

# Philosophy of the six-sided man

A philosophical inquiry into the dice man and his actions



Scriptie in het kader van de Academische master Wijsbegeerte

Door: Claire Jansen

Studentnummer: 3060314

08-06-2011

*Aan: Opa en Oma, die mijn studie mogelijk hebben gemaakt*

*en voor Papa en Mama, die me altijd hebben geholpen.*



## Preface

*"There are two paths: you use the Die, or you let the Die use you."*

So I shook the Die and here it is, a master thesis about Luke Rinehart's famous dicelife. Did I choose this subject or did the die choose it for me? Chance only knows. One thing is certain, when I first read the novel: "The dice man" I was stunned. The way in which the novel depicted boredom so accurately was amazing. And the idea of one acting purely on chance and hereby denying all responsibility was liberating. What if, I often thought after reading about Luke's life. What if I could, no dared, to put all my decisions in the hands of the die? Wasn't that total freedom? Wasn't that what we all wanted? To step out of the domain of boring obedience and be liberated, make up our own rules. When I started to study philosophy I learned loads of things about this obedience and our moral rules of conduct. But still, whenever I read the dice man (and I read it a lot) I felt that Luke's ideas, although different from what we imagined to be a good set of rules, were highly relevant. I came to understand that what he wanted was something that all of us wanted some time or other in our lives, to be free of consequences, to be no longer responsible for our actions, to live outside of the set of rules that society made for us, to live fully according to the rules of chance. I am in no way a dice person and hardly any of my choices are made by chance, when I came before the choice of picking a subject of my master thesis though, it so happened that I just read "The dice man" for the thousandth time. Consequently when the choice for a subject became too hard of a choice I decided for the first time of my life to let the dice decide. I grabbed pen and paper and wrote down the options. If I threw an even number I would write about the dice man and the philosophy that was present in his book, uneven and I would write a far more historical paper about happiness in Aristotle. With excitement I rolled the dice, it slowly tumbled off the table unto the ground, when at last I dared to look, it was apparent that my wish had come true, I would write about the dice man and make the relevance of his book apparent once more.

In this thesis I want to discuss the actions of the narrator of the book, *The Dice Man*, Luke Rhinehart. His actions are, as readers of the book know, entirely based on chance. With the role of the Die, Luke actions become clear. He rolls the Dice on almost every decision he takes. Although his actions are based on his own urges, most of the forthcoming actions are a surprise even to Luke. But does this make his actions “unintentional”? Or could we say that even though his actions are based on the roll of the dice it’s still Luke who decides and his actions are in fact “intentional”. Diceliving comes with many difficulties. How should we judge a diceperson and his actions? Are his actions still wrong or right in the same way the actions of a normal person are? Or are actions that are only answers to the role of a Die of a somewhat different order than the actions of a so called normal person. Can something be morally wrong, when we know the action was not really “intended”, nor an “intentional action”? How do we judge Luke when we know he is trying to become the random man? First I want to get in to the specific meaning of the term intentional action. What does it mean for an action to be intentional? And why do we render certain actions intentional and others unintentional? After I made this clear, I will discuss the Butler Problem. In this chapter I will discuss a problem that Ronald Butler poses; namely that there is an asymmetry in interpreting an action as intentional or unintentional in two similar cases. These cases being; the case where one wants to throw a dice six side up and does so. This is an unintentional action because of chance, most people would say. And a second (similar) case where someone spins a six-chambered gun with only one bullet, aims and kills a man. An act rendered intentional according to most people, even though chance plays an evenly big role as in the dice example. Why is this asymmetry there and what does it say about our judging of actions? And more importantly what does it say about the actions of the Dice man? In the last chapter I will explain what intentional action in the butler problem says about Luke. Are Luke’s actions similar to the Butler problem? If they are, this may mean that Luke’s actions are not intentional, and that he therefore is not fully aware of the significance of the bad outcomes that his actions may have (although we can hold him responsible nonetheless). And when intentionality and intentional actions are really of no importance in Luke’s actions then why does he even act at all?

Don't we all need intentionality in order to act? In short; does my explanation mean that his actions are intentional even if he doesn't know it himself? Or are his actions unintentional and is he, as he himself believes a mere spill in the dicegame? Should we like Luke, or is this book the perfect explanation of why we do not live randomly but think our actions through?

## Contents

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTENTIONAL ACTION</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THE BUTLER PROBLEM</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE: INTENTIONAL ACTION AND THE BUTLER PROBLEM FOR LUKE</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>41</b>

## Chapter one: Intentional action

In “folk psychology” (the opinions most of us have), concerning intentional action we distinguish between behaviour that is performed intentionally and behaviour that is performed unintentionally. But how this distinction should be understood and what function it serves, is disagreed upon by researchers. Folk psychology is a tool with many uses, we use it to; warn, threaten, asses, praise, blame, discourage, hint, imply, insult...etc. Intentionality plays a central role in folk psychology. Action theory revolves around the concept of intentional action. Intentional action without intention leaves only plain behaviour; brute bodily motion without purpose. In this subject one can discern two fundamentally different viewpoints. In the first view the basic intuition is that by seeing actions as intentional or unintentional people are making a distinction that helps to predict and explain behaviour of others. Although the concepts may be used in various other kinds of reasoning, these uses are seen as secondary and not fundamental to the nature of the concept.<sup>1</sup>

The second view sees people’s concept of intentional action as bound to evaluative questions. The concept of intentional action that people have can only be correctly understood when we see that it is not only used to explain behaviour, but also to determine the moral significance of the relevant behaviour. It is used to decide whether we should praise or blame certain behaviour.

The concepts of intention and intentionality are traditionally a topic for empirical research. Views on this subject are often formed with help from experimental philosophy, where researchers in a scientific set-up ask large groups of people about their opinions on intentional action in several different theses and questions.

According to Bertram Malle and his companions Moses and Baldwin, intentionality is a foundation for social cognition. It unlocks a central part of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Mele & Sverdlik in; Knobe J. *Intention, intentional action and moral considerations*. Analysis 64:181-87, 2004

folk ontology of mind. This is the case because intentionality's constituent components represent basic mental categories such as beliefs, desires and awareness.<sup>2</sup> The concept of intentionality brings order to the perception of behaviour; it allows people to detect structure, namely; intentions and actions. Intentionality also coordinates social interaction by helping people explain behaviour of their own and of others in terms of underlying mental causes. And intentional action has an evaluative nature as well as it has a normative (and not only a descriptive) role in ascribing praise or blame to an action. We see here that Malle takes the two different views mentioned earlier and puts them together. This is not a unique step to take. However Malle is one of the few researchers that explicitly bring the two views together. In his book <sup>3</sup> he tries to give an overview of the different viewpoints that exist. The fact of the matter is that we use the concept of intentional action in several different ways. We not only use it to ascribe praise and blame but, for example, use it to explain behaviour as well. I agree with this explanation on the role of intentional action because it is apparent that folk psychology subscribes different roles (like explaining behaviour) to concepts used and discussed. Most people do not have one definition for concepts like intentionality but several different ones in light of different situations. Intentionality can be used in different ways and all these ways ascribe to the concept in it's whole.

We want to interpret and explain the behaviour of others but at the same time we form an opinion about the behaviour at large. To come to this opinion, as well as to understand the behaviour, we need intentionality. In this paper I will not discuss the responsibility that people ascribe, to and for actions, after we made judgement about an action. This responsibility however plays a big part in the theory of intentional action. Therefore I cannot fully dismiss the evaluative and normative character that intentional action no doubt has. As it is something that we look upon only after we interpreted an action as being

---

<sup>2</sup> Malle B. Moses L. Badwin D. *Intentions and Intentionality, foundations of social cognition*, MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004

Introduction P.1

<sup>3</sup> Malle B. Moses L. Badwin D. *Intentions and Intentionality, foundations of social cognition*, MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004



intentional, I will not discuss responsibility further in this paper, but only the steps that lead to opinions about intentionality.

Most people have a common sense notion of intentionality, after all, not only philosophers and scientists think about this subject. Because there is such a shared concept of intentional action it is wise to look at the folk notion of the concept. When do people render an action intentional and why? What makes an action intentional? Another reason to look only at the Folk concept is the broader aim of this paper. I am discussing a book where subjects judge the actions of the narrator purely by their intuition, as a general reading public mostly does. These intuitions are important to the reader as well as to the characters in the book itself. This is another reason to discuss our general disposition towards intentional action.

So what is it to act intentionally? Malle and Knobe try to give a definition of intentional action in their paper. They give five conditions for an action to be intentional.

“ In people’s folk concept of intentionality, performing an action intentionally requires the presence of five components: a desire for an outcome; beliefs about an action that leads to that outcome; an intention to perform the action; skill to perform the action; and awareness of fulfilling the intention while performing the action.”<sup>4</sup>

Note here that an intention is not the same as an intentional action. One can have the intention to perform an action yet decide not to perform it later on. One can for example have the intention to study real hard for an exam. And yet when this person is asked to go to the bar, do so. An action can only be interpreted as an intentional action when it is actually performed. This means that an intended action is something different from an intentional action. An intended action addresses the reasons one has for acting and can in the end not be performed or even be performed differently from how the action was

---

<sup>4</sup> Mele in; Malle B. Moses L. Badwin D. *Intentions and Intentionality, foundations of social cognition*, MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004

intended in the first place. While an intentional action is an action already performed and, sometimes even judged.

Mele wrote a critique in reaction to the five conditions of Malle and Knobe, stating that these conditions need refinement.<sup>5</sup>

Mele argues that it is not necessarily true that to perform an action intentionally you need a desire for an outcome and beliefs about that action that lead to that outcome. Consider for instance Rick who is working in his garden. While working in his garden he is whistling a merry tune. He is conscious of his whistling and enjoys it. But most people wouldn't say that he is whistling unintentionally. Even though he doesn't have specific beliefs and desires for the outcome of his action. It seems like Rick nonetheless is whistling intentionally. Because of examples like this, Mele argues not all intentional actions are directed at a further goal. He agrees however that most intentional actions in fact are directed at a goal.

The skill component is another important condition for naming an action as an intentional one, although the skill concept is a vague concept. Mele argues that this vagueness can be expected in a folk psychology. A lot of the terms that we use every day are in fact vague concepts. Mele gives the example of our concept of boldness. Persons without hair are bold and persons with hair are not bold. However there is a wide range of boldness in between. Even if John has some hair left we would still call him bold. The notion is vague because we don't know where the boundaries of boldness lay exactly. The skill dimension of intentional action faces the same difficulty. Imagine a professional basketball player who wants to land his shot. If he indeed does so we render this action intentional. We know that the player lands about 90 % of his shots and expected him to indeed score as he intended to do. If however my next-door neighbour, who is six years old, intends to land a shot and does so we don't see this necessarily as intentional. This because she is a terrible basketball player, she is not tall enough and only lands about 5 % of her shots. In these cases the skill

---

<sup>5</sup> Mele in; Malle B. Moses L. Badwin D. *Intentions and Intentionality, foundations of social cognition*, MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004

component, still is a fairly clear one. If now however some average basketball player that lands about 50 % of his shots gives it a try, do we then see his actions as intentional? When does an action go from intentional to unintentional? This isn't a clear-cut case. Still this doesn't render the skill component useless. We have to accept that in folk psychology, not all things are clear-cut. Some scientist may seem to suggest that concepts like intentionality should be explained in a clear manner. This however does not mean that we always have exact answers. People are not always sure if an action is indeed intentional and the skill component, according to me, suits these conditions perfectly.

Furthermore Mele discusses the awareness condition. I agree with Mele that this condition does seem rather vague. Of course people are aware of most of their actions. But do they indeed have to be aware of what they're actually doing, to call their actions intentional? It seems to me that not all we do has to be in full awareness. And to name this condition in a definition of intentionality seems superfluous. Mele states that it could be that an intentional action needs some awareness, but the reason why Malle and Knobe name this as a condition is unclear. This condition however doesn't seem an essential for the understanding of intentional action, consequently I will not discuss it here. The question Mele poses furthermore is; are the conditions that Malle and Knobe put forward sufficient for defining and understanding intentional action? It appears they are not fully. Although they can be a sufficient indicator of how we can come to see an action as intentional. A factor that Malle and Knobe seem to have overlooked is luck. When people find an action too accidental or too much affected by luck, they will find this action less intentional than otherwise would be the case. The luck condition will prove to be a crucial factor in the case of the dice man that I will discuss later on.

Assumptions about an agent's background beliefs may also play an important part in shaping common-sense reactions to some instances of, for example, lucky success.<sup>6</sup> Consider the case of Thor the sportsman. Thor

---

<sup>6</sup> Mele, in; Malle B. Moses L. Badwin D. *Intentions and Intentionality, foundations of social cognition*, MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004 p. 37

grew up in a little town where he played the game “hoops” for a large part of his life. Hoops is a game that resembles basketball but is played without a backboard. One day Thor makes a trip to America. He notices some young men playing a hoops-like game in a courtyard. When he sees the backboard, he considers this a smart way of preventing people from running after missed balls. He does not for an instant think of the possibility that the board can be used to score. When Thor decides to give this strange game a try he steps up to shoot a ball directly into the hoop like he is used to. But he misses the hoop by some inches. The ball however bounces off the backboard and through the hoop. The other young men cheer but Thor isn’t sure if he made a mistake or not. The question now is; did Thor intentionally sink the throw? It was never Thor’s plan to hit the backboard. And in his trusted hoops game the ball would have missed. Even so, by luck and by the backboard the ball went through the hoop anyway. As we see here luck is, like skill, another vague factor. It makes defining intentional action even harder.

Another condition that Malle and Knobe do not name in their definition is the concept of morality. As we will see in the next chapter about the Butler Problem; morality is a factor that can greatly influence our opinion about actions. An action that we deem immoral, seems to be seen as intentional more often than a morally good action. I will discuss this more extensively later on in this thesis. Although Malle and Knobe give us, with their definition, a good idea of what the folk psychological concept of intentional action is about, it doesn’t seem to be necessarily conclusive. Precisely because it’s a folk psychological account, intentional action doesn’t have clear-cut boundaries and this makes giving a clear-cut definition difficult. Yet, for a good understanding of the concept it is important to have as clear a definition as one can give. There are many difficulties with intentional action especially in the more complex cases, as we will see in the next chapter. Intentional action is a complex tool, which makes it easier to explain, predict and maybe even approve or disapprove certain behaviour. Mele for one, proves that it is difficult to give one specific definition of this mechanism. Because we use this tool in so many different ways, we ourselves may sometimes not even know when an action should be called intentional or precisely the opposite.

For one there is a difficulty with boundaries in the different conditions that make up the concept of intentionality. Intentionality is a hard concept to define. Are only our direct actions intentional or are the consequences of our actions intentional as well? Bentham was one of the first philosophers to address this problem. He stated that we could both speak of acts and of their consequences as intentional. Mele and Sverdlik state that Bentham's view is; that to say that an act or a consequence is intentional is to say that an intention exist regarding it.

"Thus, in Bentham's view, if I consider that something will certainly or probably result from my A-ing, and I intentionally A, the result considered will be both intended and intentional if it comes to pass."<sup>7</sup>

Bentham's example is a man shooting arrows at a deer, realizing that he may kill the king, who is standing nearby. According to Bentham the man has no desire to kill the king, but should he do so, he will truly be said to have intended to kill him, and his killing the king will be intentional. However Bentham makes a distinction between direct and so called oblique intentions. A direct intention is a result of one's bodily movement such that the prospect of producing it, constituted one of the links in the chain of causes, by which the person was determined to do the act. An oblique intention concerns a result that was in contemplation, and appeared likely to ensue in case of the act's being performed yet did not constitute a link in the aforesaid chain.<sup>8</sup> Thus shooting the king by accident is according to Bentham an oblique intentional action. But is shooting the king actually intentional in the way we nowadays define intentionality, does it comply to, for example, Malle and Knobe's definition? It lacks the skill component for one, and the shooter did not have the desire, nor the intention to kill the king at all. Luck and moral

---

<sup>7</sup> Mele A. and Sverdlik S. *Intention, intentional action, and moral responsibility*. Philosophical studies 82: 265-87, 1996. P.266

<sup>8</sup> Bentham in; Mele A. and Sverdlik S. *Intention, intentional action, and moral responsibility*. Philosophical studies 82: 265-87, 1996. P 266

considerations seem to play a role here in saying the shooter intended to shoot the king. And an answer to the question; Was the shooter's action indeed intentional? is not easily given at all. Bentham does not address the shooting of the king as some sort of lucky success as Mele did with Thor and the hoops game. It is something else entirely, this oblique intentional action. Sidgwick and Austin also hold the view that to expect any of an acts consequences is to intend those consequences. However Sidgwick admitted that in English we commonly limit our talk of intention to desired consequences. And this is also what in folk-psychology most people would say about intentional actions. Accidental by-products of our action most of us would not call intentional. We could however say that the shooter at least knew there was a risk of killing the king. So even if we decide to see the shooting as unintentional we could still say the shooter is fully responsible for killing the king. There is so to speak a massive grey area between intentional and unintentional actions. Precisely this makes it difficult to give one clear cut definition, like Malle and Knobe try to do. To understand what we mean by saying that an action is intentional, it is best to look at common sense answers to questions about intentional action. Even more so because this thesis discusses the reactions I (and others) encountered, while reading *The Dice Man*. Discussing the reactions people have on different occasions of action, and which are important for ascribing intentionality is for one something that the Butler Problem does.

## Chapter two: The Butler Problem

In the Butler problem we discuss an asymmetry in ascribing intentionality between two different but alike cases.

“ If Brown in an ordinary game of dice hopes to throw a six and does so, we do not say that he threw the six intentionally. On the other hand if Brown puts one live cartridge into a six-chambered revolver, spins the chamber as he aims it at Smith and pulls the trigger hoping to kill Smith, we would say if he succeeded that he had killed Smith intentionally. How can this be so, since in both cases the probability of the desired result is the same?”<sup>9</sup>

The problem between these two cases is the asymmetry we encounter. On the one hand the cases seem parallel, both with the dice and with the gun the agent acts from an intention, and only succeeds because of luck. On the other hand we see that most people won't ascribe intentionality in the first case but do so in the second case. Why is it then that this asymmetry in deciding both actions being intentional ones or not, arises?

There are two general ways of responding to the butler problem. First, we could say that the cases are not really symmetrical. There are differences between the cases and these differences make our judgements between the two cases differ. Second, we could say that the cases really are parallel and that it is unjustified to ascribe intentional action to one case and not to the other.

On the surface it seems plausible that the goodness or badness of an agent's actions should be completely irrelevant to the question of whether he performed a given action intentionally, but there is growing evidence that ascription of intentional actions is affected by moral consideration.<sup>10</sup> Indeed the most apparent difference in Browns rolling of the dice and him shooting Smith is that a dice game is morally neutral. Killing Smith is however seen as

---

<sup>9</sup> Butler R. *Report on Analysis 'problem' no. 6*. *Analysis* 38:113-14, 1978

<sup>10</sup> Nadelhoffer T. *The butler problem revisited*, *Analysis* 64:277-84, 2004

immoral. But do these different moral features of the two cases indeed explain the difference in our inclination to see the killing case as an intentional action, and the dice case as an unintentional action? Or is it more accurate to explain this difference by chance, or our level of control over the actions in these cases, or even other factors? To see which of these options is more likely I will discuss here several reactions to the Butler problem.

Firstly Eric Kraemer analyses both cases carefully. In the dice game he sees three stages of affairs that should be noticed.

1. Brown's throwing a die
2. Brown's throwing a six
3. Brown's winning the dice game

According to Kraemer Brown clearly does 1 intentionally but doesn't do 2 intentionally, he does however do 3 intentionally. In the same way we can consider the shooting case.

4. Brown's pulling the trigger
5. Brown's firing the bullet
6. Brown's killing Smith

Brown clearly does 4 and 6 intentionally but does not do 5 intentionally. Thus there is no asymmetry between the two cases.<sup>11</sup> This conclusion, I think, seems odd because Kraemer does not compare the right states. For example Brown's throwing the die does not compare to Brown's pulling the trigger but more likely to Brown's spinning the Chamber as E.J. Lowe suggests.<sup>12</sup> Kraemer continues by trying to explain why states 1,3,4 and 6 are intentional actions. This is, according to Kraemer, because the agent has control over the roll of the die and the pulling of the trigger, he also has control over winning the game because he could have chosen not to play at all. This also is an important argument for Luke's actions. Even if we would see Luke's actions as unintentional ones, the decision to play is his decision, one he deliberately made. Respectively, Kraemer says, Brown has control over the pulling of the trigger, so consequently over the killing of Smith, this however seems different

---

<sup>11</sup> Kraemer E. *Intentional action, chance and control*, Analysis 38: 116-17, 1987

<sup>12</sup> Lowe E. J. *Peacocke and Kraemer on Butler's problem*, Analysis 40:113-18, 1980



from a decision to play. The pulling of the trigger does not coincide with a decision to play, because in the Russian roulette case a decision to play precedes the pulling of the trigger.

Kraemer sees the two cases as completely parallel. Although Brown has control over the throw of the die, he has no control over the possibility of throwing a six; he has no control over the position of the bullet in the chamber and therefore no control over the firing of the bullet. Since Brown has no control over 2 or 5 he cannot do them intentionally, Kraemer states. He however does win or kill intentionally, because the decision to play is always his, Kraemer would say. But I would say one shouldn't consider the actual decision of playing in determining control, because this decision precedes the actual cases discussed. Furthermore; Brown decided to play in both cases, but he couldn't know beforehand that he would actually win or kill Smith, even though he had the desire to win the game or kill Smith. If Brown has no control over the throwing of a six, he has no control over the killing of Smith, because throwing a six means winning and so may shooting the gun, if we take the killing to be a win. If the cases really are parallel, like Kraemer seems to suggest, neither of the outcomes of the situation can be seen as intentional. Kraemer drops the ball here. Only the decision to play might be intentional, as Kraemer suggests. This decision is not subjected to chance but made in full awareness. But it is disputable if this makes the agent have control over the outcome of the whole case.

Second, Mele and Sverdlik, as opposed to Kraemer, do not see the two cases as being parallel. In their opinion there is a difference between rolling a six (an means to an end) and killing Smith (an end and not a means). They state that this asymmetry partly explains why the Butler Problem creates conflicting intuitions. To eliminate the difference between the two cases they invent a case where killing is more parallel to throwing a six: In their new scenario Brown wants to kill Smith and he believes that the only way to do so is throwing a six. Smith is in another building. In this other building there is a bomb that detonates when it is showed a six on a television screen that is connected to a camera, which shows Browns table. Brown knows all this, although he did not arrange the set-up. He has a normal, fair, six-sided dice in his pocket and throws it upon the table. Unluckily for Smith he throws a six,

and consequently kills Smith. Did Brown intentionally kill Smith in this example? Our intuitions would say not so. Chance seems to play an even bigger factor in this example than in the original one, which to me makes the killing even more of an unintentional action. Brown here does not even pull the trigger; his level of control is far smaller than in the original case. Surprisingly enough to Mele and Sverdlik this example does not make the asymmetry in ascribing intentionality obsolete. According to them this is not due to moral considerations though. After all, someone can still be held morally responsible, even if his action was not an intentional action; I have shown this in the previous chapter. Maybe then, they suggest, the asymmetry arises because shooting a person (or a target for sake of argument), requires skill. Shooting a person takes quite some skill indeed: aiming, pulling the trigger and hitting the target in exactly the right place. Whereas throwing a dice requires nearly no skill at all. Maybe we see the shooting of Smith as an intentional action because Brown had the skill to shoot Smith. In this scenario moral consideration does not play a role. Is this argument conclusive? I would say it is not, even if skill plays a big role, we cannot dismiss moral considerations that easily. Most of us would say Luke's action of raping Arlene<sup>13</sup> is far more likely to be seen as intentional than his playing with his children for days on end. This seems like a moral argument all right. Even if his raping requires more skill than playing with his children (which I doubt), the dismissing of moral consideration only because of the skill component hardly seems enough. We cannot ignore our intuitions as easily as Mele and Sverdlik do here. Mele and Sverdlik say the asymmetry arises because of the skill component, that plays a big role in deciding the killing to be intentional. This as opposed to Kraemer who says the cases are really parallel and therefore there is no real asymmetry. He sees the killing as intentional, because the throwing of the die is intentional as well, which it's not according to Mele and Sverdlik.

How difficult it is to pinpoint the cause of asymmetry we see once more in a paper by Kim Davies. Davies states:

---

<sup>13</sup> In the book this is the first action Luke takes by throw of a die. The first time he thinks of involving chance in his decisions. Although it is a rape, in the end Arlene does not mind at all. She actually wants to get into an affair with Luke.

“ However we would have to say that it was not intentional that on this particular occasion Brown Kill Smith. For, having pulled the trigger, he has no control over whether the bullet is fired, nor over killing Smith, and it is inappropriate to describe doing something as intentional in the absence of any control over whether it is done. Similarly, if Brown intends, one way or another, to get the Mona Lisa and the dice game is just one opportunity, then we would say that he got it intentionally, but not that he threw a six intentionally.”<sup>14</sup>

Davies tries to solve the problem by stating the cases are not symmetrical precisely because of the control the agent displays in both cases. As we have seen by Kraemer control seems to be a decisive argument. Davies however gives a false conclusion, I would say. If the dice game results in getting the Mona Lisa and the shooting game in killing Smith, killing and getting art are either both intentional or they are both unintentional. It does not become clear why the killing is not intentional but getting the Mona Lisa is. It seems difficult to get these two cases to be fully parallel; shooting a person is not the same as getting a painting at all. We see here once more that it is hard to ascribe intentionality. Davies sees control as a factor that helps us decide if an action is intentional. It does however not become clear in what way an action, seen as unintentional (because of chance), can have an intentional outcome. The argument Davies gives does not really solve the asymmetry displayed in the Butler problem.

Davies also describes with this example that something can be intentional on all other occasions but not on the occasion mentioned. This is because of the lack of control in the occasions mentioned. When chance is in play certain intentional tendencies can lead to unintentional actions. This again depicts that there is a significant difference between intentions and intentional actions. Even though Brown has the intention to Kill Smith, when chance comes in play his action can be seen as unintentional, because of the lack of control

---

<sup>14</sup> Davies K. *Killing people intentionally, by chance*, Analysis 41:156-59, 1981

Brown displays. And even though Luke has all sorts of intentions which come to be, by a throw of his die, because chance decides which intention should be carried out, his actions may be seen as unintentional. Although there is something to say for this argument, I would say this is not all there is to it. More factors than only control play a role in the ascribing of intentionality. In all cases discussed as in *The Dicer* there is always some level of control. We can however choose this control to be insufficient as a factor. We have seen so many other factors that can play a role, there is no conclusive argument that renders control to be the one and ultimate factor in determining intentionality. Other factors can still play a role here. To see only the level of control as being responsible for the asymmetry encountered in the butler problem is not enough. Can we see the throwing of the dice only as an opportunity to an end? Can an action that is out of our control lead to an intentional killing? This question keeps popping up. Even if most control was missing, as we see in Butler's shooting example, some people would still see killing as intentional just because it's wrong. As we advance in our inquiry more and more factors for deciding actions to be intentional arise. In Davies we see that an intention does not necessarily lead to an intentional action, still if this is only because of the factor of control, stays debateable.

"For having entered the game, Brown has no control over its result." <sup>15</sup>

Although Brown can have the intention to throw a six or the intention to kill Smith, if chance is involved the actions of throwing a six and killing both seem unintentional actions. If chance is the total lack of control, Davies may be right in saying that control is a big factor in the matter. Still to say that it is the only factor seems rather rash and I would say there is more to the asymmetry than that.

Lowe lastly resolves the whole problem by calling Brown's actions neither intentional nor unintentional. They are simply both, because of the uncertainty of the outcome of the actions, which the examples entail.

---

<sup>15</sup> Davies K. *Killing people intentionally, by chance*, Analysis 41:156-59, 1981. p. 158

“ For while he did not know, when he threw the die, that it would certainly come to rest with the appropriate face uppermost, he did know that this might possibly happen.”<sup>16</sup>

This is an answer to the problem that immediately could solve the problems I see in Bentham’s theory of intentionality. From some actions (like shooting the king) we could say they are both intentional and unintentional. This is an accurate solution to the problem, but seems somewhat simple and does not take my doubts away.

And what about the moral considerations? Do they play a role at all? I think they do. Fact of the matter is that most subjects, when asked seem more eager to see an action as intentional if the consequence of that action is morally wrong.<sup>17</sup> Even when in the surveys we can blame an actor, despite the fact that his actions are unintentional, most people would call the killing intentional. Most texts that answer the Butler problem clearly want to prove this idea wrong by going into aspects of skill, chance, and control and by trying to prove that the cases really are not parallel. Even Butler himself would rather not see morality involved.

“ Far too many entrants argue that aiming a six-chambered gun at someone raises the question of moral responsibility and that this accounts for the disparity. Nonsense!”<sup>18</sup>

But is this reluctance for moral considerations justified? Knobe writes extensively about moral considerations in ascribing intentionality. He clearly states that people’s intuitions as to whether or not behaviour was performed intentionally can sometimes be influenced by moral consideration.<sup>19</sup> Persons can be influenced by their beliefs about whether or not a given behaviour itself

---

<sup>16</sup> Lowe, E. J. *Neither intentional nor unintentional*. *Analysis* 38:117-18, 1978. p. 118

<sup>17</sup> Knobe, several papers.

<sup>18</sup> Butler R. *Report on Analysis ‘problem’ no. 6*. *Analysis* 38:113-14, 1978. P. 113

<sup>19</sup> Knobe J. *The concept of intentional action: a case study in the uses of folk psychology*, *Philosophical Studies* 130:203-231, 2006. p. 205

was good or bad. He begins showing this with one simple example; the vice president of a company went to the chairman of the board and said, 'We are thinking of starting a new program. It will help us increase profits, but it will also harm the environment.' The chairman of the board answered, 'I don't care at all about harming the environment. I just want to make as much profit as I can. Let's start the new program.' The question here is; after they started the new program did the chairman of the board intentionally harm the environment? Most people that entered this questionnaire say that the answer is yes. When asked why, they tend to mention something about the chairman's psychological state, like; he decided to start the program even though he knew he would harm the environment. But this can not be all there is to the story, says Knobe. When we replace the word 'harm' with 'help', most people would say that the chairman did not intentionally help the environment. This difference is striking.<sup>20</sup> As with the Butler problem, people seem to ascribe intentionality far more easily in morally bad cases. And not only in this survey the effect arises, in many more cases we see the same tendency.<sup>21</sup> Knobe states that to some degree these results should come as a surprise to those who think of people's concept of intentional action as a tool for predicting controlling and explaining behaviour. After all, he says, it seems that the best way to accomplish these 'scientific' goals would be to ignore all the moral issues and focus entirely on a different sort of question. But as I stated in the previous chapter, explaining behaviour is not all that there is to discuss when it comes to intentional action. What Knobe wants to suggest is that moral consideration makes far more sense in another concept of intentional action, namely the evaluative character of intentional action. We for example don't only want to explain or even predict Luke's strange behaviour as he transforms into the dice man, this seems almost impossible seeing the strange and whimsical things he does, we also want to evaluate his actions, when reading the book we want to decide if we like Luke or not. Is he a bad man because of his actions, or is he merely a spill in something bigger than

---

<sup>20</sup> Knobe J. *The concept of intentional action: a case study in the uses of folk psychology*, *Philosophical Studies* 130:203-231, 2006. p. 205

<sup>21</sup> See: literature discussed.

himself? Of course we have seen in the previous chapter that these two definitions of intentional action do not rule each other out. Despite of this fact Knobe sees moral considerations as only making sense, when we consider it's evaluative character. We do use intentional action to assign praise or blame. This for me is only one thing there is to ascribing intentionality. We can bring different views together and see intentionality as a tool for both, predicting and explaining behaviour and as an evaluative tool. Still it is understandable why Knobe takes the evaluative character of intentionality. This means we can use moral considerations in the way we mostly do, namely for helping in the decision to praise or punish certain behaviour.

Knobe's case concerns side effects, while in the Butler problem the killing of Smith can by no means be called a side effect, it is a direct result of him pulling the trigger even if chance is involved. Still Knobe's example gives us a clear view on the importance of moral considerations, by seeing an action as intentional. According to Knobe skill, chance or control are not the factors that make an action like Browns intentional or unintentional. The fact is that most of us intuitively see Smith's killing as intentional, and this according to Knobe is because of our moral considerations. We want to blame Brown for killing Smith, and in order to do this we must see his actions as intentional. We also may give considerable less praise to an achievement if we ascribe the achievement primarily to luck. This is also why we as readers can be mild respectively harsh in judging Luke. If we see his actions as really dictated by chance (as he does himself) we may not really blame him for his foolish and sometimes harsh actions, if we however see Luke as fully responsible for his own decisions and decide luck to be trivial in seeing his actions as intentional, we could blame Luke for the foolish things he does and frankly not like him at all. But is this really all there is to it? Praise and blame and predicting behaviour are not separate but go hand in hand. And when guided entirely by chance we mostly say of actions that they are unintentional. Is it really true that when moral considerations come in play, we see a bad action as intentional? I think this is not the case, when we ask people to assign blame and intentionality to the same case, most people still see killing by chance as intentional even if they can also choose to say; it is unintentional yet blameworthy. So maybe Butler was right, moral considerations really do not

play a role in interpreting an action as intentional. Or just not as big a role as we intuitively would say.

So even though Brown may have intended to kill Smith, his action might not have been intentional. Most of us however would intuitively say that it was. This intuition arises either because of the moral aspect of the shooting or because of the skill, chance or control factors of the action. Or maybe even both, an option that seems to be dismissed by most of the philosophers discussed here. Fact is; even if Brown wanted Smith dead he could've never been certain to kill Smith in a game of Russian roulette, as he could never be sure to roll a six in a game of dice. Most texts discussed, hesitate to see Smith's murder as intentional because the killing is ruled by chance. Throwing a six, after all, isn't intentional either, that much we can say. To prove this we talk about components like skill and about the asymmetry of the similar cases. Folk psychology proves however that most people see Smith's killing as intentional while they see the throwing of a six as clearly unintentional.<sup>22</sup> Is this really because of an asymmetry or is it just our moral conscience that is talking? Are we philosophers right in wanting to say that if the cases really are parallel, the killing must be unintentional as well? Or can we say that our intuitions about this case are right? Is the killing indeed intentional, despite the seemingly parallel with the dice case? And more important, what does this say about Luke's crazy actions. All his actions are determined by the throw of a die. Chance is a big factor in all that he does. Whim is his master, and skill is mostly absent by our somewhat fat, lazy doctor (Luke). His actions are however often immoral, do we let our intuitions decide his fate or are other factors then morality evenly important? I will discuss this in the next chapter.

---

<sup>22</sup> Exact numbers can be found in the literature discussed.



### **Chapter three: Intentional action and the Butler Problem for Luke**

So what about Luke? Are his actions intentional? He himself would probably prefer to call his actions unintentional. After all, he is trying to become the random man, and a totally random man cannot be a man whose actions are intentional. But is Luke right? Can we agree to see him as a man whose actions are mostly unintentional? Does the Butler problem prove that his purely chance dictated actions are indeed so? I will try and find an answer in this chapter.

First we need to discuss the dice game. This game that Luke invented for himself in order to break free from his boredom. The first time we see a glimpse of the dice man is after a night of poker that Luke has with his friends.

“ If it’s a one, I’ll rape Arlene, ‘kept blinking on and off in my mind like a huge neon light and my terror increased. But when I thought if it’s not a one I’ll go to bed, the terror was boiled away by a pleasant excitement and my mouth swelled into a gargantuan grin: a one means rape, the other numbers mean bed, the die is cast. Who am I to question the die? ”

This is the first time Luke has the idea of actively involving chance in his decisions. That the decision on this occasion is immoral is as much subjected to chance as the game itself, at least for Luke. He is drunk and in search for something exciting, and rape is no doubt exciting for Luke. But is this decision really a random one? Of course Luke himself decides to play the game. The decision is his. This does not seem random at all. No doubt he has played with the idea of rape before. He tries to tell his readers, every person on this earth considers rape at one time or another. So in his viewpoint the decision to rape is not an idea that is alien to him or, for that matter, to any other man on this planet. On the other hand, we might all have had the idea and still most of us don’t rape anyone. Most of us intuitively would say that the decision to play is intentional. Luke seems to know what he’s doing. He has the desire to play the game and has beliefs about possible outcomes of the game. He has a real intention to play the game and although skill is not really

needed in this stage of the game, we could say he has enough skill to play his dicegame. Also he is aware of playing. So according to the definition Malle and Knobe give in the second chapter<sup>23</sup>, this part of his decision is indeed intentional. Luke decides to play and is fully aware of the fact that he has made a significant decision. He feels the importance this first decision will have on his further life. But what happens after this decision? Is the action following this particular decision itself then an intentional action?

Malle and Knobe would, I think, say not so.

“ In people’s folk concept of intentionality, performing an action intentionally requires the presence of five components: a desire for an outcome; beliefs about an action that leads to that outcome; an intention to perform the action; skill to perform the action; and awareness of fulfilling the intention while performing the action.”<sup>24</sup>

For one Luke has no apparent desire for an outcome. The idea that rape is a possibility is exciting, but as much part of him that wants to rape, wants to go to bed and snuggle up to his wife. A real intention to perform the action seems to be missing. We have seen in the first chapter however that not all philosophers agree on the importance of desire. Mele showed with the example of whistling Rick that not all intentional actions need an actual intention. Of course a second objection to this needed desire could be that the part of Luke that does want to rape, matters in this example. I think this response would be easily dismissed by Luke himself. Luke, time after time, emphasizes that we all have certain latent desires we never fulfil. We all want to murder sometimes (When your annoying neighbour comes complaining about the noise for the thousandth time, for example, while your music is not loud at all) but being reasonable people, we never do. Precisely what Luke

---

<sup>23</sup> Mele in; Malle B. Moses L. Badwin D. *Intentions and Intentionality, foundations of social cognition*, MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004. Malle and Knobe 1997, p. 111

<sup>24</sup> Mele in; Malle B. Moses L. Badwin D. *Intentions and Intentionality, foundations of social cognition*, MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004. Paper Malle and Knobe 1997, p. 111

tries to do is make every desire humanly possible, equally important, and by this of no importance at all. Luke simply has all sorts of desires but no desire for an outcome, because all outcomes should be as important as the next one.

Because Luke does not have a real desire for an outcome, his beliefs about the action stand alone. There is no belief about an action as linked to a particular outcome. This condition therefore is not fulfilled. However, Luke does have certain beliefs about possible outcomes. Luke's beliefs about the action and its outcomes are no doubt grim. Luke considers at once possible scenarios where he ends up in jail, or worse. Besides, he really does not want to betray his friend Jake, Arlene's loving husband. Luke's beliefs about the action are truly negative. He really does not want to rape anyone but he feels compelled to do so anyway. Therefore, as I stated before, we could say that after Luke intentionally decides to play the game, his actions within the game do not seem intentional. He just follows the rules. He decides to do whatever the dice ask of him, after all, who is he to question the Die?

When we look at Malle and Knobe's third component of intentional action, we see that there is no real intention to perform the action, simply because Luke has no beliefs and desires about the action and its outcome. We could however say that Luke has an intention to follow the die. Maybe just one of the components is hereby present in Luke's actions. There is some general intention to do as he does. If Luke really would have no intentions at all, he would probably seize to do anything at all. And as a man who lays on his back his entire life, would not make a very interesting book, we can say Luke does absolutely have certain intentions. I want to stress however that all these intentions have equal importance and this makes that, as one of the five components for intentional action, the presence of an intention to perform an action hardly matters. Luke's actions, at the moment, still appear to be unintentional.

As we turn to the skill component we see that once again this is a component that we do not find in Luke's actions. The skill component can be left out completely (especially if we know how the rape takes place; Luke announces he comes to rape Arlene and Arlene agrees and enjoys herself immensely). Luke is not a skilful man. He is chubby and clumsy and as a

professor he mostly spends his life up to the transformation to dice man sitting down. Although he has the skill to perform actions in general (he is after all human and not handicapped in any way), he never pauses to consider the skills needed for the actions the Die chooses for him. As a matter of fact the whole point of throwing a die to determine action is that the dice do not consider skill (nor intention, belief or desire for that matter) at all. So even if, for some actions, Luke actually appears to do have the skill, for example for writing papers or the book itself, this is no ground for believing his actions to be intentional. The dice are after all random masters. Skill is furthermore a vague concept, like boldness, as we have seen by Mele. I have agreed earlier on in this thesis with Mele that we have to accept that in Folk Psychology not all things are clear-cut. Luke's skill is in not way an exception. Like when someone with a little hair is still bold, Luke's skill is not always fully missing. He has more or less skill, depending on the action the dice choose for him. In some instances he does have the skill to perform an action when in other instances he has no skill at all. In general however we can say that skill does not make his actions intentional, not only because of the randomness of his actions, but also because of his clumsy nature. Luke is not a skilful man at all. Furthermore, if he had no skill to act at all, there wouldn't be a problem in the first place. When skill would be really absent we wouldn't act at all. We all need some skill. In this way this component of Malle and Knobe does not seem relevant for Luke's acting at all.

One last component has to be discussed when we follow Malle and Knobe. This however, is a component that is dubious. Luke has to be aware that he is fulfilling an intention while performing an action. We have seen in our first chapter that Mele already stated that this condition is too vague. Most people are in any case aware of their actions, is it really necessary to state this explicitly? My opinion is that not all our actions have to be undertaken in complete awareness. Some things we do almost on autopilot. Why Malle and Knobe mention this condition is unclear to me. Let's however, for the completeness of my argument, say that awareness is needed for an action to be intentional. Is Luke aware of the fulfilling of his intentions? I think he is. He is fully aware that with the die he is fulfilling certain intentions. Malle and Knobe on the other hand, speak of the specific intention that leads to the

actions discussed, the intention that points to an outcome and the intentions we have to perform a specific action. It is not likely that Malle and Knobe would say Luke's complicated system of seeing all intentions, even subconscious ones, as equally important will make it possible for Luke to be aware of his precise intentions at every action (role of the dice) he undertakes. Luke has many intentions and when the dice give him an option he has the intention to execute this option. Awareness is in this way present. Luke is aware that he is doing what the die want of him. He is however not fully aware of the intentions he has, to perform any given action. He is not fully aware that he wants to rape Arlene, because he also not wants to rape Arlene. Awareness is therefore a complicated matter for Luke. But even if we would say that Luke is fully aware (which he is, I would say, not) matter of fact is that Luke in no way answers to the five conditions Malle and Knobe set. His intentions are far too random to see his actions as intentional. And even if the decision for using the dice in the first place is intentional, the rest of his actions seem not to be so.

Davies control factor is as vague as the awareness component. Of course Luke is in control of the decision to play. And one could say he is even in control of his actions. He is performing all the actions himself after all. We could however also say that Luke has not enough control to see his actions as intentional. For Luke beliefs he's giving up all control in following the dice. In a way the dice have control over Luke's actions. It's the dice that decide what happens in Luke's life. Chance for Davies is something that makes control impossible, and we can say for certain that chance plays a bigger role then control in Luke's case.

The particular case of the rape we could say is similar to Butlers Russian roulette case. The decision to play is irrelevant for interpreting the action as being intentional. Furthermore Luke 's decision is based purely on chance. The fact of the matter is that the rape has only a one in six chance, just like Butler's case. This raises the question; would most people say that Luke's action here is intentional or that it is unintentional? Would we follow Malle and Knobe and say it's not, or do most people still decide otherwise? The answer would probably be: intentional. Mostly because Luke follows the die and really goes on and rape Arlene, where he could have chosen not to

play at all. Especially when he saw the outcome of the die. Also the case is no doubt immoral, because rape is mostly frowned upon in society, even in this case, although Luke's actual action is more like adultery than rape (which is frowned upon mostly as well). Here we could say that most people may follow in opinion philosophers like Bentham and Sidgwick, all of an acts consequences can be seen as intentional. If they where not intentional they would never have happened. I, however clearly do not agree with this view. Accidental outcomes of actions cannot be seen as intentional. Simply because the agent never intended it. But why would we see Luke's actions as intentional then? He clearly does not fully intend the consequences of his actions.

Why do we see Luke's rape as intentional while throwing a six is not? Because Luke could always decide not to do it? This seems not to be all there is to the decision of possibly seeing Luke's actions as intentional, he could also choose not to throw the die at all; when we choose to play we commit ourselves to the rules of the game.

“ ‘When you win a chess game, do you attribute your victory to the decision to play? Obviously not; you attribute it to the moves you made. “<sup>25</sup>

Fact of the matter is that if the die showed any number besides the one displayed, Luke would have gone to bed. Just like when in Butler's case there would have been no bullet in the chamber of the gun, and Smith would not have been killed. Or just like when Brown throws a die and the die would not face a six up. Luke intentionally decides to play the game, on that we can agree. He knows that this project he is undertaking is weird and unsettling to most of his surroundings. He eventually does commit all of his actions and hereby all of his live to the dice. And in this decision he does comply with Malle and Knobets conditions. He has a desire for an outcome, namely to become the random man. He also has beliefs about his actions; he thinks that by committing himself to the dice he will indeed become a random man. He has the intention for doing this and the skill to role the dice, he even is aware

---

<sup>25</sup> Ross D. *He loads the gun, not the dice*. Analysis 38:114-14, 1978. p.115

of the fact that he is, with this decision, undertaking an unsettling project. Namely to become the random man. As Luke clearly intentionally decides to play in order to become the random man, we should only consider if the actions that flow from the dice game are intentional.

If we follow the comments on the Butler problem we could once again come to the conclusion that Luke's dice dictated actions are not intentional. This is because his actions are for a big part based on chance. However Luke is the one that creates the options, this raises a few problems. In the course of the book Luke let the dice decide his actions and by that his life. He rapes, deceives, leaves his family, creates dice centres, writes his book and much more. These are all immoral actions and therefore could, by most of the readers, be seen as intentional. He however also plays with his children more, treats his wife, helps all sorts of people, writes brilliant psychological papers and tries to be the most loving person on earth (Jesus). These actions are then seen as unintentional by the reader who takes morality to be a factor for determining actions as intentional. When we, as some of the authors that discussed the Butler problem, take only one condition to determine if an action is intentional, it is easy to make up our mind about Luke's actions. When we take morality as a criterion all the actions that harm people, or are in any other way immoral, are intentional and the actions with a positive outcome are unintentional actions. This is what we've seen in several discussions about morality and intentionality. This is however not the conclusion the reader reaches. Luke's actions are random and therefore we cannot hold Luke fully responsible, the reader could say. More than just morality is needed to determine if Luke's actions are indeed intentional. Not just one condition can determine if Luke's actions are intentional. We should consider his behaviour at large, and therefore take more than one condition as tools for our decision. For example, Luke's absurd actions could also be seen as by-products of the dice game.<sup>26</sup> Although the decision of playing is an intentional action, all the good or bad by-products may not be so. In this scenario Luke intentionally throws the dice and intentionally decides to follow

---

<sup>26</sup> As we see in the example of Knobe's businessman and his by-products of saving or harming the environment.

their decision, the rape of Arlene however is a mere by-product of him playing and so is harming or delighting his children when the dice decides. He will punish them as easily as he will be the best dad ever, all depending on a cast of the die.

Of course we (as readers) could also say Luke is simply going crazy. Take the day Luke believes he's Jesus, he is absolutely delightful to a lot of people, but to the reader he is clearly losing it. Does this however mean that his actions cannot be intentional because he is losing it, or are his decisions and actions still his own? I will not go into this matter fully because to me the fact that Luke might be crazy is highly irrelevant for determining or interpreting his actions. It would make my quest impossible, because when Luke truly is crazy, all of his actions should be seen in an entirely different light. He follows the dice and therefore acts in full awareness, I will say. He simply knows what he's doing. He never blacks out nor acts without himself knowing it. This means that we should only review the actions as being intentional or not, in light of Luke being a more or less sane man. His actions might be intentional because of their moral character, because of Malle and Knobe's conditions or even because they are by-products, but Luke's state of mind in all this (as long as he is aware of what he's doing) is not relevant in this inquiry.

An important question however remains in interpreting Luke's actions as intentional ones; are his actions really as random as he himself believes? Is it really whim that dictates his actions? Of course this is what Luke believes, he wants to become the random man and the dice provide that possibility. But it is still Luke himself who creates the options. Luke believes that he creates options that every person has lying in their subconscious. He just does the things that other people can't do because of their hopes, beliefs and personalities.

“ Sometimes, of course, the dice discovered and permitted the expression of some of my deepest (and previously unrealized) impulses, and as time past this occurred more and more frequently. But at other times the dice discovered that I hadn't gone bowling for fourteen years because I didn't like



to bowl, and I hadn't slept with a fat slob because I was correct in sensing I wouldn't enjoy it." <sup>27</sup>

In this fragment it becomes clear that Luke truly believes that chance dictates his actions. Why else would he go bowling when he hates it? He admits however that maybe one thousandth of him likes bowling. The options are all in range of human desires, however outrageous they might be. Luke gives the options to the dice. He creates two, six or twelve options and roles. He shifts the odds, as he is reluctant to execute certain options. Should we see this as prove of intentional action or is it just the opposite, as Luke time and time again faces options he detests. For example: Luke makes the odds for killing a person immensely small but in the end the dice still pick exactly that option. Dice living for Luke absolutely seems random and therefore unintentional. And although he creates the options himself, chance is his master and many of the options he would like to execute are never thrown and vice versa. Do we as readers agree with this view? Of course Luke thinks his actions are random, but because of the fact that he himself creates the options, the sharp reader could point out that he still has control over his actions, and therefore his actions can be seen as intentional indeed. I would however want to stress the point, that the book explains how Luke comes to his decisions, from Luke's point of view. In this point of view, Luke is totally subjected to chance. There is nothing that can be helped about this. In Luke's reality he eventually becomes the dice man, a totally random person, and this is the reality we readers experience. In this light it would be unfair to argue that Luke is not random at all. He feels random and even for the other characters in the book, acts totally random. This is precisely why it is so hard for them to understand Luke's motives. He seems to change constantly. We should only review what this randomness means for his actions. The fact that he is at least trying to become the total random man is not really up for debate.

Dice living at large however seems not always to be as random as it is with Luke. Dice living is possibly as vague a concept as boldness. This luckily makes the choice for folk psychology apparent once more. In the real world as

---

<sup>27</sup> Rhinehart L. *The dice man*, Harper Collins, London, 1971. p. 195

in the world of books, the choice for intentionality is not clear-cut at all. We see this again when we consider Arlene. Luke teaches Arlene the dice game and she almost immediately loves it, with the enthusiasm of a child. She however rarely gives the dice options she dislikes (this also seems highly childlike). And if she does so, for sake of the game, (cause immoral or unfavourable options are part of the game) she shifts the odds so bad that only the good options get chosen, at least most of the time. This for one leads to her having a baby with Luke, a dice option that Luke regrets immensely.

“What about abortion? You’re only in the second month, did you let the dice consider abortion?”

‘Oh, of course,’ she said smiling. ‘I gave abortion one chance in two hundred and sixteen.’

‘Ahhh.’

‘The dice said no.’<sup>28</sup>

We could say that Luke’s actions are not really intentional because they are too much affected by chance and skill and control are mostly absent. By Arlene however, if we accept this definition, they *are* mostly intentional. She uses skill to perform her actions in the most successful ways. She really wants the actions she chooses to be executed, and she plays with the odds to give the options as much chance to come about as possible. Her actions most of the time agree with Malle and Knobe’s concept of intentional action. She has a desire for an outcome. Most of the time she even has really strong desires for an outcome, as with the baby. She has beliefs about the action that leads to that outcome. She certainly knows where baby’s come from and makes sure that she acts according to this knowledge in obtaining one. She has a definite intention to perform the actions, she obviously makes sure she has the skills to perform the action and she is fully aware of the fact that she is fulfilling her intentions while performing the actions. She will use as a tool anyone or anything to make her desires come true.

---

<sup>28</sup> Rhinehart L. *The dice man*, Harper Collins, London, 1971. p. 265

Only in rare cases the dice chooses options she is not fully happy about. For example when her baby girl is named Edgarina. But even then Arlene is delighted by the unpredictable nature of that outcome and is happy nonetheless. Maybe here Bentham and Sidgwick's idea of intentional action does fit. Arlene really wants the consequences for her actions and therefore these consequences could be seen as intentional. And even if some of the outcomes clearly are not intentional because of the lack of control, skill or desire displayed, we could say that this is really something that went wrong. Because mostly Arlene knows what she wants and will do anything to make her desires come true. The dice are just a tool for Arlene. It seems in comparison that Luke's suffering is proof of the enormous role chance plays in all of his actions. He regrets a lot of decisions the dice make for him. He shifts odds as little as possible, and in the end the die really is his master. This difference is however a gradual difference. Even Luke sometimes shifts the odds, although he does this as little as possible. It is after all human to want some things more than others. Does this make his actions intentional then? Is intention subjected to the amount of odds? It is hard to give an exact boundary. When is a man bold, and when is chance no longer a real factor for determining an action as being intentional? Chance is more apparent in Luke's actions. We can however never be certain that chance is apparent enough. It is however certain that Luke's overall goal is different from that of Arlene's. Luke strives to be random. He does not want to be subjected to the intentions, beliefs and desires we all experience. We can conclude therefore that even if dice living at large might be intentional for most people, it is not for Luke. Luke does not want to live a goal directed life. And as the book proceeds he completely loses touch with his beliefs and desires. He does not know what he wants, because he wants everything. And this in combination with the big role chance plays makes his actions far less intentional than Arlene's.

In playing the game just as he invented it and not ever straying from the rules Luke's actions intuitively really seem unintentional. He himself is however the one that invented the game. Does this have consequences on rendering his actions intentional or unintentional? I would say; not necessarily so. Of course we can say that the invention of the game and the decision to

play are intentional, this we have seen before. But as long as the game is a game of chance (which it is) and Luke let all his actions be dictated by chance, his actions are in no way intentional. He has no beliefs or desires for the actions to come about. He really does want to become the random man. Of course Luke can still be held responsible. As we have seen actions can be seen as wrong or immoral and still be unintentional. Although a lot of people would call immoral actions intentional. Consider the drunk driving example. When a driver drives home, despite his alcohol consumption. After seeing a rabbit he sways and kills a young girl that is playing on the sidewalk. We would say the driver is responsible and absolutely did something wrong, but we would not say he killed the girl intentionally. The same goes for the accidental killing of the king. We could say that all of the bad things that are brought about by Luke's actions are by-products of Luke's game and cannot be called intentional.

Luke's actions can bring about some nasty consequences. The dice unavoidably bring Luke to murder a former patient.

“ Being an American I had to kill, no self-respecting Dice Man could honestly write down options day after day without including a murder or real rape. I did, in fact, begin to include as a long shot the rape of some randomly selected female, but the dice ignored it. Reluctantly, timidly, with my old friend dread reborn and oiling in my guts, I also crated a long shot option of ‘murdering someone.’ I gave it only one chance in thirty-six (snake eyes) and three, four times spread out over a year the Die ignored it, but then, one lovely Indian Summer day, with the birds twittering outside in the bushes of my newly rented Catskill farmhouse, the autumn leave blowing and blinding in the sun and a little beagle puppy I'd just been given wagging his tail at my feet, the Die, given ten different options of varying probabilities, dropped double ones; snake eyes; ‘I will try to murder someone.’”<sup>29</sup>

Luke creates the options for murder including the murder of his son as an option (which luckily the Die does not choose) and the Die picks Frank

---

<sup>29</sup> Rhinehart L. *The dice man*, Harper Collins, London, 1971. p. 454

Osterflood, who is a former rapist and former patient of Luke. Without much skill and with a whole lot of hassle Luke eventually kills the poor guy. He is undoubtedly responsible for this kill. But did Luke intentionally kill Frank? At last we have come, once again, to the Butler problem. Luke does not kill with a gun but clumsily uses strychnine. This is no case of Russian roulette although sometime Luke lovingly refers to the dice game as Russian roulette, because he always includes a “bad” option. Luke’s action however, as the Butler problem, is fully based on chance. Luke does not want to kill a person; he detests the idea of killing. And although a clean perfect murder comes to mind, Luke does not have the skill for this. The murder is clumsy and messy and police catches up with Luke fairly quick. This action, as all of Luke dice dictated actions, does not apply to Malle and Knobe’s definition of intentional action at all. We however see in the fragment that Luke gives the option of murder only a long shot. This is one of the actions where Luke really shifts the odds. This playing with odds made clear that Arlene’s actions are intentional. Why are Luke’s not? The fact that this is an option Luke does not really want to perform, makes clear that the option has indeed come about by chance. The odd’s for killing a man were immensely small. Luke has no desire to kill. Where Arlene really wants most of her actions and their outcomes. Luke shifts the odds in favour of chance while Arlene just makes her favourite options more likely to come about. The killing of Mr. Osterflood to me is therefore not an intentional action. However, we can say Luke is guilty of murder. The killing of a person is wrong even if it is a by-product of a strange game that a strange man one day decided to play. The killing is as wrong as the killing in the Butler problem is. This however does not make the actions that lead up to the killing, or even the killing itself, intentional. Before Luke rolled the dice he never even considered killing a person. In the book it slowly becomes clear that Luke really is becoming the random man. And because bit by bit, his actions, but also his personality, thoughts and his desires become random, even police find it hard to convict him for something he clearly did.

“ Who says I lied to you the first time?”

‘You’ve just changed your story.’

‘Details’

'Gina's witnesses exposed your lie.'

'Come on now, Inspector, you know full well that her four witnesses are even less reliable than the ice, and that's going some.'

'Shuttup!'

'And besides the Die told me to change the story.'<sup>30</sup>

In this conversation between Luke and a police inspector it becomes clear that Luke has indeed become an entirely random man. His responses to others, his actions and his idea of the truth change by the cast of the die. And although he is responsible for the death of Osterflood we cannot say that he killed him intentionally. He didn't mean to kill, and if he ever kills again this will again be purely based on a role of the dice. When every action is dice dictated and all personality is replaced by total randomness, intentional action is no longer a possibility. This makes Luke's actions resemble the Butler problem far closer. Although in the Butler problem death is inevitable because it is subjected to the position of the bullet (which is in the right chamber to kill), and this is not so in Luke's case. It becomes clear that for Luke it is not an option not to obey. As in the Butler case, Brown has to shoot after he decided to play; Luke has to kill after he decided to play. Ignoring the dice is not an option for Luke. He has made a commitment to the dice. A commitment that in the end forms who he is. As he cannot give himself up, he can't act against the dice. As clear as pulling the trigger means death for Smith, so does the role of the dice might mean someone's death for Luke. The rolling is parallel to the spinning of the chamber in the Butler problem. Of course these cases are not fully parallel. In the Butler case Brown does not roll a dice in order to kill Smith at all, he simply wants to kill and therefore spins the chamber (although I can think of a lot of better, more certain, ways to kill). Still in both cases chance plays an enormous factor. If we agree on saying that Luke cannot ignore the dice or abort the game, we agree on the fact that his actions are not intentional whatever the consequences may be.

---

<sup>30</sup> Rhinehart L. *The dice man*, Harper Collins, London, 1971. P. 504

## Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show why Luke's actions cannot be seen as intentional. I used the Butler Problem as a starting point. We have seen that most people intuitively see immoral actions as intentional. Even if they get the chance to appraise guilt to an immoral action, they still interpret it as an intentional action. However we have also seen that most philosophers think that an action lacking of skill, intention, beliefs and desires about the action, and based on chance, is not apt to really be called intentional. If an action has an undesirable outcome as a by-product, this by-product did not intentionally come about; according to both, ordinary people and the philosophers discussed. Opinions differ however about when it is fit to ascribe intentionality. In the end I have chosen to go with the folk notion in deciding when to ascribe intentionality. Most philosophers I discussed, used surveys to discover the intuitions that big groups of people have on intentional action. Of course the folk notion of intentional action is most important in reviewing a book, because most of the readers are so called folk psychologists (not considering reading philosophers like myself).

We see in the book that Luke's actions can hardly be called intentional even if they are immoral. Most of the readers would in this matter, I think, agree with the philosopher. Luke's actions do not add up with the conditions that Malle and Knobe set in their folk psychological theory of intentional action. He has no desire for acting one-way or the other whatsoever. We also see a discrepancy between Luke's actions and intentional action when we review unlucky bad consequences of actions. Those are seen by most people as unintentional ones. When enough chance is involved an action cannot be intentional, like we have seen in the drunk driver example. And as Luke subjects himself to chance entirely, without really wanting or desiring anything, his actions can only with great difficulty be seen as intentional.

Luke's actions are based on even more chance than Brown's killing in the Butler problem. The skill aspect for example is mostly absent. And Luke, being the random man he is, does not really make his own decisions. He only, out of boredom, intentionally decided to become the dice man at the start of the book. All that comes next however, is a by-product of this decision. Luke

really has no intention to hurt people, whereas Brown has the intention to kill Smith. Luke only has an intention to roll the dice and let chance decide. He has the intention to roll an option. And when he does roll an option he follows without question. He has the intention to always obey and does just this. When rolling a six when one intended to do so is not intentional, then neither are Luke's actions. Whim reigns Luke's life. He regrets a lot of the decisions that the Die makes for him. Although we can hold him fully responsible for his actions, we cannot say he acts intentionally. Luke however did intentionally decide to play the game. We can say this action, an action that took place before Luke transformed into the dice man, is the last intentional action he ever undertook. The man that decided this however is now long gone. The dice man's actions are no longer his own. When truly living the dice life no action can be seen as truly intentional. This real dice living is not for everyone, and as we see in Arlene's case most of us would probably still act intentionally in following the dice. And although this difference between different dice persons is gradual, this does not go for Luke. All bad and even good consequences of Luke's actions are the sad by-products of a totally random man. And when Luke is finally transformed into the Dice Man, we can truly say his case is alike to the Butler case and maybe even clearer, because in Luke's case there is no asymmetry. Luke is himself a die subjected to chance. Luke's actions can then no longer be seen as intentional because Luke does have only one intention, and that is the following of the dice.

I myself would after writing this thesis, be advised to be very careful about when and why I will use the Die. I know now after all, that even if I act out of no intention at all, I can still be punished for my stupidity. Besides, only writing this thesis had proven that I use the dice with my initial intentions. I am not random at all. I will think twice before rolling the dice and only when I am myself ready to become a full-blown dice person I will roll again.

The End



## Bibliography

Aristoteles, *Ethica*, translation by Christine Pannier and Jean Verhaeghe, Historische Uitgeverij, Groningen, 1999

Butler R. *Report on Analysis 'problem' no. 6*. *Analysis* 38:113-14, 1978

Davies K. *Killing people intentionally, by chance*, *Analysis* 41:156-59, 1981

Dennet D. *Freedom Evolves*, Viking Pinguin, New York, 2003

Heil J. *Philosophy of Mind, a guide and anthology*, Oxford University press, New York, 2004

Kane R. *Responsibility, Luck, and Chance: Reflections on Free Will and Indeterminism*, *The journal of Philosophy* 96: 217-240, 1999

Knobe J. *Intentional action in folk psychology: an experimental investigation*, *Philosophical Psychology* 16: 309-24, 2003

Knobe J. *Intention, intentional action and moral considerations*. *Analysis* 64:181-87, 2004

Knobe J. *The concept of intentional action: a case study in the uses of folk psychology*, *Philosophical Studies* 130:203-231, 2006

Kraemer E. *Intentional action, chance and control*, *Analysis* 38: 116-17, 1987

Lowe, E. J. *Neither intentional nor unintentional*. *Analysis* 38:117-18, 1978

Lowe E. J. *Peacocke and Kraemer on Butler's problem*, *Analysis* 40:113-18, 1980

Malle B. Moses L. Badwin D. *Intentions and Intentionality, foundations of social cognition*, MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004

Mele A. and Moser P. *Intentional action*, *Nous* 28:39-68, 1994

Mele A. and Sverdlik S. *Intention, intentional action, and moral responsibility*. *Philosophical studies* 82: 265-87, 1996

Nadelhoffer T. *The butler problem revisited*, *Analysis* 64:277-84, 2004

Prins A. *Uit verveling*, Uitgeverij Klement, Kampen, 2007

Rhinehart L. *The dice man*, Harper Collins, London, 1971

Ross D. *He loads the gun, not the dice*. *Analysis* 38:114-14, 1978

Stiffler E. *Butler's problem again*, *Analysis* 41:216-18, 1981

Stiffler E. *Lowe on intentionality*, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 32:70-73, 1982

Schuster E. *Choose your fate*, *The report*, January 7: p 53, 2002