

# THE ROLE OF REASON IN HUMAN ACTIONS - A STUDY

A Thesis Submitted to the University of  
Hyderabad for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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1999

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**31st December, 1999**

## **C E R T I F I C A T E**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**The Role of Reason in Human Actions - A Study**", submitted to the University of Hyderabad in fulfillment of the requirements for award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy** is a bonafide record of original research work done by **Mr. Ajit Kumar Behura** during the period of his study in the Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad, under my supervision and guidance and that the thesis has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of any degree.

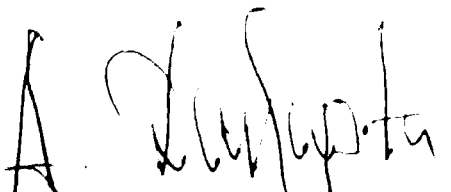
  
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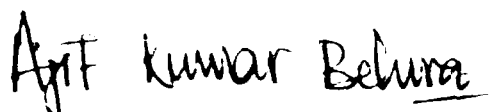
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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled "**The Role of Reason in Human Actions - A Study**", submitted to the University of Hyderabad in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy** is a bonafide record of original research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of **Prof. Ramesh Chandra Pradhan** and that the thesis has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of any degree.

  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to Prof. Ramesh Chandra Pradhan for his love, support and guidance. Memories of his infinite patience and teasing warmth about my 'idiosyncrasies' and his willingness to be disturbed day and night for academic and personal discussions, I shall always cherish.

I am greatly indebted to the head of the department Prof. A. Dasgupta, other faculty members, students and office staffs of philosophy department who were willing to extend their support during my research.

I thank University Grants Commission for granting me a fellowship during my M.Phil. and Ph.D. tenure to do full time research.

I acknowledge with deep sense of gratitude my friends Ramakanta, Koshy, Anil, Gautam, Chandu, Laxman, Muhabbat, Nishi, Kunmun, Suprita, Anita, Murty, Sridhar, Venu, Nandakishore and Shaji, for enriching my life.

I also owe a special thanks to Debasish bhai for rendering valuable suggestions on the topic and also taking trouble for reading the proof.

I thank Jhansi madam for her love and encouragement in finishing this research assignment in time. I also thank Raja and Rusi for their affection.

I am extremely grateful to my beloved brother, Biju for his effort in editing and typing the entire manuscript. Without his support and help it would have been very difficult on my part to finish the work in time.

I cannot forget the tremendous encouragement and comfort given by my best friends and relatives Paramjyot, Mitu, Nikunja, Kanhu, Kusa bhai, Nandaja, who have stood by me at various stages of my life.

Finally I acknowledge my hearty gratitude to my parents and other family members for their understanding, love, support and encouragement throughout my academic career.

**Ajit Kumar Behura**

*To My Family*

## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1-10</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> <b>Nature of Human Action</b>	<b>11-54</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b> <b>Explanation of Action</b>	<b>55-117</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b> <b>Human Agency</b>	<b>118-152</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b> <b>Intention and The Will</b>	<b>153-186</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b> <b>Reason for Action and Practical Reasoning</b>	<b>187-245</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>246-248</b>
<b>Select Bibliography</b>	<b>249-256</b>

# Introduction

The principal objective of this dissertation is to inquire into the distinctive features of human actions and analyze them, such that, it can reveal how reason plays the central role in the performance of human actions. The title itself shows the unifying theme of the thesis. The main aim of this study is to bring out the logical structure of human actions and to show how reason is fundamental and indispensable in all intentional actions. An attempt has been made to bring out the normative factors that are cardinal in the performance of human actions. The sole purpose in the whole analysis is to show how intelligent, non-habitual human actions are invariably the product of reasoning and also how belief, desire and intention play their role in the performance of actions.

In the process of investigation I have tried to uncover the fundamental assumptions about human actions. As the study begins with what is the nature of action shows the starting point of this inquiry is the action itself. To arrive at the key notion of the thesis, many concepts, which are directly or indirectly related to the topic, are taken into account. I have tried to analyze appropriately all the preexisting views starting from Aristotle to Wittgenstein, von Wright and Davidson in the discussion.

In everyday life, we tend to a very important conceptual polarity between what we do and what merely happens to us. All the events in nature are mere physical happenings, which do not need any intelligent

human agent for their occurrence but human actions are something totally different from them and presuppose some conscious agent behind it. Many causalists including Hempel and Davidson are of the opinion that, most of the human actions like physical events occur in nature and can be explained by a similar kind of explanation as in natural events. They say human actions like most of the physical happenings can be explained by means of their antecedent causes and can also be subjected to empirical validation. The same scientific explanation, which is value-free and systematic collection of facts, is applicable to both physical movements and intelligent actions. They also insist that human actions do not require any special kind of explanations other than causal explanation. Most of the causalists deny that the description and explanation of human actions belong to one level of discourse whereas the description and the explanation of physical things belong to another.

Throughout the thesis, I shall discuss the causal and non-causal theories of human actions and defend the non-causalist view of action in order to show that human actions cannot be included under the sphere of natural happenings. Natural happenings need different kinds of explanation than the kinds of explanation for human actions. The languages of both the types of explanations are so radically different from each other that one cannot replace the other. There is no logical connection between the causal model and reason model of explanation. As Melden says, absolutely nothing about human conduct follows logically from any account of the physiological conditions of bodily movements.

The first chapter discusses many general problems related to human actions and their relationship with other related concepts. For instance, I have discussed the basic questions like, what is an action? and how is it different from natural events? In the first section of this chapter, the physical events and actions are elaborately discussed and shown that physical movements are ontologically different from actions. Both actions and events or physical movements cannot be described in the same framework because they need altogether different categories for their description. Human actions presuppose the concept of freedom from which the concepts of duty, obligation and moral responsibility follow. All the actions are performed under the guidance of some social norms and rules. The important concepts like purpose, goal, intention of the agent, which are more clearly discussed in the later chapters, are introduced here.

The next section of this chapter deals with all the existing causal models of explanation, which are quite controversial. The Humean and Hempelian models of causal explanation provide a way of explaining human actions as natural events. In the following section the non-causal theories of actions are taken into account. Philosophers like Wittgenstein, Ryle, Anscombe, Winch, Melden and Kenny advocate a non-causal view of action by attacking the behaviorist and physiological accounts of human action. The non-causal theories explain human actions in terms of the agent's reasons, for performing them.

The main two models of explanations, that is, the reason model and causal model are highlighted in the next section along with a description of other possible models. The underlying logical structures of both the

models are different from each other. The causal model is usually of the form. "this happened because that happened" and assumes that there is a deductive nomological connection between the action and its cause. It says that most of the social phenomena can be explained by discovering a general law of human behavior. The causal explanation of human action takes it for granted that the concept of action can be subsumed under the concept of event. However, the philosophers who uphold the rational explanation of human action argue that, when we ask for clarification about certain human action, we are not asking the agent to provide some general law, but we need a clarification of the agent's intention and reasons behind the action. So a search for an explanation of human action is not to ask for antecedent causal factors but a search for the intentions, beliefs and desires of the individual.

The different views on springs of action are discussed in the last section of the first chapter. There are a number of diverse sources that bring action into being. For some will or volition is the ultimate source of action. But this view is not unanimous accepted by everyone. According to Davidson, however, action springs from primary reason, which is a complex of beliefs and pro-attitudes. Pro-attitudes, for him, are genuine mental dispositions, which prompt a particular action.

To contrast with this opinion, the thinkers who hold the rationalist view say that actions are done as a result of deliberation and decision. They say both intentions and motives are the springs of action. Even though an intentional action can ultimately be traced back to desires, beliefs and other pro-attitudes, it is brought ultimately by a decision or

intention. They say actions spring from a process of reasoning with reference to some purpose or goal.

The second chapter is entirely devoted to the explanation of human action. The first section of this chapter starts with the questions like what is called an explanation? and why do we call for an explanation? A distinction is being made between explanation and description and is shown how one can deal with 'why' and 'what' questions regarding explanation. I have also mentioned how most of the descriptions of actions are partial, conditional, inconclusive, uncertain and limited.

The concept of scientific explanation is discussed with special reference to the views of Hempel and Oppenheim. This explanation is known as deductive nomological explanation or covering law model of explanation and is mostly used in scientific inquiry. This explanation generally deals with the principles of change in nature. It tries to explain the 'why' questions, by giving a cause for it. The second kind of explanation which Hempel recognized along with this is the probabilistic explanation. The probabilistic explanation uses statistical laws in the place of universal laws.

I have discussed the pattern model of explanation in comparison with the deductive model. This model says that while explaining an action, we must try to fit it into some kind of existing pattern.

In this chapter, I have also analyzed the comparison between explanation and prediction. Explanation and prediction are logically

connected. We could predict something if only the explanations are complete. But most explanations in behavioral sciences are partial and so do not allow any prediction. Again the explanations which are based upon statistical laws allow only statistical prediction at best. In certain respects explanations are different from predictions. Explanations rest on a nomological or theoretical generalization, but predictions need not have such a basis. A prediction is different from a mere guess and is inferred from some premises whose basis is merely empirical generalization. It is true that, if we can predict successfully on the basis of a certain explanation, we have good reason and perhaps the best sort of reason for accepting the explanation.

The idea of purposive explanation and how far it is successful in explaining human action is included in this chapter. The word 'purpose' always implies a conscious agent, who works out that purpose. Explanation is not applicable to events or facts other than human actions. Only human beings have purpose, therefore, only human actions can be explained purposively.

One section in this chapter is marked for reason explanation. This is a very special kind of explanation and has much significance in the explanation of human action. When someone asks, why did I perform such and such act, or what is the reason behind the action performed? I tell about my beliefs and give my own reasons to justify that belief. This explanation is the most appropriate kind of explanation for human actions. This shows why an action is thought to be a good thing to do.

The third chapter deals exclusively with the notion of agency and the different related concepts like the problem of free will, determinism, choice and responsibility etc., which are closely related to it. The human action comes into existence due to the intention and motive of the agent who performs it. Here the question arises, what is an agent causation and how it is different from event-causation? The problem is not about the existence of agent causation but whether agent causation can be reduced to event causation or not.

I have made a distinction between the first order and second order desire and consequently reserved the second order desires exclusively for human agents. I have also tried to draw a line of demarcation between the animal agents and machines. The animals have desires and they choose between different desires, but what is distinctively human is the power to evaluate his own desire. Only human beings possess the capacity for reflective self-evaluation, which is, manifested in the formation of the second order desire. So we grant a moral status only to the human agents. He has the sense of self and has a notion of the future and past, can hold values, make choices and above all adopt different life-plans.

The issues of freedom and responsibility are also discussed in this chapter and attempts have been made to show how we ascribe responsibility to people for their actions. Arguments are adduced to prove that both determinism and indeterminism are incompatible with the concept of responsibility.

Towards the end of the chapter, an attempt has been made to bring out the relationship between a conscious agent with society. Could there be any meaning and value without human agent? The agent is born, brought up and learns almost all kinds of norms, conventions in the society. Culture acts as a prerequisite for the growth of the child in the society.

The fourth chapter tries to uncover the relationship of human action with the concept of intention and the will extensively. In this chapter, I have made an attempt to understand the nature of intention and intentional action. Questions like, what is an intention? What is it to form an intention? And is it possible to ascribe intention to others? etc. are answered with reference human action.

I have discussed the views of those thinkers who analyzed intention in terms of wants, beliefs, other pro-attitudes and concluded that intention is a much broader concept than mere want and belief. Having an intention to do something is more than having a mere wish, want or desire to do that thing. A distinction is made between intentions and motives. Ordinarily there is no difference between an intention and a motive. A man's intention is what he aims at, whereas his motive is what determines the aim. It is also shown that motive of an action has much wider application than intention with which the action was done. Motives may explain actions but it does not cause it. It is something, which brings the notion of choice to human action.

An attempt has been made to show the similarity and the difference between 'intention' and 'decision'. It is usually said that a decision to do

certain action A is similar to an intention to do A. But both intention and decision are not the same on the ground that, 'deciding' involves deliberation while the same is not true with intention. Moreover, the concept of intention resembles more with want and desire than that with decision.

The next section of this chapter is about the concept of will. Traditionally it is said that an action is a willed movement and this theory is called the volitional theory of action. I have discussed the views of Melden, Ryle and Wittgenstein for the understanding of concept of volition

The last chapter of this thesis deals with the central issues, that is, the issue of reason for human action, purposive definition, deliberation and the steps of practical reason. Depending on the social institutions, human values and purposes, norms and rules, reason operates in the human mind to bring the action into force. Human beings use their linguistic ability to identify and fulfil their wants and desires by employing reason.

I have discussed the views on reason in this chapter from Aristotle to Davidson. Here the purpose the goal of the human action are highlighted. Human beings are not born rational but acquire the skill of reasoning from society. So society plays a vital role in the development of human reason. We convey our expectations, goals, and intentions to others by offering reason for it. People understand each other's actions by knowing each other's reasons.

The last section of this chapter is about the practical reasoning. The practical reasoning is something, which leads the agent to action. The concept of choice in relation to practical reason is discussed with reference to Bayesian deliberation towards the end of the chapter.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **NATURE OF HUMAN ACTION**

1. Introduction
2. Actions, Events and Related concepts
3. Causal Theories of Action
4. Non-Causal Theories of Action
5. Reason, Causes and the Explanation of Human Action
6. Springs of Action

# **Chapter 1**

## **Nature of Human Action**

### **1. Introduction**

Philosophers, unlike the ordinary human beings, are interested in the meaning and analysis of the concept of human action. The primary question involved in such analysis of human action is, whether it is possible to draw a line to demarcate actions from non-actions. The answer to this question does not seem to be as straightforward as it appears. In philosophy, the problem of action is essentially to differentiate between mere bodily movements or events from those that represent action. It is obvious that when a man makes a movement it certainly entails that such a movement occurs, whereas the fact that such a movement occurs does not necessarily entail that he makes it. That is, when actions imply movements, the movements do not imply actions.

### **2. Actions, Events and Related Events**

Very often philosophers try to explain and project this distinction by citing Wittgenstein's famous remark: "what is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm goes up from the fact that I raise my arm?"<sup>1</sup> Different thinkers have explained this remark in different ways. But the underlying assumption in

this remark is that Wittgenstein demands an explanation of the relationship between bodily movements and actions. Many philosophers following Wittgenstein have made the distinction between actions and bodily movements. The main criterion on which the distinction between physical movements and actions, is based on the fact that human actions involve psychological features such as reason, intention, desire and motive, etc. whereas physical movements only refer to different causal factors for their explanation.

For Melden actions are a special sort of bodily movements which involves psychological factors such as intentions and motives. He writes: "It appears as though an action was a bodily movement of a special sort and that we need only to specify the distinctive features of bodily movements that count as actions in order to elucidate the concept of action. We are inclined, accordingly, to look for certain psychological factors in order to mark off bodily movements that count as actions from all those that do not".<sup>2</sup> Charles Taylor brings in the element of agent's purpose and goal while distinguishing human actions from the bodily movements. Most of our actions are goal oriented and have necessary reference to the agent's intention. He writes: "our ordinary action concepts generally pick out the behavior they are used to describe not just by its form or overt characteristics or by what it actually brings about, but also by the form or goal-result which it was the agent's purpose or intention to bring about".<sup>3</sup>

The above remarks make clear that Wittgenstein's question was understood as a demand for a criterion to sort out bodily movements, which are actions from those, which are not. Even though philosophers are not

unanimous to equate the concept of action with the movements or events, the recent trends in analytical philosophy says that under special circumstances where the movements or events are linked with intention, motives, conventions are considered as actions. Consequently any action can be described as a movement under special consideration. This indicates that there are two different ways of describing the same action. The same action can in one way be described as a mere happening where as in some other way can be described as an action. But many thinkers especially post-Wittgenstenians like Ryle, Melden, Peter Winch and Kenny hold the view that there is a sharp difference between both modes of describing the same action. They say that the language of action is different from the language of events. The former requires reason for its explanation where as the latter is in need of causal facts for their explanation. Both falls in different conceptual schemes which cannot be reduced to one type of explanation. Both the explanations are logically incompatible with each other. There is an unbridgeable gap between the two concepts and consequently their respective explanations.

The two alternative modes of describing actions cannot be equally appropriate for the understanding of human actions. The description of action in terms of physical movements does not refer to any conscious human agent. The view, which regards actions to be a subset of events, holds that there is no difference between actions and events. But, this view is not satisfactory because characterization of action merely in terms of physical movements fails to draw a distinction between what human beings do, and what happens to them and also what they undergo. It may be said out that even if doing and happenings were exhaustive categories, they are not

mutually exclusive. The thinkers those who do not see any difference between the concept of action and the concept of event may not fully accept the importance of the reflexive human awareness.

Can human behavior be identified with human actions? Is it something different from the agent's habitual performance of some action? Behavior is a term used by psychologists for referring both to actions and to bodily movements of the agent. A man is waving his hand, he may be doing so to show his approval or to give some other signal, or may be wishing. If we merely say that his behavior is such that he is waving his hand, then we leave it open whether he is acting or there is no action at all. Actions cannot be identified with behavior for behavior refers to the physical processes rather than what human beings do. We understand the concept of action as distinct from the concept of behavior, by referring to the fact that the agent tries to bring about something rather being passive. Human beings are different from other animals as they have the ability to express their intentions and execute them in their action. The difference is not merely because animals have no means of communicating their intention, but no one can ever know what their intention is! It looks senseless to attribute, 'intention' to animals, as they do not reflect upon that.<sup>4</sup> Apart from this animals are devoid of second order activities, that is, the second order desires, beliefs etc. These second order activities are quite complex and attributed only to human beings. The ability of knowing language and its use is unique to human beings. It is used by them not only in talking about actions, but for engaging in actions like planning an action, assessing or evaluating an action, etc. which are not shared by the creatures other than human beings.

Our actions are understood with reference to the society we belong, the socio-cultural practices we obey and the rules, norms of the group we follow. Actions are not made intelligible not by mere the concept of behavior for the concept of behavior is quite inadequate to explain the complex conceptual structure in the background of every action. We justify and interpret most of our actions with in a system by following certain rules and norms. As the rules or norms are common to all members of the society, our understanding among ourselves is possible. The rules are applied not by those who attempt to understand actions but also by those who perform these actions. In fact all the members of the society consciously or unconsciously follow the rules to be understood by the other members of the society.

Use of language occupies a special place in the understanding and performance of human action. Animals and creatures other than human beings are not capable of using language. Language is an integral part of human existence in the sense, in every act of life its presence is inevitable. Its use is very crucial in the sense, it is presupposed in the performance of every action. As actions are performed with reference to certain social institutions, beliefs and values of the agent, it need a vocabulary of purpose, intention, for their description. The human agent can provide a description of what he is trying to do and such a capacity of self-description is unique to human agents, not seen in animals and inanimate things. It can be said that, for understanding the actions of our fellow beings, we have to understand their beliefs, desires, intentions and the norms they follow. Actions are embedded in the forms of life of the people concerned. So it is difficult for an alien to understand the meaning of the actions of a community, if he is

not aware of the beliefs, values and customs underlying the forms of life of that community.

Both actions and events or physical movements fall under different categories. Actions are not identical with its corresponding events in the sense that the particular action may involve different event and the same event may involve in the performance of different action. To deny that an action is identical with its corresponding event does not imply that it is not identical with any other event. But the proposition that every action is identical with some event is not correct because it is a category-mistake to think of events as intentional. Both actions and events fall under different categories. While the events are happenings, the actions are something done with some purpose and intention. Hence actions and events belongs to two separate categories having different explanations and descriptions.

Let us consider an example to show how actions involve same event or bodily movements.

1. John is calling Mary.
2. John is showing his hand to Mary.
3. John is wishing Mary.

In all the above three propositions the meanings of 'calling', 'showing' and 'wishing' are different from one another. All these actions involve the same event that is, John lifting the hand towards Mary. Whether John is wishing or calling Mary is known from the context and the situation where it happens. These physical facts are only the necessary but not the sufficient

conditions for the truth of these statements. The meaning of wishing or calling or showing the hand can be known with reference to the particular socio-cultural context in which the action is performed.

There are also instances where the same sequences of events may characterize different actions. Let us consider an example to illustrate how a particular action is implied by many different events.

1. John wants to impress Mary by smiling at her.
2. He may impress her by telling a story.
3. He may still impress her by helping her out of trouble.

All the above three instances show that John has to impress Mary in any of the three ways, depending on the situation. So the same action, 'to impress Mary' can be characterized by different events, that is, either by smiling at her or by telling a story or helping her out of trouble. So, depending on the situation, the same event may characterize different actions and consequently one can come to the conclusion that actions are different from events.

Is it the case that, actions and events are diametrically opposite to each other? Do they exist in two different realms, one in which things happen and another in which things are done? What is then the relation between the two? Are these the same phenomena looking differently? The language of action certainly differs from the language of physical movements. We cannot talk of both events and actions in one single way. Wittgenstein asks to consider the following two languages. He says:

Examine the two language games:

(a) Someone gives someone else the order to make particular movements with his arm or to assume particular bodily positions (gymnastic instructor and pupil). And here is a variation of his language game: The pupil gives himself orders and carries them out.

(b) Somebody observes certain regular processes, for example, the reaction of different metals and acids and thereupon makes predictions about the reactions that will occur in certain particular cases.

(c) There is an evident kinship between these two language games and also a fundamental difference. In both one might call the spoken word 'predictions'. But compare the training, which leads to the first technique with the training for the second one.<sup>5</sup>

Wittgenstein wants us to emphasize the basic structural difference between the two types of language games. Also he is showing how we are trained to play two different language games, one about the human beings and the other about the natural organisms and inanimate objects. We do not give order to stones or trees for we do not presuppose that they are capable of responding to them as we do in case of human beings. We find it odd to explain an earthquake by pointing out that it has chosen to occur at a particular time and place. But we do not find it meaningless to explain an action such as walking on the road as something chosen by a person. Even we make a distinction between eating food and beating of heart. We may choose to eat or not to eat the food but such choice does not make any sense with regard to the beating of heart. But the word 'choose' express the human intention behind the whole act. That is why a human action differs fundamentally from a natural event.

Intention is something, which is inherent in the action and differentiates it from events. Wittgenstein makes the following observation on intention: “Why do I want to tell him about an intention too, as well as telling him what I did? Not because the intention was something which was going on at that time. Because I want to tell him something about myself, which goes beyond what happened at that time.”<sup>6</sup>

Intentions are part of the structure of an action. They are not something extraneous to the actions. For example: Imagine I am running. I may be doing so simply for the sake of running. But I could be running to do exercise or to catch the bus or as a participant in a running competition. In each of the cases when you know about the intention of my running, you know more about the context, the situation of my running. This helps you to understand better what I am doing. Knowing the intention of the agent, not only takes us beyond the physical movements but also helps us to understand the action of the agent in the complete sense. Actions thus are logically dependent on intentions of the agent.

Melden<sup>7</sup> holds that intention is something, which provides a better understanding of the action by placing it with in the appropriate context and also by revealing something about the agent himself. Intention is not something very much hidden from the outsiders other than the agent. It is not a private mental event. We understand someone’s action not by referring to some private mental events but by placing his action in a purposeful pattern which reveals how the act was carried out. In this we take into account the social circumstances on one hand and beliefs, and attitudes

on the other. The language of action involves necessary references to the social practices, rules, intention and belief of the agent while the language of events or behavior does not require such conditions at all.

### **3. Causal Theories of Action**

Philosophers have been concerned with explaining human actions either by appealing to the reasons which underline actions or by appealing to their causes. The analysis and explanation of human action provided by causal theories are fundamentally different from all other kinds of explanations. The causal model of explanation is most appropriate for the natural events, but it has been applied to human actions as well.

Wittgenstein, Ryle, Anscombe, Peters, Winch, Melden and Kenny oppose this causal view by attacking the behaviouristic and psychological accounts of the causal theory of action. They also oppose the traditional philosophical theories, which saw volition, motive etc. as causes of action. They reject both the Humean and the Hempelian type of causal explanation according to which a law-like relation exists between different events. Even though there are important differences among these philosophers, they are unanimous in rejecting the causal theory of human action. All the causal theories are widely differ from one another in their approach and analysis, but still they agree on the fundamental point that actions cannot be explained by their causes.

Hume defines cause to be an object followed by another where all objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second. That means there is a constant conjunction between the first and the second object.<sup>8</sup> He assumes that a causal claim implies a functional dependence between two events although every functional dependence is not a causal dependence. If A causes B, then some changes in A must be accompanied by changes in B, if all other variables are held constant. If A is the cause of B, then B is functionally dependent on A. If B changes, then A must have changed if the other related things are constant. So we can say, if A is a cause of B, then on that ground a change in B must be accompanied by a change in A.<sup>9</sup>

Mill says, cause as the sum total of the conditions positive and negative taken together, which being realized, the consequent invariably follows: he illustrates how cause includes all the conditions under which the effect comes up. Mill says, "An individual fact is said to be explained, by pointing out its cause, that is by stating the law or the laws of causation, of which its production is an instance".<sup>10</sup> For example, Mary dies and the cause of his death is that his foot slipped while climbing a ladder. According to Mill, only one condition, that is, his foot slipping while climbing the ladder cannot be the cause of death. The other conditions induce Mary's weight and his body-position. Thus Mills causal analysis is far more inclusive than Hume's. According to Davidson,<sup>11</sup> Mill is right in saying that there certainly is, among the circumstances that took place, some combinations or other on which the event is invariably consequent.

The causal theory of action argues that the concept of intentional behavior is a causal concept in the sense that behavior is intentional if and only if it is caused in a certain way. Secondly, it argues that all the acceptable explanations of intentional behavior are causal. More clearly, when we explain an agent's behavior by showing his reason for acting as he did, we specify the causes of his behavior, so that reasons are causes of a certain kind.<sup>12</sup>

In 'Action, Reason and Causes', Davidson argues that behavior is intentional if and only if it is caused by those of agent's beliefs and pro-attitudes (desires, motives and obligations etc.) in the light of which the behavior appeared reasonable or justifiable. I quote Davidson: "How about the other claims: that justifying is a kind of explaining, so that the ordinary notion of cause need not be brought in? Here it is necessary to decide what is being included under justification. It could be taken to cover only what is called for by C1: that the agent has certain beliefs and attitudes in the light of which the action is reasonable." Thus my going to the library is intentional if and only if the behavior which resulted in the act of going to the library is caused by my attitudes and beliefs which make that behavior reasonable.<sup>13</sup>

Actions are most reasonable things to do given the desires and beliefs, so that they can be understood as reasons for action. If belief and desire cause the behavior, then the behavior is intentional. So to explain the behavior one simply has to show the beliefs and other pro-attitudes, which caused it, according to Davidson.

Davidson's main argument for the causal theory of action is that it alone enables us to make sense of the notion of an agent's acting for reason. And that notion assumes the distinction between an agent's acting and having reasons and the agent does action because of these reasons. One may justify an act by citing reasons an agent had, even if he did not act because of these reasons. Here the word 'because', Davidson argues, is causal.<sup>14</sup> An agent acts because of reason, that is, his beliefs and pro-attitudes, only if they cause his behavior. Suppose an agent has pro-attitude and belief but it does not cause his behavior then the agent has behavior, but he has not acted because of it. When the agent's beliefs and pro-attitudes cause his behavior, the agent acts and then only the agent's beliefs and pro-attitudes are a sufficient condition for his behavior being intentional.

Davidson accepts the views of Hume and Mill on the one hand and the views of C.J.Ducasse,<sup>15</sup> on the other on the status of the causal law. He accepts the account of Mill and Hume to the extent that a singular causal statement "A caused B" entails that there is a law to the effect that all the objects similar to A are followed by objects similar to B. We have reasons to believe the singular statement only in so far as we have reason to believe there is such a law. The second account which is argued by Ducasse maintains that singular causal statements entail no law and that we can know them to be true without knowing any relevant law. Davidson thinks that both the views are consistent with each other and therefore there are not only singular causal statements but also law-like causal statements.

The non-causal theory of action rejects Davidson's contention that reasons are causes of action. Its argument is that reason for action could not

be causes since reasons only motivate an agent rather than compel him to act. Therefore it is argued that, for example, my desire to go to the library could not be a cause of my going to the library because that desire could be understood only in terms of its object, which is the very action it is supposed to cause. But the very notion of causal sequence logically implies that cause and effect are intelligible without any logically internal relation of the one to the other.<sup>16</sup> In the case of human actions reasons are internally connected with actions.

Davidson's distinction between events and their description are more complex. He says that causality is inseparable from causal laws and those causal laws necessarily involve descriptions. Where there is causality there must be a law and the events. Events related as cause and effect fall under strict deterministic laws. Causality and identity are relations between individual events no matter how they are described. But, laws are linguistic entities, so events can instantiate laws.<sup>17</sup>

Davidson made a significant departure from the Humean view on the relation of causality to causal laws. He avoids the covering law model of explanation, which is a development from Hume's view on causation.<sup>18</sup> The covering law model requires that in order for an event A to cause event B there must be a law covering events of type A and type B. That means event of type A are always followed by the events of type B. To assert that A causes B presupposes a causal law in which both A and B appear. If covering law model is correct, and then the causal theory will stand or fall with the possibility of formulating causal laws intentional or psychological

terms. But Davidson argues that there could not be any causal law in intentional terms.

Defenders of the covering law model argued that intentional explanation of human behavior presupposes causal laws, which cover behavior and explanatory attitude. We do not normally mention such laws, because they are implicit.<sup>19</sup> Critics of this theory, however, argue that there were no laws of the required kind. The covering law model is therefore inadequate to explain human actions.

Separation of causal theory of action from the covering law model is made possibly by Davidson's construing the causal relation of attitudes and behavior in an oblique sense. To avoid the covering law model, Davidson shows the causal laws connecting attitude descriptions with behavior descriptions. He also affirms that attitudes and behavior also have purely physical descriptions. And it is the physical descriptions of attitudes and behavior that are causally connected. Affirming that attitudes have purely physical descriptions is to affirm that attitudes are identical with physical events. Each individual attitude is identical with a physical event but no law determines which type of physical event it is identical with. Only at the physical level we find causal laws. So although reasons are causes, no causal laws need connect reasons and actions. Genuine causal laws connect the physical events to which the attitude description applies.

Goldman<sup>20</sup> says that there is a causal connection between wanting to do a basic act A and the actual performance of the act A. Normally an agent does a basic act A not because he wants to do A but because he wants to do

$A_1$  and believes that  $A$  will generate  $A_1$ . In normal situation, a number of wants and beliefs cause the performance of a basic action. He also holds the opinion that the knowledge of a precise law is not necessary to justify the statement that want and beliefs cause acts. Most of our knowledge of singular causal propositions is not based on knowledge of precise, universal laws. We know on many occasions that careless driving causes fatal accidents, but from this statement, I could not formulate any universal predictive law that relates every occurrence of reckless driving with fatal accidents. Similarly, before Newton's discovery of the gravitational force of earth, it was very much known that anything normally thrown up returns back to the earth. But at that time no one was able to state a universal law that things thrown up return to the earth. The important point in the present context is that the justification for the belief, that wants and beliefs, cause acts, does not await the discovery of a precise universal law.

Goldman also says that not only wants and beliefs cause basic act-tokens, the acts that are generated by basic act-tokens are caused by these wants and beliefs.<sup>21</sup> If something causes John's going to playground and if John's going to playground generates John's playing football, then the causation of John's playing football may involve more factors than are involved in the causation of John's going to playground. But whatever is the cause of John's going to playground is at least a partial cause of John's playing football.

The generational conditions that enable a basic action to generate a higher order action might be counted among the causes of higher act, but usually it is inappropriate to call these conditions, "*causes*" of the act. But

the generational conditions are causally relevant to the performance of the higher act, even if they would not ordinarily be called “causes’ of the higher act.<sup>22</sup> This can be compared to that of ‘standing conditions’ in various causal processes. We would not ordinarily call the presence of oxygen a “cause” of a particular combustion, but it is a causally relevant condition. Wants and beliefs, which cause a certain basic action, also cause anything that is, generated by that basic act. But these generated actions will have some causally relevant conditions that were causally relevant with respect to the basic act.

Some causalists talk of purposive causation as something different from ordinary causation. Purposive or final causation is something that preserves the purpose. If John wants to read a book and considers it necessary to go to the library to do that, then he starts going to library. John's intending to read a book becomes effective and develops to his trying to do by his bodily behavior. This action takes place through a purposive causal process. The agent's purpose causes the required bodily behavior. This purposive causation involves a particular syllogism and the causal process takes place in accordance with two practical syllogisms.

A need for such a purposive causation is felt in the recent philosophical literature. We will discuss how this purposive causation helps in handling some problematic examples. Let us consider Chisholm's<sup>23</sup> well-known example:

1. A certain man desires to inherit a fortune.
2. He believes that, if he kills his uncle, then he will inherit a fortune.

3. This belief and his desire agitate him so much that he drives very fast, with the result that he accidentally runs over and kills a pedestrian, who unknown to the nephew, was none other than his uncle.

Can we say in the above example that, the nephew killed his uncle intentionally? Obviously no. The person did not killed his uncle according to his action plan. Purposive causation needs an action plan to explain the act of killing. But still we may say that the killing is caused by the desire and belief of the person.

Goldman<sup>24</sup> gave an example of purposive causation. Suppose an agent A is at a dinner party. A intends to offend the host and he believes that if he grimaces as he takes the soup, the host will be offended. But Oscar, A's practical joker friend, knows about A's intention and A's belief, but he is determined to prevent A from intentionally offending his host. So Oscar puts the foul testing stuff in the soup that makes him grimace. Here there is a causal connection between A's conduct plan and A's grimacing. But A's grimacing is not intentional. A's grimacing corresponding to his conduct plan because the basic act in his plan was grimacing itself.

von Wright<sup>25</sup> regards the concept of causality whether Humean or Davidson's theory is in essential both to the intentionality of behavior and to intentional explanation. His central thesis is that, an agent's behavior is intentional if and only if an agent intends or aims at something by his behavior. If the agent's behavior is intended to result in a certain outcome, then it is intentional. But this is nothing to do with the causal theory of

behavior. Thus, according to von Wright, causality is not antithetical to the intentionality of human action.

#### **4. Non-Causal Theories of Action**

Reason-giving explanations form the basis of our everyday interaction with other people. They provide a model of understanding, which is fundamental to our views about the world. It is this model also regards all conscious human beings as rational purposive beings. To reject such a model of understanding, by us seems impossible. Since this model has been successful in explaining human behavior satisfactory. We must take reason-giving explanations seriously as genuine accounts of how we come to behave as we do.

Whether reasons are causes of action or something distinct of its own, is one of the existing controversies of philosophy. It is often argued that reasons are not causes of action. Causal relations hold only between physical events and as actions are not physical events, so reason which explain actions are not causes. Both the descriptions the description of physical events and the description of action are fundamentally different from each other. Action descriptions are in terms of goals, motive and intention, which are grouped under the category of reason.

The non-causal theory of action holds that event-causality plays no role in the analysis of intentional action. Another important feature of this

theory is the emphasis on the understanding of behavior. It says that to understand an item of behavior is to read off from it that the agent's relevant wants intentions, beliefs and so on. Thus we come to understand and classify behavior as a certain kind of action, in which the agent's reasons play the most important role.

von Wright's theory of intentional action says, the agent is aiming by his behavior to attain certain end. His analysis of intentional action is:

An agent performed an intentional action 'I' if and only if,

1. The result 'R' occurred because of the agent's behavior and
2. The agent by his behavior aimed at the result 'R'.<sup>26</sup>

Thus an agent intentionally throws the stone if and only if throwing the stone is brought about or caused by the agent's behavior and the agent by that bodily behavior aimed at throwing the stone.

According to von Wright, actions are properly understood not by pointing to some remote and abstract causes but by the interpretation of their intentions.<sup>27</sup> To speak of the intention of the action is to speak of intentionality of the agent's behavior. Secondly, the intentionality of behavior is in no way derived from the causal antecedents of the behavior. Intentionality, rather, is in the behavior and behavior is normally seen as action.

In von Wright's theory, the bodily behavior in action is strictly speaking left unexplained. von Wright accepts that the agent's bodily

behavior may be causally explained. It is only that this explanation is in no way connected to the teleological explanation of agent's action.<sup>28</sup> In von Wright's theory, actions are to be explained intentionally in teleological terms.<sup>29</sup> A teleological explanation refers to some end of the agent and to some belief that a means is seen by the agent as conducive towards that end. Such teleological explanations do not depend on any objective nomic relationships between means and ends. An acceptable teleological explanation of action must be 'logically conclusive' in von Wright's view.

There are other non-causal theories, which are closely related to von Wright's theory. For example, Abelson<sup>30</sup> following the idea of Peters, Dray and Melden presents a non-causal account in which intentional actions are said to be explainable in two ways. First, the action is one which the agent is expected to perform under the circumstances. For example, John has smoked a cigarette because it is his habit to do so. This type of explanation is called reason terminating because it indicates that no further reason can be asked for. The action is not in need of justification or excuse. Secondly, we may explain a voluntary action by giving a means-end purposive explanation of it. These explanations are in the form of "X did A in order to get B". This kind of explanation is reason giving explanation. Abelson argues that explanations by reference to an emotion or a desire are reason-giving as emotions and desires are connected with the reasons.

Davidson makes a distinction between the rationalization and the explanation of an action.<sup>31</sup> One may rationalize a person's doing an action by citing a reason that he has, even if one did not act because of that reason. However, one cannot explain an action by citing a reason unless the agent

acted because of it, this show there is a causal connection. But Abelson denies it by saying that a person's real or explanatory reason is the reason that suitably relates it to his other actions in a wider context.<sup>32</sup>

Descriptions and explanations of actions belong to one level of discourse whereas, description and explanation of physical things belongs to another. Antony Flew<sup>33</sup> remarks that the language of action is radically different from the language of physical things, such that, there is no logical connection between the two. Melden argues that, "absolutely nothing about human conduct follows logically from any account of the physiological conditions of bodily movement."<sup>34</sup> Both the explanations are logically incompatible to each other. There is a fundamental difference between reason and causal explanation. Melden says a why question about human action is a demand for a purposive concept including beliefs, attitudes of the agent who performs it. Melden has given two reasons to show how reasons or purposive explanations are different from causal explanations. Firstly, there is such a difference because the motive of the agent for a voluntary action logically presupposes the action it motivates, while a cause is identified independent of its effect. Secondly, reason explanations are different from causal because the motive of an action is something by which we identify the action. For example, lifting one's hand for greeting is a different action from lifting it for beating someone. He thinks that the notions of causal relation and causal explanation are not appropriate in the sphere of language of action. His argument is designed to show the logical incoherence involved in the assumption that, actions, desires, intentions etc. holds a causal relationship.

Ryle<sup>35</sup> is of the view that, desires, wants, beliefs, intentions and motives are dispositional in nature. They do not stand for any mental event. Want, for instance, is a disposition to pursue the object of want and therefore it does not exist independently of behavior, which it characterizes. It is not a separate event that can cause an action. As causation is a relation between different events, the relation between intention and action cannot be causal.

It can be said that, the cause of an event always compels its corresponding effects to happen. Given a cause, the effect must follow. But reason does not compel action. Given the reason, actions are freely performed. Reasons justify the action rather than causally explain it. Therefore the rational model of explanation assumes importance in this context.

The two models of explanations are different in logical structure. Causal explanations are usually of the form, "this happened because that had happened" and assumes that there is a deductive nomological connection<sup>36</sup> between the antecedent conditions and the consequent effects. The reason explanations are invariably of the form; "this is done as it fulfills that intention or goal." Thus, reason model is the appropriate response to the why-questions regarding human actions as it shows their teleological character. According to Charles Taylor<sup>37</sup> an explanation of human action in terms of reason is teleological because the reason explanation is the most suitable for the agent to realize the goal or purpose. Actions being goal-oriented, it is necessary that they are teleological in character.

In the causal account the actions are caused by the antecedent mental events. This implies that actions are independent of their causes in order to be explained by it. But actions and the reasons are not logically independent. There is a logical connection between reasons (wants, beliefs, intentions etc.) and the action that has to be explained.<sup>38</sup> But causal theorists have claimed that there is no such logical connection between action and its causes.<sup>39</sup> That is why the causal theory fails to explain how the actions are related to their reasons.

Thus from the logical connection argument it has been evident that, reasons and actions are not two different entities. There is a logical connection between them, so they are not separable from each other. Wittgenstein says: "I am not ashamed of what I did then, But of the intention which I had. And did not the intention reside also in what I did..."<sup>40</sup>

Purposive causal theory denies the requirement of pro-attitudes<sup>41</sup> to explain an action. But the mental cause theory requires the pro-attitudes, which play a double role in accounting for both intentionality and causation of behavior. This double role is a source of difficulties. One of the difficulties is the so-called internal and external wayward causal chains.<sup>42</sup> Let us again consider Chisholm's<sup>43</sup> example to know how the pro-attitudes (conditions) are not sufficient for intentional action. (1) A certain man desires to inherit a property. (2) He believes that only if he kills his uncle will he inherit a fortune, and (3) This desire and this belief agitate him so severely that he accidentally runs over and kills a pedestrian who unknown to the nephew, is none other than the uncle. Here, the agent does not kill the

uncle intentionally even if all the conditions (1), (2), (3) can be taken to be satisfied.

The wayward causal chains occur when causes do not produce the expected effects. Sometimes unexpected effects appear disturbing the normal causal chain. Causal explanations therefore have to account for this unpredictable causal consequences. But the non-causal theories do not encounter any such problem.

The non-causal theorists further deny the existence of psychological laws. Mental cause theorists have committed themselves to some kind of regularity or law of causality. For instance, Davidson explicitly requires the existence of backing laws in his analysis of singular causation. Again mental cause theorists accept same kind of nomological model of explanation.<sup>44</sup> Thus mental cause theories characterize intentional action by reference among other things, to the existence of causal laws. But such psychological laws do not adequately explain human action.

Human actions can be explained only by appealing to the agent's reasons for action. When we seek the purpose in the agent's action, we seek the agent's reason for intending as he does. An agent has a reason for performing a certain kind of action when he has a pro-attitude (desires) towards some end or objective and a belief that an action of that kind will promote that end.<sup>45</sup> We understand the reason of an action, when we have access to the appropriate beliefs and desires which provide the agent's reason for his intending. It is often seen that the agent has a number of desires, which cannot be co-satisfied. But in such cases, when the agent

intends to act, such a conflict has been resolved in favor of a given course of action.

The psychological states such as beliefs, desires, intentions, provide the reasons for the agent's actions. They are logically related to the agent's behavior. Such reason giving relation is logical or conceptual one. And one way of bringing out the nature of the conceptual link is by the construction of reasoning linking an agent's reason with those actions for which they provide reason.<sup>46</sup>

## 5. Reason, Causes, and the Explanation of Human Action

Explanations are the demands for intelligibility and a method of removing conceptual difficulties. They provide answer to all basic philosophical questions. Normally when we ask for an explanation, we are looking for some more information about some event or action so as to make it more intelligible. Explanations are meant for making the senses of the events accessible. In the case of human actions it is the reasons which need to be clarified.

A.W. Collins in his article, "Explanation and Causality" has pointed out, "To explain something is to make that thing intelligible, understandable or clear to someone, perhaps to oneself...Anything that is obscure, vague, complicated, surprising, mysterious or irregular is a candidate of explanation. Unfamiliar terminology, passages from texts, theories, mathematical proofs, rules, conduct, gestures, mechanisms, symbols,

actions, omissions, preferences, moods and opinion can all be explained. So can events changes, conditions, states of affairs and regularities. There are not several concepts of explanation to be associated with the several different kinds of things about which we can stand in need of explanation. If X is explained, then X is made intelligible, understandable, or clear, whatever X may be. What succeeds in making something intelligible depends on what kind of thing it is that we want to explain and the context in which need for an explanation arises.”<sup>47</sup>

Depending upon the context of explanation, we explain different actions, events, and facts by analyzing its intentions, causes and other relevant concepts, which provide more information about the fact. Different things are explained differently depending on the nature and the type of things to be explained, for example, we explain an event by stating its cause, where as refer to the purposes and beliefs of an agent in explaining his action. Thus we respond to the demand of an explanation in different ways depending upon the context. To explain an action of a person is to provide a systematic link with his other actions and to provide the reasons because of which the actions are done so far as the scientific phenomena are concerned, the deductive model of explanation has been dominant. This view says that, explanations are logical arguments in which the event which is going to be explained as a logical consequences of the premises holding statements of law and other facts. This model of explanation is popularly known as the covering-law model of explanation or deductive-nomological model of explanation. Hempel<sup>48</sup> has vigorously defended this explanation.

According to Hempel, a complete explanation of an event consists of statements describing antecedent causal conditions of the event and the laws covering it. Thus all scientific explanations are of the form of a simple deductive argument which is as follows.

Premises: 1. Always whenever X happens then Y happens.

2. X happened (antecedent condition)

Conclusion: Y happened (event to be explained)

The covering law model says, even the social phenomena could be explained by discovering general laws of human behavior. Thus the demand for providing causal explanations of human actions takes it for granted that the concept of 'action' can be subsumed under the concept of 'event'. In the covering-law model of explanation, it is assumed that the why-questions concerning human behavior can be regarded as adequately answered only when antecedent conditions of action are stated. This theory assumed that most of the human actions could be explained by taking into account its situation in which it occur. But this view does not recognize the use of concepts of choice, intention and decision etc. in explaining human actions.

Within social sciences, different theoretical models have been developed to explain human behavior. While the behaviorists refer to stimulus-response patterns, the psychologists take recourse to neuro-physiological process in the explanation of behavior. Sociologists, on the other hand, refer to social norms and institutional rules to explain an individual's behavior. The explanation of human actions generally defies the covering-law model because it aims at understanding human actions.<sup>49</sup>

The thinkers those who uphold the rational explanation of human action argue that, when we are asking why-question about actions, we are not asking the agent to provide general laws that govern his behavior but to clarify his intention or reasons for performing the action. So, demand for an explanation of human action is not to ask for the antecedent causal factors but a search for the intention and belief of the agent in performing the action. It is clear that the explanation of action in terms of its causes provide us anything more than giving the description of an event. But it will not show the reason of the agent, who performs it to explain the action. Again it is said that causal explanations are usually of the form "This happened because that had happened" and assume that there is a deductive nomological connection between the causal antecedent conditions and consequent effects which is stated by a causal law. A causal law corresponds to the empirical generalization of the type: "whenever conditions of type A are present, a phenomenon of type B must have preceded it." However, causal explanations are not relevant to the explanation of actions for the simple reason that we do not refer to the antecedent conditions but to the future goals of actions which means that explanations of actions teleological in nature.<sup>50</sup>

Teleological explanations are different from the causal explanations in the sense that they are explanations in terms of intentions, desires and beliefs and purposes which only human beings are capable of possessing. The fundamental feature of teleological explanation is the means-end scheme relationship as believed by the agent. This scheme has been characterized as

practical syllogism or practical inference by von Wright.<sup>51</sup> The scheme can be put in the form of an argument as follows:

1. The agent intends to bring about certain end P.
2. The agent considers that he cannot bring about P unless he performs action of the kind U.
3. Therefore, the agent sets himself to perform U.<sup>52</sup>

The above scheme of von Wright makes clear why we regard intentions, motives, beliefs, etc. as providing an explanation in the understanding of action. Agent's own description of his action performed and reason for it are very crucial even in the understanding of his intended actions. A teleological account of an action provides a new description in terms of characteristics, which is quite different from a causal account, which only shows that, events are the outcome of specific prior conditions. Teleological explanations are rational explanations for they show the reasons of the action performed. They also show in what manner an action is appropriate and reasonable that is, they show an action as the right thing to be done, given the agent's beliefs, intentions under the given situation. The notion of explanation and justification therefore, more or less overlap in case of explanation of actions.<sup>53</sup>

Reasons presuppose purpose behind performing actions and have reason for actions are linked with recognition of purposes and affiliation to general principles of action. These principles, whether they are rooted in moral or legal norms or social conventions, act as normative background of the agent. In offering rational explanations of actions, we are, therefore, not

only offering a reason for the actions, but also providing information about the beliefs, intentions and the situation in which the agent is acting. Most of the times our interest is in knowing the Purpose of the agent who performs the action once in a while we need to know but we also want to know the circumstances and the context in which the person is pursuing the specific purpose. This demands a comprehensive explanation or what Thalberg<sup>54</sup> calls an essential explanation. Thalberg says that depending on the purposes of the agent and the information already available to him, an essential explanation will provide answer to various questions relating to the agent and the context of his action.<sup>55</sup>

In most of our explanations of actions, like performing some ceremony, arranging a seminar, reading a book etc. presupposes certain norms, customs and practices. It would be wrong to expect that an explanation of such actions could be provided in purely causal terms. The norms and values involved in actions cannot be explained in the causal vocabulary. Critics of causal viewpoint out that such explanation fail to provide a proper understanding of the concept of action. They maintain that causal view of explanation do not take into consideration the prevalent norms, practices and institutions involved actions.

All the major kinds of explanations can be grouped under three categories. They are (1) Scientific explanation, (2) Interpretative or what explanation and (3) Reason-giving explanation. Scientific explanation is that which shows how things happen in nature. It takes the help of a scientific hypothesis and the explanation is correct only if the hypothesis is correct. It is also called the Hempelian<sup>56</sup> model of scientific explanation or

the covering law model of explanation. There are three elements in this covering law model of explanation. They are: (1) There is a universal generalization or law. (2) A statement of antecedent conditions and (3) A statement of consequent conditions. The general law and the initial conditions necessitate the consequent to follow. The truth of the law and antecedent give rise to the truth of consequent. This model of explanation treats the explanation of an event as deduction by valid argument of the event occurrence from some set of true premises.

The second type of explanation is “what-explanation “, which simply explains what is something. Some what-explanations are closely related to scientific explanation. And how far a what-explanation is related to a scientific explanation is a matter of, how for the re-description makes use of terms proper to a scientific theory. There are a great many ‘what-explanations’ whose explanatory characters has nothing to do with the possibility either of reformulating them as scientific explanations or of relating them to scientific explanations. But there is another type of what-explanation, which are not attempts to satisfy a theoretical interest, but only supply information to satisfy our curiosity. Moreover such information is of practical value, from where we may make some predictions about the event. Explanations of this kind are not scientific. They employ generalizations solely in order to define a particular model. Consequently the correctness of such an explanation depends only on such a model obtained at the time of the event to be explained. But it does not depend on the generalizations holding universally.

The third kind of explanation is reason-giving explanation which explains human actions. Here we do not make any hypothesis about our actions. But we explain 'why' we acted as we did. Reasons are called for when we explain our act of doing something. We answer the question, why we will do something by citing the reason behind it. The form of reason giving explanation for a particular action, X. can have four constituent parts. They are: (1) John holds it right to do things of type Y. (2) Moreover, he believed doing X to the case of doing Y. (3) So, John reckoned X a good thing to do. (4) Which is why John did X.

When a man gives something as his reason for his action, then he is properly said to have reasons for his action. A man's reason for his action is the reason he sincerely gives. He gives a particular reason by saying he did it because of such and such reason. This explanation always refers to the future state of affair, which is not the case in causal explanation. So, the fundamental aim in human action is not that of revealing causation but making the action rationally intelligible. It can be said that teleological explanations do not form a separate class of their own. Some of them are scientific explanations, others what-explanations and still others reason-giving explanations. When we seek teleological or purposive explanation of our actions, we actually seek reason-giving explanations. The different kinds of explanation will be dealt in detail in chapter two.

## 6. Springs of Action

Often we encounter the questions related to springs of action in philosophy. And there are number of concepts taken by different thinkers as the source of action. The entire discourse is little bit confusing, as there are diverse sources of actions from psychological to philosophical or social sources. There are number of individual concepts under each category, which independently claim as the ultimate source of human action.

H. A. Prichard<sup>57</sup> regards volition or will as the ultimate source of voluntary behavior. According to him, willing is a mental activity, which we are hardly aware of while performing action. We are aware of it only when we reflect on it. The nature of will is *sui generis* that is; it cannot be defined as it is expressed in the nature of action itself. Hume too had the similar view as Prichard. He says, will is nothing but internal impression, is the source of action.

Ever since Ryle's attack on the myth of will<sup>58</sup> as an inner mental activity, philosophers have continued to hold there is nothing called will except what is expressed as voluntary behavior. The main argument against the 'myth of volition' is that it is subject to a vicious regress is that every willing must presuppose another willing and so on and infinitum.

According to Prichard<sup>59</sup> however 'willing' is a mental process in which some idea of 'end' is involved which leads to action. It has an intentional object, which intends the action in order to fulfill the end. Kant<sup>60</sup> defines

'will' as, "the faculty of bringing about objects corresponding to conceptions, or of determining oneself to do so whether the physical power is present or not."<sup>61</sup> Thus will is traditionally associated with the practical reason of man, which leads to action.

Davidson<sup>62</sup> says that actions spring from primary reason, which is a complex of belief and pro-attitudes. Such pro-attitudes generate actions in so far as they cause these actions. By pro-attitudes Davidson<sup>63</sup> means desires, urges, moral views, aesthetic principles, economic prejudices, social convictions and public and private goals and values. Pro-attitudes, for Davidson, are genuine mental states, dispositions, episodes etc., which prompt a particular action. He has claimed that, the statements like, "John went to the park" is true just in case a suitable complex of belief and pro-attitudes cause the relevant behavior.

But primary reason is not sufficient for doing some action intentionally. Such a reason may be necessary but it is not sufficient intentional behavior. Many philosophers since Aristotle<sup>64</sup> has held that, "Reason itself cannot move a man to act". Hume says we can prompt on action only by some 'passion' such as desire. Reason can move us to act indirectly, either by exciting a passion that directly prompts an action or by showing us, what action on our part will satisfy a passion that we already have. If two or more passions conflict, the stronger will determine our action. In no case has reason itself a motivating power. In no case reason alone can bring the action.

Hume<sup>65</sup> says, when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel the consequent emotion of aversion or propensity and are carried by it to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction. He also says that we conceive an impression, an original existence, that must be experienced and be properly conceived of.<sup>66</sup> It is this impression not the pleasant or painful thought of the object, which possesses the 'motive force' that moves us towards action.

Judgements of reason are not mere inert states of mind that do or do not correspond with reality. They are accepted with various degrees of confidence or conviction. Even though Hume's view has some element of truth, his idea that reason is entirely inert would seem to be false. The traditional division of mind into active and inert faculties with reason wholly on one side and passion wholly on the other cannot therefore be correct. We are moved to act by beliefs, thoughts and decisions, which are collectively known as reason as well as passion.

The Platonic tradition rightly holds that 'reason is far from inert'. It is always in war with passion and even wins. Although we commonly do what we desire to do, we often do things we do not want to do, not always because we are forced to do them, but because sometimes our sense of what is right, proper, obligatory, leads us to decide upon them. And these factors form the conscious intention of our action. So we do sometimes what we do not want to do and do that intentionally.

Rationality is an essential feature of the intentional actions. Such an action is done as a result of deliberation and decision. When one acts

rationally, one forms the intention of doing something that satisfies him. This suggests that in a rational case, intention form the key link between desire and action.

A particular desire leads to rational action only by means of a line of reasoning or deliberation whose outcome is partly determined by a variety of beliefs and pro-attitudes. When such a line of reasoning is fully explicit, its conclusion expresses a decision, which is simply an intention formed in a special way. Although an intentional action may ultimately be traced back to a desire or to a complex of desires, beliefs and other pro-attitudes, it is eventually brought into being at least by a decision or intention.<sup>67</sup>

Both intentions and motives are the springs of action. A man's intention is what he aims at or chooses, to do whereas his motive is what determines his aim or choice. But ordinarily intentions and motives are not treated so distinct in meaning. When we say person's motives are good, his intentions are also good. But there are popular distinctions between the meaning of motives and intentions. Motives for an action has wider and more diverse application than intention with which the action was done.

What is the relation between an intention and intentional action? Bruce Aune formulates this relation is the following way. "If an agent intends to do A in circumstances C, believes he is in C and has no conflicting intentions, then if he is able to do A in C, is not prevented from doing A and really is in C, he will probably do A, and do it intentionally",<sup>68</sup> This general formula illustrates three points of considerable importance, namely:

1. That an intention by itself has, in general, no particular effects on a person's overt behavior.
2. That a belief itself has no particular effect on a person's behavior and
3. That individual intentions and beliefs combine in favorable circumstances to produce intentional behavior. When this special combination of intention and belief occurs, we proceed to act intentionally, whether we actually desire to act in this way or not.<sup>69</sup>

Intention is a mental disposition or propensity, for we can have the intention of doing something even when we are thinking about doing it. It is a disposition to have a practical thought of the form, 'I will do such and such'. And this practical thought involved in intentions may have a very complicated logical structure. In addition to such complicated intentions, one may have simple categorical intentions to do things here and now. These categorical intentions have a close connection with intentional behavior. In fact, the thought characteristic of them provides the ultimate connection between reason and action.

To conclude: action springs from a process of reasoning, which explicitly involves the premises distinctive of agent's beliefs and intentions. It is reasoning (practical reasoning) with reference to some purpose or goal, which gives rise to action.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **EXPLANATION OF ACTION**

1. Introduction
2. Scientific Explanation
3. Probabilistic Explanation
4. Semantic Explanation
5. Pattern Model Vs Deductive Model of Explanation
6. What-Explanation
7. Mental Event Explanation
8. Explanation in History
9. Teleological Explanation
10. Reason-Explanation
11. Action and Causal Explanation
12. Explanation and Understanding

## **Chapter 2**

### **Explanation of Action**

#### **1. Introduction**

All of us are called upon frequently to explain our own or other people's actions. So the question arises: what is an explanation? There are various theories put forth by different thinkers to explain what a proper explanation ought to be. Some people argue that a complete and adequate explanation of anything can be given in terms of law of a nature, whereas others say an explanation is not genuine unless it explains the purpose of the things. Still others hold the view that explanation is nothing but just describing the event in a better way for proper understanding.<sup>1</sup>

Many questions arise regarding the nature of explanation; they are:

- 1. Are all explanations of things of the same kind? Is the search for an explanation always a search for some antecedent of the things to be explained? Or, are there other types of explanation?**
- 2. Can human actions be explained in the way the natural events are explained? What is the factor most important in the explanation of human action?**

There are some such questions raised by philosophers while explaining, the term "explanation". So the problem is not whether there is a teleological explanation as distinguished from the naturalistic explanation but to find out how they are different. If there are differences, then what are they? So, to approach the subject is to examine as many explanations as possible from diverse fields.

We can broadly distinguish between the scientific explanation and the reason-explanation or why-explanation. A scientific explanation is that which explains the different happenings in nature by hypothesizing natural laws. Such explanation is correct, when the hypothesis is true. This explanation is a what-explanation, which simply makes clear, the sequence of events. The other type of explanation is reason-giving explanation. This explanation explains the various human actions and behavior. We do not explain by hypothesizing about the causes of our actions. We do this by explaining why an action is done or by providing reasons for actions.

The teleological explanations or the explanations in terms of purpose are not always treated separately. They do not form a separate homogeneous class. Some of them seem to be scientific explanations, namely those, which explain the behavior external to the human agents. This happens when we explain a man's behavior by hypothesizing about his purpose, motive, goals and aim. Still others are reason-giving explanations as when we explain an action of our own by giving reasons for doing it, the goal we planned to achieve etc.

## **2. Scientific Explanation**

The idea of scientific explanation is very much associated with the name of Carl G. Hempel and P. Oppenheim. This is the most clearly put forward theory of what any satisfactory explanation must be like. This explanation is known as the deductive nomological model or the covering law model of explanation, which is much used in scientific inquiry.

This explanation deals with the principles of change in nature. It answers various questions like, why did 'X' change to 'Y'? Why did the earthquake take place at that particular place in that particular time? etc. Such explanation informs us of the nature of the universe and all its happenings. These questions regarding nature looks as if they are requests for causes. Scientists try to show how the occurrence of certain events is necessary, given certain facts, but the way they do this is not always by discovering causes.

What is a cause and how does it works? Causes are the events or state of affairs, which bring about certain other events, called their effects. Thus we think science is the investigation of the causes of different natural phenomena. In the notion of cause and effect, there are two main points involved. They are:

1. Cause is an event, which is prior to the event whose occurrence it is supposed to explain.

2. **There is a necessary connection between the two. The cause necessitates the effect to happen.**

Scientists are not after discovering the causes of events but they look for general laws, or the universal propositions of the form, “Whenever an event of type ‘X’ occurs, an event of type ‘Y’ occurs”. These universal propositions express the connections between events, which is manifested in scientific explanations. But these laws or universal generalizations do not express any necessary connection; they express a contingent, or factual connection. For example, whenever there is dark nimbus cloud, there is heavy rainfall. To give an explanation of why an event occurs is to show how it is related to other events by such universal generalizations.

Hempel mentions the logical and empirical conditions for a sound explanation through deductive nomological model. His model is drawn as follows: <sup>2</sup>

$C_1, C_2, \dots, C_k$  Statements of antecedent conditions. (Explanans)

$L_1, L_2, \dots, L_r$  General laws. (Explanans)

Logical Deduction

E..... Description of the phenomenon to be explained. (Explanandum)

This deductive nomological model of explanation can very simply be explained with the following three steps:

1. **A universal generalization or law statement: Whenever an event of type X happens, an event of type Y happens.**

2. A statement of initial conditions, X happened.
3. A statement of the consequent conditions, Y happened.

There are several points in the above covering model of explanation. We cannot say the events mentioned under (2) are the cause of the events mentioned under (3) because there is no necessary connection between the two events. Whereas in causal relation, there should be a necessary connection between the antecedent condition and its consequent. But, if the condition (1) is true, and the condition (2) is true, then the facts under (3) must be true. The truth of (1) and (2) necessitates the truth of (3). The first two conditions are the propositions of a valid argument with (3) as the conclusion. As the definition of a valid argument goes, if the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true. So, if the generalization under (1) is true, then the facts and the fact mentioned under (2) occurred, then the fact-mentioned (3) must occur. The most interesting part of this model of explanation is that the conclusion of the proposition is deduced from a set of premises by valid argument. Consequently, what is true of a valid deductive argument will also be true of an explanation of this type. This method of explanation is same for both the explanation of a particular event as well as in the explanation of a law. Particular events are explained by deducing their occurrences from premises, which include initial conditions, and the covering law. So, given the truth of a universal generalization and the statement of initial condition, a particular event must be true. For example the following is valid scientific argument:

1. Any object thrown upward below earth's *escape velocity*, returns back to earth.

2. A piece of stone is thrown upwards, below *earth's escape velocity*.
3. Therefore, the stone will return back to earth.

There are two main features involved in the Hempelian model of explanation.

That is:

1. Every explanation of this type must contain a universal generalization.
2. The premises in the explanation logically entail the conclusion that the event being explained occurred. That is, in any valid argument, the premises taken together entail the conclusion.

At times question arises regarding the need of a universal generalization in scientific explanation. But unless explanations contain universal generalizations, they will not entail what they are supposed to explain. The explanation has to conform to the covering law model in order to become satisfactory. There are, however, explanations in which the universal generalization is not mentioned. For example, John fell on the ground because he jumped from the terrace. The gas came out of the test-tube because the metal is in touch with acid. In these explanations, the universal generalization is implicit. Unless there is a universal generalization; the mention of X cannot explain the occurrence of Y.

### 3. Probabilistic Explanation

This probabilistic explanation is the second type of scientific explanation recognized by Hempel. The first kind of scientific explanation, that is, the deductive–nomological explanation, discussed above employs universal generalizations whereas probabilistic explanation uses statistical generalizations. Hempel made a distinction between universal law and a statistical law on the ground that, “a universal law is a statement to the effect that in all cases satisfying certain antecedents conditions A (e.g. heating of a gas under a constant pressure) an event of a specific kind B (e.g. an increase in the volume of the gas) will occur; where as a law of statistical form asserts that the probability for the conditions A to be accompanied by an event of kind B has some specific value P”.<sup>3</sup> The following is an instance of probabilistic explanation employing statistical generalization:

- (1) There is a high probability of a person who has been in contact with a case of chicken pox catching chicken pox.
- (2) X has been in contact with a case of chicken pox.
- (3) X has high probability of catching chicken pox.

Hempel argues that the first two propositions (1) and (2) give a high degree of support to (3), but it does not follow that the point (3) is fully explained by (1) and (2). But the probability is so much that in any normal case we say that the occurrence of (1) and (2) supports and explains the occurrence of (3). When we consider a case like the above, it would be possible to describe the contact of ‘X’ with the person catching chicken pox as a necessary condition

of infection. For example, no one catches chicken pox, who has not been in contact with a person suffering from it. Perhaps our belief inclines us to believe that (1) and (2), to some extent, in normal circumstances explain (3).

Statistical generalization can be used to predict particular events if not to explain it. For example, 95% of the students who do hard labor pass in the examination with high score. John studied hard, and therefore his success in the examination with high score can be predicted with a probability of 0.95. The probability statements about individuals should be interpreted as the statement of frequency of an event among a set of events. So the prediction that John will succeed in the examination with high score is correct nine and half times out of ten. One will certainly believe that John will pass the examination with high score, if 95% of the students who study hard will pass. Thus statistical generalizations only enable us to make inferences about the frequency of events of a particular kind. It is another matter that there is a debate as to whether these inferences should be called predictions or explanations.<sup>4</sup>

The problem arises regarding the validation of scientific explanations. A scientific event can be explained by taking as premise the truth of a universal generalization, and in turn the universal generalization can be explained by some more general universal generalization. But, how to explain the most general universal generalization? Again, it is extremely difficult to distinguish the satisfactory generalizations from those, which are not. There are some non-explanatory generalizations (coincidental generalizations) which appear to be true because of some special

circumstances of time and place. They have, however, no role to play in scientific explanations.

Two basic questions regarding explanation arise, viz.: (1) How to distinguish an explanation from a non-explanation? And (2) What are the criteria of a correct explanation? The covering law model explains whether something can be called an explanation or not. It says an explanation consists of a set of propositions from which a conclusion logically follows. But the covering law model does not decide whether an explanation is correct or not. An explanation may be valid, but it may have false propositions. For example:

1. All fishes are birds.
2. All mammals are fishes.
3. Therefore, all mammals are birds.

Here, the conclusion of the argument is entailed by the premises (3) follows logically from (1) and (2), but this does not imply that the premises and the conclusion are true.

How the truth of an explanation is to be established? Establishing the correctness of an explanation will always depend on the truth of the universal generalization and it often involves us in establishing the truth of statements about particular situations. It may be difficult but not impossible theoretically to establish the fact about the occurrence of particular event. But it is logically impossible to establish the truth of a universal generalization by any form of investigation. Universal generalizations are assertions of infinitely

large classes of events or things. Since one cannot check an infinite number of cases, one cannot establish the truth of such assertions. For example, even a proposition like, "All men are biped" cannot be established conclusively as true, for it is possible that a triped or quadruped man will be discovered in some remote place, at some remote time.

Universal generalizations cannot therefore be established. It is possible to test them; although they cannot be proved true, they can be proved false. No matter how many human beings we examine and find to be biped creatures, it is still possible that there will be a triped one somewhere, sometime. But, if we find one triped man, then the whole generalization is false. This is because the universal generalization, "All men are biped", entails that each man is biped. That is, "if all men are biped then each man is biped" is logically true. But, if we find one man is triped, then it is false that each man is a biped creature. So we can test universal generalization by attempting to falsify them. If they survive the continuous testing of this kind, then we shall feel certain and confident about them.

Even if an explanation fits correctly to a given case, it does not establish its correctness. Such explanations must be tested by the repeated application of explanations of the same kind to new cases. The explanation remains a mere suggestion or hypothesis, until many further tests have been made. Any explanation, since it includes universal generalization, can be applied to other objects, at other times and places. If these are in the future, then the explanation becomes a prediction. It can be noticed that the covering law model of explanation makes explanation and prediction two sides of the same coin.

## **4. Semantic Explanation**

Even though the word explanation is used in many different areas, there is a set of explanations, which make clear the meaning of the word explained. Such explanations are called semantic explanations. A semantic explanation is a translation or paraphrase, or a set of words having an equivalent meaning to those being explained and easily understood. This explanation satisfies someone who understands the meaning of the word explained by such explanations. Other types of explanations, which do not take into consideration, the meaning of words is known as scientific explanation. Scientific explanation shows us the truth irrespective of other's acceptance of it whereas semantic explanation deals with the clearness of the proposition defined, and its meaning.

Interpretations are also a kind of explanation, which contains both semantic and scientific explanation in it. We interpret a speech by explaining its meaning and also by showing why a particular person made the utterance. In interpretative explanation, both semantic and scientific explanations support each other depending on the situation.

It is often said, there is a difference between explanation and description, because explanations not merely deal with 'what' happens, but also 'why' it happens. Descriptions may themselves be explanatory; the word 'how' in the same sentence may explain the 'why' and not just a 'what' of the event. An explanation does not tell us something different from description,

but it tells us something else other than a mere description of what it is explaining.<sup>5</sup>

An explanation may be said to be a concatenated description. It does its work not by evoking something beyond what might be described, but by putting one fact or law in to relation with others. According to Lawrence Kubie<sup>6</sup> describing the same thing all over again, but in other terms, provides an explanation of it.

In both semantic and scientific explanations we speak of 'understanding' something which previously was obscure. Knowing a reason in some way is knowing the meaning. An explanation makes something intelligible or comprehensible. As Braithwaite<sup>7</sup> says, an explanation provides us certain intellectual satisfaction.

There is a difference between having an explanation and seeing its meaning. In the case of semantic explanation, we do not have any explanation, unless and until we see the meaning. But in case of scientific explanation, having an explanation may occur without our understanding it. For instance the meaning of an explanation is often resisted, when it is first offered in science. This is a common place in the history of science. In such cases human beings have that explanation but they do not realize that they have it.

Both semantic and scientific explanations provide understanding. So it is always easy to confuse the second with the first. This happens especially with the behavioral sciences, where interpretation plays an important role. Such explanations (the explanations occurring in myths and occult sciences)

come due to the mistake of subjectivizing explanation, treating truth like meaning and a scientific explanation like a semantic one. This may provides some incipient intellectual satisfaction, but it is not what was conceived as an explanation. Those who accept them may only see an explanation but do not have one.

Such confusion between semantic and scientific explanation is due to 'familiarity'. Familiarity helps us to see one explanation, but it does not necessarily help us to have one. It is fundamental to semantic explanation, but quite unimportant to scientific explanation. Many philosophers have thought of explanation as a process, which consists merely in analyzing our complicated systems into simpler systems in such a way that we recognize in the complicated system the interplay of elements already so familiar to us that we accept them as needing explanation.<sup>8</sup>

Familiarity cannot be the key to explanation because it is quite relative to the person to whom the explanation is being offered. What is familiar to one man may be quite strange to another. It is the understanding, which remains fundamental rather than familiarity. What we need is an account of understanding and the understanding comes when we know the reason. That the reason is familiar may make it easier for us to know it. But its familiarity does not make it any more of a reason

## 5. Pattern Model Vs Deductive Model of Explanation

There are two accounts of reason which provide understanding and thereby explanation. They are pattern model and deductive model of explanation. In pattern model we try to fit the known reason to an existing pattern which is different from the deductive model, where we deduce it from other known truths.

Each of the models may be universal in its application. Each explanation may provide an account of all the explanations, which the other covers. But some explanations more readily fit into one model of explanation and some to other. Both models, however, are related because both try to explain an event in relation to other events.

According to the pattern model, when something is explained, it is so related to a set of other elements that together they constitute a unified system. We understand something by identifying it as a specific part in an organized whole. For example, take a diagram consisting of lines and numbers. Such a figure is meaningless until it is explained as representing a map of city and its buildings. We understand the diagram by seeing the whole picture, of which what is to be explained, is only a part. The unknown is explained with the help of something we know not by way of its local properties, but in terms of its place in the network of relations. For instance, if we ask why X? then we can say "Because X is really nothing other than Y and we know Y, as a part of old familiar Z",

In pattern model of explanation, we explain by discovering relations. According to Whitehead<sup>9</sup> to explain natural phenomena means merely to discover the interconnections among the phenomena and for Dewey, "understanding and interpretation are a matter of the ordering of those materials that are ascertained to be facts, that is, determination of their relations".<sup>10</sup> These relations may be of various types, such as causal, purposive, mathematical, etc. The particular relations that hold constitute a pattern and an element is explained by being placed in the pattern.

All the explanations are not fitting something into a pattern already given. The task of explanation is often to find or create a suitable pattern. Every explanation pattern is a fragmentary map of a limited territory; we aim at filling the details and to fit each element together with other fragments.

Explanation is often said to mean identity in difference. It searches the one in many, the universal common to many particulars. Compbell says, "Laws explain our experience because they order it by referring particular instances to general principles; The explanation will be the more satisfactory the more general the principle and greater the number of particular instances that can be referred to it".<sup>11</sup> To say that particular instances are referred to general principles means that they are deducible from those principles. To explain something is to exhibit it as a special case of what is known in general. Deductive model of explanation has developed with great care and detail by Hempel, Oppenheim and others. They say that an event is explained by subsuming it under general laws, that is, by showing that it occurred in accordance with those laws, by virtue of the realization of certain specified antecedent conditions.

There are various types of explanation for example, causal, functional, etc. In all these cases, a certain conclusion is derived from certain premises. It is not the premises alone that explain, but the fact that what is to be explained follows from them. The great power of deductive model consists in the clear and simple way in which necessity is accounted for.

In the deductive model necessity does not lie in the premises but rather in the relation between the premises and the conclusion which they entail. The general law need not be a causal law. What is required here is a logical necessity, not a causal one. For example, an explanation in terms of purpose can be formulated in the deductive model just as an explanation in terms of causes.

Philosophers have raised objections against the deductive model that it does not really explain, because it does not account for the feature of intelligibility. When an event has been explained, we understand why it happened and why its occurrence makes sense. Providing premises from which a conclusion can be deduced may not be enough to produce such an understanding. According to the deductive model, we explain why X has the property G, by pointing out that X is a member of the class S and all S's are G.

But these objections are, however, not damaging at all. There is always something to be explained, but it is surely not true that we understand nothing until we understand everything. Explanations, like concepts and laws, have certain openness. In particular every explanation is 'intermediate', in the

sense that it contains elements, which have to be explained in turn. But its being intermediate does not mean that it cannot do its own work of explaining until it has itself been explained. There is a regress of explanations, but it is not a vicious one. We explain A by reference to B even though B is not explained. The context may make B problematic, in which case we must introduce C. But this context is not to be confused with the one in which it is A that is to be explained and for this explanation B might very well serve. There is a comparable non-vicious regress of evidence. The propositions P can provide evidence for Q even though the evidence for p itself is not given. "How do you know that P is true?" But if it is asked, it may be said that some other proposition A is true. Such regress, however, has no beginning; we simply stop with what is unproblematic in this context.

In fact, explanation according to the deductive model makes use of premises, which are not axiomatic, so that they are to be deduced from still other premises. But this does not mean that the deductive model does not contribute to our understanding of the conclusion. Even in the pattern model, understanding is a matter of the perception of relationships. We understand always in terms of something or other and the question can always be raised, how that something in turn is to be understood. It is true, however, that not just any premises will do. What is required is some generalization in the premises. The event is explained by grouping it, not with just any set of events, but with a set that is nomologically bound together. In other words, we explain the fact by showing the law, which governs it.

It is a matter of fact that the Pattern model yields a more direct and natural account for explanation. We explain why there is a lion in the garden

by pointing out that there is a circus nearby, from which it must have escaped or by a similar statement. But there are generalizations implicit here which allow the explanation to be also reconstructed in the deductive model, for example, "Animals escape when they can". "They prefer to walk on grass than on cement", etc. But the more serious question involved here is, whether the explanation of laws rather than particular facts also comes under some more general principle, so that the explanation of laws is an extension of the process involved in their formulation. Is it a progress from less general to the more general? According to Compbell <sup>12</sup> less general laws can never be explained by inclusion in more general laws. What are needed are not mere general laws as such but theories.

The explanation of the law is provided by the circumstance that the laws can be deduced from the theory. All that is required for the higher level hypotheses to provide an explanation is that they should be regarded as established and the law should logically follow from them. The deductive model of explanation requires more of the premises than that they should be true and entail their conclusion. When we say the theory explains the laws, we mean something additional to this mere logical deduction. The deduction is necessary for the truth of the theory, but it is not sufficient.

Even though each law can be deduced from the conjunction of two laws, it is not an explanation for either of them. A theory explains because it is more than merely an aggregation of laws. Though theories are of greater range and scope than any of the laws it explains, it is not an extensional generalization of these laws, but a generalization at a higher level. Compbell says,

The theory always explains laws by showing that if we imagine that the system to which those laws apply consists in same way as other systems to which some other known laws apply, then laws can be deduced from the theory.<sup>13</sup>

The theory explains not by certain deductions but it uses a more comprehensive pattern of which the pattern constituted by the laws is to be explained. It is by allowing such diverse phenomena to be fitted into a pattern that the theory provides understanding.

Helmholtz once declared that, "to understand a phenomenon means nothing else than to deduce it to the Newtonian laws".<sup>14</sup> But Philip Frank says, "it was completely forgotten that in Newton's own day his theory was looked upon as a set of obscure mathematical formulas, which indeed a mechanical explanation to satisfy human desire for causality. Newton himself recognized this need..... men like Huygens and Leibnitz never considered the Newtonian theory a physical explanation; they looked upon it as only a mathematical formula."<sup>15</sup> Deductibility may not in itself be enough for understanding; what more is required is an explanatory premises of a certain kind, nomological in the case of explaining facts, theoretical in the case of explaining laws. But when these conditions are met, man's desire for causality or some other special type of explanation is of no particular logical relevance.

According to some philosophers, deductibility is not only not a sufficient condition for explanation but that it is not even a necessary condition. There are many explanations in which laws do not occur as

premises at all. The phenomenon explained is only described from a different point of view, and this description serves as the explanation without any deductions being made.

To avoid such criticisms, we may reconstruct the explanation to fit into the deductive model. But there appears to be explanations, which cannot be reconstructed in this way. There are probabilistic explanations, in which statistical laws play a part. We may explain the probabilities of a sample by calling attention to the distribution in the population from which it was drawn. This distribution does not entail that the sample must be what it was found to be, but it does confer a certain probability on that finding, a probability that may serve to explain it. Here the premises do not entail the conclusion to be explained but only make it probable to some degree. The conclusion could be deduced only if the premises were appropriately closed, and in that case they presumably would not add anything to our ideas.

Hempel<sup>16</sup> has acknowledged that explanations adducing statistical generalizations must be conceived as inductive arguments. With little change, these generalizations might still fit into the deductive model. In modern developments of inductive logic, the conclusion has a certain degree of confirmation with respect to the evidence adduced and it follows deductively from the premises of the inductive inferences. What is explained here is not why the conclusion is true, but why it is probable.

Deductive model faces various difficulties arising from the logic of confirmation on which it relies. For instances, to test whether all swans are white, we look at swans to see if they are white, but not at colored things, to

see if they are other than swans. Like the weight of evidence, the force of an explanation should not depend on the way in which the proposition is formulated.

## 6. What-Explanation

Very often we ask questions like, What is going on in the playground? What movie is running in the nearby theater? Can you please tell me what is it, is it a computer or a coconut tree or an insect? All these questions demand a straightforward answer for clarification, like there is a football match, there is Benhur, etc.

It looks as if some what-explanations have got lots of similarities with scientific explanations. Scientific explanation makes use of the general theories or concepts in explaining particular events or facts. A scientific explanation consists of a deduction from premises, which comprise a universal generalization and the statements of circumstances. It is possible to give an explanation of what is going on, with reference to such scientific generalizations and statements of circumstances. For instance, tell me what is happening in the first room of this building? An acid is in reaction with lead producing electric current. What is this? This is the process of decay of a dead body. This kind of what-explanations are elliptical scientific explanations of events. Even though they appear like using some general principle to explain the phenomena, but actually they do not do so. They only

operate within a closed system, where they can only incorporate the limited number of laws.

How far an explanation is related to scientific explanation depends on how far it can re-describe and make use of the terms proper to scientific theory. There are innumerable number of examples that try to explain scientific facts by asking the what questions. When the law of gravitation was not discovered, the fall of an apple could be explained simply by saying, 'because the stem is cut'. We say a what-explanation is related to scientific explanation only when we find an elliptical reference to some universal generalization to accommodate it in some kind of covering law model. It is very difficult to decide whether certain what-explanations are equivalent to scientific explanations, but it is very much clear that there are great many what-explanations whose explanatory characters have nothing to do with scientific explanations.

There are, however, some what-explanations, which are intended to satisfy some scientific interest. These explanations are the descriptions, which link things to scientific laws by which the behavior of things could be deduced. There are some other kinds of what-explanation, which do not attempt to satisfy a theoretical interest but only give information just to satisfy our curiosity in ordinary life. Such explanations also affect the course of our actions by giving answer to our inquiry in the specific circumstances.<sup>17</sup>

What-explanations can very easily be confused with scientific explanations. What-explanations make use of some general laws within a

system where they operate. Such laws do not have any universal applicability. We can predict certain facts about the events only within the given phenomenon. Outside the context, they do not apply and our fellow beings may not even understand what we are doing. Whatever may be the predictive power of the what-explanation, it can never be equated with scientific explanation.

The problem of confusion between what-explanation and scientific explanation arises because of the use of universal generalization in the what-explanations. The economic, political and social realms are the best examples where what-explanations are confused with scientific explanations by making use of some elliptical universal generalizations. In fact the socio-political facts are explained with the help of some kind of laws or generalizations concerning the character of events. However, there is no guarantee that such things will happen in similar situations and conditions in some different socio-political context. For instance, the recent economic collapse of South Asian countries is due to the action of open market policy. However, the principles do not have the same effect on European economy.

So what-explanations are not scientific explanations, because the former employ generalizations only to define a particular situation in a certain model or system. The correctness of such explanations depends on the particular event in the particular circumstances. When the social fact X holds good at Y during time T then the explanation of the fact holds good only in that particular situation. It does not have any general predictability.

To make a what-explanations in to a scientific one, the former has to have universal applicability. However, there is no social law or model that has such universal application. In general what-explanations are meant to make clear what something is or what is going on. In some cases they are elliptical scientific explanations, but when they are not, they may have some other practical interest.

## 7. Mental Event Explanation

Normally we encounter this explanation in our daily life, in literary works and even in market places. Why do I prefer oranges to apples? Because I like the taste of oranges more than that of apples. Why did John jump from the terrace yesterday? Because he saw a monkey nearby. These examples use a variety of mental concepts like intention, will, desire, beliefs etc. in answering different questions and correspondingly there are a variety of explanations, which come under this category, and most of them are satisfactory. The question arises, what kind of explanations are they?

Generally we do not deduce mental concepts from a set of premises with the help of some universal generalisations regarding mental behavior. In fact there are no such universal generalization which hold between mental concepts and their explanations.<sup>18</sup> Let us see how a scientific explanation uses universal generalizations and how it is different from explanations by means of mental events.

1. Why does John like Mary? Because he is intelligent.
2. Why did the machine stopped abruptly? Because it's fuel tank ran out of fuel.

We can see the contrast between these two explanations. There is a universal law, which explains the behavior of the machine. But there is no universal law to explain John's behavior. However, there is a valid explanation of John's behavior, which uses the mental concepts such as desire, motive, interest etc. But it does not take the help of any universal generalization. These explanations are perfectly acceptable explanations but do not fit into the scientific model.

The question arises, in what way are the mental concepts related to behavior? It might be suggested that, the mental concepts cause the outward physical behavior. In this case, John's liking for Mary is caused by his belief that Mary is intelligent. Thus we can very well accept that mental events explain the non-mental behavior.

Mental events cannot be defined by means of behavior in the sense that a single mental event may leads to different kinds of behavior, depending on the situation. The mental event of joy, for example, may or may not lead to boisterous behavior like laughing, etc. Thus there is no one-to-one causation between the mental events and physical behavior nevertheless there is a mental causation of the physical behavior.

To explain a particular action by mentioning a mental state is to characterize those, actions as a part of his behavior. That is to say, his mental

state explains his total behavior, say, his being happy. Mental event explanations are therefore what-explanations. They tell us what sort of pattern a particular event or piece of behavior follows. This explanation cannot be strictly called a scientific explanation, because it does not attempt to relate two things in such a way that one could be predicated upon the other. By explaining behavior, by saying that a person is smiling, one is not mentioning something from which the behavior could have been deduced.

Every explanation employing mental concepts has some practical value, but cannot have the status of a scientific explanation. Even though we considerably understand the behavior of others and know the general facts about the way people behave, we may in fact be constantly mistaken in our judgements about them.

## 8. Explanation in History

Explanations in history are very much different from the scientific explanations. In scientific explanation, events are explained by deducing their occurrences from universal propositions and the statements about initial conditions. Also the correctness of the explanation can be verified by making deductions in other similar cases. But such models are not appropriate for explaining historical events, as the criteria applied in both the cases are different. The problem of finding a universal proposition, which can explain the historical facts, is difficult. Take, for example, the British colonies in both America and India. Even if both countries had the same situation, i.e. being exploited by British government, still, both the cases are totally different.

America got independence from the British by armed revolution but India would have never got this through armed revolution. Even if these are exactly the same situations in the past and in present, there may not be the same set of explanations applicable to both the cases.<sup>19</sup>

But some philosophies of history claim that, although historical explanations are not deductive, they can pick out the most important factors leading to the occurrence of a particular event. Historians assert that the Kalinga war is the major factor that changed Emperor Ashok into a follower of Buddhism. Thus in historical explanation, the question is, whether one can assert of a particular event that certain particular factors were important in producing it.

The ability to pick out certain events as important implies the ability to make the predictions of a deductive kind. If one cannot do the latter one cannot legitimately do the former. For instance, if A helps B then it is obvious that A's meeting B is an important factor in B's getting help, for "A helping B" entails "A's meeting B".

In knowing that one event is an important factor in the occurrence of another is simply knowing that the two events occurred and further knowing about the second event which by itself logically implies the occurrence of the first event. Such knowledge is not the knowledge of a scientific or empirical kind. It involves no theories or laws about the relationship of events in the world, but involves merely knowledge of various facts together with some trivial truths. For instance, it is trivially true that if John has passed his class examination, then he must have written the examination. So the factors

which historians pick out as the important causes of the events are seemingly scientific explanations of a causal nature but are in fact not scientific.

In case of human actions, for example a political agitation, students' movement etc. we have very little idea of what a scientific account would be like. In case of political agitation what shall we take as a scientific explanation? There may be many conflicting opinions regarding the cause of a political event. In fact, there is no theory of political events, which enable us to fit these various factors together in a complete explanation. There can never be a complete deductive explanation of a political event.

It may be said that although there are no universal generalizations which historians can employ in the explanation of particular events, they may hypothesize connections between events over a certain historical period. Although it is doubtful whether the practice of non-violent method of agitation leads to freedom, a historian hypothesizes that the non-violent freedom struggle of Indians against their British rulers gave them independence in 1947. If a historian affirms a universal generalization connecting non-violent method of agitation with the particular Indian situation leading to independence in 1947, then it is a quite reasonable hypothesis. That is, he could generalize that the non-violent struggle is politically effective in winning freedom. But it cannot be called a scientific generalization at all.

Historical events are nothing but the happenings in the past and they, like other events, are also open to scientific explanation. In scientific explanation, one shows why an event took place in the way it did. But there

are few historical explanations in which exact scientific reasoning can be attempted. It is because for such explanations, one is in need of some universal generalization, which is necessary. But there is no generalization, which can support the historical predictions. In fact there is no plausible generalization available to relate to the historical events.

Some historians believe that their explanations are like scientific explanations having true universal generalization, even though they cannot formulate them precisely. In the absence of these generalizations they think, history remains a speculative exercise. The whole activity of writing history becomes an undisciplined, unsystematic speculation. Hence, the historical writings would look illusory and meaningless, unless we regard such writings as offering scientific explanation of historical facts.

In most of the cases historians spontaneously offer a narrative account. When we ask him to explain a certain occurrence he provides a narrative of the events falling into a pattern of events. For instance, if some one is asked to explain why Ashok invaded Kalinga, the historian can be expected to give a narrative of the events leading to the Kalinga war. So it is justified to say that all explanations in history are narrative. The narrative description not only explains the occurrence but also simultaneously tells what happened over a stretch of time.

Again it might be argued that there might be explanations which do not naturally fall into the form of a story (narrative explanation). The correct explanation has quite a different form, that is, a deductive form. Hempel advocated that an historical explanation to be adequate must include at least

**one universal law. This opinion is the most controversial in the analysis of historical explanation. The problem with historical explanation is due to the following three propositions which are mutually inconsistent:**

- 1. Historians sometimes explain events.**
- 2. Every explanation must include at least one general law.**
- 3. The generalizations historians give do not include general laws.**

We are logically prevented to accept all the three propositions. We can at best choose to assent only two, and the two will together entail the falsity of the third proposition. The proposition (1) and (2) entail not (3), (1) and (3) entails not (2) & (2) and (3) entails not- (1). From this it is evident that most of the explanations given by historians are narrative and most of them never include any general laws in their explanations.

The task of natural science is to explain non-human phenomenon and it does so by identifying the law to which the phenomenon invariably conforms. Hence to explain in natural sciences is to bring the event under a law, but human beings do not act in accordance with general laws. Human beings are free agents, so the historical events are unique. Therefore the actions of human agents must be explained in the light of their purposes, motives, and desires.

Historians as human scientists deal with the apprehension of the working of other minds. They do not explain natural events but explain only the unique and never duplicated historical episodes, in which free human agent engage themselves. Therefore, the explanations historians give do not

include any general law, for the simple reason that there are no historical laws. The reason behind not finding general laws mentioned in history books is because there are no explanations in the strict natural sense in history. This is not a defect in history and so to demand scientific explanation in history is logically to misunderstand the discipline of historical inquiry as well as metaphysically to misunderstand the nature of human beings.<sup>20</sup>

## 9. Teleological Explanation

Purposive or teleological explanations are the oldest forms of explanation of human actions. Such explanations are not only used to explain human behavior but also all other kinds of facts, events and happenings. Not only the historical actions, but also all other social behavior of man could be teleological explained.

The word “purpose” is quite ambiguous in ordinary usage. Most frequently in ordinary usage a purpose is something of which the concerned individual is very much conscious. That means, the purpose of someone implies a conscious intention to do something. The conscious intention is not the whole purpose, but a part of what the doer intends to do with a purpose. But there are diverse human tendencies to act, which do not refer to any conscious awareness and lead to no purpose. Also, there is something called unconscious purpose, which we are least aware of. Psychologists say if an individual consistently does his work without having any intention to bring about any result is a case of unconscious purpose. Thirdly, we speak of inanimate objects having purpose. For example, what is the purpose of the

box? The purpose is to store valuable articles safely. Here, the physical object reflects the purpose of the user. The person has a conscious purpose in both making and using the box.

In all the above cases, the purpose implies that there is an individual human being that has or can have the purpose. But, we do sometimes use the word "purpose" which carries no such implication. For example, what is the purpose of the nervous system? Here, the word "purpose" simply means function. This is the outcome of the misleading usage of language. We can use the word "function" instead of the word "purpose", which has a wider meaning. But somebody may raise some theological question while analyzing the concept of purpose. For example, what purpose did God have in giving us with this nervous system? one may ask. If this is the question, then again we are back to the question of purpose. This implies previous notion that every purpose implies a purposer. But, the difference is that, in this question, God is the purposer. But, when a doctor asks about the purpose of nervous system, he generally does not think of God's intention to keep that organism as it is there. The doctors are concerned only with the functions of the organism.

What, then, is the legitimacy of a purposive explanation? Every explanation requires laws and if there are laws about purposes, then there is no reason, why it cannot be treated as a proper explanation. In fact, laws about purposes have been established and they can be used in explanations like any other laws. But, the only laws that we are in a position to make about purposes are about human beings. Explanations in terms of divine purposes

cannot be employed because no laws about divine purposes have ever been established. Even explanations of biological events in terms of animal purposes cannot be taken as explanations. For example, when the dog barks in order to see its puppy we have no indication that the dog does so with this purpose in mind. Even if this is true, we do not know it and therefore, we cannot use it as a law in our explanation.<sup>21</sup> In the case of human beings alone we know that purposes exist, therefore, only in the case of human actions can we employ purposes in explanations.

The main mistake which people make with regard to purposive explanation is probably that of wanting an answer to a why-question in terms of purpose when the conditions under which a purposive answer is legitimate are not fulfilled. People extend their questions from areas in which purposive explanation is in order to areas in which it is not. For example, to the question 'why did he die'? The answer, "He was hit by a lorry" does not contain any purpose. To this question we can no longer give answer in terms of purpose, unless, our talk is rooted in a theological context. The person died because God has some purpose in seeing his death. If this is what is meant, one could try to answer the question in the theistic context of divine purposes. But, if this context is rejected, the why-question demanding an answer in terms of purpose is meaningless, because an answer is being demanded when the only conditions under which the question is meaningful are not fulfilled.

This point is worth emphasizing because it is so often ignored in practice. Having received an answer to why-question, when these questions were meaningful and explanations could be given, people continue to use why-questions, even when they no longer know what they are asking for.

Even sometimes no answer can be given to such questions and there are chances that we continue to ask such questions without knowing what answers we expect.

This leads us directly to the question, how far can explanations go? We may explain an event in terms of a law and this law in terms of another law and so on. But are we going to come to a stop? The burning of fire is explained in terms of the fuel and ignition. Whereas the fuel and ignition can be explained in terms of their internal structures or molecules. And their molecules in terms of some other things and ultimately we may say certain things are ultimate. They are just the things for which no explanation can be given. They are just the ultimate laws about the universe. We can explain other things in terms of them but we cannot explain them by other things. Now, the question arises: Are there ultimate laws, which explain everything but cannot even in principle be explained?

From our experience we have seen, there are laws, which cannot be explained further. For example, no other laws can further explain the laws of psychophysical correlation. This law can explain all other human phenomena; physical as well as mental but no other law can explain the mind-body correlation. There are many such phenomena in science, which till today could not be explained by any further laws. At the same time one should be careful while considering the basic laws. Some laws have explained many things in the past, which were considered basic and unexplainable. So the concept of a basic law can change from time to time. Had we excepted molecules as the ultimate constituent part of an element,

then, we would never have discovered the atomic structure, which is more basic and fundamental today.

Again, if there are basic laws, then we cannot know them. We can only know what it is not, by explaining it in terms of other laws. Discovering basic laws is epistemologically similar to discovering uncaused events. If there are uncaused events, we can never know what they are. We can only say that we have not yet found causes for them.

Furthermore, if a law is really a basic one, any request for an explanation of it is self-contradictory. To explain a law is to place it in the context of more inclusive laws. Therefore, asking for explanation of the basic laws is implicitly to deny that it is basic and to deny the very premise of the argument.

Like many other points, this factor seems logically compelling. Knowing the impossibility of basic laws, one may still be inclined to ask: why are the basic uniformities of the universe the way they are and not some other way? I want an explanation of why they are as they are?<sup>22</sup> But the fact is that 'why-questions' have had answers so many times that we tend automatically to ask them here, even when they have no answers. For example, a child who being told what is above the table, what is above the room, what is above tree, now asks question 'what is above the universe?' This question has gone outside the context of meaningful discourse. This is the case with the explanation of basic laws. To explain is to explain in terms of something and if there is no longer something for it to be explained in terms of, then the request for an explanation is self-contradictory. It says that, on the one hand,

we demand the explanation of 'x' in terms of 'y' while insisting simultaneously that there is no 'y'.

It is sometimes pointed out that science deals with, only "How'-questions" but not with 'why'-questions. It explains to us, not why things happen, but how things happen. It only describes in a better way to make the difficult concept easily understood. But, the term 'why' is most commonly used in scientific explanation. It explains existing natural phenomena by referring to the laws, and, moreover, explanations are after all merely descriptions. When we explain something we actually describe by stating laws of nature.<sup>23</sup>

## 10. Reason-Explanation

Answering a 'why' question in relation to human action is quite different from asking for a scientific explanation. When we ask, why I do pray daily in the morning? we ask for the reason behind the action performed. I tell about my beliefs and give my reasons for holding the beliefs. My arguments show that the belief in the situation is justifiable. I pray in the morning because this world is purposive and created by the Supreme Being and I have obligation to respect Him as the creator of the universe. Such explanations are called reason-giving explanations. This shows why an action is thought to be a good thing to do.

We give reasons to explain why we do something, and we also give those reasons in advising others how to act, in different situations. For example, (1) why are you going to the playground in this hot afternoon? Because, (2) there is a cricket match. The statement (2) which says, "there is a cricket match", is the reason for the first statement. But this statement of reason does not explain the person's going to the playground unless he felt compelled to see the match or to participate in it. Again, why am I purchasing a ticket to travel to my place? Because, I want to see my parents. Here the statement giving the reason explains the first statement, when there is a special connection between seeing my parents and my journey to my place. To make this intention clear, the person has to make explicit what he wants, thinks himself under an obligation, or feel morally bound to do something which, if his belief is correct, his proposed action will accomplish. These imply wants, beliefs, moral principles and obligations. Giving reasons for action is very complex involving both beliefs about facts and reasons for doing an action. Sometimes this complexity is apparent when a man is giving his reason mentions both explicitly.

Why do you think  $2+2=4$ ? Because the rules of mathematics say so. Why do you think, John is in Calcutta? Because he must be either in Hyderabad or Calcutta and he is not in Hyderabad, so by the rules of logic, he is in Calcutta. Here, in both the cases, there is a relating factor, a rule of inference, or an opinion about evidence is expressed. These are beliefs concerning the facts. Reasons for beliefs and actions are considerations, which are the outcome of the relative goodness of the course of action or the relative correctness of the beliefs. To explain a particular action or belief by

**giving one's reason is always to say why one thinks the action a good thing to do. Thus the reason-giving explanation of a past action x would be:**

- (1) John held it right to do things of type Y.**
- (2) He believed doing X to be a case of doing Y.**
- (3) Therefore, John reckoned X as a right thing to do**

**That is why**

- (4) John did X.**

Here, the views expressed in (3) are deduced from the beliefs and opinions expressed in (1) and (2) but the fact stated in (4) is not deducible from them. This type of explanation does not entail what it explains.

When a man gives something as his reason, he is probably said have his reason with respect to his beliefs and the views he holds. No matter how bizarre his beliefs or the views he express in giving his reason, he would be correctly described as having his reason for his action. Any disagreement with a man's view is not therefore a ground for denying that he has a reason for his actions. Mary has a reason not to take non-vegetarian food for he believes seriously in non-violence against other creatures. But, I do not so I have not. If I know that X has the views about the goodness of doing W and Y is a case of W, I must agree that he has a reason for doing Y. But if I do not accept his views I cannot agree that w is a reason for doing Y. And even if I agree with X s evaluative views and acknowledge his reasons as reasons I may yet dispute the relative importance he attaches to different reasons. What he calls a good reason I may count a bad one. I accept it as a reason but gives it little weight.

A man might have several possible reasons for his action, any of which would explain it. To give the explanation is to select one of these as his reason for his action. If this is the case, then how can we determine, what is the reason for a particular action? Similarly the question arises as to how we determine the particular reason a person has for his actions and also whether it is the right reason for the action.<sup>24</sup>

A man's reason for his action is the reason he sincerely gives. He may speak of his reason or the reasons why he acted, or may simply say he did it because of such and such reasons. But, whichever form he uses, if he gives a particular reason and gives it sincerely, it is his reason. To report a man's explanation is to report what he said in indirect speech. For example, if a man pleads for excuses by saying "...that he was ill", then the word 'that' implies a report in indirect speech.

To give one's reason for an action is to explain why one thinks it is the best thing to do that is, to make clear the reasoning which led him to decide to do it. When John explains, "Why he studied in Oxford" he gives the reason that he liked its academic environment. This led him to study in Oxford. A man who gives X as his reason for doing Y recalls that he thinks Y a good thing to do because of X. Whether X was his reason, depends on whether he had these thoughts. But to speak sincerely is to say what one thinks. Consequently, if someone reports his thoughts sincerely, he has those thoughts.

We may doubt a man's sincerity and suspect him of trying to deceive us as to his reasons. We may think that he is concealing another reason for his action. Now, if on another occasion he gives a different reason, we may call it his real reason to distinguish it from his earlier reason. But, if he does not, then a reason-giving explanation is excluded, since there is nothing we can call his reason, the reason he sincerely gave.<sup>25</sup>

But it might be argued, granted the reason a man gives sincerely is his reason but why should it be a necessary condition of something being X's reason that he gives it as his reason? There are instances, where people want X, but from their behavior it is obvious that they want Y. One may sincerely say that he is in need of physical support, but actually, he may be in need of affection and care. In this case the explanation of his action becomes a problem since he does not want what he says. So there can be instances where the reason-giving explanation may reflect the person's illusions about himself. Such cases, instead of being replaced by another reasoning, should be dealt with a different sort of explanation in terms of the person's real wants. Therefore, reason-giving explanations are not beyond doubt. Reason reveals something more than just wants a person has; they must be his genuine wants.

When a person gives his reason for a particular action, he must have some wants and beliefs, and he must hold certain principles. His wants and beliefs express the person's intentions. Again what a man does and what he subscribes to are quite different. Someone may behave in a particular way with some desire but may not subscribe to it. Although the person's behavior is in accord with his holding X as a good thing to do, if he does not subscribe

to that opinion, it would be wrong to say that he holds it, Only if a person declares a particular evaluative view, then only we can say he is committed to it. Hence, the statement of the agent alone justifies the ascription of evaluative opinions to him. Announcement or revelation of one's evaluative view does not reflect the facts about the person's behavior. They are not factual statements at all. They express some commitment to a course of action, so that a man must take care of what he says for fear of criticism, if he fails to act properly. A person's wants and principles, like his intentions, are what he sincerely states.

The outcome of different explanations varies from explanation to explanation. Reason-giving explanation requires us to reveal the intentions, beliefs and other evaluative views, which lead us to think whether a particular action is a good thing to do. The following points need further considerations:

1. Where several people hold different views of an action, they try to convince others by showing their reason whether a particular action is correct or good.
2. The agent explains his past and present action by citing the reason behind it, and is under the impression that others in the society hold similar views under similar conditions and will agree that his actions are right in such and such circumstances.
3. Man gives his reason to justify his action whenever anything goes wrong. He tries to persuade others that his intention is good behind the wrong action.

4. **By pointing to his reason, the person seeks moral approval in the society. When there is disagreement about a certain action as to whether it rights or wrong, we go for the standard view prevailing.**
5. **By giving his reason the individual reveals what he thinks good, right or important. We give reason not only to justify our action, but also to draw others' sympathy. The individual reveals his action as good or bad, right or wrong, sensitive or insensitive by citing his wants, intentions and throws himself to the judgement of others. That a man has acted rightly or his action is justified can be known only from the assessment his beliefs and intentions.**

## **11. Action and Causal Explanation**

The second most important explanation after reason explanation, which tries to explain human action, is the causal explanation. The analysis and explanation of human action provided by causal theories are fundamentally different from all other kinds of explanations. This theory poses much philosophical controversies ever since the time of Plato. It is mainly used in natural sciences, looks sometimes meaningless and improper in the context of human action. Davidson has been one of the most influential figures in the renaissance of the causal theory. Every recent systematic development of the causal theory is indebted to him.

A causal explanation is one, which is characterized by a causal what-question. For instance, what conditions brought the effect 'A' to happen? The conditions, which produced the consequent event, are the necessary factor for

the effect to come.<sup>26</sup> That means causal explanation shows a particular event X is a necessary outcome of the specific condition Y and the presence of that condition is sufficient for the occurrence of the event X, since Y is a condition that is both necessary and sufficient for the occurrence of the event X.<sup>27</sup>

Causal explanation believes that the cause and the effects are linked contingently through a law. And the existence of such a law is regarded as a precondition for the existence of a necessary connection between the two variables. Indeed, it is on the basis of such laws; we explain the given phenomenon and also predict what will happen when a set of conditions operates. So search for a law in the causal explanation is considered to be indispensable.

Wittgenstein, Ryle, Anscombe, Peters, Winch, Melden and Kenny oppose this causal view by attacking the behaviouristic and psychological accounts of the causal theory of action and also oppose the traditional philosophical theories, which saw volition, motive etc. as causes of action. They reject both the Humean and the Hempelian type of causal explanation, according to which a law-like relation exists between different events. Even though there are important differences among these philosophers, they are unanimous in rejecting the causal theory of human action. All the causal theories are widely differ from one another in their approach and analysis, but still they agree on the fundamental point that actions cannot be explained by their causes.

Hume defines causes to be an object followed by another where all objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second. That

means there is a constant conjunction between the first and the second object.<sup>28</sup> He assumes that a causal claim implies a fundamental dependence. If A causes B then some changes in A must be accompanied by changes in B, if all other variables are held constant. If A is the cause of B then B is functionally dependent on A. If B changes then A must have changed if the other related things are constant. So we can say, if A is a cause of B, then *ceteris paribus*, a change in B must be accompanied by a change in A.

Mill defines cause as the sum total of the conditions positive and negative taken together, which being realized, the consequent invariably follows. Mill illustrates how cause includes all the conditions under which the effect comes up. For example, Smith dies and the cause of his death is said to be his foot slipped while climbing a ladder. According to Mill, the condition, that is, his foot slipping while climbing the ladder may not be the only cause of Smith's death since there are a number of other factors like her body weight, position of her leg on the ladder, etc. has to be taken for account. Mill's answer to why we do not bother to mention the circumstance is that, it is too obvious to mention. Thus Mills causal analysis is far more inclusive then Hume's. According to Davidson, Mill is wrong in thinking we have not specified the whole cause of an event when we have not wholly specified it. On the other hand, Mill is right in saying that, there certainly is, among the circumstances that took place, some combinations or other on which the event is invariably consequent.<sup>29</sup>

The theory of causality argues that the concept of intentional behavior is a causal concept in the sense that behavior is intentional if and only if it is caused in a certain way. Secondly it argues that all the acceptable

explanations of intentional behavior are causal. More clearly when we explain an agent's behavior by showing his reason for acting as he did, we specify the causes of his behavior, so that reasons are causes of a certain kind.<sup>30</sup> Causal theory says these two claims are necessarily connected. Intentional behavior is the behavior that can be explained in terms of a person's reasons for acting and to cite a person's reason for acting is to cite certain causes of his behavior.

In 'Action, Reason and Causes', Davidson affirms both the claims. He argued that behavior was intentional if and only if it was caused by those of agent's beliefs and pro-attitudes (desires, motives and obligations etc.) in the light of which the behavior appeared reasonable or justifiable.<sup>31</sup> Thus my going to the library is intentional if and only if the behavior which resulted in the act of going to the library is caused by the attitudes and beliefs which make that behavior reasonable - perhaps my desires to read a novel and my belief that going to library would fulfil that. Actions are most reasonable things to do given the desires and beliefs and if belief and desire cause the behavior, then the behavior is intentional. So to explain the behavior one simply has to show the beliefs and other pro-attitudes, which caused it.

Davidson's main argument for causal theory of action is that, it alone enables us to make sense of the notion of an agent's reason. And that notion assumes the distinction between an agent's acting and having reasons and he is acting because of these reasons. One may justify an act by citing reasons an agent had, even if he did not act because of these reasons. Here the word 'because', Davidson argued is causal.<sup>32</sup> An agent acts because of reason, that is, his beliefs and pro-attitudes, only if they cause his behavior. Suppose an agent has pro-attitude and belief but it does not cause his behavior then the

agent has behavior, but he has not acted because of it. When the agent's beliefs and pro-attitudes cause his behavior, the agent acts and then only the agent's beliefs and pro-attitudes are a sufficient condition for his behavior being intentional.

Constant conjunction is the logical form of singular causal statement. Hume says there is a constant conjunction between the cause and the effect. That means the cause and the effects can be defined by singular terms since one can follow the other. But, majorities of singular causal statements are not backed by any laws. We cannot conclude a law, when we know a singular causal statement is true. Our justification for accepting a singular causal statement is that we believe an appropriate causal law exists, though we do not know what it is. Davidson accepts the views of Hume and Mill on the one hand and the views of C.J.Ducasse<sup>33</sup> on the other, by saying both can be reconciled with in their limits. One account agrees with Mill and Hume to the extend, a singular causal statement A caused B entails that there is a law to the effect that, all the objects similar to A are followed by objects similar to B. We have reasons to believe the singular statement only in so far as we have reason to believe there is such a law. The second account which is argued by Ducasse, maintains that singular causal statements entails no law and that we can know them to be true without knowing any relevant law. Davidson thinks, both the views are consistent with each other.

The belief that every causal explanation refers to at least one general law and there can be no explanation without such law has been challenged on two grounds. It is argued that social scientists particularly historians are concerned with the study of particular instances. For example, a political

turmoil in Europe during second world wars. They examine only in a particular instance. They neither set out to establish general laws nor do they feel that a reference to such laws is adequate for explaining 'unique particulars'. Secondly, bringing the relevant law is not always necessary for explaining a given occurrence.<sup>34</sup> Many times we explain the event without knowing the law operating in its background. We explain how the computer works without knowing the complex mechanisms behind it. So some thinkers say that, for linking together of two objects or events points to the existence of a law but an explicit reference to that law is not necessary for furnishing an adequate explanation.

Events in social world do not repeat themselves. They may be similar but very rarely identical. So reference to general law is insufficient to explain such phenomenon. General laws only suggest the type of event that might occur. They cannot satisfy exactly what did happen.

Social scientists provide explanations of particular events rather than of types of events. Such explanations render singular causal assertions rather than causal explanations of other kind. When a historian suggests about the decline of Roman Empire, we assume the decline of the Roman Empire can be explained quite differently for the decline of the Mogul Empire. This does not imply that both the decline of empires have nothing in common; it only asserts that a reference to these common conditions is insufficient for understanding the precise nature of the event. To explain the precise occurrence and to identify the conditions that made the crucial difference, one has to analyze the different prevailing conditions at that time in that society.<sup>35</sup> One would have to

**specify the causes of a particular occurrence depending on the study of the prevailing situation at that time.**

**Singular causal assertions are regarded as valid form of inquiry that explains adequately, why something happened. Indeed to denote all that is entailed in a causal relationship. Like causal explanations they refer explicitly or implicitly to at least one law and the only significant difference are that the laws used in such explanations are complex, elliptical and partly open.<sup>36</sup> That is, they use universal propositions that are incomplete.**

**Davidson defends the causal theory while dealing with logical connection argument, which is very much persistent among anti causalist philosophers. This argument says reason for action could not be causes since reasons and actions lacked the logical independence required for the causal connection in the Humean or nomic sense. Therefore it is argued that my desire to eat sweets could not be a cause of my eating the sweets because that desire could be understood only in-terms of its objects, which is the very action it is supposed to cause. But, the very notion of causal sequence logically implies that, cause and effect are intelligible without any logically internal relation of the one to the other.<sup>37</sup> Davidson denies logical connection argument by saying this argument confuses events with their descriptions. Descriptions have logical relationship with each other, but events do not have. Causation is a relation, holds between events but not descriptions. For instance a person put up more weight because of more eating. There is surely a logical connection between over weight and more eating. The distinction Davidson draws between events and their descriptions is more complex. He says causality is inseparable from causal laws and those causal laws**

necessarily involve descriptions. Where there is causality there must be a law. Events related as cause and effect fall under strict deterministic laws. Causality and identity are relations between individual events no matter how they are described. But laws are linguistic entities, so events can instantiate laws.<sup>38</sup>

Davidson made a significant departure from the Humean view on the relation of causality to causal laws. He avoids the covering law model of explanation, which is a development from Hume's view on causation.<sup>39</sup> The covering law model requires that in order for event A to cause event B there must be a law covering events of type A and type B. That means event of type A are always followed by the events of type B. To assert that A cause B presupposes a causal law in which both A and B appear. Defenders of the covering law model argued that intentional explanation of human behavior presupposes causal laws, which cover behavior and explanatory attitude. We do not normally mention such laws, because they are implicit.<sup>40</sup> Critics of this theory argue that, there were no laws of the required kind. The covering law model was therefore incorrect. This implies that the causal theory of action should be abandoned. But, Davidson holds that, causal theory of action does not stand or fall with the covering law model. Indeed he argued that, there could not be any causal laws in intentional terms.

Separation of causal theory of action from the covering law model is made possibly by Davidson's construing the causal relation of attitudes and behavior in an oblique sense. To avoid the covering law model, Davidson says, causal laws connecting attitude descriptions with behavior descriptions. He also affirms that, attitudes and behavior also have purely physical

descriptions. And it is the physical descriptions of attitudes and behavior is causally connected. Affirming that attitudes are purely physical descriptions is to affirm that attitudes are identical with physical events. Each individual attitude is identical with a physical event but no law determines which type of physical event it is identical with. Only at physical level we find causal laws. So although reasons are causes, no causal laws need connect reasons and actions. Genuine causal laws connect the physical events to which the attitude description applies with behavior described non-intentionally.

But in fact, reason giving and causal explanations cannot supplement one another since they can never apply to the same thing. Causal explanation is appropriate to events but not to actions and vice versa. This explanation in no way contributes to our understanding of human behavior. The reason giving explanation provides the means of assessing both agents and their actions. Human actions thus need rational explanation rather than causal explanation. The method of rational explanation requires the introduction of intentions and reasons into the explanation of human action.

In the causal model of explanation, prediction plays an important role. According to Hempel and Oppenheim,<sup>41</sup> prediction is a necessary consequence of an explanation. If an explanation does not allow any prediction, then it is not acceptable. An explanation is not fully adequate unless it explains the causal factor which are responsible for the event's happenings and on the basis of which future events can be predicted. Hempel says, explanation and prediction are two different names for the same logical fact and they have the same logical structure.

The human actions, however, cannot be subjected to the method of causal predictability. In behavioral sciences, what we explain on the basis of certain prior knowledge is not strictly deducible from it, and surely that is not predictable. We could predict if only the explanations are complete. But, most explanations in behavioral sciences are partial. We cannot say they are not explanations, just because they do not offer prediction. An automobile accident is said to be due to defective brakes or excessive speed or to a drunken driver. But really, none of these allows us to predict the accident (even though in particular cases they may have considerable explanatory forces). Again, the explanations, which are based on statistical laws, allows only statistical prediction at best. For example, “x' won the game, because he was lucky”, does not give any room for the prediction of the winner. Because, here winning was not a matter of skill or of planning. The role of chance is of much importance in human affairs. Chance explains actions but denies predictability.

Often we predict even though we are not in a position to explain what is being predicted. Such cases are characteristic of well established empirical generalizations that have not yet been transformed into theoretical laws. For example, ancient astronomers made predictions incomparably better than their explaining theories.

In recent years, philosophers of science have emphasized more on the difference between explanation and prediction. Prediction involves a reference to the time of the assertion. However explanations are always of an actuality (i.e. a fact or a law), even if they turn out to be wrong, but there is no

corresponding actuality for an unsuccessful prediction. An explanation establishes a certain conclusion, which is more probable than its negation. Whereas a prediction affirms only that a certain alternative is more probable than any other is, though its probability may be rather low.<sup>42</sup>

The basic difference between explanation and prediction is that an explanation rests on a nomological or theoretical generalization or on an intelligible pattern, but a prediction need not have such basis. A prediction is different from a guess, is inferred from some premises where basis is merely empirical generalization. For predictions to come true, we give no reasons other than past successes. Explanations provide understanding, but we can predict without being able to understand and we can understand without necessarily being able to predict. It remains true that if we can predict successfully on the basis of a certain explanation, we have good reason and perhaps the best sort of reason for accepting the explanation.

## 12. Explanation and Understanding

The basic urge behind the demand for an explanation is to make the explanandum (which is to be explained) free from ambiguity and therefore easy to understand. That is, when we do not understand something we normally ask for explanation. Explanation lacks its function and meaning if we do not stress on the point of understanding which is much associated with its definition. The meaning and understanding of a concept varies depending on how we explain a fact or an action in making it intelligible to us as well as

to our fellow beings. Therefore understanding a concept, an event or an action more or less depends on the way we explain it.

Frequently we encounter many different complex concepts in our day-to-day life ranging from historical happening to scientific development. We call for explanations whenever we do not understand the meaning of some action or a piece of information. Hence understanding plays a crucial role in the process of human knowledge. We explain different facts of nature and the most complex human behavior in the process of our analysis of meaning. There are innumerable facts, events and actions both in nature and human mind which are need of proper explanation. To avoid the confusion in our understanding we explain human actions, which are not intelligible, by applying the different rules. Both rules and laws are applied to human actions and natural events respectively for the precise understanding of a concept. They play an important role in the whole process of analysis.

As the different types of explanations varies depending on the things to be explained and the prevailing situation, so the human understanding also varies. For instance, why did John smile at Mary, can be explained differently by different persons and consequently the understanding of different beings also varies. John smiled because both of them are good friends is different from the explanation, John is lunatic. People those who know the first explanation obviously have different understanding of John's action from the second one.

The types of explanation in natural events, human actions, and religious books and in scientific experiments are different from each other. They

follow altogether diverse methods to arrive at their conclusion. For example the method of explanation applied in scientific endeavor is radically different from the explanations in religious speculations. The methods illustrate human actions are different from the methods explain the happenings in nature. The meaning and explanation of one category a of thing is different from the other therefore the understanding also differs from one another.

Does human understanding have any objective value? Not only the understanding of different concepts varies from person to person but also a same event or a piece of action is understood by different persons differently. For example, the occurrence of an earthquake is understood differently by a man of scientific temperament from an aboriginal. Some persons give a religious interpretation of the whole fact where as some others scientifically analyze it. There should be a single explanation of an event or a particular action in order to ascribe some objectivity to human understanding. If all the people define a fact in a particular way following a particular type of explanation then our explanation and understanding will have some objective value.

The events, which occur in nature, are law bound in the sense they follow certain laws in their explanation. Such laws are constantly followed whenever the same fact is explained again and again. Therefore the facts in nature can be verifiable and their explanations are scientifically proved and hence objectively true. However human actions lack such type of uniformity in their occurrence? They follow different rules for their activities.

Explanations are conditionals. They hold true only of a certain range of phenomenon, and are applicable only when certain conditions are satisfied. But, all these conditions are not always explicit. When an explanation fails it is always open to us to conclude, not that there is something wrong with the explanation, but some of the conditions for its application have not been met.

Explanations are approximate. The magnitudes they yield are more or less intact. What we ascribe to the natural phenomena are more or less true. There is no finality about scientific (causal explanations).

Explanations are inconclusive. They do not show why, what is being explained must be so, but why it was very likely that it would be so. The conclusion of explanatory inference is established only to some degree. This is quite clear in the explanations, which adduce statistical laws or theories to explain particular events.

Explanations are indeterminate; every explanation is in turn subject to further explanations. The circumstances that we adduce for an explanation are not self evident, but that does not mean that explanations are not truly explanatory. But, it is only a caution, that, we should not demand from explanation what they cannot give, or we confirm that explanations are beyond doubt.<sup>43</sup>

There is a widespread notion that the hierarchy of explanations must ultimately ascend to a final comprehensive theory, which is itself as ineluctable as brute matter of fact. It is like the cast of the dice by which God chose this world out of all possible worlds.<sup>44</sup>

**Explanations are limited. They are appropriate to particular contexts in which they serve as explanations, not to every possible circumstance of inquiry. An explanation is limited means that it applies in certain situations and not in others. Every sort of explanation is limited, not just because it is partial or incomplete, but because for each explanation there are contexts of inquiry in which questions arise, which it does not even begin to answer.**

Very often we explain why an event occurs by stating some purpose behind the event. For example why does the dog scratch the door? Why is the monkey running? We answer such type of questions by giving some purpose to it. The dog is scratching because he is feeling cold outside and wants to get in. When such answers are given we are inclined to feel that our question has been answered and that the event has been satisfactorily explained. This is the most primitive conception of explanation. People consciously feel that there is a purposive explanation for everything. If not in terms of human or animal purpose, then of divine ones or mysterious forces or powers. We always tend to extend, what holds true to some events to all events and also we feel bit homely with this explanation. But, what is then the scope and legitimacy of purposive explanation?

Before explaining the scope and legitimacy of purposive explanation, I would like to comment that, If explanations always were in terms of some purpose, then the physical sciences do not explain anything. The physical and chemical phenomena for example, the rotation of a wheel or the rusting of iron cannot be explained in terms of any purpose at all. Even biologists do not ascribe any purpose to animal actions. So, the purposive definition is no

longer the essential part of physical explanation. The stone is no longer to fall, because it wants to get to the center of the earth.

Many times we understand and explain events by pointing out the 'concept of familiarity'. An event has been explained when it has been shown to be an instance of same class of events, which is already familiar to us. For example, when we observe that a balloon ascends rather than descends, unlike most objects, and it is made clear to us that air has weight and that gas inside balloon weighs less than an equal volume of air. Here, we are satisfied, because the phenomenon is reduced to something already familiar to us in everyday experience. For example, a dense object sinks in water while hallow ones floats. This event is no longer unusual, strange, or unique. It illustrates a principle with which we were already acquainted. Bridgman holds that all explanation is of this kind. "I believe that examination will show that the essence of an explanation consists in reducing a situation to elements with which we are so familiar that we accept them as a matter of course, so that our curiosity rests".<sup>45</sup> But such views are mistaken. We may seek explanation for the most familiar event as well as the most unfamiliar events. We can ask question on both the cases. Secondly, the explanation may not be familiar at all. It may be far less familiar than the event to be explained.

Again familiarity is irrelevant to its validity as an explanation. Familiarity is, in any case, a subjective matter, what is familiar to one may not be same to others, yet if the explanation is true for one then it is true for all. The truth is, the law that explains the event may not be familiar but the phenomenon under question can be subsumed under a law makes it less mysterious, and thus in a sense more familiar. To show that the behavior of

something is law-like is to show it to be a part of the order of nature, and in that sense familiar, although the particular law stating the uniformity may be quite unfamiliar. So, then, the question arises, what does explanation consists of? It can be answered by saying that to explain an event is simply to bring it under a law and to explain a law is to bring it under another law. It does not matter whether the law is about purpose or not, or whether it is familiar or not. But if the explanation is to be true, the law evoked must be true.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **HUMAN AGENCY**

1. The Conscious Agent
2. Agent Causation and Event Causation
3. Agent's Direct Causation
4. Agency and Free Will
5. Agent and his Role
6. Agent and Society

## **Chapter 3**

### **Human Agency**

#### **1. The Conscious Agent**

In this chapter, I would like to explore what we attribute to ourselves as human agents, which we would not attribute to animals. The main question is: what is involved in the notion of self of a responsible human agent? This question takes us to many important philosophical problems. But I will discuss this issue by introducing Harry Frankfurt's notion of self. Harry Frankfurt made a distinction between the first order desire and the second order desire in his 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person.'<sup>1</sup> Human beings can have a second order desire, whose object is having a certain first order desire. That means, one can have the desire of a particular desire. The underlying assumption in introducing Frankfurt's notion is to find out what is essential to the characterization of a human agent and to demarcate the separation line between human agents and other kinds of agents. Frankfurt says, "Human beings are not alone in having desire and motives or in making choices. They share these things with members of other species, some of which even appear to engage in deliberation and to make decisions based on prior thoughts. It seems to be a peculiar characteristic of humans, however, that they are able to form... second order desires..."<sup>2</sup>

It is an observed fact that the higher animals have desires and also they choose between different desires. But what is distinctively human is the power to evaluate his desires. Only human beings possess the capacity for reflective self-evaluation that is manifested in the formation of second order desire. I believe we can come closer to the notion of human agency, if we make a further distinction and analyze different kinds of evaluation of desires.

The human agent is a 'being' with certain moral status. But, underlying the moral status, the person has certain capacities. He has a sense of self and has a notion of the future and the past, can hold values, make choices and above all can adapt different life-plans. A human agent must possess all these capacities at least in principle, if not in practice. An agent must be a being with his own point of view of things. This is a necessary condition for an individual to be an agent. A person is a being who can be addressed and can also reply. And it is also clear that persons are a sub-class of agents. Even though in some sense we attribute actions to animals, we do not accord personal status to them. This raises the important question what is special about persons or human agents?

In keeping these questions in mind, now I am going to discuss two views of what it is to be a person, namely, the scientific view and the practical moral view. The scientific view discusses how we are to explain human behavior causally whereas the practical moral view discusses what is a good or decent or acceptable form of life. The first view is rooted in the seventeenth-century epistemology. A person is a being with consciousness. He alone possesses it, or, at least, he has it in a manner or to a degree that animals do not have. So consciousness marks the boundary between persons

and other agents that include animals and even machines. But the boundary between agent other than persons and mere things is not recognized as important at all. Descartes equated animals with complex machines and this continues to be accepted even today. What makes us identify animals with machines? Is it by performance criterion? Animals show highly complex adaptive behavior. But understanding them in terms of performance is same as equating the nature of animals and machines. Artificial intelligence scientists do not see any difference between animals (including human beings) and computers in relation to performance. The only problem comes in relation to consciousness. The human being is conscious but the machine, which stimulates our intelligence, is not. So we cannot simply identify agents by a performance criterion nor equate animals with machines.

In a very strong and original sense we attribute purposes, desires etc. to agents. But there are instances where purpose is attributed to machines. In fact such machines are designed by us and also serve our purpose. In other words, they are used by us to carry out our purpose. Outside the agent's purpose, no other independent purpose would be ascribed to machines.

It is essential to differentiate human agents from other agents. Both animals and human beings are subjects of original purpose. For example, that the dog is barking at the snake is not a derivative or observer-relative fact. If one takes such distinctions seriously, he can no longer accept performance criterion for agency, because some agent's performances can be ascribed derivatively, to machines. But the question is how to distinguish human agents from the rest of the agents? The basic condition for being a respondent (A person, who has a life-plan and choice, is a being who can be addressed,

and who can reply. Let us call a being of this kind a 'respondent'), is that one has a point of view, which is original, and is common to all agents. Agents other than human beings do not have consciousness in the human sense but have original purposes. Original purposes should not be confused with human consciousness.

We cannot simply separate human agent from other agents by keeping consciousness as the criterion, nor, can consciousness help us to understand the difference between human beings and animals. The traditional sense of consciousness, which advocates representative theory of consciousness, cannot distinguish between persons and other agents.<sup>3</sup>

If understanding an agent is essentially as a subject of significance, then there are matters of significance for human beings which are peculiarly human, and have nothing common with animals. Pride, shame, moral goodness, evil, dignity, the sense of worth, the various human forms of love and so on are such matter of significance. If we look at the common goals like survival and reproduction, then we can convince ourselves that the difference between men and animals lies in a strategic superiority of the former to the latter. We can pursue the same end much more effectively than our dumb cousins (animals). These human matters in some sense are connected with consciousness. One could indeed argue that no agent could be sensitive to them who was not capable of formulating them or at least giving expression to them, and, hence, that the kind of consciousness which language brings is essential to them. For example, being a moral agent. To be a moral agent is to be sensitive to certain standards, but here the word

**'sensitive' must have a strong sense, not just that one's behavior follows a certain standard. And one in some sense must acknowledge the standard.**

Animals also follow standards in a weaker sense. Our dog will not eat meals below a certain standard (quality). With such knowledge of standard, we can predict the dog's behavior. But this kind of prediction would not be sufficient to attribute moral action to the dog. Even if our dog is systematically beneficent in its behavior, and always does well to men and other beasts, still we would not think of it as a moral agent. It is not a moral agent unless there is some recognition on its part that in acting this way it was following a standard. Morality requires some recognition that there are some higher demands on one, and hence the recognition of some distinction between kinds of goals, is essential to being a moral agent.

Moral agency requires some kind of reflexive awareness of the standards one is living by. So there is some kind of consciousness in them. Being a conscious agent, it is essential for him to have concern towards this awareness. For instance, it is impossible for one to distinguish between things he just wants to do and things that are worthy to be done, unless he is able to make the distinction, in some way; either by formulating it in language or at least by some expressive method which would acknowledge the higher demand.<sup>4</sup>

So consciousness is the essential attribute, which distinguishes Persons from other agents. But this consciousness is not understood as representation. Consciousness here, we might say is inseparable from language (in a broad

sense), as language is the medium with in which the human agent expresses consciousness. The medium here in some way inseparable from the content.

Ordinarily the human agent is defined as a person who has a sense of self, and who can evaluate his own self and make choices about it. This is the basis on which we respect persons. Even if some human beings are accidentally deprived of the ability to exercise these capabilities, they are still belong to human beings. These human capacities play an important role in human life. To make someone less capable of understanding himself, of evaluating and choosing his actions is to deny totally the idea that, he is a person.

Thus what makes an agent a person, a fully human respondent, is the human capacities, such that a person has most of these capacities. The question of agency arises only when the person exercises some of the capacities. Agents are beings for whom certain things of significance matter. That is what gives them a point of view on the world. But what distinguish persons from other agents are not just the capacity but also the power to evaluate it. This evaluative capacity belongs to the higher order consciousness.

Once we raise the question of agency, the ends or goals of agents come into view. It is clear that there are some peculiar human ends. Hence, the important difference between man and animal cannot simply consist in strategic power. It is a matter of our recognizing certain goals. Consciousness is essential to us but this cannot be understood simply as the

**power to frame representations. Our consciousness is somehow constitutive of these matters of significance and cannot just enable us to depict them.**

**The essence of evaluation is that evaluation is no longer fixed towards goals but also towards certain standards. Power to plan is not the essence of human agency, but it is the openness to certain matters of significance. This is what is essential to human agency.**

## **2. Agent Causation and Event Causation**

**The next important question worth discussing in this context is what is agent-causation? And can it be reduced to event-causation? This question can be perfectly answered by simply analyzing different statements. Let us consider the two statements, 'John killed his wife' and 'Mary raised her arm'. These statements are sometimes true and imply that there is a certain event or state-of-affairs that the agent brought about. 'John killed his wife' implies that, 'the death of John's wife was brought about by John and 'Mary raised his arm' implies that the raising of Mary's arm was something that was brought about by Mary. Both John and Mary are agents of the respective actions if John and Mary are agents, then it can be assumed that John and Mary could have done something else in different circumstances.**

**We make statements such as, 'John killed his wife', when we want to express praise or blame for the agent. Again, when we analyze the statement,**

'John killed his wife', to, "the death of John's wife was brought about by John", such assumptions look very trivial and obvious. As Goldman puts this point, 'when S acts A causes event E, we say that S is exemplified by the property of causing E. In other words, the event E was brought about by the agent S.'<sup>5</sup> This is quite unproblematic when we think there is something called agent-causation. But the notion of agent-causation has raised many problems. Here the question is not whether there is something called agent-causation or not, but whether agent causation can be reduced to event-causation'. Can we, for example, reduce, 'John killed his wife' without any loss of meaning into a set of statements in which only events are said to be causes and no one of which presupposes that there is anything of which John may be said to be the cause?

The theory of agency presupposes that, people do certain things, when they could have done something else, instead. This is one of those things that we have a right to believe about ourselves. At least until we have a positive reason for believing them to be false.

I will analyze three concepts, which I have borrowed from Roderick M. Chisholm<sup>6</sup> in the analysis of the phrase, "He could have done otherwise".

1. Physical necessity (P is physically necessary or P is a law of nature). Here the expression P designates a state of affairs. It is generally agreed that the concept of physical necessity is fundamental to the law of causation and more generally to the concept of nature.
2. The causal contribution ('P contributes causally to Q' or the occurrence 'P' contributes causally to the occurrence of Q'). The concept of causal

contribution is different from a sufficient causal condition. For example, the presence of oxygen in the room contributes to the fire. Here, we do not imply that it is physically necessary or a law of nature, that if there is oxygen in the room then there is fire. A sufficient causal condition can be brought as a conjunction of events. If it occurs, then some of its conjunctions may be said to contribute causally to its effect.

3. Undertaking or endeavor 'S acts with the intention of contributing causally to the occurrence of P' or 'S undertakes or endeavors, to contribute causally to the occurrence of P'. This concept in question is sometimes expressed by means of the word 'trying'. As Wittgenstein<sup>7</sup> says if I raise my arm, something else happens beside that my arm is raised. The raising of the hand is due to my will. When I choose or decide all that happens may be that I try to raise it.

Let us now analyze the sentence, 'He could have done otherwise'. Here the word 'could' is indeterministic in the sense that, our definition will imply that, had there not been the prevailing conditions, the things would have been different. Here I shall formulate three definitions in the analysis of the concept.

1. It is free for the agent to undertake a certain activity. S is free at T to undertake P.
2. The second definition concerns the things that are directly within an agent's power. These are his free undertakings and anything that they would cause. If a state of affairs is directly within an agent's power, then something he is free to undertake is such that his undertaking would bring about that state of affairs. In other words, P is directly within S's power at

**T. There is a Q such that S is free at T to undertake Q and either P is S undertaking Q or there occurs an R such that it is physically necessary that, if R and S-undertaking-Q occurs, then S undertaking-Q contributes causally to P. When we say, 'There is a Q such that he is free to undertake Q', we do not mean that Q occurs, or obtains. For many of the state-of-affairs that the agent is free to undertake are events or states of affairs that do not occur or obtain.**

- 3. The third definition concerns the broader concept of being either directly or indirectly in one's power. A state of affairs is within the agent's power if it is one of a series of states of affairs such that the first is directly within his power and each of the others is such that it would be made possible by its predecessor. That is P is within S's power at T. P is a member of a series such that the 1<sup>st</sup> is directly within S's power at T and each of the others is such that its predecessor in the series is a sufficient causal condition of its being directly within his power.**

If the series of state of affairs have only one member, then our definition says that the things that are within an agent's power include the things that are directly within his power. The second and the third definitions in combine presuppose that:

- 1. If Q is within S's power at T,**
  - 2. P occurs, and**
  - 3. Not-P is not within the power of any one other than S,**
- Then P and Q are within S's power at T.**

**From the above definitions it follows that if there is anything within an agent's power, then there is something that he is 'free to undertake'. There occurs no sufficient causal condition for his undertaking it and also there occurs no sufficient causal condition for his not undertaking it.**

**There is a familiar objection to such indeterministic account. According to that argument if anything is ever within anyone's power, then certain event occur which are not accompanied by any sufficient causal conditions. But, if an act, which is within an agent's power, is thus indeterministic, it is not possible for another person to exert any influence upon such an action. Yet, we do influence the actions of other people, including those actions they could have refrained from performing. Thus human actions are neither totally determined not totally undetermined.**

**If human action is indeterministic it is not possible for us to exercise any influence upon the actions of other people. But one way of affecting other person's behavior is to restrict his opinion. We prevent him from making choices he otherwise could have made. We indeed cause him to act in a certain way and leave the further particulars up to him. But restricting his opinions is not the only way we can affect another person's free behavior. We can also influence him by enabling him to do what he otherwise could not have done. Then if he does what we have enabled him to do, we have brought about some necessary causal condition for his action.<sup>8</sup>**

**We know that one event is a sufficient causal condition of another provided it is a law of nature that if the first one occurs, then the second event occurs. That means one event is a necessary causal condition of another**

provided it is a law of nature, that if the second event has occurred, then the first one has occurred. Now, even if a man's undertaking has no sufficient causal conditions, it has many necessary causal conditions.

Our abilities are necessary causal conditions of what we do. If someone provides me the necessary means for going to Calcutta, without the means I would not be able to get there, then, if I go there, he can be said to have contributed causally to what I do even though my undertaking the trip had no sufficient causal conditions.

I would not have taken the trip unless I had thought it would involve something pleasurable. If now someone had persuaded me that the trip would be pleasurable, then he gave a motive or reason for going. Without the motive or reason, I would not have been able to undertake the trip. And once again, if I go, then you contributed causally to my act even though there is sufficient causal condition for my doing what I did. This example makes clear the way in which our reasons and motives can be said to contribute causally to what we do.

Sometimes a distinction is made between 'event-causation' and 'agent-causation' and it has been suggested that there is an unbridgeable gap between the two. But, if we take the standard concept of 'event-causation', that is, the concept of one event contributing causally to another, along with the concept of undertaking, then we can say it is an event-causality. In agent causality, the agent contributes causally to the occurrence of an event or state of affairs.

Event-causation can be expressed in the form; 'The occurrence of P contributes causally to the occurrence of Q'. One can define the concept of agent-causation with the help of event-causation and the concept of undertaking.<sup>9</sup> If a man's undertaking contributes causally to something then the man does something, which contributes causally to that something. Let us define the concept of agent causation in a more elaborate way.

1. If a person does something that contributes causally to P, then he contributes causally to P.
2. If a person undertakes something, then he contributes causally to his undertaking that something.

That means S contributes causally at T to P. Either S does something at T that contributes causally to P, or there is a Q such that S undertakes Q at T and S undertaking Q is P. Or there is an R such that S does something at T that contributes causally to R and P is that state of affairs which is S doing something that contributes causally to R.

Does the agent contribute causally to some of his own omissions, which he may be deliberately committed? Suppose one man greets another and the second man does not respond. If the second man was unaware of the fact that he was addressed by the first person, then his failure to respond is a case of mere omission. But, if the second man intended to snub the first man, to insult him by failing to respond to his greeting, then the second man could be said to committed the omission, that is, he omitted the act deliberately. We may characterize deliberate omission as S deliberately omits undertaking P at T. That means S undertaking P and S does not undertake P at T.<sup>10</sup>

S contributes causally to his own deliberate omission and to their results. The agent may be morally responsible for the results of some of his non-deliberate or uncommitted omissions. The agent should not have made those omissions. But it is not accurate to say that the agent is causally responsible for such results.

### 3. Agent's Direct Causation

Human agents have often been thought of as 'active' in the sense that they can start chains of events in the world rather than becoming a part of the existing chain which started before. A billiard ball moves because it is struck by another ball, that is the motion of the first ball was communicated to it. The first ball began moving because of the action of the player holding the stick and in the process the person was not simply transmitting the motion which he received from elsewhere but initiating the sequence of events, which followed.

Some philosophers interpret this as incompatible with the kind of theory just presented above. If John moved his arm, then the arm moved because of John and not because of a desire or anything else in John. Richard Taylor argues: "If I believe that something not identical with myself was the cause of my behavior- some event wholly external to myself, for instance, or even one internal to myself, such as a nerve impulse, volition or what not- then I cannot regard that behavior as being an act of mine, unless I further believe that I was the cause of that external or internal event".<sup>11</sup>

**But usually we do not believe that we are the cause of our desires. Normally when an inanimate object or even a person is said to 'cause' something, what we mean is that, some event involving the object or person caused it. When we say the alarm clock awakened him, we mean that the alarm clock's ringing caused him to wake up. When we say John broke the tumbler we mean his moving his arm caused it to fall and break. But, Taylor means something contrary to this.**

**In Taylor's view, along with the causation by events, one must recognize that there is such a thing as causation by agents. The tumbler's breaking was indeed caused by the motion of John's arm, and the motion of the arm was caused by muscular and neural events in John. But If 'John broke the tumbler' reports an action, it must be the case, on Taylor's view that, one or more of those muscular and neural events was caused by John. Direct causation of an event by an agent is a kind of phenomenon unlike causation of an event by one or more other events. It cannot be analyzed or explained in terms of causation by events. We explain the alarm clock's awakening someone in terms of its ringing, causing the person to wake up.**

**The theory of agency says that every action involves direct causation of an event by an agent. Taylor<sup>12</sup> says, some causal chains have beginning and they begin with agents themselves. An agent has done an A, his doing so was an action and this is directly caused by the agent.**

**The main argument for this theory consists in developing contrasts between the billiard ball and the person who moves it, and in claiming that**

there is no way of understanding these contrasts except in terms of this theory. Billiard balls never directly cause anything to happen. When I move my arm, I am aware before moving it that its moving is entirely up to me. In moving it, I am aware that it is moving because of me. Somehow, I am the cause of its motion. Again, the theory is held to be the only plausible way of interpreting this awareness. Alternative theories seem to bypass the agents themselves, by going directly from such thing as desire to the doing related events that they cause.

It appears that my awareness of moving my arm is really awareness that I am directly causing some event, which in turn causes the arm's motion. The directly causing event is the source of the special awareness that I, as an agent, have that action. This is both necessary and sufficient for action at least on the supposition that it causes the motion of my arm.

Taylor's theory is perennially attractive, but at the same time it should be understood that accepting such a theory involves paying a heavy price. Causation is a much-studied topic in metaphysics and the philosophy of science. Although many problems remain, some understanding has been achieved on the assumption that causation is the cement of the universe<sup>13</sup> is a relation between events. By contrast, direct causation of events by agents remains a mysterious phenomenon. For example, how do we know that billiard balls do not directly cause anything to happen? Is it because we never see that one moves spontaneously? If we see a billiard ball moves spontaneously, how could we decide whether its motion was wholly uncaused or directly caused by the billiard ball itself?

Advocates of theories of agency have never provided good answers to these and similar questions. If the arguments are to be resisted, then we should not complicate the metaphysical picture of the universe by admitting direct causation of events by agents. The argument can be resisted easily. There are many differences between persons and billiard balls that we can understand. We do not need to explain them in terms of one I do not understand. The agent's special awareness of directly causing some event is to assume what was to be argued. When I move my arm, I am aware that it is moving "because of me". But perhaps what this means is that its motion is caused by an event of a certain kind. We have no reason for rejecting the possibility that causation by an agent is compatible with and even explicable in terms of causation by events, contrary to the passage quoted from Taylor.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. Agency and Free Will

We agree with G.E.Moore's<sup>15</sup> that our basic experience of free will resides in our certain feelings in regard to past actions, that is, where we could have acted differently if we had chosen so. Here, we are concerned with 'action' proper, as contrasted with involuntary movements and also with fully habitual, routine like movements or the movements performed without any attention and without the slightest deliberation. Such actions are within the range of our physical or psychophysical power and are implicit in the concept of choice. But we also understand the limitations of our choice. There is no sense in my saying that I might choose to carry this building on my back to Delhi or to dismiss the present Government.

Moore is very much aware of the clearly meaningful objection that 'acting as we choose' would not establish the fact of free will unless it were the case that our choice itself is free. In other words, we not only choose to act, but our choice itself is free.

Here, I am discussing Moore's concept of 'doing what we choose', rather than going on to ask whether we really 'choose to choose what we choose', and critically look at the deterministic view of predicting our future choices. My tentative idea is that 'the concept of choosing the choose' is going to lead us into a maze of infinite regress and that a discussion of predictability, though certainly not devoid of interest, may well prove to be inconclusive.<sup>16</sup> But the fact that we act by choice may bring out the central issue of free will.

Suppose, I am confronted with a situation of practical choice and both the situations are mutually exclusive. Each of them involves obvious advantages but also suffers from some drawbacks. After weighting the pros and cons, I decide in favor of one of these offers as against the other, that is, I choose 'A' discarding 'B'. I choose to accept 'A' and correspondingly to reject 'B' and then proceed to act according to my choice on the line of my acceptance of 'A' and rejection of 'B'. Now, if someone asks the question, why I do the various things I do in following my choice, I may answer meaningfully by pointing out the main advantages and disadvantages in question and explain how, in my estimate 'A' has emerged as the more advantageous of the two alternative courses. This is indeed my decision.

Here, the purport of the question and relevance of my answer (that is, my choice) may be materially correct but it is not unambiguous. I do the action, not because of the many grounds listed, nor because they satisfy this or that urge and inclination of mine, but I do them because I have chosen to do them. Action is not a `resultant' of psychic urges, pressures, attractions, repulsive forces but is the execution of a decree issued by a unitary `self' or `ego'.

Kant<sup>17</sup> defines the nature of will in saying that while physical events are universally subject to a pattern of mechanistic determinism governed by causal laws, the so called `intelligible ego' has the power of imitating new chains of causation and thus intervenes in the mechanism of world events without upsetting it. According to Kant, the `intelligible ego' enacts its autonomous new departures by obeying the dictates of `practical reason'. The moral law, which is unrelated to the natural law of causal mechanism, ensures that the morally right action is free action and the morally wrong, is not free action. Thus the morally neutral does exist. Kant rightly saw the essence of free action in its being performed at the `dictate' of the will over and above the interplay and the antagonism of fluctuating `inclinations' and even of rationally fixed and formulated `interests'.<sup>18</sup>

Free agency is more conspicuously brought out by random choice than by the example of moral self-control. When we freely exercise our choice we shall be doing something moderately `determined' by ourselves, but it is totally cut off from the mechanism of the physical forces and conditions. We have chosen to choose in this way. But, the content of choice is absolutely independent of any determinants in the physical world. This however

constitutes the extreme limiting case of free choice and agency as such. Even in the more normal case of deliberative and reasoned choice, my decision is an act in its own right. I need not try always to work out a wise choice, and I may even deliberately choose what appears to me to be the less wise' course.

Practical choice proper is unlike the 'choosing' that is the picking up of the heaviest or the lightest out of the given set of weights. In our general day-to-day life we are not in general pursuing one determinate and insulated 'end' but have to keep our eye on an indefinite manifoldness of mutually competing concerns. There are many alternatives present before the agent who decides the course of action according to his preferences. The choice that he makes is dictated by his will.

Free will means primarily not so much free choice as free action and free action means not uncaused action but action caused by the agent's choice. But to such a view, an objection can be made that the underlying decision is not properly a 'cause' of the action at all,<sup>19</sup> but rather its initial aspect or the agent's accompanying experience of his entering upon it. A decision not followed by any corresponding action, not carried into execution, is indeed not a true decision but merely something like a wish or a temptation. The decision then seems to be an inseparable part rather than the cause, of the action. It implies or introduces action rather than making it as a consequence. For example, wars are caused by developing clashes of interests, by threats to the nation's security, etc. and not by declarations of war or by sudden provoked frontier incident, and so on.

To call a man's decision the 'cause' of his ensuing action is incorrect just because some decisions, like acts, are false decisions or because some decisions have conspicuous defects. For example, I have an intention to sip water in three minutes interval. I really do not do anything in the interval and then sip after three minutes interval. Likewise when I decide to visit a friend John tomorrow at 3 O'clock and execute my decision tomorrow, having done nothing connected with it, until the said hour. These decisions cause some kind of action. But the causality in question must operate and a certain substratum of factual circumstances must endure. So my decision has to be maintained or my will has to remain fixed in its established position, placed towards the chosen objective. But if this is the case then it is correct to say that I do the action because I have so decided.

Even though it may equally be said that the motives that have elicited my decision are also the springs of my corresponding action, it still remains true that the deliberate action is never simply 'caused' by its motives and their prevalence over contrary motives but necessarily starts from the beginning of decision. It is performed as if it were the execution of a decree (order) which endures in the shape of a 'sustained will'. A feeling of 'I could have done otherwise' characteristically attaches to it. I am doing this for such and such reasons and from such and such motives, but I could have accorded reasons and actualized a different set of motives. There is also present a consciousness of my doing 'this' as opposed to something else, 'just' because I have decided so. This is because I am convinced that this is the wiser or the better thing to do.

Free will is not so much a quality or gift, which man uses in his everyday life. But the decisive factor has to be the decision of the person concerned, which can be influenced, guided, yet for it no other factor can be substituted. The point is that action in the marked sense of the term cannot be set off by decision and that the agent alone can make the decision.

## 5. Agent and His Role

In this section, I will discuss the question, 'what is it for a man to act morally?' And how is it related to the concept of role? I will examine the relation between morality and the concept of human role in society from the point of view of freedom, which is always regarded as a necessary condition of a man's being a moral agent.

In the history of ethics there are two poles in which moral philosophy makes its movement. These are the ethics of rule and the ethics of character. They are respectively called the ethics the right act and the ethics the good. And it is a common place in the history of ethics to single out two classical works located at either pole, that is, Kant's *Grundlegung* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Kant's work is said to be about what it is to do the right thing whereas Aristotle is about what it is to be the right sort of person.

One does not just do things. One does the sort of things one does because one is the sort of person one is. Aristotle says, one becomes the sort of person one is by doing the sort of things one does. But there are many difficulties in the connection between person and act. I will analyze one,

which gives psychological complexities underlying the concept of role. Is a right act one a good man would do? Does right depend on good? We are supposing a good man would do surely right acts. It appears as if we move in a circle. Ordinarily, a good man is one who does the right things. But what is a right act?

I want to consider whether there is a role morality where the ethics of role might be centered. There is no doubt about the existence of role-morality, but one may question whether it is really distinct from the other two, that is the morality of rule and character. The role morality is not distinct, because the demands of one's role can be represented more or less in formalized rules. Indeed Aristotle himself developed an ethics of role.<sup>20</sup> Many of the virtues and vices directly correspond to the person's role in society. Aristotle is not writing about virtues and vices, which any one can practice, as the Christian writers do, but he wrote about those virtues and vices, which are the concern of the elite class. Thus Aristotelian good man has a specific moral role in the society.

The distinction of rule morality and character morality comes out clearly in relation to the problem of freedom. The reason why Greek philosophers were not bothered with the free-will problem is that they had no idea of fully deterministic systems. This left them with the fully purposive systems, namely human beings. What is important is not what they lacked, but what they had namely a character morality. Now what a person is and what he wants to be and his aspirations, ambitions and purposes are in the strongest possible sense his. They cannot possibly be represented as

something alien and without this possibility the traditional problem of freedom could not arise.

But the ethics of rules, however, faces the problem of freedom immediately. A rule necessarily restricts agent's freedom. A rule cannot be represented as something else. Does a role-centered morality raise a problem about freedom? Is a role necessarily something alien to the person who acts it? Is a role, like a rule but unlike a character?

Aristotelian society had a strong view about roles. In that society each person carries a fixed social role. But this conception of role threatens the idea of freedom. As Cohen says: "There are theories which would engulf personality in role playing; there are people who present themselves as so engulfed; there are institutions which foster engulfment. The propensity to engulfment must be resisted in theory and practice, because it possesses a threat to the exercise of our freedom and ultimately to freedom itself".<sup>21</sup>

Dorothy Emmet considers the possibility of regarding people as assemblages of the roles they play, or a person as the incumbent of his roles, and judges that this would not leave the necessary room for a 'personal morality' and we shall never catch the conversation-like nuances (differences) by which role-performances are also found to be relationships between people. She also draws attention to the frequent case of role conflict calling for a personal, not role determined choice.

A person can well be regarded as an assemblage of roles. All depends on how widely or narrowly we interpret the term 'role'. As to the place of

**personal morality, any conduct that is to be distinguished from spontaneous behavior, is still a matter of roles, a person can choose in what role to act. He has the choice to remain in high office, the choice between conflicting role requirements, and even the choice to act in no role at all. This consists of his moral freedom, though to choose to act in no role at all is to choose not to act morally.**

## **6. Agent and Society**

The notion of agency is central to the philosophy of action because all the beliefs, desires, intention presuppose the conscious agent behind it. Such self-conscious beings are capable of understanding their own intention, desires and actions. This capacity for self-understanding is unique to the human agents.

A person is basically a social being engaged in different social projects and actions. A new born child is not called as a person, because to become a person, the child has to pass through different steps of socialization and become aware of his values, duties and obligations in his society. A new born child is not only exposed to the physical world but also enters into socialization, and other forms of interaction with his dear ones by a set of complex symbols, gestures, etc. Mother conveys her feeling to the child through many signs, and movement of facial expression and vice-versa. So, the infant begins to learn through symbols and understands its meaning when he sees its use by the persons from both sides. It is known from very careful

**observation of the behavior of a growing child that the beginning of child's knowledge is not separate from his beginning to understand a symbol.**

**The agent's life is very much associated with the society in which he is born and brought up. The culture of his society acts as a prerequisite for his growth. The society provides an external environment to which the person has to adopt himself in order to survive. The society not only acts as an external condition for the survival of the being but also provides place for his individual development in a very unique way. Even though the identity of a person is grounded in the socio-cultural setup, yet he evolves into a different individual in terms of his goals, choices and decisions. The agent sometimes identifies himself in terms of his future goals, which are yet to be realized.**

**Language plays an important role in the life of the individual. The persons have linguistic skills and so they are capable of formulating their future purpose depending on their capacity. It is within the realm of language and culture that he becomes aware of his potentialities. Individuals play different roles in their lifetime and all the roles they play are not what they choose to play. Society sometimes imposes certain roles on to individuals.**

**The family, age, society of the individual determines his identity and the roles he has to play in his life, and in the performance of these roles, the persons interpret their social situation. Depending upon their perception of the situation they feel a sense of achievement, failure, guilt, acceptance, etc.**

**It is comparatively easy to understand the nature of the individual from our experience. Anyone, who recognizes himself as a person also, recognizes**

himself being a self. To be a self, one must be an agent. But self has other passive elements, to which the term 'agent' does not apply. We are agents and also spectators at the same time. Our characteristics are so complex that it is sometimes difficult to provide an exact description of what it is to be a person.<sup>22</sup>

How to understand the nature of self in the context of human agents? By self we understand the source of activities, chain of thoughts, speculations, etc. It is logically possible to imagine an agent who is a mere observer of events without any action, but such beings are very different from human self.<sup>23</sup> In case of human beings the self is not only a source of all actions, but also conscious of one's endurance in time. So our various activities, observations, perceptions, etc. stay with us as long as we live. This continuity is observed in every action, emotion and thought, and presupposes the active self behind all these activities.

Human agents perceive themselves and their fellow beings as autonomous beings capable of making choices. They are free to choose their course of action. Consequently destiny, of course, other external factors also play vital role in shaping the behavior of the individuals, but personal freedom is the main motive behind the whole endeavor. We make choices to determine our future course of action. So the agent is free to make choice within some broadly determined framework. For example, today I can choose between going out or staying in room, but I cannot choose to become a bird to fly in the sky. However, our choices are not fully determined, since we are free to choose our action, desire, etc. within the given systems. Human beings

**can never become autonomous, unless they are capable of exercising their free will such agents are capable of changing and developing themselves.**

**If concept of choice is an essential part of human self then all human agents are ends in themselves. They are capable of holding moral or normative characters. It is a mysterious fact that only the human agents are capable of upholding and respecting the values. They even go to the extent of endangering their life for the sake of defending the existing values. There are instances where people from a particular religion do not want to give up their ethical teachings, even in the most adverse situation.**

**When one takes into consideration the case of personal identity, the continuity of body in space and time is a necessary condition for the identity of the agent. But bodily continuity is not a sufficient condition for one's identity. In spite of bodily continuity, we at times lack a sense of identity, due to uncertain beliefs, feelings and even during the medical cases of amnesia, where the person does not even recognize whom he is. So human agents are not a physical organism but are active, reflective beings. For one's identity, he has to possess the continuity of his beliefs, memories, and desires, besides bodily existence. It is the single human agent who possesses both bodily as well as mental attributes.**

**Individuals acquire their identity not when they are born but while being brought up in the socio-cultural set up of the group to which he belongs, by practicing its values, customs and traditions. One becomes aware of his identity when parents who he is and to which family he belongs first tell him.**

**The child learns different social concepts, responsibilities, and obligations, while participating in it.<sup>24</sup>**

**It is by observing and gradually sharing in these social activities the agents come to recognize and understand their fellow beings and consequently their relationship with others. But the agent, from the very beginning of knowing things, does not accept passively the whole process of socialization. He actively participates by either accepting or rejecting his interactions with other beings. The agent reflects his ability in every sphere of his activity while growing up in the society. In the process of socialization the agent not only becomes aware of his natural abilities but also acquires new learning through education. He also explores his creative abilities through reflection on different socio-intellectual affairs. It can be mentioned that the human ability and opportunities are interconnected in the sense that one can only exercise his abilities only when opportunities for the same are available to the being and the opportunities could be availed only by those who has the relevant abilities.<sup>25</sup>**

**Every action presupposes the agent who performs it and is prior to the action performed. The agent believes that the particular action is going to be performed by him, so, he is aware of his beliefs, situations and his capacity before performing the action. And it is also the fact that the agent is constantly aware of the fact that there are other agents who operate their respective course of action in this world. The individual interacts, co-operates, and attaches significance to different actions while performing them, with other individuals.**

The individual always tries to satisfy his needs but all his needs are not biological. He has diverse needs, which vary from material things to emotional gratification. There are some requirements which are formed and perceived through the socio-cultural context and are linked with the personal values of the agent. So agent has to perform a number of actions in order to satisfy his needs. One may strive to become a good academician, a good athlete, and a good bird watcher at the same time.<sup>26</sup> These aims are different in nature and require different efforts simultaneously and there is every chance that the agent while performing many acts simultaneously faces conflicting demands.

Many thinkers including Davidson argue that, the relationship between the action and its reason is a causal one.<sup>27</sup> The reason is the antecedent event of the action perform but actually the relationship between reason and action is not the same as between cause and effect. Causes do not reflect or foresee the effect, which is very much present in the human action. The agent reflects on his actions from the point of view of his own reason. Human beings evaluate their actions and are responsible for that but such types of normative considerations are not found in natural happenings.

The cause of movement in action is simply the agent himself.<sup>28</sup> When we say the cause of the action is the agent himself, we deny the cause is some event, even the events within the agent. Actually the cause of actions is not an event but a thing. and that thing, which by virtue of its power causes actions, are agents. The innumerable movements in the world are produced by prior events but, the movements, which are human actions, are not produced by prior events but by things (human beings). When a man causes

**an action, it is not some mental state or any internal event in man, which causes the act. It is the agent himself, who causes the action. It is a basic and unique causal phenomenon not found in anything other than human beings.**

We sometimes talk of inanimate objects as the agents of some movements. For example, we say the bus is running from Hyderabad to Bangalore, the lift runs for four hours daily, etc. In these cases, the movement of the bus is not by itself started, rather it is linked to a number of events which in turn are supported by some other events, leading the movement to happen. In all these cases of mechanical movements, we talk as if they are agents but actually this is not the case, only series of events caused one after another. But, this is entirely different in case of human actions, which are fundamentally different from other types of movements, where the agent does the action without undergoing any changes himself.

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# **CHAPTER 4**

## **INTENTION AND THE WILL**

1. Introduction
2. Intention, Belief and Other Pro-attitudes
3. Intention and Decision
4. Intention and Action
5. Intention and Motive
6. Intention and Prediction
7. Intention and Description
8. The Will
9. Melden's View
10. Ryle's View
11. Wittgenstein's View
12. What is Volition
13. Critical Evaluation

## Chapter 4

### Intention and the Will

#### 1. Introduction

To understand the core concepts of human action, it is imperative to analyze the word, 'intention'. In the first section of this chapter, I shall make an attempt to understand the nature of intention and intentional action. The issues that I propose to raise in this section include questions such as “What is an intention?” “How do we ascribe intention to others?” “Is it possible to form an intention without the performance of action?” Normally we do not raise the question that, “Whether a person has done something intentionally or not” because we generally take it for granted that, when the agent has performed some action, he has done it with some intention. Take for instance, John has taken lunch with Mary. Such sentence implies John has taken his lunch with Mary intentionally. It would be superfluous to ask a question, whether John had his lunch with Mary intentionally or not. Most of the time we ascribe intentions to others and to ourselves in explaining or justifying our action to our fellow beings.

When one says that an agent has performed a particular action intentionally, we mean to say the agent is aware of the action he performed. Similarly, whenever a claim is made that an agent acted unintentionally, we affirm that the action was done either in ignorance or was not performed in accordance with the agent's commitments. We cannot tell, for example, John has thrown the stone intentionally, when John is ignorant of his own action throwing the stone. We cannot characterize an action as intentional when the agent is not aware of its performance. But this is not sufficient to say that, if the agent is aware of the action, then he must have done it intentionally. John may be doing his on the basis of his appointment with some obligation and commitment, but at the same time he is aware that his work is going to affect Mary badly. But we cannot say in such situations, John is intentionally harming Mary.

## 2. Intention, Belief and other Pro-attitudes

Philosophers those who try to define intention<sup>1</sup> in terms of desires, wants and beliefs says that, wanting to do an action is a necessary condition to say it intentional. To understand this concept better, one should analyze the concept of intention and intentional action. According to Davidson, an expression of intention has an outward form of description and cannot be taken to refer any entity, state or event. The function of intention is to generate new descriptions of actions in terms of their reasons.<sup>2</sup> He has not clearly interpreted his idea of intention, but the basic idea behind his interpretation is:

To say an agent did something intentionally is to say that the agent's action was caused by a complex state consists of:

1. A pro-attitude towards actions with a certain property.
2. A belief that the actions in question 'under a certain description' has that property.

By pro-attitude Davidson mean desires, urges, variety of moral views aesthetic principles, economic prejudices, social conventions, public and private goals and values.<sup>3</sup> For him pro-attitudes are genuine mental states or dispositions. The statement like, 'I went to library is true' when my behavior is caused by a suitable complex of beliefs and pro-attitudes.

Davidson's view of intention looks very implausible because he is not arguing that mentalistic terms never refer to events or dispositions. Again when a person is said to have intention he has never acted upon, then the singular term denoting intention cannot be analyzed in the way Davidson advocated.

Another difficulty in Davidson's account of intentional action is that the responses elicited by the pro-attitudes cannot expected to be intentional, no matter how they are described. To do something intentionally is to mean to do that with some plan or objective. Sometimes, desires, passion and other pro-attitudes are so strong that the agent loses control over him and does things what he does not mean to do. And there are also cases where the agent can give a desire, passion without meaning to do it. In these cases he has not lost control, only he has not exercised it. So Davidson view of

**intention is not acceptable. Primary reason may be necessary but not sufficient for doing something intentionally.**

**The basic question one encounters in the analysis of intention is regarding the relationship between intention and intentional action. Such relationship can be cited by the formula:**

**“If an agent intends to do D in the situation S and beliefs that he is in S and has no conflicting intentions then if he is able to do D in S, is not prevented from doing D and really is in S, he will probably do D and do it intentionally.”<sup>4</sup>**

**This general formula implies three important points:**

- 1. An intention by itself has no particular effects on a person's overt behavior.**
- 2. That a belief by itself has no particular effect on a person's behavior and**
- 3. That individual intentions and beliefs combine in favorable situation to produce intentional behaviour.<sup>5</sup>**

**Both belief and intention are similar kind of mental dispositions or propensity. One can believe something when one is not thinking about anything. Belief always depends on the individual person, his attitudes, intentions, desires and also on his other beliefs. If John believes Mary is beautiful, then if he is asked a suitable question about Mary and decides to give a truthful answer, John might say, ‘Mary is beautiful’. Like belief, intention too is a mental disposition. One can have the intention of doing**

something even when he is not thinking about doing it. But although in many respects an intention is similar to a belief it is not a disposition to assert the truth of some proposition. It is a disposition to have practical thoughts of the form: 'I will do such and such'. The practical thoughts involved in intention has a very complicated logical structure but one can have simple intentions to do things here and now.

There are instances where the person is aware of his own action but still his action may not be called as intentional. Suppose a tree climber wants to commit suicide and in one of his habitual climbing work slips his hand. He knows instantly that he will die falling from the tree and also wants to die but this cannot be called a case of suicide because his death is an outcome of his slip of hand rather than his decision to slip his hand to die. The climber has a desire to die yet we cannot say he died intentionally because having an intention to do something is not same as having a desire to do something. It is more than having a mere wish or a want to do something.

It is highly unfair to ignore the crucial role played by our beliefs, desires, wants, and values in the formation of intentions. If I believe that my friend X is not in the hostel, then I cannot intend to see him in the hostel. If I believe all human beings are qualitatively much developed than other animals, then I will not intend to equate human beings with other animals. To form an intention the agent has to go to various possibilities that are open before him. Belief plays very important role in recognizing such possibilities that are open to the agent.

**Sometimes our intention are not fulfilled either because of our false beliefs about our abilities, capacities, proficiencies, caliber or our ignorance of the circumstances where we find ourselves. To illustrate this point in a particular circumstances S, an agent A, after deliberation does D, on the basis of a reason R, in order to bring about some intended consequences.<sup>6</sup> A has a belief B that doing of D is necessary and sufficient to bring about intended consequences. The following are some of the possibilities in such a situation:**

- 1. A's belief B is false; instead of intended consequences some unintended consequences come about.**
- 2. A's belief B is false but some other event E takes place such that it is sufficient to bring about intended consequences conjointly with D, either with unintended consequences or without unintended consequences.**
- 3. A's belief B is true but it also brings about unintended consequences along with intended consequences such that unintended consequences could be either anticipated or unanticipated.**
- 4. A's belief B is true but A could not anticipate that during the doing of D, an event E will take place such that either unintended consequences are brought about instead of intended consequences or intended consequences are brought about along with some unintended consequences.**
- 5. A may realize that what he believed to be a reason was not a good reason in any of the cases from (1) to (4)**
- 6. A's belief B is true and intended consequence is brought about and A continues to hold that R was a good reason for bringing about intended consequences.<sup>7</sup>**

From the above points it is clear that, the human agents has the capacity to choose among different deliberations or to intend different consequences or to have different reasons for the same consequences.

### 3. Intention and Decision

Normally we believe that a 'decision to do X' is analogous to an intention to do X in the sense that, 'to decide is to form an intention'.<sup>8</sup> But one can deny it on the ground that, to decide to do an action or a decision making entail deliberation, which is not a part of intending.<sup>9</sup> But the analysis of the concept of intention and how it is formed and work in shaping human action shows that there is a close proximity between an intention and a decision. Both making a decision and to form an intention are similar.

In fact there is much more similarity between intending and deciding. The view which upholds that, the concept of intention is more close to the concept of desire and want than the decision, says that intending to do is different from deciding to do; one does not involve the other.<sup>10</sup> But actually there is some kind of relationship between intending and deciding. We can observe the relationship when we differentiate between a mere utterance of an intention and seriously having some intention. Therefore it is obvious that the argument which denies the relationship between intention and decision, is based on faulty grounds.

Both Chisholm<sup>11</sup> and Joseph Raz<sup>12</sup> are of the opinion that intending does not involve deciding. According to Chisholm, there is no absurdity in the claim that, "I have decided to do X but I do not intend to do X because I am irresolute." But in what sense am I committed to do X? But when we announce our intention, we do not try to derive some kind of conclusion from a given set of premises. We in fact see the fact from a certain prospective and take account of that in a particular way. If the agent is not prepared to take account of the fact in a particular way then, he does not have the intention. According to both Chisholm and Raz, deliberation is an essential part of decision whereas the same cannot be said of intention.<sup>13</sup> At the same time it is also being said that there could be decisions, which do not involve deliberation. I am here being reminded of a drillmaster who often says us to first work then think. So, deliberation cannot be the criterion for distinguishing intending from deciding. Again individuals change both their intention and decision depending on the situation, the availability of new information. So, stableness or firmness of the mind cannot be the criterion to make a distinction between intention and decision. Joseph Raz has pointed out that in case of decision the matter is "closed" and "settled".<sup>14</sup> But this is not a necessary consequence of decision, because there are chances that the matter can be reopened depending on the up to date information available to the person. Similarly it is also true that of both intentions and decisions may or may not be realized. Therefore, one has to investigate elsewhere and find out some other criterion to make a distinction between intention and decision.

## 4. Intention and Action

Performance of some action is basic for the realization of certain intention. It is essential to the concept of intention that if an agent intends X, then he intends to make happen that, which will make X true. It is inappropriate to say that I intend X but I will not do the thing, which is required for X to be realized. That means, when we intend something we commit to perform certain action for its realization. An intention refers to a voluntary action through which it is to be fulfilled or realized. It is for this reason that one is committed to some action through one's intention. This is precisely the reason why we find it strange if someone said he intended to complete his research thesis and then he did nothing about it. There is nothing unusual if someone makes the claim that, "I want to help you but I cannot", for I should be in a position to help and there should not be anything to obstruct my help. But it looks odd if someone makes the claim, "I intend to help you but I cannot". This looks odd due to the fact that having an intention involves a cognitive element in the sense of having an action plan.<sup>15</sup> The objects of intention is basically actions or some state of affairs that could be realized by performing some actions, it would be incorrect to say that I intend to perform an action when I am doubtful about my ability to perform the action. Intentions are performative acts expresses the agent's commitment to his future action. It is different from wants and desires, which primarily give some kind of psychological report. Ascribing intentions to oneself does not need any other external agency. Whenever I honestly express an intention to perform an action. I give some possible chance for other's to ascribe an intention to me. But I myself do not in need

of any introspection to express my intention. On the other hand, ascribing intentions to others is little bit complicated and involves certain amount of keen observation. Louch says, we may ascribe intention to other's by:

1. seeing an action in the light of a situation (and thus seeing it in the light, also of some vaguely defined collection of human practices, institutions and roles),
2. noting the tendency of actions in a situation.
3. listening to avowals of intention and assessing the manner of utterance as well as the character of the avower.
4. noting the intensity or elaborateness of planning which appears to have an action of a certain sort as a consequence.<sup>16</sup>

Very often it is possible to realize an intention in more than one way and more than one intention in the same way, for instance, intention or reading a novel can be accomplished by going to library or by purchasing a novel from the market. This shows a single intention can be fulfilled in more than one ways. On the other hand there are situations where different intentions can be realized in one way. I have an intention of meeting my friend near the department and also I have to go there to attend my class. Both the intentions will be fulfilled by a single act of going to the department. This makes the task of providing identity-conditions for intentions difficult. It also shows why many times we are incorrect in ascribing intentions to our fellow beings in ambiguous circumstances.

When a person has an intention is a matter of conceiving in a particular way an action, which he is committed to realize. "Having an intention has been compared to the initial act of a play which foreshadows and clarifies the subsequent acts of the play; the initial act at the most sets

the stage for what is to follow. It is not necessary that the subsequent acts must have been the same as they are being presented and yet there is such a relationship between the initial act and the subsequent acts that the later would not have the same meaning had the initial act been different. Therefore, man's having an intention is one thing, and performing an action is another".<sup>17</sup> However there are possible instances where the realization of our intention go wrong. These can be number of reasons why we do not fulfill our intentions. Many thinkers like Fleming argue that:

"Intention is something which is not overt, not open to observation of others, which seems to be mental, in his mind or on his mind, like his thoughts, or in the way his thoughts are. For no matter how easily we can read off his intention from what we observe him doing we do not see him intending to do something as we see him, for example, picking up his pen, and there is always the possibility of our being mistaken about his intentions beyond the possibility of our being mistaken about what he is overtly doing."<sup>18</sup>

It is possible to make a distinction between conditional and unconditional intention of an individual while performing some action. Since action is the object of any intention, one has to perform the corresponding action to realize a particular action. It is difficult or may not be possible to assert an intention without mentioning an action, which is the object of intention. But there are cases where some kind of conditional statements appear while stating some intention. Such intentions for their realization depends on the fulfillment of the pre-conditions stated while expressing it. For example, I may intend to meet my childhood friend if I go

to my hometown. In this case the intention of meeting the old friend is dependent upon the fulfillment of the condition of my going to my hometown. At present such conditions may not be my intention. A conditional intention does not confine the agent to do anything unless the conditions are fulfilled. On the other hand, in case of unconditional intentions, the agent is promised to perform the action in the given circumstances unless he change his mind and cease to have the intention. If "I intend to meet my old childhood friend", then I should take the necessary steps to meet realize it. For example, my doing exercise in the morning is a means to realize the intention of having a good health. I intend to do exercise in the morning in order to fulfill my intention of having good health. If this is the case then my intention of doing exercise in the morning is an indirect intention for the realization of direct intention i.e. good health

## 5. Intention and Motive

Sometimes a distinction has been drawn between our motives and our intentions in acting as if they were quite different things. A man's intention is what he aim's at or chooses, whereas his motive is what determines the aim or choice. Ordinarily motive and intention are not treated as so distinct in meaning. Asked for a motive, a man might say, 'I wanted to...' But he may say, 'I did it in order to ...' which may not be a satisfactory answer but both the phrases here have same meaning. When we say a man's motive is good, it is in no way different from calling his intentions good, e.g. I wanted to do some social service.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of that there is a distinction between the meaning of the word 'motive' and that of 'intention'. For instance, John helped Smith. He may have done it out of love, or out of pity, or out of some obligation. Though these are the forms of expression suggesting objectives, they are the expressions of the spirit in which John helped Mary rather than giving a description of the end to which helping was a means. This shows us the distinction between motive and intention. Therefore, we should say, motive for an action has much wider application than the intention with which the action was done.

Motives may explain actions, but that is not to say that they determine actions in the sense of causing them. A motive is something that brings about a choice.

Revenge and gratitude are motives. For example, if John kills Mary as an act of revenge, then revenge is the motive of his action. Here taking revenge is the object, but it is not something, which is obtained by killing Mary. The killing itself is taking revenge. John killed Mary, because she killed John's wife. This describes a concrete past event, and can be compared with a concrete future event. Motives always refer to some concrete event. If we wanted to explain revenge, we can say it is harming someone who has done some harm. But when someone has done something out of good intention, it cannot be explained in these terms. Revenge, gratitude and pity are backward looking motives, different from the good motives in general in the above respect.<sup>20</sup>

To give a motive is to say something like, 'see the action in a particular way'. To explain one's own actions by a motive is to put them in a particular way. This type of explanation is often prompted by the question, 'why'?

The motives of admiration, curiosity, friendship, fear, love etc. are extremely complicated and are of a forward looking kind. Normally, if it is an intention, then we call the motive forward looking.

## 6. Intention and Prediction

There is a distinction between intention and prediction. The statement "John is going to be a millionaire" is usually a prediction, whereas the sentence, "I am going to take my breakfast" is usually an expression of intention. What is the difference between the two sentences? A prediction is a statement about the future but intention is not. It is perhaps the description of a present state of mind, whose properties characterize it as an intention.<sup>21</sup>

How can we make statements about other's intention? How do we know other people's intentions are true? It is possible to find the intention of our fellow beings with certainty. One can understand better other's intention, when one comes through other's actions. Whatever may be the intention of a person in doing what he does, the number of things that we would say about his action, will be the things he intends. Suppose John is eating in the dinning hall then anyone with sound reason would know it as

soon as he sees John. In most cases, we do not only report what an agent is doing but his intention behind doing things.<sup>22</sup>

It is obvious that the person concerned is the final authority of the intention of his action. The question whether the agent intends to do what he does, just does not arise because the answer is obvious. If we want to know the intention of somebody, then it is same as knowing the contents of his mind. It is something purely internal. Hence if we wish to understand what intention is, we must be investigating something which is purely in the sphere of the mind.

## 7. Intention and Description

Philosophers like Anscombe, Davidson are of the opinion that a single action can have more than one description. It is possible to give multiple answers to a particular question regarding someone's action. Suppose for example, "X opened the lock", "X pulled the bolt", "X opened the door", "X entered into the room". Here the question arises whether the agent X performed a single act or several different actions. We confuse whether all the actions done by X refer to a single act or are they separate acts because the individual acts are described in such a way that they mean different things. Is it possible to have more than one description of the same action? Davidson says:

I flip the switch, turn on the light, and illuminate the room. Unbeknownst to me I also alert prowler to the effect that I am home. Here, I do not do four things, but only one, of which four descriptions have been given.<sup>23</sup>

In the above passage of Davidson it is shown that a single act is performed by the agent, that is, flipping the switch. But this gives rise to a series of situations describable in several ways.

Anscombe and Davidson say that a particular action can have several different descriptions. Is it possible to know that all the different descriptions are the descriptions of a single action? But such an idea that a single action can be described in different ways leads to several difficulties. We would not face any problem if we can say, a single act can have several partial descriptions which are individually true and combine to form a single, full description. Both Anscombe and Davidson claim that, "the relation between my pointing the gun and pulling the trigger and shooting the victim is that of identity."<sup>24</sup> But it may be understood that, my pointing the gun, pulling the trigger and shooting the victim combinely aims at a single action that is the fulfillment of my intention. When we view the above description from the point my intention, it is a single action. But when we look at each act separately, they are different from one another.

Davidson says, normally in our everyday life we come across cases of acts, where we are forced to talk of alternative descriptions of actions seriously. But these are also other different circumstances where we describe an action in the light of its intention. He also says to have a coherent theory of action, we have to accept that different description can be given to a single action.

## 8. The Will

Traditionally it is said that actions are willed movements and this theory is called the volitional theory of action. According to this theory of will or volition, the action of raising my hand is my action, if and only if, the motion of my hand is caused in an appropriate way by my volition. The presence of will is the distinguishing factor, which makes the movement of my hand, the action of raising my hand. Thus when my hand moves by being pushed by some external force, it is not a willed movement and therefore not an action. Only when I willingly raise it, it becomes my action.

That action is a bodily movement caused by volition or an 'act of will' is advocated by many thinkers. Even people from commonsense point of view define voluntary action by citing will. But this theory came under severe attack by Ryle,<sup>25</sup> and Melden<sup>26</sup> and to counter this a number of attempts made by the thinkers who support the causal theory of volitions.<sup>27</sup> They try to defend the theory against the attacks of Melden and Ryle.

## 9. Melden's View

Let us examine the difference between, my arm rising, and myself raising my arm. That is, let us find out the difference between a bodily movement and a conscious action? Whenever I raise my arm I make some conscious movements deliberately which give rise to a number of actions. My arm getting raised is something that has happened to me without my conscious effort; it might be due to the action of some other person or due to an external force. In such instances I do not initiate the movement which may

be the effect of some other's action. What is, then, the difference between the two states-of-affairs, I raising my hand and the hand rising? Melden<sup>28</sup> says, the simple answer is, I 'will' the movement of my hand, when I raise my hand, where as, there is no trace of will or the act of volition, when my hand is raised. So I raise my hand, which is the result of a series of acts following my performing an act of volition. But when I say my hand is raised, I imply some causal factors being involved rather than act of volition behind the movement.

Actions are thus the willed movements. So there is a difference between the occurrence of such an event and my producing it. There is a difference between the occurrence of my hand's movement and my moving my hand. An act of volition is involved in all cases of action. We cannot, say, however, that an act of volition can be performed without an agent. If this is so, then willing the movement of hand is not enough, one must will the willing of the hand movement and so on, it will continue to infinity. Someone may say when I will the movement of my hand, *I will it*, that is the end of the matter. But this reply may not serve to explain what an action is and how it is different from other movements or happenings. It explains the action raising of the hand in terms of an internal action of willing and hence all it does at best is to change the locus of action. It coincides with the view of Prichard that, strictly speaking and contrary to the ordinary notion, one does not raise one's arm at all.<sup>29</sup> All one can do is '*willing*' and this willing produce various effects such as, raising of one's hand, lifting a book, wishing a friend etc. In any case, willing is some sort of doing which one performs not by doing any other action, and that is the end of the matter

Prichard<sup>30</sup> says that willing is *sui generis* and indefinable, some kind of mental phenomenon in which we engage. Such activity is devoid of any further description but is different from thinking, expecting, supposing etc, which comprises our mental activities. But by saying the act of volition is indefinable, and lacks any further description, we may get rid of criticisms but at the cost of intelligibility. If something is indefinable, that is also unintelligible. One may argue to save this theory by saying that the act of volition is something to which all of us are familiar and hence will not face any difficulty in recognizing the act of volition that produces the raising of my hand. But the question still remains, what do I recognize when I recognize an act of volition? There should be some description in the mind to recognize this act; otherwise there is no meaning in the whole exercise. Prichard's<sup>31</sup> ideas can be stated by saying that if one is to perform an act of volition, one must be moved by a desire to perform that act of volition. The important point raised by him is whether or not it is intelligible to speak of an act of volition where the very notion of such an act does not involve a reference to the relevant bodily event.

The act of volition is alleged to be the direct cause of certain bodily phenomena. As we raise our hand by moving our muscles, so we move our muscles by willing them to move. No act of volition is intelligible that does not involve a reference to the relevant bodily phenomena. Every act of volition, whether it is mental or physical, must be logically distinct from its effect. Yet nothing can be an act of volition that is not logically connected with that which is willed. That is, the act of willing is intelligible only as the act of willing whatever it is that is willed.

When we ask the difference between, 'my arm rising' from ' I am raising my arm', we find that there is an active involvement of the agent in the latter case. To explain this, the theory of act of volition seems appropriate. By willing to move certain muscles and by moving certain muscles we raise our arm. Here willing in question can be understood as 'the willing of a muscle movement by an agent'. So the willing cannot be the cause of the muscle movement since, the reference to the muscle movement is involved in the very description of the will. So to say one moves certain muscles by willing them to move is not to give any causal account at all.

## 10. Ryle's View

Rule has characterized the so-called acts of volition as part of the myth of the Cartesian mind. The concept of will is one that we normally do not use it in everyday life. It is a quite different concept, and has to be properly analyzed in order to understand it. The theory involved is a faulty description of the 'will' and the corresponding process, that is, volition

According to the Cartesian theory volitions are special acts in the mind by means of which the mind puts its ideas into facts. Volitions mediate our thought or wish and its existence in the physical world. So we need volition to fulfill the process from wishing to its occurrence in the world.<sup>32</sup>

People do not mention what is their volition while Performing a particular piece of action. “No one ever says such things as that at 10 A.M. he was occupied in willing this or that or that he performed five quick and easy volitions and two slow and difficult volitions between midday and lunch time.”<sup>33</sup> People mention their wishes, actions but never mention their volition, because they might not know what to say about it. What kind of thing volition describes?

The thinkers who uphold this theory maintain that, the occurrence of volition is asserted by implication, whenever an act is done intentionally. They say that volitions are conscious processes and hence the agent is bound to know what he is willing when he is doing so. Ordinary individuals fail to mention what they will in their descriptions of their behavior because of their untraiendness.

The second objection is that one individual can never guarantee the volitions of another. He can only infer and predict from the outward observed action to the volition from which it is derived. And only if he believes the overt action was a voluntary not a habitual, action. So, judging other's actions is not better than a mere guesswork

Thirdly, the connection between volition and movement is mysterious in the sense that the former is a purely mental phenomena whereas the latter one is a physical one. And these two are separate and so are independent of each other.

Fourthly, the main function of volition is to explain bodily movements but there are some mental happenings, which result from the act of will. Thus volitions cause both physical and mental phenomena. Now we can ask the question: Are volitions voluntary or involuntary acts of mind? In both ways answering this question leads to problems. If volitions are involuntary, then I cannot will to lift my hand. It will be absurd to describe my lifting my hand as voluntary. But if my volition to lift my hand is voluntary then it must have arisen from a prior volition. Thus it leads to infinite regress, so to avoid this difficulty, it has been suggested that, volitions cannot be described as either voluntary or involuntary.<sup>34</sup>

## 11. Wittgenstein's View

In the *Philosophical Investigations* the human will is given a central place in the discussion of the nature of language and its relation to reality. There is a very strong analogy between the investigations of intentional action on the one hand and following a rule on the other. The latter notion, that is, 'the rule following' is a dominant component in the conception of a form of life in this account of language. Wittgenstein says:

The grammar of expression 'I was then going to say ...' is related to that of the expression 'I could have gone on'. In the one case I remember an intention, in the other I remember having understood.<sup>35</sup>

Here the relation between will and action is no longer seen as the relation between mental process and a bodily movement. Instead, the concept of action, is taken as primary in certain language-games. Wittgenstein writes

Willing if it is not to be a sort of wishing, must be the action itself. It cannot be allowed to stop anywhere short of the action. If it is the action, then it is so in the ordinary sense of the world; so it is speaking, writing, walking, lifting a thing, imagining something. But it is also trying, making an effort, to speak, to write, to lift a thing, to imagine something, etc.<sup>36</sup>

Just because besides doing a thing, we also refer to trying, choosing etc., it is possible to drive a wedge between acting and willing. It is because the concept of acting requires that agents should have a concept of what they are doing and their willingness for it. But the possibility of such a wedge in some cases does not mean that it can always be driven. These are many cases, where there are no distinction at all between willing and acting. Acting is the other side of willing.

In *Notebooks*<sup>37</sup> Wittgenstein discussed about 'willing' and 'wanting' and made it clear that both willing and wanting are radically distinct. It is a logical fact that wanting does not stand in any logical connection with its own fulfillment. In other words, what is wanted actually depends on conditions other than the conditions merely of being wanted. One has to discover through experience, which events are causally connected with his willing and which are not.

Wittgenstein rejected the idea that the will is the cause of the action. He says it is 'the action itself', which is responsible for the action. For the first time he makes a distinction between 'willing' and 'wishing'. I quote:

**Does not the willed movement of the body happen just like any unwilled movement in the world, but that it is accompanied by the will?<sup>38</sup>**

**Yet it is not accompanied just by a wish! But by will, we feel, so to speak, responsible for the movement.**

**Wishing is not acting. But willing is acting.**

**The fact that I will an action consists in my performing the action, not in my doing something else which causes the action.**

**The wish precedes the event the will accompanies it.<sup>39</sup>**

**Wittgenstein also refuted the view that I cannot know my own future action  
He says:**

**then is the situation that I merely accompany my actions with my will?**

**But in that case how can I predict- as in some sense I surely can - that I shall raise my arm in five minutes' time? That I shall will this?<sup>39</sup>**

**But of course, it is undeniable that in a popular sense these are things that I do, and other things not done by me.**

**The human 'will' is placed much more firmly and explicitly at the center of the relationship between thought and the world than it was in the *Tractatus*. This involves the popular idea of human action. The question of building up the concept of human action from the primitive concept of will**

does not arise, rather the concept of a human action is taken as what is primitive and the notion of will is explained by it.

*Tractatus* does not equivocally say that there is a distinction between parts of my body which are and which are not, 'subordinate to my will'. But this cannot be denied. I can raise my hand at will, but cannot change the function of heart. When the former one is in my control, the latter one is not. But Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* also says, "The world is independent of my will"<sup>40</sup> and "The freedom of will consists in the possibility of knowing actions that still lie in the future. We could know them only if causality were an inner necessity like that of logical inference. The connection between knowledge and what is known is that of logical necessity".<sup>41</sup>

In *Notebooks* he also mentions "The consideration of willing makes it look as if one part of the world were closer to me than another (which would be intolerable).<sup>42</sup> And he also says, "But of course it is undeniable that in a popular sense there are things that I do, and other things not done by me"<sup>43</sup>

## 12. What is Volition?

In philosophy the words 'volition' and 'will' are not used in a uniform sense, neither by its defenders of the volition theory nor by its critics. As these words are not commonly used in ordinary language, it becomes essential that one should define them clearly before using. These words have also been used in different senses by different thinkers since time immemorial. But there is a general agreement that volitions are mental phenomena, which

**belong to the practical side of mind as distinguished from the cognitive side of mind. Most of the thinkers differ in their opinion while defining the meaning and use of the word will or volition.**

**The concept of will designates the practical side of the mind whereas perceiving, thinking, believing etc. belong to the category of cognitive phenomena. The function of the cognitive side of the mind is to understand the world whereas; the function of will is to make changes in the world. As cognition is not the name of a separate mode of knowing, besides perceiving, thinking, believing, etc. so also volition is not the name of a mode of willing, besides desiring, deciding, intending, etc. Similar ideas are expressed when it is suggested that will is less circumscribed in meaning than such other notions as desire, intention and decision.<sup>44</sup> Most of the philosophers do not use the concept of will as a faculty of mind in the traditional sense. They think it is one of the mental episodes but they are not unanimous on to which mental episode the concept of will refers to. In contrast to this opinion, there is a group of thinkers, who equate volition with desire, intention, decision etc. They make a separate category of volition in order to make a distinction between the movements, which are actions from those, which are not. Actions are taken as willed movements as distinguished from mere physical happenings. Thus volitions are indispensable for any description of human actions.**

### **13. Critical Evaluations**

The theory of volition is subjected to many objections. It has been viewed as a theory of dualistic metaphysics having some historical interest. It is very often claimed that no serious minded philosopher should talk of volitions. Goldman comments:

The history of philosophy is replete with changes with fashion and taste. A piece of theoretical furniture which at one time adorns almost every philosophical household is relegated, at a later time, to the attic for unsightly monstrosities. Yet the same piece, the object of ridicule and derision in one generation, can sometimes be refurbished by the next generation, and re-introduced as a modish and handsome doctrine.<sup>45</sup>

It is already mentioned earlier that some philosophers who have subscribed to the theory of volition have not used the term in one uniform sense. There are objections that are specifically directed towards the sense of willing or volition outlined above. I shall now turn to those objections and their possible replies.

Ryle pointed out that, willing in the Cartesian sense is a most puzzling phenomenon of which no one is aware of anything clearly.<sup>46</sup> He also argues that no one except some old time philosophers speak of volitions. Novelists and social scientists never mention volition though they talk of describing and explaining human actions. Richard Taylor also has similar view of volition:

No one has ever arrived at a belief in volitions by observing them. They find no place in the data of empirical psychology, nor does it appear that anyone has ever found volitions occurring within himself or within his mind, by any introspective scrutiny of his mental life. It is doubtful, in fact, whether any such thing as a volition, as construed by this theory, has ever occurred under the sun, and this would seem at least to be a defect in the volitional theory, whatever might be its philosophical merits.<sup>47</sup>

Thus volitions are not empirical entities and they come from the grammatical construal, that voluntary actions are actions, which are caused by volitions. Taylor points out that we are unable to say anything at all about volitions except that they cause our bodily motions, which are actions. He caricatures the doctrine when he illustrates thus – “sneeze volitions causing our bodies to sneeze, are raising volitions causing our arms to go up and so on”.<sup>48</sup> No volition theorist will say that sneezing is caused by the volition to sneeze, as sneezing is not an action, which one can perform by willing to perform it. But the example of raising of an arm is surely a genuine action and his objection that we have no other way of characterizing volitions except that they cause the bodily movements would still hold.

It is sometimes said that, willing is indefinable. One cannot proceed to tell someone, what it is, who lacked the concept of will or volition. Volition like sensations is grasped only by direct experience. If a person is not aware what is a will then probably he cannot be thought what it is to will something. Melden, Ryle and Taylor pointed out that, normal persons who perform various actions find the notion of volition puzzling and unintelligible. Volitions are specified by mentioning the bodily movements

to which it is directed; yet the content of volition is not identical with the actual bodily motion.

Volitions are mental tryings, which always occur in every action. A distinction can be made between basic and non-basic tryings corresponding to the difference between basic and non-basic actions. Basic trying can have their objects these bodily movements, which are under the agent's voluntary control. As Mohanty puts it:

Volitions are basic tryings directed to the various parts of the body whereas non basic tryings consist of basic trying coupled with beliefs about the possible consequences of moving one's body. As one does non-basic actions by doing basic actions, we can say that one wills to do a non-basic action by *willing to do* a basic action. So, we do not require separate volitions for the performance of non-basic actions."<sup>49</sup>

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **REASON FOR ACTION AND PRACTICAL REASONING**

1. Introduction
2. Reason, Desire and Belief
3. Reason, Motive and Emotion
4. Reason and Choice
5. Reason and Justification
6. Reason and Rule-Following
7. Reason and Intention
8. Practical Reasoning
9. Practical Reasoning and Choice
10. Practical Reasoning and Goal
11. Validity and Reasoning
12. Practical Reasoning and Choice (Bayesian Deliberation)

## **Chapter 5**

# **REASON FOR ACTION AND PRACTICAL REASONING**

### **1. Introduction**

The concept of reason is central to all human activities, as it plays the key role in realizing it. Reason incorporates the notion of desire, belief, motive, and intention for the analysis of action. All voluntary actions are intelligible because they are performed with certain purpose in mind and have their own intention and motive behind them. One has to identify the basic relation between desire, belief and intention with rational action. To understand an intelligent, non-habitual action of an agent, one must take into consideration the reasoning that prompts and also guides it into completion.

Normally we use the word 'reason' very loosely in the sense that it is applied to a wide variety of explanatory facts that have importance in bringing some results. All actions are performed in social context with the prevailing norms and rules, which provide the basic structure of human purpose. Individuals use their linguistic ability for the realization of their wants, desires, motives with the help of reasoning.<sup>1</sup> Reason with

**the power of generalization predicts the future action, draws practical inference and plans the agents all courses of action. Reason thus plays a crucial role in the performance of human actions. In this chapter I am going to discuss the important aspects of reason and try to show how it is intrinsic to every human activity.**

## **2. Reason, Desire and Belief**

**A reason is best conceived as a desire and belief in a certain sort of combination. If my reason for going to computer center is to type the assignment, has two statements that is, I desire to type the assignment and I believe that going to computer center will do that. From both the description of the action and the statement of my reason, one can reconstruct the desire from which I acted and the underlying belief, which guided me. Moreover, to know the desire is to know the purpose of the action and to know the belief is to know the means to its attainment. Action, belief and desire are quite interrelated, given the two, the third one can be easily inferred.<sup>2</sup> But knowing only one of the three may not show us the way to determine the other two. We come to know the agent's reason in action, when we know from which desires and beliefs his action under a certain description is inferred. Given the desires and beliefs, we appreciate why the action was for the agent a most appropriate thing to do. If we had the same desire and beliefs, we too should have done as the other agents did.**

The different components of the agent's reason can be taken as premises in a piece of practical reasoning. Practical reasoning is reasoning about, 'what to do' and it involves taking account of one's desires and beliefs about certain courses of action. It is different from theoretical reasoning in the sense, in the theoretical reason the question is, 'what to believe'. The premises of theoretical reasoning are the objects of beliefs. And this is the reason, why the desires of the agent is irrelevant to the assessment of the correctness of his reasoning. But in practical reasoning, desire is very much necessary in the assessment of the person's reasoning. Let us analyze an example of practical reasoning:

1. I desire to go for a movie.
2. Going to city by the university bus is a best means for going to the movie.
3. This going to city by university bus is therefore a good or desirable thing for me to do.

In the above example, the conclusion corresponds to a desire of the agent's act in a certain way, where this desire leads to an appropriate action not mediated by further practical reasoning. The desire expressed in the premise one, that is, 'to go for a movie', need not itself be specified in terms of any particular action as its object. It only concerns a certain event the agent desires to get. The concept of action enters into picture with the second premise, which acts to link the desire with a type of action that will contribute towards achieving the event. Once the desire is transferred to a type of action, and also believed by the agent to

be a means in satisfying the desire, the agent is prepared to act. Whenever an agent acts for a reason we can assume some such reasoning to have occurred. Hence it is clear that a reason is a rationally structured combination of desires and beliefs.

We do often explain why an action took place by ascribing desires and beliefs that constitute the agent's reason. Depending upon the context, we may cite either a belief or a desire, but we must assume that a desire-belief pair is implicated in the explanation, even though either of them is not explicitly mentioned. Desire without belief is blind and belief without desire is purposeless. When we come to know an agent's reason for acting, we learn what made the agent to do it and given the desires and beliefs, the action seems to be rational. This type of explanation is called rationalization. Rationalization introduces an element of justification, that is, by knowing the agent's reason we come to know why, what the agent did was a rational thing to do. And also we see of which practical syllogism his action was the conclusion.

I have already discussed that desires and beliefs justify actions. But does this suffice for the human action to occur? It seems it does not and some further relation between reasons and actions is needed. There are cases, where the agent may have desires and beliefs, which make reasonable a certain type of action, without performing it. The agent may perform the action and thus may make it reasonable, but not because of that reason. For a reason to explain why an action occurred, it is not enough that the reason be present and the action occur. But the

**action must be done for the reason. Reasons explain why actions occur and represent them as rational.**

**Ryle made a revolutionary change in the studies in philosophical psychology. He aimed at demolishing Cartesian dualism and he also in the act of doing it, stamped a new kind of dualism. In arguing mind and matter are not different kinds of substances, he revealed that mental and physical concepts are of radically different kinds. Ryle himself did not follow out the implications of his new conceptual dualism. Others philosophers like, Anscombe, Melden, Charles Taylor has separated the psychological concepts such as motive, intention, belief, perception and volition from the language of natural events and processes.**

### **3. Reason, Motive and Emotion**

**In his *The Concept of Mind* Ryle presented a dispositional analysis of motives and emotions, according to which they are not the internal states but are the 'reason' for predicting a range of overt behavior. Emotions and motives are not inner springs of action. They are reasons for our acts; not causes of our acts.<sup>3</sup> But Ryle failed to note the categorical gap between reasons and causes. He assumed that reasons and causes work together in the same type of explanation. The cause of an action or event, for Ryle, is some antecedent event, while the 'reason' is a law like conditional generalization. What Ryle failed to see is that the concept of cause cannot intelligibility be applied to the explanation of human action. But Melden, Peters and Dray bring these notions.**

Ryle started the work by distinguishing reasons and motives from causes, but he failed to see that a psychological explanation is not a causal explanation. In fact, the two types of explanations are logically incompatible. To give a cause for an event and to give a motive for an action, in either case, answers the 'why' question, but the meaning of the question is different in both the cases. Melden and Dray made a fundamental difference between psychological and causal explanation. They say a 'why' question about human action is a demand for a purposive explanation including the beliefs and attitudes of the individuals who perform it. Dray comments, a motive in one way is more like a cause than Ryle realized. It is neither a law like conditional nor a ghostly event. A motive does not tell us how the agents generally behave but rather explains an action by identifying the 'reason' for doing it. Dray says reason is a special kind of cause. He also says that reasons like causes have explanatory power, while conditional generalizations do not. For him reason is not a cause in the sense of an antecedent event and it is not logically linked to its effect by any deductive nomological law.

Melden's view on the difference between reason and causes is more consistent and radical compared to the views of Ryle and Dray. He says that a reason explanation of an action is totally different from any causal explanation. Why did the agent perform the action? This question implies that the agent's behavior can be described only in purposive language. To ask for the cause of the agent's behavior is involuntary and the use of purposive explanation is inappropriate. When

we ask, 'why did the agent raise his arm?' we ask for reason, and so is different from asking, 'what made the agent's arm raise? Which is a search for a cause. Melden has given two main reasons why a reason explanation is incompatible with a causal explanation. They are:

1. Because the motive for a voluntary action logically presupposes the action it motivates, while a cause must be identifiable independently of its effect.<sup>5</sup>
2. Because the motive of action is part of the way in which we identify the action. 'As motive it...tells us what the person was doing'.<sup>6</sup> For example, shouting at someone for making him regular in his work is a different action, from shouting for calling someone far away.

But Melden's argument is not fully satisfactory in the sense his first reason is inconsistent with the second reason. If motive helps to define the action, then it cannot presuppose the action, otherwise the method of identifying both reason and action would be viciously circular.

It looks as if Melden's first argument is sound but the second argument is wrong. But the second point provides us the proof that a motive cannot be a cause. Melden's first argument claims that a motive can only be identified in terms of the action it motivates. This implies that it makes no sense to talk of a person's motive before he has performed the action. A motive can only be known *ex post facto*. A motive is the reason, why psychologists have so much trouble predicting what their patients will do. Melden is right in saying that a motive must be identified in terms of the action it has motivated. But if this is right

then it must be inappropriate to identify an action in terms of its motive. One can give a number of examples to prove that Melden's second argument is unsound. A man's action may have many motives; therefore, any one of them cannot identify it.

Richard Peters made a distinction between justifying an action by good reasons and explaining it by its motives, to avoid the absurd consequences that all psychological explanations are justifications. According to Peters a motive is a type of reason when the conduct is directed towards a goal and it is the actual reason why the agent acts as he does.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the difficulties, the theory of psychological explanation of Melden, Peters and Dray is substantially correct. The only lacuna this theory has to overcome is to distinguish psychological explanation from ethical justification. Dray thinks of reason as grounds for justification, so he assimilates motives to reasons but Ryle assimilates reasons to motives. But the reasons that are not motives have no psychological reality. They are only the statements to which we appeal in supporting an action. To explain an action, rather than justifying it, a reason must be the agent's real reason and also it must motivate the action. Many thinkers ask why cannot we accept motives as a special kind of reason to which a person could consistently appeal in attempting to justify his action? My real reason or motive for my action is the reason that relates it to other actions of mine in a much broader way. If I donate money for cyclone victims only when my name is made public, then my reason to help the needy, although it does serve to justify my action, is not my real

reason because had my name not been announced in public, I would not have given the fund. My reasons are not patterns of my behavior, rather are the statements which I make about my action. But our motives are in fact verified in terms of the observable pattern of my behavior. Once we distinguish real reasons from merely possible reasons, it becomes evident that all reasons need not be good reasons, and that psychological explanation does not entail responsive justification.<sup>8</sup>

To understand a person's behavior we do not need good reasons for it; we only need the real reasons for it. Dray says a reason must be good to be intelligible. Any reason by which a person is motivated is a good reason for him in the sense that he thinks it is good. To give a good reason for an action is to justify it, whereas to give the agent's real reason or motive is to explain it. But it must be granted that there is a logical relation between rational explanation and justification. The motive by which we explain a person's action is the reason to which he could consistently appeal in supporting, urging or justifying actions to himself or his confidante.

Most of the time we usually do not deliberate about our actions prior to its performance. We go on doing most of our daily works like, going to market, visiting the library, greeting friends, etc. without much planning.<sup>9</sup> But there are occasions when we ask the significant question "what should I do?" This question presupposes an awareness of the availability of alternative courses of actions on the part the agent and without this awareness, there would be no sense in considering such a question. In fact the question also can be formulated differently as,

**“what is the best thing for me to do in the situation?” This question involves consideration of the relevant facts in the situation and the appropriateness of the alternative courses of action, available to the person in the given situation.<sup>10</sup>**

**When one is considering the question, “what should I do?” one is not attempting a prediction about himself but is trying to come to terms with one’s prevailing situation and finding a decision regarding what to do. In the process of deciding the course of action to be performed, one weighs the different possible reasons for the various alternative actions that are open before one. This process allows the agent to consider a number of personal factors, social conventions and the cultural practices before deciding to perform the action.<sup>11</sup>**

#### **4. Reason and Choice**

**There are a number of alternative courses of action the agent encounters every time and as a result of which he has to choose his best possible action in the situation. The individual is not supposed to perform all these actions, he has determine the act, which will fit his scheme For example, at this moment, instead of writing this chapter, I can go out for a walk and meet my friends, see a movie, attend the university cultural festival and so on. All these actions are possible in the sense that, if I choose to do some of them, I can do them. However, they are circumstantially incompatible with my decision to complete this chapter**

before the end of the month. The consideration of completing this chapter overrides the other considerations and hence this chapter writing gets a priority over other possible actions. In course of doing our voluntary deeds, we come across some different kinds of actions to which some of us do not consider as alternative actions. For example, when I pass across the Health Center, I do not feel like operating my eye or heart nor do I think of scolding the doctor for his incompetence. Our values, purposes, conventions and self-image restrict us from other possible alternative actions to perform.

Reasoning is not something innate, rather we acquire such proficiency while growing up in the socio-cultural group. We come to know about the different factors of rationalization, which count as reasons for actions in learning about ourselves, and the society. In our deliberations about actions we presuppose the share ability of our experience in the sense that as we understand other persons in the society, we also expect others to understand us. Due to a similarity of experience the same assumption provides the possibility of relationship with our fellow human beings. In the existing society, each one of us learns that others know our emotions, desires, and dreams indirectly through various manifestations and each of which is open to diverse interpretations. We also learn that others have emotions, desires, and dreams through the same indirect manifestations of their behavior. The social interaction between individuals is possible because of some kind of agreement between our experiences and the experience of our fellow beings. Such agreement is possible between different human beings because we follow more or less the same kind of conventions and social

norms. We most probably may not understand an alien because there is no common social and conventional factors, which we can share together. Only when we understand different social concepts, we will be able to describe our emotions, feelings in front of other individuals. The capacity to identify and describe our feelings presupposes the use of different notions and concepts, which we share with other members of the community. We can understand and comprehend the significance of an action and its relation with the other actions of the agent only when we place the action in its proper context.<sup>12</sup>

The meaning of an action is not an immediate visible property of the agent's performance but it involves a reference beyond the present event. While performing an action, most of us have an immediate awareness of the situation in which we are organized and the action we have performed. In these descriptions an explicit reference to future actions is inevitable in the sense that our knowledge about ourselves is constituted not only in terms of what we have done in the past but also in terms of what we are likely to do in the future.

## 5. Reason and Justification

Generally when we ask the question, "why did X act like that?" the question is primarily a demand for a justification of the action. Such a question usually arises in those situations where we fail to understand the behavior of the agent in question, in the sense that we find it unusual

**to act in that particular way. The agent's reasons for his actions justify the actions in such a way that it makes it compatible by putting it in a conventional pattern. Davidson says:**

**When we ask why someone acted as he did, we want to be provided with an interpretation. His behavior seems strange, alien, outer, and pointless, out of character, disconnected or perhaps we cannot recognize an action in it. When we learn his reason, we have an interpretation, on a new description of what he did which fits into a familiar picture. The picture certainly includes some agent's beliefs and attitudes: perhaps also goals, ends, principles, general character traits, virtues, or vices. Beyond this, the re-description of an action afforded by a reason may place the action in a wider social economic, linguistic or evaluative context. To learn, through learning the reason, that the agent conceived his action as a lie, a repayment of a debt, an insult, the fulfillment of an avuncular obligation, or a knight's gambit is to grasp the point of an action in its setting of rules, practices, conventions and expectations.<sup>13</sup>**

**Most of the time we are asked to account for our actions only when the action is regarded as wrong, unfavorable or queer. We understand such requests as a demand for justification for the defense of the action. In responding to the question of the type, "why did you do X?" We either make appeal to justifications or give excuses. Depending upon the context, these justifications or excuses may be of several different kinds. We have to recognize the moral, legal, intellectual, and other imports of the question before giving our reasons for the action.<sup>14</sup>**

**In offering justifications, we accept the responsibility for the act but deny the irreverent qualities associated with it. On the other hand, in**

**offering excuses we usually admit that the act is wrong or inappropriate but discard full responsibility for the act.<sup>15</sup>**

Thus providing reasons for one's actions enables others to understand and appreciate the point of the action. In knowing about the reason for an action one also comes to know about the considerations which guided the agent's conduct in a particular case.<sup>16</sup> Providing reasons for one's actions involves an element of assessment, in the sense that, reasons justify the rationale of the action by showing in what way the action is appropriate. The person's reason shows the considerations on the basis of which the agent regarded the action as *the most appropriate thing to be done in the circumstances*. The fact that the agent usually states his reasons in order to defend or justify his actions makes it difficult to draw a clear-cut distinction between justificatory and explanatory reasons. The notions of justification and explanation often overlap in providing reasons for action. In mentioning one's reasons for actions, one does not only show that the action was performed because of such and such considerations, but in the particular situation, given the agent's motives, desires, expectations *the action was the exact thing to do*. Reasons for actions are normative in the sense that they appeal to the principles of action rather than empirical generalizations.<sup>17</sup> The fact that reasons are stated in a variety of contexts with different purposes, sometimes to explain an action and at other times to justify or defend it gives rise to a considerable ambiguity in the use of the term '*reason for an action*'. Sometimes a '*reason for an action*' is understood as a statement or a presupposition, which provides grounds for acting by referring to a norm or a principle. At other times a

**'reason for an action' is taken to be a belief, desire, want or the attitude of the agent on the basis of which he acts. Davidson says:**

**Whenever someone does something for a reason, therefore, he can be characterized as (a) having some sort of pro-attitude towards actions of a certain kind, and (b) believing (or knowing, perceiving, noticing, remembering) that his action is of that kind. Under (a) are to be included desires, wants and urges, prompting and a great variety of moral views, aesthetic principles, economic prejudices, social conventions and public and private goals and values in so far as these can be interpreted as attitudes of an agent directed towards actions of a certain kind... Giving the reason why an agent did something is often a matter of naming the pro-attitudes (a) or the related belief (b) or both.<sup>18</sup>**

**Even though explanation in terms of beliefs, wants and desires is called reason explanation, it is a special kind of explanation. It is necessary for such explanations that the agent must be aware of the reason in the sense that he should be in a position to avow it for his action. This feature of explanation in terms of reasons distinguishes them from all other types of explanation.**

**Explanation by reason avoids coping the complexity of causal factors by singling out one, something it is able to do by omitting to provide, within the theory, a clear test of when the antecedent conditions hold. The simplest way of trying to improve matters is to substitute for desires and beliefs more directly observable events that may be assumed to cause them, such as flashing lights, punishments and rewards, deprivations, or spoken commands and instructions. But perhaps it is now obvious to almost every one that a theory of action inspired by this idea has no chance of explaining complex**

behavior unless it succeeds in inferring or constructing the pattern of thoughts or emotions of the agent.<sup>19</sup>

According to Davidson, reasons for action are to be understood in terms of pro-attitudes and beliefs of the agent. This analysis of reasons for action is grounded in a utilitarian conception of rationality according to which “all reasons for performing actions must ultimately be derivable from statements of human wants, desires or satisfactions”.<sup>20</sup> This account of reason for action results in subjectivism, in the sense that all ‘why questions’ about actions could be responded to by replaying ‘I just want to do such and such’ or ‘I felt like doing so and so’, etc. It is important to remember that we employ reasons to determine different facts, diverse state of affairs, alternative courses of action that are present before us. It is true that different situations involve different degrees of risk and uncertainty. But we try to take into account these factors as well. According to Norman Richard

One can by the use of reason, drive a judgement that an action, characterized as of such and such a kind and having such and such consequences, is right (or wrong) from a more general principle that actions of a certain kind are right or wrong. This principle in turn may be similarly derived from an even more general moral principle and so on. But eventually this chain of reason must come to an end, when one reaches an ultimate principle.<sup>21</sup>

## 6. Reason and Rule-Following

We shall now make an attempt to clarify the ways in which intentions and rules are involved in practical reasoning. Recalling the distinction between constitutive rules and regulative rules, we may say that *the constitutive rules function as reasons for actions* in the sense that, in order to be seen as performing an action of a certain sort, one has to take the help of certain rules, which constitute that specific activity. For example, in order to greet one's teacher, the student has to follow the rules, which define greeting behavior in the community. The behavior of a person is explicated and seen as meaningful, appropriate in terms of the constitutive rules. This is particularly so in case of actions, which are performed in the constitutional contexts because the rule-guided behavior is intelligible only in terms of the rules that constitute the action. The alternative interpretations of actions in such contexts arise due to the open-ended character of the rules. The regulative rules play a slightly different role in practical reasoning. They function as normative pressures on the person by either making certain actions obligatory or prohibited for him. To use the terminology of Joseph Raz, regulative rules function as mandatory or exclusionary reason for actions in which the agent considers them as reason for certain kind of action

Following rigid rules in the performance of human actions involves difficulties in resolving different life situations. Rule following behavior of the agent restricts his action into a particular pattern and thereby weakens the human capacity to creativeness. There are also

difficulties in applying utilitarian criteria of rationality,<sup>22</sup> for the consequences of actions are quite indefinite and unforeseeable. On occasions when we are offering reasons for actions, we are not necessarily showing that the actions are rational but are just trying to make the actions intelligible to others. It is generally assumed that a rational action makes sense and perhaps a totally irrational action does not make any sense. But the notion of intelligibility of actions wants and desires etc. is much wider than that of their rationality. This should be evident from the fact that there is a fairly large number of actions over which the rationality-irrationality distinction simply does not apply. It would be quite inappropriate to ask whether chewing a gum, writing a poem or painting a picture in moonlight or listening to a musical concert are rational or irrational actions. And yet within these activities too, one could give reasons for action, for example, the agent striving towards perfection in his art may use the notion of beauty of moon to give reasons for doing his creative work in a particular way. A child may tell exercise of the mouth is the reason for his chewing the gum. As Weston has pointed out,

Having reasons for pursuing an activity, where this does not involve reference to external goals, is being able to give oneself to it that is, to act solely for reasons intelligible within that activity. Giving reasons for one's involvement in it will be describing the activity in a particular way, which description will involve the ability to apply certain terms to what one does.<sup>23</sup>

The point that is being made here is that the question of relation between reasons and actions cannot be adequately answered without taking into

account the concrete cultural practices in which individuals participate. The possibility of an action being seen as meaningful or intelligible depends on the underlying rules, norms and social practices, which are public and should be intelligible to the other members of the society. It is due to the share ability of these norms that we do not need to ask people to explain their conduct when they engage in most of the routine activities. We do not ordinarily ask a university teacher, "why do you teach to the student?" though we might ask him such a question if he was going to address a private group outside the university. These questions are not asked because the answers to them are taken for granted and are implicit in the very concept of university teacher. We learn the meaning of the term, 'University Teacher' by knowing the functions that are performed by a university teacher within the university. Since the meaning is taken for granted, those who raised questions about the meaning of the term can be regarded as queer or perhaps 'sick'.<sup>24</sup> But such sharp reactions are possible only in a well-ordered society. In periods of quick transition or value crisis, the sense of uncertainty dominates in the society. The famous Cartesian example of the moral dilemma of a young man who was in doubt whether to join the free French resistance forces or to stay back and look after his ailing widowed mother, is a dilemma which does not arise in ordinary or normal times but in extra-ordinary circumstances.<sup>25</sup> Usually we are guided by the common practices and values of our culture. Even if we are dissenters, our new values emerge out of a critique of the existing culture, values and practices. Richard Norman says:

**Any human society will inevitably possess:**

- 1. Concepts which serve to identify certain basic human needs...**
- 2. Concepts, which are needed in order to determine how much importance is to be attached to these needs in relation to other human satisfactions and to the different satisfactions in relation to one another. Primarily these concepts would have to offer a view of man...**
- 3. Concepts, which are needed in order to determine how much importance is to be attached to human needs and satisfactions in general in relation to the non-human world...**
- 4. Concepts which offer ways of seeing one's relationship to other human beings in our culture, there include concepts such as 'honesty', 'justice', 'duty', 'respect', but also concepts such as 'independence', 'nobility', self-affirmation, as well as those which refer to more specific relationships (family relationships, institutional roles, sexual relationships, etc ) \***

It is within the above mentioned normative concepts that human beings take note of the facts of the situation, and frame alternative plans of action, by taking into consideration the different means. There are occasions when the agent has to deliberate before performing the action and there are also some other occasions when prior sketch of the action is not so important. In any case, an agent can have reasons for his actions even in circumstances where he had not carefully considered the reasons before performing the action.

## **7. Reason and Intention**

**The concept of intention is integral to the notion of agency. If a piece of behavior is intentional, and then there is something the agent does that**

is, an action. Throwing a piece of a stone is an action if the agent throws it intentionally. But even though intention is sufficient for agency, intentionally is not necessary, for we may also perform an action unintentionally. Are mistakes not precisely unintentional actions? This is a very obvious correct statement but it does not follow that intention is one on the basis of which we can distinguish action from non-action. Normally our unintentionally doing one thing is invariably accompanied by my intentionally doing another. Every action can be described as intentional (under an aspect that makes it true). An action will satisfy many descriptions; where the statements of intentionality is relative to some.<sup>27</sup>

The event 'E' is an action if and only if there exists at least one description such that, when substituted into an intentional sentence, a truth results. If a movement satisfies no intentional description, then it fails to count as an action.

Some protest on the point that, the criterion for action in terms of intention is an attempt to illuminate the already obscure by the mere obscure. In fact, this is not itself a good objection, if the criterion successfully articulates a significant conceptual connection. But it is a fair question to ask what is involved in bodily movements being intentional. Acting intentionally is intimately related to acting for a reason. When I open the book, I do it for a reason, perhaps to read the book. But no reason can be ascribed to the reflexive bodily movements. When I do something, I do it for a reason, even when my reason was just that I wanted to do it. The notion of reason is like the notion of

intention. An agent has a reason to perform an action only under certain of its descriptions. The term, 'done for reason' and 'done intentionally' both mean the same thing.

Intentions also function as reasons for actions in which the agent's commitment to realize certain ends make him consider the means for achieving those ends. It would be relevant here to recall the distinction between *the direct and indirect* intentions to appreciate the way in which intention function as reasons for actions. The direct intention to meet my parents is a reason for the formation and realization of the indirect intention of going to my hometown. Nevertheless, it may be pointed out that the direct intention of meeting my parents by itself is not a reason for meeting my parents but it certainly is a reason for going to my hometown. The point is that *all intentions are not necessarily reasons for actions*, only some of them are. Similarly, the reasons for conditional intentions are less strong than the reasons for unconditional intentions

If we do not succeed in providing reasons for all our actions is due to the fact that, we do not keep on deliberating indefinitely but terminate our reasoning at some stage, a stage beyond which we do not provide or look for further reasons. Nevertheless, the reasons, purposes, intentions, norms, and values of our action enable others to understand and interpret our actions. In demanding and providing reasons for actions, we assume the agent to be rational, and whenever the rationality of the agent is suspect we usually take recourse to quasi-rational explanations

## 8. Practical Reasoning

Practical reasoning is a form of reasoning leads the agent to action rather than truth. A successful practical reasoning or deliberation is one by which we committed to a course of action. Aristotle is the first thinker in the history of philosophy to discuss the nature of practical reasoning. His view of practical reasoning is expressed in what he called practical syllogism and has much relevance even today. In *Nicomachean Ethics* he says:

(In practical syllogism) one of the premises the universal is a current belief, while the other involves particular facts which fall within the domain of sense perception. When (two) premises are combined into one The soul is thereupon bound to affirm the conclusion, and if the premises involve action for example, if (the premises) are 'Everything sweet ought to be tasted' and this thing before me is sweet ('this thing' perceived as an individual particular object), a man who is able (to taste) and is not prevented is bound to act accordingly at once <sup>28</sup>

According to some philosophers, the conclusion of the above passage is really an action, although it is logically a practical inference of a judgement. The correct interpretation of Aristotle's view on practical syllogism depends upon how we understand the notion of reasoning as such. A more complicated account of deliberation is seen in the following remark:

**We deliberate not about ends but about the means to attain ends...we take the end for granted, and then consider in what manner and by what means it can be realized. If it becomes apparent that there is more than one means by which it can be attained, we look for the easiest and the best; if it can be realized by one means only, we consider in what manner it can be realized by that means and how that means can be achieved in its turn. We continue that process until we come to the first link in the chain of causation, which is the last step in the order of discovery....**<sup>29</sup>

This remark implies that the concept of practical reasoning is far more complicated than suggested in the passage from Aristotle about practical syllogism. This view can be more clearly put in the following way:

- (1) The goal G has to be achieved.
- (2) Doing A will bring about G.
- (3) Doing B will bring about G.
- (4) Doing A is easier and better than doing B.
- (5) Doing X is the only way to bring about A.
- (6) It is possible for me to do X.
- (7) So, I will do X.

## **9. Practical Reasoning and Choice**

It is very clear that the conclusion of the above argument and is a choice (*proairesis*) has direct relation to action. Aristotle seems to think that its relation to action is somewhat indirect, i.e. first it generates a desire, which brings about action. However, some commentators have pointed out that choice is probably not the best word to describe what Aristotle

had in mind in using the Greek word *proairesis*. “Burnet says that ‘proairesis is really what we call the will’, and Hardie, who explicitly adopts Prichard’s theory of action, apparently holds a similar view”.<sup>30</sup> So to describe Aristotle’s view of deliberation (reasoning) as choice is not appropriate. Choice always implies number of alternatives. However, when one finds only one way to realize the goal, he may end his decision without actually making any choice. In addition, when the agent considers that there is only one way to achieve the end, he might not consider any alternative at all. So in the strict sense, no choice is involved, in such inferences.

Usually speaking, more than minimal rational consideration is not necessary for choosing and deciding, for choice and decisions can be made capriciously i.e. without any careful consideration of reasons. However, when no consideration of ends is made, there is no proper choice or decision, only at best an intention is formed. To decide or to choose is, of course, to form an intention but all intentions are not formed by way of a decision or choice. It is only when an intention is formed in a special way, when it results from a process of decision making, a decision is properly made.

Choosing to do an action A is explicitly deciding to do A in preference to some alternative action. Schematically, the reasoning in a choice has the following steps:

- (1) I will bring about the end E.
- (2) Doing D will bring about E.

- (3) Doing  $D_1$  will bring about E.
- (4) I cannot do both D and  $D_1$ .
- (5) Shall I do D or shall I do  $D_1$ ?
- (6) I will do D.

Most actual deliberations including the above type would include others steps as well, since no reasons for preferring D to  $D_1$  are represented here. Of course, such reasons are not necessary, for a choice to be well formulated. It can be an irrational one.

Richard Taylor has claimed, for example, that to choose one thing rather than another is often simply to take one thing rather than another. He says:

Think of a man.... Walking through the Cafeteria, who pauses before an array of great variety of juices and then reaches for a glass of orange juice? Here, certainly, is a perfect example of an act of choice, namely, the actual act, which consists of taking one thing from among others that were offered, and doing so under circumstances in which those alternatives were, or were at least believed to be, equally available.<sup>31</sup>

Did the agent described by Taylor actually choose to take the orange juice? The answer is 'yes', in the sense that the man implicitly made such a choice. The man intended to take the juice but not by mistake. It must also be assumed that the man regarded the other juices before him as alternatives; evidently he had an intention of taking one glass of juice, and the glasses before him were the alternatives relative to his aim. If his aim were different, for example, to take two glasses of juice, he

would be faced with a different set of alternatives. Consequently, in describing the man as having chosen a certain glass of orange juice, we are silently making at least the following assumptions:

1. He intended to take just one glass of juice.
2. He was aware of a number of alternatives relative to his intention.
3. He actually intended to take orange juice; he did not take it by mistake, etc.
4. He took the orange juice in preference to the other glasses of juice that were before him.

In the above assumptions we are clearly supposing that the man's mind was not a complete blank as far as the juices before were concerned. The thought of taking one or the other glasses must have been related to his beliefs about what is before him, his preferences regarding juice and ultimately to his intention to take a glass of juice. So, the agent has to act in accordance with the above pattern for his choice otherwise it would be a mistake to say that he chooses the juice.

## 10. Practical Reasoning and Goal

Aristotle says that, 'we deliberate not about ends but about means to obtain ends.'<sup>32</sup> It is obviously correct that we do not deliberate about the ends which we already have, but we deliberate about whether to adopt certain ends or not. An evening walker may have as his end to complete two kilometers of walking; with this end in mind he may deliberate

about how he would have to complete the walk. Should he move in a slow pace or should he make a speed walk? These kinds of ends are not ultimate. One seeks to realize them only as a means to realize some further ends. Since any form of Aristotelian reasoning requires some end to be taken for granted. At least for the purpose of the given deliberation, it follows that some end or other will have to be ultimately described.

However, what are the ends? Are they things we desire to obtain or something else? Aristotle suggests that ends are what we wish for: "we wish to be healthy and choose the things that will give us health."<sup>33</sup> Again he says that the end is the object of wish, and the object of a wish is 'whatever seems good to us'.<sup>34</sup> These remarks suggest that our ends are what we wish for or perhaps think good for us.

When we wish to be beautiful, wise, and immortal, we may know that we are wishing for the unattainable and it would be silly for us to deliberate about how to attain such wishes. But when we wish something we do not regard it as unattainable, our wishes seem to be the same as wants or desires. Yet wants and desires are not sufficient to generate a kind of reasoning we have been discussing. We commonly want or desire many things; we have no intention of pursuing. We want to go for picnic to the mushroom rock or to the nearby lake, and also we want to avoid argument on unnecessary matters. However, these may not be wants on which we are consciously prepared to act. This is applicable for the things, we think good for us. We may know, we should read more but for one reason or another we do not have reading as one of our conscious ends. It is true that, when we want to realize

some end under some description, we do it. However, there is more clarity in an end than the corresponding wants or desire.

In Aristotle's view, decision is the outcome of a series of deliberation, which is different from desire or want because decision commits us to do something. If on deciding to do A, if I fail to do it on the appropriate occasion, then I am subject to criticism. I am being practically inconsistent; I am not doing what I have agreed to do. In this respect a decision is like a promise. Since wants and desires and wishes do not involve this kind of commitment, they are insufficient to generate a line of reasoning that ends in a decision. Purpose also differs from wants and wishes in this regard. Purposes lead to intentions. They generate commitment to act. Therefore, it seems, the Aristotelian ends are best understood as purposes.

In 'Practical Inference' von Wright<sup>35</sup> proposes a pattern of practical inference:

A wants to attain X

Unless A does Y, he will not attain it

Therefore, A must do Y.

von Wright thinks that this pattern exactly fits only in reference to a third person. First person inferences related to the pattern are to be understood in accordance with Aristotle's remarks on the practical syllogism. He says:

In the case of inferences of first person...the premises are a person's wants and his state of knowing or believing a certain condition to be necessary for the fulfillment of that want. The conclusion is an act, something that the person does.<sup>36</sup>

The claims made by von Wright here seem to be confusing. Firstly, wants and states of believing are not premises and an act such as moving one's hand is not the conclusion of an inference. An act may be caused by a complex set of wanting and believing and the act even is shown reasonable in relation to such a state. However, the transition from wanting something and believing to do certain action is not an inference that could be said to be valid or invalid. Secondly, even if the first point was mistaken and the transition from the want and the belief to the act was properly regarded as an inference, the reasoning would not fit to schema of von Wright.

Corresponding to the third-person inference, von Wright is of the view that the conclusion here expresses what he calls '*practical necessity*'. However, clearly the necessity in question is at best relative. Absolutely speaking, it is not that the agent must do Y. It is merely that he must do Y if he has to satisfy his want. A conclusion of this kind not only fails to correspond to the action of doing Y but also it does not even commit the agent to do Y. David Gauthier while discussing von Wright's view, says:

But the conclusion does have practical force. For if the agent fails to carry out the action, he must, on pain of self-contradiction, reject one of the premises. If the agent genuinely accepts that he would attain X, and that

**unless he does Y he will not attain X, then he is committed to doing, or at least attempting to do Y, and that commitment is logical.** <sup>37</sup>

**Let us consider an argument, which fits into Gauthier's Pattern:**

- 1. John wants to be a good man.**
- 2. Unless John practices all the moral values, he will not be a morally good man.**
- 3. Therefore, John must practice all moral values.**

**It seems obvious to suppose that any one who accepts (1) and (2) is logically committed to practice moral values. However if we construct an argument similar to the above one but with a conclusion where necessity is clearly exhibited as relative, then we can easily see why the conclusions of such arguments imply no commitment to act. Let us consider the following:**

- 1. John wants to get an Olympic medal.**
- 2. Unless he does rigorous practice, he will not get an Olympic medal.**
- 3. Therefore, John must do rigorous practice if he has to get an Olympic medal.**

**Now, think of the argument about practicing moral values. Its conclusion made fully explicit would be this:**

- 4. John must practice all moral values, if he wants to be a good man.**

**This statement is a hypothetical one and does not commit one to doing anything at all. Let us discuss another argument in which a man has an intention to achieve a result.**

- 1. I will achieve D.**
- 2. Doing A is necessary for achieving D.**
- 3. Therefore, I will do A.**

**This argument has a better standing as a practical inference because it commits one to the intention to do an action.**

**The statements of 'wanting' cannot be used to derive practical conclusion that leads to action. If this is true, then the Aristotelian view that our ends are merely things we wish for or desire cannot be correct, at least in the context of practical inference. The only kind of practical inference, which is appropriate, consists of premises that taken together with statements expressing beliefs can imply a practical conclusion leading one to act with an intention. Also it can be said that the only kind, that directly answers the practical question, 'What shall I do?' has the form 'I will do A'. Statements like 'I want to do A' or 'I ought to do A', or 'Doing A is the best, most reasonable thing for me to do, do not directly answer such a practical question, because one can always ask the further questions 'Shall I do what I want to do?' or 'Shall I do what I ought to do?' or 'shall I do what is the best, most reasonable thing to do. Since these further questions can always meaningfully arise when suggested answers be given to the practical question in point, these answers do not themselves imply a commitment to action. However, the**

only kind of answer that allows no room for a further practical question about doing something is, 'I will do A'. This answer is an expression of intention and carries a practical commitment to act.

That in saying 'I will do A' carries a direct commitment to act is not to deny that the other statements may formulate good reasons for the act of doing A. But merely having a good reason for doing something is not the same as being committed to doing it. A mere good reason may be used to justify an action, to show that it is reasonable. However, it does not in any logical sense require one to perform that action. It can be said that a logically conclusive reason for doing something may commit one to do it but then, the desire and belief that something is good, reasonable or even in some sense obligatory would not be logically a conclusive reason. Given such reasons, the question whether to act on them can still meaningfully arise. But a reason like 'I will do A' allows no room for a question like 'shall I do A?' to arise, because it has already answered that sort of question

In this section, I am concerned to establish two basic points about Aristotle's account of practical reasoning proper. Firstly, we may deliberate about ends, at least if they are not ultimate ends. We may also say that, all if not, most ends mentioned in the premises of Aristotelian lines of deliberation are not ultimate ends. They are the ends that might naturally have been adopted as the result of prior deliberation. Secondly, the ends in question cannot be merely things that the agent wishes or desires to occur, to provide deductive support for a decision, which carries a commitment to act, they must be things that he intends to occur

If we take both the above points into consideration we can say that a line of Aristotelian practical reasoning may have this form:

1. I will bring about A.
2.  $W^1$  will bring about A.
3.  $W^2$  will bring about A.
4. Bringing about  $W^1$  is, for me, easier or better than bringing about  $W^2$ .
5. Therefore, I will bring about  $W^1$ .
6. I can bring about  $W^1$  by doing B.
7. Doing B is something I can do here and now.
8. So I will do B (here and now)

## 11. Validity in Reasoning

According to Aristotle, a practically wise person will be good at thinking the ways of achieving his ends that would not occur to an irresponsible person. However, excellence in deliberation may be assessed in more than one way. Aristotle says the formal validity of the deliberation has much importance. No matter what virtues a line of reasoning may possess, if it is not formally valid then it cannot be considered a good form of inference. In this respect deliberation is not different from the forms of assertoric inference.

Let us examine the following argument to find out its invalidity. This argument must be invalid because the practical form of this argument has acceptable premises but unacceptable conclusions. The example is:

1. Would that I had enough time to maintain good relationship with my fellow research mates.
2. Successfully praising or emotionally bribing them, by taking out some of my time from other activities will give me a good relationship.
3. Daily gossiping one hour will give me enough opportunity to maintain a good relationship with my fellow beings.
4. Daily spending one hour in gossiping is much easier than spending time in bribing them emotionally.
5. Cutting some time from my evening activities is the only way for me to find out time for gossiping.
6. Finding some time in the evening for one-hour gossiping is something what I can do.
7. Therefore, I will spend one hour in the evening for gossiping

It cannot be said that, the argument just given is invalid for the simple reason that the premises are true and the conclusion is false. This would be unsatisfactory because it is doubtful that statements like (1) and (7) actually possess truth-values. What we can say is that the argument is invalid because each of its premises could be perfectly acceptable when the conclusion is not acceptable.<sup>38</sup>

How do we know that a rational agent finds premise number (7) is unacceptable but (1) through (6) acceptable? A precise answer to this question may not be given until we have a theory of validity for practical inference. The premises (2) and (3) describe two ways of achieving the end mentioned in premises (1). Although premises (4) and (5) affirm that one of these ways is easier or better than the other and that the easier or better way is something the agent can actually do. No reason is given for thinking that either of these described means is really a good one or something that must be done if the end of making good relationship with my fellow research mates is to be achieved. As far as these premises are concerned, there might be some other means say, wishing all the fellow beings regularly or showing them sympathy when they are in distress, would be easier or better than spending one hour daily in gossiping or bribing them. The stated means of realizing the end may very well depend on different situations. Thus even though we do not yet have an account of practical validity, we can see that the argument form in question is objectionable and invalid on purely formal grounds. However, the argument that the above form of reasoning is invalid is not acceptable to all thinkers. Anthony Kenny has recently worked out a theory of practical inference according to which this form of argument is patently valid.<sup>39</sup> According to him, the fundamental purpose of practical reasoning is to find satisfactory means of achieving our ends<sup>33</sup> The following form of inference is compatible with this purpose and should, be considered valid:

John will bring about X.

If he does Y, he will bring about X.

**Therefore, he will do Y.**

**It looks as if this type of inference has much resemblance to the Aristotelian form criticized above. In that form two means of achieving a given end were cited, one easier than the other. The conclusion represented a decision to adopt the easier or better one. But in Kenny's example only one means of achieving the end is cited, where he declares the argument is valid and conclusion represents a decision. Both forms of inference are subject to the basic objection although a given means is sufficient for an accepted end. But it is highly objectionable in other respects.**

**It seems Kenny was well aware of this kind of objection. To avoid this he claims that a practical conclusion is to be regarded as satisfactory only in relation to a given set of premises. If a set of premises are enlarged by further practical premises, a conclusion originally inferred could be disallowed, if it conflicts with one of the new premises<sup>4</sup>**

**Kenny divided all sentences into two classes assertoric and imperative. He claims that the imperative and assertoric sentences do not differ in meaning but in mood. An assertoric sentence has the form 'Ep' and the corresponding imperative has the form 'Fp'. The basic rules of Kenny's logic<sup>41</sup> appears to be this:**

**The inference  $Fq / \text{so, } Fp$  is valid in practical logic in case the corresponding inference  $Ep / \text{so, } Eq$  is valid in assertoric logic**

Practical inferences involving both assertoric and imperative premises require complicated rule. Kenny states the rules as follows: "The assertoric premises must be replaced by the corresponding imperative sentences. The inference is valid in imperative (or practical) logic if the goal fiat can be derived in assertoric logic from the conjunction of the other premises and the conclusion (e.g., 'Fp', E (Cqp) so Fq; is valid in practical reasoning because 'E (kcqpq)' entails 'Ep')".<sup>42</sup>

Kenny aimed at providing a formal justification for inferences that accord with what he regards as the fundamental purpose of practical inference, that is, finding satisfactory means of achieving our ends. It tells us that, if we have an end E and know that doing A is sufficient for E, then we may adopt the fiat 'F (I do A)'. However a practical conclusion is inferred this way is not acceptable absolutely. It is acceptable only in relation to stated premises. If those premises are supported by further fiats, the conclusion originally inferred may be ruled out. Therefore, formally, this requires reconsideration of Kenny's rules as formulated above. We must add that a practical conclusion is inferable from a set of premises 'P' only when the conclusion is consistent with all premises of 'P'. This addition, which Kenny clearly accepts, makes it clear that, as far as his logic is concerned, a practical conclusion is acceptable only in relation to a given set of premises. We cannot reject such a conclusion from the premises supporting it.

It seems the last feature of Kenny's theory is seriously inadequate for the basic task of practical reasoning. This task is to locate practical conclusions that are worthy of being derived. But the mere fact that the

practical conclusion is derivable, by Kenny's logic, from premises we accept is patently insufficient to show that it has this feature. If a set of premises specifies two incompatible means to the given end, Kenny's logic allows us to infer incompatible fiats.

Kenny's theory is in need of additional practical rules for arriving at a decision. His logic is of little use for serious practical reasoning without some higher order rules, but Kenny does not provide any such higher rule of any kind. If we strict to Kenny's principle, we cannot prove that the inference is valid. So a quite different approach to practical inference is necessary to work out a satisfactory system of practical reasoning.

From the discussions on Kenny's theory, one important question arises. If the rules of Kenny's theory of practical inference are rejected, then what should be said regarding the formal validity of practical syllogism conforming Kenny's pattern? Consider the following example:

I will complete my Ph.D. program.

If I write eight hours daily, I will complete the program

Therefore, I will write eight hours daily.

Should we regard the form of this argument as a valid pattern of inference? No, the argument of this form cannot be regarded as a valid deductive inference because it commits the fallacy of affirming the consequent.

If such a form of deductive argument is fallacious, then how to account for a valid practical inference? Let us consider the general rules of deliberation, to answer this question. Deliberation is a process of practical inference. In most cases it is a practical inference, but in some cases the decision reached is a deductive consequence of the reasons considered. See the example:

I want to complete my Ph.D. work.

I can complete it only if I am sincere.

Therefore, I will be sincere.

The deliberation exhibited here constitutes a practical argument and the reasons given are thus appropriately considered premises. However, not all deliberations, leads to a decision that appears to be a deductive consequence of the given reason. Such cases can be very easily observed, when there is a choice in the decision, how to achieve some purpose P. Alternative courses of action come to mind, all of which would be sufficient for realizing that purpose. One alternative may be easier or better than others. If no other better alternative comes to mind, the agent may decide to adopt one course of action in preference to others. Although, in his decision, his choice is clearly motivated by reasons, it seems clear that his decision is not a deductive consequence of any reasons he actually considered. His choice seems, in fact, logically a free step. It is not inferred from anything

If all the decisions are not inferred from the reasons that prompt them, then we must be careful not to interpret the conclusion of the argument (so, I will do such and such) as an infallible sign of an inference. It is no doubt tempting to accept such an interpretation, but we can reject it because a decision is made on the basis of certain reasons without being deduced. Therefore, the above example need not be interpreted as a practical inference, in the strict sense. It may be viewed as a process of making a decision on the basis of certain reasons.<sup>43</sup>

We must discuss the concept of preference in order to understand what makes the decision inevitable on the basis of certain reasons. Supposing a person wants to bring about a goal G and knows that he will bring about G, if he does something A. If he is rational, he should at least consider whether he prefers A to not-A. After all, apart from bringing G, the action A may have repugnant consequences. Wilfrid Sellars,<sup>44</sup> mentions a minimal account of preferences, which relates to intentions. He represents intentions in a canonical notion and it will be useful to use his notion in explaining his idea of preference.

According to Sellars,<sup>45</sup> if an agent prefers a state of affairs A to a state of affair B, then if he considers both A and B to be relevant to his interests, but incapable of being jointly realized, then he will intend (A & ~ B). If under these conditions, the agent does intend (A & ~ B), we can say that he prefers A to B. To this Sellars adds that the agent preference A to B is nevertheless compatible with S's preference B & C to A & C. Sellars's account of preference as he himself admits is a thin

one, but it provides enough logical information for the analysis of important cases of deliberation.

Suppose that an agent intends to bring about an end E and knows only that doing A will bring about E. To decide an appropriate course of action, he must at least consider whether he prefers doing A to doing  $\sim A$ . Suppose he prefers to do A, then given the above account of preference he will form the intention  $(A \ \& \ \sim \sim A)$  which is equivalent to (A). This will count as a decision that will realize his purpose; (I bring about E). It is important to note that the intention (A) need not be based on the coming intention, (I bring about E) in any logical sense. It concerns an action by contributing its intention or purpose, which could be purely accidental one. If the agent simply found the action A intrinsically preferable to ' $\sim A$ ', the decision (A) would not in anyway be derived from his purpose, that is, we should not have a practical inference that makes the use of the given premises. The reason would lead the agent to raise a practical question; the answer to it is not derived or inferred from anything at all. To say that the decision was based on these reasons would only mean that they prompted the practical inference, given that the agent's preferences led to that decision

Let us consider an example of genuine practical inference, which is more complicated but worth discussing. Suppose a person intends P (Gi) [Here I am using P (Gi) as short for P (I will bring about G)] and realizes that the end G can be brought about by doing either B or C. Also suppose B and C are known to be the only alternatives, so that

realizing  $P(G_i)$  implies doing B or doing C but not doing both together. Therefore, the agent thinks either  $P(B \ \& \ \sim C)$  or  $P(C \ \& \ \sim B)$ . If he prefers B to C, he will intend  $P(B \ \& \ \sim C)$  in which his practical reasoning made fully explicit might take the following form. <sup>46</sup>

1.  $P(G_i)$  (Premise)
2. B implies  $G_i$  (Premise)
3. C implies  $G_i$  (Premise)
4.  $G_i$  implies  $(B \text{ or } C) \ \& \ \sim (B \ \& \ C)$ , (Premise)
5. Therefore  $G_i$  implies  $(B \ \& \ \sim C) \text{ or } (C \ \& \ \sim B)$  (From step 4)
6. Therefore  $P[(B \ \& \ \sim C) \text{ or } (C \ \& \ \sim B)]$  (From step 1 & 5)
7.  $P(B \ \& \ \sim C) \text{ or } P(C \ \& \ \sim B)$ ? (Practical question)
8.  $P(B \ \& \ \sim C)$  (Expression of choice)
9. Therefore  $P(B)$  (From step 9)

If valid practical inference is parallel to valid assertoric inference the entire deliberation is in a sense valid. But there is an important gap in the inference. This inference leads to a complex intention that merely prompts a practical question and the answer given to this question is logically unsupported by anything stated in the premises. As far as the steps in the above reasoning are concerned, the step (8) could have been evoked by a momentary preference that is not properly considered. Since the final conclusion is inferred from this possibly questionable premises, the actual inference supporting that conclusion is simply this

$P(B \ \& \ \sim C)$

## So, P (B)

Under what conditions the statements of the form P (X) is rationally justified? According to Sellars one condition under which they are justified is, when they are validly derivable from other P-statements.<sup>47</sup> This kind of justification is of course, relative or conditional. If P (X) is validly inferred from P (Y), then P (X) is justified only if P (Y) is justified. Since the question whether P (Y) is justified can be raised in just the way that the question about P (X) is raised, it appears that we are faced with two alternatives.

(a) Either P-statements can be validly derived from statements other than P-statements. For examples, Indicative Premises need no practical justification.

Or

(b) P-statements can be justified at least in some cases without deriving from anything at all.

Here the alternative (b) is more promising Aristotle holds that some end must always be taken for granted in deliberation He also held that all rational beings have a single ultimate end, namely, *of being happy*. Eventually this fundamental end can have no practical justification He held the view that practical justification is nothing other than a proof that something contributes towards this end Many Philosophers have seriously doubted that, we all have one fundamental end, and some have even doubted that, there is any end we all have throughout in our lives Thus the idea that, most lower level intentions are justifiable only

because they are derivable from one or more fundamental intentions that cannot themselves be justified.

Sellars has argued that there is a form of practical reasoning in which we adopt ends or fairly high-level intentions, without actually inferring them from more fundamental intentions.<sup>48</sup> He distinguishes two stages to such reasoning. If an agent 'H' is concerned to decide whether he will bring about an end K, then,

1. The first stage of his reasoning is to consider the available means of bringing it about. Suppose he concludes that K can be realized only by bring about L by performing a minimal action A.
2. The next stage in his reasoning is to consider whether the complex state of affairs A & L & K is preferable to ~ A & ~ L & ~ K. Although he values K, he may find L and A objectionable

Sellars therefore raises the practical question H (A & L & K) or H (~ A & ~ L & ~ K)? If the first state of affair is preferable, he will intend H (A & L & K), which will enable him to conclude that H(A), H(L), and H (K). The end K in this case motivates the minimal intention H (A). But H (K) is not adopted prior to ascertaining the acceptability of H (A) itself.

## 12. Practical Reasoning and Choice (Bayesian Deliberation)

Even though the view on practical reasoning of Sellars is different from Aristotle and others, it has two important features that is its inferential structure is extremely simple and the notion of choice that it contains is purely capricious. The logical structure of the reasoning can be written like this:

1. I value K.
2. Realizing K implies realizing L and realizing L implies doing A
3.  $H(K \& L \& A)$  or  $H(\sim K \& \sim L \& \sim A)$ ? (Practical question)
4.  $H(K \& L \& A)$
5. Therefore  $H(K)$ <sup>49</sup>

Here the first two premises do not support the conclusion. The two premises only raise a practical question. The fourth premise, which is a choice, is also not supported by anything in the above argument. Therefore it is logically capricious. The only inference in the argument is from premise (4) to premise (5), which is trivial one. But how the step (4), that is, the choice part in the argument can be justified? This brings the Bayesian Deliberation in to consideration.

The premises (1) and (2) are very much essential for the acceptance of the premises (4). If the agent defends his choice, without

deducing it from some higher order intention, the agent will think of realizing K only by doing A. And he will prefer the state of affairs K & L & A than its alternative  $\sim K$  &  $\sim L$  &  $\sim A$ . It seems there is some sort of normative relationship between these reasons and the fourth premise, and by virtue of which it is justifiably adopted. The principle of Bayesian reasoning specifies such a relation. One can formulate the principle by saying that, if the agent is justified in performing any action in its circumstance 'C', then for him the circumstance 'C' has maximum expected desirability.<sup>50</sup> But to understand the principle, we must understand, what it means by maximum expected desirability, (MED)

The maximum expected desirability of an action A for an agent H in circumstances C depends fundamentally on three things. Bruce Aune says,

- (a) The agent's assessment of the desirability of doing A in C is relative to the desirability of what he regards as appropriate alternative actions
- (b) The agent's view of the consequences of the action A and its alternatives and his estimate of the relative desirability of these consequences. And
- (c) The agent's beliefs about various conditions or contingencies that bear upon the consequences of the actions he regards as his alternatives

Since the maximum expected desirability of an action thus depends on the agent's subjective estimate of his practical situation, his justification for intending to perform such an action is relative.<sup>51</sup>

Let us consider a case where the agent has raised a practical question 'H (A &  $\sim B$ ) or H (B &  $\sim A$ )'? Here the agent has no available premises

from which to deduce an appropriate answer. Let us suppose the agent is a Philosophy Professor who is committed to give a seminar in Delhi on a certain day and he is trying to decide whether to take a train or a plane. He believes that adopting one of these alternatives is necessary for arriving in Delhi at the proper time. His task is to determine which of these alternative acts has maximum expected desirability. If their expected desirability will turn out to be the same, he could on Bayesian grounds do both with equal justification. If their expected desirability is unequal, one of the acts will have maximum expected desirability; he will then choose the one with maximum expected desirability.

The desirability of both the alternatives depends on various contingencies of the agent. If he is an experienced traveler, the desirability of taking a plane depends on the weather conditions at the Delhi airport. If the airport is foggy, then he can expect a delay in landing. On the basis of his available information about flight delays, he may construct a desirability matrix that will allow him to compute the relative desirability of taking a plane or taking a train depending the weather conditions in Delhi airport. The matrix of this kind will have the following form:<sup>52</sup>

	Good Weather in Delhi	Bad Weather in Delhi
Plane	90	20
Train	50	40

The above table shows how a man is able to estimate the expected desirability of taking a plane in good weather and in bad weather. And he also considers how desirable it would be to take train under both weather conditions. He might represent these estimated desirability by numerical values- taking 100 to represent the highest degree of desirability and 10 to represent the lowest degree.

Although the table may represent the desirability of either proposed action depending on the weather condition at the Delhi airport, it does not represent the estimated desirability of the outcomes, because it does not take in to account the exceptions about the weather. To deal with these exceptions, we must construct another matrix, 'called probability matrix'. Suppose the professor thinks the chances of bad weather in Delhi in this rainy reason is 70 out of 100. Since the probability is independent of either mode of travel, his probability matrix will have the same number for both the mode of travel

	Good Weather in Delhi	Bad Weather in Delhi
Plane	30	70
Train	30	70

To calculate the expected desirability of each outcome, the corresponding entries of both matrixes are multiplied together. The net result is:

	Good Weather	Bad Weather
Plane	$(90) \times (30) = 2700$	$(20) \times (70) = 1400$
Train	$(50) \times (30) = 1500$	$(40) \times (70) = 2800$

The expected desirability of each act can be determined by adding the outcome of each act. Simple addition shows the expected desirability of each act is as follows:

$$\text{Plane} - 2700 + 1400 = 4100$$

$$\text{Train} - 1500 + 2800 = 4300$$

Since the expected desirability of taking a plane is lower than that of taking the train, the principle of Bayesian deliberation requires the agent to choose the latter alternative, that is, going to Delhi by train

The above example illustrating the principle of Bayesian reasoning is applied to a very simple practical problem. But this principle can be applied to greater, more complex problems of reasoning.

My aim here is to show that the principle of Bayesian deliberation can be used to justify decisions, even when those decisions cannot be deduced from other decisions or intentions that the agent accepts. But

**what we say about the following inference, which comes at the end of a line of deliberation in which the question S (I do A) or S (I do B) arises?**

**1. Doing A for me in this circumstance, is the maximum expected desirability.**

**2. Therefore, I do A in this circumstance.**

**Can we regard this inference as logically valid? The answer is certainly 'no'. If we regard the principle of Bayesian deliberation as acceptable, then we can maintain that an agent adopting premise (1) will rationally accept the conclusion (2) But if someone does not accept the Bayesian principle, then his expectance of (1) would in no way lead to (2) If we accept (1) but reject (2), then we might look foolish, but would not be logically inconsistent.**

**Let me mention the "action on policy" of Wilfrid Sellars," by which we may be committed to the Bayesian principle According to Sellars, to have a rational policy of doing a certain kind of things, in a certain kind of circumstances are to have the disposition to form conditional intentions that matches with that policy If one has the policy of deliberating in accordance with the Bayesian principle, one would have the disposition to form conditional intentions**

**The principle of Bayesian deliberation provides a means of eliminating the logical gap in practical inference of the kind Sellars discusses. If a person has the method of deliberating in accordance with the Bayesian principle, he will have another intention that will enable**

him to deduce conclusions from premises concerning his relative desirability of the course of action. If he does not have such a policy, he will not be able to derive any conclusions from his beliefs about what courses of action are maximum desirable, but *if he chooses to do what in fact has maximum expected desirability, then we may regard his choice as a reasonable one to make.* Thus even choices that are (logically speaking) capricious in the sense of being unsupported by the valid practical inference may still be justifiable if they are formed when the agent has made a suitable assessment of his practical situation.

This principle also provides an answer to the general question raised earlier of how an intention may be rationally justified, if it cannot be validly derived from some more fundamental intention the agent already has. Roughly, the answer is that an intention may be regarded as rationally justifiable, if it stands in a suitable relation to the agent's desires and beliefs.

It is worth discussing in this connection a significant analogy between the justification of an intention and the justification of a belief. In both cases justification can be provided by inference, that is, *one may justify a belief by validly deriving it from some other accepted belief and one may justify an intention by deriving it from some other intention.* The conclusion is shown to be acceptable only on the assumption that the premise is acceptable. But the acceptability of the premises may be questioned. Hence if any belief or intention is justifiable then some belief or intention must be self-justifying.<sup>34</sup>

Here it is not claimed that, beliefs and intentions are not ultimately justifiable; it merely implies that a belief or intention may be justifiable without being justified by some other belief or intention. Therefore the claim seems obvious *that 'justifiable' does not mean 'justified'*. Of course if something is justifiable, it must be capable of justification, but to give a justification for something, we do not actually have to justify every premises we use in our justification. It is generally sufficient to use premises known to be justifiable. There are instances, where a person can be said to know something or be justified in believing it, even when he cannot justify, what he knows or believes.

In case of elementary beliefs such as, 'That is a tree', 'This is a stone', etc. we are justified in holding them by virtue of having been taught to identify the appropriate objects by competent people. When this condition is met, one's belief might be justifiable even if one cannot offer any reasonable justification for one's belief. The ability to give justification requires a skill that all need not possess. In some cases, at least, a person's belief may be considered justified merely by virtue of the relation it bears to the person's past training or past experience and to the situation in which it comes out. Certain intentions may be considered justified merely by virtue of the relation they bear to a person's beliefs and desires. If they stand in the appropriate Bayesian relation to such beliefs and desires, then he is justified in having them, whether he can offer any justification for them or not.

To conclude: in this chapter I have been concerned with the basic structure of practical reasoning. The distinctive feature of such

reasoning is that *it terminates in a decision or choice rather than in a statement of fact*. I have argued that, a decision may or may not be deduced, from the premises employed. When it is not so deduced, as in case where the decision is a choice, there is no question of the reasoning being formally valid, but the conclusion may be warranted by the premises. What I want to emphasize is that, such reasoning may be evaluated by the principles of Bayesian decision theory. On the other hand, if the conclusion of a line of deliberation is deduced from the premises, the reasoning may be considered formally valid. The basic structure of practical inference is not different from that of ordinary assertoric inference. Both forms of inference employ the same general principles.

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## Conclusion

The basic aim of this study was to show the place of reason and its role in shaping the voluntary non-habitual human action. All actions presuppose reason, which includes desires, beliefs, motives and intentions. The intelligent human actions are prompted and guided by reasons for their completion. Reason with the power of generalization predicts the future actions, draws practical inference and plans the agent's all courses of action. Reason brings a.1 action under the most appropriate pattern under the given desires, beliefs and intentions. As the primary goal of the thesis is to make clear the concept of action in the light of reason, one has to take the help of other supportive arguments and facts in order to arrive at the desired conclusion. In this thesis, to justify the role of reason in human action, I have made four important points. They are:

1. Human actions are rule-guided activities, only to be explained by giving rational justification. The scientific nomological explanation, which supports the natural sciences, does not fit in the framework of human actions. Efforts have been made to show that human actions are in need of intentions and beliefs but not the antecedent causal factors for their explanation. The causal explanations only describe the events by some general law, but not the human actions. Any attempt to explain human actions in terms of causal categories is misleading. The teleological explanation which takes into consideration the agent's goals and purposes is ultimately incorporated in the reason explanation, because the purpose of

the agent is explained in terms of his intentions, wants and beliefs. It has been shown that most of our actions presuppose certain norms, customs and practices, which are exclusively human. So, conceiving the explanation of human action in terms of causal terms is totally wrong.

2. The second important point I have tried to establish is the importance of the notion of human agent in human action. Why is a human being called a responsible human agent? Why are human beings the only creatures that have second order desires? Human beings have the unique power of evaluating their own action and behavior. They are the only species who have the capacity for reflective self-evaluation. All the moral values, convictions and obligations presuppose the existence of the human self. The agent has the sense of self, and has a notion of the past and future, can hold values, make choices and possess the capacity to adopt different life plans. The notion of purpose is attributed in a very special sense to humans to make them distinct from other creatures and machines. The whole theory of action will be nowhere if the human agent cease to exist.
3. The third notable point I have tried to uncover is the function of intention in human reason. Every human activity presupposes some intention behind it. We attribute reason for explaining human action because it is the intentions along with beliefs and desires of the agent, constitute the reason, and finally shape the human actions.
4. To arrive at the conclusion that reason is the sole authority for the performance of human action, it is important to show the method or the way we arrive at the conclusion. Practical reasoning is a form of

reasoning, which leads the agent to some decision or choice and ultimately to action. Thus it is shown that actions are the results of practical reasoning undertaken by the *rational agent*.

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