

1) Lecture @ CEN

Actions, Intentions & Goals

- Davidson's question in Agency

↳ What is the mark that distinguishes actions (from other events)?

agent

intention — R — event

Q: What is R?

Q: What is an intention? (What is characteristic of its functional role, that distinguishes it from any other attitude)

Davidson-1: Intention is just b-d. pair

Objection: can have intentions for the future

Davidson-2: intention is conclusion of practical reasoning

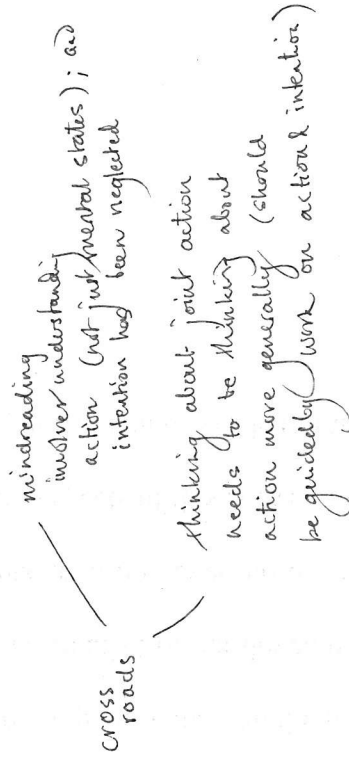
Bratman:

- can't be committed to types of events
- also should see intentions as inputs to further practical reasoning

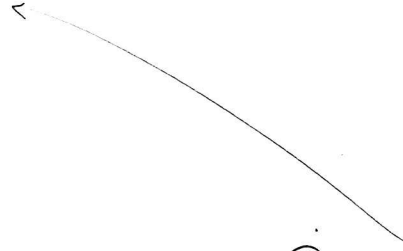
- planning conception of intention
agglomeration distinguishes intention from desires

It's a Tutorial.

But what is the aim & what will the cond. be?



? Mention Velleus's view that our intention is a belief about what I will do?



Lecture: Actions, Intentions & Goals

~~So~~ I take this discussion to be helpful for a qn: why exactly do we need to postulate intentions?

1) In order to explain which events are actions?

— No because could have mere b-d in many cases (see Dancy - I)

2) In order to explain which events are intentional actions?

— No. First reject the Simple View. Then note that 'intentional' doesn't play a very rigorous role.

3) So some events can be actions — even intentional actions — without involving irreducible intentions

4) We need intentions because of Frankfurt's problem about planning exercise — desires change in ways we can predict.

— only when we can answer this qn can we claim to have shown

we do need to distinguish between:

intentional qna shooting

& intentional qna ~~shooting~~ alerting the enemy to my position.

But this distn doesn't require irreducible intentions.

— salty crisps or water before a long journey?

③

So we started by asking what actions are. And we answered in terms of intention. So we asked what intentions are. And the answer to this question suggested that intention is a fairly rare & sophisticated phenomenon — we were mistaken in supposing that all actions involve intention. Rather some are driven by mere beliefs & desires.

Maybe we need further revisions?

Distinguish goals from intentions (= goal-states).

Q1. Can an action be directed to a goal only in virtue of a goal-state?

Q2. What sort of goal-states are there? (motor representations)

On Q1: (a) teleological function (relⁿ bet. action & goal — completely silent on the agent & the structure of the agent)
(b) "teleological stance"
understood as defining relⁿ bet. goal and action.

AGGLOMERATION

Compatibility

$A > B > C$
 $B & C > A \& D$

	A	B	C	D
A	✓	x	x	✓
B		✓	✓	✓
C			✓	✓

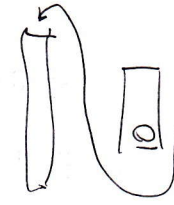
choice 1: A vs B

choice 2: C vs D

If you act on the basis of y 's desires only, you should choose A
(Assuming no larger desires — depends on how you frame the problem.)

To choose B requires intention or other state that is subject to agglomeration.

Nicely illustrated by a face of route selection



A vs B

NB: Ascribing intentions wld mean being able to predict the more efficient action? Not just in this case but generally.

Assuming of course that the problem is framed in a step-by-step way (not as the overall bit).

Lecture chd

④ Understanding action

So we should not suppose that actions are all of a kind. There are several coherent conceptions of action, and arguably all exist.

What can we conclude about understanding action?

Mindreading often ignores this issue.

• If we spare mindreaders understand mere movements only, it would be almost impossible to ~~state~~ see how they could ascribe mental states. It is our actions - eg our choices - and not the bare movements realising them which reveal our states of mind.

• But action & mental states seem to be interdefined - as we have seen

So hard to make sense of understanding action but not understanding belief or desire.

Fortunately we can broaden our acct. of understanding action even further.

Interestingly, we may be able to hold on to Davidson's claim that a person agent is the agent of an event if ~~a sentence~~ intentional description (PFH, p. 46) (see slides)

This is because 'intentional' is so flexible

[more up?]
I could justify talking about non-mental conceptions of action.

(5)

Conclusion

Intention — understanding it takes us beyond understanding mere beliefs & desires

— Several notions of action:

a) This may matter for mindreading + continuity claims
(discontinuity in the conception of action)

b) Joint action: so far have been assuming that each event has a single agent.

NB: Stress that 'teleological stance' vs intention —

can intentionally act in ways that are not most justifiable or most efficient — assumptions of optimality are proxies for ignorance about knowledge of mental states & may ~~simply~~ reduce the complexity of predicting actions