

What are Actions?

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Abstract

The thesis is a defence of an original position in the philosophy of action. It argues for a pluralist view of actions dubbed Strong Pluralism.

One of the key questions of philosophy of action since the early 20th century has been taken to be ‘What are actions?’ In my thesis I argue that there is no single correct answer to this question. I put forward two positive claims which explain why this is so: 1. That ‘action’ is ambiguous and can mean either doing or thing done. 2. That not all doings fall into the same metaphysical category because they can have different constitutive structures: some of them are causings, some are events, and others are processes. I demonstrate in the thesis that these two claims can be held coherently, and I identify the resulting view as Strong Pluralism about action.

The thesis divides into two parts. In the first part I lay out and offer a defence of the view in question and in the second I discuss how my pluralist view of relates to the three major types of views of action: events, causings, and process views.

The first part of the thesis consists of three steps of the main argument of my thesis, each step outlined and argued for in a chapter. In the first chapter I offer an overview of the answers provided to the ‘What is action?’ question offered by philosophers in the last 80 years. I identify a trend common to these views to advance monist answers, that is, they offer views of action which are committed to ‘action’ meaning one thing and all actions fitting into the same metaphysical category. I argue that the monist answers are unsatisfactory and monism about actions cannot be maintained.

In chapter two I offer an alternative to monism in the form of pluralism about actions. I defend pluralism by arguing that ‘action’ is ambiguous between doing and things done, and by showing that it is a suitable substitute for monism. I provide an overview of the four most important ways in which the doing – thing done distinction has been made, and I suggest and defend a further version of it. In chapter three, I outline three possible pluralist views of actions, and defend the view which I call Strong Pluralism. Strong Pluralism is committed to the claims that there are both doings and things done, and that there are doings which have different

constitutions from other doings, hence it is correct to think that some doings are events, some are causings, and some are processes.

In the three chapters which constitute the second part of the thesis I engage successively with views which have claimed that actions are events, that they are causings, and that actions are processes. I argue in each chapter that there are doings which can be said to belong into the category discussed and I provide positive accounts and examples of when this is so. I offer a categorization of doings which helps us to decide which doings fall into the group of events, which into that of causings, and which into that of processes. Throughout these three chapters I critically discuss the most influential events, causings, and process views and point out several aspects in which they are too limiting or mistaken about doings.

The view of doings and things done worked out in thesis helps to resolve long standing issues in the philosophy of action by clarifying what we take to be the object of explanation, knowledge, and evaluation when we discuss actions in ethics, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, epistemology (esp. debates about knowledge of action) and other fields of philosophy. The view can have broader applications in the fields of moral psychology and cognitive science by helping to sharpen our account of what researchers are discussing when they are discussing actions.

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Introduction

The world is full of change. Seas erode cliffs on the shores, volcanoes erupt, bacteria invade organisms and are destroyed by antibiotics, robots assemble cars, screws rust, dogs alert their owners to danger and move their feet while asleep, and humans are born, learn to walk, and, in the end, perish. In this cavalcade of alternations, where everything seems to be moving constantly, we find a crucial difference between changes. This difference is that some changes are doings or they are results and consequences of doings which are constituents of doings, that is, they are actions, while other changes are not actional. I use actional to mean that we can talk about any change which a doing as an event or a process or a causing while also maintaining that it is an action.

There are plenty of agents who exercise their capacities and abilities, react to their environment, use their skills, perform things, and engage in acting. Agents can be widely different, some are more complex than others, some we can understand easily, while others are constant sources of puzzlement. Nevertheless, we all agree that there is action in the world and the changes which are themselves actions or result from actions are especially important for our lives.ⁱ This thesis will argue that what looks like the most fundamental question in philosophy of action which should have a single answer is actually a question which has no single meaning and has to be answered by differentiating between the things we might mean by 'action'. I will argue in the thesis that there is a distinction to be made between doings and things done, and 'action' can mean either of them. So, before the 'What are actions?' question can be answered it has to be clarified what we mean by it. Philosophy of action is the subfield of philosophy that explores issues surrounding free will, intention, intentional action, the will and voluntary action, knowledge of action and a number of other questions related to actions.ⁱⁱ I will show that it is also necessary to ask what doings and what things done are, and what differences there are between doings.

The starting point of this thesis will be set in the early-mid 20th century. During the last 80 years of research carried out in the philosophy of action this question has been asked over and over again, and several different answers to it have been given.

The earliest position which I'll discuss has been advanced by John Macmurray in his contribution to the 1938 symposium of The Aristotelian Society entitled *What is Action?* Since Macmurray's treatment of the matter much work has been done on actions and many different approaches have been proposed, but his view is still one of the most plausible. Authors such as Aristotle, Hume, and Kant wrote on the subject of action previously, most of the philosophical work on action happened in the 20th century and is on-going. I shall therefore focus primarily on these contemporary debates although I will of course be approaching them with an awareness of their historical context, and where it is relevant – for example in chapter six where I discuss process views of action – I will indicate their historical sources.

The main goal of my thesis is to show how we can answer the 'What are actions?' question, and I will propose a pluralist strategy that corresponds to my pluralism about actions. Since 'action' can mean either doing or thing done we first have to specify which one we are interested in, and then further specify what the doings we are interested are like. The view of doings I defend is a novel position in the literature. I identify most views of actions that have been defended in the 20th century as monist views: monist views take 'action' to mean the same kind of thing in every case and take all actions to belong into the same broader metaphysical kind. (See section 1.2) I will argue that monist views haven't been successful for two major reasons: a) They fail to accommodate a distinction between what we do and our doing of it (the doings - things done distinction, see chapter two), and b) none of them manages to characterize all doings well (see especially 2.4 and 3.4). I will defend a pluralist position concerning what actions are that recognizes the doings - things done distinction, and also the differences between types or kinds of doings. On my view, all things done are types/kinds/universal and all doings are particulars which can belong into a plurality of categories. The distinction between doings and things done, and the differences between particular doings which belong into different categories are metaphysical and ontological. This pluralist view will enable us to advance beyond monist views in the literature on actions and to understand our everyday talk and thought of actions, as well as other practices in which actions figure prominently.

The thesis aims at exploring both how we should go about seeking answers to the 'What are actions?' question, and to investigate some of the answers that have

been given in the literature. The overarching goal of my thesis is to show that monism about actions is wrong, and to offer a pluralist alternative which helps us to understand what actions are better. I propose to do this by achieving three interconnected aims:

1) I aim to show that monist views of action cannot be correct. This means that I argue against attempts from the last 80 years of philosophy of action which propose a view according to which a) there is only one thing we mean by action, and b) all instances/particulars/cases of that one thing can be taken to belong into the same broader metaphysical category. The most obvious example of a monist view is the position of Donald Davidson who claimed that all actions are events, that is, particular occurrents, and furthermore claimed that the events that are actions are all bodily movements under a description, which are actions in virtue of having specific causes. In contrast to such positions I argue that we have to distinguish things done and doings, things done are neither events nor causings, nor processes, while some doings are events, while others are processes, and more narrowly, and some doings involve bodily movements while others do not.

2) As part of my pluralist proposal I argue that we should recognize that ‘action’ can be used to talk about things done (what we do, the things people do) as well as doings (agents’ doing things). If I’m right, it follows that monist views of action cannot be right, because they fail to accommodate this distinction, and without accommodating it we cannot really understand how and what we talk and think about when we talk about what agents are doing and their doing it.

3) The third aim of my thesis is to show that if we accept a pluralist view of actions, and accept the distinction between things done and doings, then we should also endorse a pluralist position about doings. This means that we can hold that some doings are events, other causings, and others are processes. The two pluralist claims that I defend amount together to the position I defend, which I call *Strong Pluralism* about action.

Achieving these three aims enables us to provide an answer to both how we should go about answering the ‘What are actions?’ question and to decide which particular answers are good answers to the question. They enable us to take a stance which recognizes that doings can differ from each other in important ways. Just to mention a few characteristics in which doings might differ consider that some of them can be purely mental (like thinking, deciding, fantasizing), some can involve

movement of the agents' body (shooting a goal, painting a picture, writing a book, cooking a casserole), some of them can only be done together as a group (playing a football match or a party of tennis), and some are instantaneous and can be easily located (realizing the solution to a puzzle, seeing the point of a remark, crossing the finish line), some are extended in time (writing a sermon, running four miles), while others are scattered in time and space (getting a divorce, making plans for the future, designing a robot).

To sum up, in this thesis I shall argue for Strong Pluralism about action, and pluralism holds following claims 1. 'Action' can be used to talk about things done or about doings, 2. Things done, without taking on any substantial commitments, can be said to be types or kinds of actions, and 3. Doings are agent's acting. If my arguments work, pluralism about action and pluralism about doings can be maintained. The view consisting of these three claims enables us to embrace the variety of doings which we encounter in our normal life. Some doings can be characterised as events, others as causings, and others again as processes. Some doings have intrinsic results. In the case of such doings agents can be said to have been doing them, but they can only be said to have done them if they brought about the results intrinsic to instances of that type of action (for example Sergio can only be said to have written a letter if there is a letter written by Sergio, or Annie can only be said to have run four miles if she has covered four miles running). All doings involve the agents' exercising some of her agential capacities or abilities – even in the case of refraining from reacting to something, making a decision, if paying attention and control by the agent are required. At the same time, doings can consist not only of such exercises but also of the bringing about or prevention of results of such exercises encompassing the results themselves (baking a cake, winning an election or divorcing someone can be doings of an agent).

Bringing about can be but is not always causal. So, some actions can consist in causing something, but not all actions are like that and they don't have to. Also, longer and more complex actions can involve causings that are not simply exercisings of agents' capacities, but are causal relations between results of such exercises. Whether we should consider a particular doing to be an event, a causing, or a process depends on the involvement of the agent, and the temporal, spatial, and causal characteristics of the doing in question. Pluralism is motivated not just by the inadequacy of monist views, but also by the cases that they do seem to get right.

There are actions which do seem to be like events, or processes, or causings. Hence it is worth exploring which actions are such and how exactly we should understand the claim that an action is – for example – a process.

The thesis is divided into two large parts: the first part consists of chapters one to three, and the second from chapters four to six. In the first part I argue against monism, make my case for pluralism, introduce the doings - things done distinction and argue for my understanding of it. These steps present a general introduction and the defence of my methodology. In the second part, I argue for pluralism about doings by showing that different monist ideas can be used to characterize some doings well, and that we really find a plethora of doings that differ in several distinct ways.

In chapter one I explain the differences between monist and pluralist positions on action. I list the ten main types of monist views and present some of the most important criticism they have received. These monist views are the following: i) bodily movement views; ii) event views; iii) agent causalists view; iv) causings views; v) authorship views; vi) volitionalist views; vii) mental events views; viii) causal process views; ix) teleological process views; x) causal relations views. I argue that all monist views suffer from the general problem that they cannot accommodate the doings/things done distinction and this in itself limits their usefulness to a large extent. They are too narrow in their characterization of actions and fail to capture both the distinction between what we do and our doing it, and the many distinctions between doings.

After arguing that the monist views can't offer us what they promise I turn to the doings - things done distinction in chapter two. The distinction has a history in philosophy of action: it has been cast in subtly but importantly different ways by John Macmurray, G. H. von Wright, Jennifer Hornsby, and Constantine Sandis (2.3). I offer accounts of these four main ways in which the distinction has been made and evaluate them critically. I offer my own version of the distinction as the most economical and plausible way of elucidating it (2.4). As noted above, I hold that 'action' can mean either doing or thing done. I aim to show that things done are what we could call – without taking on any substantial metaphysical commitments – types or kinds of actions, for example running, joking, building a dam, spending an afternoon at parks. Doings are agents' doing *x*, the actual ongoing, datable and locatable doings, like Katja's dancing at the party, Pete's driving to York, or

Donald's insulting his competitor. The benefit of spelling out the distinction in my way is that it clearly separates kinds or types of actions from the doings of agents in which they are engaged in. We talk about the latter when we discuss those happenings and ongoing elements of our world which are the actions of agents. My approach enables us to recognize that different views of actions might be right about different doings. It opens up the possibility of a reconciliatory strategy that avoids systematically rejecting all earlier positions as wrong and is flexible enough to endorse useful claims about actions when they really apply to some doings, and to reject others.

In chapter three I move on to distinguish between three possible pluralist positions which can and have been defended in the literature on actions. I call these Complex Pluralism, Strong Pluralism, and Simple pluralism for reasons that I shall outline in section 2.3 and 3.2-3.4. The main idea common to all three different types of pluralism is that the monist and eliminativist views of action are wrong, and that we have to accept that there are more than one kind of action. The main difference between the views is that they differ on what it means that there are more than one kinds of action. The main claims of these positions can be summarized as follows:

A) Complex Pluralism: **i)** there are many different types of things we can call 'action', e.g. doings, things done, bringing-about, the events of someone's doing something, etc.; and **ii)** from all these groups if we pick out doings we can reliably characterize them as belonging into a specific metaphysical category. According to this view some actions could even be endurants.

B) Strong Pluralism: **i)** there are at least two types of things we can call 'action', namely things done and doings, and for most purposes in the philosophy of action it is enough to distinguish between these two; and **ii)** we should be pluralists about doings and recognize that instances of different types of doings can and do belong into different metaphysical categories. This version is committed to the view that doings are occurrents which could be bringing-about, causings, events, or processes.

C) Simple Pluralism: **i)** there are two types of things that we can call 'action', namely things done and doings; and **ii)** all doings belong into one broader ontological category (for example they are all events), and all things done also belong into one ontological category (since they are kinds or types not into the one in which doings belong).

I call these three views *Complex*, *Strong*, and *Simple* pluralism because of the claims they make about doings: Complex Pluralism endorses doings, but also holds that there are many other categories of actions (see 2.3.4, 3.2.1 and 3.3); Strong pluralism holds that an agents' *x*-ing is always an agents' doing something, and that doings can belong into different ontological categories based on distinct metaphysics (see 2.4, 3.2.2 and 3.4); and Simple Pluralism claims that an agents' *x*-ing is always an agents' doing something, and that doings all belong into the same ontological category because all share the same metaphysics (see 2.3.3 and 3.2.3).

I argue that we should accept Strong Pluralism because it endorses the right combination of main claims about doings and things done, and the plurality of doings. Strong Pluralism, I maintain, is in the best position to help us understand our moral, epistemological, legal and political practices of evaluating actions. With the help of this pluralist approach we can correctly identify what the object of evaluation or knowledge is when we evaluate or know an action. Strong Pluralism can differentiate between different types of doings: some of them being simple and instantaneous, some more complex and taking longer time, while again other being very complex, incorporating several results and taking place over longer periods of time. This, in turn, makes it possible for us to offer more detailed and sensitive treatments of doings in moral psychology, philosophy of mind, and other fields which deal with actions, such as cognitive psychology or AI research. (See also my conclusion.)

In the second part of chapter three I draw upon some further pluralist views to make it easier for the readers to relate to pluralism about actions and pluralism about doings. G. H. von Wright's discussion of the varieties of goodness, John Dupré's view of pluralism about the categorization of 'kinds' in biology, and David Velleman's account of doables provide the opportunity of helpful comparison's. The pluralism I'm advocating about 'action' and also about 'doings' is closest to Dupré's approach to pluralism about biological kinds. The main idea is that depending on our interests and goals we might want to place the emphasis on different properties and characteristics of beings when we classify them into kinds (species), and hence when we are engaged in different enterprises we might end up with different taxonomies even though we relied on the same body of data and classified the same beings. According to my pluralism, something similar is true of what we take to be actions, and what we take to be doings. That is, I do not debate

that the monist views which have proposed that some doings are events, some are causings, and some are processes, are right in their judgement as it applies to some doings and in their commitment to there being something shared across all doings. I simply defend the claim that they are wrong when they extend this judgement to all actions and to all studies of behaviour and action. This can help us to see one of the main problems with Complex Pluralism, namely its commitment to the idea that different categories of action will have definite characterizations across all disciplines and inquiries. Chapter one to three comprise the first part of the thesis in which I present my criticism of monist views, argue for the doings/things done distinction, and propose Strong Pluralism, my alternative to monism.

The second part of the thesis investigates whether monist views of action can be understood as providing useful characterisations of different types of doings. In chapter four I try to answer whether any doings can be entities like they are supposed to be according to causal theories of action, and more particularly like the events that Davidson – and philosophers following his track – have taken actions to be. I argue by citing examples that actions cannot be grasped as something that the agent is not involved in, as something rendered an action by external causes. Also, the view of events as detached particulars has difficulties to accommodate doings which are extended or scattered temporally and spatially, or when it comes to actions which have internal results. (4.2-4.5) I introduce the framework worked out by Zeno Vendler, Anthony Kenny, and Alexander Mourelatos (the VKM framework), which classifies actions into different types depending on their temporal profiles and their aspectual properties, that is, whether they are completed or still ongoing (4.6). I discuss some of the ways in which Vendler, Kenny, and Mourelatos developed their ideas, and emphasize the usefulness of their work in bringing to surface how different doings can be with respect to their temporal and aspectual characteristics, and how important it is to accommodate these differences in a comprehensive account of actions.

Chapter five discusses whether doings can be grasped as causings. Two different versions of the causings views have been endorsed in the literature: agent causation, and the view that doings are instances of the causal relation. I argue that there are ways in which causation is involved in doings: agents can cause things, the results of agents' doings can cause further results and consequences, and there might be causal processes that precede or go on during doings which have to be in

place in order for agents to be able to act. (5.2) I survey traditional agent causation – defended by Richard Taylor and Roderick Chisholm - and more recent versions of the view – advanced by Kent Bach, Maria Alvarez and John Hyman, and Timothy O’Connor. (5.3, 5.4, 5.6) I will discuss many claims of these views and try to accommodate much of their findings in my pluralist framework for discussing doings. I will also discuss the distinction between transitive and intransitive verb forms, and debate Jennifer Hornsby’s view that a certain understanding of this grammatical device supports the view that doings are causes of bodily movements. (5.5)

In chapter six I survey positions which take doings to be processes. The main positions in this vein are all comparatively recent. They can be divided into causal and non-causal views. Fred Dretske’s position is a causal view (6.3), while the views proposed by Rowland Stout, Jennifer Hornsby, and Helen Steward are non-causal process views of action, ones which emphasize the agents’ active role in bringing something about (6.4). The VKM framework serves a useful purpose again: by taking tense and aspect into account we can differentiate between ongoing and incomplete, as well as between completed and finished processes, including those doings which are processes. In the course of presenting the four views I discuss some of their weaknesses as well. The main problems with the views are that a) It is not clear how the active contribution and role of the agent is accommodated in Dretske’s causal view, b) Stout relies on a very heavy notion of teleological guidance in his view of processes, so that it can only be taken as an account of purposive actions, and c) Hornsby relies on a problematic parallel - originally suggested by Mourelatos – between activities and stuff (like wine, gold, etc.), and takes activities to be the stuff of actions (which she takes in turn to be events); as I argue this is a misunderstanding of what the distinction between imperfective and perfective aspect is supposed to achieve. I maintain that differences in aspect indicate whether or not the action is completed or not at the time that we talk about. I argue that the way Hornsby and Steward have understood Mourelatos’ way of making the perfective-imperfective distinction leads to the implausible view that once a doing is completed its metaphysics somehow completely changes.

In conclusion, I offer a novel way out which helps us to organize the positions present in the literature in a new way. It also enables us to see the most important

views of action as interconnected and as providing useful details to the characterization of actions. I indicate ways in which Pluralism can help clarify and open up the possibility of new solutions in ethics and metaethics, in debates about knowledge of action, in debates about action individuation, and possibly also when it comes to constructing applied ontologies. I conclude on the optimistic note that the work already carried out in philosophy of action can be used as a good basis in providing solutions to problems both in action theory – taken to include any endeavour systematically studying action and behaviour – and in other areas of research.

Part I

Chapter 1

The landscape of actions

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will lay the foundations for my pluralist approach. I do this by first surveying the most important views of action of the past 80 years and identifying a general characteristic of them, which I think is problematic. This characteristic is their monism: these views all claim that when we talk about actions we invariably talk about things that belong into the same category, and in turn this category of actions can be understood in terms of some further broad metaphysical categories. I'll start by presenting monist views of action, discussing problems with them. I'll finish my discussion with a brief prelude to pluralism. By pluralism about action I mean the view that when we talk about actions we can have at least two different kinds of things in mind. In this chapter I won't go into a detailed discussion of pluralism (that happens in chapter four), my aim will only be to make the readers aware of the alternatives available to us once we depart from monist views and indicate the direction in which my argument is developing.

I hope to provide sufficient motivation in this chapter to render the shift from monist to pluralist views attractive, or at the worst plausible. By showing that 80 years of research in monist philosophy of action have provided at least ten different views of action all of which fail (in part) for reasons relating to their monism, I aim to convince the reader that the current state of affairs in philosophy of action is ripe for a radical change of approach. I argue that the most fundamental problem which is shared by all monist views is that they cannot recognize the doings - things done distinction. I'll offer a detailed discussion of both the development of this distinction and of my way of understanding and employing it in chapter two. For the moment suffice it to say that things done are *what* we do, the thing both you and I, or we can do, and without going into any particulars of the metaphysics of things done we could liken it to types or kinds of actions.ⁱⁱⁱ Doings are an agent's doing *x*. Nothing less and nothing more. Agents are *x*-ing in time and space, in our world, and your *x*-ing at noon cannot be my *x*-ing tomorrow, that is our doings are distinct. In contrast, *what* you do at noon can be the same thing that I will do tomorrow.

I argue that since we need at least a distinction between doings and things done no monist view could live up to the ambition of providing an account of all actions as sharing the same small, definite set of characteristics. Hence, monist views which claim that all actions are events, or causings, or processes, or more specifically that all actions are bodily movements, or tryings, or willings cannot be right. This chapter will have achieved its goal if the reader accepts that it is necessary, or at least very much possible, that we should accept a pluralist view of actions. I hope to make this proposal even more convincing in chapter two by offering a more detailed discussion of the doings - things done distinction which will show that it is important to make the distinction. Then in chapter three I'll present three possible ways of being a pluralist and I'll support the case for my version of pluralism, which I will call Strong Pluralism. I hope that the troubles with monist views, the need to make the doings - things done distinction, and the availability of pluralist alternatives will constitute a convincing case for my view presented in the thesis. With this plan in mind, let me now start my discussion with the overview of monist views.

1.2 Monist approaches to actions

The dominant methodological assumption during the last 80 years of research in the philosophy of action was that there is one kind of thing which we talk about when we talk about actions. Even some views which admitted that there is a difference between action types and tokens, or universals and particulars, have then often only dealt with what the tokens or particulars are, or tried to explain away the difference as something that only seems so, but isn't so. The most influential monist account of action has been that of Donald Davidson: Davidson claimed that all actions are events caused by the right kinds of events. In this, Davidson expressed the basic idea of all Causal Theories of Action (CTA). According to CTAs what makes something an action is that it has the right causes. Besides Davidson's there have been several other influential monist proposals, some of them CTAs, some non-causal views. I will briefly survey these positions and argue that they all fail as comprehensive views of action because of their monism. Monist views simply cannot accommodate the doings - things done distinction and mistakenly reject the claim that there would be more than one kind of thing which is an action.

Furthermore, most monist views struggle with more specific problems of their own: For example monist CTAs rightly recognize that doings can have constituents

which are not inherently actional. Think of rolling a bowling ball. The ball's rolling on the hardwood floor could happen because the stand on which it rests disintegrates. But starting from such examples CTAs jump to endorsing the mistaken claim that the same is the case with movings of the body of a human or the workings of any agents' minds. They endorse the claim that when I think of a number or when you are raising your arm there are events which are exactly like events which would happen if no agent would be doing anything. This is of course an unwarranted assumption: we know from chemistry, neurology, physiology, psychology and simple everyday common sense thinking too, that the arm rising constitutive of A's raising her arm is different from the arm rising constitutive of A's arm being pulled up by someone else.^{iv} Hence the starting point of CTAs that there would be some neutral events which are made actions simply in virtue of standing in some sort of relation to causes preceding them cannot be right.

What is an important insight about the role causation does play in doings, is that some of our complex, extended doings (for example building a house, learning to ride, directing a movie) do involve several causal relationships, and are partially constituted by events (possibly movements of objects amongst these) which are neutral. Doings are partly constituted by all that is involved in them including these causal relationships and their results. And also, no one would want to say that in, for example, directing a movie, the actions of the director were only those movements of objects which could have occurred without the intervention of any other agents. So much for the moment on the two largest general problems that plague monist views. All views discussed in this section are beset by the problem of not being able to accommodate both things done and doings in the view of actions they offer, and I'll indicate in the description of the particular views if they are also CTAs.

It is important to note before beginning our survey of monist views that I do not claim that none of these monist views offer good characterizations of *some* actions, more specifically, of some doings. In fact, I think the biggest advantage that pluralism has over any monist view is precisely that it has the theoretical space to allow for actions with quite different characteristics, and can account for the variety of actions present in our lives and the existence of agents in general. Thanks to this, pluralism can make use of the insights of monist views by recognizing that some actions (some doings) are well characterised, or at least partially characterised by a monist view.^v Pluralism can hence build on the results that philosophers advancing

monist views have achieved and is as such a constructive position capable of building on the already existing foundations laid by others. In contrast, monist views take on a very hard task when trying to show that what actions are can be understood based on their belonging to a single broader category.

1. Let me begin our survey of the monist views with the simplest monist view of actions that holds that all actions are bodily movements.^{vi} As I already indicated, it is easy to see what the problem is with this view. It is incompatible with our common ways of taking an agent's deciding to refrain from something, to abstain from doing something, to think of someone, to figure out the solution to a problem as doings of the agents because such doings are surely not bodily movements. Such negative actions and mental actions seem to be manifest counterexamples of the view, which thus either admits that it is only a view about some doings or is plain wrong.^{vii} Of course it is also problematic that such a simple view does not allow us to differentiate between talk of actions as talking about what we do ('Running a marathon isn't easy' as being about this kind of action in general) as contrasted with talk about actions as particular instances of an agent doing something ('Mary Jane is cycling around lake Balaton', 'Joe ran a marathon last weekend').

We should ask the question if it is even plausible to think of some doings as consisting purely of bodily movements? As I have already noted in the previous passages this is a very implausible suggestion: the bodily movements involved in agents' doing something are unlike bodily movements which are not agents' exercising some of their capacities, or abilities, or skills.^{viii} Bodily movements of agents are tied to particular mechanisms, processes, reactions within the agents body, her neural system (and in the case of inanimate agents in their makeup), and furthermore in the case of higher animals and humans sometimes also to their agent-level capacities.^{ix} The only sense in which bodily movements that are indistinguishable from bodily movements resulting from external forces affecting one's body do play a role in one's doing something is when one gives commands to others (as when someone asks his friends to help him get up from the ground), uses some machine to move parts of one's own body or someone else's body (as when medical robots are used to carry patients between the ward and the operating room), or wilfully lets someone or something affect one's body in a desired way and the movement is required for it to be true that the agents is doing/has done something (like when one relaxes one's body to stay floating on the waves, or when one relies

on the force of the water to push one to the surface of the sea). But such movements are still only constituents of one's doings and not entire doings, and as such the view cannot be right.

2. A second, larger group of views about actions holds that all actions are events. I will deal in more detail in chapter five with the question whether it is a correct view of doings that all doings are events (I will argue that it isn't, but on a certain understanding of doings some doings can be taken to be events), but for the moment I just want to offer a brief treatment of this position as one of main representatives of monist views. We can encounter this view explicitly endorsed by A. C. Ewing in his contribution to the 1938 debate on 'What is action?' organized by the Aristotelian Society, and Stuart Hampshire also mentions the view as a position that he rejects (1959), as does G. E. M. Anscombe in her *Intention* (1963). But the best known and most popular (both in terms of endorsement and criticism) version of the view has been worked out in detail by Donald Davidson (see his 1963, and all the essays reprinted in his 1980).^x

As all monist theories do, the events view fails straightaway because the category it offers to analyse actions as belonging into is not such that it could accommodate both agents doing things, and discussions about what agents are doing; that is it cannot make sense both of what it is that both you and I can be engaged in, or we can both have in mind, or we can both desire to do, as well as your doing it, or my doing it, or our doing it. This is so because it is not plausible that both doings and things done are events. Event views of actions rely on causation to single out which events are actions: they offer some criteria about what sort of causes events have to have to count as actions. That is, according to event views actions are things that happen, just like any other occurrence and the important task for philosophers is to distinguish those happenings that are not actions from those that are.

One specific way of answering the question which events are actions is to say that they are bodily motions that have the right sort of causes. This is the view of Davidson, according to whom bodily movements are events and the right sort of causes are events which are the onsets of desires and beliefs which together make the action seem rational to the agent and thereby constitute a reason for doing it and cause it in the right way. Davidson wasn't a friend of agent-causation but his view about actions shares with agent-causalist views the intuition that we need to identify

the smallest possible element that we can as an action. All the other things which influence what actions can belong to agent are according to his view relegated to the status of redescriptions or different descriptions that apply to the real action, the basic action. That is, there is one thing that happens that can be described as an action in virtue of having the right causes, and it can also merit further descriptions under which it counts as an action depending on its results, the specific causes it had, and other circumstances.

These descriptions single out the same initial, intervention-like action of the agent's. They apply to this same minimal action because that action has led to some further results and consequences, and if these further results and consequences are such that the agent knows about them, or desires them, or even intended them, then the agent can be said to have done the actions voluntarily or intentionally. As I will argue later in more detail (in chapters two, three and four), some results of the agents' doings should be attributed to the agents as something she brought about. I will also argue that from endorsing the claim that some doings are simply agent's bringing about something it does not follow that all doings consist simply of bringing-about. Davidson, Hornsby (in her early work), Prichard, McCann, Chisholm, Taylor and others have assumed that this is so, and offered views of actions which identify them as minimal initiating elements in a larger chain of occurrences, reducing actions to point-like flickers in the world.

I will argue that contrarily to such views we should allow that some doings are partially constituted by the results an agent's exercising her capacities, using her abilities. Davidson and other CTA theorists endorse the view that the events which are bodily movements under a certain descriptions and have the right causes are actions. They endorse that these events qua bodily movements are not different in any way from bodily movements which are not actions. This seems to me to be a mistake because it is quite plausible that movements which are constituents of actions (of doings more precisely) are different from movements which are not. Not only are the two types of movings different in such aspects as their elegance, their coordination, but also in their neural and chemical correlates, and in the agent's involvement in them through her moving her body. Davidson's view fails to account for all these differences and hence it seems to cut actions too narrowly and to identify them simply by their causes, thereby mistakenly limiting them to bodily movements.

Such CTAs can't help us in accommodating actions which extend in time and space. As I explained in the introduction my goal is not to show conclusively that the view could not be defended with further modifications. What I want to achieve is to show that these views suffer from many serious problems, and hence, taking a radical departure from them is a possibility which is at least, or more, as enticing than amending these views. I think this has been achieved for the events views, and so I will proceed to the next views.

3. Historically philosophers who rejected Davidson's view of action did so mainly for two reasons: the events view of actions has a hard time accounting for the problems of i) deviant causal chains,^{xi} and ii) disappearing agents.^{xii} Agent causation has been taken by many to offer answers to both of these issues and so it is the third type of view on our list of monist views of action.^{xiii} Agent causation has (at least) two versions and, in this section (3), I address the first of them according to which the agent causes her action, which is an event of a bodily movement.^{xiv} The view has come under heavy fire for the implausibility of the idea that agents cause their own actions and I don't want to repeat those – in my view correct – objections here.^{xv} This version of agent causation only differs then from simple event views of action in that it specifies those events as actions which are caused by agents, not those which are caused by preceding mental events. Actions are events that are special due to their sources, due to how they come about, but they don't differ in other aspects from the rest of the changes in the world. The role played by the agent in bringing about the event that is an action is playing the main role in this story. Due to the structure of this view shared with the event views it suffers from the same problems: it is implausible that agents wouldn't have a more substantive role in their doings; events do not seem to be well suited to understanding the characteristics of more complex and longer term doings; and bodily movements simpliciter aren't doings no matter what their causes are.

4. The other popular way of defending agent causation is to claim that actions are agent's causing a certain result.^{xvi} This causing is the action and anything that comes about is a result or a consequence of the action further down the line. All descriptions which are true of what the agent is doing apply to the causing. Alvarez and Hyman have argued both in their joint paper and in further work (Alvarez 1999, Hyman 2001) that actions cannot be events and hence this view is substantially different from views 1-3. The view is a causal account of action, but it does not take

actions to be identified by their causes, and is hence not a CTA. The view takes actions to be the causings themselves. So, agents do not cause their actions on this view (contrarily to view 3). Rather, an agents' causing a result is an action. I will argue in chapter five that the view over-generalizes and it is false that all doings would involve the causing of results. I'll also argue that the view cannot accommodate doings when an agent cannot be said to have done something unless certain results haven't come about.

A causings view of actions will also have to provide a plausible account of causings, preferably one that fits a natural view of the world. Also, it has to explain the difference between events which are, on the one hand, the onsets of states of agents causing further events, and, on the other, agents causing events. And at first causing sounds like something that cannot be extended in time and space, if it is in time and space at all. Hence the view has to offer an explanation of how agents can be active, how they can be engaged in an activity that requires continuous or episodic but long term acting. Is the agent continually causing results in such cases? Or is it sometimes enough that the agent is able to intervene causally in what she has started? I will argue in chapter five that this approach might fit some simple, quick actions and parts of actions and hence might be the correct way to understand what some doings are. I will also maintain that it still needs more specification and it cannot serve as a good characterization of many doings.

5. There are views of action which do not try to account for actions in terms of their causes, or as causings, in fact, they give causality no role in their characterization of what an action is. Of course this does not mean that what actions are cannot involve a causing or something caused, but whatever the truth about these issues, defenders of non-causal views of actions hold that we can characterise actions without reference to these related causal components. The first non-causal theory that we should mention is Harry Frankfurt's authorship-view of action. According the authorship view of action a bodily motion is your action if a) you embrace it as your own, and b) it occurs under your guidance.^{xvii} Frankfurt and people who follow his views focus on how agents relate to what they did. Not everything we do is an action of ours, and not everything that can be attributed to an agent as her action is an action of the agent. Think of the example of breathing and of moving dust in the air around yourself while moving, or about cases when the words one utters could count as a job offer but only if one would have wanted one's

words to mean that. On Frankfurt's view those instances of behaviour are an agents' actions which embody, express, or are seen by the agent as embodying and expressing her (or in case of animals: its) goals, purposes, values, intentions, policies or dreams.

I think that besides the usual complaint that monist views do not accommodate the doings - things done distinction we should focus on the following disadvantages of Frankfurt's view as a view that purports to characterise all actions: While Frankfurt's view is well suited to address the questions of what a voluntary or an intentional action is, it provides significantly less help with understanding spontaneous, arational, irrational and other actions which are the agents' actions. The idea that what makes something one's action is the agents' identification with the values or goals expressed in that action is very inspiring, still, it is hard to see how something's being an action is not linked to agents' exercising some of their specific capacities, or how it could be understood without accounting for the involvement which is often required from agents when they are acting. Frankfurt relies on the notion of 'control' to avoid this latter type of problem, but that again seems to narrow his conception of what counts as an action down to doings where agents need to pay attention to the execution of their movements, or planning, or they need to focus their attention on something. Not all actions are like that. Frankfurt could suggest that we should take control simply to mean something general, like the involvement of the agent in exercising her capacities and skills. I don't think this reply will solve the problem. It leads to accepting another problematic presupposition, namely that there is something common, something shared in all cases of doing something - a mechanism, or way in which all agents control their doings. I will argue in more detail in chapter five that postulating such generic links between agents and their actions is a bad tendency and unnecessary if we work with the right conception of doings. While I do cherish the insights of Frankfurt's position, it does not offer enough to help us understand doings well. In later chapters I will argue that some doings are like causings or like processes. Frankfurt's view of agency is surely important and very valuable, but his view of actions seems to be too narrow for the purposes of the present thesis.

6. Philosophers who are not satisfied with events, causings, or authorship views of actions have offered views which treat actions as willings.^{xviii} Volitionalists identify actions with the inner causes of bodily movements, and take

these inner causes to be acts of will or volitions. The difference between such volitionalist views and causings-views of actions is that volitions are not causings, they are the causes. So, whereas according to agent causation and causings views it is agents who are causing actions, on volitionalist accounts it is acts of will which do the causing. Maybe the most important proponent of this view of action, H. A. Prichard writes that “The thing meant by ‘an action’ is an activity”, whether or not the agent is a human, or some material, or an animal. According to Prichard we do think that in moving his hand a man causes his hand to move, but his activity is not identical to (does not consist in) the man’s causing his movement. “And if we ask ourselves: ‘Is there such an activity as originating or causing a change in something else?’ we have to answer that there is not.” (1949: 60) Prichard only uses the example of someone causing his hand to move to contrast it with cases of real activity, which are instances of mental activity – “when we think of ourselves as having moved our hand” we think of having performed this special kind of mental activity, which – according to Prichard - we should call willing. (1949: 61)

The volitionalist view shares many features of the previously presented views. Similarly to causings views, it tries to locate action as some element playing a role in causing actions. Similarly to authorship views it places significant emphasis on our desires and will, and on the mental activity of agents.^{xix} What makes volitionalist views really unique is that they push actions back into the body. They subscribe to the view that our terms like intentionally and voluntary make sense only if we presuppose that they pick out specific things that happen in the mind of the agent. This is also true for example Davidson’s view of actions, but volitionalist views go one step further and assert that these mental occurrences are our actions. This presents a number of problems. Such a view hardly fits any of our practices of action evaluation, attributing responsibility, or our views regarding the involvement of agents in what they are doing and their control over what happens around them. Also, identifying actions with willings is deeply problematic because willings are usually specified by their phenomenology, but not all cases in which an agent performs something have the same phenomenology, and most of them don’t have the phenomenology that consciously willed actions have. Hence, it is hard to see how the sort of mental activity volitionalists envisage willings to be could be actions. It is hard to see the advantage of volitionalism.

7. Another view – in many respects similar to volitionalism – has been defended by Hornsby in her early book *Actions* (1980). The view is really a mixture of events views and volitionalism: it denies that actions would be bodily movements, and it also rejects willings. But it does subscribe to the claim that actions are events, and also accepts that all actions are mental events. Instead of taking the mental events which are actions to be willings Hornsby proposes that they are all tryings. Now, this is manifestly wrong if we take it literally: surely in a great many cases our doings are not purely mental, and especially when they are mental they are most often not tryings but other doings. Hornsby's view seems to fall for several traps characteristic of other monist views. The view identifies actions as minimal elements located inside the body. The view imagines that actions are either the events which cause bodily movements or the events which are bodily movements caused by certain specific mental events. Identifying actions as something within the body is problematic because observers can often see what others are doing, we can observe others acting, and also – as I will argue in more detail in 2.4, 4.2, 5.2 and 6.2 – doings sometimes can only be said to be performed by an agent if movements and also results – changes in the world come about, making it plausible to think that such movements and results are constituents of doings. Furthermore, it also seems wrong to separate agents' doing something from their bodily movements. Normally agents are involved in moving their body, if those movements are constituents of their actions.

Hornsby's view also accepts that there is some one type of ever-present element which is *the* action of the agent, identifying these elements as tryings.^{xx} As Hornsby herself pointed out in later publications (2004, 2012, 2013) such views cannot account for the participation and active role that agents have in actions. All in all, such monist views are quite counterintuitive; they have a hard time of characterising the majority of doings, and share some of the disadvantages of both events views and volitionalist views.

8. As our survey so far indicates event views suffer from a series of common problems: they seem to have a hard time accounting for the role agents play in acting; they don't characterise complex, extended and scattered actions correctly; and mislead philosophers into identifying too narrowly picked elements (bodily movements, tryings, willings) as actions.^{xxi} To avoid these problems some philosophers have opted for the view that actions are more extended, more complex

entities, namely processes. A causal version of process views of action has been proposed by Fred Dretske's (1988, 2004, and 2009). According to Dretske an action can be taken to be "the causal process of a mental/neural event causing a bodily event" and "behaviour is neither the internal cause nor the external effect. It is the one producing the other—a process, not a product." (Dretske 1988: 33) At first this might seem like a causings account which takes causings to be processes. But in reality this is not so: Dretske takes the behaviour to be the unity of the process of the causal production – which can be a very extended continuous producing of one thing by another – and the behaviour coming about to compose the process of the behaviour together (one type of which is human action).

I return to Dretske's view in 6.3 at greater length. As I argue there, his view offers much that is important to characterizing a great variety of doings in a metaphysically plausible way, as well as faithfully to what we all know about what particular types of doings are like. The merits of the view are that while it does recognize the importance of causes that influence behaviour simply in virtue of the structure and properties of agents (inner causes) it does not reduce actions to such inner causes (like some agent causalists and volitionalists do), or to a causing (like other agent causalists, volitionalists and causings views would suggest), and it also avoids the conflation of actions with movements and other changes outside the agents' body. The biggest disadvantage of Dretske's view seems to be that actions are in part still identified by the causes that trigger and structure them, and it is not made clear enough how this explains agential participation, and how it accounts for those actions where results are constitutive of an action which are not directly caused by the agent or under the agents' control. Nevertheless, Dretske's view has much potential and is a valuable springboard for further work on doings, especially for process-like, extended and complex doings.

9. Rowland Stout has in a series of publications worked out a very detailed teleological non-causal process view of action. I deal in more detail with Stout's view in chapter six where I address the question whether aspects of his view can be useful for characterising some doings. For the present, I simply want to indicate that it would be difficult to take Stout's view to be a view of all doings in general. According to the teleological view an action is a process "defined by an end or goal that need not be achieved in order for it to be true that the process has taken place". (Stout 2001) Contrary to Dretske's view, these processes do not incorporate the

results that the agent is continuously producing; it is independent of those results. For Stout, acting is just a process that the agent is engaged in with a goal in mind.^{xxii} We can then say that the objections which held against views that try to locate action strictly at one point in time and space – as do events, willing, and causings views – do not apply to Stout’s view. Stout does take into consideration the plausible fact that some actions are extended and do go on for a longer time, and also, that some actions can be spatially scattered. This way Stout’s view can do justice to the varied temporal and spatial features that actions can have. Stout also avoids ‘confining’ actions to mind: He takes the process of my arm raising to be the process of my arm rising under some agency.

What I find problematic is Stout’s insistence to think only of those instances of behaviour as actions which can be explained rationally. Since Anscombe’s *Intention* most views about actions had something to say about action explanation, and many of them insisted, in the vein of Davidson’s work, that if action explanations are causal then actions have to be characterised by their causal background. Stout seems to be no exception from this trend, the only difference being that instead of relying on a Humean view of causation he thinks that teleological causation is what matters for understanding what actions are. But surely it can’t be right that all action is purpose driven in any sense of purpose that could be cited as a rational explanation of the action. If we take purpose and rational in some minimal sense the view is plausible and uninteresting because any movement of any machine, animal or human can be given a purposive reading (Frankfurt 1978, Dennett 1987), and whatever causes a given behaviour of an organism we can say that we understand it (it is rationalised by explanation) if the explanation really helps us to grasp why the behaviour occurred.

The problem for Stout’s view is that interesting notions of purpose and purposive are much thicker than that.^{xxiii} Many actions don’t have a teleological explanation in the sense that in doing them the agent would be aiming at purposes she endorses for reasons and acts on those reasons, or would have desires or motivations, principles or views for which she would do something. Means-end reasoning is important, still, as for example Millgram (2010) argues, machines can perform means-end reasoning easily without necessarily counting as acting for a purpose because of that, unless they chose their purpose in a way sufficiently similar to us. A lot of actions don’t have this kind of interesting purposive

explanation. Just think of irrational or arational actions (Hursthouse 1991), or actions done out of weakness of will (Davidson 1980, essay 2). For these reasons I think that even if Stout provides a good characterisation of some actions (some doings, more precisely) that characterisation does not apply to non-purposive action.

10. According to the last monist view that I will discuss here actions are instances of the causal relation.^{xxiv} (Hyman 2001) Actions are relations between an agent and a result that is brought about by the agent. Hyman writes that “an act is an instance of causation, obtaining between an agent and an event. For example, Brutus’s killing of Caesar was Brutus’s causing of Caesar’s death. And *Brutus’s extending of his arm* was *Brutus’s causing of this extension.*” (Hyman 2001: 309)

The biggest task for an account such as Hyman’s relation view is to explain the following: Are causings in time and space or not? It seems very natural to think that whatever agents do they do it at times and places. So, if the causal relations view is a view of doings it should accommodate this characteristic of doings. However, it seems difficult to understand how causal relations could be in time and space, and on the other hand, if they are something which is in time and space then they don’t look much like causal relations anymore. It could be said in answer to this dilemma that agents are active in causing a result or engaged in causing. Still, if this is the answer provided we can ask how exactly the view that doings are causal relations differ from a process view? If the agent is not involved in causing an event, then how is the view different from agent causalist views which locate the action in an event in the agent, or from volitionalist and tryings views which identify the action with a causing occurrence? On the other hand if the relations which are the causings of events by agents are not present in space and time then we need an account of what particular conditions make our sentences about the obtaining of this relation true. Otherwise the view becomes mysterious and fairly uninformative.

This version of the causings view succeeds in calling attention to the importance of causal relations holding between agents and results. However, it also shows some of the weaknesses characteristic of monist views. By focusing only on one component involved in acting, the causings view leads to an overly narrow view of actions which has a very hard time accommodating a host of doings as doings. For example, why would anyone endorse a view that claims that no actions are ever bodily movements in any sense, and do not even involve bodily movements? It

seems plausible that agents move their bodies and these movements are constituents of doings. Causing views suggest that the agent is wholly passive with respect to these movements, almost as if he were absent during them. Such questions rob the view of much of its persuasiveness. Nevertheless, there seems to be a sense in which causings seem to be integral elements of many doings. As already indicated, I will discuss causings views in more detail in chapter five.

My aim was in this section to show that the monist views so far (different types of CTAs, causings views, views which identify actions with causes of bodily movements, etc.) all seem to face serious issues which their defenders have not managed to resolve throughout a long period. This is enough for my present purpose to motivate a move from monist to pluralist views of actions. In the next section I will briefly introduce the idea of pluralism and suggest that pluralist views might worthwhile alternatives of monist approaches.

1.3 Pluralism about actions

The purpose of this chapter is primarily to show that there are serious problems with all the major monist views of action and hence a departure from them is justified. But I wouldn't achieve my goal if such a departure could take any direction – maybe one towards another monist view or towards scepticism – and hence my pitch has to include a short preview of the approach I propose to defend instead of monism. As I have already indicated, this approach is pluralism about actions. Pluralism's main claims are that 1. there is no single thing which we call 'action', and 2. the version of pluralism which I'm advocating in this thesis – Strong Pluralism – also endorses that there are philosophically important differences within sub-types of actions. I have asserted that we should distinguish at least between things done and doings and that one of the biggest disadvantages of monist views is that they cannot do so. The next chapter, chapter two, will be devoted to a detailed discussion of this distinction. I will mention instances of its appearance in everyday contexts, and in philosophy, and then present the four main versions of the distinction in which it has been defended in the literature, and I will build my own version of it on these previous proposals.

Besides, some of the monist views which have been serious contenders for the title of 'sole true view of what actions are' have serious flaws: event views fail to accommodate agents in acting; CTAs identify all sorts of occurrences as actions based on what caused them, but they are blind to the inherently active nature of

many doings and also to doings which consist of many interrelated elements; bodily movement views fail to account for the large majority of actions (it is not even sure whether there are any doings which are simply bodily movements); volitionalist and tryings views do not recognize anything outside the boundaries of the body to be an element of an action; with causings views it is hard to know what doings are, where and when they take place; and process views unduly narrow down the processes that might qualify as doings. This shows that so far no monist view has managed to offer a comprehensive view of all actions, or even of all doings. Since the doings – things done distinction calls attention to the fact that there are two things with different natures both of which we can call ‘action’ the inadequacy of monist views of actions seems unavoidable. I will argue in the second part of the chapter that it is not even possible to accommodate all doings in a monist view of doings. My argument will rest mainly on the characterization of doings (2.4) and further discussions of whether monist views can accommodate doings in a broader ontological category (of events, or of causings, or of processes) and at the same time account for all their important characteristics. I will argue that monist views fail to do so.

The pluralism I want to commend is more ambitious than simply endorsing that there are both things done and doings. I want to argue that the monist views also fail in another way: None of them can really ‘get right’ what all our different doings are. I claim that this is not because they are inadequate monist views, but because no monist view could succeed in this. Doings can differ from each other in many different respects, including: the way that they are constituted by causings, results (see 2.4 and 4.2 for more detailed discussions of my notion of results); the way they occupy space and time; the ways in which agents are involved in them; the types of capacities and exercises involved in them, and so on. Pluralism can be a realistic view that takes actions to be part of the furniture of the universe. As such, it need not be a relativist, sceptical, or an ‘anything goes’ view. It does however recognize the rich variety of doings, and that it is hardly – if at all – possible, to select a few characteristics which would shed light on *a* basic nature of all doings.

The pluralist approach which I recommend prioritises characterising doings in detail, especially with respect to their constituents, and their spatio-temporal structure. As I will argue (3.4) this should lead us to think that there are different sub-categories of doings: some of them are bringing-about or causings, some are

events and some are processes. The ontological categorisation of doings should on my view follow such detailed characterisation of doings. In this way we can endorse a metaphysics of doings which captures their natures, and situate them in a wider ontology which will take it into account that these sort of things are there in the world and need to be accommodated in a full picture of it. This line of reasoning enables us to avoid the mistake which monist views make, namely that they try to provide views of actions (or less ambitiously of doings) with an eye of fitting these into broader metaphysical and ontological categories which have been proposed without taking into account the variety of things which there are in the world.

This pluralist approach enables us to learn from monist views, both in avoiding their failures and in incorporating their most useful findings. Most monist views only encounter problems when they get into the details of their claims. In itself the idea that some doings might be events is not controversial; it becomes only problematic if it is coupled with a view of what events are that is incompatible with what we know about actions. The same seems to be the situation with bodily movements, processes, mental actions, and causings. These all seem to be things that can be involved in our doings, or can be doings, if we understand them in a certain way what we mean by this. The second part of my thesis – chapters four to six – pursues this line of enquiry and aims at finding out what we can save and use constructively from the three main monist views (or families of views), the event views, the causings views, and process views. I think that the fact that there are so many different monist views throws some doubt on any further monist enterprises. Can a view that shares the same fundamental presuppositions really be successful where several talented and hardworking colleagues have failed? At the same time the fact that so many different views seemed to be plausible and attractive is – if anything – a good sign for pluralism. Of course different ways of being a pluralist about actions are possible. In chapter three I offer a more detailed treatment of pluralism and argue for a particular version of it.

1.4 A glance ahead: doings and things done

I have argued in this chapter that monist views of action are problematic. I meant by this that we should reject all views of action which endorse the method of claiming that all actions fit one broader metaphysical category (be that events, causings, processes), or a narrower category of occurrents (bodily movements, tryings, willings). I have tried to motivate this departure from traditional

methodology in order to show that endorsing a pluralist approach to actions is a better choice. I will undertake the first step of this in the next chapter where I will argue that the doings - things done distinction is important for several purposes both within philosophy and outside of it. Then in chapter three I will discuss the possible pluralist approaches and the one approach I favour.

To very briefly sum up what happened in this chapter: I first introduced monism, which I take to be the dominant approach that most philosophers working on actions have taken in the last 80 years. I listed all the main positions monist views took on what actions are. My goal was to motivate a departure from pursuing monist views of action, that is, that we shouldn't further defend monist views which have been presented earlier, and we shouldn't spend more time on developing new monist views. All monist views fail to accommodate the doings - things done distinction, and numerous specific problems plague them. My method was that of presenting the key claims monist views endorse and showing that they have come under significant criticism in the literature and also that their most important claims are very often contrary to what we manifestly take to be true of actions. If I was successful the reader is at this point sympathetic or at least open to the idea that a genuine issue has been identified, and we need to look for a solution, which might take a new form. I gave a short presentation of the approach which I take to be the solution, namely pluralism. The fact that such a position is available, and it seems to offer the chance of being able to accommodate both the doings - things done distinction, and solves or avoids many of the problems of monist views by taking a pluralist stance towards doings as well, seems also to support the idea that we should abandon monist approaches. We can now move on to discussing the elements of the broader approach which I call pluralism.

Chapter 2

The distinction between doings and things done

2.1 Introduction

As we have seen there are in philosophy of action different views of what action is. There are also debates concerning the correct metaphysics of action, and respectively that of doings and of things done. In this chapter I'll deal with four different, influential takes on the distinction, and then offer my way of making the distinction. I will discuss these different views of the distinction in chronological order, surveying the positions of John Macmurray, G. H. von Wright, Jennifer Hornsby and Constantine Sandis.

The distinction is a prominent one and of fundamental importance in the philosophy of action. What we take doings and things done to be has an influence on what we think about the relation of *what we do* (or *what you do*, or *what I do*) and our doing of it (or your doing of it, or my doing of it), about the metaphysics of action (do things done occur? are doings events or processes or causings?), the epistemology of action (how do agents know their actions, and how do observers know it?), and about metaethics (do we judge what agents did, their doing so, their reasoning about what to do or their reasoning governing their doing so?). Getting the distinction right provides us with a clear grasp on what we should take actions to be.

2.2 Making the distinction

I will introduce the distinction by briefly summarising the way in which it has been relied upon in ethics and moral philosophy, then move on to discuss four ways of making the distinction in philosophy of action (2.3), and finally offer my own view of doings (2.4). I think that what I already said about the distinction shows one fundamental way in which we rely on it in our everyday affairs. We can discuss what someone is doing or did, and we can also discuss her doing of it or her having done it. Consider the following case: We can talk about what Mary did – prepare a cocktail – and we can talk about Mary's preparing a cocktail. We can evaluate these two objects of discussion differently in the same situation: we can say that it was a great idea from Mary to prepare a cocktail, that is, we can praise her for what she

did, and we can at the same time evaluate separately her doing so. If Mary is amazing with cocktails we can say that she prepared the cocktail gracefully, which we wouldn't say about what she did – her preparing a cocktail might have been graceful but that means something else than that she prepared the cocktail gracefully. We rely on these distinctions all the time, sometimes in matters as mundane as discussing the things our friends do at parties and their doings of them, while at other times weightier matters like the things politicians and military leaders did and their doings of those things.

Sandis notes that “It is worth noting that the terms ‘doings’ and ‘things done’ simply do not have set meanings in ordinary language. (...) Still there is clear *conceptual* space for the distinction in question, even if we have to place a straightjacket on certain aspects of everyday usage in order to capture it.” (Sandis 2012: 188, en. 2) I think we can be even more assertive and say that making the distinction brings some clarity and is helpful in understanding our everyday practices connected to actions. As with any philosophical terminology there are differences between the views of what the two elements of the distinction, doings and things done, stand for. This is what I will try to clarify in next sections. The matter is important for the overall argument of my thesis: making the distinction is helpful in sorting out what the object of evaluative judgments is, what agents have knowledge about, and for some other topics. If it can also be shown that the distinction helps us get a better understanding of all the phenomena that we normally call action that also counts in favour of endorsing it and thereby also accepting pluralism instead of monism as a general approach to actions.

2.3 Four views on the distinction

The purpose of this section will be to review four different ways in which the doings - things done distinction has been made. I present the views in chronological order, recounting what they claim doings and are things done, and what they say about the relation between them. I'll argue that none of the four views gets the distinction quite right: Macmurray and von Wright identify things done mistakenly with products of doings, and Hornsby and Sandis think about doings too narrowly as things that can be firmly characterised as belonging into one metaphysical category. I'll offer my own take on the distinction in the next section. This chapter prepares the ground for chapter three, where I'll argue for my pluralist position.

2.3.1 Macmurray's account of the distinction

In his article ‘What is Action?’ John Macmurray makes a distinction between things done and doings, that is, as he puts it, between deeds and doings. (Macmurray 1938: 74, 76. All further page numbers in this subsection refer to this paper unless otherwise specified.) Macmurray is mainly bothered because, as he sees it, philosophy has only focused on the passive aspects of the self, such as perceiving, experiencing, knowing, and states of the self, such as perceptions, experiences, and thoughts, but has neglected the active forms of the self, like thinking and acting. (77, 84) The latter two are forms of activity of the self and if we want to understand the self as agent we have to account for them too. To do so, Macmurray thinks we need to recognize that *doing* is an activity of the self, directed at bringing about a change in the external world. (70, 77, 82-4) The change so brought about in the world is *what* is done by the agent. (74) Such changes are fundamentally different in reality from events: Macmurray defines things done as changes brought about by agents, whereas events are things *not* brought about by agents. (72, 74)

Macmurray uses in his paper the following terms for deeds interchangeably: an act (70, 71, 74, 75, 79) - what we do (70) – what is done (70, 74, 75) - deed (74-6, 81) - thing done (79, 81) – actum (74, 76, 78, 79, 80-5) - observable change in the world (brought about by an agent) (70, 79) - the change effected in the world by an agent (70, 76-84). And he uses for doings the following terms: Acting (74-5, 77-8, 82) - to act (74, 76) – doing (69, 70, 74-6) – actio (76, 78, 80-5) - “to effect a change in the external world” (74). After making the distinctions he thinks three questions suggest themselves: 1. What is acting (a doing)? 2. What is an act (a thing done)? 3. What is the relation between the two? (74) In answer to the third question he writes:

“(...) it is inherent in the very notion of action that what is done depends for its existence on the doing of it. To act is to effect a change in the external world. The deed is the change so effected. What is done is, by definition, not in the mind, but in the world of existence, and it has consequences in the world of existence which are not under the control of the mind.” (Macmurray 1938: 74-5)

So, according to Macmurray what is done exists in the world as an object, brought about by the agent and once it has been brought about it enters into further relations with other things. What is done depends for its existence on someone doing it, on

acting. So an action is different from other occurrences in nature. (75) Macmurray rejects that actions could be events that are caused by other events:

“Two events necessarily related may perhaps constitute a causal sequence. They assuredly do not constitute an action. An action is not the concomitance of an intention in the mind and an occurrence in the physical world; it is the *producing* of the occurrence by the Self, the *making* of a change in the external world, the *doing* of the deed. No process which terminates in the mind, such as forming an intention, deciding to act, or willing, is either an action or a component of action. In certain circumstances such a mental event or process may be followed *necessarily* by action. But the fact that it can be followed by action is itself enough to show that it is neither action nor a component of action. The analysis of the idea of action does not deal with the concomitants of action, but with action itself; and it yields only the distinction between the *doing* and the *deed*.” (Macmurray 1938: 76, see also 84-5)

Macmurray takes the distinction between events and actions to be fundamental. Actions cannot be understood as one type of events, for example as events with certain causes. This is a very important difference between his view and such later views as Donald Davidson’s (1980) or the early view of Jennifer Hornsby (1980) discussed in section 2. In fact, Macmurray held that it is the idea of events that is derived from the idea of actions:

"An action is something that is done, while an event is something that is not done, but happens. Both the act and the event are changes in the world of existence. Both, in principle, are open to observation, as processes of change. (...) If the observed changes are acts, then they are made by an agent and have their source in his intention to produce changes in the world. (...) I would suggest that the idea of an "event" is in fact derived from the idea of an action through the recognition of such accidents. The primitive tendency of the mind is to refer all changes to agents." (Macmurray 1938: 79)

According to Macmurray then, human action is something that happens in the world, but it is an occurrence that is different from other occurrences in ways that are so fundamental that it merits to be treated as a separate category. In contrast, event views of action see actions as being to a large extent like any other thing occurring in our world, and as forming a category in virtue of some specific properties that they have as events – e.g. their causal background (mental events of

agents), maybe jointly with the type of event that they are (bodily movement, mental action of trying, etc.). I find both views dubious and in section 2.4 I'll argue for a different approach to things done that is closer to Hornsby's and Sandis's treatment of things done.

Macmurray goes on to say that a thing done – what he also calls *actum* – is always a particular, and is a process of change. He speculates that humans have a natural tendency to identify all changes in the world as brought about by an agent, but throughout history we have learned that this is not true. So we invented the idea of events. Event “(...) is the concept of a change which is not intended.” (79) *Actum* and *eventum* are both observable changes and aren't always distinguishable by observation. Accidents are cases where we might think something is an action but we want to emphasize that the change wasn't produced intentionally. (79)

Macmurray makes two important distinctions: one between doing (*actio*) and thing done (*actum*). The former is the activity of the self as agent when producing a change, while the latter is the change produced by the self as agent in the external world, that is, in Macmurray's understanding doing is an agents' producing a change, and thing done is the change produced by the agent. Macmurray draws a second, different, distinction between *actum* and *eventum*. This is a difference between changes in the world which are produced by agents (*actum*-thing done), and changes which are not produced by agents (*eventum*-events). For Macmurray things done and events differ by definition; *actum* can never be *eventum* and vice versa. It is interesting to note that according to Macmurray we invented causal explanations to explain events: since they are not produced by agents, we came up with the idea of something non-agential producing them. (Macmurray 1938: 80) In his diagnosis, the tendency to look for the causes of actions is a further development of this invention of causes: as the sciences become more influential we forget that it is *actum*, not *eventum* that is the basic category of change and try to find causes for actions. But actions are produced by agents, and the proper job of science would be to understand this production and the active mode of the self, not to look for causes which are inadequate to explain actions. (82-84)

From the previous we can conclude that Macmurray offers a non-causal process view of doings which separates the producing of changes by agents from the changes they produce. According to Macmurray doings are productions of changes, and things done are the changes produced. On his view things done are

essentially different from events, because the former are produced by (human) agents while the latter aren't. This seems to be a causal view of things done which says that things done are different from other events in virtue of being caused by an agent. But if that is the only respect in which things done and events differ, then the difference isn't very significant and for me it is hard to grasp why things done, which are just like events in every respect with the exception of their causes, could not be treated as one type of event, as one type of change in the world.

The distinction also seems problematic because once we treat things done as one type of action, and as actions merely in virtue of their causes it becomes hard to see what makes them special. Also, it renders the agents passive with respect to what they are producing. In itself this is not a significant problem: we are in a plausible sense often passive with respect to what we cause. For example if Jamie starts the washing machine, he is in a sense passive with respect to the events which go on in the washing machine, events which he has caused. In another sense, and I will argue in 2.4 that this is the more important sense, Jamie is actively washing his clothes, and this requires for its truth that he knows that the machine is turned on, that it is working, that he keeps an eye on the machine, that he goes and takes out his clothes once the cycle is done, etc. When an action is extended and is partially constituted by events - such as the events going on in the washing machine in Jamie's example - agents are not wholly passive towards them. Nevertheless the events themselves could be the way they are without the involvement of an agent - for example an automatism could turn on the washing machine every three hours. This line of thought seems to go against Macmurray's idea that there is a clear division between changes which are caused by agents and changes which are not. Changes just seem to occur in each case, and whether or not they are constituents of an agent's doing something is a further question - or so I argued here (see also 2.4).

Macmurray could be said to offer a double theory of action: doings are actional productions of changes by selves which are just like events. I don't want to get stuck on the point that 'self' is also too narrow and agents in general do things, even agents which aren't selves. I'll argue in section 2.4 that what Macmurray calls things done could perfectly well be treated as results or consequences of our doings, and we could save action and doing for what is truly actional. The hope that we could filter out some purely agential contribution to the production of action seems dubious anyway: It sounds as if we would either have to accept some kind of

dualism of the physical and the mental, or as if doings could be filtered into actional and non-actional parts.

It also seems to follow from Macmurray's view that doings are always producing changes in the world, and this seems to exclude the idea of there being 'purely mental' actions, like deciding, thinking, pondering, planning, and so on. Macmurray is right that these are activities of agents but not that they have to produce something in the world to count as actions. It is similarly problematic when he writes that no event (and no causing) can be a constituent of an action. Surely in the case of extended, long term, complex actions there are several events and several causings which might be constituents of a doing, as in the case of baking a cake, grading an essay, editing sound recordings, or playing with one's dogs. I think that Macmurray deserves recognition for placing an emphasis on the active role agents play in doing something, and on the productive role of doings. But he didn't make the doings - things done distinction in the way in which it seems most plausible to make it, and seems to have divided actions up along the wrong joints into active change and agentially caused occurrence.

2.3.2 Von Wright's account of the distinction

The doing - thing done distinction also appears in von Wright's *Explanation and Understanding*. Von Wright holds that "(t)he thing done is the result of an action; the thing brought about is the consequence of an action. Primarily, the things done and brought about are changes (events)." (1971: 67) Von Wright holds that we can talk about actions which are the bringing-about of results and those results are the things done. If the things done cause further events, those events are consequences of the action (if they are also intentionally done). (1971: 89) So, we can say that the way von Wright and Macmurray set up the distinction is substantially similar: They both think that the thing done is the result, the change that has been produced by the agent in the world. In Macmurray's account the doing is the producing of such a change by the agent. Although von Wright talks about bringing about a change not about producing it, their views are similar in that neither of them thinks of the doing (producing) and the bringing about as a cause of the result that is the thing done, nor necessarily as a causing of it. That is, they both seem to recognize that a causal relationship between agent and result does not have to exist for an action to exist.

The picture offered by von Wright is further complicated by his earlier views worked out in *Norm and Action* (1963a), where he worked out the first version of

his view of actions and on which he relies in *Explanation and Understanding*. In *Norm and Action* von Wright made a distinction between generic and individual actions to clarify the distinction between basic and non-basic actions. He writes that it is always individual actions to which this division applies. (1963a, chapter 3: 3. All further references to *Norm and Action* are to page numbers within chapter 3.) In *Norm and Action* von Wright also distinguished between acts and events. He held that acts aren't changes in the world, they are not events, but many of them are "the bringing about or *effecting* ('at will') of a change." (1963a: 2) This notion of 'act' is very similar to that of Macmurray's doing, but Macmurray uses the expression 'act' as a synonym of thing done. Von Wright held that actions bring about ('effect' is von Wright's technical notion) events. This difference between acts and events rests on a logical difference: "An act requires an agent. An individual event is the taking place or happening of some generic event on a specified *occasion*. An individual act again is the doing of a generic act on a specified occasion by a specified *agent*." (1963a: 3) Macmurray's and von Wright's views are then also similar in that they both think that acts and things done are not events, and the main difference between things done and events is that things done are produced or effected by an agent.

The distinction between generic acts (or act-categories), and individual acts (called act-individuals too in his terminology) is used by von Wright to express the idea that generic acts (e.g. window opening) can have an unlimited number of cases (e.g. window openings), and those cases of the generic acts are the individual acts. In von Wright's view we can only say that an agent did something (acted) if it is true that the thing done (the change that the agent willed or intended to bring about) occurred. As he puts it "To the generic act of opening a window there answers the generic change of a window becoming open. To the individual act, which was the murder of Caesar, there answers the individual event of Caesar's death." (1963a: 3, 1971: 93-103) This way of thinking about doings (individual act for von Wright) is committed to the claim that a doing can only be truthfully be said to have taken place if the results which are internal to the doing have been brought about. I'm sympathetic of this line of thinking and my understanding of doings will also incorporate it.

Von Wright further clarifies the distinctions between acts, results, and consequences: "To every act (...) there corresponds a change or an event in the world." Change here means both change and non-change, i.e. effecting that

something does not change. “This correspondence between act and change is an *intrinsic* or logical tie. The act is, as it were, ‘defined’ as the act of effecting such and such a change.” (1963a: 5) Whether or not we accept such a characterization of doings is of course dependent on which bringing-about of changes or non-changes by agents we think should be taken to be actions. If one holds that only voluntary or intentional bringing about of changes are actions then the criterion of von Wright might work very well. It seems to me that not only voluntary or intentional bringing-about of changes are doings of agents. We do many things – sometimes in the course of doing something else, sometimes on their own – which are neither voluntary, nor intentional. For example when one jumps up in joy when seeing a friend, when one thirstily gulps down a glass of juice, or babbles to one’s dogs, one is doing something but not typically voluntarily or intentionally.

According to von Wright ‘result’ is ambiguous: “By the result of an act we can understand either the change corresponding to this act or, alternatively, the end-state (...) of this change. Thus, by the result of the act of opening a certain window we can understand either the fact that the window is opening (changes from closed to open) or the fact that it is open.” (1963a: 5) The connection between act and its result is thus intrinsic. “The act cannot be truly described as being an act of the category in question unless it effects a change or ends in a state of affairs of the kind in question, which we call its result.” (1963a: 5) So, although ‘result’ can be used to talk about the facts that hold in virtue of the agent having brought something about by changing the way things were, they can still be distinguished from changes involved in events. In the case of events no agent willed or intended to bring them about.

Consequences are those further changes that follow from the result due to causation or natural-necessity. Their relation as such is extrinsic to an act. (1963a: 6) Again, I think von Wright’s thinking is too rigid and as a result too narrow. As I already wrote, complex doings do seem to involve the causing of changes the bringing about of which is under the agents’ guidance or control, the agent is involved in them, and they are constituents of a doing of the agent. Von Wright is surely right that we should distinguish doings, their results (changes caused directly by the doing), and consequences (further changes caused by the results of the doing). I think this can be done without having to say that all results are internal to doings: some are and some aren’t. Those results are internal which have to be

brought about in order for the doing to count as being done or having been done, and those ones aren't which are caused by the doing as a whole. Consequences of the doing are the changes caused by its results, both the internal results constitutive of the doing, and the further results. I will use 'internal results' and 'intrinsic result' interchangeably. When I write that internal results are constitutive of doings I do not mean that they are wholly constitutive and in themselves constitute the action, nor that they could be clearly separated from some other constituents. Constituents of doings are not interrelated like Lego building blocks which are clearly separable and their outlines can be traced even in a whole. They are more like a chemical compound where the constituent elements are united and form a whole that has different characteristics from its parts as a whole.

Von Wright brings a very useful set of concepts to the debate but I slightly disagree with his way of using them. He seems to treat things done as the results of doings similarly to Macmurray, which is problematic. The expression 'thing done' is well suited and connected to the *what*-question concerning actions, and as such would be better suited to track kinds or types of action. Furthermore, distinguishing things done and doings as two expressions which both cover something actional in the world that can be clearly distinguished, and one of which (things done in Macmurray's and von Wright's use) do not involve the agent do not actually seem to be actions, and strengthen the misunderstanding that constituents of action can be separated clearly, and maybe even yield further building blocks of action. There have been parallels between Macmurray's and von Wright's views on doings and things done, and although I argued that some of their views on them are problematic, they nevertheless both deserve credit for both the sensitivity and the richness with which they treat their subject. I will now move on to discussing two different views of actions, those of Hornsby and Sandis.

2.3.3 Hornsby's version of the doing-thing done distinction

Hornsby starts her 1980 book *Actions* by making two important distinctions on which she builds in her work: The first distinction is that between particular actions and kinds of actions. (1980: 2, further page references in this section are all to Hornsby's 1980 book) The second is that between transitive and intransitive verb forms and the distinction they track: According to Hornsby transitive verbs track an agents' moving her body, while intransitive verbs track the movements thus caused by the agent. The former are events which cause the latter. That is, she holds that we

can on the one hand talk about the rising of the arm, which is expressed by the intransitive form of the verb and is a movement of the body but not an action, and on the other hand we can talk about the raising of the arm by an agent, which is expressed by the transitive form of the verb, and is an action. To test the distinctions and views she proposes that we should consider on how well these distinctions fit our ordinary way of talking, that is, whether or not using her distinctions would result in a way of talking that we find natural. For example, after highlighting what she thinks the difference between transitive and intransitive forms express she urges the reader to consider that to the question ‘What did you do?’ the answer wouldn’t be ‘my arm rose’ but ‘I raised my arm’. (3) Hornsby uses the distinction to make the point that actions are bodily movements, but only in the transitive sense. So, in the transitive sense bodily movements are our doing something (your raising your arm, for example) and as such they are the causes of bodily movements in the intransitive sense (causing the rising of your arm). (13)

She goes on to add that when we talk about what someone did, we only talk about one event (which is ‘her raising her arm’), and a kind of action (‘raising an arm’). The latter is not a particular event. (3) Hornsby makes an admittedly artificial choice of using ‘action’ in her work to stand only for doings. She says of our common practice and her choice: “I do not say that ‘event’ and ‘action’ are words that are used exclusively of particulars (‘act’, at least, is most often used of universals); but for clarity’s sake I shall use them only in that way myself. In this usage, actions are people’s doings of things, and what is done is never an action.” (4) As stated here, Hornsby thinks that normally we do use action to stand for general ideas (universals, kinds, types, or some other general category) of action, but the bulk of her discussion is focused on doings.^{xxv}

Hornsby explains what she takes to be a difficulty about getting right what we talk about when we talk about actions in everyday situations. Hornsby compares ‘perceive something’ and ‘do something’. She thinks that whereas perceive something is straightforward in that we can say that there was an object seen, do something is misleading as it suggests that besides a doing there was also

“a separate thing which is done (or is the action). For whereas the question ‘What did you do?’ must be answered by saying simply that there was an action of some particular kind (which thus had a certain sort of effect), an answer to the question ‘What did you perceive?’

will directly mention something separate from the perception. With ‘perceiving something’, then, it is not a mistake to interpret the words as a verb with external accusative, and grammar keeps one clear of possible regress.” (Hornsby 1980: 120)

That is, she takes doing something not to have an object in the sense in which seeing something is the seeing of an object. Things done are not objects or events; they are the kinds of actions that the agent has performed.^{xxvi} And a result of an action is not what was done either; it is simply what is caused by doing something. To use Hornsby’s earlier example, my doing something is my raising my arm, what I do is raise my arm, and what my raising my arm causes is the rising of my arm. Neither my raising of my arm, nor the rising of my arm are what I did. The ‘something’ in ‘my doing something’ does not refer to an object or event but to a thing done – the type or kind of the action I have performed - which is in this case simply ‘raised my arm’.

As can be seen from the exposition above Hornsby’s usage of ‘act’ (thing done) differs from those of Macmurray and von Wright, and corresponds roughly to what von Wright called generic-act. The way she narrows her usage of action to people’s doings of things is similar to the way in which Macmurray emphasizes that acting (*actio*) is the activity of the agent, or to the way in which von Wright talks about agents effecting changes. But whereas Macmurray is happy to say that things done are changes that occur when produced by the agent, Hornsby would treat such occurrences as bodily movements which are events and are not actional. Hornsby treats the doings which are actions and the bodily movements which are their results as two separate events, the moving causing the movement. Macmurray denied that things done are events: he maintained that there is a categorical difference between changes produced by agents and changes that were not produced by agents, only the latter being events, but still thought that they are occurrences. Hornsby is noncommittal about what things done are, but she clearly doesn’t treat them as any sort of occurrence. I think this is a virtue of Hornsby’s view and helps avoid calling actions both doings and results of doings, while it also reserves a useful term for expressing when we are talking about types of kinds of actions.

Another difference is that Macmurray thought that agents produce changes in the world, and contrarily to events do not cause them, and von Wright took the relation between doings and internal results of actions to be logical and not causal.

Hornsby in contrast is happy to say that our doings are events that cause movements which are also events. In section 2.3 of her book *Actions* she explains that while the concepts of bodily movements_T (the lower case 'T' stands for 'transitive) and bodily movements_I (the lower case 'I' standing for 'intransitive) are different, they do apply to the same kind of particulars, just as animal and giraffe can apply to the same substance, or pulling a face and making Lucie laugh can apply to the same action. (5) But Hannah's raising her arm, and Hannah's arm's rising apply to two different events: The first one is a trying (a mental event which is the doing, the action) and causes the second one which is a bodily movement. (13) In section 2.4 and chapter 5 I will argue that we should actually try to encompass both the causal and the non-causal view about the relation between doings and their results, and also the idea that there is a difference between internal and non-internal results, this yielding four different possibilities: that doings are sometimes bringing about their internal results non-causally, sometimes are bringing about their results non-causally, sometimes are bringing about their internal results causally, and sometimes are bringing about their results causally.

Hornsby says about her non-committed stance about what things done are the following:

"I speak, as other English speakers do, as if we were committed to the existence of the things we do. Whether we accept that that gives us reason to think that there really are such universals as things done is on a par with the question whether we accept that there are things had because we find sentences like 'Wisdom is something he has'. I do not attempt to answer these ontological questions". (Hornsby 1980: 4, fn4)

She also adds the following:

"Things done correspond to kinds of action, and descriptions of actions determine kinds of actions. I hope that it can be left an open question whether the philosopher's English in which we speak informally about basic action commits us to an ontology of kinds, of properties, of descriptions" (Hornsby 1980: 69)

I will keep questions concerning things done open. My focus will be on what doings are and to find this out I explore what their nature is like and based on that take a

stance on which ontological categories they belong into (see 2.4, and chapters four to six). Hornsby's approach is a very clear and helpful discussion of the topic. Even though I will later argue against several of her views (that actions would be trying, that they are mental events, that all actions would be causings, that the relation between a doing and its results is always causal, that the transitive-intransitive distinction tracks a distinction between two events) my view is in agreement with her view about the fundamental difference between things done and doings, and the importance of this distinction to philosophy of action.

2.3.4 Sandis's many distinctions

In his book *The Things we do and Why we do them* Sandis distinguishes between (at least) eleven forms of expression that we use to convey eleven conceptions of action. These forms of expression are the following: 'behaviour', 'the movings of her body', 'action', 'things she does', 'her movings of her body', 'what I'm doing', 'my doing of x', 'my doing x', 'the event of my doing x'/'the process of my doing something', 'what I do when I x', 'my x-ing'. (Sandis 2012: xviii. All further page numbers in this section refer to Sandis 2012, unless otherwise specified.) Besides the very legitimate goal of retaining conceptual sophistication and the expressive power it grants, Sandis has at least two other motivations in arguing against the conflation of different conceptions of action. One is that when we ask for an explanation for an action it can make a great difference what exactly we would like an explanation of. According to Sandis three conceptions of action are most often conflated in studies of human behaviour and action, both in philosophy and in other fields. These three conceptions of action are:

- “(a) The (mere) movement of the agent's body.
- (b) The event (b1) or process (b2) of the agent moving her body.
- (c) *What* the agent did (viz. move her body).” (6)

I will return to the discussion of how Sandis treats these three (or if we accept both (b1) and (b2) then four) conceptions of action. Before doing so I will introduce another distinction he makes. According to Sandis when we are interested in the explanation of an action it is of great importance which conception of action we want to explain. To this purpose Sandis distinguishes between the three questions: (i) 'Why A's body moved', (ii) 'Why A's action of moving her body occurred', and (iii) 'Why A moved her body'. (12) All three aim at elucidating something different, namely “[i]n (i) we are searching for the *cause* of the event that was the movement

of A's body. What is sought in (ii), by contrast, is the *cause* of the (related) event *that is A's moving of her body*. Finally, to provide an explanation of (iii) is to explain (...) why A performed the action of moving her body." (Sandis 2012: 12, see also 25-6)

Sandis mentions an example of the doings – things done distinction made in a similar way to David Ross's work. Sandis thinks that Ross draws the distinction in the same way as he does, and with similar motivations in mind. Here is Ross in *The Right and the Good*:

"I would further suggest that additional clearness would be gained if we used 'act' of the thing done, the initiation of change, and 'action' of the doing of it, the initiating of change, from a certain motive. We should then talk of a right act but not of a right action, of a morally good action but not of a morally good act. And it may be added that the doing of a wrong act may be a morally good action; for 'right' and 'wrong' refer entirely to the thing done, 'morally good' and 'morally bad' entirely to the motive from which it is done. A firm grasp of this distinction will do much to remove some of the perplexities of our moral thought." (Ross 1930: 6-7)

As can be seen Ross thinks that the distinction can shed light on some issues in ethics, most importantly it can be employed to avoid confusion between evaluating what one is doing and one's doing of it (see section 2.2 of my thesis). We need not agree with Ross's way of dividing very firmly what wrong or bad apply to. It is enough if we recognize that there are two potential objects of evaluation in every case in which an agent is doing something: what she is doing, and her doing of it.

As Sandis recognizes we do make a distinction between evaluating "an act performed and the performance of the act in question". (10) We say things like 'It was a nice thing to help the old man, but her doing so was entirely unnecessary'. Of course we can make ethical and moral evaluations within the same sentence as in: 'What the general did was the right thing, but his doing so can only be deemed bad'. (10, 150) Sandis is surely right that we should distinguish between things done (what we do), doings, and mere bodily movements. Whether we need to introduce further questions depends on how we understand the doings - things done distinction. This will be the main topic of the next chapter, where I discuss different possible pluralist positions. The main question is whether the categories of things

done and of doings are broad enough to accommodate all the different finer conceptions of action or not. I'll argue that they are, whereas Sandis's position seems to be that they aren't, and Hornsby's that there aren't any further important distinctions to recognize.

In Sandis's view things done are just what the agent does. To stick with the earlier example of Sandis if the bodily movement is 'the rising of my arm' (an event), and my doing is 'my raising of my arm' (an event or a process), then what I do is 'raise my arm' and what she does is 'moves her body'. (32) Similarly to Hornsby Sandis holds that although we clearly have a conception of actions as things done, no clear commitment follows from this about what things done are in broader metaphysical terms. (144-5)

Regarding doings Sandis urges us to take a closer look at doings and upon doing so himself holds up another distinction between the event/process of my doing x and my doing x . This distinction was already hinted at when Sandis lists 'the activity of our doing something' as one of the possible conceptions of action. (10) Doings are on Sandis's view most commonly taken to be either the events of my doing something, or the processes of my doing something (for example 'the event of my raising my arm', or 'the process of my raising my arm'), but the later he writes the following:

"Moreover – and here I part company with Hornsby – (...) it is, in any case, a mistake to think that my doing x is itself identical to the process of my doing x , for the 'of' in question is not that of identity (as in 'the city of Paris') but rather signifies a different kind of relation (as in 'the pick of destiny'). If this were not so, then the process of my doing x would be identical to the event of my doing x (...) and, indeed – even more absurdly – the rumour, memory, or hope of my doing x . (...) What is (or fails to be) intentional, however, is neither the event of my doing something, nor what I *do*, (...) but rather my *action* of doing it, in the sense in which actions are things we perform." (Sandis 2012: 33)

So Sandis distinguishes doings from the events or processes of doings. The former he takes to be agents' performing something, while the latter the events of agents' performing something. But what use is this distinction really? I will argue in detail in chapter five in the section concerning the VKM framework that whether or not we characterise something as an event or a process is primarily a question of

what we think of its temporal and spatial profile, its complexity and the involvement of the agent in it if it is a doing (whether the agent was involved continually in it, and whether the agent brought about directly all results that are constitutive of it). This approach does not fall to the objections Sandis has against saying that some event or process is intentional.

Sandis seems to think that events and processes are some types of entities which are always different from doings. I think we can understand his approach in a way that yields two perfectly sensible claims: we can take it to amount to a distinction – similar to Macmurray’s – between changes which are actions and that are events. If this is the case then Sandis has to deal with the same kind of objections which I have proposed to Macmurray’s view (see 2.3.1). Another way to understand the distinction Sandis makes is to take him to be saying that doings are agents’ bringing about things, exercising their abilities, capacities and skills and the (intrinsic or extrinsic) results of their doing so, and to think of processes and events as processes or events of the agent’s doing something. The ‘of’ in ‘the processes/events of’ does not mean identity in Sandis’s view (I concur with him on this, see 4.2). A natural way to think of what Sandis means by this is that the results and consequences brought about/caused by agents are parts or constituents of the event/process of the agents’ doing, but not of the doing, which is simply the bringing about/causing of those results and consequences. I will argue against this way of thinking about doings and defend the claim that extended doings are partially constituted by some of their results and consequences, and in such cases doings *are* events and processes.

The way Sandis makes the distinction seems to aim at identifying an element of distinctively agential contribution to the events and processes of the world. In my view taking such an approach is a mistake because in many cases, as in the case of Dana’s raising her arm the whole agent, in this case Dana, contributes to what is going on in the world, and all that Dana is involved in – including her arm’s going up – is an actional element of the world, and is different from other events and processes (see also 5.5 and 6.2). Sandis and others who identify the distinctly agential element with some causal contribution of the agent seem to worry that including the rising of the agent’s arm in the doing would render it indistinguishable from other things that occur in the world, and hence actions would lose their special status. I think that even if we would adopt – I’m not saying that we should – the

hardest physicalist-reductionist approach we can take towards actions it is very plausible to think that there would be several systematically distinguishable characteristics of the occurrences which are doings, and based on those characteristics they could be contrasted with non-actions.

I will argue in the next section and chapters four to six that we do not need to enter into such metaphysical speculation and reductionism. Even if we only focus on what is relatively uncontroversial about doings we can provide a view of them that can accommodate them in the world and it can do this without being committed to the claim that somehow agents' causings are actional but the movements which agents carry out and coordinate, the events and processes which are under their control are not. I will offer a view according to which what constitutes my raising my arm cannot in any intelligible way get cut off from anything that is not an agents' performing something. In the case of more extended doings the mistake seems to be even more obvious. Think for example of Sebastian's designing a new trade policy or Ann's playing a game of chess. We don't want to say that simply those things count as the doings of the agent that are the initiating movements or the first exercises of agential capacities on the agent's part.

Sandis could reply to my arguments that actually his way of thinking doesn't exclude constituents of actions from actions, exactly the opposite. He could claim that because he allows that both doings (in his narrower understanding) and events or processes of an agent's doing x can count as action his view is richer and can account for an important distinction for which other views cannot. I think this argument would not be right: my approach of taking doings to be wholes does yield the right carving up of things into actions and non-actions, and by thinking of actions as having constituents it enables us also to think of distinctively mental or neural or psychological or other constituents and processes that can be important to distinguish, without making the claim that any of them would be a doing in itself. Of course in some cases we can identify quicker, simpler doings as constituents of slower, more complicated ones, as in the case of completing a triathlon we can separate easily the running from the swimming, and both of them from the cycling. This does not mean that the constitutive doings would be simple: they also involve the agents' exercising of some of her capacities, they involve bodily movements, intrinsic results, and so on, and thus, the problem is not solved.

All in all, Sandis offers a rich and detailed view of doings and things done, with similar motivations in mind which I have also cited in favour of accepting the distinction. Our disagreement concerns whether or not a further distinction between ‘the event/process of my doing something’ and ‘my doing something’ is a real and important distinction or not. There surely are ‘events of my doing x ’ as well as ‘processes of my doing x ’, and I will argue in chapter five that we should also take seriously ‘my causing of x ’. But it is doubtful whether there is anything that corresponds to ‘my doing x ’. I think that some cases of ‘my doing x ’ are best described as events while others as processes, that is, they *are* events or processes, or causings. It is a further question in my view whether or not we take actions to be different from events in kinds, say, for the reason that actions are always changes brought about (caused) by agents, while events are not directly caused by agents. Whereas Sandis claims that ‘the event of my doing x ’ is different from ‘my doing x ’, and they both differ from ‘my moving my hand’, I will argue that an event (or process) which is a moving of my hand is of a different kind than events which are not doings.

This concludes my survey of the four most important ways in which the doings - things done distinction has been made in the literature of philosophy of action. I have argued that none of these four views gets the distinction entirely right. My view is the same concerning things done as Hornsby’s and Sandis’s, but it diverges from both of their positions when it comes to doings. There is no way of fully and outright endorsing or rejecting any view of the distinctions which are as sophisticated and complex as the ones discussed here. Therefore I have aimed to point out throughout the discussion of these four views which of their particular ideas seem correct and argued against some of their specific claims. The view presented in the next section will be the one I take for the remainder of this thesis to be the correct way of making the distinction.

2.4 The version of the distinction defended in this thesis

The doings - things done distinction is of crucial importance for my thesis. As I have argued, one of the main reasons why we should reject monist views and shift to pluralist approaches to action is that monist views don’t have the resources to accommodate this distinction. Several things speak for making the distinction: our practices of evaluating actions and of explaining them, as well as understanding agential knowledge of action acquired in a special way, all call for this distinction to

be made. I'll write in more detail in the conclusion about how a pluralist approach to actions might be useful for seeking solutions for several problems in philosophy as well as outside philosophy. So far in this chapter I have tried to further motivate the case for endorsing this distinction by showing that despite that it has not been widely discussed, it is accepted and endorsed in a few important works in the field, and making the distinction gets us closer to understanding many more significant details about actions. In this section I'll try to gain even more traction for the doings - things done distinction by presenting what I take to be the most plausible way of thinking about doings. But let me first explain my stance on things done.

Things done are important and interesting, still in my thesis I'll mainly explore what doings are because I will try to show that certain elements of monist theories can be used to understand more about doings. In my view, the same could not be done for things done. As I wrote, things done are types or kinds of actions, and they make an appearance primarily when we cite them in our answers to questions of the form '*What is the Agent doing?*' In itself this approach to things done does not commit us to a more detailed picture of what they are, or of their metaphysics, or of which category they belong to, and I won't enter into such discussions. The focus will mostly be on doings because doings are what agents can be engaged in, what they can be observed as doing, what they control, and so on. Monist theories that try to identify actions as elements of our world belonging to one kind could be useful by providing more details for our understanding of doings, but I think that they couldn't do the same for our understanding of things done (see 1.2). In this section I will provide a general characterization of doings and in the next chapter I discuss how my approach to doings distinguishes my pluralism from two other pluralist views. In chapters four to six I'll survey what we can learn about doings if we explore the idea that some doings might be events, some doings might be causings, and that some doings might be processes as monist views would have us think about all doings.

I take doings to be different from other occurrences in that there is a key element of the agent-level organization playing a role in their bringing about. In the case of agents like stones, acids, branches or vegetables the agent level organization will mean all the properties, powers, capacities something has in virtue of its overall structure. In the case of machines and more complex plants the story is the same but due to the differences in their workings and structure there are many agent level

capacities, abilities, that appear which are not present at the lower level. And at the level of organization of agents where more complex animals including humans can be found there are several interesting further self-sustaining, self-organising, and other complex agent level capacities, abilities, skills, that influence the behaviour of the agent as a unit. For example Alvarez 2013 offers an interesting view about what makes certain key human powers distinctive from the powers of other agents. I agree with Alvarez that some human agency can involve the use of specifically human abilities, capacities, etc., and also their use in a specific way (e.g. enabled by conceptual links between information, certain types of info being made use of, etc.); the same is true of some animal doings, and doings of robots, plants, and parts of beings; in general what I'm interested in my thesis is agency of complex systems – e.g. robots, animals, humans; agency is not my main topic but I think the notion of doing I'm working with is flexible enough to serve as a loose, unified framework; I'm not sure about how to handle plants, molecules, bacteria etc. Accordingly, when I use 'behaviour' I mean all actional doings of agents.^{xxvii}

That the agent-level features play a role in doings is what makes them different from other occurrences in the world, where no agents can be located as origins of some change, or where changes happen inside an agent.^{xxviii} For example CTAs fail to grasp what actions are exactly because they misunderstand the relation between agents and their actions: they think of actions as bodily movements or mental events which could happen just the way they are without an action occurring. But no bodily movement which is a constituent of an action is like a bodily movement which isn't an action: the processes – muscle movements, neural processes, chemicals produced and active in my tissues, as well as my psychology, the coordinating processes in my motor cortex, etc. – are different when I raise my arm and when my arm is moved by someone else, or when my dog pulls on it. There is nothing actional in it in the last cases – what happens to my arm is not connected, not integral to any agent level processes of mine. Of course if I react to someone else moving my arm or my dog's pulling on it I have started acting. I do not want to claim that no causal processes are involved in one's raising an arm. My view can then offer the following specification in addition: an agent is always *involved* in her doings, but she is only *engaged* in them when she is exercising some of her agential capacities in doing something. The same is true of *performing* something, with the additional criterion that an agent only counts as performing something if she is

actually bringing about some of the results characteristic of the type of doing she is performing.

This approach to doings can help us to see why CTAs are wrong: many of the causal relations that are constitutive or enabling of doings of agents are parts of the doing. The doing is neither their results, nor the causing relation. Another problem stemming from the same type of thinking can be caught in the act when it comes to descriptions of actions: Davidson thought that there are events which are just like events that are not actions, and they get described as action in virtue of having specific causes, which are in his view a belief and a desire which together provide the agent with a reason to do something (see also chapter four). On such a view the event which gets described as an action in virtue of its causes is seen as a ‘naked’, neutral or brute event, an event that is the same no matter whether it is a constituent of a bodily movement that is not an action or a constituent of an action. Everything that goes on in an agent, including in her arm, is different during acting then during not-acting. All the small differences matter. Some doings are just doings.

I will argue for this view in connection with different views of what doings are in sections 4.2, 5.2 and 6.2, and later parts of this section. To prepare the grounds for those arguments and clarify why I think that doings are different from non-doings I offer the following consideration: agents – whether human, other animal, plant, or non-animal – are complex beings. When their agent level capacities, skills, powers, abilities are involved in producing something there is a real difference in what goes on in the agents at the agential level – be that psychological as in the case of persons, nervous as in the case of animals, chemical as in the case of acids, and so on. When things happen to agents these agential capacities, etc., are not involved in the same way. While a person is raising her arm she is involved in this, if not in any other way then simply by controlling her movements. Such control might not be free, intentional, voluntary, planned or interesting in any other respect, but I have not made any such criterion part of my view of something’s being a doing of an agent. As long as agent-level capacities are involved we are dealing with actions on the view I defend.

I also hold that Davidson is right that doings can have many different descriptions. An agents’ doing something intentionally might merit other descriptions, descriptions which are true of the agents’ doing but are not intentional doings of hers (see 4.5). On the other hand, contrary to Davidson, not all doings

have to be intentional under at least one description. Some actions are voluntary but not intentional, performed willingly but not with an intention (for example if I never intended to marry your daughter but I voluntarily said yes after you threatened me), some are neither intentional nor voluntary (for example Stephen's blinking when a ball is thrown at him). This approach helps also with the problems Davidson and others following him face when they claim that many descriptions apply to the same event. They have to explain the following: the action, which gets the action-descriptions is an event of a bodily movement, while it gets described – for example in Davidson's classic example – as *A*'s flipping the switch, *A*'s turning on the light, *A*'s lightning the room, *A*'s scaring away a prowler. It seems that for at least three of these descriptions to be true a lot more than a bodily movement has to be brought about by *A*. Davidson and others endorsing his view then end up in the position of having to say that it is the same bodily movement that gets described in all these ways in virtue of the results it has.

This position is problematic for Davidsonians to maintain because 1) it doesn't recognize that a bodily movement which is an action is different from a nonactional one, 2) it has a hard time accounting for the unity of extended actions like running a marathon or building a stone-garden, and 3) it narrows down all actions to an arbitrary constituent of actions while excluding from action everything else that is naturally thought to be involved in them. Davidson's idea of different descriptions applying to doings can be made use of without endorsing a CTA or a more narrowly Davidsonian view, and this is one more reason to adopt a more flexible view of doings. It also needs to be noted that different descriptions might track different aspects of facets of the same action. Describing something as 'her delicately raising the fork to her mouth repeatedly' alludes to one's refined table manners, and while the expression 'her stuffing herself full with Brussels sprouts' may be about the same doing, it certainly doesn't put the emphasis on the same facet of the doing.

Some monist views have claimed that actions are events, or processes, or causings, and I wrote that we can make use of these views in order to understand doings better. But how could doings be events, processes, or causings if they are inherently agential? Well, three things need to be said: 1) That doings are inherently agential does not mean that all that doings are - all that constitutes them is – is an agent's exercising an agent-level capacity or ability. Doings are partly – and rarely fully – constituted by the exercise or working of agent-level abilities, skill,

capacities, powers, etc., and more often than not they also encompass bodily movements, thoughts, the (sometimes concerted) workings of not one but of several distinct capacities (attention, concentration, etc.) and even things that are not under the agent's control.

Both in joint and group action agents sometimes have to rely on others for something to be performed together, and so, others' doings are constituents of their joint doing, and at other times they encompass results or consequences of constituents of the doing that are under the control of the agent. For example in staging an exhibition or in organising a Christmas dinner there are several things constitutive of these doings which are directly under the agent's control, like her making phone calls, carrying and placing decoration, planning the dinner, etc., and there are also constituents that aren't under her direct influence, like the appearance of the guests, the potatoes' becoming tender, and so on. Some doings are extended, complex, and an agent could not have been said to be doing them, or to have done them if their constituents had not occurred (see also 6.2 and 6.3). So, doings seem to be different from each other in respect of how complex they are, what constituents they involve, and some of them may have an event-like character, others a causing-like character, and again others a process-like character: they can be more or less extended in time, space, complexity, and some of them are constituted by a single exercise of a single capacity which doesn't cause anything further (like thinking of a number) while others involve the use of a great number of capacities and causing many results and consequences (like building a Japanese stone garden).

Treating doings as actions in virtue of their nature that can have different characteristics also helps to explain questions about knowledge that agents have of their own actions and sort out questions concerning the explanation and evaluation of actions. If we endorse the view of doings that I propose then in all such debates we can ask what the object of knowledge, explanation, or evaluation is, and we can treat doings as these objects. I will discuss such positive consequences and potential uses of my approach in more detail.

What about those cases where the objects of two descriptions are not one doing, but two different and related doings? It seems to me uncontroversial that there are complex doings which involve the exercise of several distinct agential capacities, and the bringing about of several smaller or larger results. Sometimes we can single these out and treat them as actions in their own right. For example when we review

Adam's performance at his company we might not only be interested in whether Adam has performed a task, but also in how he has performed different stages of the task – was he economic, fast, precise, polite, cautious, etc.? There is no single, simple relation between doings that could capture every possible relation doings can have to each other. When Katja performs a complicated choreography, that is a planned action, and the unity of the dance partly comes from Katja's intention with which she is acting, her attention and concentration and so on. She could not have performed that dance without performing all steps, turnings and other movements that are part of that dance.

There are also different unities, which are even surprising to the agent: one might come up with a funny short speech as one goes along, making a joke, continuing with an insightful remark, a touching memory, and completing the sequence with something funny, doing all this spontaneously (see also 5.2). In some cases mere convention, independently of the intentions and purposes of the agent, will render some doings into a larger unity (consider for example offending another person by saying two seemingly unrelated things one after the other), and customs might achieve the same. So, there might be many types of relations between doings and many types of doings which have other doings as their constituents. That doings can be 'made' into unities of further doings in such varied ways also shows that there is no single element in all doings, in all actions which would render all of them doings. Willing, trying, intending, planning: none of these are always present when an agent acts – not even in the case of humans, not to mention species that can't plan, or agents that don't have mental capacities.

I think what motivates monists to argue for their views is the intuition that all doings are the same in some substantial sense, that is, they are looking for a common element like trying, willing, moving one's body which is present in every case when an agent acts. According to monist views, these doings can be described as this or that type of action (as a jumping, an arm raising, a painting of the wall, a contract closing) partially in virtue of the intention or goal with which the agent performs them, and partially in virtue of the circumstances in which the doing is performed and the results and consequences which it brings about. In this section I'm arguing against such monist approaches by trying to show how manifold doings are. Doings always merit certain descriptions qua doings – the factors, like the agents' states of mind – when they are present - are not external factors influencing

which descriptions apply to them, but are tied up with the doings of the agents in a way that they shape those particular doings. Doings are unique because they are done by a particular agent at a particular time, and involve some activity of agent-level abilities, capacities, skills or powers.

It is also important to note that doings behave differently with respect to their aspectual features. Some doings – especially those that are typically or only ever performed voluntarily or intentionally – have what I call intrinsic results. That is, for it to be true that an agent is doing them, or an agent has done them certain things need to happen. Since I claimed that we should treat ‘mental actions’ such as thinking, deciding, deliberating, and bodily movements under the agents’ direct control like raising one’s arm, making dance steps, or moving a pen as inherently actional, the thinking, deciding, moving, stepping, etc. do not count as results, they count as constituents of the doings. In the case of Ann’s swimming four miles what counts as the intrinsic result is the covering of four miles – one cannot be said to have swum four miles if one has not covered four miles. Of course one can be said to be swimming four miles while one is engaged in swimming four miles and hasn’t yet covered the distance. At the same time with swimming four miles it seems to be enough for it to be underway that the agent is engaged in swimming and making progress with the intention of swimming four miles.

There are more obviously structured doings with more rigid structures, like practising one’s kanji writing. When one writes kanjis one should make the strokes in a specific order. If Shaun is not following that order then no matter what the end results are, it is not the case that Shaun has done his kanji practice. In this case the reason why Shaun doesn’t count as doing what he has to do with the conventions relating to writing kanjis, specifically the conventions regulating the order in which the strokes should be drawn. Conventions, habits, customs, rules of politeness and etiquette, and several other normative systems specify criteria which have to be satisfied in order for something to count as a specific type of doing described by these systems. There are also doings which agents can engage in without satisfying any prescribed rules. Acids can act on minerals, cats can punch dogs, and humans can walk without having to conform to any rules. This shows that whether or not an agent counts as having done something can have different criteria from case to case.^{xxix}

Another thing about doings and their constitution that is necessary to discuss is their causal profile. Some doings involve causing certain things. For example a lumberjack cuts out trees, and this causes the trees to fall. She fells trees. Snipers shoot people, and often they try to shoot them so that they instantly die. So, some snipers cause people to die by shooting them. But not all doings involve causing something. When Esther wants to come up with a solution to a mathematical problem she thinks about it, but she does not cause anything. When Hiromi pays at the cashier in the mall she pays and buys the groceries, but she does not cause anything. Similarly when Annie raises her arm: in raising her arm she simply makes her arm go up, but she does not cause it to go up, nor does she cause anything further to happen.^{xxx} Of course there are several causings, events and processes going on within agents at different levels – neurons firing, hormones and other chemical compounds being produced and absorbed, muscles tensing and contracting – but the agent does not cause anything. Annie as an agent simply raises her arm. So, not all doings seem to involve causing something (see also 5.2 where I argue for different ways in which causation can be a constituent of doings).

In the case of some doings their intrinsic results have to be caused by the agent. The sniper hasn't eliminated the target if she didn't cause the target's death by shooting him. But in other cases causing something is not constitutive of the doing: In running four miles Edith might wear down her shoes and might cause the heel to come off, but this does not have to happen for Edith to run four miles. There is also a difference between the sniper shooting the target in the head and causing the target to die as a result, and the sniper's shooting a rope which held a weight that falls on some cargo boxes which squash the target. In this case the sniper's doing is still killing the target, but her doing this time involves causal relations which hold between the rope, the weight, the boxes and the target and are not under the direct control of the sniper in the way in which her shooting the target or her shooting the rope is. Nevertheless the progressing chain of events causing each other is constitutive of her doing.

These subtle differences between the ways in which causing something is involved in doing something will be of importance when I discuss the distinction between doings which are causings, which are events and which are processes in chapters four to six. In a nutshell, I will argue that there are some doings which do not involve causing anything at all, there are doings which can be said to be

causings in the sense that they are just the causing of something by doing something; there are more complex doings of agents which involve causing intrinsic results, these causings are under the agents' control, and these might be called events; and there are also doings which involve causing results and further consequences which are not under the direct control of the agent and these might be called processes. Some doings that are causings (and some doings that do not involve causing anything at all) are almost instantaneous, while others are more or less extended both spatially and temporally. I will argue that it is a good way of making the distinction between doings that are events and that are processes to distinguish them based on their temporal, spatial and causal profile.

We sometimes use constructions like 'the event of raising my arm' or 'the process of raising my arm' to talk about doings. It has been objected to this that if one accepts that there are both events and processes, and takes the 'of' in the above constructions to stand for identity (that is, the event is my raising my arm, the process is my raising my arm), then it follows that such events are identical with such processes and the distinction collapses.^{xxxii} If one agrees with this position it seems to motivate the move to distinguish doings from both events and processes (see also 4.3). After accepting this distinction one might endorse a view, according to which there are doings, and there are both events and processes which stand in some complicated and close relation to these doings, and these events and processes are distinct both from each other and from doings.

I think this line of argument is right in emphasizing that 'of' doesn't always stand for the relation of identity. Examples where 'of' doesn't stand for identity are abundant: 'a twist of fate', 'the mountains of Chile', 'the dangers of over-eating', 'the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha', and 'the son of man' all confirm this. Still, we do not have to accept the above given solution and distinguish doings from events, or from processes. 'Of' obviously stands for identity in some cases, or rather for the specification of which type or kind a particular belongs into, as in 'The city of Budapest' where Budapest specifies which specific city one is referring to. According to the view defended here we should take 'of' in construction like 'the event of her brushing her teeth', or 'the process of his building a stone garden' as identity, and hence her brushing her teeth as an event, and his building a stone garden as a process.^{xxxiii} Why there is no danger of mixing up these events and processes can be understood from the differences between particular doings: more

complex and extended doings are simply processes, while less complex doings are events. This way we can avoid the conclusion that the same doing would be both identical with an event and a process, and therefore an event would be identical with a process. The same point applies to causings, as I will treat them. On the possible classification based on the constitutive structure of doings see more in 4.2.

In this section, I have presented an initial sketch of the notion of a doing. I have tried to provide a conception of doings that is broad enough to encompass all the different doings that there are, and can accommodate the different features of the doings of agents of different complexity, while at the same time it can also be helpful in understanding the more specifically animal or human actions. This approach to doings combined with accepting the doings - things done distinction yields the position which I will call *Strong Pluralism* in the next chapter, and which is in my view the most plausible pluralist position about actions, and as such the most plausible position about actions overall. I think it is a virtue of this approach that it can make use of the results achieved by other philosophers, even if their views of doings are narrower. This is what I will show in chapters four to six. In the conclusion I will discuss in more detail how my approach could be used to solve some issues in philosophy of action, and what uses it might have in other subfields of Philosophy and in related disciplines.

2.5 Conclusions

The role of the present chapter in the overall framework of the thesis was to introduce the reader to one of the basic distinctions in the philosophy of action. This distinction has often been overlooked or it hasn't been sufficiently discussed. As a result separate conceptions of action have been conflated and some philosophers tried to account for all of them by offering a monist view of action, that is, an account of only one thing, confusing and moulding the characteristics of different things into one. Naturally such approaches tend to lead to controversial results because they try to find one kind of thing that possesses the qualities of many distinct things. The proposal that we should keep such conceptions separately was the main one of the chapter, arguing that the doings - things done distinction serves this purpose well. I have outlined four ways in which the distinction has been made and argued that none of them managed to capture all details of this complicated distinction well. Consequently, I went on to offer my own understanding of the distinction, emphasizing that doings should be seen as part of our world, as having

at their core elements that make them different from non-actional occurrences and causings.

At the same time my view of doings allows for them to differ along a large number of parameters: they can have different causal, temporal, spatial characteristics, agents' involvement in doings can follow different patterns, and there can be mental doings, doings involving bodily movement, doings involving changes not under the direct control of the agent, and so on. This view of doings will enable us to capture them in their variety and use monist views to learn more about different kinds of doings. In the following chapter I will survey the three types of pluralism and argue for the one that unites my pluralism of endorsing the doings - things done distinction with my pluralist view of doings.

Chapter 3

Pluralism about action

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will argue for the pluralist approach that I think is the most plausible, has the most explanatory potential, and is the most accommodating to what we know about actions. I call this view Strong Pluralism. The chapter consists of two parts. In the first part I will present three pluralist views, and argue for the one I think is the strongest version of pluralism. The three pluralist options I discuss in section 3.2 are Complex, Strong, and Simple pluralism. In the second part of the chapter I will draw some parallels between my pluralism and three other philosophical views which are pluralist positions about other philosophical subjects and can help locate my brand of pluralism more firmly on the philosophical map. The three positions that I will compare pluralism about actions to are Von Wright's approach to *varieties* of goodness, John Dupré's pluralism about *the categorization of species*, and David Velleman's view of *doables*.

All three of the pluralist approaches to actions that I discuss deny that the expression 'action' would only mean one thing, and endorse the doings - things done distinction. The three versions of pluralism which I will discuss differ along two main issues. The first is whether or not the doing – thing done distinction is exhaustive: according to Complex Pluralism besides things done and doings 'action' can be used to talk about other things which are actions, like 'bringing something about', 'an event of doing something', etc. Strong and Slim pluralism maintain that 'action' is used normally either to talk about things done or about doings. The other main question is whether all doings fall into one metaphysical and hence also ontological category or not. Strong Pluralism's distinctive claim is that doings have such varied natures that they cannot be understood as being the elements of one broader ontological category like events, or processes, while Complex and Simple Pluralism accept that doings all belong into a single metaphysical category (see 3.3 and 3.4).

So far in the thesis I have introduced my general position, and argued in chapter one that no monist view can characterise actions correctly. I have defended

the claim that all monist views are too rigid because they do not recognize the distinction between things done and doings, and they are also insufficient to articulate all the differences between distinct types of doings. In chapter two I have further tried to motivate a shift away from monist views by showing that the doings - things done distinction is made in our normal everyday lives, it has been made in ethics, and is known in the philosophy of action literature. I have presented four views of the distinction, and argued for my own version of it. Part of this view is what I take to be a plausible pluralist view of doings, emphasizing the dimensions along which distinct types of doings differ from each other. I proposed that since such pluralist positions can be spelled out intelligibly, and they hold the promise to be useful for solving some of the main problems in philosophy of action we should take them seriously as alternatives of monist views.

I have also argued that my view of doings can help us characterise doings without forcing us to treat them in arbitrary ways that prevent us from seeing them in their full complexity. This chapter should further strengthen my case for adopting a pluralist approach by convincing readers that there are alternative, serious pluralist positions about actions which are available, and by showing that similar approaches regarding other topics have already born fruit. If my arguments are successful and my case is convincing then pluralist views should be taken at least as seriously as monist views have, and as I will argue in chapters four to six, based on their merits they should be favoured over monist views.

3.2 Three types of pluralism about actions

In this section I will present three versions of pluralism about action. I will briefly explain what the main claims of the three versions are and how they relate to each other, how they address some of the main questions of the literature on actions. The three views are Complex Pluralism, Strong Pluralism, and Simple Pluralism. None of these views have been defended previously in the literature under these names, but any view that rejects the basic claim of monism that all actions belong to one kind is a pluralist view. Let me begin with Complex Pluralism.

Complex Pluralism claims that there are many different kinds of things that we can call 'action'. All types of pluralism accept that things done and doings are different, but Complex Pluralism holds that we should make further distinctions and not only recognize that we can talk of 'the events of doing x ', 'the process of doing x ', 'deeds', 'acts', 'bringing about' and so on, but also accept that all these terms

refer to things that are different both from things done and doings.^{xxxiii} That is, for example, Joe's mowing the lawn and the event of Joe's mowing the lawn are distinct kinds of entities. They are not disconnected, but not identical either. 'Joe's mowing the lawn is a doing, but that doing is not the same as the event of Joe's mowing the lawn. Thus, Complex Pluralism recognizes a great variety of things that we can talk about as actions, for example things done, doings, and occurrences of doings.

Complex Pluralism further holds that if we can get a good grasp on what doings are we will defend the view that they don't belong into the category of events or causings or processes, and there are also events of doings and processes of doings, which are events and processes. Complex pluralism also recognizes such further possible things like behaviour, or deeds which are distinct from things done and doings, and also of processes of or events of doing x . That is, events of doing x are not one sub-type of doings in general, exactly to the contrary. Doings belong into a category (maybe into that of causings) and events of doing x belong into another one (into that of events). So, according to Complex Pluralism when we talk about Granny baking cinnamon swirls we are talking about something metaphysically substantially different from the process of Granny baking cinnamon swirls. Complex pluralism is the sort of view defended by Macmurray, von Wright, and Sandis (see 2.3.1, 2.3.2., 2.3.4, and 3.2.1).

2. *Strong Pluralism* differs from Complex Pluralism in two ways: According to Strong Pluralism when we talk about 'action' we either talk about things done or doings. And second, according to Strong Pluralism when we talk about doings we are not talking of a type of thing that has a unified metaphysics. The main ideas behind Strong Pluralism are that i) The distinction between things done and doings captures the philosophically interesting distinction between kinds or types of action and between what goes on in our world when agents are acting or have acted, and ii) That there might be many different kinds of doings. That is, Strong Pluralism holds that all the things that are agents' doings of something, whether or not ongoing, completed or still incomplete, in the present or in the past, engaged in by one agent or by many, involving causings or not, events or processes, are all doings. Or so I'll claim in 3.3.

Strong Pluralism is also liberal concerning the metaphysics of doings and holds that we should recognize that doings may differ in respect of their

metaphysical group belonging. Such differences need not be what is tracked by the different terms that we can use to talk about doings. Of course in a sense every difference is metaphysical: whether or not a doing involves causing something, or an intrinsic results, or if it is purposeful or not, and so on. But not all differences are metaphysical in the sense in which this means the differences between group membership in such broader categories like events, processes or causings. I'll argue for this stance in more detail under 3.4.

3. A third version of pluralism could be called *Simple Pluralism*. Simple Pluralism endorses the claim that we should only distinguish between things done and doings – it is similar in this respect to Strong Pluralism – and it also endorses the claim that both things done and doings belong into one larger metaphysical category each – in this it is similar to Complex Pluralism.^{xxxiv} Simple Pluralism is a very clear, simple and economical position. Of course as such it needs to do a lot of work both in arguing for the exhaustiveness of the doings - things done distinction and in arguing for monism concerning things done and doings. Especially the latter seems to be a daunting task, taken that none of the monist views we have surveyed seemed to be adequate for characterizing all actions.

The three positions and their relations to each other are set out in this table:

Claims endorsed Positions	Monism is false	There are both things done and doings	Besides things done and doings we also talk about other things as actions	All doings belong into one metaphysical category
Complex Pluralism	True	True	True	True
Strong Pluralism	True	True	False	False
Slim Pluralism	True	True	False	True

After this overview of the three possible pluralist positions concerning actions I will move on to discuss the two main questions on which these positions differ and argue that the pair of answers provided by Strong Pluralism is the best option.

3.3 *Is the doings - things done distinction exhaustive?*

As my above introduction of the three possible pluralist positions has shown Complex Pluralism holds that there are other things besides doings and things done which we should treat as actions. In contrast Strong and Simple Pluralism both claim that whenever we talk about actions we either talk about doings or things

done. The main difference between the approach of Complex Pluralism and the two others sorts of pluralism to the question of doings is this: Complex Pluralism is committed to the idea that all elements of the group of doings share the same important main characteristics, and these are relatively clear-cut so they can serve as distinguishing marks from other things that we treat as actions. While Complex Pluralism gains a metaphysically neat group of doings this way, it has to allow for other terms to refer to things that are different from doings in various degrees, such as bringing-about, deeds, events of doing x , processes of doing of x , and so on. This way Complex Pluralism has to accommodate all the actions of agents that are part of this world by using a variety of different terms to talk about them. A bringing about is never a doing according to Complex Pluralism. As precise and finely painted this picture of the landscape of actions is, it seems to lack an argument for why all these things are actions. The worry arises that if – for example – doings have a privileged place in this view and other things – like bringing about, events of doing x – are just actions in virtue of being connected with doings then Complex Pluralism just collapses into a Causal Theory of Action. It seems that either there are some more or less loose threads running through each of these elements, connecting them and explaining why they are all actions. In that case Complex Pluralism runs the risk of collapsing into a version of Strong Pluralism, and the differences it points out between events of doing x , bringing about, etc. can be treated as differences between sub-types of doings.

Two more considerations speak against Complex Pluralism's approach to the actions of agents. If we accept that doings are just one kind of thing among many which are agents' actions performed and ongoing in our world, then Complex Pluralism owes us a characterization of doings which is clearly distinct from, but at the same time connected to characterisations of bringing about, deed, etc. The worry is that Complex Pluralism owes a crisp categorization of doings, and it is hard to imagine what exactly this would be. It seems rather arbitrary to consign doings to anything like causings, or to single out any other possible element or constituent of actions as the prime example of a doing.

Complex Pluralism surely has the potential advantage of offering clean delineations of different kinds of things that are actions, and it is seemingly also helpful because it promises that one type of thing belongs into one metaphysical category. But this advantage is I think illusory and leads to mistakes and problems

for a number of reasons. First of all, it is hard to see what makes events of doing x actions if they are different from doings, bringing about, or from deeds. What are these elements and why are they all actions? If there is something substantially similar in them, why would they be different? Second, it seems hard to maintain that either doings, bringing-about, deeds, or any other such expression could track metaphysically neat groups of things. If someone were to propose that doings are just relations between agents and changes that they bring about that seems to be too narrow – surely, sometimes doings can be seen, they can be stopped, an agent can be ordered to cease them, and so on. Maybe some doings are only such relations, but that all doings would be only that seems to be a forced attempt at definition. If someone were to propose that all doings are bodily movements whereas events of doing x aren't, then we still have a classification which seems arbitrary (Why would all doings happen to be bodily movements? Why not mental activity then? Or exercisings of capacities?), and not too helpful (What do we learn about doings and events of doings this way?). These are of course just two possibilities how someone could go about approaching doings, and there might be other metaphysically neat solutions that are more plausible and do more work, but based on my earlier overview of monist views I'm very sceptical of any attempt at finding a non-arbitrary and neat characterisation for all doings.

Third, if any of the many forms of expression that are supposed to be tracking actions track something actually different, and as Complex Pluralism any one of them is claimed to latch onto some distinctively agential contribution, or any one of them is claimed to track the unities that are actions, then it is left an open question why what the other forms of expression track would be taken to be actions? Maybe they track constituents of actions, or single out sub-groups of doings, but it is hard to see how they could track different things and be about actions.

A possible objection to my argument is the following: One of the reasons that I cited for endorsing the doings - things done distinction was that it does justice to the differences between objects of explanation and evaluation, and of knowledge of action. I argued in the previous chapter that since we can explain and evaluate *what* someone did independently of her *doing* it, these must be two different things. The supporter of Complex Pluralism could then ask why I don't think the same is true of doings, bringing-about, deeds, and the rest. My answer comes in two parts. First, I think that the difference between things done and doings follows a general pattern

and there is a distinction similar to this whenever there are things in our world and those things can be grouped into types or kinds. So, the distinction exists between what is said and saying it, between the colour red and the redness of a box, and so on. The distinctions which the Complex pluralist would like to maintain between doings, bringing about, etc. do not seem to be the same kind of differences. In fact, they seem to be more like differences between subgroups of elements within a larger group. If they are not that, then the ugly question ‘What makes these all actions?’ pops up its head again. If they are all essentially different then it becomes even more confusing why they would all be actions.

My second reason for rejecting the line of argument cited in support of Complex Pluralism’s approach is that – and I think this is revealing about the forms of expression the Complex Pluralist suggests to be standing for groups of action distinct from doings – they direct attention not to different objects of explanation or evaluation apart from doings, but to different aspects or constituents of doings. Think of the following for example: there is an apparent difference between evaluating Alicia’s pinching Sam, and evaluating the event of Alicia’s pinching Sam. Still, let’s stop and think about what the difference really amounts to. If we think about the difference for a second it seems only to be a difference because in the first case we know less about the action, the form of expression ‘Alicia pinched Sam’ reveals less than the second ‘The event of Alicia’s pinching Sam’. In the first case we only know that it is Alicia’s doing something, while in the second case we know a bit more, that this was an event, and so, that it didn’t cause anything further, it is not part of a larger process, that it did have a result, and so on. This is that we didn’t know about Alicia’s doing based on its less informative description as Alicia’s pinching Sam. So it seems that actually what we are dealing with here are not two different objects of evaluation – contrary to cases of evaluating doings and things done – but a more general way of taking an action (as a doing) and a more specific one (as a doing that is an event). In itself this argument does not show of course that Complex Pluralism is mistaken. But it does offer a simple explanation of the same phenomena and hence shifts the burden of proof the Complex Pluralist to show that the distinction between doing x and the event of doing x , and further such distinction are needed.

Strong and Simple Pluralism seem to have the advantage on this topic then. They offer a more economical, more elegant classification of what actions are. They

take agents' acting to be doings thereby offering a view that identifies some shared characteristics of all doings, while still leaving enough room for different subgroups of doings. But, one could ask, does this approach not commit the same mistake as monism did by claiming that all actions belong into a definite category of things - into that of events, or of processes, or even more narrowly into that of events which are bodily movements or willings, just to recall a few examples. I think that the answer to this question depends on how we treat doings. One solution is the one that Strong Pluralism offers: by endorsing the view of doings that I have provided in the previous chapter (2.4) Strong Pluralism is accommodating enough to allow for doings with very different temporal, spatial, causal, phenomenological, and constitutional (what skills, capacities, etc. are involved in them, how they relate to results) characteristics. This enables Strong Pluralism – similarly to Complex Pluralism – to accommodate different actions of agents, and this seems to be a big advantage over monist views and more rigid views, like Simple Pluralism.

Strong Pluralism allows for different doings and still leaves it open whether it shares the monist tendencies of Complex Pluralism and Simple Pluralism concerning the metaphysics of doings. I'll turn to that question in the next section. While my characterisation of doings allows for considerable flexibility in how many different types of doings we can recognize, Strong Pluralism would still only be a monist view about doings – similarly to Complex Pluralism and Simple Pluralism – if it were to claim that all these different doings are members of the same broader metaphysical category. I think that would rob Strong Pluralism of much of its explanatory power as an approach to action that aims at enabling us to recognize all the different types and kinds of doings that there are. In fact, that would even put the view at a disadvantage to Complex Pluralism. Strong Pluralism could still be an interesting view, but it couldn't afford us the same sophisticated treatment of the metaphysics of doings.

3.4 Do doings have a shared metaphysics?

In chapter one while surveying the dominant positions on what actions are I have already argued that monist views have the serious disadvantage that they cannot accommodate the doings - things done distinction, and they also seem to be too narrow to do justice to doings. All three pluralist views which I have proposed agree that the doings - things done distinction should be made, but Complex and Simple Pluralism hold that doings have a definite metaphysical nature that fits one

category. Strong Pluralism denies this and holds that doings are scattered across categories. This seems to put Simple Pluralism at a decisive disadvantage if we compare its explanatory potential with that of Complex and Strong Pluralism. Complex and Strong Pluralism agree that doings that fit one metaphysical category (of events, or of processes, or of causings) or a subcategory of a broader group (that of bodily movements, or causing bodily movements, etc.) cannot be the whole story about agents' acting. They differ in that they provide a different approach to avoid the mistake of monism: Complex Pluralism proposes that we distinguish many different kinds of things which are different types or kinds of agents' acting, while Strong Pluralism holds that doings are a group diverse enough to encompass all the variety there is in acting.

Naturally, the question will emerge whether this is not just a terminological difference between Strong and Complex Pluralism. I think that it is not. In chapter two I have shown that to some extent 'doing' is a term which, although performing some important role in ordinary thought and talk, does have a history of different technical uses it was put to in philosophy of action. I have proposed an understanding of doings in 2.4 that treats doings as splitting into many-many subgroups along differences in some of their key characteristics. And this is exactly the main difference between Complex Pluralism and Strong Pluralism: Complex Pluralism seems to deny that types or kinds of agents' acting would form one group, and claims that there are many groups and they all have their separate but clearly delineable metaphysical homes in one of the broader categories. In contrast Strong Pluralism claims that agents' actions share some key features – and key differences, dimensions along which they differ – and that the subgroups of doings do not line up neatly with broader metaphysical categories. This of course also entails that doings fall into many separate more or less specific metaphysical categories. For example Strong Pluralism would claim that some of them are events, some maybe events of someone moving her body, but not all doings are either of those things. Strong Pluralism has the advantage of showing that there is a unity in acting, but that does not mean that we need a theory which explains how all doings could fit one broader category.

Strong Pluralism does not want to claim that we should simply neglect the variety of terms that we can use to talk about actions to which Complex Pluralism calls attention to. Instead Strong Pluralism proposes that we take these to be terms

which pick out sub-groups of doings based on different characteristics members of that subgroup share. Obviously enough, events of doing x are those doings which are events (like writing a Christmas card), bringing-about are doings where nothing is caused (like coming up with a nice couplet), and so on.^{xxxv} This approach also helps to separate the question of whether the things that are actions belong in one metaphysical category or not. Complex Pluralism would have us think about doings as being members of the same category. In contrast Strong Pluralism treats doings as an exotic gathering that encompasses processes, events, and causings as well. Complex Pluralism incurs an implausible constraint when it claims that the different forms of expression that we can use to talk about actions neatly track metaphysical group-membership. Strong Pluralism has the advantage to recognize that all these different forms of expression pick out subgroups of doings, but not necessarily along the lines of their respective metaphysical categories, except of course for such terms like ‘the event of doing x ’ or ‘the process of doing x ’ which are expressively intended to pick out group membership along such lines. But if we think of a bringing about, or a deed, or a performance, or an engagement or other such expressions these can be seen as tracking other differences in characteristics of doings: ‘engagement’ tracks those doings which are performed by agents pursuing a goal in acting, or for actions which involve achieving something by doing something else; ‘performances’ can be taken to be those doings which are processes and involve the agents’ attention and maybe also require that the agent knows that she is engaged in that doing. The details are not my topic here and should be subject of further work of course.

I have argued in the previous chapter that doings can differ in whether or not they involve causing anything. Some monist views claim that actions are causings of results. But not all actions seem to involve causing something. Take the example of Monica’s coming up with a good excuse. Monica’s coming up with a good excuse is something she can be doing or have done, and it is constituted by her exercising her imagination and planning, her verbal capacities and memory, and forming an excuse that she can put in words and utter when needed. In doing so Monica is acting, she is exercising her agent level capacities but she is not causing anything, she is not causing any further events that would be distinct from her acting, and she isn’t causing any results at that time which would not be intrinsic to her coming up with a good excuse. That she does have a good excuse in mind is

such an intrinsic result: she wouldn't be coming up with one if no good excuse would occur to her. Such a doing surely cannot be accommodated then in the category of causings, because it does not involve causing anything.

However it is not clearly an event either in the sense in which CTAs take actions to be events with specific causes. There is no constituent of Monica's coming up with a good excuse – nor her exercising her imagination, nor her forming the sentences which the excuse can be put into, nor her calculating the effects of the excuse – which could be separated, filtered out into *the* core event which is the action as contrasted with the other constituents presents which would be seen simply as causes or results and as nonactional. Monica's coming up with a good excuse can be thought of as an event of course, if we take event in its perfectly ordinary sense in which it means a spatially and temporally fairly compact occurrence, and in the case of speaking of a doing we could add to make the distinction from processes clearer, that among its constituents no causings are involved which would not be direct causings by the agent.

Of course it is also easy enough to think of a doing which involves a causing on the part of the agent: take for example Barry's demolishing the house, which is a complex action in which Barry does have to cause electric signals to run from detonators to explosives and the explosives had to be placed by Barry so that when they go off they cause the frame and the walls to collapse. Barry caused the house to collapse by exploding it. Such actions are partly constituted by the causings involved, among them Barry's causing the explosives to go off by pushing a button on the detonator, and his causing the house to collapse. This doing of Barry consists both of a direct causing by Barry – his setting off of the explosives – and of an indirect one – the explosives' blasting apart of the frame and the walls. Such an extended and complex action involving both sorts of causings can be called a process, and it differs surely both from Monica's coming up with an excuse and from other doings, which do not involve causings which are not direct causings by the agent, which do not involve as many interrelated elements as demolishing a house, which are easier to locate, which are maybe constituted by a single causing of something or a single exercise of a capacity, and so on.

Some doings can be thought of as identical to the exercise of a capacity. Other doings might be thought of as identical with a whole that has parts, and this whole consists of the components of the initiation of the workings of a capacity which is

relatively automatic, and of the exercise of the capacity to pay attention or coordinate one's movements, or pay attention to and calculate the reactions of one's audience. For example publicly debating a policy can involve one's initiation of giving a brief speech that one has already thought out, paying only attention to one's voice, pitch, facial expression but not to the content which has already been learned, and at the same time one can pay attention to what one's partner in the debate seems to think of what is being said and what they might reply, thus anticipating possible replies to their potential comebacks. Such a doing is surely different from just simply exercising one's capacity in causing something, e.g. in causing my finger to move by putting it under a strong gush of water, or in such semi-automatic actions as walking on the pavement where all I do is initiate the walking and pay a bit of attention to the road.

This variety and manifold nature of doings of which I gave a few examples, taken together with the plausibility of the doings - things done distinction and the characterization of doings I have offered make Strong Pluralism the best option out of the three versions of pluralism which I have discussed. Strong Pluralism endorses the doings - things done distinction, it enables us to recognize that doings can be widely different, it can offer an understanding of the differences between doings, and, as I will try to show in chapters four to six, it can also accommodate some of the findings and useful ideas of earlier monist accounts. This last point is also of importance because this way Strong Pluralism does not have to start over from scratch in characterising doings. It is an accommodating approach which makes it possible to recognize earlier achievements and to make progress by offering more nuanced and sophisticated views of action. In contrast both Complex and Simple Pluralism have a monist attitude towards doings, which I think is in the danger of neglecting some of the variety of doings, and also running the risk of not making use of available results. Taking all these advantages into account I settle for endorsing Strong Pluralism in this thesis. In the rest of the thesis – from chapter four up to the conclusion – I employ Strong Pluralism and my view of the doings - things done distinction. In the remainder of this chapter I will briefly discuss three pluralist views about other topics to show that similar attitudes to pluralism have previously been defended in Philosophy with interesting results.

3.5 *Pluralism about actions and pluralism about other topics*

Pluralism is not a very common approach to most topics in Philosophy. The ambition of Philosophers is often to find possible ways of categorizing or grouping things based on their similarities. Of course this can be done in many way: the pluralist views of action which I'm discussing in this chapter all recognize that there are connections between the things that we call actions - there are connections between things done and doings, doings and bringing about, doings and other doings, and so on. Pluralism seems to be most interesting then when it claims that no monist solution can be found to the 'What is x ?' question, and when it denies not only that specific monist proposals are right, but also that any monist view could be right. I have argued that this is the case with action, and more narrowly with doings. It is so because things done and doings are different, and furthermore doings differ from each other in considerable ways. In this section I'll discuss briefly three pluralist positions concerning three distinct topics. The purpose of the section is to illustrate that pluralism is often the best option about a given thing or at least an option which should be taken seriously. The three positions are G. H. von Wright's pluralism about the good, John Dupré's pluralism concerning methods of classification in biology, and David Velleman's pluralism about doables. The main goal is to differentiate my pluralism from views with which it might be confused, such as pragmatist or relativist views, or views which only deal with concepts and their pluralism is rooted in the vagueness or family resemblance of their subject.

3.5.1 *Von Wright on the varieties of the good*

In his book *The Varieties of Goodness* (1963b) von Wright's main aim was to establish that there is no single, purely moral concept of goodness. In the first chapter of his book he discusses all the various meanings and uses of the concepts 'good' and 'goodness'. Von Wright writes:

"An urge to do conceptual investigations—and one of the main urges to do philosophy I think—is *bewilderment* concerning the meaning of some words. With the words in question we are usually familiar. We know on the whole how and when to use them. But sometimes we are at a loss as to whether a thing should be called by some such word ' x '. We are at a loss *not* because we are ignorant as to whether this thing has some feature y which would be a ground for or against calling it ' x '. We hesitate because we do not know which features of this thing *are* grounds for or against calling it ' x '. We are challenged to *reflect* on the

grounds. Instead of grounds for calling things 'x' I could also have said *criteria* or *standards* for deciding whether a thing is *x* or not." (von Wright 1963b: 3)

My enterprise of arguing for a pluralist approach to actions could be taken to say that two different kinds of things are actions: they are either 'things done' or 'doings'. Secondly, my project also claims that it is not enough to pick a plausible category of occurrents and say that actions belong into that category, and then attempt to explain how actions can have – or seem to have – the characteristics that we know they have. We should simply rely on what we know about the characteristics of actions and provide a view of actions based on that. In section 2.4 I was trying to show that this can be done for doings.

We can give a much more natural and true to the facts view of actions by admitting that some actions are different from each other. That is, we don't first pick a larger metaphysical framework and then look for a place for actions within that frame, but instead look at actions, and if they turn out to be different in various ways we accept that the metaphysics we need to accommodate them will also have to be such that it allows for such variety. In chapter one I did not focus on the feature of monist views which leads to their attempts to fit actions into one category, such as that of events or of processes because I wanted to avoid getting bogged down with wider issues of Philosophy. Nevertheless it has to be said, that especially in the case of views which have been proposed throughout the 1960s up to the 1980s the Quinean principle of aiming for ontological parsimony seemed to drive philosophers to accept at most one category of occurrents, and as a result also to think that all actions are elements of that category.

Following Davidson's lead many philosophers thought that the best candidate for such a category is that of events. The work of Davidson (1980), Goldman (1970), Thomson (1971), Chisholm (1976), Thalberg (1977), and Hornsby (1980) are all good examples of this trend. The tide turned after Bennett's (1988) and Steward's (1997) criticism of the adequacy of events for dealing with the wide variety of occurrences which have been claimed to be occurrences. I don't want to suggest that such views were the only ones around: Any writing of Ryle (1949), Wittgenstein (1953/2009) and Wittgensteinians (Hampshire 1959, Melden 1961, Kenny 1978, White 1985, Hacker 1996), or authors working in the VKM tradition (Vendler 1957, Kenny 1963, Mourelatos 1978) are counterexamples of this

trend.^{xxxvi} Still, relatively recently views of action or more narrowly of intentional action are put forward and try to deal with – among other problems – issues arising out of such ontological frugality. The works of Bishop (1989), Mele (1992), O’Connor (2000), and Setiya (2007) are all good examples of this.^{xxxvii}

Let me return to von Wright’s view of good, and the similarities and differences it bears to my pluralism, by reminding the reader that von Wright’s view of action (discussed in 2.3.2) allowed for distinguishing between what we do and our doing so, and employed the terms ‘thing done’ and ‘doing’ to make a further distinction between bringing about and its results. While agreeing with von Wright on drawing a distinction between what we do and someone’s doing so, I offered a different view of doings from his. It is my pluralism about doings which can be compared and clarified further through a discussion of von Wright’s varieties-view.

Von Wright says the following about the variety he has in mind: “By the Varieties of Goodness I understand the multiplicity of uses of the word ‘good’.” (von Wright 1963b: 10) By multiplicity he means that ‘good’ can be used as instrumental goodness (when we say of something that it is good *for* something), as good at something (meaning technical goodness, as in something being a good cogwheel, or someone being a good potter), as medical goodness (like something being good for one’s health, or being a good medicine), as the good of wellbeing or welfare, as beneficial goodness (someone or something having a beneficial effect on someone or something), as useful or utilitarian goodness, as simply good (as in the idea of goodness, or idea of good), as in the goods (meaning here the goals worth wanting and pursuing), as meaning ‘a good’ (anything that is good), as hedonic good (which might be good but not always pleasurable), as pleasure (which might not be good for oneself in the long run, but is always pleasurable), as good as connected to the moral life of man and so on. (See section five of von Wright 1963b). Von Wright provides this list in order to convince the reader that no moral use of ‘good’ or ‘goodness’ has priority over other uses, in fact, it is much more likely that the moral uses are just derived, secondary uses.

Similarly to von Wright’s diagnosis of moral philosophy, I think there has been too much focus on ‘action’ in philosophy of action and it has masked the fact that actions come in many varieties, and not only that, but even among doings there are significant differences from time to time. But the way von Wright relies on different uses of ‘good’ and ‘goodness’ is not open to me because normally we rarely if ever

use ‘action’ and even in Philosophy it almost always appears as a term which is properly introduced. I want to highlight that, this ignorance in much Philosophy of all the different forms of expressions that we can use to talk about actions (doing, deed, thing done, bringing about, causing, and so on) and to the immense variety and important differences that the plethora of verbs that we use to talk of different actions could have been one of the causes of why much philosophy of action developed monist tendencies.^{xxxviii} We normally talk of actions by using the verbs that express what kind of action they are (and in some languages the forms verbs take also express by whom, when, how, etc., the actions is or was done) such as running, singing, marrying, joking, and so on.

Does this show that there is a variety of actions in the sense in which von Wright thinks there is a variety of ‘good’ and ‘goodness’? I don’t think there is such an analogy. Von Wright seems to distinguish uses of the ‘good’, the same form of expression but different uses, practices. With actions we usually really talk about something – either the thing done or the doing of something – and we surely do not qualify actions when talking of them as someone’s running, painting, or cooking. Rather, we communicate what those doings are. As von Wright notes we can talk about something that we take to be the good or one of the goods but this is still just one use of the expression. Doings can be manifold, like goodness, but they are manifold not in the same way. Von Wright’s list shows that good and goodness are sometimes used to talk about something, at other times to communicate that something can be evaluated positively for having certain characteristics which matter from some perspective (that of welfare, of medicine, of technology, etc.). While von Wright maintains that there is some unity in the many uses of ‘goodness’ and ‘good’, after all they are all varieties of them, there is no definite way to point out just what secures this unity. (von Wright 1963b: 12)

Von Wright denies that the variety of goodness could be understood by thinking of uses of goodness as vague, ambiguous, analogous, or standing in the relation of family resemblance. In contrast, according to the view of doings defended in this thesis there are fairly clear characteristics which taken together provide us with the dimensions along which the differences of doings can be understood, and their unity can also be seen. Doings are doings of agents, involving agential capacities, and have spatial and temporal profiles. Other features are not such that all doings have them – like being purposeful or intentional, planned or

spontaneous, causal, partly constituted by intrinsic results - but these differences can all be explained without having to call into question whether what we are dealing with is a doing or not.^{xxxix}

Von Wright writes about family resemblance the following:

“The philosophic importance—as I see it—of the idea of family-resemblance is that the insight into the family-character of a concept may make us give up an attempt to hunt for its ‘essence’ *i.e.* for a common feature of all things falling under this concept which would explain to us why these things are classified together.” (von Wright 1963b, section 7)

I agree with von Wright heartily that it is important to see that there is no essence of both things done and doings. But I doubt that the same would apply to doings. Those events, causings, or processes which are doings are not events, causings, or processes primarily and doings just in virtue of some secondary qualities, like the causal relations they happen to have to some other events (at least most doings aren’t like this). They are doings in virtue of agents being involved in them, using their agent level capacities and skills. I do not wish to defend here any particular notion of essence. Von Wright’s characterization of essence as something explaining why we classify things together does a perfect job here. In this sense, doings are categorized together because they all have one shared key characteristic.

Von Wright’s view of goodness is similar to my view of action in that both views recognize that the term they are dealing with has different uses. Von Wright thinks that there is no simple solution to find any unity among the many uses of goodness, some of them seem to be closely connected, some don’t, some seem to be connected by use or by groups of concepts with which they are related, while others by more abstract ties (e.g. being good for someone, something, some purpose, etc.). These problems don’t appear for action, since the connection between thing done and doing is easy to make explicit, and as I have argued we can also find ties running through all the different types of doings of agents. Compared to good and goodness, action and more narrowly doing appears to pick out a group of things which can be shown to be related in important ways. On this closing note, I’ll proceed to the discussion of Velleman’s relativist view.

3.5.2 *Dupré on taxonomic pluralism*

One could ask why I place so much emphasis on the considerations that for purposes of evaluation and explanation things done and doings have to be held apart, or why I think that the important characteristics in which doings differ from each other are their temporal, spatial, causal, etc. features. The main reason for placing the emphasis on evaluation and explanation, and on the features of doings discussed in detail in 2.4, is that they seem to be the most important for action evaluation and explanation, and are what we focus on most often when discussing doings. I discuss John Dupré's taxonomic pluralism to show that one can defend a position according to which that there are different ways of classifying things does not mean that one disregards some shared, real, definitive features of those things. And why I want to make this point is to emphasize that I think that there is a difference between the distinction between things done and doings, and between the subgroups of doings. The former is a distinction between kinds of things, while the latter are distinctions between subtypes of a type of thing, which can be made in several different ways depending on one's interests.

Dupré's view of biological taxonomies is that there has been too much emphasis on the genetic evolutionary lineage of species in recent discussions of how to distinguish them, that is, on what makes something a species. (Dupré 2001) The main idea of Dupré is that we can accept that it is a possible and interesting way of classifying organisms into species to take their evolutionary development or their genetics as the basis for grouping them together and distinguishing them from other organisms, while at the same time accept that for purposes where such information about the evolutionary background or genetics of the organisms has no importance (for example if we are simply looking for the right ingredients for the dinner we want to cook, or a nice looking plant for a friend) we can choose other features of organisms on the basis of which to group them together. This is a pluralist approach to biological taxonomy that rests on the insight that there is more to biology than just studying the evolutionary history or the genetics of organisms. We classify beings into species for a variety of purposes. Consider the following passage of Dupré's:

“Classification in biology has a life of its own. Biologists in areas only tangentially connected to evolutionary theory, such as ecologists, ethnobotanists, or ethologists, need to

classify organisms, as do foresters, conservationists, gamekeepers, and herbalists. As will be discussed below, for many, perhaps even most groups of organisms, evolutionary considerations are of little or no use for classificatory purposes. And finally birdwatchers, wildflower enthusiasts, or just biologically engaged members of the public, may choose to classify organisms, even if they do not need to do so. These diverse groups of people require workable classifications that enable them to communicate among themselves and to members of other such groups, record information about natural history, and so on. If, as I argue, units of evolution inadequately meet these needs they must be distinguished from units of classification.” (Dupré 2001: 204)

Dupré expresses well the view that how we group things together often depends on our needs and interests. This is of course also true of our classification of species.

Dupré endorses a ‘pluralistic and pragmatic account of the species category.’ (Dupré 2001: 203) His goal is to argue against specifying species in biology as units of evolution and treating them rather as the fundamental units of classification. According to him evolutionary units are impractical for many who use classifications for practical purposes, such as herbalists, gamekeepers and foresters. (2001: 204) Dupré argues that evolutionary considerations are not much help in working out such classifications. The criteria provided by evolutionary theory aren’t going to help us get the differences between units of classification that we need. For example it is popular to hold that reproductive isolation is a good criterion for distinguishing species, but there are many species that are morphologically diverse (and diverse in a way relevant to us) while they are hybrids (an example are blackberry, loganberry and raspberry). (2001: 206) There is also a problem with delineating species as different branches of the evolutionary tree, since formerly distinct units sometimes merge. Keep in mind that Dupré doesn’t disagree “about the kinds of things that evolved, only whether these should be referred to as species.” (2001: 208)

Dupré goes on to propose his taxonomic pluralism in the following passage:

“Once it is recognised that there is no theoretical grounding for a classificatory system that will universally or even generally provide a practically applicable taxonomy, we are free to embrace taxonomic pluralism. Approaches to classification will vary from one group of organisms to another, and we should allow experts in particular phyla to decide the most appropriate way of classifying a particular domain. It is worthwhile, however, to insist on

the importance of certain desiderata derived from considerations of the nature and function of classification itself, an insistence that only becomes possible once we are freed from the prejudice that the ultimate criteria of classificatory excellence must be imported from some external source, evolutionary theory.” (Dupré 2001: 209)

I want to draw the following analogy between the way Dupré sets up his pluralism about the classification of species and Strong Pluralism. Dupré recognizes that there are things that are properly the objects of classification into species, and we come up with different ways of grouping them together into species or distinguishing them. In the same spirit, I argue that we should recognize that while we can offer different groupings of things done, or of doings, we have to keep things done and doings separate. We can talk of the things one can do when in despair, or the things everyone can do without doing anything else, or evil things, but these will all be classifications of types or kinds of things, classifying the answers we can give to the *what*-question. We can also talk of doings that involve moving one’s body, doings that were carried out with an intention, doings that were involuntary, doings performed by agents unknowingly, doings involving causing something, and so on. These are all different groupings of doings – just like the different groupings of species that according to Dupré a botanist and a geneticist would come up with – but they are still all groupings of doings.

Furthermore, while it is up to us which criteria we take to guide our grouping and categorizing, it is not up to us what characteristics things done or doings have, as it is not up to the herbalist, the gamekeeper, or the evolutionary biologist working in lab what properties different organisms have. Our groupings may be based on our interests and purposes, but the characteristics that the subjects of classification have are not rooted in our interests. So, we can say that there can be different classifications of doings or of things done, but not because the classifications are arbitrary but because the interests of those wanting to classify will take into account different characteristics of the classified things. To use our analogy again, in the case of biology when we are classifying organisms we stick to organisms, not to anything, and a classification doesn’t affect what genes the organisms classified have, nor what other properties (size, methods of reproduction, taste, structure, etc.) they possess. Similarly, if we classify things done that is what we do, if we classify doings that is what we do, but we do not mix these things up or mix them with other

things. Also, what characteristics we pay attention to when we classify things done or doings does not change the characteristics of things done or of doings. What changes is which of these characterisations we focus on and base our groupings on. This approach shows that it is possible to keep different things firmly apart, while also allowing alternative ways of groupings to be made. The possibility of such doings does not mean that we endorse an ‘anything goes’ approach. In contrast, it emphasizes that we give weight to the various real and interesting differences between objects of classification, and the plethora of different interests people engaging in grouping and classification might have.

3.5.3 *Velleman on doables*

David Velleman in his ‘Doables’ (Velleman 2013) defends the view that all actions which we can decide to do in the course of practical deliberation are socially constructed. He holds that different societies come up with what counts as an normal way of doing something and when we deliberate we can initiate the performance of doing those things of which we have learned during our upbringing in our particular society that they are doable by us. Velleman couples this with a strong anthropological relativism endorsing the view that different cultures have different conceptions even of the most simple bodily movements and hence can have totally different sets of doables. This makes Velleman a pluralist about culturally different sets of doables. I’ll briefly present Velleman’s main claims and offer a criticism of his position on the grounds that some actions seem to be shared by all humans and constituted by elements which are independently of culture available to all agents. As examples of the effect of culture on available actions Velleman cites different things people from different cultures might have in mind when they shake hands and different ways of providing information. (Velleman 2013: 4-5, 7-9)

Velleman’s goal is to make a point about the origin of actions. He claims that actions are what we decide to do during practical deliberation, and that what we can decide to do depends on the culture we grow up in. Different cultures teach their members partially different sets of possible things done. Velleman is thus a pluralist about sets of things done, and a relativist about possible actions. According to his view what we can do is relative to the society we grow up and live in. (Velleman 2013: 1-3) Velleman also thinks that when we act there is a set social norm of how to perform something and we normally aim at doing things in the standard way,

calling this the ordinary way of doing something. Whether or not this is so is in my view an additional psychological or sociological question. I can imagine that some people do follow some perceived norms in that way, while some people don't and perform the same thing in different ways, and some people do not aim at following any norms just act in optimal ways. But answering such questions is not the job of my thesis.

I think there are four main problems with Velleman's positions: First, his view excludes many actions. He only recognizes as action what we choose to do during practical deliberation. What we choose normally that way is what we do intentionally or voluntarily. And not all of our actions are intentional or voluntary. As I have argued in chapter two, and as I will argue in 6.4.1 when discussing Stout's view, there are many actions of ours which are neither intentional nor voluntary. So, do I think that Velleman's view holds true for all voluntary and intentional actions? The answer is no because even among the things we do intentionally or voluntarily there are some which are universally available to any human being unaffected by serious limitations of her natural capacities, abilities, skills and powers.

This brings us to the second problem with Velleman's view. If his view were right only those aspects of doings would count as constitutive of doings which are culture specific. That is, in raising my arm only the specifically culture relevant aspects would count as my raising my arm, since the other constituents (the actual raising of my arm, my deciding to do so, the way I direct my arm movement, etc.) are not specific to any culture. I have argued that actions are constituted by more than such elements, and a great many doings have constituents which are hard to see as culture dependent. Think of types of actions like 'running', 'climbing', 'preparing a strawberry frappe', 'pondering military budgets', 'recalling warm feelings of belonging', etc.

The third problem is that Velleman doesn't recognize the group of actions about which his view is actually revealing and the ones about which it isn't. There are actions which are partly constituted by the agent acting with an intention, or willingly, or unwillingly – the main point is: in a certain mindset, having a certain attitude towards her own action. Some such types of action are only open to agents if they can choose to act in those ways, meaning that they have to know that they can act with those intentions, they can refuse or endorse doing some things, they can

decide to do them and so on. Being able to have these attitudes towards some actions and in acting can require that the agent has certain knowledge which is culture dependent. At the same time it seems very unlikely that this would be true of all actions. Even if we only consider actions which we characteristically decide to do after deliberation – which are by no means the only actions we do – there are actions which independently of culture anyone can do. Just think of raising your arm, smiling, raising your eyebrows, eating or opening your mouth. Some similar actions are culture bound. Maybe waving to someone is not present in all cultures, or is not constituted in the same way involving different attitudes and the exercise of different capacities as well as bringing about different intrinsic results. But moving one's arm surely isn't.

The fourth problem with Velleman's view is that he has only taken into account human agency. Surely, some actions are only possible to perform for agents with the kinds of conceptual and other bundles of capacities characteristic of humans. But this does not seem to be true of all actions. If, as I have claimed before, there are non-human agents then not all actions require that characteristically human agent-level capacities be involved in acting. Think of hunting, foraging, digging, raising-protecting-and feeding one's offspring, flying to Africa, swimming upstream, or lifting boxes and car parts. All these things can be done by nonhuman animals, and it is entirely implausible to say that because fish, birds, mammals, or robots are not steeped in, say, American or European culture (if there is such a thing at all) they could not do them.^{x1}

Velleman also makes a point connected to understanding action. He claims that understanding what others do is possible because societies have shared ontologies of possible actions. He extends this even to bodily movements claiming that everything that is an action is socially constructed. (Velleman 2013: 4) Again, Velleman fails to distinguish actions that are partly constituted by being done with an intention or being decided on, and those which aren't, that is, most of the actions we regularly do. When he claims that all bodily movements are socially constructed he might of course only be thinking that we couldn't think of some of our bodily movements in certain ways if our society wouldn't think of them that way, e.g. as a dancer makes certain hand moves while dancing the Flamenco we can take them to be beautiful hand movements, while we wouldn't take them to be beautiful hand movements if they happened at a different time at a different place. The difference

in such cases is that the dancer executes those hand movements with the intention of performing a dance, etc. her control, her planning, her choice, her coordination, etc. are admirable. While it is certainly true that the dancer's actions are socially constructed, it would be a mistake to think that this implies that all bodily movements are such.^{xii} When I raise my arm, even if it looks exactly like the dancer's move, it is nevertheless not the same. It is simply not the same doing because it is not constituted in the same way.

Also, not all doings are like the dancer's move or a graceful hand movement. No one needs to construct eating. Velleman might retort that different societies have different concepts of eating, but that does not amount to a good answer, since varieties of eating are still, well, eating, and would occur no matter which society one grows up in, in fact no matter which species of animal one belongs into. Also, no matter where one comes from, we would understand that people are eating – this may not be true of course of species very remote of us, but it holds for most mammals, birds, reptiles, and so on. We might always look for more neutral, less culturally embedded ways of describing actions, and cultural embeddedness makes a huge difference to our correct understanding of what some people are doing. Anthropologists, sociologists, and anyone travelling abroad can testify to this. Still, we all understand many actions of our specimens no matter which culture we come from.

Velleman's view is not a pluralist view or a view of the metaphysics of action. It is also different from Dupré's view which makes taxonomies relative to our practical interests while respecting the facts which licence our classifications. Velleman's relativism is based on empirical claims from anthropology and other fields, and it makes false claims about all actions based on these specific insights of other fields. This concludes my short discussion of Velleman's position on doables. I think the main idea of Velleman that the things we can decide to do have social origins is a valuable idea and in a more specified form it would be interesting to explore it in more detail, but in its current form it is overly ambitious and its claims are too wide. The discussion of this view served mainly to show that there are deep differences between pluralism about actions and cultural relativist views of action. Discussing the flaws of Velleman's view allowed me also to show by discussing particular examples of how my pluralist view can serve us in distinguishing

different groups of actions and understand better what matters for them being the actions they are.

3.6 Conclusion

The present chapters aim was to offer the reader a comparison of my pluralist approach with two other pluralist views of action and three different pluralist views of other things. One of my two goals was to argue that out of the three possible pluralist positions – Complex, Strong, and Simple Pluralism – Strong Pluralism is the best option. My other goal was to show that Strong Pluralism is not the same as endorsing a family resemblance view of actions, or a relativist position, or an ‘anything goes’ position.

I have argued that Complex Pluralism takes distinctions between forms of expression too seriously and misidentifies subgroups of doings as separate kinds of actions. (3.3) I also rejected the claim endorsed both by Complex Pluralism and by Simple Pluralism that doings all share the same main metaphysical characteristics and hence are elements of one larger metaphysical category. I argued that this approach is too constraining and unable to accommodate the substantial differences between doings. (3.4) I argued that von Wright’s approach to ‘goodness’ and ‘good’ is different from my approach to doings: von Wright emphasizes the differences between all the things and features of things which can be called good, while my category of doings is a unified category the members of which differ along a few clearly identifiable dimensions. (3.5.1)

I went on to criticize Velleman’s cultural relativist-constructivist approach for its blindness to the distinction between actions which do depend on social norms and actions which do not, and for drawing the boundaries of actions unduly narrow, excluding much human action as well as non-human action. Velleman’s view appears to be a pluralist approach at first look, but as I argued it does not offer us an understanding of what actions (or more narrowly doings or things done) are, nor of how we should think of them. It is simply helpful in highlighting that whether agents can choose to do certain things in given ways might depend on their cultural and social background. (3.5.3) I also argued that Dupré’s interest-relative view of biological classification can be seen as a revealing model of how we can focus different aspects and facets of doings, without having to endorse that these different aspects or facets belong to different things. I have argued that while things done and doings should be kept apart from each other because they are distinct kinds of

things, the distinctions that we make within the group of doings can vary and intersect depending on what we are interested in – whether we want to distinguish between intentional or unintentional, or intentional and nonintentional, or free and unfree actions, and so on. In this the different possible classifications of doings are similar to the different possible classifications of the same biological organism as belonging into different species based on alternative classificatory interests. (3.5.2)

The role of this chapter in the larger structure of my thesis was to offer the reader an overview of possible pluralist approaches to actions, to argue for my preferred view, and to make the view clearer and more plausible by showing that similar views have been proposed about several topics in philosophy while at the same time drawing attention to the differences of my pluralism from varieties-views, and relativist-constructivist views. This chapter concludes the first larger part of my thesis in which I have tried to motivate a shift from monist views of actions to pluralist approaches. I tried to achieve this by showing that monist theories face serious problems on their own terms and are unable to accommodate certain distinctions that are important to understand what actions are. I have also proposed an understanding of the doings - things done distinction, and a more general pluralist approach to actions to show that a shift from monist views to pluralist views is not only desirable but possible, and views that can accommodate what we know about actions and offer us a more sensitive and refined view of actions are available.

In the second larger part of my thesis consisting of the next three chapters I will try to further motivate the shift from monist views to pluralist views by showing that with the help of my understanding of doings, and my pluralist approach we can harvest the useful results and insights of the major monist views and accommodate them in a fuller picture of actions, without having to endorse them full out. That my pluralist approach makes this move possible is another argument for endorsing Strong Pluralism about action, and to abandon monist views. I'll move on now to discuss what we can learn from monist views of action which claim that all actions are events.

Part II

Chapter 4

Are Doings Events?

4.1 Introduction

This chapter starts the second half of my thesis in which I will investigate in more detail what we can learn from the major monist views of action which claim that all actions are events (chapter four), or causings (chapter five), or processes (chapter six). I have argued (chapter one) that one of the main disadvantages of monist views is that they cannot accommodate the doings - things done distinction. I argued in chapter one and two that things done are neither events, nor causings, nor processes, and consequently, here I will ask the question whether all or some doings can be understood in the way these monist views suggest that we do. I will argue throughout the three chapters that there are some important points which have been made by philosophers proposing monist views of action, but that none of the three suggestions is suitable to fit the nature of all doings, so the most we can claim is that some doings are events, some are causings, and some processes. Monist theories make it seem as if endorsing a view of actions as events would have to exclude the possibility that some actions are not events, and they also show tendencies of trying to identify some minimal component of actions as the real action. I'm exploring here what monist theories can contribute to our understanding of doings. I will use 'action' and 'doing' interchangeably in chapters four to six, unless I explicitly say so. Also, when I write about doings I always mean a doing of an agent, as in 'Mark's taking a bath', 'Eiko's writing her thesis', and 'Sebastian's teaching a class'.^{xlii}

My arguments in this and the following two chapters should enable the reader i) to see that we can be pluralist about doings, ii) that even if we allow that some doings are events, or causings, or processes, that doesn't have to mean that we take those events, causings, or processes to be some sort of minimal components, like bodily movements, or tryings, or willings, and iii) we can recognize actions in their full complexity while being pluralists about them and allowing that some of them are, for example, events.

In this chapter I will explore what my view of doings implies for them being events. (4.2) Then I'll discuss if Davidson's view and similar causal theories of action which take actions to be events caused by certain causes can offer us any insights into the nature and characteristics of doings. (4.4) My goal is to show that although monism is wrong and it is false that all actions, more precisely that all doings are events, at least some of them are. I will argue that Davidson's view of actions fails to offer us a good characterization of what it means that actions are events, and this is so because he endorses a Causal Theory of Action (CTA). CTAs claim that certain events (or processes) are actions because they are caused by specific other events (or processes).^{xliii} So, the reason why I reject Davidson's event theory of actions is not because of what it says about events. I reject it because of the way it characterises the events which are actions (as bodily movements) and the view it holds about why these events are actions (because they have the right causes).

I argue – as I have before in 2.4 – that some actions are events, but the events which are actions have a far more complicated constitution than Davidson's view allows. His view seems to only recognize bodily movements as actions and this amounts to singling out one constituent of some actions as standing for what all actions are. I will briefly discuss Hornsby's and Prichard's views as well, which claim that all actions are tryings or volitions. I argue that they make a mistake complementary to Davidson's and hence we need to reject their views. In conclusion what I think is useful for my approach to doings from the repertoire of Davidsonian actions is the idea of descriptions of action and of basic actions (4.5). These event views have been some of the most influential in the literature and had a profound effect on those working in philosophy of action and on others working on the philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and ethics, hence it is important to see how these views relate to my pluralism, and whether we really need them at all.

After discussing event views which are CTAs I will move on in section 4.6 to discuss another take on actions as events, offered by Alexander Mourelatos in his development of the views of Zeno Vendler and Anthony Kenny. Mourelatos distinguishes events from states and processes which are actional by claiming that events are countable occurrences, while processes are non-countable. I argue that Mourelatos' take on the distinction between events and processes is not well grounded and incompatible with the view of doings advocated here because it

proposes a deep metaphysical difference between actions which are homogeneous and ones which aren't. Events and processes are not as unlike as Mourelatos takes them to be. The methodology advocated in this and the following chapters is that we should take into account what various doings are like, and when making further claims about more general metaphysics take what we know of actions into account. All these steps together should enable us to see what can be made use of by Strong Pluralism to offer a comprehensive view of actions.

This chapter will afford us an overview of different approaches to actions and events, and to actions as events. This is useful because it can help us to see that what has traditionally been taken to be the 'Standard View' of actions – that is Davidsonian CTAs – are not even the only option when it comes to events views of actions. In all three of these chapters the introduction will be followed by a section highlighting the ways in which doings are events, causings, and processes. The later sections will address specific views advanced in the literature on actions. Together these sections should give a comprehensive grasp on what it means that some doings are events, some are causings, and some are processes. The project carried out in these chapters, forming the second part of my thesis, will complement the first part by showing that Strong Pluralism is more than simply another view of action: it offers a way of thinking about actions with the help of which we can build on the existing literature, accommodate the widely varying nature of doings, and work out a position which opens up new ways of thinking about questions concerning actions in ethics and other fields too.

4.2 Doings and events

In this section of the chapter I'll try to answer the first of the two questions, 'Which doings are events?' First I will briefly summarise my position on doings, then I'll make a brief excursion to discuss an issue which has been raised by some authors, namely whether or not events and actions are essentially different. I will argue that although philosophers who have claimed this were right and events and actions do differ in some of their key features, there are nevertheless also many similarities, and indeed, there is a sense in which we can say that some doings are events. In this sense actions are events because they are spatially and temporally relatively continuous, and they take place as changes in the world. After this brief excursion I will discuss what follows from my view of doings for the question

whether any doings are events. This will enable me to see whether the earlier proposed monist views can contribute anything to our understanding of doings.

My discussion does not rely on any particular view of event found in the enormous literature on events. I work with a broad understanding of events and I offer a way of distinguishing doings which are events from doings which are processes and which are causings in this section. The approach I take here to doings is relatively non-committal. It is compatible with views according to which events cause each other, with views according to which agents cause events, and in theory with Davidson's, or Kim's, or Bennett's view of events.^{xliv} As long as a view of events can accommodate doings as events that are actions in virtue of their constituents not in virtue of their causes that view is compatible with the view of doings I defend in this thesis.

It is a separate issue how we approach the individuation of doings. In the literature on actions it has been commonplace since Anscombe's (1963) and Davidson's (1963/1980) work to take actions to be events and also to advance the view that closely related actions – for example those related by the expression 'by', as in 'She was cutting the cucumber by moving the knife up and down' – are identical. This means that there is only one event, and in virtue of its cause and results that event merits more than one action description. Davidson (1980), Goldman (1970), Thomson (1971), Thalberg (1977), Hornsby in her early work (1980), and McCann (1998) all thought that one's views of events will influence one's view of identity of related actions. I will sidestep this discussion here because my main focus is on what actions are. The view of actions that I have proposed allows for the possibility that some actions are such that they merit more than one description (for example 'Albert's singing' and 'Albert's singing loudly'), while other actions are related without being identical events, causings, or processes (for example 'Noelia's pushing the button' and 'Noelia's landing the jet'), that is the expressions we use to talk about the latter do not describe the same action in different ways, they describe two distinct and related actions.^{xlv}

As outlined in section 2.4, the view of doings I'm committed to takes doings to be occurrences in which agents and their agent-level skills, capacities, abilities, or powers (maybe more than one of them) are involved. I there endorsed the position that there are many agents doing things: inanimate and animate agents, machines, plants, animals, and among them humans. Of course distinct types of agents have

some unique capacities and abilities, but they are still all agents. From the view that there are agents which don't have some capacities characteristic of higher order animals it follows that not all actions are intentional, or voluntary, or purposive, because only some animals and humans (and maybe in the future machines) have the capacities and abilities to act in those ways.

I have also endorsed the claim that doings are essentially actional, that is they are actions in virtue of being partly constituted by bringing something about and this is partly constituted by the activity of agent level capacities. I have also outlined an initial classification of doings according to which whether we treat them as causings, as events, or as processes is a secondary question and depends on their constitution, and their spatiotemporal character. In 2.4 I specified intrinsic results as results which, if they are not brought about then the action hasn't been done, and in some cases it isn't even being done and hence there is no action, only a trying. In the same section I took extrinsic results to be those results which if they are not brought about then some descriptions don't apply to the action, or – although there might have been one or more successful actions of the agent – at least one action counts as a trying or a failure. Consequences fit into this framework as counting as further things (events, states of affairs, facts, etc.) caused by extrinsic results, and expected/foreseen/expected of the agent to foresee/intend/etc.

This framework enables me to propose a taxonomy of doings based on the possible different constitutions doings can have:

- a) The most simple doings are constituted of a simple single instantaneous exercise of a capacity bringing something about (non-causally). (Example: thinking of something.)
- b) Still simple doings involving causal relations are a simple single instantaneous exercise of a capacity causing something. (Example: pushing a button with my finger.)
- c) More complex doings that are constituted by a simple single instantaneous exercise of a capacity bringing about an intrinsic result which is also a constituent of the doing. (Example: running 400 meters.)
- d) There are more complex doings constituted by a simple single instantaneous exercise of a capacity causing an intrinsic result which is also a constituent of the doing. (Example: opening a door by pushing a button.)

Simple and more complex doings can either be i) purely 'mental' (mental as in not involving overt bodily movement as a constituent, for example carrying out a calculation in one's head or envisaging the route to one's destinations), or ii) 'bodily' (involving overt bodily movement as a constituent, for example raising an arm, or cleaning the snow from one's driveway).

e) Complex doings can be constituted by an exercise or exercises of one or more capacities, and they may be purely mental or may involve bodily movements, and they may also involve one or more intrinsic results. (For example preparing potato salad.)

f) Slightly more complex doings are constituted by an exercise or exercises of one or more capacities, which may be purely mental or may involve bodily movements, and they may involve one or more intrinsic results and non-intrinsic results. (For example causing a controversy in the media or causing a bushfire.)

g) Doings that are more complex and involve causings are constituted by an exercise or exercises of one or more capacities, and may be purely mental or may involve bodily movements, may involve one or more intrinsic results and non-intrinsic results, and involve some causal relations between the constitutive elements. These causal relation/relations might be relations between exercises of capacities, or exercises of capacities and intrinsic results, or exercises of capacities and external results, or internal results and external results, or different external results. (For example causing the downfall of the House of Usher.)

This classification enables me to also offer a plausible first approximation as to what sense I think we can say that doings are events, causings, and processes. So based on the previous criteria doings that are causings are the ones that belong in groups b) – most simple causal doings – and group d) (a bit more complex doings). Those doings could be treated as events which are more extended than causings, and are not constituted by extrinsic results causing other extrinsic results, and are also not scattered temporally and spatially. That is, they occur continuously, in a single – even if only vaguely determinable – location. Any doing that is not a causing, and involves causal relations between extrinsic results and consequences, can be characterised as a process. Processes, in contrast with events, can also be scattered or continuous through long periods of time. This classification rests on the intuitive ideas that causings, events, and processes differ from each other in respect of their spatial and temporal extension, their complexity (the number of different

constituents they have and the relation between those), and that they are all nevertheless occurrences in our world. There are different understandings of causings and events, as well as of processes, and I only offered here a brief and rough characterization of causings, events, and processes doesn't address many questions which are of importance for detailed discussions of these categories, and it might also be compatible with more than one view of them. Some philosophers have claimed that actions and events are essentially different.^{xlvi} I will now briefly address what they might have had in mind and whether we have any good reason to place so much emphasis on the differences between actions and events as to claim that no action is an event and vice versa.

4.3 *Is there an essential difference between doings and events?*

Some authors have defended the view that there is an essential difference between the categories of doing and event. I'll have a brief look at what they mean by this and whether or not we have to rule out as a consequence that any doings could be events. I'll discuss some remarks on this matter of John Macmurray (1938) and David Ruben (2003).^{xlvii} I'll argue that although we can draw a line between actions and events because there are systematic differences between those actions that are events, and events which aren't actions, such distinctions are rather arbitrary since actions and events also share many features. The importance of the question is that if there is any feature of actions, or more narrowly of doings, which events cannot possess then it is not true in any sense that some doings are events. I'll try to show that this is not the case and it is enough to keep apart those events which are actions from those events which aren't, and from those actions which aren't events. In the course of the discussion I'll rely on my way of handling doings and things done separately, as it makes no difference to the interpretation of what Macmurray and Ruben said on these matter, and it makes the discussion easier to follow and more straightforward.

Macmurray holds that there is a difference between our doings, for which he uses the old Latin expression *actum*, and events, called *eventum*. He writes that

“The opposite of *actum* is *eventum*. (...) An action [meaning here doing or actum] is something that is done, while an event is something that is not done, but happens. (...) Both of these are changes, both of them are observable. Their mode of occurrence is different: whether an agent's intention is their source or not. (...) I mean merely that in principle it is

not possible to infer that “X is an event and not an act” from observation. The distinction can be made only by an Agent, and rests upon his experience of *actio*.” (Macmurray 1938: 78-80, text in square brackets added by me)

Macmurray makes a number of interesting points in these paragraphs: He holds that actions and event both occur, they are both changes, and sometimes they cannot be distinguished by observation. In his view action and event have a different source, but this is also something that can in some cases only be known by the agent herself. I agree with Macmurray that it is often true that we can't tell the difference by observation between an event that is not an action, and an event which is. We might have to rely on further inferences and make queries as well to find out whether we are dealing with an action or not. What I find contestable is Macmurray's way of phrasing how agents can tell the difference: he seems to suggest that what differentiates doings and events is their source, and the agent has some privileged experience of this. I think this cannot be right. Experience might be important for the agent for knowing what she is engaged in and guide her actions in the way sought, but many doings don't have any decisively distinctive experiential feature and even if they do agents don't always take notice of these. It would follow in principle that an agent might not know that she has been doing something – even if she was doing it intentionally – if she hasn't paid attention to the experience she had as the agent of the action. Furthermore, as is known from Psychology, there are cases where an agent is not acting but experiences that she has performed an action.^{xlvi}

Macmurray's epistemological argument for distinguishing between actions and events isn't convincing. He offers another line of thought to support his view that actions and events differ essentially. (Macmurray 1938: 80-83) According to Macmurray, since we only experience our own acting, humans were initially somewhat puzzled by changes in nature. They proposed the category of events as an analogy to changes brought about by human agents, and postulated causes as analogues of agents. The idea of seeking laws in the changes of nature was in Macmurray's view motivated by the analogy with human agents too – since agents have habits and cause changes, there have to be regularities in the changes in nature as well. Macmurray concludes this discussion by claiming that seeing events as similar to human action is a serious mistake. There are no agents causing events, no

intention plays a role in bringing them about, and this is a further reason to distinguish events from actions.

I think it is hard to take a stance on Macmurray's view *qua* historical account of the origin of our ideas about events. No matter how our views of events have developed, the question whether any doings can be events is a genuinely interesting question. I think the interesting way to ask this question is to phrase it in the following way: Is there anything about events which makes it impossible to say that any action is an event? Macmurray holds that this distinction holds because no event is a bringing about by an agent. At the same time everything else he says in his paper about doings seems to indicate that doings and events are very similar to each other: they both occur, they are changes, they can be observed, they can be interpreted in different ways, and so on. In the light of this couldn't one say that actions are a special subclass of events in which agents play a productive role? This seems very natural to me, whereas the claim that those changes in the world which don't involve agents are events seems to be very arbitrary. I don't want to put too much weight on these claims, since I don't think that they are much more convincing or well argued than Macmurray's opposing claims (see 2.3.1). In fact, I think it is exactly their arbitrariness which is interesting. It shows that if we want to distinguish events from actions we might be able to do so, but we can also treat one as a group some members of which intersect with the other group, that is, we can think that some actions are events, and some events are actions.

David Ruben has also offered a way of distinguishing between actions and events. He writes the following about the distinction between hand movements – which are events - and movings of my hand – which are doings:

“My view is that, when *X* moves his hand, there is in one sense no such event at all as his hand's moving. All that there is, is the action. I'm not just denying that the basic action and its intrinsic event are identical. I deny that any such intrinsic event occurs at all, even one necessary but insufficient for the basic action; *a fortiori*, if there is no intrinsic event, it can't be identical to anything. (...) There is, on this view, a sense of 'event', and of specific event descriptions (like, 'the moving of his hand'), in which an *exclusive* disjunction is true in the case of basic actions: either a person moves his hand or his hand moves. The first is an action; the second is a (mere) event. So if I move my hand, it is false (in one sense) that

my hand moved or that it changed place, only true that I moved it or that I changed its place.” (Ruben 2003: 177-8)

It is important to note that Ruben only claims that ‘in one sense’ there are no events when we perform basic actions. I take this to mean something similar to what I have said in connection to Macmurray’s view, namely that events and some doings are alike in many of their temporal, spatial, causal features, but doings involve agents. Whether we want to rely on this feature of them to distinguish them from events is a choice of terminology and also depends on our further goals and projects. Ruben opens up conceptual space for doing so by emphasizing that we can treat a simple hand movement from my moving my hand differently. He also – correctly – makes the distinction between an event of my hands’ moving which might look just like my moving my hand but is still different from it, and not between my causing the movement of my hand, or some other supposedly internal mental action and the event of a bodily movement.

Ruben’s way of making this contrast is compatible with my view of doings according to which an agent’s doings are unlike ‘mere’ events that involve bodily movements which look similar or alike to the bodily movements constitutive of the agent’s doing. The difference does not depend on some previous causes. There is a difference between the hand movements themselves. They are not alike in all respects since doings involve the activity of agent-level capacities. Because of this the hand movements aren’t even similar on the lower levels of physiology or chemistry. The pattern of the nerve activity and connections between part of the brain and the hand are different in the two cases too, as might be other enabling processes that are going on during the action, like hormonal changes in the agent that have to do with his emotional states or perceptions, and so on. Still, some doings can be characterised as events because doings can have the same temporal and spatial features, and even stand in some of the same causal relations as other events. So, it is up to us how much emphasis we want to place on the difference between doings and other, very similar, occurrences. The question is alike cases of classifying humans as animals or as distinct from animals. Surely in some respects humans differ from all other animals, but then again so do starfish, pufferfish or dogs. Where we draw such lines depends on what we want to emphasize, the similarities or the differences.

4.4 Davidsonian views of actions as events

In the previous section I have argued that there is no reason to think that no doings can be events. In this section I will spend some time discussing whether Davidson's view or similar CTAs, committed to the claim that actions are events, are compatible with the characterization of doings offered earlier, and whether they can contribute something substantial to our understanding of doings.^{xlix} As indicated in the title of the section I take as Davidsonian all views that are CTAs and hold that all actions are events because Davidson offered the most influential and detailed version of this combination of claims. I will first briefly introduce Davidson's view of actions, his motivations to advance these specific views, discuss some of its main merits and backdrops, and then argue that it shares the same mistake of identifying all actions, or more narrowly doings, with things that are only constituents of actions, and it is also a problem that it is treating events as actions only in virtue of their causes. I'll argue that although it is true that some actions are events, we need neither endorse that all doings are only bodily movements or only tryings, nor that the events of bodily movements or the mental events of trying or willing are actions because they have certain causes.

Davidson's view of actions is fairly comprehensively introduced in his 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes' where he defends the position that i) all actions are explained by their causes, ii) all actions are events, iii) the events which are actions are movements of the agents' bodies, iv) the causes which explain actions are what make some events of movements of the agents' bodies actions, and v) these causes also make the action seem rational to the agent, that is they are reasons for him to act that way. From this it follows that vi) all actions are intentional – done for a reason – under at least one description. The reasons that explain and render actions rational are themselves the onsets of pairs of rationalizing mental states of desires and beliefs.^l I will not contest that all actions are explained by their causes. I think that actions have many kinds of causes and depending on which facets of actions (their speed, method, criminal status, elegance, etc.) we want to explain we can cite different causes.^{li} My approach can allow that some actions have mental causes, and that is enough for my present purposes. It is also not my topic here whether reasons are causes or not, whether all explanation by reasons is causal explanation or not, nor whether reasons are mental events or facts, or something else.^{lii} Questions of rationality can also be put aside for present purposes. The claims of Davidson that I

do want to engage with concern whether all actions are events, whether only events which are bodily movements are actions or other events too, and whether these events count as actions due to their causes or due to their constituents.

Whether all actions are events or not depends on what we think events are. Earlier, I proposed a distinction between doings based on their differences in respect of complexity, and spatial-temporal features. Davidson holds that many complex and fairly scattered occurrences and changes are events, as well as almost instantaneous and simple ones. He mentions avalanches, birthday parties, eruptions of volcanoes, arm raisings, sharks devouring people, having breakfast, and so on. (Davidson 1980: 164-6) This suggests that Davidson takes events to form a broad and diverse category, one that could possibly accommodate all the doings which I distinguished as causings, events, and processes. In this sense I think there is only a terminological clash between Davidson's view of actions as events, and my view of doings as falling into distinct categories. Davidson's view could be modified so as to recognize the distinctions by which I organize doings into three different categories. Where we diverge is whether Davidson could recognize that what makes doings what they are, are their constituents. Furthermore there don't seem to be any constraints in Davidson's theory which would prevent him from endorsing the claim that some events are doings, and some doings are events. He doesn't make any fundamental distinction between actions and events which would prevent him from doing so. So while Davidson doesn't place any emphasis on the differences between doings that I think are important, his view could in theory accommodate these distinctions.

Davidson also argues for the view that actions are events on the basis of his view that a correct reconstruction of the logical form of sentences in which we talk about actions will have to quantify over occurrences. These occurrences are in his view events and they are described as actions in action sentences. Even if Davidson is right about the logical structure of action sentences, this in itself does not decide whether they are events or not. As Maria Alvarez has shown (Alvarez 1999) we can accept the analysis that Davidson provided of action sentences but take the view that the events he postulates are simply the results of agents' doings, which are in Alvarez's view causings. I'll discuss whether doings are causings in the next chapter. Furthermore, as Alvarez and others have also argued, it is not uncontroversial whether Davidson was right about the logical structure of action

sentences. And be that as it may, even if Davidson was right about them, and he was also right that actions are the occurrences quantified over in such sentences, it is still an open question what actions are, what they are like, what they encompass, how they relate to other things. These questions are not answered by his views about the logical form of action sentences. It might turn out that these sentences are about processes or causings, and these might be simple movings of bodies, or much more complex doings as well. For these reasons I'll for the rest of this chapter put the question of logical form aside, and focus on Davidson's views of what actions are.

An important question that I need to settle in connection to Davidson view is whether all we ever do is move our bodies, as he seems to claim in 'Agency'. Consider the following passage of his:

"When we infer that he stopped his car from the fact that by pressing a pedal a man caused his automobile to come to a stop, we do not transfer agency from one event to another, or infer that the man was agent not only of one action but of two. We may indeed extend responsibility or liability for an action to responsibility or liability for its consequences but this we do, not by saddling the agent with a new action, but by pointing out that his original action had those results. We must conclude, perhaps with a shock of surprise, that our primitive actions, the ones we do not do by doing something else, mere movements of our body—these are all the actions there are. We never do more than move our bodies: the rest is up to nature." (Davidson 1971/1980: 59)

Davidson traces out in this passage the consequences of his view that an action is an event that is explained by its causes, and these causes are those mental events which are the reasons for which the agent acts. He holds that it is only plausible to think of such a causal relation as holding between the mental events of the onset of the reason-providing-mental states and the bodily movements that they cause. Everything else happens as a consequence of these events of agents moving their bodies. He also holds that once an agent has moved her body she doesn't have to do anything else, so in a sense she stops being an agent. Think for example of someone moving her hand, thereby dropping poison from a vial she is holding into the ears of someone else sleeping besides her, thereby poisoning him and thereby killing him. In Davidson's view all these descriptions apply to the event of the bodily movement of her moving of her hand in virtue of its having certain consequences. All these

different descriptions, from most primitive to the most complicated, apply to the same event. Is this really a plausible view of actions? It is, if one is committed to Davidson's way of thinking of actions as events that are actions in virtue of having the right causes, and of causation as occurring between two distinct particular occurrences, one preceding the other.

I think there are two problems with Davidson's view of actions. One is the thought that all CTAs subscribe to, namely that the events (processes, etc.) which are actions are actions in virtue of standing in a causal relation to something else, not in virtue of being actions. The second is that in the case of all actions one movement of the body is enough to bring about all the further consequences in virtue of which the event of the bodily movement gets further descriptions. I think that this might be true of some simple doings but it isn't true of many of our normal, ordinary actions, not to mention complicated actions requiring skill and expertise, which require more participation and continuous involvement from agents.

The first problem with CTAs is a general problem that I have already drawn attention to in chapter two: CTAs would have us think of the events that are actions as being just like other events which are not actions except for their causes. This way of thinking usually leads CTA theorists into two opposite but equally mistaken directions where they end up making monist claims and confusing actions with some of their constituents. One direction is that taken by Davidson: Davidson's way of thinking exemplifies the mistake of thinking of the caused thing as the action, and in his view this is the moving of the body since what explains actions are their causes, and we explain actions by citing the reasons for which agents did them. The other direction is exemplified for example by Hornsby's early view (1980) or Prichard's view (1949) who both end up identifying actions with something in the mind that causes bodily movements. As I have argued in chapter three, our doings seem to be much more varied than either of these two types of CTA could account for.

The problem with CTAs is that they oversimplify what actions are. Philosophers have many different motivations to do so. For example, they might be naturalists and think that events like moving one's body or trying or willing fit well into a naturalist framework, or they want to avoid ontological costs and want to emphasize that we can explain what actions are by fitting them into such broader categories as events and think that the events of bodily movements are the most

plausible candidates for being actions. I think that the view of doings I have offered could serve both naturalist philosophers and those conscious of their ontological footprint equally well. Someone with naturalist tendencies should find a view of doings that claims that they are complex natural phenomena consisting of movements, movement guiding and eliciting processes, of the exercise of different specific agent-level abilities and skills particularly interesting. This approach opens up the way to ask many questions about the structure of actions, the interrelations and nature of their constituents, the differences between specific skills and abilities, and so on.

I have also noted that the distinctions I make between actions as causings, events, or processes do not seem too hard to accommodate in one broader category of occurrences as the ontologically parsimonious wish to do. Still, I think it would make more sense to adopt a framework that can accommodate all the interesting differences between doings, even if this means that we have to let go of some of our ambitions of keeping our ontological budget low, and let our ontology be guided by the elements that are manifestly part of our life and which we have to accommodate and explain with the help of our theories. I do not want take a hard stance on these issues here since these questions go far beyond the scope of my thesis. I merely want to emphasize that the view of doings as actions in their own rights seems to be compatible with the different broader ambitions which have been cited as favouring approaches that ended up proposing CTAs and monist views of action. So we can let go of CTAs and monist views without losing much, and instead endorse a pluralist approach, and gain much by doing so.

Davidson, Hornsby and others who have proposed monist views of actions turn to identity theories and to views of descriptions of action to account for their claims that one event gets all the different action descriptions; that for example one and the same event is a moving of one's hand and a killing of someone else. Normally we wouldn't say that the Bride's moving her hand is her having killed Bill, or that the mental event of her trying to kill Bill is identical to her killing him. That is why Davidson (1980) and Hornsby (1980) endorse a view of action individuation according to which in the case of all such complex actions the action is the event caused by the agents' relevant mental states, and that one event gets described as a bodily movement in Davidson's view, or as a trying in Hornsby's view, and also as a poisoning, a killing, etc. If one endorses a CTA then these events merely count as

actions in virtue of their causes. I have debated this, but one could accept my view of doings as essentially actions, and still think that Davidson's and Hornsby's view of descriptions of actions is right, that there is only some basic doing, like the exercise of one's ability to move one's hand or the exercise of a mental capacity of trying, and these doings are all that there is in terms of actions. They have results and consequences, and those results and consequences can offer us more information about the doings in question, but there are no more extended doings. All our doings are just movings of our bodies or tryings.

These views of descriptions of action have to go to great lengths to accommodate complex actions, the involvement of the agent in them, and in explaining relations between actions and results. That they have to make these efforts indicates that monism is problematic. No doubt, it is true that some actions can be described in many different ways. Just think of Gary's singing loudly, Gary's singing annoyingly, Gary's caterwauling, and Gary's singing. But it seems equally true that there are actions which are complex and encompass more than the exercise of one capacity. Think for example of baking a cake: One needs to mix the ingredients, knead the dough, and let it rise, put it in the oven, and so on, and so on. Such cases are not ones where the agent can just let nature do the rest. The agent needs to pay attention to the cake, needs to keep it in mind to take it out of the oven in time, needs to apply the icing, etc. In such a case the agent's doing something seems to be constituted by many elements, not one of which could be discarded as not a constituent of the doing. Hence, in such cases there is no single constituent element – like a bodily movement or a trying – which could be identified as *the event*, which gets all the descriptions including those under which it is an action. We could also think of much more complicated actions, like securing a contract for a company takeover, organising a hospital in a war-affected region, or raising a child. While performing such complex actions agents exercise several skills, abilities and powers, they are involved in countless things during different intervals and sometimes parallel, and a good many things need to happen in order for them to be doing what they aim at.

This shows two things. First, that it is false that all doings would be movings of the body, or exercising one mental capacity like trying or willing. And second, that it is true that some doings have many different descriptions and often the same doing can be described in different ways. Still, it is false that in the case of any but

the most simple doings descriptions apply to one moving of a body or trying or willing. Doings are normally constituted of much more than that and the descriptions which apply to them pick out doings, not just a constituent of them. Many descriptions apply to extended doings which are constituted by many different exercises of skills, their intrinsic results, the causal relations between those intrinsic results and further results, and so on. Such descriptions like 'Elisabeth's securing funding for the new neurosurgery block' surely do not pick out the same doing as 'The Bride's moving her hand' does, even if her moving her hand is something by which she signs a contract. Securing funding for most things is more complex than that.

Before summarising what we can learn about doings from Davidsonian views of action I'll briefly digress to discuss a notion which has played an important role in many views of actions, and I have already mentioned it, namely the notion of basic actions. I'll do so to address the possibility of descriptions of doings applying to one basic doing in more detail and also to say a few things about doings, actions, and basicness. The idea that there are being basic actions has been understood in different ways: the Davidsonian way, in which it was taken to show that there is some most basic description of an event which describes that event as an action, and another way according to which what is a basic action is essentially different from other events, causings, or processes which cannot be described as doings at all.

4.5 Basic actions

The idea of basic actions has been proposed and worked out in a pair of papers by Arthur Danto (Danto 1963 and 1965) and spread throughout the literature.^{liii} Danto proposed that we do have good reason to think that there are actions, and if there are actions, then there have to be some basic actions as well. According to Danto basic actions are those actions which we do not do *by* doing something else. For example, in a normal case I simply raise my arm and I do not have to do anything else by which I do so. Of course what 'do something by doing something else' means can be understood in many ways. The idea of basic actions has been picked up by Davidson as well, who called them 'primitive actions'. (Davidson 1971/1980) In Davidson's view the search for basic actions is just the search for the most basic descriptions of actions: since in his view all action descriptions apply to the same event, the same event is described both as the most basic action an agent has performed and as the most complex one. In Davidson's view these events

usually happen to be bodily movements caused by mental states, although he recognizes that there are actions like our deciding or ignoring someone.

The upshot of Davidson's view that what we describe as a basic action and as a complex action is the same event shows how fundamentally different his view of actions is of the view of doings defended in my thesis. I would claim that a description of a more complex action gives us information about a complex doing with many constituents, while Davidson would claim that it applies to the same event caused by a reason-constituting desire-belief pair which the most basic description applies to. So, in his view the difference between the information communicated would be a difference in the amount of information we give of the same event and its results and consequences. In my view the different descriptions would – in most cases – give us information about two possibly related but different doings.

Whatever one's view of events, my view of doings would have no problem with admitting that we can identify more and less related basic actions in case of any but the simplest doing. Such complex doings as playing a Liszt rhapsody or as running a marathon can be divided into almost any number of more basic doings of agents, such as finger movements, feet movements, concentration, encouraging oneself, trying to capture an emotion, and so on. There might be several doings constitutive of more complex doings. My pluralist view of doings has no problem recognizing that different actions – actions that might take different amounts of time, some short some lengthy, might have different locations, and so on – are related in complex ways. Views like Davidson's cannot accommodate such different structures of doings. Since his view is committed to the idea that all descriptions under which an event is an action apply to the same event it becomes very hard to imagine this event.

It seems that Davidson either has to say that the event is identical to those occurrences described by the most basic action description (such as a finger movement, in the case of playing a piano piece), or to the most extended series of occurrences captured by the most complex action description. In the former case Davidson's view would owe us an explanation of what unites those atomistic bodily movements with later, distinct movements (surely not that one finger movement is done by another), and in the latter Davidson would have to explain how Usagi's moving her finger picks out the same event as Usagi's performing a rhapsody,

including all the different finger movements, feet movements, concentration, and – if she cares for show – even elements like her deliberately executed mimicry and swaying, not to mention the sounds produced. The solution that Davidson proposed to this was that only those events count as actions which are intentional under at least one description, and those events can be described in terms of their results and consequences. As I mentioned, while I think this argument works for many simple actions, and maybe even for actions which involve only one moving of the agents' body, it cannot work for actions which require the sustained participation of the agent. In such cases there would be pressure for Davidson to admit that making several movements together are the event of one action. But if Davidson were to admit this, it wouldn't be clear why he couldn't also admit that there are more complex actions, or that other actions can include times between two movings, and that besides moving there is deciding, deliberating, observing, and so on.

As I wrote, the same problem doesn't emerge for Davidson when he discusses complex actions which only require a more or less simple bodily movement like killing someone by shooting them by pulling the trigger of a gun, or by giving them a shove and thereby pushing them into the sea. Such cases could be explained by him as saying that there is no genuinely agential participation in the gun's discharge, the bullet's flight, its causing a deadly wound, the victim's agony and eventual perishing, and so on. Nevertheless, the same argument of Davidson doesn't work for complex actions which involve continuous participation and extended exercise of skills and abilities of the agent. I do not want to claim that these problems could not be overcome in some way by Davidson, or others defending monist views with similar tendencies, claiming that all actions are willings, or causings, or tryings. My goal is simply to show that the pluralist approach to doings that I'm advocating has an easier way of accommodating these issues than the monist views, and that is another advantage it has over them.

I also don't want to claim that the movings of one's body with which Davidson thought most doings are identical are not things that we can find and identify. We can identify such movings and many of them are surely events, both in Davidson's sense and in the sense in which I have proposed in section 4.2 that some doings are events. The question for me is rather why we would want to be so specific as to identify such movings. It just doesn't seem to make sense to identify them on their own, except if we are interested in physiology, neurology, kinematics, or some other

field focusing on movements and movings. In those fields it might matter that the movings that are studied are movings that are actional, but what is studied is usually not the whole action but mostly its bodily aspects. There is of course nothing wrong with that, except that the unities interesting for the different fields of studies in, say, kinematics and action theory are in this case different.

This line of thought about bodily movements and unities studied in different fields leads us to a question about basicness: Exactly what do we mean when we say that an action is basic? Danto proposed that every action is basic which we do not do by doing something else. Davidson's view is that our primitive actions are movings of our bodies. Hornsby's view was that they are tryings, which are the causings of our movings. A pluralist view of doings will recognize some doings which are exercises of mental skills, similar to what Hornsby thought of as tryings, as well as simple movings of the body, and Danto's criterion could also be accommodated. But so could many others. In an insightful paper Annette Baier lists eight different ways in which actions could be taken to be basic. We might think of them as Danto did, or we might think of them as what is conventionally taken to be basic, or as the easiest ones to perform, or as ones which make up a whole procedure, or which happen while the agent is in one position, or as genetically basic (as known before other actions are learned), or ones we can perform without having to make an effort, and so on. (Baier 1971) I think Baier's list shows that there are many possible and actual uses of the notion of basic action. Danto's may be one of them, and it may be useful for certain purposes in the philosophy of action. Still, it cannot do the task that Davidson hoped it would do, by rendering more plausible his view that all action descriptions apply to the same event.

In the last passage of this section I would like to sum up sections 4.4 and 4.5 on Davidsonian views of action and the notion of basic action. I have argued that Davidson's view of events is relaxed enough to accommodate most doings. At the same time, it cannot be used to make the differences between doings which I have suggested should be categorized as causings, events, and processes. Davidson's view also has problematic consequences in terms of which events it takes to be actions, and also due to its being a CTA. I have further argued that Danto's idea of basic actions can be helpful in discovering different ways in which actions relate to each other and in emphasizing different aspects in which actions can be basic. What it cannot do is to lend support to Davidson's view that all actions are basically

movings of our bodies. It seems then that the Davidsonian view can contribute valuable thoughts about the descriptions of doings, and about the role bodily movements have in our doings, but it takes a too broad scope on which events are actions, and it misidentifies which events are actions.

4.6 The VKM approach to actions and events

In this chapter so far I have offered my own view of doings and some ideas about how we can distinguish between doings as causings, events, and processes. I have also surveyed Davidson's view of actions to see if we can learn anything from it that enriches our understanding of doings. In working out my view of doings I have aimed primarily at the goal of offering a view of actions that provides some insight into our ordinary ways of thought and talk of actions, including our evaluative practices which are so important for ethics, politics, and law, and which also influence what we pick as objects of explanation and knowledge, both ordinarily as we engage with a friend over a glass of wine or at dinner at home or after a company meeting while having a coffee, and also in scientific and philosophical enterprises. My aim was to offer a view which is compatible with naturalism, but does not presuppose it and doesn't rule out other general approaches either.

In this section of the chapter I want to argue that another approach to actions and to metaphysics in general can be used to enrich our understanding of doings. This approach places great emphasis on the study of the behaviour of the verbs and the sentences which we use to talk about actions. It investigates the behaviour of such verbs and the sentences they appear in from linguistic, logical, and philosophical perspectives, highlighting the inferential relations between sentences, paying great attention to what sounds grammatically correct to say. This approach has been employed and advanced exemplarily by Zeno Vendler (1957), Anthony Kenny (1963), and Alexander Mourelatos (1978) and I will call it VKM henceforth. I will discuss what their findings add to our understanding of doings, and what the claims of Kenny and Mourelatos about some actions being events amount to.

I will argue that VKM is useful because it enables us to understand much about the way we think of the temporal and aspectual features of doings. These findings don't affect the way of classifying doings into causings, events, and processes which I have promoted. They simply help us to see what particular types of actions we are dealing with from a temporal and aspectual point of view, i.e. what the

sentences containing the verb used to express our message about that action implies about whether or not the action has been completed or not, whether it is or was ongoing, and so on. I will also try to show that taking the logical behaviour of action sentences too seriously leads to mistaken views about doings through the example of Mourelatos' distinction between action and activity. The way Mourelatos wants to distinguish events from processes is to claim that events (actions) are non-homogeneous while processes (activities) are homogeneous like stuff (e.g. wine). This view is incompatible with the way I suggested that we should treat doings because it draws a distinction between doings based on a criterion that cannot be applied coherently. I will discuss Vendler's view in some detail and point out how it relates to my pluralist framework. After that I'll turn straight to the problematic distinction of Mourelatos between events and processes as that is the point most relevant to the matter of this chapter.

Vendler built in his work on distinctions made by Gilbert Ryle in his *The Concept of Mind* (1949). Vendler's goal is to give a time-schema that explains how we can categorize verbs from the point of view of their temporal behaviour. His method is based in linguistics: He focuses on how we use verbs and what these uses imply, what further complements the verbs can occur together with in their different tenses, and so on. Vendler's main interest was in making properties of verbs explicit, which he thought amounts to learning something about what we use those verbs to talk about. (Vendler 1957: 143) Based on their temporal behaviour he distinguishes between the following verb types:

A) Activities – “ “A was running at time t ” means that time instant t is on *a* time stretch throughout which A was running.”

B) Accomplishments – “ “A was drawing a circle at t ” means that t is on *the* time stretch throughout which A was drawing.”

C) Achievements – “ “A won a race between t_1 and t_2 ” means that *the* time instant at which A won that race is between t_1 and t_2 .”

D) States – “ “A loved somebody from t_1 and t_2 ” means that at *any* instant between t_1 and t_2 A loved that person.” (Cited sentences from Vendler 1957: 149)

It can be seen that the concept of activities and states involves non-unique or non-definite time periods, whereas accomplishments involve unique time instants, and achievements involve definite time periods. Classifying verbs and the actions they are about would fit my approach of doings smoothly: Accomplishments fall into the

group of causings, achievements would fall either into the group of causings, events or processes depending on their complexity and extendedness, while activities would in general be events or performances. States are trickier: I don't think states are doings in any sense. Vendler inherits the interest in stative verbs like loving and knowing from Ryle, and uses his ideas about them to discuss knowledge and perception. Those topics can for our present purposes be safely separated from actions so I will put this category of Vendler's aside.

We can identify an idea of Vendler's about activities which led Mourelatos and in her recent work Hornsby (Hornsby 2012, 2013) on the wrong tracks. Vendler writes the following:

"It appears then, that running and its kind go on in time in a homogeneous way; any part of the process is of the same nature as the whole. Not so with running a mile or writing a letter; they also go on in time, but they proceed toward a terminus which is logically necessary to their being what they are." (Vendler 1957: 146)

I will discuss the idea that running and other processes are homogeneous in connection with Mourelatos's view because he explicitly relies on such considerations to claim that activities are entirely different from events. Vendler's point above could simply be accommodated by my view of doings as pointing out a difference between those doings which do not count as being done or having been done if some intrinsic results haven't been brought about, in contrast to those which have. That is, I don't think we are dealing with an important temporal difference here, rather with a difference in the constitution of certain doings. An action might be going on 'in a homogeneous way' but it will still have constituents which can be singled out as smaller actions if we are interested in those. Also, how homogeneous an action is depends a lot on how closely and carefully we look at an action. Seemingly homogeneous movement of a hand can be constituted by quite distinct phases of keeping on trajectory versus shaking, and so on.

This brief summary of Vendler's classification of verbs based on their temporal profiles served to introduce the reader to the VKM approach. I think most of what Vendler says about verbs and through them about actions is fairly uncontroversial and any serious view of actions should be able to accommodate it. Kenny offers a more sophisticated and detailed treatment of the same project, with a special

emphasis on tense logic. In his book *Action, Emotion and Will* this discussion plays the role of undermining views which took actions to be relations between subjects. Since I don't share that view and I think it has been convincingly shown to be false^{liv} I won't go into the details of Kenny's view here. The two categorizations aim at different things of course and so this situation is normal: it doesn't indicate a conflict, rather complementariness.

Mourelatos has taken Vendler's and Kenny's (and Ryle's) work further by not only focusing on the temporal qualities of verbs but also on their aspectual qualities. In his paper 'Events, Processes, and States' Mourelatos offers a general ontology of situations based on the behaviour of verbs. Mourelatos thinks that there is a deep metaphysical difference between actions which are processes (activities) and actions which are events (performances). He argues for this on the basis of the different inferences that sentences about activities and sentences about performances license, and on the basis of the similarity of the behaviour of action verbs which we use to talk about processes and the behaviour of nouns which we use to talk about stuff, as contrasted with substances. I will argue that Mourelatos's distinction is confused because he mixes up considerations about things done with considerations about extended, complex doings which are processes (his activities).

In the following paragraphs I will outline Mourelatos' reasoning by which he arrives at the view that there is a distinction between two categories of actions: Performances (which are events) and activities (which are processes). Mourelatos holds that activities are like stuff (like wine, gold, etc. that do not refer to particulars, but to (kinds of) stuff). I think this claim cannot be right about ongoing doings – whether they are causings, events, or processes – and Mourelatos is confusing talk about things done which are to doings like stuff, kinds of things are to substance. That is why he is misled into thinking that activities are differently constituted from other actions. I argue that if we keep in mind all the time that we have to distinguish between things done and doings, and when we think of actions which are events and processes we keep thinking of doings then we can avoid such mistakes. The importance of this discussion is to shed more light on my view of doings, and to highlight a mistake which can be made while making the distinction between events and processes.

Mourelatos calls attention to a grammatical phenomenon which Vendler and Kenny neglect, namely that of *aspect*. He takes aspect to mark a distinction between

verb types which is important for the categorization of changes in general, and as such to the distinction between those actions which are events and those which are processes. (Mourelatos 1978: 418) Aspect and tense are always distinguished in linguistics: Tense informs us of the position of something in time, whereas aspect informs us of its relation to time. So, tense can tell us whether something happened in the past, whether it happened for a longer or a shorter time, and so on, and aspect can tell us whether it was a continuous, repetitive, scattered, etc. occurrence. In some languages (e.g. Russian) the aspectual differences are indicated by two different forms of the same verb (by adding a suffix), but in English most of the time we use two different verbs to express the two different aspects of something being ongoing (not yet completed) and something having been completed, that is of imperfective and perfective. (Mourelatos 1978: 417-8)

Mourelatos goes on to argue that verbs in English which express ongoing, homogeneous occurrences behave just like mass terms (wine, snow, hunger), whereas verbs which express completed and/or non-homogeneous occurrences are like count terms. Mourelatos goes into quite detailed grammatical arguments, which we need not follow here, to show that verbs which we can use to make event-predications are the only verbs which behave like count terms. From this Mourelatos thinks it follows that:

“(E)vents thus occupy relatively to other situations a position analogous to the one objects or things or substances occupy relatively to stuffs and properties or qualities. (...) A substance is not homogeneous (...) A clock is not made up of clocks. Correspondingly, an event *E* is not made up of *E*-events: the capsizing of a boat is not made up of boat-capsizings. (...) Stuffs are homoeomerous: if *X* is gold, then all parts of *X* are gold. Processes are homoeomerous in the corresponding sense explicated at the opening of this paper a propos Vendler’s activities. Moreover, just as we can collect and thus individuate stuffs into such extrinsic containers as bottles or lumps or measures, we can correspondingly collect and individuate activities into stretches, phases, stages and the like.” (Mourelatos 1978: 430)

We can see then that the view Mourelatos offers is this: Events are the stretches into which we measure processes. Processes in themselves cannot be measured since they are like stuff, like kinds of things. Combined with the view that imperfective aspect is typical of processes this yields the view for Mourelatos that when we talk

of actions as ongoing, as incomplete, we talk about the kinds of actions (activities, the stuff) not of something ongoing. Once an activity is over or once it has been performed for any measurable time we can take any stretch of it and treat it as an event (as a performance). It is a consequence of this view that we should treat expressions like 'Susan is running', 'BP is drilling in the North Sea', and 'Todd is shopping with his daughter' as being about the stuff of actions, about the kinds of actions not about any ongoing doings.

Mourelatos is right in emphasizing that aspect communicates something that tense doesn't, but wrong in basing a metaphysical distinction on this.^{lv} He seems to slip from talking about doings into talking about things done when he moves from talking about ongoing actions to talk about the stuff of actions. There is of course nothing wrong with talking about the stuff of actions – which in a sense could be taken to be things done – but there is everything wrong with claiming that while a doing is ongoing, an agent is doing something, there isn't any process that we can talk about, and instead we only talk of there being some kind of action. This reasoning seems to me fantastic and despite all the linguistic considerations that Mourelatos marshals to its support in his paper I think this case is one where seeking too much order and system in the grammar of our everyday language can mislead us.

Mourelatos claims that actions which we talk about as having the imperfective aspect (activities, which are the actions that are process) are 'homoeomerous' (constituted of the same thing through and through) and this consideration also speaks in favour of taking them to be like stuff. Mourelatos does voice some reservations about whether or not this reasoning holds but in the end he relies on it in support of his view. An activity that consists of the same thing through and through in Mourelatos' view is running. Analogies of this in his view are for example wine and beer. But what about such mass terms as furniture or fruit cake? First of all, it is by no means true that we wouldn't use these terms to single out particular, spatio-temporally located instances of these things. Mourelatos is surely right that we talk about types, but we can also perfectly well talk about things that fall under those types.

Second, they are not really homoeomerous. Let's think of fruit cake. Are the spongy bits just like the creamy bits or like the fruity bits? I doubt that it would be called fruit cake or very well liked if it was so. Let's think of our example of

activity, running. Are the first slow steps and short movements just like the long strides? Are the fast, quick paced kilometres the same as the ones where one is saving some energy and resting a bit? In a sense yes, they are. Equally well, they aren't. They are very different and this is easy to see if we try to run even a few hundred meters. When we talk of the kind running or wine we really have one kind of thing in mind. Talking about our ongoing doings is not like that and it requires more flexibility and attention to particular details, just like there is a difference in talking about wine and talking about the wine in one's glass which one is holding at a wine tasting.

I'm not denying that the grammatical differences Mourelatos notes are there. All I'm denying is that there aren't any ongoing, extended actions, or that all we would ever talk about when we talk about actions which are process would be kinds of actions. Just like completed runs, there are ongoing and incomplete runs. Just like completed runs are or have been constituted by many things, ongoing runs are constituted by many things. We can admit the difference Mourelatos wants to make between ways of referring to occurrences, but it doesn't follow that there are no ongoing actions or processes in the same way in which there are completed actions and events, and because there are such ongoing and incomplete doings we do talk and think about them regularly.

So, to summarize things, I think we should reject Mourelatos's way of distinguishing between events and processes, that is, in his terminology of actions between performances and activities. The distinction I offered between events and processes can capture the differences that there are between doings of different constitutions, and our common ways of talking about the temporal and aspectual features of actions don't need to guide our metaphysical categorization of actions. It is enough if they are reliable tools of expressing when an action occurred, and whether it has or has not been completed successfully. The notion of processes I'm working with treats processes simply as complex, extended doings, not as something fundamentally different from events in terms of their nature. After having considered Mourelatos's way of treating events as something fundamentally different from actions I think we can see that there is no need to differentiate between events and processes in that way. We can make good sense of ongoing actions, whether someone counts as having done them or doing them simply in virtue of doing them or some further results have to be brought about for this to be

true. The usefulness and role of aspect can be perfectly understood as indicating the completeness or incompleteness, the success or failure of a doing. And processes can be understood as doings going on in time and space, just like events.

4.7 Conclusions

In this chapter I started the enquiry that forms the second part of my thesis in which I investigate whether views of action that hold that actions are events, causings, or process can contribute something to the view of doings that I have proposed. This chapter focused on the claim that actions are events. I have first (4.2) provided my characterization of doings and a possible way of classifying doings into events, causings, and processes. I addressed the question of whether there is a difference between actions and events that would rule out any claim that some actions are events and have concluded that considerations offered to this effect can be accommodated by my pluralist approach without having to rule out that some doings could be events.

Then I moved on to discuss whether Davidson's view (4.4) and views inspired by it can be used as a source of adding further valuable details to our view of actions. I argued that the most useful contribution of Davidson's view is his idea of descriptions of action. I argued that we shouldn't accept a CTA and we should be sceptical of monist views which claim that all actions are moving of bodies, or tryings, or willings, or any other one single type of typical constituent of doings. I briefly discussed Arthur Danto's idea of basic actions (4.5) and how it has been used by Davidson. I took a pluralist approach to basicness and defended Anette Baier's take on the topic according to which there might be many different ways in which an action can be basic. I've also tried to show that the idea of basicness doesn't lend any support to CTAs.

Finally, I discussed the VKM approach to actions (4.6), which places more emphasis on how those verbs and sentences behave which we use to express our thoughts about actions and what they reveal by that about actions. I've argued that VKM is useful because it helps us understand more about the temporal and aspectual features of actions. I have also claimed that taking the logical behaviour of action sentences too seriously can also be misleading and that Mourelatos's distinction between events and processes is an example of that. I concluded that while studying the logical behaviour of action verbs and sentences can be useful, we shouldn't only focus on that when thinking about what doings are and we should be

careful with making inferences about differences between kinds of doings. Having rejected both the Davidsonian view that all actions are simply events, and Mourelatos's view that the actions which are events are somehow different from the actions which are processes has shown that we shouldn't attribute too much role to broader metaphysical categories in understanding actions. A category of events can be used to organize doings but it doesn't have to be something fundamentally different from other categories of doings, nor the exclusive category that doings belong into.

One of the main things that I think the results achieved in this chapter show is that we shouldn't relegate too much work to a theory of events or any broader ontological or metaphysical framework if we don't really need it, and it seems that in the case of doings we don't really need it. Considerations about doings based on what we know about actions from our ordinary life and practices, and what we learn about them from the sciences, should precede our metaphysical interests and our linguistic insights, without leading to ignoring them. Pluralism seems to be successful at accommodating these different concerns. In the next chapter I'll move on to discuss what we can learn from theories which claimed that doings are causings.

Chapter 5

Are doings causings?

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will address the question of whether doings can be taken to be causings. In the previous chapter I defended the claim that some doings are events, although not in the sense of events which was made most popular in the literature by Davidson. I will take a similar approach to the question in this chapter. My pluralism does not rule out that some doings are causings, in fact it is hospitable to this idea as I have argued in 4.2. Again, the question will turn on how exactly we understand what causings are. For this reason I will address different views which emphasize the role of causal elements in actions. We should distinguish between two ways of treating questions of causation in connection with actions. The first way of discussing causation in connection with action is to seek to understand what the logical order of action and agency is, that is, whether there are such elements as willings, bodily movements, tryings that are actions or constituents of actions and are themselves causings, or are related causally, or are actions in virtue of their causes. Taking this approach means that we try to figure out how conceptually and/or metaphysically causal elements involved in doings fit into a comprehensive view of doings, how these concepts of causation and doing connect, what causes what, what brings about what. It also amounts to asking when these questions make sense, and when they are mistaken and consequently only amount to unnecessarily splitting up the unities which are doings into artificial parts.

The second take on causation is to discuss different views of what causation is (counterfactual dependence, probability, etc.) and try to deduce some conclusions from such considerations for our view of doings. As I indicated in connection with events, in this thesis I'm not interested so much in outlining a general metaphysics and attempting to fit actions into such a picture and explaining how actions can be accounted for with the help of the resources of such an overall view. Hence I will put the second take on causation aside. My aim here is to explore what all the elements involved in our doings are and what doings are like. I will put aside considerations about what causation is in general. I employ the notion of causing

here in the senses in which it plausibly appears in discussions of doings. What I will focus on will be the proposals of different views of actions that rely on causation or causings to account for what actions are.

There have been several different views of action in which causal relations and causings play an important role and I will address the three most important such views. The first one of these is traditional agent causation, defended for example by Chisholm (1976) and Taylor (1966), which takes actions to be events which are caused by agents. I will argue that this approach has been rejected rightly for two reasons: i) It is a version of CTA, and ii) it is implausible to claim that agents cause their own actions.

Second, I'll address the view which claims that actions are the events of agent causings, and these events cause further results such as bodily movements, etc. I argue that this view is plausible for some doings but not for all. I will make a short excursion to discuss the way Jennifer Hornsby made use of the difference between transitive and intransitive verb forms (5.5). I'll argue that although the difference can be used as a grammatical tool to mark a distinction made in one's theory – similarly to the way I use the doings - things done distinction – in itself it doesn't prove or disprove any views of doings. Hornsby's (1979, 1980, and 1982) use of it engendered a mistaken approach which leads to problematic assumptions for both types of views which take agent causings to be actions.

Another type of view I will discuss – defended for example by Bach (1980) and Hyman (2001) – takes actions to be instances of the causal relation between agents and events which are the results of actions. I think this view is also hard to endorse fully for two reasons. First, if we take causings simply to be the instances of relations that hold between an agent and an effect then doings are not like occurrences and this makes doings very hard to understand. Doings do seem to be such that they can be the object of evaluation, some of them can be known through observation, they can be interrupted, and so on. On the other hand if such instances of relations are like other occurrences, like events and processes, then they don't offer any distinctive advantages over the second type of view discussed in this chapter. Second, if the view of doings I have proposed can be taken seriously it is hard to see why the causings view excludes all events from what doings are. I'll argue that Hornsby's way of making the transitive-intransitive distinction has contributed to the confusions which this view is a hostage to.

The chapter will be structured as follows: First (5.2) I will briefly explain in what senses my view of doings can plausibly take some doings to be causings. Then (5.3-5.6) I will move on to discuss the three takes on the role of causation and causings in elucidating what actions are. If my arguments are right then we can conclude that some doings are causings, and causation does play a role in understanding what doings are. We have to be cautious to avoid endorsing a CTA, or a view that confines doings to the body, or a view that treats doings simply as relations and rules out the possibility that they share spatio-temporal characteristics with occurrents.

5.2 Doings as causings

In the previous chapter I proposed a taxonomy of doings based on the differences in their constitution, and I have considered that the following four basic types of doings are possible:

- a) The most simple doings are constituted of a simple single instantaneous exercise of a capacity bringing something about (non-causally). Examples are my thinking of something and Bill's recalling someone's name. In such cases nothing happens as a result of the doing. The doing is just thinking of something or the recalling of the name, causation is not involved.
- b) Simple doings involving causal relations are simple single instantaneous exercises of a capacity causing something. An example is pushing a button with my finger. In such cases the agent causes a change in the button's position. This effect is a constituent of the agents' doing, it is not a separate result from it. The doing comprises the moving of the finger (which is partly constituted by the movement of the finger), the movement of the button and the causal relation between the two.
- c) More complex doings that are constituted by a simple single instantaneous exercise of a capacity bringing about an intrinsic result which is also a constituent of the doing. Example: running 400 meters. An agent counts as having run 400 meters or running 400 meters if she has covered 400 meters. In case of running pushing one's body over the imaginary 400 meter line takes only one of the many instantaneous doings that form a sequence of the larger-scale doing of running (maybe an unspecified distance, maybe a specific longer distance). The intrinsic result of producing the effect that one is over the imaginary 400 meters line is necessary for this to be true of the agent. Causation is not involved.

d) There are more complex doings constituted by a simple single instantaneous exercise of a capacity causing an intrinsic result which is also a constituent of the doing. Example: opening a door by pushing a button. In this case we can say that the agent opened the door. Her simple exercise of a capacity was her pushing the button, and this caused the result intrinsic to her doing of opening the door. The obtaining of this instance of the causal relation between the button's being pushed and the door's opening is constitutive of the doing.

It can be seen from the above list that simple and more complex doings can either be i) purely 'mental' (mental as in not involving overt bodily movement as a constituent, for example carrying out a calculation in one's head or envisaging the route to one's destination), or ii) 'bodily' (involving overt bodily movement as a constituent, for example raising an arm, or cleaning the snow from one's driveway). I hold that both of these types of doings has varieties which involve causal relations, and ones which do not involve causal relations. That the right causal relations hold between constituents of doings is sometimes as important for the doing being what it is as that the constituents exist. This does not amount to a reifying of instances of causal relations – I'll argue against such moves later, in section 5.6. I don't think that we should take doings to be instances of causal relations, just that doings might involve causal relations.

I have also claimed that in more complex doings which involve the exercise of more capacities, the occurrence of more events, it also matters to the constitution of these doings how their constitutive elements are related, whether some elements cause others, e.g. exercises of a capacity causing some results, and results other results. I argued that some simple doings can be thought of as pointlike, instantaneous doings. Recalling the name of someone, coming up with a good comeback, blinking, and snapping one's fingers could be all be thought of in this way. There is something intuitive about taking simple doings involving causings – whether or not they involve causation –to be causings. As I said, I do not mean by this that doings would be identical with instances of causal relations. What I mean is that we can call some doings causing in the innocent sense of them being very short and taking place in a well identifiable, 'small' location.

We can also note that the VKM framework accommodates the view that some of our achievements and accomplishments are instantaneous doings, and that in case of completing a doing with a set endpoint we can take the verbs we use to single out

such completions to be about instantaneous doings. Examples of such doings are winning something, finding something, recognizing someone, reaching the summit of a mountain, diving 10 meters deep. As Mourelatos summarizes it, achievements capture the starting or endpoint of an occurrence. They can be dated, but they do not occur over or throughout or during a time stretch, they occur at a specific point of time. (Mourelatos 1978: 416, see also Vendler 1957: 101) In my view, singling out such starting or endpoints of doings might be validated if our interest is in the doings which are those starting or endpoints, but only if what happens at these points are really doings in themselves, as for example they are in the case of one's making the last push needed to cover 400 meters, or completing one's plan by deciding on the last action one is going to take. There are doings in the case of which there is nothing distinctive about elements constitutive of the last moments and we wouldn't take them to be doings normally, as in the case of finishing watching a movie. Saying that watching a certain scene (maybe the end-scene) of the movie was a distinct doing because the level of my engagement with it made it different is of course fine.

So, while I accept that some of the accomplishments or achievements identified by the VKM framework belong with instantaneous simple doings, I don't think that all of them do, and I don't agree with Mourelatos that we should only take starting and endpoints to be such doings. In the case of some actions it is hard to decide whether the endpoints could be taken to be doings on their own, and in case of some other actions there is just one instantaneous, point-like doing, no sequence which has a distinct start or end. To give a few examples of cases where endpoints can be taken both as doings and as integral parts of a complex doing think of example of the parts of performances that involve the coming about of their goal - that is the their intrinsic result - such as arriving somewhere, realizing something, getting the result of a calculation, or coming up with the solution. We might think that these things are integral constituents of doings, but at the same time they also seem to be more than just intrinsic results because one is still involved in them. They could also be taken as satisfying the criterion of being point-like in time as well as in space.^{lvi} As in the case of some other questions regarding actions, our judgments here will depend on the particular cases.

I have argued in 2.4 that some simple doings which are exercises of capacities are causings, and some complex doings involve causings. Kenny in chapter six of

his *Action, Emotion and Will* writes that some performances – which are bringing-about – (Kenny 1963: 177) – are exercises of capacities that bring about changes in the object of the action (and might bring about changes in the agents too, Kenny 1963: 179-180). Such exercises of capacities might very well be considered causings of changes when they do cause changes. In some cases they directly cause an intrinsic result, whereas in other cases they cause something by causing other things which lead on to further effects, and those effects might be events, processes, states, etc. (Kenny 1963: 181, 184) As my constitution-based taxonomy of doings shows, many complex doings involve such instances of causal relations between intrinsic results, extrinsic results, and consequences of doings. Doings might also just simply have further effects which are not their constituents and don't change their descriptions. One might think of such cases as the establishment of a manufacturing plant which leads to many people in the area getting well-paying jobs, this in turn leading years later to a worker buying the presents for her son that he wishes for and making him happy. There are complex relations between the actions of founders of the manufacturing plant, the worker buying the present, and her son's happiness: still, these are not the instances of causal relations we are looking for when elucidating the sense in which doings can be causings.

As can be seen from this brief discussion of the possible ways in which doings might be causings or might involve causings, my pluralist approach can accommodate causings. It does so in the sense in which causings that are doings form a third category besides events and processes amongst occurrences, their distinctness being that they are instantaneous or take very short time. After this preliminary clarification of my view of doings as causings I will move on to discuss three views of action which all allocate significant roles to causation in their version of the story of what actions are. As in the previous chapter, I'll treat these views as if they were views of doings. I'll try to highlight the main problems they suffer from, and at the same time make use of their findings to better understand doings.

5.3 Traditional agent causation

I'll start my discussion of causings views of doings with traditional agent causation.^{lvii} Many people refer to Thomas Reid as the first who defended such a theory in detail. Since Reid's time there have been many attempts to defend agent causation and I'll now briefly discuss agent causation as it has been defended by Roderick Chisholm (1976) and Richard Taylor (1966).^{lviii} These views identify

agent causation as a conceptually irreducible element of agency, and hold that actions are the events caused in this way. This essentially makes traditional agent causation a type of CTA: The action is still an event - in Chisholm's view cerebral events,^{lix} in Taylor's events in the neural system which are themselves bodily motions - in itself indistinguishable from other events, and counts as a doing simply in virtue of its cause. CTAs discussed in the previous chapter identified the two elements standing in causal relation – the effect, which is the action, and the cause which renders the effect an action – as two events. On the contrast, the traditional agent-causal views discussed here, identify the first element as an agent, a substance, while the action is still an event, which counts as an action in virtue of being caused by an agent.

It is an advantage of agent causal views above simple event causal views that they do not reject the role whole agents, not just their parts, play in actions. As Hornsby has argued extensively, event causal views of actions can't grasp the participation of the agent in action. (Hornsby 2004) And as Dennett (1967), Hornsby (1997), Alvarez and Hyman (1998), and Hyman (2015) all try to show, there is an important difference between an agents' subsystems causing something and an agents' causing something. If we are looking for doings of human agents, not just doings of their subparts, then we should be looking for agent-level capacities, abilities, and skills, and their exercises. I think that subparts of humans and other beings can be agents too. If we are interested in those cases, we will have to look at the wholes those agents are, and what capacities and powers they have.

Despite the advantages of agent causation over event causal views of action I still think that traditional agent causation is wrong because it divides constituents of doings in an arbitrary way. This is the same mistake which I claimed is made by CTAs. Versions of event CTAs which identify actions which the events caused take actions to be events which could not be distinguished on their own from events which are not actions. The only reason why they count as events is that they have certain causes. I've argued that this cannot be right: doings involve the workings of agent level capacities, and what is brought about, what is caused as an intrinsic result by the exercise of these capacities, and sometimes further results and consequences too. As I argued, a similar problem emerges for views which take the causing events to be the actions: such views – like Hornsby's early view and Prichard's view – take something happening inside the bodies of agents to be events

in which agents aren't involved (they talk of mere events) and which in themselves couldn't be the objects of evaluation, perception, etc. Also, such views would suggest that guided, controlled movements of our bodies, items and tools we use, etc. are not part of our actions, but somehow excluded from them. I have concluded that these are both bad ways of grasping doings, because they only identify some typically constitutive elements of doings as actions, not whole doings.

I've rehearsed these arguments here because they are relevant to traditional agent causation. Traditional agent causation seems to offer a misguided view of doings for the following reasons. I) Although it provides a role for agents in its view, the agent is actually not involved in the action, but is just the cause of it. According to these views the action is an event-independent occurrence. II) The events that are taken to be actions are – just as CTAs did – taken to be undistinguishable from other events. They just count as actions in virtue of their causes. III) The view needs further specification: surely not everything an agent causes is an action. The view might be specified so as to explain which events caused by the agent are actions by invoking mental states, skills, capacities and abilities of agents. If this way is taken then the view encounters the same kind of problem that event CTAs which identify the action with the causing event encounter, namely that to say that what happens 'within' the skin of an agent is an action and what happens outside the skin of an agent is not an action.^{lx} I have argued against this distinction both in chapters one, two, and the previous chapter. My view does allow for mental actions, but it does rule out the position that all actions would be mental.

These and other concerns about traditional agent causation have led to a flight from the view and to proposing different understandings of how we should understand agent causation and how it helps us to understand what actions are. One way of doing so is to claim that actions are not the events agent caused, they are agent causings. This view has two versions: one takes agent causings to be events, and the other takes agent causings to be instances of relations. I will first discuss the view that doings are events of agent causings (5.4) and discuss the view that doings are instances of the relation of agent causing later (5.6). Between the two sections I will make a detour and discuss the way Jennifer Hornsby (1980) has elucidated the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs and what their difference means for actions (5.5). Hornsby's older view is an event CTA which takes actions to be

the events causing bodily movements (a version of event views of action I have argued against in the previous chapter). Her idea that transitive verbs track causings of bodily movements was used by others – for example by Alvarez and Hyman (1998: 223, 228) – to argue for the position that actions are just causings of results. Exposing this mistake will feature importantly in 5.6 when I discuss the views of Kent Bach, Maria Alvarez and John Hyman. With this in mind, I shall move on to discussing the first type of causings views which takes causings to be actions.

5.4 *Are causings events?*

Some agent causalists who disagreed with Chisholm and Taylor but thought that agent causation captures something important about action have advanced the view that an action is not an event caused by an agent, rather it is an agents' causing of an event, and this causing is itself an event. Timothy O'Connor's *Persons and Causes* (2000) makes an extended case for this position; alas, his aim is only to offer a view of free action (see his chapter one). O'Connor writes:

“(N)ow consider an instance of *S*'s causing *e*. This event is intrinsically a doing, owing to its internal causal structure (i.e., an agent's bearing a direct causal relation to another event). Its very nature precludes the possibility of there being a sufficient causal condition for it (as I argued earlier), being an event which is the agent's causing the event internal to it (*e*). Now the event *e* is itself clearly under the control of the agent, since *he* caused it (directly). But would it not, then, be perfectly absurd to raise a doubt concerning whether the agent controlled his causing *e*? Indeed, it seems to me that the question of whether the agent has control over this event is ill-framed - it is simply an instance of an agent's *exercising* direct control over another event.” (O'Connor 1995: 186-7)

O'Connor also further specifies what he takes agents' doings to cause: “Agent causes bring about immediately *executive* states of intention to act in various ways.” (O'Connor 2000: 72) We can gauge the general picture from these citations: doings are events, they are events which are the agents' causing another event, and the event caused is the agents' coming to have an intention. O'Connor also thinks that such intention formations are exercises of capacities of the agent. (O'Connor 2000: 72) As can be seen straight away this view is compatible with the view of doings defended here because it claims that causings are events, so it affirms that they are things which have spatio-temporal profiles. I have reserved the usage of 'event' to

those doings that are more extended doings than simple exercisings of capacities, so the two views don't fit exactly; still presumably this constraint could be included in a more detailed characterization of this type of causings view. Making such adjustments would require that one's view of actions should allow for the kind of pluralism about doings I'm defending here and in turn for making the distinction between events, causings, and processes which are doings based on their different complexity and different spatio-temporal profiles.

I think that the view O'Connor holds is mistaken if we take it to be a view of all doings, and even if we were to take the sense in which this version of agent causation takes events to leave sufficient room for the distinctions I made between doings based on their complexity and spatio-temporal features, the particular characterization it offers of doings as causings of intentions is very narrow. In this respect it doesn't make a difference whether O'Connor's view is a view of free action or all action because presumably there would be instantaneous free actions as well as complex, extended ones. Since O'Connor's view considers all doings to be causings of intentions *simpliciter* and these intentions (or the events of acquiring them) cause all further movements, and other constituents that have to come about to make it true that we are or were doing certain things, the view endorses a too restrictive claim of what can be a doing. If the view is taken to say then that even in the case of actions which require continuous involvement and participation from the agent doing something the doing is actually simply a single causing and everything else follows without the agent doing anything (without there being any other doing on her part), and this is hard to accept. O'Connor basically claims that in the case of my gardening the whole afternoon what was really my gardening was simply my causing to have the intention to garden. My hoeing, weeding, and pruning are all just events that are not actions, just non-actional events like any other event. According to the view I have proposed this is wrong because it turns a blind eye to all that is distinctive and specific about my doings: to all their psychological, physiological, biological, and other features which do distinguish my doings from anything else that is not a doing, and not the specific type of doing that I'm engaged in.

By allowing that our doings are simply causings of intentions this type of agent causation also seems to give up on what seemed to be the biggest advantage of agent causation: that it can actually offer a view of action which characterises

actions by portraying agents as involved in them, as doers, as active. If I'm not involved in making any of my movements, in tending to my garden, in working, or in performing anything, agents seem to be confined to their mind. Besides this being false, it also puts a huge burden on anyone offering such a view to explain why exactly there would be one special type of doing that humans are capable of, but not others. And it would also be a strange idea to think that our activity applies to causing ourselves to have certain mental states, not to interacting with each other and our environment. I won't go into more detail considering such objections since that would take us into debates concerning free will, determinism, and whether actions are different from other events in the way they are caused or not. I only argue here for a view according to which doings are different from other occurrences, but these differences can be accounted for without having to rely on arguments concerning determinism and indeterminism, and hence my position could in principle be compatible with either type of view as I said before.

If O'Connor's view were modified so as to claim that continuous causation of intentions is required in the case of more complex actions in which we are continuously engaged in for a longer time, two questions would emerge again. Why would the only thing that we are doing in such cases be the causing of our intentions? It seems that not all actions are intentional, and it would make more sense to take into account the complicated relationships between different patterns of motivations, decisions, emotions, deliberation, impulses, and so on, than simply claiming that our doings are all the same kind of causings. And second, while such a view could give a more plausible account of doings which involve our continuous movement, speaking, and other directly controlled constituents, it would still have a hard time accounting for more complex doings – the types which I have proposed to treat as processes – which are extended and involve constituents which are not directly caused by agents. Such doings are the publication of a book, or getting married, or growing a cherry orchard. These doings are characteristically performed with others (maybe even involving institutions) and/or involve the occurrence of further results and consequences of mental actions and movements of the agent.^{lxi}

In summary then we can say that this version of agent causation, while characterizing some simple exercising of capacities well, constrains what our doings are too narrowly, and it also oversimplifies what kind of doings humans are capable of. I would add to this that the idea that we cause our intentions is in itself

hard to grasp: if our causing ourselves to have an intention is our action, then what makes these actions intentional? It seems that we have to endorse the overly strong claim that all actions are intentional in virtue of being causings of intentions, or we have to explain the intentionality of these causings in some other way.^{lxii} Also, if agents cause things, their powers and capacities seem to enable them much more than just causing intentions. It is a natural thought that agents (not just humans) can move, can move other things, and that (typically human agents) can write, plan, sing, assassinate others, edit newspapers, and play with their dogs and cats. So, while the view could be taken to capture what some simple causal doings are, it isn't a very good fit for others.

This discussion of O'Connor's version of agent causation amounts in my eyes to a limited endorsement of his version of agent causation. It is surely true that some of our simple doings are exercises of capacities and our causing something. At the same time I think the view is wrong in both that this would be a full characterization of all our doings, and in its more particular claims concerning what doings are, or at least so I have argued. I'll move on to discussing the type of agent causalist work that claims that causings are instances of a causal relation, but before that in the next section I will discuss a topic which doesn't at first sight belong here, the issue of how to make sense of the difference between transitive and intransitive verb forms. I think the discussion of this distinction is warranted for two reasons: First of all, it is allocated an important role in some of the agent causal views which I will discuss in the rest of the chapter. Second, it is a distinction which deals with a sense in which causation figures importantly in all doings. After this brief detour I will return to agent causation in 5.6

5.5 The transitive-intransitive distinction and causation

I've given two reasons for discussing the transitive-intransitive distinction: that it plays a significant role in agent causal views which take actions to be instances of causal relations, and that the distinction is connected to how we think of the role of causation in action. First I'll say a bit more about the distinction and Hornsby's (1980) way of using and making use of the distinction in her earlier view of actions.^{lxiii} Then I'll talk a bit about the way the idea has been picked up by other philosophers, and finally I'll argue why we should make sense of the distinction in a different way from Hornsby's.

Hornsby discusses transitive verbs for two purposes: 1. To help clarify her standpoint by making use of them as a marker of events that are doings, and events that are caused by doings. 2. To make sense of a linguistic phenomenon which she thinks also supports her view of doings. The linguistic phenomenon in question is that some verbs can have one or more objects, these verbs are called transitive, while verbs which don't have objects are intransitive. The following are examples of sentences involving transitive verbs (the transitive verbs are in italics):

The camel *bit* him.

He *broke* the screwdriver.

They are going to *need* a bigger house.

Some verbs are ambitransitive and can be used with or without an object. An example is *eat*: 'You ate' is intransitive, while 'The dog ate two cream buns' is transitive. There are two uses Hornsby makes of this distinction. The first one of these is an innocent and philosophically uninteresting use: Hornsby uses the transitive forms to mark doings as contrasted with things done (see chapter 2 and 3 on Hornsby's way of distinguishing things done and doings). (Hornsby 1980: 5-6) This helps her to establish a coherent usage that is easy to follow. She introduces lower index τ to mark verbs as standing for their transitive use (e.g. *moved τ* as in 'She moved her hand'), and lower index ι to mark their intransitive use (e.g. *moved ι* as in 'Her hand moved').

The second thing Hornsby does is to connect the distinction with her view. She holds that many transitive verbs are causative verbs, causation plays a role in action (actions cause their results) (Hornsby 1980: 89, 99, 101), and she also accepts event causation. What view does Hornsby arrive at starting from these commitments? She thinks that the transitive verb forms mark our doings, and doings are our actions causing results. Hornsby connects this with the distinction she makes between 'She *moved τ* her hand' and 'Her hand *moved ι* ' and defends the idea that her moving her hand is what the doing which causes her hand's movement. That is, she thinks that the transitive and the intransitive verb forms pick out in such cases two separate causally connected events, one is the agents' action and the other is the result of that action. Since the movement of the body is not an action according to Hornsby, the action has to be something that is causing this movement. Hornsby argues in chapter two of her book against the idea that what causes a hand movement would be a muscle contraction, and proposes instead that "unless we push actions right

back inside the body, we cannot make good sense of talking about an action as a person's contracting_T his muscles." (Hornsby 1980: 24) Hornsby argues that the most promising candidate for events being doings are tryings and writes that "[e]very action is an event of *trying* or attempting to act, and every attempt that is an action precedes and causes a contraction_I of muscles and a movement_I of the body." (Hornsby 1980: 33) The transitive element, the action, is causing one's muscles and by causing them it also causes further results and consequences as well.^{lxiv}

I have already indicated in chapter one, and again in the previous chapter that I think it is problematic to push actions back into the body.^{lxv} I want to focus here mainly on Hornsby's idea that the transitive-intransitive distinction in itself supports a further distinction between two things, one of which is an action and one which is not. The reason I dealt with Hornsby's view earlier was that it is an event view of action relying on the pattern of views, which claim that a doing is either something causing bodily movements or a bodily movement with certain causes. Independently of this, Hornsby's idea of how we should take the transitive-intransitive distinction has had an effect on agent causalist views as well. To understand my rejection of these views – discussed in the next section – it is helpful to first think about how we should understand the transitive-intransitive distinction.

Hornsby's way of focusing only on causative transitive verbs can be explained by the influence of CTAs at the time when Hornsby wrote and the natural idea that causation is involved in some way in our actions. Still, not all transitive verbs are causative verbs (*thinking* of someone, *needing* something aren't, for example). This doesn't affect of course the way Hornsby uses the distinction to bring regularity into her book by using transitive forms to stand for doings and intransitives for their results. On the other hand, it does affect whether Hornsby can rely on the distinction to claim that there is a distinction already present in our ordinary language use which seems to track a distinction between our doings and what they cause, i.e. she can't gain support from the fact that the verbs which we use to talk about our doings are all causative verbs because not all transitive verbs are causative, and not even all transitive verbs that we use to talk about someone's doings. (She notes this in appendix A of her 1980 book.)

Furthermore she certainly can't get any support for the view that actions are not identical with bodily movements or constituted even partly by them by relying on

such verbs as *move* - which have a transitive and an intransitive use as well – to argue that the doing and its result are not the same thing, hence if the result is $move_1$ and the intransitive is surely about a bodily movement then the transitive cannot be about that, so it has to be about something causing it, something ‘inside’ the agent, that is, something mental. (See Hornsby 1980: 20-4, 33, 44-5) The grammatical distinction upon which Hornsby relies is surely real and does communicate something in a systematic way and we use it to do so; still, it probably doesn’t do the job that Hornsby takes it to do.

Rowland Stout has recently argued against taking actions to be events happening within the body. (Stout 2010) Stout argues that the way Hornsby understands the transitive-intransitive distinction contributes – together with her views about bodily movements and mental events – to the way she wrongly identifies action with the internal causes of movements, and thereby separates it from the movements which are constitutive of doings. Hornsby could be said to split doings into two parts, a part that is the action and something caused by actions; the problem being, that there are no such two separate components. Since there are no such two components, they also cannot be what is marked by the transitive-intransitive distinction. Stout also emphasizes, what I already wrote, that there is conceptual space for more than one way of making the transitive-intransitive distinction and the way one makes it and uses it does not have to map onto its use in ordinary language.

In the following passage Stout cites Coope, who in turn builds on some points of Aristotle:

“My arm rising under my agency is the same process as my raising my arm, just as the butter melting under the sun’s agency is the same process as the sun melting the butter. This appears to be Aristotle’s view (*Physics*, Book 3, chapter 3 and see Coope, 2007: 123-4). So the process of my arm rising is the process of my arm rising under some agency. There are not two processes occurring here; there are not two potentialities being realised or two mechanisms working.” (Stout 2010: 112)

I think we do not need to all-out endorse Coope’s view that a doing is always identical with something occurring under my agency. As I have argued in 2.4, 4.2 and 5.2, agents might be doing something which is partly constituted by results of

movements and mental actions not directly under our control. Also, Coope's analogy between my raising my arm being identical with the rising of my arm under my agency and the sun's agency being constituted in the melting of the butter seems to be problematic: it sounds as if agency would be constituted only by its results (the butter's melting), whereas it must be at least partly constituted by the activities of the sun, such as its generating energy and emitting light. If we accept Coope's analogy then it follows that when I wake up my neighbour by playing the piano loudly my doing would be identical with my neighbour's waking up, which is surely not true. Still, Coope's idea can be helpful to elucidate that in the case of some doings, such as mental actions (thinking, planning, imagining, etc.) and bodily movements of our thinking of something, planning something, moving some bodily part cannot be separated as results of our doings. Instead they are constituents of our doings.^{lxvi}

This supports the thought that what we should take the transitive verb forms to express is that agency was involved and that causation was involved (whether of some results intrinsic to the action or extrinsic is a separate question). I'm not suggesting here that instead of events that are tryings, we should take doings to be Aristotelian processes, or subscribe to the views of Stout or Coope. All I'm trying to show is that there is room for a way of thinking about the distinction that we make with the help of transitive and intransitive as the following: transitive verb forms can be used to communicate certain things that intransitive forms cannot, such as that something had results and that causation was involved in the production of these results. What sort of causation was involved is left unspecified and this is an advantage not a drawback. The causal chains in the case of 'The high winds caused the bushfires to spread to the hills' and in case of 'The dog's moving caused the cat to climb up the tree' are different and this is how it should be.

The point that Stout and Coope are making is rather that if we take a view according to which all action is just a causing precluding any movement of the agent we end up again with a view of action which renders everything happening after the causing into an occurrence in which an agent is not involved. Now, this is certainly not true of many of our movements which we shape actively, direct them, have simple and unmediated control over in all or most of their stages, rendering them into a unity. Again, I'm not saying that all our movements are like this, not even all our movements which are our doings; but at least some are. What I'm saying is also

not that no doings are instantaneous causings which cause further movements and other results. What I'm saying is that some doings are unities incorporating movements, and in such cases the distinction Hornsby makes is problematic, because the intransitive form isolates a constituent of the doing as something separate.^{lxvii} There is room to understand the distinction of talking about something with the help of a transitive versus an intransitive form to stand for communicating different ideas, different bits of information about what is going on. Transitive forms emphasize the role of the agent, while intransitive forms simply name the kind of the thing done which the agent's doing is and don't call attention to the agents' role in it. This doesn't mean that the agent doesn't have this role, only that it is something the speaker/writer wants to put an emphasis on. If we think of doings this way we can avoid what Hornsby sees as inevitable, namely to conclude that our doings as causes of our movements have to take place within our bodies and are confined there.

Rejecting Hornsby's way of making the transitive-intransitive distinction is important because it highlights how dangerous it can be to try and take an either/or approach to actions and causation, and to take support from a particular understanding of a grammatical tool. It is a mistake to think that i) causation is involved in all doings, ii) that either the effect or the cause is the action, and iii) that we need to think of doings as something causing our movements and confined to our mind or within the body. Alvarez and Hyman's view, which I will discuss in the next section, commits mistake i) and a version of iii), and it also relies on Hornsby's way of making the transitive-intransitive distinction. By taking doings to be instances of causation the results of which are bodily movements, the view commits itself to the idea that doings, expressed by transitive verbs, are distinct from the bodily movements and further results brought about by the agent that should be understood to be constituents of the doing and without which it couldn't be said that the doing took place, that the agent did or is doing that type of thing. With these cautions in mind, let us move on to discussing views of actions which take all doings to be instances of causal relations.

5.6 Are causings relations?

The second type of causings view of action that I will discuss in this section holds that doings are instances of causation, that is, instances of a relation holding between an agent and the results of her action. The agent is the cause of those

results, and her doing is her causing of those results. This view may remind the readers of von Wright's view, which I presented in chapter three, and they are right in connecting that view with the ones discussed here.^{lxviii} It will be a natural transition to the discussion of the agent causationalist theories in question to discuss first how von Wright's and my views relate to each other, after all, I have presented von Wright's view as one of the views endorsing the doings – things done distinction as well.

One of the differences between von Wright's position and the views I will discuss in this section – causings views of action - is that von Wright thinks both of the agents' doing and of the thing done as elements of action, and doesn't want to uniformly characterise this distinction as a distinction between an element which is an action and one which isn't. The difference between von Wright's and my pluralism is to some extent terminological: whereas he takes the results of our doings to be things done, I take these results to be intrinsic results of doings, and therefore these intrinsic results are on my view constitutive of doings. Compare von Wright's following lines: "The connection between an action and its result is intrinsic, logical and not causal (extrinsic). If the result does not materialize, the action simply has not been performed. The result is an essential "part" of the action. It is a bad mistake to think of the act(ion) itself as a cause of its result." (Von Wright 1971: 67-8) Also, I reserve thing done to refer to kinds/types of actions. A further difference is that von Wright recognizes a causal relationship between results of actions (his things done) and consequences of actions (what is caused by things done). On his account agents bring about the consequences of their doings, their doings being the causes of the consequences. As I have argued in 2.2, chapter four, and section 5.2, there might be many different relations between an agent and the results intrinsic to her doings: agents may cause some intrinsic results and there can also be bringing about without causing, as in adding up numbers in one's head, or waving to someone. Also, on my view, in the case of more extended doings causal relations between intrinsic and extrinsic results can be constitutive of a doing. Hence, my view is more flexible than von Wright's.

The worries I voiced earlier about CTAs and event views in general (chapter four), traditional agent causation (5.3), and the version of the causings views which takes causings to be events (5.4), have led some philosophers to endorse the view that actions are instances of the causal relation between an agent and the results of

her doing (or in the case of group actions more than one agent and the results of their doings). Kent Bach was one of those philosophers who proposed that actions are causings. (Bach 1980) Bach writes that actions are “instances of the relation of bringing about between agents and events”. (Bach 1980: 119) He adds the further condition that actions are only performed if someone has brought about an event. This condition is similar to von Wright’s requirement that results of the doing occur, and my requirement that intrinsic results of the action have to come about (by bringing them about or causing them). Bach furthermore holds that these causings themselves are not events, and that since the causings which are doings are not events they do not enter into causal relations with other things, i.e. they are not causes or effects. (Bach 1980: 120) Instead they are instances of causal relations between agents and events.

Another example of this view is the one defended by Alvarez and Hyman. They write: “An action, although the phrase is a clumsy one, is a causing of an event by an agent; the result of an action is that very event; and its consequences are effects of its result.”^{lxix} (Alvarez and Hyman 1998: 233) According to Alvarez and Hyman an agent is someone or something that makes things happen. To make something happen is to cause an event, i.e. “to exercise the power to cause an event of that kind to occur.” And “An agent who acts causes an event, but actions are not events that agents cause.”^{lxx} (Alvarez and Hyman 1998: 221-222) Their positive proposal relies on the transitive-intransitive distinction as it was introduced and used by Hornsby (1980; see also the previous section). Consequently, they hold that the action of A isn’t the movement of his body, but his moving his body. The movement is the result of that action. A’s action is A’s moving of his finger, which is a causal relationship between A, and the event of the movement of his finger. This way we can see that what is caused by the agent is not his action – A’s causing the event -, but a result of his action. That is, “action is a causing of an event by an agent.” (Alvarez and Hyman 1998: 224)

So, Alvarez and Hyman hold that 1) actions are not events, and are only bodily movements in the transitive sense, 2) bodily movements in the intransitive sense are not actions, but events. (Alvarez and Hyman 1998: 228) Their positive proposal is that “to act is to exercise a causal power—to cause, bring about or effect an event. But the exercise of a causal power is neither an event, nor the relation between agent and event that it entails.” (Alvarez and Hyman 1998: 233) The actions are

themselves instances of relations, namely of relations of causing an event (see also Hyman 2001: 309). Agents don't cause their actions, they cause the results or the consequences of their actions. When writing about result and consequence Alvarez and Hyman rely on the way von Wright made the distinction in his *Norm and Action*.^{lxxi} Hence they write that "An *action* is a causing of an event by an agent; the *result* of an action is that very event; and the *consequences* are effects of its result." (Alvarez and Hyman 1998: 233) Expressing the same view in his '-ings and -ers' Hyman writes that

"(...) an act is an instance of causation obtaining between an agent and an event. For example, Brutus's killing of Caesar was Brutus's causing of Caesar's death. And Brutus's extending his arm was Brutus's causing of this extension. Hence both of these acts are causings; and causings are instances of the relation expressed by the verb 'cause'." (Hyman 2001: 309)

The version of the causings view which Bach, Alvarez and Hyman endorse is less attractive even than the view that doings are events that are causings. There surely are at least two easily identifiable motivations behind this view: one is the rejection of events accounts, and the simple identification proposed by CTAs that actions are just events of bodily movements with the right causes. The second is the mistaken understanding of the transitive-intransitive distinction which I have argued against in the previous section, and its consequence that actions are entirely distinct from bodily movements. As I have argued throughout the thesis, there are doings which seem to be causings in the sense that they are spatially and temporally very restricted, and may only be constituted of the exercise of a simple mental capacity. I have argued that there are also doings which are extended in time and space, and have a more (maybe much more) complex structure. Take for example Michelle's completing the Le Mans 24 hours race. The race has to take place on a particular course at a particular time to count as that race. So Michelle has only completed the 24 hours Le Mans race if she raced for 24 hours at Le Mans.

Alvarez and Hyman explicitly rely on Hornsby's way of making the transitive-intransitive distinction. (Alvarez and Hyman 1998: 223-4, 228) This becomes apparent in section three of their joint paper where they deny that actions would be bodily movements in any sense. They subscribe to the view that bodily movements

(in their intransitive sense in which they can be events) are never actions. In their view, only causings of bodily movements, that is movings in the transitive sense can be actions. This seems to me to be an example of those views which are misled by the impulse to deny that bodily movements have anything to do with doings. Consider the following: When I'm raising my arm I'm not causing my arm to rise. Instead in exercising my capacity to control my movements I simply raise it and I'm involved in this, I'm not removed from it at any distance, and no causation between something separate from the thing which has the hand that is moving is involved.

We can also think of the example of Lucy's handling the excavator: her doing seems to encompass more than just causing bodily movements. In this case Lucy's handling the excavator is her action, that is, her doing. And hence, what constitutes handling an excavator constitutes her doing, including her moving her hands, the hand movements thus brought about, her using her further capacities, the movement of the excavator controlled by Lucy. If we take these components away and only leave Lucy's moving her hands what do we have left? Even if we single out some 'inner' (psychological, or neural, or chemical, or mechanical, or mental) going-ons for this it seems that we have some occurring things left that could be studied, evaluated, investigated, and maybe even known by Lucy. Of course I'm not suggesting that we should identify Lucy's doing with such inner episodes: I think that anything like these episodes is only a fragment of a moving, a fragment of a constituent of a doing. What my line of thought is supposed to show is that we would still be left with some occurrents, not only relations, and those occurrents are more plausible candidates for being doings than anything like an instance of a relation.

I'm defending the claim that when we are talking about my moving my hand there is no room to insert a metaphysical knife between the movement of my hand and my moving it, just as it would be strange to say that either what happens in my brain during the raising enables it, and what happens in the nerves and muscles in my hand (partially making up my hand) are not part of my hand's going up. I'm not stating that all that is relevant to my raising my hand happens in my hand, just as I wouldn't want to say that all that my raising my hand is constituted by is only in my mind, or in my brain. These are all mistaken routes: we should embrace that raising my arm is an exercise of my agential capacities in which I bring something about, and what I bring about, namely the rising of my hand is constitutive of my raising

my hand – the latter cannot be imagined without the former, for what would be left without it would just not be a raising of a hand.

Another issue with the instances of a relation view is whether we want to treat instances of relations – such as causings are supposed to be – as entities at all. Ruben raises a problem for causings views concerning the spatial and temporal features of doings. Here is Ruben’s line of thought: If we think of a sentence like ‘*c* causes *e*’ we can ask the where and when questions about *e* or about *c*, or about both of them, but not about ‘causing’. Even if we do, our answer, depending on our more specific interests motivating us to ask the question, can be given by providing where *c* or where *e* were at the time. The causing is not something extra that has its own occurrence, location and time as do the cause and the effect. (Ruben 2003: 166-169) This worry is a more specific and, in its full version, detailed argument raising worries about the characteristics that doings seem to have and instances of relations seem to lack.

There is also one further issue which presents a difficulty for accepting the discussed causings views. Consider the issue of failing and succeeding at doing something. We could ask the following about successfully doing something the following: if a relation only obtains if capacities are exercised in a certain way – agents move and certain intrinsic and extrinsic results come about – then aren’t these occurring things more plausible candidates for being the action than a relation which can be said to hold in virtue of them? It seems that it would be much more plausible to take doings to be constituted by these elements and their relations, instead of simply a relation between an agent and something occurring. All these difficulties taken into account together with the initial implausibility of doings being merely relations make it hard to accept the view as a plausible elucidation of what doings are.

In this section I have argued that the view that doings are instances of causings (instances of relations) is problematic because it presents us with a very limited, hard to grasp, and unintuitive account of what doings are. The view has a hard time accommodating many features which doings seem to have, it has trouble with explaining at all how doings fit into the world, and how they are connected to all those things which are necessary for there to be doings. The view certainly has its merits: it is very elegant and economical, and it avoids many of the problems with events views, which is no wonder since it grew out of sustained criticism of event

views. I have argued in this section that it rejects a bit too much of the events views, and puts relations in place of doings, whereas doings – even when they are causings – should be treated as other types of occurrences. While the view that causings are events can be adjusted so as to be made compatible and a plausible view of some doings, the relations view seems to be too different for such a reconciliatory strategy to work and hence I reject it as an adequate view of doings. This section of the thesis fits into the broader fabric of the chapter as the last step of addressing whether doings can be causings, and if yes in what sense, and what roles causation plays in doings at all, and this concludes my discussion of the question of whether doings can be causings.

5.7 Conclusions

As in my previous chapter I found that there is no simple answer to the question whether actions are causings. I argued (5.2) that causation does play more than one important role in addressing some of our doings: some doings constitutively involve elements which are related causally, and doings can be the causings of results, and they can also cause further consequences which are unintended and haven't been foreseen. I also endorsed the claim that doings that are almost instantaneous, occur at a limited place, and involve the exercise of some causal capacity, skill, or ability are causings. In the following sections I have addressed how my view of doings relates to traditional agent causation (5.3), and defended the claim that traditional agent causation leaves out too much of what doings are in order to be a useful approximation of actions. Then I moved on to discuss two versions of the view that doings are causings. First I addressed the version of the view which claims that doings are events of agents' causing events. I maintained that such views lie close to the view of doings as causings which I have outlined in this section and can be used to further our understanding of them.

Then I made a brief detour to discuss Hornsby's idea that the distinction that transitive and intransitive forms of verbs mark is a distinction between causing elements which are actions, and caused elements which never are actions. Hornsby also proposed that since the events of bodily movements are not actions, bodily movements can only be effects, and their causes must be our doings. Hence she endorsed the view that such doings are inner events of tryings. I argued against this view by showing that we can make sense of the transitive-intransitive distinction as a device of communication suited to provide with the help of transitive forms the

extra information that something is a doing of an agent. By endorsing this account of the distinction we accommodate it without having to endorse Hornsby's version of it and the view of actions she thinks it supports.

In the final section of the thesis I presented the version of the causings view of actions which claims that doings are instances of a relation obtaining between an agent and an event. I have argued against this view of doings on the grounds that if we take doings to be relations their spatial and temporal aspects are hard to accommodate, and they also seem to exclude many elements constitutive of doings. I pointed out that Alvarez and Hyman rely on Hornsby's way of making the transitive-intransitive distinction in their arguments for the view that actions cannot be bodily movements or events. I have argued with the help of examples that doings seem to be more complex than their view allows, and hence it cannot be a correct account of doings, not even partially.

The results reached in this chapter indicate that my pluralism about doings can be upheld and can accommodate the notion of causings and it can help in understanding better how causation is involved in doings. I offered my own take on this topic, related it to the VKM framework, and then discussed whether the most prominent versions of agent causal and causings view can contribute to it. I pointed out the reinforcing points of these views and my view of doings, and argued against those aspects of them where I think they go wrong. The results of this chapter fit into the broader framework of my pluralist view of actions, and pluralism about doings. I showed that some doings are causings, and doings involve causation. I maintained this while also showing that this is not true of all doings: there are doings which do not involve causation, and doings which involve much more than just a causing, and are more complex than causings.

The role of this chapter in my thesis was to address whether doings are causings. In the previous chapter I have addressed whether doings are events, and in the next chapter I will deal with processes. These three chapters comprise part two of my thesis, wherein I aim at supporting my pluralism – outlined in part one – about doings with arguments showing that some doings are events, some are processes, and some are causings, and I also survey the previously proposed view of actions with an eye for anything useful that can further advance our understanding of what doings are.

Chapter 6

Actions as processes

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss whether any doings are processes or not, and if yes, what this means. I will do this in four steps. First, I will draw on the discussion of doings in part I of the thesis, and on the classification of doings which I have proposed in chapter four and explain in what sense I think doings can plausibly be taken to be processes (6.2). Then in the following two sections (6.3, 6.4) I will discuss how causal views of doings as processes, and more recent non-causal views of doings as processes, deal with doings. Finally, similarly to the previous chapters, I reject the view that all doings are processes and defend a more qualified view. This chapter will conclude part II of my thesis in which I investigate in what sense doings can be taken to be causings, events, and processes, and what – if anything – the major process views of action can contribute to our understanding of doings. This second part of my thesis illustrates my pluralism about actions, which takes doings and things done to be different, and also my pluralism about doings, which claims that there are substantially different sub-types of doings. If my arguments offered in chapters four to six are convincing then my view emerges as a plausible view of doings because it can account for our different intuitions about different doings, and it can also accommodate and incorporate insights of previous work carried out by philosophers in this field.

I have argued in previous chapters that doings differ from each other in their temporal, spatial, and causal characteristics, as well as in their complexity, and the skills exercised in doing them. It is because of these differences that we have to be pluralists about doings. I also argued that Davidson's events view couldn't capture adequately what doings are, nor were the dominant CTAs capable of this. I will argue in this chapter that the major process views on offer also have some serious flaws; still, we can incorporate some of their insights. I divide process views of doings into two groups: causalist views of processes like Dretske's, which take doings to be processes that involve one or more causing relations, and these relations play an important role in the characterization of the doings; and those non-

causalist views which have been advanced more recently and which place emphasis on processes as a metaphysical category of their own, like Stout's, Hornsby's (new), and Steward's views.

I won't go into a discussion of the VKM approach in this chapter since only Mourelatos deals explicitly with doings which are processes (he calls them activities) and I have already engaged with his view and the problems with it in 4.6. Vendler has not written about processes, and Kenny's view of processes does not treat them as ontologically different from events, just as different in terms of being ongoing, and some of them being aimed at achieving a purpose. Kenny's work is in this respect close to the view of doings which I defend in the thesis and the distinction he draws between ongoing activities and activities which are not aimed at a purpose, or do not have a defined endpoint can also be made use of. I will proceed without committing a separate discussion to these aspects of his view because my thesis is not focused on the intentionality, purposefulness, or voluntariness of actions, and an insightful and fair discussion of these issues would require much more space than I can commit to it here.

The main issues that I will discuss in this chapter are the way agents and their role in doing something is accommodated; how the links between doings and their defining results, as well as between their further results and consequences, are explicated; how the transitive-intransitive distinction figures in process views; what activities are taken to be; and how the difference between ongoing and completed doings, and connected to this, what imperfect and perfective aspect are taken to distinguish. I will survey how these views accommodate both processes and events as different types of changes; and how the particulars vs. stuff/matter debate and the debate about continuants and their temporal parts are related to the notion of processes proposed. Much hangs on the question how we accommodate doings which aim at goals and doings which do not.

Philosophers who propose process views are in agreement that the Davidsonian events views cannot capture much that is of importance to the correct characterization of acting, agency, and actions. While the views discussed in this chapter are all process views, there are many differences between the way they grasp what a process is and what is involved in acting. In the previous chapters on events and causings we have seen that different views disagree about whether doings are events of bodily movements, or events causing bodily movements, or

events of causing bodily movements, or causings of events of bodily movements. Despite there being many differences between the views discussed in those chapters, one way or another, most views attempted to grasp doings as an agent's control over her bodily movements. Process views are different in this respect: since they recognize that doings are processes in which agents are involved they are more open minded about the possible different constitutions that doings can have. One of the important motivations behind the departure of non-causal process theories from event theories of action is the missing agent argument (defended in great detail in Hornsby 1997 and 2004, 2012: 233-5, and briefly mentioned in chapter one of this thesis, see pp. 17-8, and endnote xii); and another is the need to account for the active role agents play in acting (Hornsby 2013: 1); while a third is the criticism which CTAs have come under (discussed in chapters one, two, four and five). Views that claim that actions are processes try to accommodate both the role agents play in acting – something that the causings views also places a great emphasis on – and also the insight that what is going on, what the agent is engaged in, does not seem to be something that is an action in virtue of something causing it, and it does not even always have to be causal in its nature. Before engaging with the process views proposed in the literature, I will first explicate in what sense my view of doings is hospitable to doings being processes.

6.2 The process of what, exactly?

One of the main claims of my pluralist position is that doings can come in many kinds and types, some of them events, some causings, and some processes. One could ask: 'Why bother then with surveying views to which your position is sympathetic already? We just have to sort out which doings are events, which ones are causings, and which ones are processes, and the job is done.' I agree with this suggestion but as I have argued in chapter two and three it is false that doings could be easily identified with just one sort of occurrence like bodily movements, tryings, willings, wishes, purposes; also, not every characterization of events, causings, or processes is helpful in elucidating what doings are. There might be events, causings, or processes which are unlike any doings ever. Therefore, I'm only interested in the processes of an agent's doing something. So, let me briefly reiterate what I mean by doings and what a view of processes which aims to be a view of doings has to fit.

I have argued in chapter two that there are complex doings, that some of these are doings which take a long time and take place over several locations (you could

think of Phileas Fogg's journey around the world, or the shooting of a movie which can take place in several locations, the latter also being an example of a scattered doing which does not take place continuously but sporadically at different times), that some doings have constituents which are extrinsic results, and even constituents which are consequences caused by extrinsic results. In 4.2 I have argued that complex doings can be constituted by an exercise or exercises of one or more capacities, and they may be purely mental or may involve bodily movements, and that they may also involve one or more intrinsic results, an example being my decorating the Christmas tree which involves the tree getting – and eventually being – decorated. There are also slightly more complex doings, which are constituted by an exercise or exercises of one or more capacities, and those might be purely mental or may involve bodily movements, and they may involve one or more intrinsic results and non-intrinsic results. As an example, think of Carol's cooking a good ramen. And there are doings that are even more complex: they involve causings and are constituted by an exercise or exercises of one or more capacities; they may be purely mental or may involve bodily movements, may involve one or more intrinsic results and non-intrinsic results, and involve some causal relations between their constituents.

These causal relations might be relations between exercises of capacities and internal results, or exercises of capacities and external results, or internal results and external results, or between different external results. As an example of such a complex action you could think of a postdoc's editing a volume. All these more or less complex doings are in my view processes: they are extended, they incorporate several elements, agents typically need to exercise more than one of their skills, capacities, abilities, and for longer than an instance, agents need to be involved in their doings in different ways, and many of these types of doings require things to happen that are not under the agent's direct control and might in fact be the doings or products of doings of other agents.

All in all, it sounds plausible to say that some doings are processes. Think of Jenna cooking a honey roast gammon, of AC Milan reaching the finals of the UEFA Champions League, or of Anthony Burgess researching the bequest of James Joyce. These could be seen as the processes of an agent or a team of agents (or group agent if you like) bringing about certain occurrences. Usually we do not take all changes that agents bring about to be doings. Not everything that we do is something we are

doing. For example, at any given time when we are alive we increase the pressure on the ecosystem. This is a thing done, something we do. But it is not any doing of ours because no exercising of our agential capacities are specifically involved in this and hence there is no doing of ours which corresponds to it. At the same time, it is artificial to claim that only intentional actions, or intentional and voluntary actions, are doings. Why would that be so? Agents are doing many more things than just their intentional actions. Consider cases of negligence, involuntary actions, emotional reactions, reflex actions, or things one is doing without knowing. We are not responsible – in any sense, legal, political, moral – for all our doings and all the things we do, and many doings of ours aren't interesting. Some doings can be reasonably attributed to sub-agential systems, such as the beating of our heart, digesting, etc. Why are these not *our* doings? The reason, as I also wrote in 2.4, is that almost none of our characteristically personal-level capacities are involved in doing them.^{lxxii}

Pluralism about doings helps in the following way in clarifying which doings are processes: some of our doings can be taken to be processes. Processes are extended in time, agents can be engaged in them, and they can unfold. While an agent is doing x it is up to the agent to make it true that she is doing x . If an action has a goal, product, or upshot that defines it, for it to be completed the end-stage definitive of it had to be brought about. Unsuccessful attempts at doing something – doings which don't bring about the end-stages or goals definitive of them – are then qualified as tryings.^{lxxiii} Hence it seems that many doings consist not only of causings, or of active movements, but also of the occurrence of ends, goals, products, etc., which are aimed at, pursued, intended, or otherwise sought.

Some such end-stages do not have to be sought in any way by the agent: if an agent brings them about by exercising some agent-level capacities then simply in virtue of this fact she can count as having done that thing. Such is the case for example with insulting or offending someone, stealing something, or carrying out human trafficking if one takes an underage person without the consent of his caretakers or parents to another country. If no such end-states are definitive of an action then when an agent is doing x with the intention to be doing x or the intention to be doing x in order to r her doing so will be identical with her exercising her abilities, capacities, and skills that are needed for doing x . We treat such cases as

doing x intentionally, and in virtue of this the agent can be said to be doing what she intends to be doing. A simple example is walking.

In this section I have given an overview of doings which are processes. In the following sections I will present different approaches that claim that doings are processes. Historically Aristotle is claimed to have defended a type of process view and some contemporary philosophers have to different degrees built their own views on Aristotle's work.^{lxxiv} The views discussed here have grown out of different projects: Dretske's (6.3) main aim is to offer a naturalized theory of intentional content and its role in causing, structuring and explaining behaviour; Stout's (6.4.1) work on actions began as part of his Aristotelian-behaviourist project on agents and their psychology; Hornsby (6.4.2) once defended a causal, events view of actions and has gradually shifted her position and became a staunch critic of views in the Davidsonian tradition, her own early work included, arriving at a position which tries to capture what seems to be true about actions based on our everyday way of thinking about the personal dimensions of the world around us^{lxxv}; and Steward's (6.4.3) view seems to have grown out of her interest in general ontology and in particular in the metaphysics of changes (which ongoing actions are a sub-type of), and her interest in agency and freedom.^{lxxvi}

These four positions are the current major process views of action. I will argue in the next sections that some of the process views are not adequate characterizations of doings. This does not mean that they could not be adequate characterizations of processes which are not actions. In fact, some of the misguided points these views make about doings are the results of taking them to be like processes which are not actions. After this general introduction let us start by discussing Dretske's view.

6.3 A causalist view of processes

In the current section of the thesis I will deal with causalist views of doings as processes, and the particular view I will discuss is the most prominent and detailed version of this view, proposed by Fred Dretske. Dretske's position seems to be very accommodating to the view of doings that I'm proposing in my thesis, and I will argue that Dretske's view is one of the best contenders to grasp the main aspects of the way we do and should talk and think about doings in important contexts, like our normal everyday interactions, in court rooms, parliamentary sessions, company

meetings, books and TV. As I wrote before (2.4, p. 50) Dretske uses behaviour to apply to all doings of agents. Our views are similar in this respect.

Dretske's view can be taken to have two readings: he might be taken to offer a view of doings which treats them as processes of causing products, and treating the products produced as distinct from the doing. (See for example Dretske 1988: 33, 35) Other passages suggest that Dretske takes doings to be processes which also encompass (some of the) products – intrinsic results for example – which they bring about. (See for example Dretske 1988: 17-8, 29-30, 38) The first one of these readings is very much like the causings views discussed in the previous chapter. Since this is not an exegesis, and I think there is a coherent and interesting reading of Dretske as proposing that doings are processes which incorporate the coming about of their intrinsic results, I will discuss this reading of his view in this section.

The merits of the view are that while it does recognize the importance of causes that influence behaviour simply in virtue of the structure and properties of agents – taking into account the inner causal mechanisms influencing actions in different ways – it does not reduce actions to such inner causes (like some agent causalists and volitionalists do), or to a causing (like causings views would suggest), and it also avoids conflating actions with the products of these causes or causings (as traditional agent causation and some CTAs do).

We can get a good first approximation of Dretske's view from the following paragraph:

“A person's moving his arm is then a piece of behaviour that begins with those internal events producing arm movements and ends with the arm movements they produce. If we are talking about a more extended' piece of behaviour (a pitcher's striking out a batter, for instance), the behaviour begins, once again, with those internal events producing arm movement. The behaviour ends, though, not with the arm's movement, but with the batter's missing his third swing at the ball.” (Dretske 1988: 17-8)

A few pages later Dretske adds the following:

“Behaviour, then, is to be identified with a complex causal process, a structure wherein certain internal conditions or events (*C*) produce certain external movements or changes

(*M*). If *M* itself brings about some further event or condition, *N*, then, assuming the transitivity of the causal relation, *C*'s causing *N* is also behaviour." (Dretske 1988: 21)

These two passages illustrate Dretske's position well: doings are processes that start with the occurrence of specific internal events (of acquiring desires and beliefs) and end with certain end products coming about. Such processes count as doing in Dretske's view if the internal events stand in appropriate causal connections with the products. (Dretske 1988: 2) An example of an agents' doing is a bee stinging a child, if suitable internal causes lead (through other steps) to the child's getting stung. Thus, Dretske's doings do not have very strict temporal or spatial boundaries, and include both the causing inner elements, the movements caused by them, and the causing of the further occurrences resulting from these movements, as well as the occurrence of those further results.

This conception of extended process enables us to deal with actions which have a complex constitution. It is also helpful to see how seemingly passive agents can still be involved in an action. I call this kind of involvement the passive-participatory role. An example of this would be for example when a baker is preparing bread and custard doughnuts, the bread already being in the oven, rising, and the baker waiting for it to be ready. There are also sporadic, scattered actions: these are doings which have constituents occurring at different times and places. Dretske provides a few examples of such doings in the following passage:

"(...) publishing a book (waiting for someone else to print it), selling a house (waiting for the realtors to close the deal), fixing an appliance (waiting for the glue to dry or the solder to harden), and many other acts in which there is a substantial delay between one's active contribution and the result whose occurrence makes the activity the activity it is." (Dretske 1988:17-8)

And he adds that

"No matter how remote the effect may be (there is, in principle, no limit to how remote it might be), though, the behaviour is being identified not with the internal cause (*C*) and not with the effect—proximal (*M*) or remote (*N*)—but with a temporally more extended process: the thing's causing the other." (Dretske 1988: 21-22)

All in all, Dretske's view intuitively and economically captures much of what is important about doings. Still, I have to highlight a serious disadvantage of the view. Dretske employs talk about inner events and states as playing the causing role in doings and he doesn't mention the role *agents* play in acting. While I think his view stands close to the view of doings which I have been arguing for, it also oversimplifies things. When doing something agents can use several of their capacities, skills, or abilities. It is surely significant that in each such case there are sub-personal occurrences and states which play a role in enabling the agent to act, or causing her to act, and influencing her doings in many further ways, some of which the agent is conscious of and some of which are not-accessible or not modifiable on the personal-level. While it is important to acknowledge the role that these events, states, and processes play in making agents do what they are doing and enabling them to do so, as I have argued they are no substitutes for agent-level (personal-level) involvement and exercising of skills. Therefore it seems that a proper appreciation of the role of agents in doings is missing from Dretske's view because he talks of inner events and states causing movements and further results too broadly. While some of the events and states he cites as causes of movements and further results could be taken to be personal-level exercisings of capacities, the view still oversimplifies the variety of different personal- and subpersonal-level processes, and blurs the difference between doings and non-actions.

It is probably the result of not making these distinctions that Dretske is led to think that all doings involve causings. I have repeatedly brought up as a problem of different views that they cannot accommodate doings which do not involve causings and do not lead to results. This is also a problem for Dretske in a specific sense: Dretske is probably right that even in the case of doings which do not cause results and further consequences there are sub-personal events and processes causing the occurrence of other states, etc. that enable the higher-level going on, like agents' exercising of their capacities. This doesn't show of course that causation is involved on the personal-level. Both the general problem I have raised about Dretske's view and its consequence that it cannot accommodate non-causal doings are such that Dretske's view can be modified and supplemented in ways to become able to handle them. Hence I do not propose these criticisms as a reason to discard Dretske's view. I want to emphasize that it would need to take into account certain factors already

endorsed by the view of doings I defend in the thesis for it to be a comprehensive view of doings.

All in all, Dretske's view of actions as processes lies very close to mine. It is an almost exhaustive account of doings which covers many cases and grasps many of the important features of several types of doings. We can think of Dretske's view as a big advancement over simple event views or causings views of action. Readers will remember that it was one of my reasons for rejecting Davidsonian event views of action that their way of explaining what makes certain events actions by citing specific types of causes is inadequate because it misses out on the inherently active notion of most doings. My only issue with Dretske's view is that it doesn't differentiate between agent-level and sub-agential causes clearly enough, and hence it qualifies behaviour of agents which is not regulated by agent-level processes and cannot be influenced by the agents.^{lxxvii} I will return to discussing how Dretske's view relates to other process views in later sections. I will continue my survey of process views of action with Stout's view.

6.4 Non-causalist views of processes

In the three subsections of this section I will discuss three views of doings which take doings to be processes. The views are not monist views: Hornsby and Steward argue that there is an important metaphysical difference between ongoing doings and completed doings, and hence they can be taken to recognize that some doings are processes while others are events. (Hornsby 2012, Steward 2012) Ongoing doings are taken by them to be processes, while completed doings are taken to be events. They take the difference between processes and events to be a substantial difference between two clearly distinct ontological categories. Both Hornsby and Steward draw the line between those doings which are processes and those which are events based on whether or not the doings are completed, and in this they follow the ideas of Mourelatos (which I have argued against in 4.6). Stout argues that doings are processes in a different way from Hornsby and Steward, and claims that events are the end-phases, the completions of actions (I have discussed this idea in connection with the VKM framework in 5.2). All of these views take events and processes for something different than I did in the sections where I have argued for my positive view: according to Hornsby and Steward events are always completed actions, while processes are always only the ongoing actions. According to the view I have proposed we can talk of both ongoing and completed events, as

well as processes. On my view, the difference between event and process is not a difference between being completed and being ongoing, but a difference in complexity of constitution. I will discuss the three views in the order in which they have been worked out and defended, starting with Stout's view and then progressing to Hornsby's and finally to Steward's position.

There is an interesting sense in which Stout, Hornsby, and Steward all leave a role for events in characterizing actions: they all take the VKM tradition, and especially Mourelatos' work, to support the view that the aspectual difference between ongoing and incomplete verbs expressed by their continuous forms, and their finished and complete forms expressed by their past participle forms is a distinction between processes and events. That is, they seem to be dualists about doings in the sense in which I'm a pluralist about doings, while drawing the distinction between the doings which are events and the ones which are processes based on different criteria from the ones proposed by my position. Actually I would say that matters are a bit trickier than that: while Stout, Hornsby, and Steward all seem to hold that as long as a doing is ongoing, as long as an agent is engaged in it, it is a process. And once it is over and we – so to say – 'look back on it' we can treat it like an event. I think this idea is problematic and it is not truly pluralistic, in fact, it makes it hard to take the difference between doings that we handle as processes and doings that we handle as events seriously. My discussion of this issue will be a common thread running through the next three subsections of this section.

6.4.1 Stout's view of actions as processes

One of the most prominent process views of doings is Rowland Stout's. Stout defends a teleological view of action according to which an action is a process "defined by an end or goal that need not be achieved in order for it to be true that the process has taken place". (Stout 2001) According to Stout's view actions are processes, and contrary to Dretske's view these processes do not incorporate the results that the agent is continuously producing. For Stout, a doing is just a process that the agent is engaged in with a goal in mind. Stout also leaves space for events in his view. Take the following passage:

"Consider the example of my brushing my teeth one evening. It seems that there is both an event and a process to be identified here. What was happening while I was brushing my teeth was a process of my brushing my teeth. What happened when I brushed my teeth was

an event of my brushing my teeth. The event in this case is the completion of the process. Either can count as an action—the action that was happening and the action that happened.” (Stout 1996: 156-7)

From this passage it seems that Stout accommodates both processes and events in his view, and he treats events like the temporally only momentary or instantaneous accomplishments of VKM (compare 5.2). As I wrote earlier, I do think that accomplishments and instantaneous doings should be accommodated in a full account of doings. But it does not follow that in the case of every doing – especially of every temporally obviously extended doing, like brushing one’s teeth – we should also speak of accomplishments. I have argued in 4.2, 4.6, and 5.2 that we can sometimes identify the final stages of more extended or complex doings as doings themselves, and these might be either the most simple doings which are causings or doings which are events. In itself I don’t think that to admit this we need the grammatical difference Stout seems to rely on between progressives and perfectives. I also think that it is a mistake to identify the final stages of all doings as separate events. It seems very dubious that we should talk of the completing stages or completion of the process of my brushing my teeth as an event that is separate from my brushing my teeth. There is no good reason to accommodate events this way.^{lxxviii}

Stout also holds that processes of actions can extend beyond the boundaries of the body and comprise some of the results of smaller units of the action. He writes:

“Consider, for example, Oswald's action of shooting the president. Does this action include the bullet flying through the air and striking the president or does the action end with the last bit of Oswald's bodily movement, or perhaps earlier? According to my theory, the activity of the bullet flying through the air is part of a piece of available activity, and is therefore part of the action. It is part of a structure of smaller pieces of available activity and other pieces of activity that will occur if earlier pieces occur, which as a whole results in the president being shot. (...) But I now want to add that even when Oswald only has one shot to make he is not just making a shot at shooting the president (although he is also doing this); he is also shooting the president, and this includes the activity of the bullet flying through the air and striking the president.” (Stout 1996: 160)

Stout's inclusive approach is close to Dretske's as well as to mine. The key difference is that Stout thinks in terms of many smaller, so called available activities, which are all things the agent chooses as means to his end. The pluralism I'm defending doesn't rule out talking of constituents of a doing as smaller actions. Especially if an agent intended to do *x* in doing *y*, for example to confess his love in singing a song, it seems justified to talk of two things being done. But if applied too rigidly such thinking might lead to false judgment concerning doings since there surely are doings which do not consist of or in other doings of ours. There are basic doings, and moving our bodies can be one of those. Not because there is an arbitrary limit to what the most basic actions of mine can be, but simply because that is what I intend. Or consider the case of a non-intentional action, such as ducking when a hard object is thrown towards one.

It is true that in such cases much depends on how strong a reading of Stout's teleological requirement we take to apply: Stout thinks that an action is a structure of elements consisting of smaller actions that stand in means-ends relations.^{lxxix} (Stout 1996, 2006: 16) If 'teleological' is read weakly, not claiming anything more than that we can understand any element that we can discern in an action to have contributed to being that action, and by that to the agents' achieving a goal – even if doing so was unintentional, involuntary, unconscious, etc. – then I think Stout's idea is right, but quite uninformative. If we read it as something stronger then it seems to fly in the face of all those cases where we do not want to bring about what we have to bring about, or where we do things unintentionally, or without a specific purpose, or without any further goal in view, such as when we are just goofing around with friends, say jumping repeatedly into the water from a pier.

Stout's position (see his 1997 for example) conflicts with my pluralism also when it accepts that the distinction between processes and events amounts to a distinction between ongoing and finished doings. As I have argued earlier (4.6), this distinction should be taken to be about the nature of specific types of doings: some are processes, some events. It is puzzling why Stout thinks this way, since he – similarly to my view - rejects Mourelatos's position that when we are talking about processes we are talking about stuff, whereas when we are talking about events we are talking about particulars. Stout correctly holds that there are particular processes, and also accepts that the doings-things done distinction applies to them when he distinguishes between a process and a particular development of that

process. (Stout 2003) He makes the latter distinction by drawing on Bennett's work (1988, 1995) between the stuff of events, and events, and makes an analogous distinction between the stuff of processes (which he calls activity) and processes.^{lxxx}

Stout writes:

“So I distinguish three levels. Firstly there is the activity - John's singing the Marseillaise. This is referred to using an imperfect nominal. Then there is the process of this activity. Finally there is the event of this process. The perfect nominal, “John's singing of the Marseillaise”, may refer to either the process or the event.” (Stout 2003: 151)

As this passage also shows, Stout's view can be used to elucidate doings and I would agree with Stout that we can and should admit into our ontology doings which are particular processes, and also types of processes which are a subgroup of things done.

Stout also takes a stance on the distinction between transitive-intransitive verbs and the way it has been invoked – among others by Hornsby (1980) and Alvarez and Hyman (1998) – to mark a distinction between doings and their results. I've already discussed my criticism of making the distinction in this way, and I built on criticism advanced by Stout and Coope (see 5.5). Their approach is close to the approach I've been urging to the transitive-intransitive distinction in 4.6. What we should take the transitive verb forms to express is that agency was involved and that causation was involved in a doing (whether of some intrinsic results of the action, or of further results is a separate question), and not to mark a distinction between actions and non-actions. Stout rejects the event-version of the transitive-intransitive distinction endorsed by Hornsby 1980 and Alvarez-Hyman 1998 in a similar way to the way I have argued before by claiming that my moving my hand and my hands movement are just aspects of my action (if the movement is actional), and not too separable components, one of them which is an action and the other which is just a cause of the action, or the result of the action. (See also my criticism of monist views in chapter one, and my discussion of the transitive-intransitive distinction in 5.5.)

All in all, it can be said that Stout's view is in many aspects a good characterization of doings. Since it has a strong teleological bent it seems best suited to provide an understanding of consciously and purposefully pursuing actions.

There surely are such doings, but, as I have argued, not all doings are like that. Stout's position on some of the details of how we make some basic distinctions regarding doings is also helpful in supplementing my arguments and what I proposed as the most plausible general characterisation of doings. Stout's view is similar to Dretske's in that both of them accept that doings can be extended and consist not only of things going on in an agent, or of bodily movements/an agents' moving her body, but also of those results without which that action wouldn't be. Next I will consider Jennifer Hornsby's position which she has worked out in a series of recent papers (2012, 2013), and which contrasts with Dretske's and Stout's views in some interesting ways, and introduces a further element into the discussion of doings, that of activities.

6.4.2 Hornsby's view of activities and processes

Hornsby has gradually shifted from her early view which was a Davidsonian causal events view of action, claiming that all actions are events of mental acts of trying. (Hornsby 1980) This shift has eventually led Hornsby to think that there is a distinction to be drawn between activity and action, activities being the ongoing processes of an agents' doing something, while actions are the completed doings. Seemingly this means that Hornsby is not only working on actions anymore, nevertheless actually we are just dealing in this form with the same distinction which Mourelatos drew between events (actions) and processes (activities) based on their aspectual features, that is, depending on whether or not they are completed or incomplete. As earlier in the thesis, I will treat this distinction as a distinction between two different types of doings, namely ongoing doings and completed doings, and I will argue that the distinction is either insignificant or faulty. It doesn't matter whether or not a doing is completed for its interesting features (constitutive structure, spatial and temporal features, etc.), and the structure and features of a doing don't change just because it is completed, they change as the doing goes on, as it is executed.

Following criticism from Steward (Steward 2000) Hornsby's recently defended view denies that doings (activities and/or actions) are confined 'inside the body' as her previous tryings view claimed. The new view also attempts to accommodate the agent in an active role in the story of action contrarily to her earlier view which simply treated actions as a causing event. (See 2.3.3, chapter four, and 5.5, as well as Hornsby 2012: 234) Hornsby moves away from event views of action only to a

certain degree: She adopts the Mourelatos style view, similarly to Stout, that events are completed actions. She calls ongoing actions activities and relies on the analogy made – but in her view not followed consistently – by Mourelatos between activities and stuff. In Hornsby’s view activities are to actions, what stuff is to objects. That is, my having run 4 km consists of the activity of running 4 km, similarly to the way in which a statue can consist of clay. (Hornsby 2012: 235) Hornsby thinks that although Mourelatos already made this distinction, he still assimilated activities to actions. (See Hornsby 2012: 238-240, 2013: 5)

The view Hornsby thinks Mourelatos held is very similar to the view that I’m defending in this thesis, claiming that ongoing and completed actions don’t differ in deep metaphysical ways from each other and they are the same kind of occurrents. According to the view I defend, the interesting differences between actions hold whether or not they are ongoing, incomplete, or completed, finished, that is, there are ongoing causings, events, processes, as well as completed causings, events, and processes and any of these can be a doing. Just because an agent is not doing something anymore and her doing *x* is over, the category into which the doing belongs doesn’t change (see 2.4, 4.2). Hence, I will argue that Hornsby’s way of differentiating between doings which are events and doings which are processes is mistaken. In the following pages I will explain why I think her way of drawing up the difference is problematic and how I think we should think about these matters.

Hornsby takes activities to be like stuff; that is: wholly present, not countable, not particular. She writes:

“So what are activities? Let me take them to include buttering the toast, turning on the light, walking, walking to the shops, operating the pump ..., so that activities are things that may be (intentionally) engaged in by one or another person at one or another time. They are not then actually present in the world of space and time. In this respect they are like what are sometimes called *acts* or *act types*, which are abstract, and instantiated by actions (so called ‘token actions’).”

If that were all she says about activities it would be easy to argue that it is very hard to understand how events, which are after all completed activities, could be particulars, while seemingly nothing existed in the world while the activities were going on.^{lxxxix} So she goes on to add:

“But *someone’s engagement in an activity*—Jones’s buttering the toast at midnight, say—apparently does have actual being in the spatiotemporal world: one might say that it partakes of the *concreteness* of actions (of ‘tokens’). (...) Let me use ‘*ongoing activity*’ for that which has actual presence in time and space. Some ongoing activity—Jones’s buttering the toast—is present so long as Jones is actually busy buttering it, and *was* present so long as Jones *was* actually busy buttering it. (...) ongoing activity is not in any category of countables, so that ongoing activities are no sort of particulars, as events are particulars.” (Hornsby 2013: 3-5, italics in original)

What Hornsby says could be summarized this way: activities are types of things we do, they are *what* agents are doing, similarly to things done. When an agent is doing something, she is engaged in an activity, and this engagement of the agent is an ongoing activity. So, for example if Janet is having a tea, then the activity which Janet is engaged in is ‘having a tea’, and the ongoing activity is ‘Janet’s having a tea’. Hornsby argues that once there is an activity (an individual activity) with sharp boundaries we can talk of an event. So, Hornsby thinks of events as actions completed. According to her, activities (when they are not used to talk about types of activities) are not particulars – they cannot be divided into arbitrary stretches of ‘activity’ like a cake can be divided into pieces.

Hornsby’s position seems to be problematic in several respects. Hornsby’s (and as I will argue in the next section Galton’s) characterisation of activities as fully present may suit some doings, but surely not doings which are more structured – like a roundtrip to Kyoto, writing an essay, or running a half-marathon. In these cases the activities do have constituents, stages which are discrete. The activities are not fully present, nevertheless agents are fully engaged in them. Their engagement in them is just constituted by their use of the capacities and abilities which are constitutive of doing that thing, the results (intrinsic and extrinsic that they are bringing about), and the relations that hold between the agents and these results. ‘Fully/wholly present’ – which is how Hornsby, and Galton (2006), think of processes – just doesn’t seem like a coherent idea. As Steward emphasizes (in her 2012, 2013 and 2015) processes can and do change, and surely their discrete stages are different. Also, it were more than unusual if there would be nothing particular going on at any time, but there were something wholly present, which – if the

activity is unsuccessful – would then suddenly be only partially present or not present at all after having been wholly present.

Hornsby illustrates one of her arguments against the idea that activities are like particulars or countables with the help of four little stories about running:

- 1) Ann was running a mile, but twisted her ankle and had to stop.
- 2) Beth intended to run a mile, and she did.
- 3) Clare went to run an unspecified distance and while running realized she can run a mile, and so she did.
- 4) Dawn wanted to run until out of breath and this happened after a mile.

On Hornsby's view Ann couldn't complete her 1 mile run and Clare wasn't engaged in a 1 mile run until she decided to do a 1 mile run. (Hornsby 2013: 7) Hornsby argues on these pages against treating processes as Mourelatos treats accomplishments and performances. She claims that subscribing to this would rule out that we can think of Ann and Dawn as having performed something. Hornsby seems to want to claim that in these cases some activities can be said to have occurred, and hence also actions have been performed (even if failed ones), and it is also true that even if Ann didn't run a mile she was embarked on running a mile until her ankle snapped. She also thinks that it follows that we have to say that there always is an activity when someone is engaged in an activity. Hornsby argues that because activities can be unsuccessful there being an activity cannot depend on particular results having been brought about.

Now, this inference seems to me to be wrong. I'm in agreement with Hornsby that there always is an activity (an ongoing doing if you will) if someone is doing something, and if that activity stops there was an action, and it is also true to say that that person has been engaged in doing a certain type of activity. Still, as I have argued in 4.2, 5.2 and 6.2, some activities cannot be said to have been completed unless their goals have been attained, achieved, or brought about. I would rather say that there are different types of activities. There is no conflict between saying that someone hasn't performed something and saying that she has been trying to perform it. The latter doesn't mean – as Hornsby's early work would have had it – that a mental event of trying occurred. It only means that the agent did all that was required at that stage of her activity to do, but then for some reason she couldn't also bring about the pursued end stage.

Hornsby also thinks that ongoing strollings are not countable things like events. (Hornsby 2012: 235) We can speak intelligibly of strolling going on, and Hornsby thinks we can speak intelligibly of strolling going on without speaking of an event, or in fact any particular at all. Hornsby thinks it is an argument for this that we can speak of Sebastian's strolling as wholly present, but no particular could be wholly present until the event of strolling is completed. (Hornsby 2012: 237) But why couldn't we talk about Sebastian's stroll which has already been covered? Surely we can ask Sebastian which parts of Venice his stroll took him through so far, even as we join him in his continued stroll. And it seems perfectly obvious that is and was one such stroll of Sebastian. Hornsby also asks how her idea of stretches of activity relates to the VKM tradition's accomplishments and achievements. Examples of accomplishments are for example painting a picture of the nativity, running a mile, or pushing a cart to the top of the hill. (See Mourelatos 1978: 417) Accomplishments are over, complete, when the outcome or product they involve has been brought about. In contrast stretches of activities can be said to be present even when no such criterion has been fulfilled.

Hornsby (2013) talks of the particular stretches of activities which are activities directed at a goal and their names are derived from accomplishment verbs, as directed activities, which one might engage in intentionally or voluntarily. I'm in agreement with most of what Hornsby has to say in this paper about stretches of activities, and those stretches which are directed at goals, that is, about directed activities. What I'm in disagreement with is that we should consider the activity the agent is engaged in as a process while the agent is engaged in it, and an event once it has been completed, and with the claim that when we talk of processes we do not talk about ongoing (open-ended if you will) stretches of activities. I think that characterising something either as an event or as a process marks some real differences. Hence it seems to me that if the same thing is a process as long as it is ongoing and it is an event as soon as it is finished there is either a substantial change that thing undergoes, or our distinction between processes and events only amounts to a change of perspective. It is a bit like watching a moving train from within a train standing next to it: it can seem to one as if the train one is sitting in has started moving. Whereas if one is standing a few meters away from the train on the platform it is easy to see which train is really moving. If the event-process distinction marks only that once an activity has been finished it now seems to us to

be an event, then there is no real change in what was going on which would warrant this different characterisation except that the process is now in the past.

Could there be a substantial change in processes when one stops performing them, when the agent ceases to be engaged in them? I doubt so. Actions go on while an agent is performing them, as long as the agent is doing something. When the agent stops doing something, but if her doing causes further results and consequences we can often apply further descriptions to the doing – as in the case of getting divorced when the doing might be going on for a long time without one being active; or in the case of some Cambridge changes, as when one ordered Socrates to be executed and thereby widowed Xanthippe and one's verdict thus becomes the cause of Xanthippe's bereavement. In cases where the doing is going on we cannot yet speak of an event according to Hornsby – it is not yet over, even if the agent is only waiting, or doing other things at the same time too. And Cambridge changes are not real changes. Are there any other changes that happen to doings once they are done? It doesn't seem so.

Hence it doesn't make sense to take the distinction in aspect between ongoing doings and doings which are not going on anymore as being a distinction between processes and events. I think many people thought of the distinction in this way because they had mostly accomplishments in mind and there is a difference between a processual doing which is incomplete in the sense that the agent hasn't attained her goal yet, and a process where the agent has attained her goal. This is a real distinction: the two processes have different constituents, one is successful the other isn't, etc. But in the case of something going on or not going on anymore there is simply a difference of whether it is still being engaged in by the agent or not. And what is or is not engaged in anymore is a process in both cases. If something was a process while an agent was performing it, it does not become an event once the agent has stopped doing it. We can talk of processes – whether goal directed or not, and whether successful or not – in the past tense, and from a completed aspect.

Hornsby says about the other performances (accomplishments – actions with duration, and achievements – punctuate actions, like finding the book or winning the race) that achievement verbs report the upshot or product of an activity. Accomplishments are – like activities – comprised of activity (type, non-count). Consider the following: “Suppose that Mary found the book. Perhaps she took ten minutes to find it: ten minutes would then be the length of a stretch of activity of her

looking for it.” (Hornsby 2012: 241-2) These are points on which Hornsby’s and my view differ again: as I have argued in chapter 5.2, doings which are point-like and their nature is causal should correctly be taken to be causings. Punctuate doings which are not causative seem to be event like – the agent is not engaged in them for a period of any extension and is not causing anything in them.

How does this position of Hornsby’s then relate to the characterization of doings that I have offered, and to the two previously discussed process views? I criticised many elements of Hornsby’s position: her idea that we would normally talk about activities in the way we talk about stuff, that actions would be inherently causal, and that the difference between processes and events depended on whether we would be talking about an ongoing action or a finished action in which the agent is not engaged in anymore. Besides the monist tendency to claim that all ongoing doings are processes, and that we cannot distinguish between doings which are defined by achieving certain goals/bringing about end states or products also makes this position problematic because it cannot accommodate certain differences between doings which are very natural to make.

In conclusion, Hornsby’s view distinguished actions and activities in a way which is not entirely necessary; the invocation of the stuff-activity analogy suggests that there is a fundamental divide between ongoing and completed actions, as if actions when completed would suddenly undergo a change of kind. Hornsby understood that this view is difficult to maintain and introduced ongoing processes and stretches of processes, which are located in time and space. Although the view’s goal (to accommodate agents as actively engaged in doings) and Hornsby’s departure from her earlier monism about doings are positive developments, the view doesn’t offer an advantage over other process approaches or the VKM framework. Hornsby’s view might thus be part of it, but is not the solution.

6.4.3 Steward’s view of processes

The last view of the three non-causal process views of doings that I discuss is the view worked out by Helen Steward in a series of recent papers (Steward 2012, 2013, 2015). Steward is an ontological pluralist – she accepts that there are both events and processes – and she only debates that any actions are events. (Steward 2012: 373) I have argued in chapter four, as well as the previous section, that some doings should be taken to be events. Still, I will argue that Steward’s account of

what doings which are processes are might be helpful, and it will also be interesting to explore how Steward treats the events-process distinction.

Steward (1997) has been arguing for a long time that a metaphysics which recognizes only events as occurrents and wants to grasp all changes as events cannot be adequate. In recent years she published several more detailed arguments for her own position on what processes are.^{lxxxii} This position is in many respects related to Stout's and to Hornsby's views on processes. In most of her work, Steward considers a wider account of processes than just simply processes which are doings. (See her 1997, 2013, 2015) The main issue on which Steward focuses is the difference between events and processes: whereas events do seem to be what we have traditionally taken occurrents to be, processes seem to combine features of occurrents and continuants. In her view the main difference between events and processes is that events occur and hence don't have temporal parts, and in consequence have their properties atemporally, processes unfold and they might change, that is, they are things which can themselves undergo change. (Steward 2012: 381-3) In Steward's view this means that they have temporal parts, just like continuants, while they are changes, just like events. Processes are then present throughout the whole period of their existence but not all of their parts are present at all times, so they are not wholly present.^{lxxxiii}

In her 'Actions as Processes' Steward argues against the view that actions could ever be events in two ways: first, she lists four characteristics which seem to be true of the way we talk about ongoing doings and which she thinks we cannot understand as ways of talking about events, and second, she takes imperfective aspect to be the tool of referring to the stuff of processes, which shows that processes differ from events. She also argues (Steward 2012: 374-6) that Davidson's arguments for the view that actions are events aren't conclusive by any standards: the idea that the correct logical form of action sentences implies that actions are events only holds if we also subscribe to Davidson's view that there is a very strong connection between semantics and metaphysics, and either way, from his formulation of action sentences it only follows that we need to be realists about a subject and an object, and even if we take the object to be an event we might justifiably consider it to be the result of an action (as Alvarez 1999 suggests).

Steward argues against the claim that adverbs of actions modify events which are actions. She cites examples like "Smith waved more and more frenetically in the

attempt to attract Jones' attention" (Steward 2012: 377) which show that actions can change throughout their execution. She goes on to argue that the metaphysics of events in general is incompatible with the idea that the events can change because they are themselves changes. When something changes there has to be a subject which exists throughout the change. If we take a stone's rolling which is first bumpy and then smooth we are dealing with a change in the stone's rolling. Events are supposed to be changes which have all their properties at all times, so the event cannot be what changes and is first bumpy and then smooth – instead it has the properties of being a bumpy rolling and then a smooth rolling at all times. (Steward 2012: 377)

Steward discusses a possible reply to this objection, namely that events have successive phases and these might have different properties. She rejects this line of thought on the grounds that even if we think of events this way we couldn't account for four properties which actions have: 1) actions seem to undergo genuine changes, 2) actions seem to sometimes have stretches which have characteristics which they don't have as wholes (e.g. a buttering can be angry for a moment, but calm on the whole), 3) some actions seem to change smoothly, and this is inconsistent with the view that actions are events that have separate phases 4) actions have modal properties, e.g. we might think that Joanne's writing of her thesis could have taken less time. All of these properties seem to be incompatible with the mereological essentialism about events, that is, the view that events have all their parts and characteristics necessarily, and if some of those parts and characteristics were to change we would be talking of a different event. Steward proposes that having these four properties is characteristic of processes and hence that plausibly actions are processes.

So far Steward's view is contributory to mine: the view of doings I have proposed endorses the view that some doings are processes, with the caveat that not all of them are. The view I have proposed is not committed to any particular way of thinking about the metaphysics of processes or events. The method I have relied on was to first characterise a large variety of doings and think about what seems to be plausible and acceptable about them for anyone who works on actions. It is my view – as I have argued – that this way we arrive at good detailed characterizations of actions which can be plausibly differentiated as causings, events, and processes based on their complexity, constituents, etc. Still, if someone should argue that the

claim that some doings are events commits me to a view of events that Steward convincingly rejects in her work I would reply that the doings which I have classified as causings and as events could plausibly be thought of as having a constituent structure that is rarely subject to change during the execution of those doings, and when they are then those changes are relational changes, or changes of one of their constituents or the agent, not of the doings in the way that processes change according to Steward. If Steward concedes that there are both events and processes, then one might think that she can as well concede that some events change in these ways, and hence they can be doings.

Steward's view of processes (in her 2013 and 2015) is an interesting case: she invokes the imperfective-perfective aspect and Mourelatos' work on it to emphasize the difference of events and processes, and to argue that our ways of talking and thinking about doings (and processes in general) imply that doings are not processes. Still, she avoids the confusion Mourelatos and Hornsby run into by trying to accommodate the view that processes are in some substantial sense like stuff, and she settles for a more plausible view of individual processes.

As I have already argued and emphasized the imperfective-perfective distinction has been taken to mark a difference between two types of entities, claiming that there is a substantial difference between what the imperfective and what the perfective aspect is used to communicate. Without wanting to downplay the importance of distinctions that we can make with the help of such grammatical tools, this seems to me to be the same kind of problem into which Hornsby, and Alvarez and Hyman have gotten themselves when discussing the transitive-intransitive distinction. That problem has been rightly pointed out and defused by Stout and Coope as well (see also 5.5 and 5.6).^{lxxxiv} As I have already said, I think the same kind of rectification is in order with the imperfective-perfective aspect. Surely the difference in aspect should not be conflated with the difference in tense – it means something different to be incomplete, and to be ongoing and present.

Still, exactly for that reason I think we can plausibly say the following: when we use the imperfective aspect to talk about doings we are talking about them while occurring and before they have been completed. Perfective forms can be used to communicate that an action has been completed. The tricky bit, and where the extra information communicated by the difference in aspect hides, is 'completed'. 'Completed' can mean different things when we are talking about doings which are

event-like and don't extend to the occurrence of results that are not under the direct control of the agent (as in waving to a friend), and again different when we are talking about doings which are processes and involve the occurrence of such results (as sending Christmas gifts to one's beloved through the post). The doings which are events won't usually be imperfective if they have been done at all, much like doings which are instantaneous or they consist simply in their exercise and maybe in bringing about some intrinsic result, including doings which are causings.

The other way in which aspect might play an important role is when it comes to doings which are defined by their inherent goals/results/products. In such cases aspect can be used to communicate that the agent is or has been doing everything that she can to bring about the results aimed at, but it has not yet been, or has not at all been achieved (or we may simply want to talk in the past about the stage of the doings when it hasn't been achieved yet). Treating the distinction between events and processes in this way, contrarily to the way suggested by Mourelatos and Hornsby, actually enables us to see that there is a different divide between the two categories than the one conceived before.

Steward does think that the divide between events and processes is substantial, and she does not rest her case only on the aspectual difference. (2012: 373) Her two most recent pieces are extended discussions of arguments for the position briefly introduced above, according to which processes unfold in time, and can change and acquire new parts. (See especially Steward 2013, Steward 2015: 119-121) Steward thinks that we have to accept that these entities are continuants and this means that we will have to think again what we hold about continuants in general. (Steward 2015: 122-3) Can the pluralist view of doings I defend accommodate such a heavy metaphysical thesis with all its commitments? I think in a way it can. The view I defend can endorse the possibility of processes as like the ones postulated by Steward. They seem to be helpful in explaining how doings which are processes (and even maybe more complex events) can go on, how they can undergo substantial changes, how they can be interrupted and continued, how they can change, how they can be scattered (across locations and time), how agents can alter them or how new agents can join in the activity (think of games, festivals, parties, the work of committees, or governing institutions). (See also Steward 2012: 385)

As long as we do not exclude the possibility that some processes (and hence doings) might be different, and as long as we don't want to commit ourselves to the

view that all doings are processes as Steward characterises them (and she seems to be open to pluralism about doings) then I think her insights can be used in metaphysical debates by those who are interested in questions of persistence, endurance, cross-temporal identity and so on to settle matters well. All in all, Steward's view seems to be helpful if we want to supply our account of doings with a detailed metaphysics of what is involved in processes when they are changing. Steward's view seems thus to be useful as a tool if we want to explicate the metaphysical nature of changing doings, and it surely can serve a helpful role if a more detailed metaphysical picture is sought.

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter is the last element of the second part of my thesis in which I have surveyed how my pluralist view of doings relates to the dominant positions proposed about what actions are. I have asked whether the most prominent views according to which doings are events, causings, or processes can contribute something to our understanding of doings or whether they rather constrain or distort that understanding. I have argued at the beginning of each chapter (4.2, 5.2, 6.2) that there are perfectly natural ways – maybe even more than one way - of talking about some doings as causings, as events, or as processes. The goal of this part of my thesis is to show how a pluralist about doings can build on and advance much of the good work which has been carried out in philosophy of action. My view of doings does not require abandoning the projects which people have spent significant effort and time on pursuing, and hence my doings view should rather be taken to be a positive, constructive contribution to the literature, not one sceptical about it, or one urging us to take some destructive stance towards a complicated and diverse research project.

In this chapter I have offered an overview of causal and non-causal process views of doings, and I have argued that the focus on processes has brought out much that is important about doings and enabled us to think of doings in a more varied and complex way. My aim was to show that some doings are processes, and I achieved this by offering examples of ways in which doings can be taken to be processes (6.2), showing that we can rely on certain aspects of Dretske's (6.3), Stout's, Hornsby's, and Steward's (6.4) work to gain a better grasp on doings. At the same time I was trying to point out where earlier identified simplifying tendencies seem to plague process views: I emphasized that while Dretske's sophisticated view

offers many insights, it seems to lack all the conceptual tools needed to fully accommodate agents' participation in doings. I have argued that Stout's view of doings is overly narrow due to his endorsement of a teleological conception of action.

I have also tried to show that the imperfective-perfective aspect can be taken to be an important grammatical tool to communicate different batches of information about doings, still, some people have misunderstood it and taken it to stand for a deep metaphysical distinction deducing from it a categorical distinction between ongoing and completed doings. This, I have argued is a mistaken move that would lead us astray similarly to the way in which a misunderstanding of the transitive-intransitive distinction could. I have also tried to make the readers aware of the dangers of introducing overly narrow or exclusive conceptions of doings as processes. It would be a shame if after finally having managed to free ourselves from the constraint of thinking of actions almost exclusively in terms of events we would now embark on a similarly narrow project substituting processes for events. As I have argued, this would lead to further forced attempts to offer convulsed accounts of why simple, instantaneous, etc., doings are processes, instead of endorsing the simple and elegant solution that some doings are processes, while others aren't. This conclusion seems also to be reinforced by the discussions in the second part of my thesis: there doesn't seem to be anything about acting, actions, or activities – about doings – which would force us to think of them as necessarily being elements of one metaphysical category.

Conclusion

The main claim of my thesis is that ‘action’ is ambiguous because there is no single answer to the question ‘What are actions?’ I have argued for this by trying to establish one negative and two positive claims:

1. The negative claim was that monistic views of action are committed to the claim that all actions belong into the same broader ontological category and hence they face persistent difficulties with which they could not cope so far.
2. The first positive claim was that ‘action’ is ambiguous: it can mean either doing or thing done. Here I’m following Macmurray, von Wright, Hornsby, and Sandis, though my understanding of this distinction is different from theirs.
3. The second positive claim was that doings can differ from each other in many important features including their constitutive structure and hence they do not all belong into the same broad ontological category.

Showing that 1-3 are correct together supports the view of actions which I have proposed. This view is Strong Pluralism. Strong Pluralism endorses the claims that ‘action’ can mean either doing or thing done, and that some doings are causings, while others are events, and again others are processes. In light of my arguments I have claimed that accepting this view concerning actions is the most reasonable alternative: it avoids most problems that monist views face, it accommodates the doings – things done distinction, and by endorsing pluralism about doings it has the potential to help us in solving some problems and answering questions in the philosophy of action, in ethics (normative, meta, and applied), in moral psychology, and in epistemology, and even in fields beyond philosophy where people rely on views of actions.

Let me briefly summarize the main chapters to offer an overview of how I argued for Strong Pluralism and my view of doings. In the first chapter of my thesis I offered a brief overview of the main views which have been proposed in the last 80 years of research in philosophy of action, and I have argued that all attempts to offer a view of actions according to which all actions belong into one metaphysical category are deeply problematic. We have seen a range of typically broad answers to the ‘What are actions?’ question which claim that all actions are events, or that

they are all causings, or processes, as well as narrower responses which claim that actions are those events which are bodily movements with certain causes, or willings that cause certain things, and so on. All these views suffer from serious problems which have not been successfully resolved in the literature. Given that no one has managed to solve these difficulties, I proposed that monist views of action need to make many claims to the effect that do not recognize the doings – things done distinction, or the significant differences between doings in terms of their constituents and their spatial and temporal characteristics, we should consider whether replacing the monist approach with a pluralist approach to actions, and also to doings, would lead to results.

In the second chapter I argued that being a pluralist about actions enables us to accommodate plausible distinctions that we can observe in our evaluative, explanatory, and epistemic practices when we contrast such objects of judgment, explanation, and knowledge like *what* she did with her *doing* of it. There seems to be a difference between thinking that what someone did was horrible or thinking that her doing it was horrible. Hence it seems that even if we think that what she did was horrible, her doing it is understandable. In a – roughly – analogous way there is a difference between explaining what she did, maybe by citing her reasons for choosing to perform that specific type of action, and explaining her doing of that action – or more specifically some aspect of her doing, maybe what caused her to do it in that way, at that time, what explains why her doing it was so clumsy, and so on. And there is also an important distinction between an agent knowing *what* she is doing, that is knowing what she is engaged in with an intention or purpose, and between an agent knowing her doing, that is, knowing the constituents of her doing in more or less detail, keeping track of how her doing is developing, and such. Accepting the doings – things done distinction thus enables us to accommodate a distinction present in many of our important everyday and workplace practices which are also studied and used in philosophy and other disciplines. Accepting the distinction does not settle any deep metaphysical and ontological questions about either doings or things done, other than that we can confidently say that careful considerations of both will lead one to think that the nature of doings is different from that of things done, so they should not be conflated.

As noted above, I'm not the first to make such a distinction. Chapter two also offered a critical overview of the distinction as captured by John Macmurray, G. H.

von Wright, Jennifer Hornsby, and recently by Constantine Sandis. I reflect on these discussions and draw up my own way of making it. I show that in the case of Macmurray's and von Wright's understanding of the distinction there is a misunderstanding whether the distinction serves to differentiate between types/kinds of actions and agents' doing something, or an agents' doing something and what those doings bring about. I defend the view that the distinction is most plausibly taken to mark the difference between types/kinds of doings and agents' doings of something, and argue that we should further differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic results of actions, the former being such that if they are not successfully brought about then the agent does not count as doing or having done the action which is partially constituted by that intrinsic result.

In chapter three I differentiated between three types of pluralism about actions, and argued for the version of pluralism which I have called Strong Pluralism. According to this pluralist view doings are always one or more agents' bringing about or causing something in or by exercising some agent-level – personal-level in the case of humans - capacities, skills, abilities, or powers. Since the topic of my thesis is not agency I do not offer a detailed view of what these agential capacities are. (See 1.2, en. ix) I have emphasized (section 2.4) that while some doings might consist simply in an exercise of a capacity (like thinking of someone does), other doings might have more complex structures involving moving our bodies and controlling devices and tools (like cooking an omelette or filling out a tax return form), and even the causing of further results and consequences (like establishing an institution does), as well as the actions of others (as having a dinner party with friends or raising one's children).

Doings can thus differ in their temporal and spatial profiles, some of them being momentary, instantaneous, while others can range over long times, and there are doings which occur at one precisely determinable location and others which are stretched out over several distant locations or scattered across places, sometimes nobody being engaged in them, and then suddenly a large number of people continuing them, as it is the case with military campaigns or worshipping gods through annual festivals, and with growing crops which don't require any attention during the winter months. With the advance of new communication and digital technologies people can even act distantly, or instantaneously and simultaneously in more than one location. Exploring the characteristics of such joint, communal,

social, and online actions would be a further interesting project that could be advanced by employing the understanding of doings which I have proposed and defended in my thesis. Just think for example of such online actions as a company's transferring money into another country: in such cases many results need to be in place for it to be true that we can talk of a transfer, and these results and their bringing about together constitute a doing. Such doings are located in several places, and they can take any time ranging from an instant to weeks. Different agents might be involved in them: companies, agents (like programmers), machines, and software. Analysing and understanding such actions can be of importance to people designing banking systems, thinking about their security, relying on them and planning to use them, as well as questions of responsibility, of taxation, and so on. The pluralist characterization of doings that I offer enables Strong Pluralism to give an overview of agents' doings without having to postulate further categories into which these fall.

In chapters four through six, I surveyed positions already worked out in the philosophy of action which endorse the claim that actions are events/causings/processes. I turned to these views with a constructive intention taking their views to be views of doings – agents' doing something. My purpose in these chapters was to see whether we can use certain elements of these views, or the views themselves as accounts of all doings, or at least of some. I have endorsed certain elements and ideas connected to these monist views, particularly Davidson's idea of a doing having multiple descriptions, Danto's idea (as modified by Baier) of there being basic actions, and the Vendler-Kenny-Mourelatos focus on the temporal and aspectual features of actions.

In chapter five, with respect to causal and causings views of action, I took a nuanced approach that accepts that there are some plausible ways in which agents can be taken to cause things, and there are many causal relations that might be involved in enabling actions, cause actions, or which hold between actions and their consequences, or between results of actions and consequences. At the same time I argued that it is not convincing to take actions to be causings in any other sense than that they are agents' very short time – instantaneous if you want – exercisings of capacities. I also argued against the understanding of the transitive-intransitive distinction that Hornsby has proposed, and suggested that this distinction cannot be

used as supporting for the view that doings are the causings of movements of the body.

In chapter six I argued that we can learn both from causal- and non-causal views of doings as processes. These views can help us to accommodate extended and complex doings, doings involving results and consequences of agents' exercising their capacities, using their skills. I also voiced some worries about the idea that all doings would be processes – this would lead us back to the same kind of restrictive view which we hopefully managed to leave behind – and also about the idea shared by the non-causal theories of doings that the difference between processes and events lies in the way they exist. This distinction has been based on Mourelatos's work on the imperfective-perfective aspect as a distinction between two different types existence of things, imperfective things being like stuff to which we refer in general, and between particular things (I have argued against it in 4.6). I proposed a different understanding of the distinction, suggesting that it is simply a useful grammatical device that can be used to inform the listener about whether or not the action has been completed at the time of which we are talking.

It is a further advantage of the view I have sketched that it is compatible both with compatibilist and incompatibilist, naturalist and non-naturalist philosophical positions. I think in doing so I have followed a reasonable path, by first focusing on the variety of characteristics that doings can have and describing them in some detail, calling attention to the sometimes widely divergent constituents that make up an agents' doing. This ordering of tasks opens up the possibility for further work on the metaphysics of agency and action, and that further work could attempt to accommodate doings in a broader view in all their variety. This would be philosophically valuable work, which, by taking into account what doings are like, could make more headway in situating them in a general metaphysics of the world or some larger segment of the world, than previous theories because they would have a clearer understanding of what needs to be accommodated in a full picture of the world, and what characteristics those things have.

These benefits could also be cashed out when engaging with actions in the philosophy of science, investigating what different investigations take to be actions, how they try to connect up explanations that work in one field of investigation (for example in neuroscience) with other fields (for example with psychology). This is just one example of how a pluralist view of doings can open up the field for more

exact new research in several fields. The differentiated approach of pluralism can help us understand better the many different kinds of explanations and their interrelations by clarifying what the object of explanation is (the thing done, the doing, or some aspect of the doing, or why the agent decided to do that thing, and so on), questions concerning agents' knowledge of their actions by clarifying what that knowledge is about (the thing done, the agents' exercising some capacity, an ongoing or a completed doing of an agent, and so on), and with other topics as well.

My approach is original because it is not a monist view. One might think that my view leads to a pessimistic conclusion regarding the endeavour to understand the nature of actions. In actual fact, the situation is exactly the opposite: by endorsing pluralism we actually accept the fact that truth about action is as complicated as in the case of any other topic, be that explanation, molecules, motivation, emotion, or the human body. Pluralism is not giving up on understanding what actions are: it recognizes the complexity of the project, and starts by accepting that there is no one thing that call 'action'. Pluralism is giving up only on the idea that there is one way of answering the 'what are actions?' question. I have argued that approaches which endorsed this idea have led to simplifying views which could not accept some important distinction. Pluralism is not pessimistic about there being interesting answers to the question in different fields, and humans being able to find out what those answers are.

Pluralism about doings is not even pessimistic about philosophers coming up with interesting philosophical answers that can be made use of in answering characteristically philosophical questions and problems. I indicated this when I wrote about the possible applications of the approach to problems concerning action individuation, knowledge of action, moral judgments concerning actions and other topics. I would even venture that pluralism is not only not pessimistic (or a lazy position, demanding no thinking) but is a much more demanding position than most monist views. Monist views are hard to work out because they have to solve issues how what we would normally think of actions (both things done and doings) can be accounted for in terms of a broader ontological category which has been proposed to cover a range of phenomena and fit into a wider picture. Such views are not worked out to enable us to offer a view of actions, rather they are shaped by other goals and take accommodating actions into a broader view as a separate question.

As I have indicated, so far this has always lead to views of action which can't do justice to the doings – things done distinction, or to the variety of doings.

Pluralism is no less hard to work out in detail, and by admitting that there might be differences between groups of doings, or even individual doings which might be relevant to the answers we give to our questions – be they philosophical, legal, scientific, or a simple question in an everyday context – it actually places the burden of being specific on the shoulders of the person who undertakes to answer these questions correctly. There is a task to think about what the doings under investigation are like. Monist views offer the promise that we do not need to go through this thinking every time, that all actions fit one metaphysical categorization – maybe they are all tryings, or willings, or bodily movements, - and they all fit neatly into one broader ontological category – of causes, of events, or of processes. Monist views cannot live up to this goal. My conclusion is that this is no wonder since they approach 'action' in a reversed order by presupposing that there is a single answer to the question 'What are actions?' As I have argued in my thesis, there are answers to that question, but we have to first specify whether we are interested in doings or in things done, and in case we are interested in a doing we have to also pay attention to the particular features of that doing.

I hope to have convinced the readers that Strong Pluralism is not only possible but should be seriously considered as the correct view of actions. As I have emphasized, accepting the version of pluralism which I have defended and the view of doings which I have offered in this thesis has three main gains:

First, it opens up the possibility of thinking in more precise terms when addressing problems in the philosophy of action. Narrowly action-theoretical gains might be cashed in when my view is applied to the arguments surrounding the issue of knowledge of action. Since the early 1960s it is a topic of intense debate what agents know about their actions, as well as how agents and observers can know what an agent is doing. I argue that some of these issues dissolve once we take the object of an agents' practical knowledge (non-observational and non-inferential knowledge) of her own intentional and voluntary actions to be knowledge of her doings. Furthermore, agents can have practical knowledge of their doings if they are causings or events, and also of processes if those don't have intrinsic results. Agents typically can't have practical knowledge or can only have reliable knowledge of their doings if they are complex actions which involve several causal relations.

Agents usually have knowledge of the things they do if they are doing those things intentionally, voluntarily, or arrive at what they do by deliberation. My view might in a similar way help sort out some debates about the individuation of action by enabling us to see that doings rightly categorized as belonging into different metaphysical categories can have different identity conditions.

At the same time, by rejecting Davidsonian event views, and Hornsby's approach to ongoing actions as activities that are likened to stuff/matter, my pluralist position is less committed to controversial views of events and processes than some other views of actions that have been defended. Last, but not least, my view might help in understanding mental actions: mental actions typically don't have further results and are not causal. Hence, my pluralism helps in accommodating them in an understandable way, and this is a distinct advantage over views which claim that all actions are bodily movements (Davidson 1980), or that all actions are willings (Prichard 1949), or that they are the causing of something (Hornsby 1980), or are the bringing-about of results (von Wright 1963, 1971). All these possible applications of Strong Pluralism make it an attractive and plausible position, and commend it as a point of departure and basis for further research.

The second main gain of accepting my position is that it is a new position in the literature which accommodates earlier findings in the philosophy of action in a single larger framework. It is a pragmatic approach: it shows us how we can make good use of the work already carried out by others. It does not systematically reject other positions. Instead it makes an attempt at surveying earlier advances and incorporating what can be kept, building on the achievements of the many previous philosophers working on these issues. Throughout my thesis I have rejected certain views or certain claims of specific views. For example, I have argued that Davidson was wrong to claim that all we ever do is move our bodies, or Prichard's claim that all actions are willings. Pluralism is incompatible with such narrow claims because, as I have attempted to show, they are not true to the nature – the metaphysics if you will – of doings.

Strong Pluralism about action can play a role in discussions in ethics, political philosophy and philosophy of law as these investigations usually make use of some view of action. My work can also be helpful in providing the conceptual apparatus needed to make it explicit what an agent is doing and what her doing something is

like. As such, it can also help in addressing the agents' responsibility by clarifying what she is responsible for, and why she is responsible for it. Furthermore, in AI research views of action can be useful for programmers who are working on modelling actions in applied ontologies, and when developers are tackling challenges about modelling reasoning about action. My view can not only help by providing further details to models of planning actions; it can also supplement models used to enable the understanding of actions, that is, to help carve up what different things can count as agents' doings that are to be understood as unities explained in terms of the agents' exercising of her capacities, skills, and abilities. Strong Pluralism combined with my view of doings can also offer further refinements in AI research by enabling programmers to specify in more detail the properties of specific doings.^{lxxxv}

A third important gain of endorsing Strong Pluralism about action is that by urging a move away from monist tendencies Strong Pluralism opens up the door for more original research in the philosophy of action. The view does not oppose or reject the perfectly valid philosophical ambition of finding the place of doings – and their different varieties – and of things done in a broader metaphysical picture of the world. What it does is make it possible to investigate the nature of things done, the nature of different types of doings – doings with different constitutive or spatio-temporal profiles – and to discuss in more detail which variety of pluralist views is best able to handle actions. In the future interesting work could be done on the particular types and groups of types of doings, on what kind of doings mental actions – like deciding, planning, thinking of someone, coming up with a new idea – are, how specifically human agents exercise their capacities and skills, and how the different types of doings relate to different ethical and moral views, whether doings always incur praise and blame in the same way, and probably also further questions. The view achieves this without presupposing either naturalism or its opposite. It is compatible with different views of the metaphysics of the mind and of persons. In arguing that certain widely accepted views of action are false, and suggesting that we take a pluralist approach to doings and things done, I hope to have presented a new way of looking for answers to old questions concerning actions.

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ⁱ Although of course – as with respect to any question in Philosophy – the extreme view that there are no actions has also been proposed and defended, in this case by Jonathan Dancy, see his 2009.

ⁱⁱ For the most sophisticated ways of distinguishing intentional and voluntary actions see Anscombe 1963, Austin 1966, Kenny 1978, and Hyman 2015. My topic is not intention or voluntariness in this thesis, but these are the positions and trends which I'm largely sympathetic to and which I rely on in my discussions.

ⁱⁱⁱ In my thesis I won't go into much detail concerning the different possible metaphysics that we might choose to accommodate things done in our worldview. My thesis primarily focuses on pluralism and on doings. I think that it is a virtue of the pluralism which I defend in the thesis that it is in theory compatible with more than one way of making sense of things done, and it should be the subject of future work to explore which of these possibilities complement pluralism about doings best.

^{iv} Consider for the same effect the reflex of chicken feigning their death, cited by Dretske (1988: 29). The neural – and probably also phenomenological – characteristics of the chicken's feigning its death are very different from its becoming stiff and unresponsive due to a shock or actual death.

^v Of course this does not mean that all monist views give useful characterizations of at least some doings. As I will argue for example, Davidson's particular view that actions are events, and more narrowly that they are identical with bodily movements simpliciter is simply mistaken. But the ideas that many doings might – *in some sense* – be events, and that bodily movements play important roles in doing something are both useful and important insights which I will explore and try to elucidate how we can make use of them.

^{vi} Davidson counts as someone who accepted this view, but we need to be careful with this claim. For one, Davidson viewed actions primarily as events, and only in more specific discussions does he say that all actions are events which are bodily movements with the right causes (see his 'Agency', reprinted in his 1980). But in more than one place he mentions that he puts aside discussion of mental actions and negative actions for the sake of simplicity, not as a categorical endorsement of the position that these could never be actions.

^{vii} And we could think of several further negative doings as well as mental doings. In general the possibility of negative action, and the question of whether omissions and cases of negligence are doings of agents are not topics of my thesis and I won't go into detailed discussions of these topics. For a detailed recent discussion see Clarke 2014. I merely wanted to cite an example that is not too controversial: if *A* consciously decides to refrain from *x*-ing and exercises her abilities to refrain from *x*-ing, paying attention to how she does this, that does seem to be a case of refraining from something that is a doing of *A*'s. Mental actions that qualify as doings of an agent are planning the details of a trip, memorizing a poem, diverting one's attention from something, or conjuring up before one's 'inner eyes' the details of the hand of one's beloved one. For more on mental actions see the introduction and the essays in O'Brien and Soteriou (eds.) 2009.

^{viii} Throughout the thesis I will often talk of agents exercising their abilities, skill, capacities, etc. Since my thesis is not about agency or agential powers or capacities I won't provide a detailed view of such things. By using these phrases I do not want to say that there are purely inner or mental or causal elements of actions. I take the ability to raise one's arm to be just that: that when I exercise my ability to raise my arm that consists of my raising my arm (including my arm's going up). For an interesting and suggestive recent stance on what it means to use one's agential powers see Maria Alvarez's 2013. Alvarez offers a view inspired by Aristotle. I don't want to claim that we should all do so, and there surely are other ways of understanding exercises of abilities, skills, etc. Her article serves the purpose of a convenient point of introduction to the issue as well as offering a promising view.

^{ix} I rely on the distinction between lower level or sub-agential and higher level or agent-level capacities, abilities, and skills. The distinction has been made first by Daniel Dennett, and it plays a role in Alvarez and Hyman's 'Agents and their Actions' (1998), and is the topic of Hornsby 2000. I largely rely on Alvarez and Hyman's use of the distinction without going into much detail about its specific details.

^x Alternative event views of action have been proposed by Alvin I. Goldman (1970), Judith Jarvis Thomson (1971), and Irving Thalberg (1977 and in some of his articles together with Vivian Weil), as well as by Jennifer Hornsby (1980). Davidson's view has been the most popular and received most attention, and it also had significant traction in linguistics – one could think of the work of Bernard Lombard or Terry Parsons. But it also received much criticism and particularly after the

very detailed book length criticisms advanced by Jonathan Bennett (1988) and Helen Steward (1997) it has fallen out of favour. Nevertheless, Davidson's theory of events and his view of actions as events has been very important and significant, and for this reason it has to be addressed by any serious treaty of the subject. Following the brief treatment of the view in this chapter I will return to it in greater detail in chapter four where I'll explore if at least some doings can be characterised as events in Davidson's sense.

^{xi} See Davidson's discussion of the problem in his 'Freedom to Act' pp. 79-81, reprinted as essay 4 in his 1980. To keep things short: an event might have the right kind of events which caused it, by might be caused by them in the bad way, and hence despite the causal connection holding between the right kind of events not count as an action. This is a serious problem for every CTA. For a very detailed discussion of this issue see John Bishop's 1989, and for a discussion of more recent literature on the topic and a proposed solution see Paul 2011.

^{xii} This criticism has been made most forcefully by Hornsby, see especially her 1997 and 2004. The problem is briefly that if what makes some events actions is simply that certain kinds of events caused them, then agents don't seem to have any role in acting. This is a problem in itself, and it is also quite absurd if we consider ongoing actions which manifestly require the control, participation, attention, etc. of the agent.

^{xiii} Agent causation has been defended in several forms and versions. Two prominent views were Richard Taylors' (1966) and Roderick Chisholm's (1976 amongst other publications). I won't discuss their views here because some of their fundamental ideas will be addressed and rejected here, and they don't offer any very strong arguments for them which would need to be addressed separately. The main assumption shared by both Taylor and Chisholm is that agents cause their actions.

^{xiv} Timothy O'Connor in his *Persons and Causes* (2000) defends a view like this. I'll explain in more detail why this view is affected by the same illnesses as the events view in 5.4.

^{xv} See the first section of Alvarez and Hyman 1998.

^{xvi} For example Kent Bach in his 1980 paper, and Maria Alvarez and John Hyman in their 1998 article defend this position. I will discuss this view and its potential usefulness in characterising doings in chapter five.

^{xvii} See the essays collected in Frankfurt 1988. Frankfurt has developed his views further in the last decades, and his view also had a significant effect on research on agency.

^{xviii} H. A. Prichard offers a detailed version of this view of action, see his 1949.

^{xix} Activity is sometimes used in philosophy of action in a different sense from action. In this thesis activity is interchangeable of action. I do recognize that the everyday usage of activity is more nuanced, but my main aim is not to capture the everyday usage of action-related expressions, and I think what we discuss normally when we discuss activities fits into the broader category of doings.

^{xx} Hornsby rejects both that actions would only be mental events and that they would be events later in her 2004 and 2012. Concerning actions as happening inside the body she accepts the criticism of Helen Steward, see Steward 2000.

^{xxi} By scattered actions – more precisely scattered doings – I mean doings which are events or processes, and which take place across multiple times and locations, maybe without being continuous. Think for example of the action of chatting with a friend online which takes place in two separate locations, and maybe without continuity, one of sending a message and the other replying ten minutes later, or about such actions as a concert broadcast to which people listen in several places across the globe. A temporally scattered doing could be the building of a dome in which several people might take place over years, the construction stops during the nights, there are snowy winter days when work can't proceed and so on. Still, we can talk of the construction company's building a dome.

^{xxii} In elucidating the difference between incomplete and complete actions, and ongoing and finished actions Stout relies on Mourelatos's work on tense and aspect (Mourelatos 1978). I'll discuss Mourelatos's view in section 4.6 and in connection with process views in chapter six.

^{xxiii} For arguments see the relevant sections in Kenny (1978), White (1985), Dretske (1988), Hacker (1996), Hyman (2015).

^{xxiv} The view is subtly different from the causings view discussed under point 4: The view described there claims that an action consists in an agents' causing something. In contrast the view discussed here under point 10 claims that an action is an instance of the causing relation, which obtains between an agent and a result.

^{xxv} My thesis shares this focus on doings: I advocate a distinction between things done and doings, but then focus mostly on doings and take on no further commitments about how we should understand what things done are.

^{xxvi} With this move Hornsby seems to avoid the temptation, which affected both Macmurray and von Wright, to treat things done (what is done) as the result of a doing.

^{xxvii} Dretske uses behaviour in the same broad sense. See 6.3.

^{xxviii} The distinction between agent-level and sub-agential processes, as well as the distinction between personal, unconscious but personal and sub-personal levels has been proposed and explored by Daniel Dennett in his 1969 and 1991, and further made use of by John McDowell in his 1994 and Jennifer Hornsby 2000, 2001. Maria Alvarez and John Hyman also rely on a distinction which very much resembles Dennett's when they delineate actions of agents from non-actional changes in their 1998. The exact details of the distinction need not concern us here in more detail.

^{xxix} Velleman's position on doables – sketched in 3.5.3 – can be taken as a position which claims that all criteria for doings which human agents can choose is relative to the society that they grow up in. I'll argue against this view.

^{xxx} At least not necessarily. We can come up with scenarios when agents ask others to raise their arms or use machines that they operate with their other hand to raise their arm. In such cases it is true that they cause their arm to rise. It is also true that normally agents cause many further things when doing anything – disturbing the dust flying around them, annoying sleepless dogs and alert flies, stomping down leaves of grass, and many other things come to mind. These might be doings of agents and they might cause them. This still doesn't show that normally when an agent walks she causes herself to walk. It just shows that her walking causes other things. See also 5.5 and 6.4.1.

^{xxxi} For the objection see Sandis 2012: 8, 33.

^{xxxii} I'm in agreement here with Hornsby, see her 1980: 3. Hornsby thinks of all doings as events, and the 'of' as showing that a doing is an event.

^{xxxiii} Constantine Sandis's position outlined in his book *The Things We Do and Why We Do Them* might come to mind as an example of such a view. Sandis explicitly says that he is arguing for a pluralist position concerning actions, see his 2012: 39-40. Sandis lists the following forms of expressions that we should treat as being about different kind of actions, such as 'behaviour', 'the movings of her body', 'action', 'things she does', 'her movings of her body', 'what I'm doing', 'my doing of *x*', 'my doing *x*', 'the event of my doing *x*'/'the process of my doing *x*', 'what I do when I *x*', 'my *x*-ing'. (Sandis 2012: xviii)

^{xxxiv} Jennifer Hornsby's view in her book *Actions* or von Wright's approach in his *Norm and Action* and his *Explanation and Understanding* are examples of Simple Pluralism. Hornsby is relatively uncommitted about what things done are, and held that doings are events. Von Wright used 'thing done' differently from me and Hornsby, but he had place for what we mean by it in his view, see the discussion of his view in 3.3.2.

^{xxxv} I will say more about what I mean by a doing being an event in chapter four. By no means do I mean to suggest that some doings are events as Davidson has conceived of events.

^{xxxvi} See also Sandis 2015.

^{xxxvii} To see how these constraints shaped much debate on the role of causation in action and on CTAs see Aguilar and Buckareff 2010, D'Oro and Sandis 2013, and O'Brien 2015 chapter two.

^{xxxviii} I do not want to suggest that this is the only reason why it did so or even that there would be no attractive reasons to think that a monist view is the right view of action. We would need to investigate the development of monist views in detail to find out why they seemed like attractive option to different philosophers who have endorsed them.

^{xxxix} Ambiguity is the only serious issue that makes some uses of 'action' hard to understand. We don't have a problem as long as we are talking about particular doings, like an ostrich's running, a lion's hunting, or Jill's looking up recipes. But once talk of 'action' enters confusion often comes along. The reason for this is not only that things done and doings can easily be mixed up, or that the differences between doings are often not recognized. It is also that many authors – not only in Philosophy – use action and behaviour interchangeably, or don't make it clear enough what they mean by action, what their view of doings is. Helen Longino's book *Studying Human Behaviour* (Longino 2013) explains very well how many different views of what human behaviour is there are in fields of the natural sciences and philosophy which lie relatively close to each other.

^{xl} Consider also Frankfurt's notes on animals acting with a purpose (Frankfurt 1978).

^{xli} It seems to be committing the mistake of painting with a broad brush to say that all actions are socially constructed. Certainly some are, but would the example I gave of a dancer's movement count as such? Not everyone knows how to dance even in societies famous for their dances, like

Brazil or Spain, and the whole of society does not contribute to the creation of dances. The same is true of certain forms of writing: John Barth is not an important author in mid-20th century American literature because he has decided to write novels in a way that was socially constructed, but because he himself came up with new ideas about how to write novels, which others subsequently followed. While an account of why and how Barth came up with his ideas would certainly make reference to conditions and processes in wider society, that would by no means be a full and satisfactory account.

^{xlii} Some philosophers – for example Hornsby in her 1980 – take ‘my doing *x*’ to pick out something different from ‘doing *x*’, the former being a doing, the latter being a type of doing.

^{xliii} I will discuss in chapter six Dretske’s view of action which is also a CTA and takes actions to be processes.

^{xliv} For their respective views see Davidson 1980, Kim 1980, and Bennett 1988. I do not claim that my view is in fact compatible with all such views. Exploring that question in detail would require a separate thesis, one that deals with events in much more detail. Even if we would find that the view of doings I proposed is incompatible with one or more of these views it wouldn’t mean that there is no sense in which it is intelligible to say that some doings are events,.

^{xlv} Alvarez and Hyman in their ‘Agents and their Actions’ (1998) take the same approach to this question.

^{xlvi} See for example Macmurray 1938: 78-9.

^{xlvii} A different way of arguing from ones discussed here is that taken by philosophers engaged in descriptive metaphysics. Such arguments usually try to show that action and event are never the same thing by arguing that they are not explained in the same more general explanatory framework. See for example Giuseppina D’Oro’s 2014.

^{xlviii} For detailed descriptions of experiments in which this effect occurs see Wegner 2002. I do not endorse Wegner’s view that consciousness and consciously experienced mental states have no role in acting ever, but I can leave the possibility open here that there might be cases where although an agent experiences that she is acting, actually she isn’t.

^{xlix} Of course it is a clash between my view and Davidson’s that he doesn’t recognize the difference between things done and doings. I take this distinction to be fundamental and I have argued for this in chapter two and three. This is a problem with every monist view, but since I’m focusing on doings and whether monist theories can be taken to contribute something to our understanding of them throughout chapters four to six, I won’t mention things done every time when discussing these monist views. Also, I use action and doing interchangeably in these chapters, except where I explicitly say that I don’t.

¹ Davidson later changed his view and thought that ‘intentions’ are a genuine kind of mental state with distinctive roles in our mental lives, see his ‘Intending’, included as essay 5 in his 1980. For my present purposes this difference doesn’t matter: Davidson’s view was still a CTA after the introduction of intentions, and he still thought of actions as bodily movements.

ⁱⁱ See Dretske 1988: 29-30 for similar claims about explanation and the facets of actions. His following example illustrates this point well: “My tug on the steering wheel of my car, for instance, doesn’t cause my car to move, much less to move at 63 mph. Rather, it causes the 63-mph movement to be in that direction. My heavy foot is responsible for the speed, the dirty carburettor for the intermittent pauses, and the potholes in the road for the teeth-jarring vertical component of the movement. It would be foolish to treat the movement of the car as a single entity in need of a single explanation. There are, or may be, as many explanations for the movement as there are distinguishable properties or facets of the movement.” (Dretske 1988: 30)

ⁱⁱⁱ For in depth-discussions of such questions the reader should turn to Taylor 1966, von Wright 1971, Davidson 1980, Dretske 1988, Mele 1992, Stout 1996 and 2006, O’Connor 2000, Ruben 2003, Setiya 2007, the relevant entries in O’Connor and Sandis 2010, D’Oro 2012, Sandis 2012, and the introduction and essays in D’Oro and Sandis 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The original views of Danto have been modified and refined in many respects. For some important modifications see Stoutland 1968. Davidson (1971/1980), von Wright (1971), McCann (1972, 1974), Goldman (1970), Hornsby (1980, 2013), and Ruben (2003) have all contributed to the literature. For a good overview see Sandis’s entry in O’Connor and Sandis 2010.

^{liv} Among others by Kenny in his 1963, and see more recently Hyman 2001 and 2015.

^{lv} Jennifer Hornsby in her recent work relies on Mourelatos’s reasoning and on Henry Laycock’s work on mass terms to develop a view very similar to Mourelatos’s. I will discuss her view in 7.3.

^{lvi} Dretske calls such episodes ‘the consummatory event’, see his 1988: 15. Stout (1996) also thinks that these events are the end-stages, the completions of the processes, and he also holds that they are actions themselves.

^{lvii} Often questions of agent causation are discussed with a view of free will in sight, and the discussion is focused on whether or not agents are determined or not, whether they have powers to do things and to refrain from them, and so on. These are clearly separate questions from our main topic. Whatever answers we find to the question whether actions can be free and what that amounts to, depends on what we take actions to be. Hence as I did before in this thesis and as I will continue to do, I will put questions concerning freedom and agency aside.

^{lviii} For a good overview of Reid's position in this context see O'Connor 2000: 43-9.

^{lix} There is a significant amount of discussion devoted to Chisholm's view. See for example von Wright 1971: 76-81 and Alvarez-Hyman 1998: 236-9.

^{lx} For more extended arguments highlighting further difficulties with traditional agent causation see Alvarez and Hyman 1998: 221-4, Ruben 2003: 161-165.

^{lxi} The view would still be different from Davidson's CTA because it doesn't equate the causing elements with simply the occurrences of a pair of desires and beliefs. For arguments for the distinction between an agents' causing something and (mental) events causing something see O'Connor 2000 chapters five and six.

^{lxii} Either way, there is the further problem that it does not seem obvious at all that we cause our intentions. In exercising a mental capacity such as making up one's mind, or arriving at a decision, one can have in mind the extended doings of deliberation, reasoning, weighing up pros and cons while imagining different possible scenarios, or one can just think of the momentary episodes actually settling on a decision, intention, or plan. These endpoints – or single points – of deciding, reasoning, planning, etc. seem not to be something further caused by our deciding, reasoning, but their end movements. While in general I try to avoid to banish any substantive discussion to footnotes I did so in this case because the literature on intentions, reasoning, planning and deciding is substantial and I won't have the space here to engage with it in any serious depth.

^{lxiii} Hornsby's views on actions have changed since the 1980's, but the understanding of the transitive-intransitive distinction detailed here still plays a role in her current view. See my discussion of her more recent views in the next chapter.

^{lxiv} Hornsby also claims that the basic actions we do are the events which are tryings, and that the further descriptions which we give of actions apply to these events. These parallels with Davidson's view are for my present purposes not important to discuss.

^{lxv} For more criticism of this idea see Lowe 1981, 1983, and Steward 2000, and Hornsby's 1982.

^{lxvi} Stout also accepts a modified view of Coope's view to avoid the conclusion that the process of my doing something is identical just with the end states coming about. Instead he thinks "that the process of my raising my arm or my arm rising is the realization of a potentiality for the arm to be in a series of states characteristic of arm-rising". (Stout 2010: 112-3)

^{lxvii} Von Wright's way of drawing the distinctions between the elements that should be separated in an action and what elements stand in causal relations is close to my way of arguing here. See his 1971: 66-9.

^{lxviii} Alvarez and Hyman build on von Wright's view in their 'Agents and their Actions'.

^{lxix} Maria Alvarez invokes the same view of action in her 1999. I won't address that paper separately, as it deals mainly with the logical form of action sentences, and its aim is to show that even if a Davidsonian account would be right and we should quantify over events in action sentences, this wouldn't show that those events are the actions of agents.

John Hyman in his 2001 also defends the claim that "...an act is an instance of causation, obtaining an agent and an event. For example, Brutus's killing of Caesar was Brutus's causing of Caesar's death. And *Brutus's extending of his arm* was *Brutus's causing of this extension*." (Hyman 2001: 309) Hyman does not go into details of the causings view in that paper, hence, no separate treatment of the claims made there is required – what I say about the view proposed by Alvarez and Hyman in their joint 1998 paper applies to the later paper as well.

^{lxx} In her 2013 Alvarez takes a more pluralist approach about what we might mean by making something happen and how we should understand agents' exercising of their powers in that she says that not all doings are causings of events.

^{lxxi} See Von Wright 1963b: 39, 1971: 66-7, and also section 2.3.2 of this thesis.

^{lxxii} The idea of such a distinction figures importantly in Dretske 1988, as well as in Alvarez and Hyman 1998, 232 and 238, and Hyman 2001. Agent-level capacities can be distinguished from sub-personal capacities most simply by i) the processes that lead to one's acting do not cause the action in virtue of their meaning, but in virtue of some other (maybe chemical, physical, etc. features), and ii) by the fact that agential level capacities are characteristically those which agents use and rely on, and characteristically such capacities are such that they can be used across our capacities and

abilities. For example the way we handle reasons while reasoning about what to do is such that we can also engage in theoretical reasoning regarding the same reasons if we want to. See also 2.4, footnote 29.

^{lxxiii} This is not the sense of ‘trying’ which Hornsby (1980) gives to it when she treats it as a mental event that causes bodily movements.

^{lxxiv} Ursula Coope and David Charles could be mentioned as philosophers who go into very detailed exegesis and follow Aristotle closely. Rowland Stout could be cited as someone whose view is informed by many Aristotelian insights, but is developed in detail as it relates to current rival views and departs from Aristotle’s works more freely. David Ruben (2003) also refers to Aristotle as a source of some details of his position.

^{lxxv} This transition can be well observed in Hornsby 1997, 2004, 2012.

^{lxxvi} Steward’s development of her view can be traced throughout her 1997, 2012, 2013, and 2015.

^{lxxvii} For a way of distinguishing agent-level and subpersonal, sub-agential processes involved in causing behaviour see Hyman 2015 chapter two.

^{lxxviii} Stout in his *Things that Happen because They Should* talks more about the teleological nature of action and activity. I won’t spend much time here discussing that aspect of his work. I think that whether or not actions are teleologically structured unities is a further question which would find its proper place in a treatise on human agency, reasoning and rationality, and my thesis has no ambitions of being such a work. My general pluralist framework could be modified to allow that only those doings are actions which are teleologically structured. In his recent work Stout places the emphasis on the metaphysical qualities of processes that are actions rather than on their teleological features.

^{lxxix} It is interesting how differently philosophers can set up what they are seeking and what accounts for that difference. When I discussed the doings - things done distinction I wrote that Macmurray says that actions are essentially different from events. The former are performed by an agent, the latter are caused by something else than an agent. He thinks that the notion of action that is a change occurring in the world (what he calls thing done) is substantially different from events in virtue of this difference in causes. The contrast with Stout is interesting: Stout is worried that just being caused by an agent would not be enough and hence adds that only those processes are actions which are the performances of an agent aimed at a goal. Macmurray draws the distinction much broader.

^{lxxx} Bennett makes the distinction between facts and events, taking facts to be more basic than events, and he takes the distinction in grammar between imperfect and perfect nominals to mark the distinction between facts and events, the imperfect forms picking out facts which are the stuff of events, and the perfect forms picking out events. In Stout’s view there is the stuff of processes (activities), the particular processes, and once a process is completed we can look at it as an event.

^{lxxxii} Before out of fairness and charity we delve into the arguments Hornsby offers, and start wondering in just what complicated ways language works, let us stop and think for a second. Hornsby writes the following: “Where ‘beer’ names a sort of stuff, and ‘thing’ applies to the particulars that are occupants of the spatial world, the word ‘beer’ in ‘There is beer in the fridge’ does not stand for any thing.” My friend comes over to chat a bit. I tell him we should have drink while we talk. She offers to get the glasses and the drinks and asks me what there is. I tell her ‘There is beer in the fridge.’ If in this case my friend takes this to be a statement about the type of things there are in my fridge, well, bad for him. She will remain thirsty. If she takes this to mean that there are particular things (bottles, puddles, cans) of beer in the fridge that she can take out and we can drink, well, then she is right. And if someone says that ‘Sure, you are right, but the statement there is beer in the fridge just implies that there are canful or bottlefuls of beer in the fridge, but is not about them’, we can just answer: there has to be a way of talking about the particular bottles or cans or puddles of beer in my fridge. Hornsby’s insistence to delineate very clearly what we mean when we talk of strolling or beer is fishy. It is very much like the grammatical tests that were supposed to indicate agency which Davidson so skilfully undermined in his ‘Agency’. Hornsby writes that she has relied on Henry Laycock’s work on mass, count, and non-count nouns. I think it does not bear much on Laycock’s work (for a short overview see Laycock 2005) if we do not think of doings that are processes (stretches of activities in Hornsby’s vocabulary) as having to do much with stuff.

^{lxxxiii} A very similar approach to processes, but without sustained focus on actions, has been worked out by Antony Galton and Riichiro Mizoguchi in applied ontology. See for example Galton 2006 and Galton and Mizoguchi 2009. Steward references Galton’s and Mizoguchi’s work in her papers.

^{lxxxiii} Contra to what Stout and Hornsby have suggested. See Steward’s arguments against Hornsby’s approach of building her account on the stuff-activity analogy in her 2013, esp. section 6.)

^{lxxxiv} As an illustration of the position I'm arguing consider the following: "We can of course think about the whole set of temporal parts which have occurred by the time the process is complete. But to think of *that* is to think of an event—to think of the whole change, conceived of as a unit which is now over and done, a completed whole." (Steward 2012: 384)

^{lxxxv} For such work already employing philosophical views see Hobbs 1985, Galton 2006, and Galton and Mizoguchi 2009. Such models are used in branches of programming like coding the transfer of funds between institutions. Such transfers are treated as extended, ongoing actions which can lose and gain properties, and the agent initiating the transfer counts as carrying them out throughout the different procedures that a transfer consists of. My view could be used to work out further such models and to add sophistication and flexibility to existing models.