions of LCA is partly recognized by G. H. von Wright when he says of volitions:

The logical dependence of the specific character of the will on the nature of its object is fully compatible with the logical independence of the occurrence of an act of will of this character from the realization of the object.³

However, von Wright then presents us with the statements contained in (T), but restructured into the form of a practical syllogism (PI), and presented in terms of 'intends' and 'considers', rather than 'wants' and 'believes':

(PI) A intends to bring about p.
A considers that he cannot bring about p unless he does a.

Therefore A sets himself to do a.⁴

He then construes the issue between the causal theorist and the proponent of LCA (intentionalist) in terms of the status they ascribe to the practical inference:

If one regards practical inferences, when properly formulated, as logically binding, one takes an intentionalist position. If again one accepts the causalist view, one would say of practical inferences that the truth of their premises ensures the truth of

³ von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, p. 94.

⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

their conclusions, but that this is a "causal" and not a "logical" entailment.⁵

In the light of von Wright's prior criticism of LCA, this seems an unfortunate interpretation of the intentionalist's position. For, thus construed, surely that criticism applies to it. Suppose that we were to grant that the inference from the premises to the conclusion of the practical argument is logically binding. Still, it has not been shown that the occurrences specified in the premises cannot cause the occurrence referred to in the conclusion. An entailment relation between sentences describing certain events does not rule out a causal relation between those events. All that is established is that the "inner" aspects of an action (as von Wright calls the intention and belief) can be so described that the claim that they occur entails the claim that the "outer" aspect occurs; but, as we saw, causes and their effects can quite generally be described in this way.⁶

Let me quickly dispel two objections. First, it may be claimed that, strictly speaking, the conclusion of a practical syllogism is not a sentence or proposition, but an action. Secondly, as von Wright notes,⁷ both the

⁵Ibid., p. 97. For convenience, I will use "(PI')" to refer to the practical argument as properly amended. All further references to "the practical argument" are to (PI') unless stated otherwise.

⁶Chapter 3, footnote 29 above.

⁷von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, Chapter III, footnote 22.

premises and conclusion of a practical syllogism are referentially opaque, so that the substitution of alternative descriptions (under which the entailment fails) is not permissible. Yet, it may be maintained, the argument I have given relies upon the availability of legitimate substitutes, whereby the action gets explained, but the action statement is not implied.

To the first objection it may be replied that, although the conclusions of practical arguments are sometimes taken to be actions, von Wright makes it clear that his version of the practical syllogism is strictly linguistic. As we shall see, von Wright treats the conclusion of his practical argument as a contingent proposition, and is essentially concerned with the verification procedures by which we would establish its truth-value.

The second objection is simply mistaken. The issue of substitution in intensional contexts in (PI') is not relevant to LCA. The claim that such replacements would have to be produced by the causal theorist has the effect of fixing the descriptions of the putative cause in much the same way as Davidson took them to be fixed when he said that:

. . . it may be maintained that a reason rationalizes an action only when the descriptions are appropriately fixed, and the appropriate descriptions are not logically independent.⁸

Only this time the descriptions are supposed fixed under (PI') rather than under C1. As we saw,⁹ Davidson was

⁸Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes,' p. 696.

⁹See 3.2.

mistaken in taking this claim for granted. A similar criticism is appropriate here. Suppose that we agree with von Wright that the practical argument represents 'a teleological explanation "turned upside down"',¹⁰ and that in order to perform the function of explaining the occurrence of the action we must describe the intention, belief, and action in the way in which they are described in the practical syllogism. How is this relevant to establishing the LCA conclusion? The status of DER aside, DER does not imply a requirement on descriptions of cause and effect such that any description of the cause which has explanatory force vis-à-vis its effect must be logically independent of the description of the effect under which it is explained. Nor does the point show that there are no other descriptions under which the implication fails. As in Davidson's case, here we have a slip from "causes" to "causally explains". Finally, it is worth noting that the objection we are now considering would only be thought worth making in the first place by someone who wrongly supposed that RID is a condition on cause and effect.

Perhaps a more serious reply is that von Wright, in the end, almost certainly does not take the logical relation binding the premises and conclusion of the practical argument to be entailment proper, but rather as a necessity conceived after the event:

It is only when action is already there and a practical argument is constructed to explain or justify it that we have a logically conclusive argument. The necessity of the practical inference schema is, one could say, a necessity conceived ex post actu.¹¹

¹⁰See Explanation and Understanding, p. 96.

¹¹Ibid., p. 117.

If the fact that the action occurred is what makes the argument "logically conclusive", then it seems that the logical relation being employed by von Wright is not one familiar to us from classical logic. While the existence of the action may establish the truth of the conclusion of (PI'), the truth of that conclusion does not establish the validity of the argument. As von Wright admits, 'the premises of a practical inference . . . do not entail the "existence" of a conclusion to match them'; but, of course, they still do not entail that conclusion, in any standard sense of 'entails', even given its "existence".¹² The present point, however, is that the necessary relation which von Wright takes to be established by (PI'), albeit ex post actu, may be thought to in some way preclude intentions and beliefs from being occurrences distinct from actions such that one could occur without the other.

4.2.2 Fortunately there is no need for us to ponder upon just what kind of necessary relation von Wright might have had in mind. For it can quickly be shown that (PI') could

¹²Ibid. If anything, the action's occurrence signifies that the premises are true; and this fact might be taken to suggest that there is a logically binding relation in the opposite direction, i.e., from the conclusion to the premises. Although, once again, if this relationship is entailment, it is so independently of whether or not the action occurred. Perhaps it is also worth noting here that if an inference from the premises to the conclusion were damaging to a causal theory, then a similar one from the conclusion to the premises would be just as damaging. However, as we shall shortly see, the latter inference does not hold.

not support such a conclusion. In order to show this I shall begin with a type of case mentioned by both J. Kim and R. Tuomela in their contributions to a recent anthology largely devoted to von Wright's work.¹³

Both Kim and Tuomela consider cases where an agent forms a subsidiary intention related to an action, the formation of that intention being contingent upon having made some prior practical inference which has that action as outcome. First, A intends to bring about p, and considers that he cannot bring about p unless he does a. He resolves to do a. However, A then notices that doing a is also necessary for bringing about q, which is some other desired state-of-affairs. So A decides that, since he is already going to do a, he may as well accomplish q at the same time. Thus A forms the intention to bring about q. A second practical inference is generated with the same conclusion, viz., 'Therefore A sets himself to do a' (or some qualified claim to that effect, which will do as conclusion for (PI')).

Now let the pair,

$$\langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle = \langle \text{A's intention to bring about } \underline{p}; \text{A's belief that he cannot bring about } \underline{p} \text{ except by doing } \underline{a} \rangle$$

and the pair,

¹³Jaegwon Kim, 'Intention and Practical Inference,' and Raimo Tuomela, 'Explanation and Understanding of Human Behaviour,' in Juha Manninen and Raimo Tuomela (eds.), Essays on Explanation and Understanding: Studies in the Foundations of Humanities and Social Sciences, Synthese Library, Vol. 72 (Reidel, 1976).

$\langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle = \langle \text{A's intention to bring about } \underline{q}; \text{ A's belief that he cannot bring about } \underline{q} \text{ except by doing } \underline{a} \rangle$.

Further, let ' $S_{x, y}$ ' express the relation that x is a distinct occurrence from y, such that x can occur without y occurring. Thus, for example, if the logically binding relation between the premises and the conclusion of the practical argument, whatever else is said about it, is one which shows that the occurrences referred to by the premises cannot occur independently of the occurrence referred to in the conclusion in such a way as to satisfy DER, then $S_{\langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle, \underline{a}}$ and, presumably, $S_{\underline{a}, \langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle}$ are false.

Let us first take the question of whether the practical argument shows that the action cannot occur independently of the occurrence of the intention and belief. If it has been shown that it cannot then,

$$(1) \quad -S_{\underline{a}, \langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle}$$

and

$$(2) \quad -S_{\underline{a}, \langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle}$$

But we know that (2) is false, for $\langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle$ may well not have occurred even though \underline{a} occurred; this normally being so where $\langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle$ failed to occur but $\langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle$ occurred.¹⁴

¹⁴As Kim points out (in 'Intention and Practical Inference,' p. 252), if it is true that,

(i) If A had not intended to bring about \underline{p} , then he would not have done \underline{a}
and true that

(ii) If A had not believed that he could not bring about \underline{p} except by doing \underline{a} , then he would not have done \underline{a}
then it is false that,

(iii) If A had not intended to bring about \underline{q} , then he would not have done \underline{a}

However, if the second practical syllogism does not show that (2) is true, then the practical syllogism does not have the general feature of showing that the action mentioned in the conclusion cannot occur without the intention and belief mentioned in the premises occurring. In that case, the first practical syllogism is incapable of showing that (1) is true. (1) is clearly false in any case. Since it is a purely contingent matter that $\langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle$ was efficacious and $\langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle$ not, (1) can be shown to be false by interchanging ' $\langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle$ ' with ' $\langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle$ ' in the original account.

We still have to show that the practical syllogism does not establish the more usual LCA claim that the intention and belief cannot occur without the action also occurring. If the practical syllogism did establish this, then,

$$(3) \quad -S \langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle, \underline{a}$$

and

$$(4) \quad -S \langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle, \underline{a}$$

However, we must take it that von Wright would not argue that the practical syllogism establishes either (3) or (4), since he has already allowed that such claims are false.

and false that,

(iv) If A had not believed that he could not bring about q except by doing a, then he would not have done a.

But, on the account given, (i) and (ii) are true, and therefore (iii) and (iv) are false. Simply put, $\langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle$ does not have a determinative relation to a.

Indeed, it is this admission which leads von Wright to claim that the practical syllogism exhibits ex post actu necessity.¹⁵

In Part IV of Essays on Explanation and Understanding, amongst von Wright's replies to his critics, he attempts to account for the Kim and Tuomela case. There von Wright contends that statements of secondary intention are implicit conditional and form non-explanatory schemata, since carrying the intention into effect depends upon already having performed the action mentioned in the conclusion. This contrasts with a properly formed practical syllogism, which is explanatory and contains a statement of unconditional intention. A statement of conditional intention is of the form 'A intends to bring about q, should (when, if) he bring(s) about a'. Unconditional statements of intention, of course, are of the form already occurring in (PI'). It follows from this that the non-explanatory schemata are ill-formed, or better, that they do not get generated.

Von Wright argues that Kim's statement of secondary intention, 'A intends to visit his in-laws in Cincinnati', when fully expressed, is the conditional, 'A intends to visit his in-laws in Cincinnati, should (when, if) he go(es) to Cincinnati'. If it were not conditional, von Wright maintains, then it would explain why A went to Cincinnati, which it is agreed it does not.

¹⁵For a discussion of these points see Essays on Explanation and Understanding, p. 317f.

Now there does seem to be some point to what von Wright says, although I think the matter is open. A's forming the intention to visit his in-laws in Cincinnati does presuppose that he has already decided to go to Cincinnati. But one may put that point the following way. Having already decided to go to Cincinnati, A simply decides to visit his relatives. As far as A is concerned, he is going to Cincinnati and, likewise, as far as A is concerned he is going to visit his relatives. Whatever we are to make out of von Wright's point, however, it provides only a temporary respite from the argument in progress. Suppose that we agreed with von Wright that not both intentions lead to explanatory schemata, we can easily adjust the case to ensure that they do. For we can consider cases where, as the causal theorist would have it, the action is over-determined. In such cases we are agreed that either set of occurrences ($\langle \underline{i}_1, \underline{b}_1 \rangle$ or $\langle \underline{i}_2, \underline{b}_2 \rangle$) would have been sufficient to ensure that a occurred. Given this adjustment, the argument still goes through. The conclusion follows, that the practical argument is incapable of showing that the events mentioned in the premises are related to that mentioned in the conclusion in such a way that they do not satisfy DER.

- 4.3 Until now I have neglected a major line of argument employed by von Wright, and which is clearly central to his version of LCA. In brief, von Wright argues that unless two occurrences can be independently verified, they are not logically independent of one another and, hence, cannot be cause and effect:

Let it be asked how, in a given case, one ascertains (verifies) whether an agent has a certain intention, 'wills' a certain thing—and also how one finds out whether his behaviour is of a kind which his intention or will is supposed to cause. Should it turn out that one cannot answer the one question without also answering the other, then the intention or will cannot be a (humean) cause of his behaviour. The facts which one tries to establish would not be logically independent of one another.¹⁶

In what I shall call the Requirement of Independent Verifiability, or RIV, we have von Wright's replacement for RID. LCA now has the following premises: (1) DER is a necessary condition on cause and effect; (2) DER implies RIV; (3) RIV is not satisfied in the case of an action and its intention-belief complex. It follows that the intention-belief complex cannot be the cause of the action.

How does the argument from the nature of the inference in (PI') relate to LCA as reformulated in the light of RIV? Suppose that any successful attempt to verify the premises of (PI') also verifies its conclusion, and vice versa. While the premises may not formally entail the conclusion, to have shown that the premises are true is to have assured the truth of the conclusion and, conversely, once we can assume that the action mentioned in the conclusion is before us, we are assured of the truth of the premises. So the claim that (PI') exhibits ex post actu necessity points to the fact that its premises and conclusion fail to satisfy RIV; from which it follows, by the argument of

¹⁶ von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, pp. 94-95. Cf., R. Taylor, Action and Purpose, pp. 51-52.

the last paragraph, that actions and the occurrences which form their immediate intentional backgrounds are not causally related.

Let us set down for future use a statement of the Requirement of Independent Verifiability:

RIV If C causes E, then we must be able to verify that C occurs independently of verifying that E occurs, and vice versa.

According to von Wright, the premises and the conclusion of (PI') are not independently verifiable, and so do not satisfy RIV. Two points of clarification should be made here. One is that, on the interpretation of 'verifies' employed by von Wright, we verify that X occurs by verifying either the statement 'X occurs' (or some statement to that effect), or by verifying some other statement which implies the former statement.¹⁷ The other point is that we can fairly take it that we are able to verify the occurrence of C independently of verifying the occurrence of E if there is a way open to us of verifying the occurrence of C without also verifying the occurrence of E. Similarly for the vice versa case.

Let the ordered pair of occurrences to which the premises of (PI') refer be $\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle$, and the occurrence referred to by the conclusion be \underline{a} . Further, let 'RIV_{x, y}' stand for 'x and y satisfy the Requirement of Independent Verifiability'. Then, adopting expressions familiar from 1.3.1, we can

¹⁷See Explanation and Understanding, p. 116.

now formally state von Wright's verificationist version of LCA as follows:

- (1) $(x)(y)(CR_{x,y} \rightarrow DER_{x,y})$
- (2) $(x)(y)(DER_{x,y} \rightarrow RIV_{x,y})$
- (3) - $RIV_{\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle, \underline{a}}$
- (4) $CR_{\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle, \underline{a}} \rightarrow DER_{\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle, \underline{a}} \quad (1)$
- (5) $DER_{\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle, \underline{a}} \rightarrow RIV_{\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle, \underline{a}} \quad (2)$
- (6) - $DER_{\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle, \underline{a}} \quad (5,3)$
- (7) - $CR_{\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle, \underline{a}} \quad (6,4)$

In the following sections I shall try to show that, not only has von Wright failed to show that RIV is not, in general, satisfied by $\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle$ and \underline{a} , but that $\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle$ and \underline{a} can be shown to satisfy RIV. Finally, of course, I argue that RIV is not a condition on the causal relation in the first place.

4.3.1 If $\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle$ and \underline{a} satisfy RIV then von Wright cannot have shown, to the contrary, that they do not. Let us first of all establish the weaker claim, that von Wright has failed to show that $\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle$ and \underline{a} do not satisfy RIV. Consider von Wright's summary on the issue of the verification of the premises and conclusion of the practical syllogism:

The result of our enquiry into the verification problem is thus as follows:

The verification of the conclusion of a practical argument presupposes that we can verify a correlated set of premises which entail logically that the behaviour observed to have occurred is intentional under the description given to it in the

conclusion. Then we can no longer affirm these premises and deny the conclusion, i.e., deny the correctness of the description given of the observed behaviour. But the set of verified premises need not, of course, be the same as the premises of the practical argument under discussion.

The verification of the premises of a practical argument again presupposes that we can single out some recorded item of behaviour as being intentional under the description accorded to it either by those premises themselves ("immediate" verification) or by some other set of premises which entail those of the argument under discussion ("external" verification).

In this mutual dependence of the verification of the premises and the verification of the conclusions in practical syllogisms consists, as I see it, the truth of the Logical Connection Argument.¹⁸

What correlated set of premises must be verified before we can verify the conclusion of a practical argument? We are told that they need not be the premises of the practical argument under discussion (although of course they may be) but that, in effect, they must logically entail its conclusion. It can quickly be shown that no set of premises could satisfy these requirements.

Von Wright himself admits that the premises of a practical argument do not logically entail their conclusion. But, in that case, the correlated set of premises are not those of the argument under discussion, since the correlated set of premises are required to entail the conclusion of that argument. On the other hand, according to Mackie,¹⁹ the verification of the conclusion of a practical argument would almost always have to involve the verification of the premises of the same practical argument, because it is only where two or more practical arguments to the same conclusion have true premises (i.e., where,

18 von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, pp. 115-16.

19 In The Cement of the Universe, p. 291.

on the causal theorist's account, the action was over-determined) that some additional set of correlated premises is available.²⁰ But even suppose that we do in general have a correlated set of premises which are the premises of some other practical argument leading to the same conclusion; they cannot meet the requirement that they entail that conclusion. Not, at least, given the admission that the premises of a practical argument do not entail their conclusion. Thus, the set of premises correlated with the conclusion of the practical argument under discussion, and supposedly required in order to verify it, cannot be the premises of any practical argument leading to that conclusion.

It seems that, in order to have it that the conclusion of a practical argument is verifiable at all, von Wright will, at least, have to drop the requirement that the correlated set of premises entail that conclusion. However, it might be thought that, as an alternative move, von Wright could retain the entailment requirement, and treat the correlated set of premises as "premises" only in the sense that they are the premises of an ordinary argument with the same conclusion as that of the practical syllogism. This second possibility is worth canvassing briefly.

As it stands this second option is not going to help establish the conclusion von Wright wants from

²⁰ The causal theorist underestimates the availability of those premises if he follows Mackie, however, for an additional set of premises may be true without over-determination--at least if Kim's case stands.

the first half of his enquiry, viz., that one cannot verify that an agent's behaviour is describable as an action of a certain kind without also verifying that he has a corresponding intentional background. For, since the set of statements correlated with the conclusion of the practical argument under discussion are not now supposed to be the premises of some practical argument which has that conclusion, they may not imply that he has some appropriate intention and belief. This defect can be quickly remedied, of course, by simply building that implication into the requirement on the correlated set of statements. Thus it might be maintained that the conclusion of a practical syllogism cannot be verified without also verifying a correlated set of statements which both entail that conclusion and entail the premises of some practical argument which has that conclusion. Indeed this reformulation carries the advantage over simply dropping the claim that the correlated set of premises must entail the conclusion of the practical argument under discussion, in that it still follows that, in verifying the correlated set of statements, we verify (through entailment) both the conclusion of the practical argument, and the premises of some practical argument having that conclusion.

In the next section I will show that neither of these conditions need be satisfied in verifying the conclusion of a practical argument. Before we turn to that, however, let us recall von Wright's statement of LCA:

Let it be asked how, in a given case, one ascertains (verifies) whether an agent has a certain intention, "wills" a certain thing--and also how one finds out whether his behaviour is of a kind which his intention or will is supposed to cause. Should it turn out that one cannot answer the one question without also answering the other, then the intention or will cannot be a (humean) cause of his behaviour.²¹

Both the condition originally put forward by von Wright-- that we cannot verify the conclusion of a practical argument without also verifying the premises of some practical argument which imply that conclusion--and the amendments suggested above, imply that one cannot verify the conclusion of a practical argument without also verifying the premises of some practical argument which has that conclusion. However, this seems too loose a requirement for what von Wright wishes to establish. Suppose that the practical argument under discussion is the following:

PI₁ A intends to bring about p
 A considers that he cannot bring about p
 unless he does a
 Therefore A sets himself to do a.

And let us allow that there is some other practical argument with the same conclusion, which we may take as:

PI₂ A intends to bring about q
 A considers that he cannot bring about q
 unless he does a
 Therefore A sets himself to do a.

Suppose further that, in accordance with all of the above conditions, we verify the statement 'A sets himself to do a' by verifying the premises of PI₂ (either directly

21 von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, p. 94.

or by the means of some correlated set of statements which imply them). Although we have now verified the conclusion of PI_1 , we have not verified that A has the intention specified in PI_1 . So, in such a case, we can "find out whether his behaviour is of a kind which his intention or will is supposed to cause", without ascertaining (verifying) that the agent has that 'certain intention, "wills" a certain thing'. Thus, even if any of the above conditions did need to be satisfied in order to verify the conclusion of the practical argument under discussion, the LCA conclusion is still elusive.

Furthermore, the narrower condition that would presumably aid in establishing the LCA conclusion, viz., that the set of premises correlated with the conclusion of the practical argument under discussion must be either those of that practical argument or imply the premises of that practical argument, is not acceptable—at least, not without qualification. For, wherever an additional practical argument with the same conclusion is available, its premises, or some further set of statements which imply them, would do the job just as well.

4.3.2 Let us now turn to the stronger claim, that $\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle$ and \underline{a} in fact satisfy RIV. This is the contention of M. C. Bradley in his paper 'Two Logical Connection Arguments and Some Principles of Causal Connection'. Bradley takes $\langle \underline{i}, \underline{b} \rangle$ as the ordered pair $\langle \underline{a}, \underline{b} \rangle$ where,

$\langle \underline{a}, \underline{b} \rangle = \langle \underline{x}$'s intending to bring about A, \underline{x} 's considering that he cannot bring about A except by doing B \rangle

and \underline{a} as \underline{e} where,

$\underline{e} = \underline{x}$'s setting himself to do B.

He then tells us that:

. . . we can readily find other descriptions of \underline{a} , \underline{b} and \underline{e} abbreviated, let us say, to " \underline{D}_a ", " \underline{D}_b " and " \underline{D}_e ". Thus suppose " \underline{D}_a " is "the praiseworthy intention \underline{x} noted in his diary yesterday", and " \underline{D}_b " is "the belief about A's necessary conditions \underline{x} reached yesterday" and " \underline{D}_e " is " \underline{x} 's last official act before lunch". Then

$$\langle \underline{a}, \underline{b} \rangle = \langle \underline{D}_a, \underline{D}_b \rangle, \text{ and } \underline{e} = \underline{D}_e. \text{ }^{22}$$

The sentence ' $\langle \underline{D}_a, \underline{D}_b \rangle$ occurs' is then supposed verified by the following sentence, referred to by 'Q':

\underline{x} noted just one praiseworthy intention in his diary yesterday, and all records of intentions in his diary relate to intentions he actually formed, and \underline{x} reached just one belief about A's necessary conditions yesterday.²³

This is by virtue of the fact that Q implies ' $\langle \underline{D}_a, \underline{D}_b \rangle$ occurs'. It is then noted that Q does not imply, and so does not verify, ' \underline{e} occurs'. From this it follows that there is a way of verifying that $\langle \underline{a}, \underline{b} \rangle$ occurs without verifying that \underline{e} occurs. And by a similar routine the vice versa case can be established. So $\langle \underline{a}, \underline{b} \rangle$ and \underline{e} do satisfy RIV.

Bradley goes on to consider two problems which may be thought to confront his argument. One concerns whether the strong form of verification on which the argument relies is appropriate; the other concerns whether

²²Bradley, 'Two Logical Connection Arguments . . .'

²³Ibid.

RIV provides transparent contexts for the singular term positions occupied by 'C' and 'E'. On the second of these Bradley points out that RIV is founded in (P)²⁴ and so must be taken as transparent, for (P) is undeniably so.²⁵ As to the first, von Wright is obviously employing the stronger form of verification, under which if one sentence verifies another then it must also imply that latter sentence.²⁶ As Bradley points out, a weaker form of verification would bring problems for RIV in any case.²⁷

Given these problems cleared, Bradley's argument does show that there is a way of verifying that $\langle a, b \rangle$ occurs without also verifying that \underline{e} occurs, since we cannot verify that \underline{e} occurs via the truth of Q. At least, this is so provided that there is no singular term ' $\underline{D_s}$ ' which is such that Q implies ' $\underline{D_s}$ occurs' and $\underline{D_s} = \underline{e}$ or, in

²⁴See 3.3.2 above for (P).

²⁵In any case, if RIV were to provide referentially opaque contexts for 'C' and 'E', it would not plausibly be a condition on cause and effect relations. Say, for example, that the expression taking the place of 'C' is ' \underline{x} 's exposure to the sun', and that occurring in place of 'E' is ' \underline{x} 's sunburn'. Now, *inter alia*, the present suggestion is that E is to be verified under the description ' \underline{x} 's sunburn'. But ' \underline{x} 's sunburn occurs' implies, and so verifies, ' \underline{x} 's exposure to the sun occurs'. In that case, the occurrences in question, viz., \underline{x} 's exposure to the sun and \underline{x} 's sunburn, would fail to satisfy RIV. But, plainly, a causal relation is involved, so that RIV, at least under the present assumption, could not be a condition on cause and effect.

²⁶See page 79 above, and Explanation and Understanding, p. 116.

²⁷Bradley, 'Two Logical Connection Arguments. . .'

general, that there is no chain of implication from Q to 'e occurs'. But it is patently false that Q implies 'e occurs', and therefore there is no term 'Ds' (as Bradley points out) and, in general, there is no such chain of implication.

4.3.3 Still, it might be claimed that Bradley misses the force of von Wright's argument, in that he gives too narrow an interpretation to the notion of a mode of verification. After all, it is observation and interrogation that finally lead us to affirm that we have verified the statements of a practical syllogism. The procedure of verifying a statement inevitably leads back to observation and experience:

We may make the truth of some statements depend upon the truth of others, but this process cannot go on for ever . . . it is through having some experience that we discover the truth or falsehood of any statement of empirical fact.²⁸

Accordingly, it may be claimed that to establish that the occurrences C and E are independently verifiable it needs to be shown that some collection of experiences would establish that C had occurred, without establishing that E had occurred, and vice versa. Thus, in Bradley's case, we may agree that the truth of Q implies, and so verifies, the truth of 'Da, Db occurs', without implying, and so not verifying, 'e occurs'. But this is not sufficient to show that the group of experiences that ultimately verify 'Da, Db occurs' would not also verify 'e occurs'.

28 A.J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge (Pelican, 1956), pp. 20-21.

For the group of experiences which verify ' $\langle D_a, D_b \rangle$ occurs' are those which verify Q, and it may well be that any group of experiences which together are sufficient to confirm Q would also confirm "e occurs'.

In any case, favouring talk of experiences is consistent with von Wright's point of attack on the claim that the premises and conclusion of a practical syllogism are independently verifiable, and leads us into the sorts of consideration which he adduces in order to show that they are not.²⁹ Von Wright begins by noting that "the premises and conclusion [of the practical argument] are themselves contingent . . . propositions", and that "it must therefore be possible to verify and to falsify—or at least confirm and disconfirm—them on the basis of empirical observations and tests."³⁰ How, then, do we confirm the conclusion of a practical syllogism? Suppose that we see A's body go through certain motions which (we have good reason to believe) bring about, say, the opening of a window. Surely this is evidence that A opened the window? However, according to von Wright, it is not sufficient evidence for us to conclude that A (intentionally) opened the window:

But in order to verify that A did a it is not enough to verify that the result of the action came about and to verify or otherwise make plausible that it was caused to come about by some muscular activity

29 See Explanation and Understanding, Chapter III, Sections 7 and 8.

30 Ibid., p. 107.

displayed by A. We must also establish that what took place was intentional on A's part, and not something that he brought about only by accident, by mistake, or even against his will. We must show that A's behaviour, the movement which we see his body go through, is intentional under the description "doing a." 31

Moreover, suppose that A sets himself to do a, but fails. The associated bodily movement may then not even suggest the conclusion to us. In either case, von Wright suggests, we can only establish that the action is intentional, under the description given, by establishing "the presence in the agent of a certain intention and (maybe) cognitive attitude concerning means to ends."³²

How do we confirm the premises of a practical syllogism? Surely we can begin by questioning the agent about his beliefs and intentions. However, as von Wright points out, A's response is also behaviour—verbal behaviour—and corresponds to the conclusion of another practical syllogism. How, then, do we know that A does not intend to lie about his intentions? Perhaps we are assured by our knowledge of A's character, and by what we know of the particular circumstances surrounding the case: A is generally a truthful person; there is no apparent reason for him to lie; these are, in any case, the sorts of intentions which you would expect for someone like A in these sorts of circumstances. These considerations are usually taken to make it reasonable to suppose that an agent has the intentions that he says he has; but, as von Wright reminds us, this evidence itself is largely

31 Ibid., p. 108.

32 Ibid., p. 109.

based upon a cumulative record of the agent's past behaviour (both verbal and somatic), particularly relating to similar circumstances.

Of course it will be argued that these comments fall short when we consider the case of the agent himself proceeding to establish the premises of the practical syllogism. The agent need not rely on behavioural confirmation. However, von Wright argues that "my immediate knowledge of my own intentions is not based on reflection about myself (my inner states) but is the intentionality of my behaviour. . . ." An intention and belief complex is a behavioural sequence—not qua bodily movement, but qua "sequence meant by me (or understood by others) as an act".³³ Thus, to establish the premises of a practical argument requires the verification of its conclusion.

First, we should note that in arguing that the verification of the conclusion of a practical argument relies upon the verification of an appropriate intentional background, von Wright insists that the action, if it occurs, needs to be verified under the description 'doing a'. However, it should be made clear that while the verification of the conclusion of (PI') requires the action to be verified under the description 'doing a', no such stricture can be placed on RIV. As far as RIV is concerned, the action could be verified under any true description which uniquely selects it. Again we see that the features

33 Ibid., pp. 114-15.

of (PI') are inadequate for establishing the conclusion of LCA.

As Mackie notes,³⁴ von Wright's claims seem to have a most implausible and unwelcome consequence. Neither the premises nor the conclusion of a practical inference can be verified, since it is a precondition of showing either true that the other is shown to be true. However, when we come to von Wright's argument for the dependence of the verification of the premises of a practical argument on the verification of the conclusion, this consequence is shown to be drawn by overlooking the claim that the so-called "intentional background" and the action are inseparable.

Two points should be made here. First, that the Wittgensteinian argument, that intention and action are not distinct, itself seeks to establish the LCA conclusion. If it were successful, no further argument would be needed. Secondly, let us still ask how it is that the occurrence of the action (taken now to include the intention) is to be verified. According to von Wright, we cannot simply observe its occurrence. For all we can see is a certain bodily sequence; or, worse, "externally", we may have nothing more than the agent's setting himself in such a way that the sequence would have been completed had not certain intervening factors arisen. Relying on community norms, educational background, and so on, is at best a rough guide and, in any case, according to von

34 In The Cement of the Universe, p. 290.

Wright, is notably circular. Von Wright also rules out questioning the agent, even where the agent is oneself (that is, by introspection). How then are we to verify that a certain intention-belief-action has taken place? It would seem that to imbue the goings-on with intentionality is, as von Wright himself at one stage puts it, rather to tell a story about the agent.³⁵ That is to say, it is not just that actions cannot in the end be verified, but that they are not the sorts of things to which the notion of verification applies.

This outcome would be seriously at variance with von Wright's purported programme, for it is thus ensured that no empirical observations or tests can determine the truth-value of the propositions which constitute the practical argument. They would not be empirical claims at all, strictly speaking, but interpretations of behavioural events. As von Wright himself admits, "It is a characteristic of these verification procedures that they presuppose the existence of some factual behaviour, upon which an intentionalist "interpretation" is then put."³⁶

- 4.3.4 It is perhaps appropriate to make a few remarks on von Wright's Wittgensteinian views, since, if they are acceptable, they have the noted consequence of establishing the LCA conclusion. My basic thrust is that the Wittgensteinian analysis that is offered by von Wright is irremediably obscure, if not confused. To show this I shall consider each of his statements about the nature of intentions in

³⁵Von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, p. 115.

³⁶Ibid., p. 116.

turn.

Von Wright begins by claiming that to establish my intention and cognitive attitude in relation to an action is to establish nothing other than "the aiming inherent in my behaviour".³⁷ So von Wright, we might suppose, takes intentions as the intentionality of behaviour, interpreted as a kind of aiming inhering in the bodily movements. But then, characterizing intentional behaviour, he comments: "Intentional behaviour, one could say, resembles the use of language. It is a gesture whereby I mean something".³⁸ Is the intention now interpreted as the meaning of (in) the behaviour? Further comments suggest that it is more than some infusing of "meaning" or "aiming" into the behavioural sequence; rather that the intention-belief complex and the action are one:

Am I saying then that my intention (right now) to ring the bell and my thinking the pressing of the button necessary for this end is the same as the fact that I now press the button? To this should be answered: It is not the same as the sequence of bodily movements and events in the external world which terminates in my finger's pressing against the button and the button's sinking into the hole. But it is this sequence meant by me (or understood by others) as an act of ringing the bell.³⁹

It does now seem as if the intention-belief complex is the action—the intention-belief complex is the same as the bodily sequence understood as a certain kind of act.

Now it might be thought that none of these suggestions is satisfactory. Surely one can have the appropriate

37 Ibid., p. 114.

38 Ibid., p. 114.

39 Ibid., p. 115.

intention and belief without performing the action. Indeed von Wright allows this himself.⁴⁰ In any case, we normally suppose that the agent has the intention and belief before the onset of the action. These, it can fairly be argued, are commonsense data which any adequate account of intentions must take into account. Nor does it help matters that von Wright is considering an intention and belief "right now", i.e., when the agent performs the action. Considering just concurrent intentions brings problems later, when we have to allow, for example, that intention-belief complexes can have radically different characteristics—like being actions, or not.

4.3.5 Finally, let us turn to the claim that RIV is not a condition on cause and effect, as required by von Wright's argument. In 3.3.5 we argued that, if DER is acceptable, it does not imply that every distinct occurrence is uniquely describable. Briefly, it can be shown that there is an uncountable infinity of events in the passage of a particle along some finite line segment. Yet there are only denumerably many designations to cover the points through which the particle moves; and therefore insufficient designations to uniquely tag each event. But the same argument shows that RIV is not a condition on cause and effect, since we always verify an occurrence under some description or other, and there are not enough descriptions to go around.

40 Ibid., p. 119.

Finally, it was argued in 3.3.6 that DER does imply D_1 and Bradley's (P). It would therefore be shown false by the argument of 3.3.5. It is also shown to be false by the arguments of 3.3.1 and 3.3.3, since those arguments show that D_1 is false. However, DER is a basic assumption of von Wright's argument, so that, from the outset, that argument was doomed to failure.

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