

A New Kind of Action Explanation and The Life of Complex Action

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Abstract

Ordinary action explanation formulated as "I am doing A because I am doing B" is explanation of an action in terms of another action-in-progress. According to Michael Thompson, the explained action is a teleological part of the explaining complex action, which is composed of different parts. Thompson's analysis focuses on the part-whole relation between the explained action and the explaining action, thus ignores a possibility: these two actions can be two different parts of a complex action. I shall argue that the interrelation between different parts of a complex action corresponds to a new kind of action explanation of the formulas: "I am doing A because I am doing B" and "I am doing B because I have done A", where A and B are two different parts of a complex action. This kind of action explanation is associated with the temporal schema of an action-type, for example, X: First, do A; second, do B; then, C; finally, D. This is an attempt to probe into the inner structure of complex action.

Keywords

Complex action, Action explanation, Part-part relation, Temporal schema

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1. Introduction

We can explain our intentional action¹ in terms of another action we are performing and is still in progress. For example, if asked "why are you breaking the eggs?" by another one, I can answer that "I am making an omelet." The question 'why' deployed in such interlocution bears "a certain sense" Anscombe articulates in *Intention*, "that in which the answer, if positive, gives a reason for acting" (Anscombe 2000: 11). The reason thus given, is the end or further intention² in service of which the queried action is being performed.

This kind of action explanation, which explains an ongoing action by another larger action I am also performing, is marked by Michael Thompson (2008: 86) as naïve action explanation. Thompson emphasizes that in naïve action explanation, the explained action is a teleological part of the explaining complex action³. Typical instances of such action used by Thompson, appearing as an explanans in naïve explanation, includes making an omelet, building a house, etc. Complex actions are temporally extended, and are composed of several teleological parts⁴. We can call its parts sub- action⁵. Then Thompson's analysis of naïve action explanation can be seen as affording us a point of view

1 In the following I will use "action" for convenience. Actually, we can also explain our action by mental items. According to Davidson and other causalists of action, a complete explanation of action typically includes two elements: a desire and a corresponding means-end belief. But it can suffice in ordinary situation to give either of the two elements to explain one's action. See Davidson (1963) and Smith (2004). Thompson (2008) argues that want and intention are not "mental items", rather, they are "practical psychological verbs" which is metaphysically the same as "progressive expression." This needn't concern us here. See also Falvey (2000).

2 Philosophers agree on this point. See Anscombe (2000), Davidson (1963), Wilson (1989).

3 I borrow the name "complex action" from Lavin (2013).

4 One qualification I must make here is, the form of action explanation I want to articulate doesn't pertain to intentional action with only simultaneous parts. If an action composes only of simultaneous parts, then this kind of action explanation which explains a part by another of the same encompassing action certainly doesn't apply here. Ford (2008; 2018) points out that "not all partnerships (between parts of an encompassing whole action) involves a separation in time". Some intentional actions are composed by simultaneous parts which can't prepare for each other. And "Simultaneous partnerships need not involve any rationalization of one of the partnered actions by the other: a person may be performing each of two simultaneously partnered actions for the sake of a single more encompassing action, without doing either of the partnered actions directly for the sake of the other." (Ford 2018: 177).

5 The term "sub action" is also used by Thompson. See Thompson (2008: 106).

of investigating the inner structure of such complex actions. For he argues that it is the teleological part-whole relation⁶ between sub-action and the complex action that makes it possible that sub-actions be explained by the corresponding complex action they belong to.

But the inadequacy of Thompson's analysis will emerge immediately if we switch to the interrelation between different parts of such complex action. How are they related to each other? And will the interrelation between them generate some different kind⁷ of action explanation? It is to ask: in the process of building a house, when asked why I am taking the step of building the wall, whether I can explain by saying "because I have laid the foundation" or "because I am going to make the roof"? This will be the task of this paper.

I will proceed as follows. In the next section, I will outline Thompson's analysis of naïve action explanation. In section 3, I will offer a new interpretation of such naïve action explanation, where A and B are two different non-simultaneous parts of a complex action⁸. This interpretation was articulated and given an initial analysis by Anton Ford (2018: 177). This is action explanation between different parts of a complex action. Then in section 4, after criticizing Ford's understanding of this kind of action explanation, I will articulate the other half of this thought: "I am doing B because I have done A". I will elaborate the distinctive character of it by contrasting it with explaining an action by giving a backward-looking motive and explanation of an action by sunk cost. Action explanation goes by referring to the temporal schema of complex action and this retrospective explanation shows that when engaged in a complex action, not only what is in the future, what is yet to come (the complex action or the next part, as action theorists tend to focus) can explain my present action, what has been done (the earlier part) can also explain my present action. Several objections will also be responded to in this section. In section 5, I will

6 Anton Ford (2018: 169) distinguishes the teleological structure and chronological structure of intentional action. And the part-whole structure between sub-actions and the encompassing action belongs to the teleological structure of intentional action.

7 Sebastian Rödl (2007; 2010) holds that action explanation designates a form of explanation, which constitutes the nature of intentional action. I embrace his analysis. Then, I use the term "kind" here to designate the different action explanation I propose to articulate between different parts of an encompassing whole action. This kind of action explanation shouldn't differ in "form" from naïve action explanation

8 For the sake of convenience, below I will use the term "complex action".

elaborate the temporal-teleological interrelation between different parts of a complex action. This interrelation is associated with the temporal arrangement of a complex action. For example, for a complex action-type X, to do X: first, do A; next, do B; then, do C; finally, do D. Finally, I conclude.

2. Thompson's Analysis of Naïve Action Explanation

Michael Thompson starts from some ordinary interlocution, which explains an action an agent is performing in terms of another action he is also engaged in. Examples of such interrogation are as follows:

(Why are you breaking those eggs?)—I am making an omelet.

(Why are you laying bricks?)—I am building a monument.

If we extract the essential elements in the question and answer and glue them correspondingly together, we will get instances of naïve action explanation: "I am breaking the eggs because I am making an omelet." "I am laying bricks because I am building a monument." Obviously, they are of the same linguistically form: I am doing A because I am doing B. The answers, in terms of an action-in-progress, each give doing B as "a reason for action", i.e., the aim or end of doing A. It expresses the familiar teleological means-end relation between the explained action (A) and explaining action (B). Such explanation or rationalization puts intentional action in the "space of reasons".⁹

Michael Thompson proceeds to claim that the familiar teleological means-end relation between A and B in naïve action explanation bears another distinctive mark: they are related as a part to a whole¹⁰, as an organ to a living organism. This is how he articulates it:

"The special character of what is given, in each response, as formulating a

9 "The space of reasons" is a term from Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Thompson borrows this term to characterize naïve action explanation, which thus contrasts with neurological account of action, which puts action in the "realm of law".

10 Actually, Doug Lavin (2010: 177), Frey (2019a: 1131; 2019b: 215) also holds this view. Valaris (2015; 77) names this relation between sub-action (which he calls "subsidiary action") and complex action "the instrumental structure", emphasizing the former performed for the sake of the latter. This characterization expresses the teleological relation between the two, for it says the sub-action is done as a means for the complex action as an end, but it is not so specific as Thompson's characterization. Part-whole relation is a species of the genus of teleological relation.

reason—a description, namely, of the agent as actually doing something, and, moreover, as doing something of which the act queried might be said to be a part, phase¹¹ or "moment"—marks each of our exchange as an instance of what I will call naïve action explanation or more generally, naïve rationalization. " (Thompson 2008: 86)

"The typical case of naïve action explanation is indeed one in which the act mentioned in the explanandum will intuitively be a 'part' of the act mentioned in the explanans, or of its completion." (Ibid, 107)

He thus says the relation between egg-breaking/egg mixing and omelet-making, brick-laying/door framing and house-building, writing the letter "a" and writing the word "action" are all instances of part-whole relation: more specifically, the former item is a part of the latter. (Thompson 2008: 106-107) In this understanding, it is the part-whole relation between A and B that makes naïve action explanation of A in terms of B possible. Thus, Thompson finds the part-whole relation that is internal to complex action.

Thompson's analysis of naïve action explanation thus provides us a point of view of investigating the inner structure of complex action. It surely establishes the first sight into the inner structure of complex action, however, it doesn't constitute a full vision of it: what is left by Thompson is the relation between different parts of a complex action, i.e., the part-part relation. As we said above, as a teleological system unfolding in time, a complex action composes different parts. Then if we switch to the interrelation between parts, we can first articulate a different kind of action explanation ("I am doing A because I am doing B" and "I am doing B because I have done A"¹², where A and B are two parts of a complex action X.), and then find the distinctive temporal-teleological

11 Anton Ford criticizes Thompson conflates the part and the phase of an action, the former belonging to the teleological structure of action, the latter the temporal structure. This bears on our discussion below. I will argue Ford's distinction between a part and a phase, and its consequence that there will be several parts performed in a phase, won't affect my articulation of the new kind of action explanation in complex action.

12 This kind of action explanation admits many kinds of linguistic expression: "I am doing A in order to do B." "I am doing A because I will do B." "I am doing A for the sake of B." "I am doing B because A has been completed." "I am doing B because I already went through the step A." Of course, if according to the temporal schema of action, C is done after B and A, you can also explain your doing B by saying "I am doing B because I am doing C", explain your doing C by saying "I am doing C because I have done B (and possibly A)".

interrelation between parts of a complex action which makes this kind of action explanation possible.

3. "I am doing A because I am doing B" as Explanation of a Part by Another Part of a Complex Action

Now let us switch to the interrelation between different parts of a complex action. Two questions need to be answered: first, what is the interrelation between the different parts? Second, if the part-whole relation generates that kind of action explanation (I am doing A because I am doing B, where A is a sub-action of B), will the part-part relation also generate some new kind of action explanation which we barely pay attention to? I will try to answer the second question in section 3 and 4, then I turn to the first question in section 5.

It seems that the new kind of action explanation corresponding to the interrelation between different parts of a complex action will initially come out in a new understanding of the formula "I am doing A because I am doing B"¹³. In this understanding, A and B are two parts of a complex action and B is supposed to be done after A. Then, it seems that I can also explain my action by saying that I have done what is needed or supposed to be done before doing what I am doing, that is, "I am doing B because I have done A".

Anton Ford (2018: 177) hints at this kind of action explanation between different parts of a complex action. He argues there that intentional actions comprises teleological/purposive parts and their interrelation is cooperative. And there are three kinds of partnership that can hold between (a pair of) partnered actions: "Some partnered actions are necessarily separated in time, while others

13 At somewhere in passing, Thompson (2008: 129) observes that the relation between the explained action (A) and the explaining action (B) in naïve action explanation can also be in this way: A is what is done in preparation for another action B, but they are not related as a part to a whole. The cases used to illustrate this point are like: I am buying the eggs because I am making an omelet. Or I am putting on my shoes because I am walking to school. In these two cases, egg-buying is not a part of omelet-making, and putting on shoes is not a part of walking to school. The explanandum and explanans of naïve action explanation, thus understood, are related to each other as a preparatory action and a prepared action. This further understanding of the formula "I am doing A because I am doing B" is near to the first half of the thought I want to articulate: I am doing A because I am doing B, where A is done in preparation for B and they are at the same time two parts of a complex action.

are simultaneous; and among the latter, some, but not all, are reciprocal in the sense that they are mutually and continuously sustaining." (Ibid:176)

The first kind of partnerships which involve a separation in time can be called "preparatory partnerships." And an action can be rationalized by appeal to a partner in relation to which the action in question is preparatory. Therefore, there can be a kind of action explanation: "I am doing A because I am doing B", both being a part of a complex action and mutually constituting a preparation-prepared relation. His example is "I am breaking an egg because I am mixing an egg-batter.", where egg-breaking is done in preparation for egg-batter mixing. He thinks that this kind of action explanation is like explanation by the encompassing whole action, which gives B as the end/aim/further intention in doing A. (2008:125) Ford's analysis stops here.

4. The Full Shape of This New Kind of Action Explanation

In performing a complex action, if I can explain my ongoing action by a later part, then can I explain it by another part which is supposed to be done before it? It seems plausible to say that I can explain my doing B either out of the reason that I am doing C in a while, or out of the reason that I have finished doing A, if A, B and C are three stages or steps in carrying out a larger encompassing action X.

Below I will argue that this thought is true. This means that the part-part relation will really generate a new kind of action explanation, the full shape of which includes both an anticipatory half and a retrospective half.

Anticipatory Explanation: I am doing A because I am doing B./ I am doing B because I am doing C.

Retrospective Explanation¹⁴: I am doing B because I have done A./ I am doing C because I have done B (possibly also A).

Sometimes these two are put together in an explanation: I am doing B because I have done A and I am going to do C. B is supposed to be done at this

14 This name may cause some confusion: is the so-called "retrospective explanation" just the "backward-looking reason" Anscombe articulated in *Intention*? I will clarify this point immediately after I articulate

stage, after A and before C.

I will argue this new kind of action explanation is philosophically significant. I will first offer a critique of Ford's preliminary analysis of the Anticipatory Explanation in 4.1 and then focus on the nature of the Retrospective Explanation in 4.2.

4.1 Critique of Ford's Analysis

As I said at the end of section 2, Ford says explanation of an ongoing action by a prepared part of a complex action is very similar to explanation of it directly by the encompassing whole complex action. Possibly. For the prepared part(s), like the encompassing whole action, are both (all) yet to come. They are all supposed to come to be in reality after the ongoing preparatory action is carried out. In other words, the prepared part can explain or rationalize the preparatory action because it, as well as the whole action, determines that what is preparatory should be done first. This constitutes the basis to say the relation between the preparatory part and the prepared part is similar to that of the preparatory action and the complex action as a whole.

But still, a preparatory part relates to the prepared part in a different way from how it relates to the whole complex action. This is shown by comparing corresponding two kinds of naïve action explanation:

I am breaking the eggs because I am mixing the egg batter. (a)

I am breaking the eggs because I am making an omelet. (b)

(a) is an instance of Anticipatory Explanation. (b) is an instance of the kind of action explanation by the complex action as the encompassing whole. It is true that in (a), the action supposed to be done after egg-breaking, i.e., the egg batter-mixing, is given as an aim/end/further intention of my breaking the eggs, just like omelet-making is given as an aim/end/further intention in my breaking the eggs. But there are two important differences: first, in breaking the eggs, the overarching complex action, omelet-making, is partly realized, while the prepared action, egg batter-mixing is not—it is just progressed towards. Second, the complex action unites and sustains the egg-breaking and other parts, rather, the prepared part egg-barter mixing has no such unifying function. These two differences suggest that the nature of this kind of action explanation may differ from the kind of action explanation giving the complex action as an encompassing whole.

4.2 Retrospective Explanation

Retrospective Explanation of action is pervasive in everyday life. When carrying out a project of building a house, and a passerby sees me laying the bricks and asks "why are you laying bricks now?", I may look my head up and respond "Because I have already laid the foundation of the house." On the way of completing my MA thesis, and have read the essential texts, I am writing my own line of thought. You happen to pass by and ask "why are you writing?" I respond "because I have done the reading and it is time to compose my argument." Obviously, in such interlocution, the mode of action explanation is "I am doing B because I have done A", where A and B are two parts of a complex action and A is supposed to be done before B.

Now, saying "I am writing my argument because I have done the reading." Or "I am laying bricks because I have laid the foundation" may appear strange for it seems not to be an intelligible, or rather only a roundabout answer to the Anscombean question 'why, which asks for a reason for action, i.e., the end/aim/further intention in doing what you are doing. For the passerby may still be puzzled about my aim in "laying the foundation" and the relation between "laying the foundation" and "laying the bricks", and thus he may continue to ask "why did you lay the foundation", to which I can only truthfully answer "because I am building a house." This also pertains to the anticipatory explanation "I am doing A because I am doing B". For answering "I am going to mix egg batter" when asked "why are you breaking the eggs?", the passerby may still be puzzled about my aim in "mixing the egg batter". As I have said above, "mixing the egg batter" is not realized in breaking eggs, thus it may still confuse the passerby what my end is in mixing the egg batter. Therefore, it seems that asked the question 'why', I can only respond by referring to the encompassing complex action, which truly gives the end to which the quired action belongs as a part.

But what excludes the possibility that the associated question 'why' to which this kind of action explanation constitutes a sufficient answer is different from the Anscombean question 'why'? We can reasonably expect it for this way of relating one action to another is really rational explanation for it puts the explained action in "the space of reasons", while at the same time it is distinctive in that the explanans is not an encompassing complex action as the teleological whole. Below I will try to articulate its distinctive nature.

The suitable situation in which by saying "I am going to do B" is qualified

as a sufficient answer to "why are you doing A" is where the bystander already knows your larger project, the encompassing whole action you are engaging in and he wants to further know why you are doing A at this step or why are you arranging your action in such a way that you are doing A now in the developmental process of the whole action—either because he, as a beginner, wants to learn the skill of doing X, one aspect of which is the temporal arrangement of the different parts of the complex action, or he is not satisfied with your arranging A at this step and want to rationally criticize you as a skillful man on doing X—he asks this 'why' question not for your aim or end which he already knows, instead, for reason for the temporal arrangement of B at this stage or step. And thus, the sense of this "why" question is different from that of the Anscombean question "why". And that I explain my doing B by my going to do C gives the sense that B is supposed to be done before C, thus suitably temporally related to mutually contribute to the encompassing complex action.

This analysis also goes for the retrospective explanation "I am doing B because I have done A", explaining my ongoing action by a part I have already done in preparation for B. Yes, as Ford says, I am not mixing the egg batter for the sake of having broken that egg or in order to have broken that egg—what is done, after all, is done and I can do nothing to advance it. But I can also explain my doing B by saying that "I am doing B because I have done/did A."¹⁵ in the same sense that I explain my doing A by saying I am going to do B. I explain my doing B now, at this stage of the development of the whole action, by my having done what is temporally precedent of it, and thus preparatory for it. That is, I say I am doing B because I have done A means I explain my doing B in the following sense: I am doing B because I have done what I need to do to be in the stage to do B. This reflects our time-consciousness when we are engaging in the development of a process.

This analysis uncovers the significance of this kind of action explanation for it uncovers the distinctive nature of it by noting that the sense of the corresponding question 'why' is different from Anscombean question 'why' and thus, this kind of action explanation reflects the interrelation, i. e., the temporal

15 Of course, you can explain your doing C by saying that "I have completed A and B.", D by "I have completed A, B and C." You can also explain your doing B by saying that "I am going to do C, D (and even E)."

arrangement of the different teleological parts. It explains a certain part the agent is performing in such a way: by locating it in the temporal arrangement of the whole complex action, especially its temporal position with other parts done before or after it.

Besides, it has deeper philosophical significance: action explanation goes by referring to the temporal schema of complex action. Both Thompson and Ford, inquire into the nature of naïve action explanation that is "explanation by the progressive", explanation by what is in the future and yet to come. But this retrospective explanation shows that when engaged in a complex action composed of different parts, not only what is in the future, what is yet to come (the complex action or the next part, as action theorists tend to focus) can explain my present action, what has been done (the earlier part) can also explain my present action.

Here a few more words are needed to clarify the retrospective explanation. Firstly, the explanans it gives, that is, that "I have done A" is not a backward-looking reason (Anscombe 2000: 20). According to Anscombe, a backward-looking reason is "that something that has happened (or is at present happening) is given as the ground of an action or abstention that is good or bad for the person (it may be oneself, as with remorse) at whom it is aimed." Examples of explanation by backward-looking reasons are "I am killing him because he killed my father" or "I am painting his house because I promised him so." Though "I am doing B because I have done A", where A and B are two different parts of a complex action is also an explanation of an ongoing action by giving something that has happened, it is still different from explanation by backward-looking reason. Müller (2011: 251) pointed one essential difference between forward-looking reason and backward-looking reason: while the question 'why?' can still be directed at a forward-looking reason given as the answer to the question 'why?' asked about an action, in explanation by a backward-looking reason, "the question 'why Φ ' receives an answer to which we cannot in turn apply the question 'why?...In other words: a backward-looking reason for Φ -ing is always an ultimate reason; it leaves no room for an ulterior, more remote reason and, therefore, in particular, no room for a reason that might confer any teleology on Φ -ing." But if you explain your doing B in the mode of retrospective explanation, then certainly the question 'why?' can still be directed at "A" and it will finally uncover the forward-looking final reason in doing B, that is, X.

Secondly, it is not explanation or justification by sunk-cost, whose ordinary expression is "I have come thus far, why not one step forward", where these carried-out actions and the "one step forward" are always different parts of a complex action. It can be transformed into action explanation schema like this: I am doing this (B) because I have done so many things (A)! I can't give up." Though verbally alike, explanation by sunk-cost is different from retrospective explanation because the second explains an action by locating it in the temporal schema of the complex action, especially its location with respect to the action it prepares and the action done in preparation for it. It gives the reason why doing such a part at such a stage or step.

4.3 Replies to Objections

The first objection may be that this kind of action explanation is not really rational or teleological explanation of action, it just deploys the temporal relation between the explained action and its teleological partner(s)—it is only because A is before B that I can explain my doing B by saying "because I have done A". And it is only because C is after B that I can explain my doing B by saying "because I am going to do C." I admit that this objection really captures a truth of this kind of action explanation, that is, the temporal relation between these parts is part of what makes possible this form of action explanation — but not the whole truth. Suppose I just broke two eggs with no intention to make an omelet. Then, I happened to mixed eggs with milk. In this case, these two actions are not two parts of some whole action at all. And now, if asked why I am mixing the eggs with milk, I certainly can't say "Because I have already broken the eggs" to rationalize my mixing eggs. This shows that when I am doing these two things for the sake of a whole action, the relation between these two actions is not simply temporally consecutive. Rather, they are also somehow teleologically related as different parts of the whole action, determined by the whole. Ford's characterization of their interrelation is pertinent: cooperative. They coordinate with each other in a temporal way, thus mutually contributing to the whole action. This cooperative relation between different parts, determined by the underlying whole, is what distinguishes it from heap complex action composed by several sub-actions with no internal purposive relation.

The second objection comes after the first one. It puts the significance of this kind of action explanation into consideration. If, as Ford has argued and I have conceded, this form of action explanation is derived from the part-whole

action explanation model, then it is a parasitic kind at best, has not much philosophical significance, though it is really rational explanation of action. This objection can be responded if we discover the distinctive nature of this kind of action explanation. As I have pointed out in last section, this kind of action explanation corresponding to a different sense of question 'why' from Anscombean question 'why', asks not for the further intention of performing an ongoing action, but for the reason why the agent is doing a certain part at a certain stage. It asks this question: according to what, you arrange B to be done now? And this kind of action explanation answers: because I have done A, the part supposed to be done precedent to it; or equally, because I am going to do C, a part supposed to be done after B. In both ways I express the thought that the reason I am doing B now is that it is needed to be done at this stage because it is settled at this temporal location, after A and before C, which best coordinate them to mutually contribute to the accomplishment of X. Thus, though really relying on the part-whole model of action explanation between parts and a complex action itself, this kind of action explanation between parts of a complex action has its own significance.

The third objection may say that my account of this form of action explanation can only be applied to a very limited group of intentional actions. It goes like follows: Anton Ford (2018) distinguishes the teleological structure and temporal structure of intentional action. According to his analysis, phases/stages/steps of intentional action belong to the temporal structure of intentional action, rather, parts of intentional action belong to the teleological structure of intentional action. "The phases of an action are the sequentially ordered and infinitely divisible stages of its development; its parts, by contrast, are the actions performed during its phase...in general, the phases of an action are marked by a 'First...', then...', finally...' framework, and its parts are represented by whatever fills in the ellipses." (Ford 2008:121) In a certain phase, several parts may be simultaneously performed: "at any given moment in the performance of an action, an agent may be performing numerous other actions

that are subordinate to the first, and parts of it."¹⁶ Then it seems that I ignore this important distinction in my account of this form of action explanation. In other words, the group of complex actions my account of this kind of action explanation is pertinent to is only those of whose there is only one part to be done in every phase. It can't accommodate other action some parts of which may be scheduled to be done in one phase. I think the opposite. To the parts of these complex actions, we can also explain my doing a certain part (for example, B) at a certain step by saying "I am doing B because I have done A. (and perhaps some portion of Y is also already carried out)" or "I am doing B because I am going to do C (or D, the part supposed to be done after C)." when asked the associated 'why' question.

In general, in a complex action what you do at the beginning, during the middle, at the end, are not interchangeable. You can only do A (perhaps with Y) in the first, then proceed to do B (and perhaps when B is nearly finished, Z should be embarked on), then C, supposing as above A, B, C, Y and Z are all parts of a complex action X.

5. Temporal Schema of a Complex Action

It is time to articulate the nature of the interrelation between different parts of a complex action which this kind of action explanation reflects. Just as Thompson's analysis of naïve action explanation shows that "I am doing A because I am doing B" reflects the part-whole relation between A and B, a sub-action and a complex action, this kind of action explanation reflects that the interrelation between different parts of a complex action is temporal-teleological. On the one hand, as they are different parts of a complex action, they are teleologically related; on the other hand, they are coordinated in a temporal order.

Austin (1961: 149) once remarked that there are different ways of splitting up an action. One among them is splitting into stages: "We can dismantle the

16 The example Ford gives is as follows: "the second step in making an omelet might involve both beating the eggs and adding milk; for I might have to add the milk while beating the eggs." and "it might be, for instance, that I am nearly done beating the eggs for my omelet, though I have just begun to season them, and for several minutes now I have been slowly warming some butter in a pan." (Ford 2008: 122)

machinery of the act, and describe (and excuse) separately the intelligence, the appreciation, the planning, the decision, the execution and so forth." Then, inquiry into the interrelation between parts of a complex action is just a further cutting into stages of the procedure "the execution". It shows that parts of a complex action are coordinated in a temporal frame like this, one after another: (An X, as an action-type, is done in this way:) first, do A; second, do B; then, do C; finally, do D. (Ford 2018:178) Propositions of this form appear in manuals or guidebook of various crafts. Actually, they are general rules out of the "general machinery of act", a certain norm we should obey when actually bring X into reality. The reason I can explain my doing B by "Because I have done A, or I am doing C." is just this: A is *supposed to be* done before B and C is *supposed to be* done after B.

Why is A supposed to be done before B or what is the nature of the proposition "First, do A; second, do B; then, C; finally, D. "? The general temporal schema of teleological parts of an action-kind is constituted in this way: 1) on the one hand, some parts are related to each other as preparatory action(s) and prepared action(s). It is metaphysically necessary that the parts preparing for other actions are done before the prepared actions, because "whatever was needed for the performance of any single part of it was provided ahead of time by another part" (Ford 2008: 134): without A done before C, C can't even get started, (sometimes without C done, D can't be done) ; without B done ahead of D, D can't be done. Thus, X can't be done at all. But there may be no metaphysical necessity that B is done before A. The procedure of making an omelet can show this. Breaking eggs must be done ahead of mixing egg batter, and mixing egg batter ahead of sautéing, heating the pan with butter must be done before sautéing. But heating the pan with butter can be done before breaking the eggs (and thus before mixing egg batter), or between breaking eggs and mixing egg batter, or after mixing egg batter. 2) On the other hand, some parts of the whole action may be time-insensitive, in the sense that they don't enter into some preparatory-prepared relation with other parts. They can either be done early in the progress of the action, or in later stage. But still, it is generally prescribed to be done at certain stage. This is related to skill.

The temporal schema of complex action has to be immediately distinguished from Anscombe's famous A-D teleological order in the pumping water case. The latter is not a temporal schema of complex action for the items "I

am putting my arms up and down" (A), "I am pumping water" (B), "I am replenishing the water supply" (C) and "I am poisoning the habitants" (D) are not different parts of a whole complex action, though the former relates to the latter as a means to an end. They are, in the circumstances, the same action. The progress of the former is just the progress of the latter. According to Ford, the former item in the order is a special realization of the latter one. They are related as species to genus, not part to whole.

The temporal schema of ballistic action (Stout 2018) —the agent does something, which triggers a causal chain, as I touch the first domino in the row and all the other dominoes fall down in a chain—is also different from the temporal schema of complex action. For what the agent really did in a ballistic action is just the initial launching of the whole process. There are no other parts to be done, for the rest is "up to nature" (Davidson 2001b: 59), there is no contribution from the agent besides the initial launching. Then, there are no different parts to be coordinated in a temporal frame at all in ballistic action.

6. Conclusion

I start from the observation that Michael Thompson's analysis of naïve action explanation omits one central aspect of the inner structure of complex action, that is, the interrelation between different parts. As I argued in section 4, they are temporally-teleologically related to each other: temporally coordinated with each other to mutually contribute to the complex action. This temporal-teleological relation is registered in the general proposition associated with an action-kind, for example, X: first, do A; next, do B; then, C; finally, D. This relation is reflected in the new kind of action explanation that I articulated in section 2-3, the whole shape of which is "I am doing A because I am doing B" and "I am doing B because I have done A", where A and B are two different parts of a complex action X. This kind of action explanation explain an action by locating it in the temporal schema of the larger complex action it belongs to. It gives the reason why I am performing it at this stage. I consider my effort to be a rustic further investigation into the inner structure of complex action.

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