ALVIN I. GOLDMAN

Theory of Human Action

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For Holly

Preface

The prominence of the subject of action on the contemporary philosophical scene can be traced to two sources: first, the extent to which it is intertwined with other areas of philosophy, and second, the intrinsic interest of the subject. Philosophers have come to realize that one cannot go very far in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, ethics, or many other fields, without confronting crucial problems in the analysis of action. Inquiry into the nature of mind, for example, requires an elucidation of the relation between mental states and actions. Investigation of language reveals the value of distinguishing between various kinds of speech acts and explaining the connections between them. In ethics, most of all, questions about action arise on every front. Responsibility and excuses cannot be adequately discussed without an analysis of ability and inability, and an account of the difference between intentional and unintentional acts. Ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, cannot be properly assessed without an understanding of the relationships between acts, consequences, circumstances and motives.

The frequency with which problems of action are found to underlie problems in other areas is a sufficient explanation for the current prominence of the field. In addition, however, its intrinsic philosophical interest makes it a natural focus of attention. What is an act? What is the relationship between act and agent? Is John's flipping the switch identical with his turning on the light? If not, how *are* they related? How is the concept of a "basic act" to be analyzed, and what role should it play in a general theory of action? What is the nature of the connection between act and desire; logical or causal? These are questions that demand philosophical attention, quite independent of the importance to other fields that their answers might have.

The theory of action presented here is intended to provide answers to these fundamental questions, among others, and in so doing to develop a set of ideas and principles in terms of which various problems of action can be handled. The heart of the theory consists of three main ideas or principles.

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First, a "fine-grained" approach to the individuation of acts is explained and defended. Secondly, the relationships between acts, so individuated, are studied and exhibited, including the relationships between basic and non-basic acts. Thirdly, the idea that acts are caused by wants and beliefs is not only espoused, but used in the analysis of the concept of an act. The bulk of the book consists in an elaboration and defense of these central ideas and principles, especially the notion of want-and-belief causation. The central role of wants and beliefs is most apparent in the analysis of intentional action and in the discussion of explanations of action.

As in any enterprise of philosophical analysis, one of the purposes here is to explicate certain aspects of our common sense conceptual scheme. Thus, my analysis of action is intended to capture, as closely as possible, our pre-theoretic conception of an "act" or an "action." An analysis of action would be unsatisfactory if it counted salivating or sneezing as cases of "acts." At the same time, it is also my purpose to develop a set of sharp conceptual tools that will be useful for studying action in a systematic way. The achievement of this goal demands that we look beyond the ideas embedded in common sense wisdom. We must look for concepts that will offer the greatest theoretical fruits, and these are not always to be found in everyday thought and language. For example, although it is evident that acts such as turning on the light or signaling for a turn are in some sense "products" of bodily acts and environmental conditions (both physical and social), common sense wisdom does not provide a clear conceptual scheme for analyzing these relationships. At this point the theoretician must introduce novel concepts, the justification for which should ultimately be assessed by their contributions to further investigation and analysis.

As is evident from the problems that occupy most of my attention, the book is aimed primarily at a philosophical audience. But it should also be of interest to behavioral scientists. First, any inquiry into human behavior faces the problem of choosing appropriate units of behavior. The principles of act-individuation and act-interrelation I propose may prove useful for social science as well as for philosophy. Secondly, after elucidating the role of wants and beliefs in our everyday explanations of human action, I spend some time discussing the extent to which our common sense model of action accords with the sorts of models and theories of action found in the behavioral sciences. At first glance, common sense and behavioral science seem to be miles apart. But I contend that there is less incompatibility than initially appears between explanations of behavior appealing to desires, beliefs, goals and intentions, and explanations of the sort sought by behavioral scientists.

The book is based on my doctoral dissertation, which was submitted to Princeton University in 1964. Chapter Six is a slightly revised version of a paper entitled "Actions, Predictions, and Books of Life", which appeared in the *American Philosophical Quarterly*, V (1968), 135-151. A small portion of Chapter Five is adapted from a paper entitled "The Compatibility of Mecha-

nism and Purpose", which was published in *The Philosophical Review*, LXXVIII (1969), pp. 468–82.

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Acts

1. The Identity Thesis

What is an act? One of the problems concerning the nature of acts is the problem of individuation. Suppose that John does each of the following things (all at the same time): (1) he moves his hand, (2) he frightens away a fly, (3) he moves his queen to king-knight-seven, (4) he checkmates his opponent, (5) he gives his opponent a heart attack, and (6) he wins his first chess game ever. Has John here performed *six* acts? Or has he only performed *one* act, of which six different descriptions have been given? Again, suppose that John (1) moves his finger, (2) pulls the trigger, (3) fires the gun, and (4) kills Smith. Are there four distinct acts that John has performed, or are all of these one and the same act? An answer to such questions will provide a partial answer to the question of the nature of acts.

A straightforward answer to these questions has been proposed by G. E. M. Anscombe and defended in some detail by Donald Davidson. On the Anscombe-Davidson view there is but *one* act that John has performed in each of the two cases. On their view John's moving his hand is *identical* with John's moving his queen to king-knight-seven; John's moving his hand is identical with John's checkmating his opponent; etc. There is but one act here, which has been described in a variety of ways. Miss Anscombe writes:

> ... a single action can have many different descriptions, e.g. "sawing a plank," "sawing oak," "sawing one of Smith's planks," "making a squeaky noise with the saw," "making a great deal of sawdust," and so on and so on. ...
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> ... Are we to say that the man who (intentionally) moves his arm, operates the pump, replenishes the water supply, poisons the inhabitants, is performing *four* actions? Or only one? ... In short, the only distinct action of his that is in question is this one, A. For moving his arm up and down with his fingers round the pump handle *is*, in these circumstances, operating the pump; and,

in these circumstances, it *is* replenishing the house water-supply; and, in these circumstances, it *is* poisoning the household.

So there is one action with four descriptions. ...[1]

Similarly, Davidson writes:

I flip the switch, turn on the light, and illuminate the room. Unbeknownst to me I also alert a prowler to the fact that I am home. Here I do not do four things, but only one, of which four descriptions have been given.[2]

And in another article Davidson writes:

But what is the relation between my pointing the gun and pulling the trigger, and my shooting the victim? The natural and, I think, correct answer is that the relation is that of identity.[3]

I shall call this thesis the *identity thesis*. It has been espoused not only by Anscombe and Davidson, but also by D. S. Shwayder[4] and Eric D'Arcy.[5]

The identity thesis constitutes one clear and attractive way of individuating acts. But there are several difficulties it encounters. In general, if X and Y are identical, then X must have all and only the properties that Y has. We shall find, however, that some of the pairs of acts which are alleged to be identical do not share all the same properties.

Let us look, for example, at John's pulling the trigger and John's killing Smith, which were mentioned in one of the examples given above. According to the identity thesis, these acts are supposed to be one and the same act. But are they really identical? Consider the act of John's killing Smith and consider the event consisting in the gun's going off. Is it true to say that this act caused this event, that John's killing Smith caused the gun to fire? Surely not. It would be extremely odd to say that John's killing Smith caused the gun to go off. But now consider John's act of pulling the trigger. It is certainly true of *this* act that it caused the event in question, i.e., that it caused the gun to fire. Thus, John's pulling the trigger has the property of causing the gun to fire, whereas John's killing Smith does not have the property of causing the gun to fire. However, since one of these acts has a property which the other lacks, they cannot be one and the same act.

Let us take a slightly different example to illustrate the same point. Suppose that John is playing the piano, and that his playing causes Smith to fall asleep while also causing Brown, who was already asleep, to wake up. John has performed the following acts: (1) he has played the piano, (2) he

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[1] *Intention* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1958), pp. 11, 45–46.

[2] "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LX (1963), p. 686.

[3] "The Logical Form of Action Sentences," in Nicholas Rescher, ed., *The Logic of Decision and Action* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), p. 84.

[4] *The Stratification of Behaviour* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965).

[5] *Human Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).

has put Smith to sleep, and (3) he has awakened Brown. According to the identity thesis, John's playing the piano = John's putting Smith to sleep = John's awakening Brown. But are these genuine identities? Consider the following two events: (e_1) Smith's falling asleep and (e_2) Brown's waking up. *Ex hypothesi*, both of these events were caused by John's playing the piano. Now let us compare John's playing the piano with John's awakening Brown. Clearly, while John's playing the piano caused (e_1), Smith's falling asleep, John's awakening Brown did *not* cause (e_1). Similarly, compare John's playing the piano with John's putting Smith to sleep. John's playing the piano *did* cause (e_2), Brown's waking up, while John's putting Smith to sleep did *not* cause (e_2). We see, then, that John's act of playing the piano has a property which is lacked by John's act of putting Smith to sleep and has another property which is lacked by John's act of awakening Brown. Hence, John's playing the piano cannot be identical with John's putting Smith to sleep and cannot be identical with John's awakening Brown.

These two objections to the identity thesis make reference to the effects or consequences of two allegedly identical actions. Further objections can be raised to the identity thesis by examining the causes or causal factors of actions. If A and A' are one and the same action, then they are one and the same event. And if they are the same event, one would expect them, if they are caused at all, to be caused by the same set of events or states of affairs. If we find, to the contrary, that A and A' have somewhat different sets of causes or causal factors, that would give us reason to conclude that A and A' are not the same after all.

John answers the phone and says "hello." He says "hello" because he wishes to greet the caller. But John has just been quarreling with his wife and is in a tense emotional state. As a result, he says "hello" very loudly. He doesn't intend to shout over the phone; it just comes out that way. Now consider the following acts: John's saying "hello" and John's saying "hello" loudly. According to the identity thesis, these acts are one and the same. However, they appear to have different sets of causal factors. John's act of saying "hello" loudly is an effect, at least in part, of his being in a tense emotional state. But John's act of saying "hello" (*simpliciter*) is not at all an effect of this emotional state, since John would have said "hello" whether or not he had been angry or tense. Thus, there is a causal factor of John's saying "hello" loudly that is not a causal factor of John's saying "hello."[6]

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[6] Similar problems arise with respect to physical events generally, not only with respect to human acts. Suppose that a certain piece of wood contains some sodium salts, so that it burns yellow when ignited. The wood's burning *yellow* is partially an effect of the presence of the sodium salts, but the wood's burning *simpliciter* is not an effect of the presence of the sodium salts—at least not an effect in the same way. Thus there is a problem for the contention that the wood's burning (*simpliciter*) is the same event as the wood's burning yellow.

Let us turn next to a slightly different example concerning the causes, or causal conditions, of actions. Suppose there is a light bulb missing from a certain socket and that George fetches a bulb and screws it into the socket. A moment later John comes along, flips the switch and thereby turns on the light. Now consider John's act of flipping the switch and John's act of turning on the light. If we tried to list all the causes or relevant causal factors of John's turning on the light, we would certainly include George's screwing the bulb into the socket. If George had not screwed the bulb into the socket, then John would not have succeeded in turning on the light. He would still have flipped the switch, perhaps, but this would not have resulted in the light's going on. Thus, George's screwing the bulb into the socket is a cause, or causal condition, of John's turning on the light. On the other hand, George's action is not at all a cause, or causal factor, of John's act of flipping the switch. For, as I am imagining the case, John would have performed this act whether or not George had screwed the bulb into the socket.

If the reader finds it a bit odd to say that George's screwing the bulb into the socket is a "cause" of John's turning on the light, we might say instead that John's act of turning on the light was "enabled," or "made possible," by George's screwing the bulb into the socket. We may then add that John's act of flipping the switch was *not* "enabled," or "made possible," by George's activity, since John's success in flipping the switch was quite independent of George's contribution. Thus, John's act of turning on the light has at least one property that is lacked by John's act of flipping the switch.

I turn now to a rather different sort of case in which there is a failure of two putatively identical acts to coexemplify a given property. In this case the property in question is the property of being supererogatory.[7] Suppose that I owe Smith two dollars. Seeing him on the street, I reach into my pocket for some cash, and discover two single dollar bills and one two-dollar bill. I like to collect two-dollar bills myself, but I recall that Smith simply goes wild over them. Bearing this in mind, I pay Smith the money with the two-dollar bill. Now consider my act of giving Smith the two-dollar bill and my act of repaying Smith two dollars. The former is supererogatory, while the latter is not supererogatory in the least. Acccording to the identity thesis, these acts are identical. But since one of them has a property which the other lacks, they cannot be one and the same act.

We have seen that many pairs of acts which are alleged to be identical fail to satisfy the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals: they fail to have all properties in common. A further difficulty confronting the identity thesis stems from a certain relationship that holds between many of these acts which are said to be identical. I wish to turn now to this relationship and to its consequences for the identity thesis.

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[7] I am indebted here to Michael Stocker.

We often say of a person that he performs one act "by" performing another. We say, for example, that John turns on the light "by" flipping the switch, or that he checkmates his opponent "by" moving his queen to king-knight-seven. As used in these contexts, the term "by" expresses a relationship that holds between acts, between John's act of flipping the switch and his act of turning on the light, and between John's act of moving his queen to king-knight-seven and his act of checkmating his opponent. The relationship in question might be expressed by saying that the one act is a "way" or "method" by which the other act is performed. Typically, when act A is the "way" by which act A' is performed, we can *explain how* act A' has been performed by citing act A. For example, if John checkmates his opponent by moving his queen to king-knight-seven, we can *explain how* he checkmated his opponent by referring to his act of moving his queen to king-knight-seven.

The important point to notice about this relationship is that it is both *asymmetric* and *irreflexive*. Consider first the matter of asymmetry. If agent S does act A' "by" doing act A, then he does not do A "by" doing A'. John turns on the light *by* flipping the switch, but he does not flip the switch *by* turning on the light. He checkmates his opponent *by* moving his queen to king-knight-seven, but he does not move his queen to king-knight-seven *by* checkmating his opponent. We can *explain how* John turned on the light by indicating that he flipped the switch, and we can explain how John checkmated his opponent by saying that he moved his queen to king-knight-seven. But we cannot explain how John flipped the switch by saying that he turned on the light; nor can we explain how John moved his queen to king-knight-seven by saying that he checkmated his opponent.

The irreflexivity of the relationship can be seen in the same examples. We would not say that John turned on the light by turning on the light, nor that John checkmated his opponent by checkmating his opponent. We cannot explain how John flipped the switch by indicating that he flipped the switch; nor can we explain how John moved his queen to king-knight-seven by saying that he moved his queen to king-knight-seven.

The fact that the relationship in question is asymmetric and irreflexive has important consequences for the identity thesis. If A and A' are identical, there can be no asymmetric or irreflexive relation which one bears to the other. If A and A' are genuinely identical, then if a relation R holds of the ordered pair (A, A') it must also hold of the ordered pair (A', A). And if R holds of the ordered pair (A, A'), it must also hold of the ordered pairs (A, A) and (A', A'). But we have seen that there is a relation that holds between the ordered pair (John's moving his queen to king-knight-seven, John's checkmating his opponent) which does not hold of the ordered pair (John's checkmating his opponent, John's moving his queen to king-knight-seven); nor does it hold of the ordered pair (John's moving his queen to king-knight-seven, John's moving his queen to king-knight-seven) or of the ordered pair (John's checkmating his opponent, John's checkmating his opponent).

My final criticism of the identity thesis concerns the contrast between basic actions and non-basic actions. Along with many other philosophers, I am inclined to think that some of our actions are basic actions and that other actions of ours are not basic actions.[8] Moving my hand is a basic action, whereas checkmating my opponent and turning on the light are not basic actions. Rather, they are actions I perform *by* performing some basic actions. Now if the identity thesis is correct, then the distinction between basic actions and non-basic actions must be abandoned. For if John's moving his hand is a basic action, and if it is identical with John's checkmating his opponent, then his checkmating his opponent is also a basic action. This consequence of the identity thesis has been acknowledged by Davidson, who does not find it unacceptable.[9] But I, for one, would regard this as an undesirable consequence.

Having suggested a variety of difficulties for the identity thesis, let us consider how a proponent of the identity thesis might reply to these difficulties. One possible reply would involve an appeal to referential opacity (or intensionality). It is well known that certain phrases, such as "desire," "believe," "necessarily," etc. create contexts in which expected substitutions cannot be made *salva veritate*. The truth of "John believes that Cicero denounced Catiline" does not ensure the truth of "John believes that Tully denounced Catiline," even though Tully *is* Cicero. And the truth of "Necessarily nine is greater than seven" does not ensure the truth of "Necessarily the number of planets is greater than seven," although nine *is* the number of the planets. A proponent of the identity thesis might contend that the phrases used in posing our objections also create referentially opaque contexts, viz. such phrases as "is the cause of," "is an effect of," "is supererogatory," etc. For example, it might be suggested that the context ". . . is the cause of the firing of the gun" is referentially opaque, and because of this the co-referential phrases "John's pulling the trigger" and "John's killing Smith" cannot be substituted *salva veritate*. The non-substitutivity, according to the identity theorist, is not to be accounted for by denying the identity of John's pulling the trigger and John's killing Smith, but rather by observing that ". . . is the cause of the firing of the gun" is an opaque context.

The first point I want to make is that there is a danger here of proliferating opaque contexts. Antecedently, it does not seem very plausible

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[8] The term "basic action" is due to Arthur Danto. Cf. "What We Can Do," *The Journal of Philosophy*, LX (1963), 435–45, and "Basic Actions," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, II (1965), 141–48. As I shall indicate in Chapter Two, however, I do not agree with Danto's explication of the notion of a basic action.

[9] Davidson has discussed this matter in a paper entitled "Agency," delivered at a 1968 symposium at the University of Western Ontario, *Agent, Action, and Reason*.

that all of the contexts, "... is the cause of X," "... is an effect of Y," "... is supererogatory," and "... is done by - - -," are referentially opaque. Thus, the conclusion that they are all referentially opaque should not be drawn unless this opacity can really be proved.

But can the proponent of the identity thesis *prove* referential opacity in these cases? I think not. The proof of referential opacity could only be accomplished by begging the question. In order to prove the opacity of the belief context in the Cicero-Tully case, it must be granted antecedently that Cicero is identical with Tully. In this case, the identity presents no difficulty, of course. But unless this identity is granted, it cannot be proved that the context in question precludes the substitutivity of identicals. Similarly, in order to prove the opacity of such contexts as "... is the cause of the firing of the gun," we must have antecedent agreement on the question of whether John's pulling the trigger is identical with John's killing Smith. But here there is a difficulty, for whether or not these are identical is the very point at issue. To presuppose that they are identical is to beg the question.

Another possible reply of the identity theorist is to claim that the properties we have considered do not apply, strictly, to actions *per se*, but rather to actions *"under certain descriptions."* We cannot say, for example, that actions *per se* are supererogatory, but only that actions, *under certain descriptions*, are supererogatory. Talk of actions "under descriptions" appears in Davidson's article, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes." He writes: "*R* is a primary reason why an agent performed the action *A* under the description *d* only if *R* consists of a pro attitude of the agent toward actions with a certain property, and a belief of the agent that *A*, under the description *d*, has that property."

This reply of the identity theorist seems to me to have unfortunate consequences. In particular, it requires us to do violence to some of the things that it seems most natural to say about human actions. It seems perfectly natural, for instance, to say that actions cause certain events. But if we accept this reply of the identity theorist, we shall be forced to deny that actions cause events, and to say instead that only actions under descriptions cause events. This has the unattractive consequence of committing us to the view that causation is somehow *language-dependent*. Again, it seems perfectly natural to think that acts are often caused by antecedent events, or at least made possible by antecedent events. But if the identity theorist is right, we shall have to revise this view, and say instead that only actions under certain descriptions are caused or made possible by prior events. Similarly, if we adopt the identity thesis, we shall be forced to deny that agents often perform one act by performing another act. We shall be forced to say that only acts under certain descriptions are performed by performing acts under other descriptions.

All this talk of acts "under descriptions" strikes me as unnecessarily

cumbersome as well as questionable. A more natural and straightforward way of talking about action would allow us to speak of acts *per se* as causes, as effects, as supererogatory, etc. In order to achieve this more natural way of speaking about action, however, we must abandon the identity thesis. Instead of saying that John's pulling the trigger = John's killing Smith, we must say that John's pulling the trigger is a different act from John's killing Smith. Instead of saying that John's moving his queen to king-knight-seven is the same as John's checkmating his opponent, we must say that these are distinct acts. And instead of saying that John's turning on the light is identical with John's flipping the switch, we must contend that these are not identical.

Such an approach to the individuation of acts has at least some precedence. In J. L. Austin's William James Lectures, *How to Do Things with Words*,[10] he distinguishes between a variety of different acts, all of which would be considered the same act according to the identity thesis. In a given bit of speech, Austin distinguishes a phonetic act, a phatic act, a rhetic act, a locutionary act, an illocutionary act, and a perlocutionary act. It is not my purpose here to discuss or evaluate the nature and justification of the particular distinctions which Austin draws. I mention Austin's work only in order to draw the reader's attention to one example of an attempt to individuate acts in a way quite different from the Anscombe-Davidson approach. I shall try to develop a similar project of individuating acts, but I shall make no further reference to Austin's work.

There are two immediate objections that might be raised to a more "fine-grained" manner of individuating acts. The first objection is that such a fine-grained manner of individuating acts would generate a proliferation of entities. If we individuate acts in such a manner that in the chess case, for instance, John performs (at least) six different acts, we would commit ourselves to a prodigal ontology; we would increase the furniture of the world in an unconscionable manner. There is a danger, in fact, that at any given moment an agent will be performing indefinitely many acts. And such a view would surely be ontologically unacceptable.

This objection is misguided. A fine-grained method of act-individuation cannot justly be accused of "increasing the furniture of the world," for such an approach would not countenance any entities that would not be admitted by a rival method of act-individuation. What, after all, are the acts it would allow in its ontology? They are acts such as John's moving his hand, John's frightening away a fly, John's moving his queen to king-knight-seven, John's checkmating his opponent, etc. But surely these are all acts that would be countenanced by any theory whatever, including the identity thesis.

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[10] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

The bone of contention, then, is not whether these acts exist, but whether they are identical with one another. Though the fine-grained method of act-individuation diverges from the identity thesis on the question of identity or diversity, it would not postulate any acts the existence of which would be denied by the identity thesis. The difference between the two approaches, therefore, is not to be settled by the use or disuse of Ockham's razor.

While conceding that a fine-grained approach to act-individuation would not postulate any "new" acts, the critic might maintain that this approach would slice behavior up into too many units, "too many" as compared with our *ordinary* procedure for individuating acts. But what is our ordinary procedure for act-individuation? In fact, ordinary language is very vague on this matter. In everyday speech we seldom explicitly address ourselves to the question of whether the acts in the chess case, for example, are identical or distinct. And when asked such a question, people are frequently uncertain about the issue. This is not to say that ordinary language provides no clues for the best resolution of the matter. As we have seen, appeals to ordinary language, e.g., appeal to the use of the "by" locution, combined with appeals to relevant logical or ontological principles, provide strong reasons for abandoning the identity thesis in favor of a fine-grained method of act-individuation. Nevertheless, the adoption of a fine-grained approach does carry us beyond ordinary language, in the sense that it does not merely restate a standard procedure for act-individuation already explicit in ordinary language. But this is to be expected. It is characteristic of philosophical explications that they introduce refinements where ordinary language is unclear or indeterminate. Hence, although we do not say things in ordinary speech that explicitly commit us to the view that agents typically perform many acts at a given moment, an analysis of the notion of an act which has this consequence is not on this account defective.

The second objection to a "fine-grained" procedure of act-individuation is that it leaves as a puzzle the nature of the relationships between the various acts. It is evident that John's act of moving his hand is intimately related with his act of moving his queen to king-knight-seven, with his act of checkmating his opponent, etc. If the relationship is not that of identity, what is it? This question is clearly formulated by Davidson in "The Logical Form of Action Sentences." He writes:

> Excuses provide endless examples of cases where we seem compelled to take talk of "alternative descriptions of the same action" seriously, i. e., literally. But there are plenty of other contexts in which the same need presses. *Explaining* an action by giving an intention with which it was done provides new descriptions of the action: I am writing my name on a piece of paper with the intention of writing a check with the intention of paying a gambling debt. List all the different descriptions of my action. Here are a few for a start: I am writing my name. I am writing my name on a piece of paper. I am writing my

name on a piece of paper with the intention of writing a check. I am writing a check. I am paying my gambling debt. It is hard to imagine how we can have a coherent theory of action unless we are allowed to say here: each of these sentences describes the same action.[11]

This passage can be taken as a challenge. Unless we can find a way of relating acts other than by the relation of identity, the "fine-grained" procedure of act-individuation will not prove satisfactory. I think, however, that such relationships can be found. This matter will constitute the heart of Chapter Two in this volume.

2. Act-Types and Act-Tokens

In the foregoing section I expressed my intention of adopting a "fine-grained" procedure for the individuation of acts. But the precise nature of this procedure is yet to be spelled out. To this matter I now turn.

I begin by distinguishing between *act-types* and *act-tokens*. An act-type is simply an act-property, a property such as mowing one's lawn, running, writing a letter, or giving a lecture. When we ascribe an act to an agent, we say that the agent exemplified an act-property (at a certain time). When we say, for example, "John mowed his lawn," we assert that John exemplified the property of mowing his lawn. Mowing one's lawn is a property because it can be *true of*, or *exemplified by*, a particular object at a particular time. Normally philosophers tend to apply the term "property" to such things as being six feet tall, being a bachelor, or having red hair. But we need not restrict the term "property" to *static* properties. Just as *owning* a Jaguar is a property that can be exemplified by John at time *t*, so *buying* a Jaguar is a property that can be exemplified by John at time *t*.

To perform an act, then, is to exemplify a property. To perform the act of giving a lecture is to exemplify the property of giving a lecture. A particular act, then, consists in the exemplifying of an act-property by an agent at a particular time. I shall call such particular acts: "*act-tokens*." An act-token is not itself a property. It is the exemplifying of a property by an agent. Act-tokens include John's mowing his lawn (at *t*), John's flipping the switch (at *t*), John's giving a lecture (at *t*), etc.

Since an act-token is the exemplifying of a property by an agent at a time, it is natural so to individuate act-tokens that *two act-tokens are identical if and only if they involve the same agent, the same property, and the same time.*[12]

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[11] Rescher, ed., *The Logic of Decision and Action*, p. 85.

[12] This analysis of an act-token is very similar to Nicholas Rescher's characterization of a "concrete act" or a "specific action" given in *Introduction to Value Theory*, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 30. It also closely resembles the account of events given by Jaegwon Kim in "On the Psycho-Physical Identity Theory," *American*