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AGENT-CAUSATION AND EVENT-CAUSATION

Intentional actions necessarily involve a reference to agents who cause them. To be specific, intentional actions mostly have a component which may be termed 'basic action', and this 'basic action' is explicable only in terms of a conscious agent who causes such an action. There are, on the other hand, event-causalists who, enamoured by the concept of a monistic ontology and the concept of uniformity of explanation in all sciences including the social ones, argue that the notion of agent is incapable of explaining the bringing about of actions. Following the Humean tradition, these philosophers contend that whatever explanatory force the statement of a causal episode has, it has it because of the fact that such an episode ultimately refers to pairs of *events* causally connected. It does not make much sense to assign causal explanatory roles to objects or conscious subjects by depicting them as the antecedents of causal sequences (consider, for example, the lack of explanatory force of the statement, " Whenever Smith, then ... ... ".) We often, it must be admitted, assign causal roles to objects in our common parlance. But such talks are really about, according to event-causalists, *events* involving such objects that cause some consequent events.

Some proponents of event-causalism even go to the extent of claiming that the concert of agents causing basic actions either involves an absurdity, or is simply superfluous, as far as explanation of actions are concerned. In our opinion, however, the explanation of human actions irreducibly involves the concept of

an agent causing actions. Although the concept of agent-causation is not exclusive of event-causation, event-causation does not, in our view, suffice, by itself, as a causal explanation. The task before us, therefore, is two-fold, Firstly, we shall have to answer the charges levelled against the theory of agent-causation by the proponents of event-causation. Next, we shall have to establish our claim that only the concept of an agent-cause can ultimately provide a proper explanation of intentional actions. But, before we proceed to our eventual tasks we must, as a necessary preamble, attempt an explanation of two important concepts viz. intentional actions and ' basic ' actions.

I

Intentional Actions and ' Basic ' Actions

1. Inientional Actions :

Intentional action is an action that an agent wants to perform or aims at performing. When an agent wants to perform or aims at performing an action, the action may be a ' primitive ' or ' basic ' one, and the agent does it directly. But this is very rarely the case. Most of the actions we aim at *are not* ' basic '. They are rather actions we aim at performing by doing some other action or actions that we believe will generate them. The belief that an action has the capacity to generate another action (or action-type) is thus a basic constituent of a ' non-basic ' intentional action. For example, my raising of my hand in the course of a lecture I am attending is intentional if I believe that my doing so will attract the attention of the lecturer, and I am aiming at attracting the latter's attention. In the case of a ' basic ' action my action is intentional if I believe that my performing it is an act-token which will exemplify the act-type of which it is a token. For example, my act of feeding myself with a spoon is an intentional act because I believe that it, a

basic act-token, will exemplify the act-type of eating (which may be exemplified either by manipulating the food with fingers or with a spoon).

2. *'Basic' Actions*

The necessary condition of an action's being 'basic' is that besides being an action aimed at or desired, it is a sort of action that is exemplified at will. In other words, an action is 'basic' provided that it is true that if the subject wanted to exemplify it at a particular time, he would do so at that particular time. For example, an act of pedalling, performed with circular movement of the legs, is a 'basic' action because the agent can, whenever he wants to exemplify it, exemplify it. Of course, this naturally implies that there is no external constraint present which will prevent the agent from exemplifying a 'basic' action at his repartoire. For instance if his legs were tied or there was no room for the circular movement of the legs, then the agent could not exemplify it even if he wanted to do so.

Another intrinsic feature of 'basic' actions is that they are such that the agent who performs them does not have to know of any other actions which have to be performed in order to bring them about. Performance of a 'non–basic' action like riding a bicycle requires knowledge of other actions like pedalling, keeping balance etc which have to be performed in order to ride the bicycle. If one wants to perform a 'basic' action, no selection of a *means* is necessary. One simply does this directly without having to do this *by* doing something else.

II

Event–Causation Versus Agent–Causation

Nearly all intentional actions have, as we have seen, a component known as 'basic' action. Event-causalists and agent–causalists argue about the way such a 'basic' action is brought

about. A ' basic ' action, as the agent-causalist understands it, is a direct and intentional bringing about, by an agent, of certain bodily movements. Event-causalists, on the other hand, contend that such a bringing about of intentional actions can be explained solely in terms of certain events like intending, wanting, believing, without reference to some ontological entity called ' agent ' who intends, wants and believes.

The question now arises, how do the event-causalists establish their hypothesis ? Do they do so by a direct appeal to intuition and reasoning about the way intentional actions are brought about ? It is hardly likely that they do so. In fact, event-causalists admit that *the precise way in which intentions bring about 'basic' actions* is not known to them. Event-causalists like Davidson readily acknowledge that although causal sequences as a rule involve covering law explanations, yet such explanations are not forthcoming in cases of actions caused by antecedent intentions, wants etc. In his early essay, entitled 'Actions, Reasons and Causes,' Davidson concedes that it is hard to convert intentional explanations into covering law explanations containing precise laws. Yet, he argues that this is not a serious handicap for the event-causalist. In his opinion, one has enough justification to believe that a singular causal relation obtains between intention and behaviour provided one believes that *there is a law* which covers this relation, even though *one does not know what that law is.* However, by the time he came to write 'psychology and philosophy', Davidson seems to have given up the attempt to convert intentional explanatioas into coverning law explanations.[1] That he does so is obvious from the observation, *" the desire and belief work to cause action must meet further, and unspecified conditions"*. The advantage of this mode of explanations is clear. "we can explain behaviour *without having to know too much about how it was caused* ..... we cannot turn this mode

of explanation into something more like science."[2] Not only does Davidson concede that it is hard to subsume singular causal relations under covering laws, he also acknowledges that we cannot show precisely how desire and belief cause intentional behaviour.

Davidson's inability to provide a *precise analysis* of how intentions cause intentional actions is also mainfest in his treatment of cases which are in the technical parlance of recent philosophy of action, known as ' wayward causal chains '. These are the cases where the beliefs and intentions of a person result in the person 's committing some actions, yet no one in his senses can call them intentional actions. Roderick Chisholm, for example, cites the instance of a man who believes that if he kills his uncle he will inherit a fortune. This desire and belief may agitate him and cause him to drive in such a way that he accidentally kills a man who happens to be his uncle.[3] Yet, in spite of his belief and desire causally determining his action, it will be wrong to say that *the man intentionally kills* his uncle. The strange thing is that although this is not a case of intentional action, it has enough similarity with a case where the belief and intention cause a man to commit an action and where we readily accede that the man acted intentionally. What then is the difference between the two cases ? The agent–causalist would reply by saying that in the case of intentional action the *agent himself* carries out his intentions. The event–causalist will not, however, appeal to the concept of agency. He will, in that case, have to contend that the required difference lies in *the specific way* the relevant intentions cause the relevent actions. Yet, the event–causalist seems unable, when pressed, to spell our *precisely how the intention causes such an act* to be produced which will make us readily grant that the action concerned is a genuine intentional action. All he can do is to insist that in formulating the

definition of intentional action he can introduce some clauses which will ensure that there is no wayward causal chain between intention and action.

It is evident that the event-causalist cannot prove his hypothesis by a direct analysis of intentional actions. He therefore tries to prove event-causation by exposing the unintelligibility and absurdity of the concept of agency.

Event-Causalist Criticism of Agent-Causal Hypothesis

In his article, " Agency ", Davidson points out the inanity of the agent-causal theory in the following way.

He asks what, according to the theory of agent-causation, is the exact nature of the relation between the agent and his action? Granting that the agent causes the basic action, the question is : how does the agent cause ? Davidson maintains that there is a dilemma involved in the answer. There are two possibilities here. The first possibility is that the agent's causing his action is an event discrete from the ' primitive ' or 'basic' action.

In that case the agent's causing of his action is either itself an action, or it is not. If the former, then the 'primitive' action the agent is supposed to cause will, in that case, fail to be a 'primitive' action. If, however, the agent's causing is *not* an action, then the expression ' the agent *causes* his basic action ' is unintelligible. (How does the agent cause anything if he remains inactive ?) A proponent of agent-causation will, in that case, be charged with trying to explain agency by appeal to a more obscure notion, " that of a causing that is not doing, "[4] Let us turn to the other alternative, namely the agent's causing is identical with the action itself. In that case, the expression, ' the agent *causes* his action' is identical with, 'the agent acts', This being the case, the latter expression is hardly an analysis of the former. It happens merely to be a circumlocution for the former

We have not offiered an explanation of the expression, ' an agent causes. ' We have only stated the same expression, ' the agent causes ' with the help of some other words.

Ways of Handling the Objection Against Agent-Causal Hypothesis.

A ' basic ' intentional action is, as the agent-causalists rightly point out, really a *relation* whose subject is the agent and whose object is certain relevant bodily movements.[5] As is evident in the case of a particular 'basic' intentional action, an agent directly *causes* something. Now, undoubtedly, every case of something *causing* something else is a case of relation. Relations obviously need at least two terms between which they hold. Hence an agent causalist may legitimately claim that a basic intentional action consists of a relation connecting an agent to some bodily movements he intentionally and directly brings about.

We have seen that the subject of the relation mentioned above is the agent. What then is its object ? It can hardly be the ' basic ' intentional action. What *constitutes* a 'basic' intentional action *is*, as proper analysis reveals, the *obtaining of the agent–causal relation.* Hence the intentional action itself cannot be the object of this relation. If it is, then relation would be reduced to one of its terms. The object of the relation then, turns out to be typical movements of the body which are intrinsic to the intentional action. It is to be noted here that bodily movements are not, contrary to what we unreflectively believe 'basic' intentional acts themselves. Bodily movements are undoubtedly *essential components* of intentional actions, yet they are not intentional actions themselves. Just as the movements of the relevant muscles of the mouth are intrinsic to eating, but not themselves equivalent to eating, in the same way typical movements of the body are intrinsic to intentional action, but do not hemselves count as intentional actions. The agent thus directly

and intentionlly brings about the typical movements of the body which turn out to be objects of the agent-causal relation.

Davidson's demonstration of the dilemma involved in our understanding of the notion of agent-causation depends, the agent-causalist suggests, really upon a wrong identification of bodily movements with 'basic' actions. Keeping in mind this mistaken identification, *and* proceeding with a clear conception of what constitutes a 'basic' intentional action, we may recast Davidson's question as: how does the idea of agent-causation account for the relation between an agent and his *bodily movement ?*' Recast in this form, the first horn of the dilemma loses its strength. For, we can give a negative reply to the question, 'is the agent's causing his movements distinct from his intentional action ?' We can insist that the agent's causing his typical movements is *not distinct* from his intentional action. The agent's causing his typical bodily movements *constitutes* the agent's acting intentionally. Yet, the second horn of the dilemma seems still to continue to haunt us, althugh in a slightly new form. If we suggest that the 'agent's causing his relevant bodily movements' *is* 'his acting intentionally', then the latter expression can hardly be said to be an analysis of the former. We have no way of understanding what it is for 'the agent to cause anything' apart from understanding what it is for the 'agent to act intentionally.' Identical facts are stated with the help of two different expressions, (i) 'the agent causes x' and (ii) 'the agent acts intentionally.' We are consequently guilty of the charge of circumlocution.

Yet, the second horn here draws whatever strength it has, from the misconception that the agent-causalist is in favour of offering a definition of basic intentional action in terms of the notion of the 'agent causing something'. No attempt is, however, being made here to *define* intentional action in terms of agent-

causal relation. What the agent–causalist is suggesting here is only pointing out that the irreducible logical structure of 'basic' intentional actions consists in agent–causal relation. An analogous case can be cited here. Take the concepts of family and family resemblance. We can justifiably argue that the irreducible logical structure of a family consists of a kind of resemblance between the members. Yet this argument does not, by any means, amount to *defining* a family in terms of family resemblance between the members of the family.

We are now, at this stage, required to answer a question of considerable importance, if we are to provide a convincing account of agent–causality. Granted that the logical structure of intentional actions implies an agent–causal relation, the question is, what exactly is meant by agent–causation? Let us now concentrate on the answer to this question.

Explication of the Concept of Agent–Causation

We will not, however, attempt a definition of agent–causality. We will rather try to delineate some essential fertures of agent–causation.[6]

The concept of agent, as the proponents of the agency theory are wont to point out, inevitably carries in its fold the notion of power. The notion of efficacious power has indeed, through out the ages, been associated with the notion of agency. The agent is the locus of several powers. Amongst these powers the power of carrying out ' proximate intentions ' and the power of making practical inferences form the essential core of the notion of agency. The power of executing ' proximate intentions ' implies the ability to perform ' basic ' intentional actions (within an agent's repartoire) without a considerable time lapse between having the intentions and translating them into ' basic ' actions. The power to make practical inferences includes practi-

cal inference of intentions from other intentions and beliefs. The agent-causalists point out in this connection that the notion of an agent's exercising his powers is a primitive notion. How exactly the agent exercises his powers cannot be analysed further, just as much as the notions of different basic tastes cannot be analysed further in terms of some other notions. Sweetness, for example, cannot be analysed in terms of some other tastes or colours or any other thing.

A proper understanding of the agent's having efficacious power is however incomplete without understanding some of the conditions under which one is entitled to hold that the agent has performed an intentional action (as opposed to an action which has the semblance of being intentional, but is not really intentional in character).

Evidently, for an agent to do a particular action intentionally he must have the intention to do it and he must act in a way which qualifies as an action of the intentional sort. But this is not enough. The agent must, *himself, carry out his* intention to do that particular action.

Under what conditions then can it be admitted that the *agent himself* carried out his intention to do that particular action ? In the first place, the particular act-type must belong to the agent's repartoire of basic actions at a time when he is supposed to be committing that action. Secondly, the agent's opportunity to carry out his proximate intention should not be pre-empted by some conditions which are both (i) causally sufficient for the agent's exhibiting the particular type of intended action and (ii) are independent of his proximate intention. The fulfilment of these conditions will ensure that the agent himself has acted intentionally. A proper understanding of these conditions will help us see why a wayward causal chain case cannot be treated

as a case of intentional action inspite of its resembling the latter to some extent.

Let us consider a case of wayward causal chain cited by Davidson. Davidson cites the example of a climber holding a fellow climber on a rope. At a certain stage of his climbing he might " want to rid himself of the weight and danger of holding another man on a rope and he might know that by loosening his hold on the rope he could rid himself of the weight and danger. This belief and want might so unnerve him as to cause him to loosen his hold and yet it might be the case that he never *chose* to loosen his hold nor did he do it intentionally."[7]

Such a case as this is not a case of intentional action owing to the fact that the *agent himself* has not carried out his proximate intention. It is true that the intention of the climber did cause him to act in that particular way that he did. Yet the climber is not the agent here, because his opportunity to carry out his proximate intention is pre–empted. The opportunity was pre–empted by a set of causally sufficient antecedent conditions. Among these conditions are included the agent's state of nervousness. The climber is not, in that case, the originator of his bodily movements. What happend on the contrary is that the climber lost control over his bodily movements, viz. that of holding his grip on the rope. And what caused the climber to loosen his grip is his state of nervousness caused by his particular belief and intention These considerations help us see why the climber is not supposed to have acted intentionally, in spite of the fact that his belief and intention are supposed to have caused his so–called action of letting the rope go. The talk of having or losing control is meaningful only against a background of an agent who is capable of controlling his movements. In the circumstance

under dispute the climber is supposed to be capable of controlling his grip. But he is not the agent here because he failed to exercise that control.

It is obvious from the above discussion that supporters of agent–causation would like the distinction between a genuine intentional action and its fake semblance to be based on the notion of an agent. But the supporters of event–causation would like the distinction to be made on some other grounds. According to these supporters, like Davidson, the causal route from intention to behaviour is highly complex. An exact analysis of how intentions cause matching behaviour in the case of genuine intentional actions cannot, according to them, be made available.[8] Nevertheless, they point out, that there are some intermediate stages of this causal chain which sometimes produce cases of wayward causal chain. In their opinion, a proper analysis of intentional action could be made complete just by introducing a clause in their analysis which excludes these intermediate stages and safeguards a case of genuine intentional from going deviant. It is not incumbent on him to show exactly what characteristics of these intermediate stages make a case of wayward causal chain. He considers his task of analysing intentional actions to be adequately fulfilled if he can, by introducing some additional clause in his analysis, make provision for a way of excluding the intermediate stages that are responsible for wayward causal chain. But, in our view, such a consideration on his part is not justified.

In our opinion the notion of a deviant case is really parasitic on that of what happens in the normal case. The concept of making an incorrect calculation is parasitic on that of making a correct calculation. The explanation of a deviant case of intentional action must therefore make reference to the concept of the cases of genuine intentional actions. And since these latter

cases inevitably refer, as we have seen, to the notion of the *agent* himself executing his intention, the deviant cases are also obliged to refer to agents in control of their actions. It thus seems quite likely that the event–causalist's notion of the characteristics of the intermediate stages of the causal chain which introduce deviant cases is itself drawn from our grasp of the notion of the agent exercising his efficacious powers in intentional actions. Thus the event–causalist's attempt to analyse a genuine intentional action, simply by inserting a clause excluding the intermediate stages of a causal chain which makes a chain deviant, is really quite a weak attempt. In as much as the notion of a wayward causal chain inevitably has an agent–causal presupposition, it can hardly be introduced in the explanation of a genuine intentional action produced by event–causes like intentions.

We have maintained a little while ago that an agent is the locus of powers including that of carrying out his proximate intention, and of making practical inferences. But a question arises at this stage. We grant that intentions and beliefs play causal roles in the production of intentional actions. But the question is, is the concept of an agent being the cause of intentional actions not incompatible with the notion of beliefs and intentions also being causally involved in the production of intentional behaviour ?

Agent causalists argue that both the (i) agent himself and (ii) his beliefs and intentions are causally responsible for the agent's performance of intentional actions. Yet the causal roles of these two are not incompatible. We can present the agent causalist's view on this matter, by referring directly to the argument of John Bishop, as presented in his article, 'Agent–

causation' published in volume XCII of *Mind*, 1983, in the following way :

In Bishop's view the agent himself is directly making an inference in the case of practical inferences essential for an intentional action. It is also the agent himself who carries out his proximate intentions in the case of intentional behaviour. (How the agent actually makes these inferences and carries out proximate intentions cannot be answered with the help of some other notions. These are primitive notions.) Now practical inferences involve inferring of new intentions from other intentions and beliefs. Carrying out of proximate intentions are also impossible without intentions to be carried out. As being essential parts of practical inferrings and carrying out of proximate intentions, beliefs and intentions must thus also be causally involved in the bringing about of intentional actions. Yet, the causal roles of intentions and beliefe are different in nature from the causal roles of agents. While the existence of agents exercising causal powers are sufficient for bringing about of intentional actions, intentions and beliefs are necessary factors for the sufficient's being causally efficacious. In Birhop's view the causal roles of intentions and beliefs in the production of actions are comparable to the roles which beliefs that the premises of an argument are true, have in the production of the believer's belief in the entailed conclusion. Suppose I infer that Socrates is mortal from beliefs that, (i) All men are mortal and (ii) Socrates is a man. It cannot be held here that these two beliefs of mine are jointly causally sufficient for my believing that Socrates is mortal. I came to believe in the new conclusion only on the basis of certain things *I myself do* besides believing the two premises. It is possible that though I do believe that (i) all men are mortal and that (ii) Socrates is a man, I never come to connect the two beliefs of mine and hence fail to see their mutual rele-

vance. When I conclude that Socrates is mortal, I consider the contents of two beliefs of mine in the two premises, recognise their mutual relevance, and reason it out that Socrates is mortal. We do not deny here that the beliefs in the premises play some causal role in my arriving at the conclusion. It is undoubtely the agent who makes the inference, and so he is the cause of his belief in the entailed conclusion. But he plays this causal role only because of holding the premise beliefs to be true.

Let us now look at the causal roles of intentions and beliefes in practical inferences and in carrying out of proximate intentions. In the case of a practical inference the agent infers a new intention to do something on the basis of his belief that doing it then is instrumental to producing some other event which he intends to make happen. Intention and belief have causal roles here. They are intrinsic to and hence necessary conditions for the agent's bringing about of new proximate intention. If the agent did not have these intentional states and beliefs, he could not have performed that act of practical inference. The causal role of the agent's proximate intention in producing intentional behaviour is to be understood in a similar manner. If the agent did not have the proximate intention he could not have performed matching behaviour in acting intentionally. Thus, we see that the intentional 'doings' of the agency have as a necessary condition of their occurence that the agent should take into account the contents of some beliefs and intentions. "Accordingly, beliefs and intentions do not themselves causally suffice for intentional action, but they are necessary to what does causally suffice for it. Agent causalism then, does allow a causal role to the agent's intentional states". [9]

Remarks About Some Basic Misconceptions of Event-Causalists :

Before we draw the present discussion to a close we would like to point out some basic misconceptions of event–causalists.

Davidson :

A proponent of event-causalism like Davidson suffers from the wrong notion that a proper explanation of intentional action is possible on the assumption that (i) mere bodily movements are intentional actions and that (ii) basic actions are the only actions performed by the agent. The rest is up to nature to complete. The queen in Hamlet is required only to move her hand in a certain way causing the poison to be poured in the king's ear. That is the only intentional act she ever performed. The eventual dying of the king has strictly speaking hardly anything to do with an action of the queen. The king's death is, in his opinion, just a natural effect of the event of the hand's moving in a particular way. The so-called 'killing' is not in other words an action to be performed in addition to and subsequent to the queen's moving her hand in a particular way.

Davidson has a specific advantage in making these assumptions. These two assumptions are intended to make the hypothesis of an agent a superfluous one. In the case of bodily movements for instance, we have just a brief way of mentioning a person and an event, and yet leaving open the question whether he was the *agent.* This is amply illustrated in the descriptions of bodily movements like : Smith fell down, Smith blinked, Smith shuddered. So, if a basic intentional action is restricted to the mere bodily movements there is no further need for the introduction of the agent. On the other hand, the supporters of agent-causalism make the introduction of the agent necessary by extending the action of the agent beyond 'basic' actions They have to "go beyond mere movements of the body and dwell on the consequences of what the agent has wrought in the world beyond his skin."[10] They point out that the agent is responsible, not only for the bodily movement, but also for the 'non-basic' actions which bring about some changes in the

world around Yet, if the event-causalist succeeds in proving that *action is limited to bodily* movements then he no longer needs an agent who will own responsibility for the changes his bodily movements bring about in the world beyond his skin. There changes are then mere mechanical physical effects of certain changes in the body.

In our opinion, however, both these assumptions mentioned above are results of short-sightedness on the part of Davidson. We have already argued at length against the first assumption that bodily movements themselves are equivalent to intentional actions. Bodily movements are really objects of the relation constituting intentional actions. If mere bodily movements caused by intentions are considered as intentional actions, then even in cases of wayward causation we have discussed above the nervous bodily movements of the nephew on the steering, gear etc. can be said to be an intentioaal action of killing his uncle. As a matter of fact, this is not an intentional action precisely because the driver here has no control over his movements. A genuine 'basic' intentional action is one where the agent himself, on the basis of intention and belief, brings about some bodily movements. The agent here is in full control of the situation. Bodily movements, by themselves, are not capable of giving sufficient explanation of intentional actions.

If bodily movements were the only actions then, a man can, for example, exonerate himself from the charge of killing where the victim of his shooting dies a little later as a result of loss of oxygen supply to his brain. The killer may plead that he only made certain characteristic movements of his fingers. The victim *would not have died* if loss of oxygen was not brought about eventually by a sequence of natural events each caused by the previous ones. Unless we grant that the killer intended to produce the non-basic action of causing the victims ' death by

'basic' action involving a relation between the agent and his bodily movements (e.g. pulling the trigger), we cannot say that he is responsible for the murder.

Davidson is thus not justified in claiming that bodily movements are the only actions performed, and that the rest can be explained as natural consequences of an event. In our opinion there are 'non-basic' actions in addition to the 'basic' actions performed by the agent. 'Non-basic' actions are 'non-basic' in the sense that their performance depends on knowledge of how to do some 'basic' acts. Consider the case of the reading of words and reading of alphabets. Although the reading of words is not an action to be performed *subsequently to* the successful act of reading of alphabets, it is however, an action *in addition to* that of reading of alphabets. When an educated person reads words the action which he intends to, and actually performs, is not complete by reading of alphabets– it stretches to a further action of which the latter is just a necessary means.

In the same way, performance of a 'non-basic' action like riding a bicycle is dependent on knowledge of how to perform 'basic' acts like pedalling which involve moving legs in a circular manner, keeping balance (which involve certain other bodily movements) etc. It is not the case, contrary to what Davidson would like us to admit, that *after* performing 'basic' actions like pedalling and keeping balance the cyclist performs some other actions which count as riding the bicycle. But, as a matter of fact, the 'basic' actions are intertwined into the 'non-basic' action of cycling. In this way when the agent sets about cycling he starts the action of cycling *at the same moment* that he starts pedalling and balancing (which involve certain bodily movements).

An action is individuated by reference to the intended result. A 'non–basic' action like riding a bicycle must thus necessarily refer to the final intended result It is consequently absurd to suggest that moving legs and hands in a particular way constitute a complete action in the case of riding the bike. The action, in the case of a 'non–basic' action, must refer to the final intended result.

The whole point in calling an action 'basic' lies in the fact that although in itself it is an action with its own *immediate* result, it is nevertheless considered as an 'incomplete' or 'unsaturated' action. It is 'incomplete' in as much as it serves as a means to the performance of a higher 'non–basic' action. In some contexts, however, its immediate result may be considered an end in itself. But in that case we do not refer to it as a 'basic' action– we simply refer to it as an 'action'. Being considered as an 'incomplete' action or the 'partial fulfilment' of a whole 'non–basic' action, the 'basic' action is not supposed to have a beginning separate from that of the 'non–basic'. It really starts at the same time as the 'non–basic' action. It is thus wrong to suppose, as Davidson would like us to, that 'non–basic' action is an action *performed after* the successful performance of the 'basic action'.

But a question remains to be answered here. If the 'basic' and 'non–basic' actions have an identical beginning, in what sense can we call them two separate actions ? In answer we can make the following remark :

A partial fulfilment of an action is also an action, although of a differed sort, from the completed action. As a partical fulfilment of a 'non–basic' action, a 'basic' action is thus as much an action as the 'non–basic' action. It is not of course the same action as the 'non basic' action of which it is considered

an instrument. It is nevertheless an action with its immediate result. Comparable is the case where the failure to perform an action counts nevertheless as an action. A miscalculation is also a calculation, although not the original correct calculation which it was intended to be. Considered in this way as an 'incomplete action' or a 'partial fulfilment' of a contemplated 'non–basic' complete action, a 'basic' action begins at the same time as the 'non–basic' action. Nonetheless it is an action separate from the 'basic' action. A number of stitchings made on a dress at several times is a combination of several actions. Together they contribute to the final sewing of the dress. The different stitchings do not have any beginning separate from that of sewing of the dress. Yet, they are acts separate from the act of sewing the dress.

Goldmann

Alvin Goldmann objects to agent–causal theory in the following way in his book, *A theory of Human Action.*

In his opinion, the theory of agent–causation, as introduced by Taylor, Chisholm and Campbell,[11] requires that "agents cause acts without any state or event of the agent being an event–cause of these acts." [12] But if the agent acts in such a way, then, in Goldmann's opinion, it will be hard to distinguigh a case of intentional action from a mere unintentional happening. For example, it will be hard to distinguigh a case of grimacing done intentionally from grimacing which occurs as a mere reflex, unless, in Goldmann's opinion, we admit that the agent's wanting to grimace precedes the intentional action, but does not precede the mere reflex. In the circumstances, Goldmann argues, "the notion of event–causation *unconnected* with ogent–causation is bound to be a mysterious and obscure notion" [13]

In my view, however, Goldmann's objection rests upon a misunderstanding of the position of the agent–causalists. Chis-

holm, for example, does not really seem to entertain the idea of an agent causing an intentional action without an episode in the life of an agent being an event-cause. Chisholm, for example, talks of ' undertaking to do X ' in the context of intentional actions. Now this ' undertaking ' is clearly different from ' doing X ', and it definitely has intentional overtones. Inasmuch as forming an intention is clearly an *event*, Chisholm does not really seem to be in a mood to indroduce the notion of agent-causation *unconnected* with event-causation.

In addition, Chisholm, in introducing the notion of an agent causing a ' basic ' action, speaks of the agent's ' making happen ' certain changes in his brain and muscles. These events happening in his brain are supposed to cause the agent's ' basic ' actions like raising his hand. Thus prior to the agent's raising his hand intentionally he ' makes happen ' these neurophysiological events. Although these neurophysiological events are not to be counted as intentional actions committed by the agents, they are nevertheless necessarily involved in the agent's committing of intentional actions. On the basis of the reasons noted so far we can justifiably argue that Chisholm does not seem to advocate an agent-causal theory *unconnected* with event Causalism.

Let us also consider the view of John Bishop in this context. In Bishop's opinion, as we have already seen, the making of a practical inference plays a vital role in the agent's committing an intentional action. The practical inference requires that the agent forms a new proximate intention from other intentions and beliefs. The agent is also necessitated, as we have already seen, to carry out his proximate intentions himself. It is thus evident that forming and executing intentions and framing of beliefs, which are necessarily events, constitute the necessary conditions of the agent's causing his basic actions. Goldmann's

remark that agent-causalists are committed to a theory of agent-causality unconnected with event-causation does not thus appear to be founded on sufficient evidence. We are not, however, it must be remembered, maintaining that the agent-cause and his intentions and beliefs play some causal roles in producing intentional actions While the agent-cause acts as a sufficient condition here, the other factors play only the role of necessary conditions in this context.

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NOTES

1. See *Essay on Actions and Events*, D. Davidson, Oxford, 1980, pp. 229–244.
2. *Ibid*, p. 233. Italics ours.
3. See ' Freedom and Action ' by R. Chisholm, in *Freedom and Action*, ed. K. Lehrer. Humanities Press, New Jersey, U. S. A., 1976, p. 30.
4. ' Agency ' by D. Davidson, in *Essays on Actions and Events*, p. 52.
5. ' Agent-causation ' by John Bishop, *Mind*, 1983, vol XCII, pp. 71–72.
6. We would like to record here our heavy indebtedness to John Bishop's article, ' Agent-causation ' *Mind*, volume XCII, 1983, pp. 61–79.
7. Davidson, ' Freedom to Act ', reprinted in *Essays on Actions and Events*, p. 79.
8. *Ibid*, See pp. 6–7.
9. J. Bishop, ' Agent-causation ' *Mind*, vol. XCII, 1983. p. 78.
10. Davidson, *op cit*, p. 55.
11. a. *Action and Purpose*, Richard Taylor, pp. 111f.
    b. ' Freedom and Action ' by Chisholm, in *Freedom and Determinism* ed. by Keith Lehrer
    c. ' Is Free Will a Pseudo Problem ? ' Campbell, *Mind*, Vol. LX (1951), pp. 446–65.
12. *Alvin* Goldmann, *A Theory of Human Action*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976, p. 84.
13. See, R. Chisholm's "Freedom and Action" in K. Lehrer edited *Freedom and Determinism*, pp. 37–38.