

Reasons to Intend

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Donald Davidson writes that “[r]easons for intending to do something are very much like reasons for action, indeed one might hold that they are exactly the same except for time.”² That the reasons for forming an intention and the reasons for acting as intended are in some way related is a widely accepted claim. But it can take different forms: (1) the reasons may mirror each other so that there is a (derivative) reason to intend whenever there is a reason to act; or (2) they may reduce to just one kind: perhaps all reasons for action are really reasons for forming intentions.³ Or the other way around: (3) all reasons for intentions are really reasons to act. The three versions are not equally strong contenders though. The third - that reasons to intend could reduce to reasons to act - seems unlikely. After all, there may be reasons to form future-directed intentions, in particular, independently of the reason to act as intended. The second suggestion falls prey to different considerations: reasons to act can, at least sometimes, be reasons to produce a certain outcome, quite independently of the intention with which the action is done, or whether it is done intentionally at all. In these cases, the reason to act is not (or not obviously) a reason to intend.

I will therefore not pursue the possibility of a reduction in this paper. My main focus is on the first, non-reductive proposal. I will discuss various versions of it in some detail, but ultimately reject it.

1. The debate

Reasons to intend are often discussed in parallel to reasons to believe.⁴ One feature they share is that we typically respond only to considerations of a particular kind when forming beliefs or intentions respectively. Truth-related considerations, or evidence, are reasons for belief, and intentions are formed in response to reasons to

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² ‘Intending’ 1978, p. 96. ‘Except for time’, because intentions are intentions to do something at a particular (future) time, but reasons to act needn’t build in time in the same way.

³ T.M. Scanlon (1998) seems to defend this view: “What is the range of things for which reasons in the standard normative sense can be asked for or offered? [...] [T]he things that are included are attitudes of rational agents such as beliefs, intentions, hopes, fears [...]. [...] Actions might be cited as a class of glaring exceptions to this claim, on the ground that they are not themselves attitudes [...]. But they are only an apparent exception. Actions are the kinds of things for which normative reasons can be given only insofar as they are intentional [...]. [...] A reason for doing something is almost always a reason for doing it intentionally, so ‘reason for action’ is not be contrasted with ‘reason for intending’.” (20-21)

⁴ Hieronymi (2005), McHugh (2012b, 2013), Raz (2011, chapter 3), Schroeder (2012), Shah (2008).

act. You cannot form a belief that p simply because it would be good to believe that p . That it would improve your chances of getting an attractive job offer, if you believed that Trump is a good president, may well be a reason for having the belief, but you can't simply go ahead and form the belief *for that reason*. Similarly, it doesn't seem to be possible to form an intention in response to considerations that bear only on the value of having the intention, but not on the value of acting as intended. Examples in the neighbourhood of the toxin puzzle⁵ illustrate the point. Their general form is that it would be good to have the intention, but there is no reason to act as intended, and the agent is aware of this.⁶ Reasons of this kind are sometimes summarily called 'state-given reasons'⁷ since it is the value of being in the state of intending (or believing) which provides the reason independently of the value of acting as intended. I will occasionally use this terminology here but I prefer the notion of a non-standard reason.⁸

Intuitively and roughly then, there is a distinction between standard and non-standard reasons for forming attitudes where evidence for p is a standard reason to believe that p , and reasons to ϕ are standard reasons to intend to ϕ , whereas

⁵ The Toxin Puzzle (Kavka 1983): an eccentric billionaire would transfer a million pounds into your bank account at midnight today, if you now intend to drink a (mild) toxin tomorrow. The toxin will not kill you, but it will cause you some discomfort. The billionaire does not require that you drink the toxin, but only that you form the intention to do so. You know now that tomorrow there will be absolutely no reason for you to drink the toxin, since the money either is already in your bank account, or you won't receive it. So you may have a reason to form the intention to drink the toxin, but no reason to actually drink it.

⁶ Much of the debate of the Toxin Puzzle focuses on 'solving' it: on showing that it may be possible to rationally intend to drink the toxin after all. McClennen (1990) and Bratman (1999) fasten on the notion of "resolution". As Bratman sees it "a prior plan settling on which was – because of autonomous benefits – best in prospect, can trump a later, conflicting evaluative ranking concerning planned-for circumstances." (70) Since the agent prefers drinking the toxin and having the money to not drinking the toxin, and since she needs to intend to drink the toxin to get the money, and since, once she intends to drink it, she is rationally committed to drinking it if nothing in her circumstances changes (Bratman calls this the 'linking principle'), the agent can rationally embark on a plan that takes her from intending to earn the money to drinking the toxin. It seems to me that she cannot: knowing that she doesn't need to drink the toxin to get the money should, if the 'linking principle' holds and she is rational, prevent her from forming the intention to drink it. - My focus here is just on understanding why it is that we cannot respond to reasons to intend of the toxin puzzle variety in the way in which we respond to other reasons to intend: why there is a puzzle to begin with.

⁷ Parfit (2011), Appendix A.

⁸ One problem with this terminology is that it is ambiguous between a reason that is provided by the value of the state of intending when there is no value in acting as intended, and a reason that is provided by the value of the state whether or not there is also value in acting as intended. This difference will become important at a later stage. (See also Schroeder (2012: 463f) for a discussion of the problems with the terminology.) – Joseph Raz speaks of a non-standard reason (Raz (2011), chapter 3) but this isn't extensionally equivalent, since a non-standard reason is a reason that cannot be followed directly, and as we will see, there is a difference between those and state-given reasons. Non-standard reasons are sometimes also called 'reasons of the wrong kind'. The origin of this terminology is in fitting-attitude analyses of reasons to form attitudes of a certain kind. If there were such reasons, so the worry, the fitting attitude analysis would be wrong. Hence, 'wrong' reasons: wrong from the perspective of a proponent of the theory. See Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004) for showing how certain reasons are 'the wrong kind of reasons' in this sense. The term has gained wider currency recently, presumably just indicating that non-standard reasons are peculiar in certain ways. For further discussion see Heuer (2010, and 2017).

reasons that bear only on the desirability of having the attitudes are non-standard reasons. This distinction seems to line up with a distinction between reasons that can, and reasons that can't be followed directly in forming the respective attitudes.⁹

One question that the debate focuses on is how to explain why standard reasons for believing and intending are confined to evidence and reasons to act, respectively; another how to understand non-standard reasons: we need to explain why they don't function in the same way as standard reasons. Is it a mistake to regard them as reasons for the respective attitudes at all? But even if they weren't reasons, it would be all too easy to imagine a person who mistakenly believes that they are. But she too wouldn't be able to respond to them directly.

On the one hand, there are those who claim that all and only evidence-based considerations are reasons to believe, and only reasons to act are reasons to intend, and on the other hand there are those who think that, while all evidence-based considerations are reasons to believe, and some reasons to act are reasons to intend, there are reasons of a different kind for the attitudes in question as well. Conor McHugh¹⁰ frames the question as being about exclusivity: are reasons to believe exclusively evidence-based considerations? And are reasons to intend exclusively reasons to act? Like many others, he denies this¹¹, whereas Nishi Shah for instance provides an argument in favour of exclusivity.

This brief sketch of the dialectic of the current debate brings out a crucial background assumption which is rarely questioned: reasons to ϕ are generally regarded as reasons to intend to ϕ (whether or not there are also different reasons to intend to ϕ). The idea is, I take it, that standard reasons to intend derive from reasons to act. I will call this the *Derivative Reasons View (DRV)* of standard reasons to intend. I interpret DRV as claiming that a *pro tanto* reason to act provides a (derivative) *pro tanto* reason to intend as well.¹² We should distinguish between two versions of DRV:

Weak DRV: normally reasons to act are reasons to intend.

Strong DRV: all reasons to act are reasons to intend.¹³

⁹ Hieronymi (2005) draws the distinction (introducing her own terminology of 'constitutive' and 'extrinsic' reasons) focusing on two criteria: reasons that justify the forming of an attitude, and reasons that do not, and reasons that result in forming the attitude, and reasons that do not. I take it that her way of drawing the distinction is roughly the same as the one I use here, taking standard reasons to be reasons that can be followed directly and that bear on the rationality of forming an attitude.

¹⁰ McHugh 2013.

¹¹ E.g. Pink (1991); Schroeder (2012).

¹² One worry concerns the question how DRV works in those cases when there is more than one *sufficient* reason to act. When you have reasons of equal strength to help your friend John, and your friend Jill, but you can't do both, would you have a sufficient reason to intend to help John and a sufficient reason to intend to help Jill?

¹³ Pink (1991) discusses and rejects what he calls the 'identity thesis' which comprises two conjuncts: "(A) Any reason at t for then intending to do A later is a reason at t for doing A later. (B) Any reason at t for doing A later is a reason at t for then intending to do A later." (351) This is a strong version of

In this paper, I will begin by exploring the current debate further and sketch some of the proposed explanations of the distinction between standard and non-standard reasons (in section 2). I then show that even weak DRV is problematic (in section 3), and so is the parallelism of reasons to intend and reasons to believe (in section 4). And finally, I will propose an explanation of the peculiar behavior of non-standard reasons (in section 5). Let me begin however with a preliminary: some explanation of the crucial concepts of intention, and intentional agency.

1.1. Intentions

G.E.M. Anscombe (1957, §1) distinguishes between three kinds of intentions: future-directed intentions, the intention with which we act (further intentions), and the intention in acting when a person acts intentionally. Donald Davidson distinguishes between a pure intending, “that is, intending that is not necessarily accompanied by action”¹⁴ and intentional agency. Joseph Raz distinguishes between independent intentions, that is: intentions that are independent of actions, and embedded intentions: intentions “that I can have only when doing what it is an intention to do”.¹⁵ He emphasizes that independent intentions comprise the first two categories that Anscombe distinguishes since both future-directed and further intentions are independent of what an agent actually does. This is clear in the case of future-directed intentions: we may never get around to acting on them, because our plans change, or we forget about them. But it holds for further intentions too, since the intention with which a person acts is an attitude which perhaps guides the action, but has independent content. This is most obvious when the action fails. I may take out my bike with the intention of riding to Otley, but I go off in the wrong direction, never even getting closer to my goal.¹⁶ What I end up doing is not what I intended to do. Therefore, both future-directed and further intentions are independent of what an agent actually does.

In that way, they are different from ‘acting intentionally’ since, if a person ϕ s intentionally, she actually ϕ s. We sometimes say that when a person ϕ s intentionally, she must have intended to ϕ . This latter claim is what leads to speaking about intentions in action. But it isn’t clear that these are independent psychological states of the agent. What allows say “she intended to ϕ ” is just whatever accounts for her ϕ ing being intentional in this cases.

One question then is how independent intentions relate to acting intentionally. John McDowell suggests¹⁷ that a future-directed intention, for instance, becomes an intention-in-action, provided a number of conditions are satisfied: that the agent keeps time, that she doesn’t change her mind, and she doesn’t forget about the

DRV. McHugh’s (2013) discussion of ‘exclusivity’ is about similar claims regarding reasons to believe. He distinguishes between weak and strong exclusivity, rejecting both.

¹⁴ 1978, p. 88.

¹⁵ 2011, p. 66.

¹⁶ Davidson’s ‘pure intendings’ also comprise both further and future-directed intentions. Further intentions are ‘pure’ he thinks, because they often don’t describe actions: “If someone digs a pit with the intention of trapping a tiger, it is perhaps plausible that no entity at all (...) corresponds to the noun phrase, ‘the intention of trapping a tiger’ (...).” (1978: 88)

¹⁷ McDowell (2011).

intention. Future-directed intentions and intentions-in-action are not different kinds of intentions, he thinks, but different shapes that the same intention can take. All going well, future-directed intentions morph into intentions-in-action when their time comes. As McDowell puts it, we should “conceive an intention for the future as a potential action biding its time.”¹⁸ This is not saying that every intention-in-action starts out as a future-directed intention. We can act intentionally, and also with an intention even when there never was a preceding future-directed intention.

1.2. The Simple View

Another question has been raised by Michael Bratman: is it really true that when a person ϕ s intentionally, she must have intended to ϕ ? According to the ‘Simple View’, as Bratman calls it¹⁹, this is indeed so. But he rejects the Simple View in favour of the Single Phenomenon View, that when a person ϕ s intentionally, she must have an intention, but not necessarily the intention to ϕ . Bratman’s worries about the Simple View depend on his full theory, in particular on the claim that a person cannot rationally have inconsistent intentions: intentions which cannot jointly be satisfied.

Bratman considers an example which seems to show that it is perfectly rational for a person to have intentions which she knows to be inconsistent. In his famous video game example, Bratman imagines an equidexterous agent who operates a lever with each hand with the aim of hitting a target, T_1 , on the left through the motions of her left hand and a target, T_2 , on the right with her right. However, she cannot hit both. As soon as she hits one of the targets, she will have won and the game closes down. The pursuit of each goal is rational, but she cannot (as she knows) achieve both. So, intending to hit both T_1 and T_2 amounts to having inconsistent intentions, and she cannot rationally have intentions which she knows to be inconsistent. Therefore, the attitude with which the agent pursues her goals cannot be ‘intending to hit T_1 , and intending to hit T_2 ’, but it could be ‘trying to hit T_1 and T_2 ’ or, as Bratman puts it, introducing a piece of terminology, ‘endeavoring’ to hit each target.²⁰ However, if the agent were to hit one of the goals, she would have hit it intentionally. Bratman concludes that there are intentional actions which are not done with the intention of doing what the agent intentionally does. She only intends to try or to endeavor to do so.

One worry about Bratman’s videogame example is that, instead of proving the Simple view false, it shows that it is quite possible to rationally have inconsistent intentions. At any rate, it is difficult to show which intention can substitute for the

¹⁸ McDowell (2011), p. 15.

¹⁹ Bratman (1987, chapter 8)

²⁰ This is how I understand the argument:

- (1) An agent, A , rationally intends to ϕ only if A does not have inconsistent intentions.
- (2) A rationally aims at hitting target, T_1 , and at hitting target, T_2 .
- (3) A does not have inconsistent intentions.
- (4) A does not intend to hit T_1 and to hit T_2 .
- (5) If A hits either target, she hits it intentionally.
- (6) A can ϕ intentionally, even if she does not intend to ϕ .

intention to ϕ , since the Single Phenomenon View requires that the agent must have some intention in acting intentionally.²¹

Jennifer Hornsby also raises doubts about the Simple View. She notes, what we do intentionally must be in some ways related to our mental states²², but they needn't include an intention to act. She offers what she calls 'emergency cases' as an example: cases when we have to act "extremely quickly and instinctively"²³ as when someone reaches out to catch a snowball thrown at her just before it hits her. She catches it intentionally, but there wasn't an intention to catch it. The person's beliefs, or her awareness of her situation, are crucial to what she does, and it is for this reason that her actions should count as intentional. Something similar may be true of habitual or automatic actions. Acting intentionally in this sense is (as Hornsby sees it) acting without an intention, but not acting without a reason.²⁴ There may be reasons to doubt that Hornsby's emergency cases are genuine counterexamples to the Simple View. They show that a person can act intentionally without having future-directed intentions. But is there no intention to catch the snowball, when the person acts? Describing the snowball-catcher as being guided in the movements of her arm by the intention to catch the snowball doesn't seem incorrect. But there are further counterexamples to the Simple View.

As some philosophers argue, at least some of the foreseen, but unintended, effects of one's actions have been brought about intentionally, but not with the intention of producing them.²⁵ The agent is not guided by any intention to bring them about in this case. Otherwise they would not be unintended side-effects.

Joseph Raz uses 'acting intentionally' even more broadly.²⁶ When you doodle while listening to a philosophy talk your doodling is an intentional activity because you control it, but it is not guided by an intention. The doodler may not even be aware of her activity. But she can become aware of it, and once aware, she can control it. Doodling is not like the movements of the digestive system, say, which, whether or not we are aware of them, are beyond our control. When acting intentionally in this sense, we normally don't follow reasons. Therefore, a person who acts intentionally

²¹ I will not discuss the point further here, but have done so in 'Acting Intentionally' (ms).

²² "[I]f a person did a number of things, and we raise the question in the case of a particular one of whether it was intentionally done, then it is to her states of mind that we need to advert in order to settle the question." (Hornsby 1993, 66)

²³ Hornsby (1993), p. 65.

²⁴ According to Hornsby, the person has a reason to avoid being hit, and that reason leads to the action without going through forming an intention to catch this particular ball. Following Davidson, she takes reasons to be desire-belief pairs, and therefore mental states. Thus that the person has a reason assures that the action is appropriately related to her mental states, and therefore intentional. But even if we reject the account reasons as desire-belief pairs, it remains true that the person's awareness is crucial to the explanation of her action. This may suffice to ensure that the action is intentional.

²⁵ Bratman (1987, chapter 10); Knobe (2003).

²⁶ Raz (2011), p. 66.

does not, Raz thinks, always respond to a reason she believes to have.²⁷ Rather, the crucial feature of intentional agency is its link to agential control.²⁸

The debate on reasons to intend focuses almost exclusively on future-directed intentions, neglecting both intentions-in-action, and the broader sense of acting intentionally.²⁹

1.3. Acting for a reason and the Derivative Reasons View (DRV)

There is one feature of intentional agency which may seem to support DRV: when a person ϕ s with an intention (not just intentionally in the wider sense that may not involve independent intentions), she normally believes to have some reason for ϕ -ing and the reason explains her action. Acting with an intention is typically acting for a reason (or at least for a believed-to-be reason).³⁰ But despite the close connection of acting for a reason and acting with an intention, this is not enough to establish DRV. It does not show that *all* reasons to act are reasons to intend; nor does it even show that *any* reason to act is a reason to intend. We are not interested in whether there are reasons to act when a person acts intentionally but in whether those are reasons to intend. Even if a person who acts with an intention acts for a reason, this is a reason to act as she does, not a reason *to intend to act* as she does.

However, we may be able to take this further: when a person acts with a certain intention, the reasons for which she acts explains not only her action, but also her intention. After all, not every true description of what a person does is a description of what she does intentionally. When I slip on the pavement while running with the intention to catch the bus, the slipping isn't intentional, but the running is. G.E.M. Anscombe suggests that we can distinguish those aspects of a person's action which are unintentional from what she does intentionally by asking 'why are you X-ing?',³¹ if the answer is 'I do it to Y (or: in order to Y)', the agent acts with the intention to Y. It also shows that the agent regards Y-ing as desirable, i.e. as a reason for acting as she does.³² If so, the reason for which someone acts explains not only the action but it reveals the intention with which she acts. It specifies what it actually is that she does intentionally (in the example: running, but not slipping).

²⁷ Hornsby (1993) denies this, but she doesn't consider cases of this kind. Pekka Väyrynen suggested to me that intentional actions of this kind are controlled by reasons in the sense that we would stop or modify the behaviour if we became aware of a reason to do so.

²⁸ This is my interpretation of these cases, for which I argue in "Acting Intentionally" (ms).

²⁹ Bratman (1987), chapter 1, defends the focus on future-directed intentions. Others simply seem to follow him without giving much thought to the matter.

³⁰ For the purposes of this paper it doesn't matter that the reasons a person believes to have may be no reasons at all (if she is mistaken or confused). The question here is which considerations are reasons to intend. That we may be mistaken on a particular occasion doesn't matter as long as the reason we believe to have would have been a reason, had we not been mistaken.

³¹ Anscombe (1957), p. 38f. Alternatively, the agent may just answer 'I'm Y-ing', thereby revealing the description under which her action is intentional. If she rejects the question, responding (e.g.), 'I didn't notice that I am X-ing' or 'I didn't mean to X' (in my example: to slip) then the action is not intentional under that description. But note that, as Anscombe sees it, an agent who rejects the question by answering 'no reason' agrees that her X-ing was intentional.

³² This test is only a rough guide: the answer Anscombe describes may be sufficient for establishing that the person acted with an intention, but it is not necessary.

Does it follow that there always is a reason to intend, when we intend anything – or at least that the agent must believe that she has a reason to intend? The answer is again no: even if there were always³³ a (believed to be) reason to act when a person acts with a particular intention, which explains not only her action, but also her intention, it would not follow that this is a reason to intend, or that it is taken by the agent to be such a reason. It is once again only a reason to act, not a reason to intend. The answer to the why question shows that we typically form intentions in response to our reasons to act, but it does not show that there would have been anything amiss if the agent hadn't form such an intention: that there was a reason for the intention itself. Nor does it show that the only rationally acceptable way of forming intentions is in response to reasons to act.

2. The debate in some more detail: Shah vs Schroeder

The views of two of the proponents of the current debate illustrate the questions it centers on in a particularly vivid way. They occupy opposing ends of the spectrum setting out to answer two questions:

- 1) Are reasons to act reasons to intend to act?
- 2) Are there reasons to intend to act which are not reasons to act?

While agreeing on an affirmative answer to (1), Nishi Shah and Mark Schroeder disagree on the answer to (2).

2.1. Shah's view

Shah writes, “[i]n order to settle the deliberative question *whether to intend to A* an agent must settle the question *whether to A*.”³⁴ This is what he calls ‘transparency’: the question whether to intend to A is ‘transparent’ to the question whether to A.³⁵ He focuses on an interpretation of ‘whether to intend’ and ‘whether to A’ in terms of ‘ought’, rather than in terms of reasons. Deliberation may lead an agent to conclude that she ought to A. And while “a normative judgment is not identical with an intention [...] the normative judgment that I ought to A normally leads directly to the intention to A. Certainly no further question needs to be considered before deliberation can conclude in the intention.”³⁶ Thus Shah's claim is that when we deliberate about what to do the same considerations that count in favour of the conclusion that we ought to do something count in favour of intending to do it. And if we replace ‘consideration counting in favour’ with ‘reason’, we arrive at a version of DRV. Shah not only endorses a version of DRV but also of the converse: there is a reason to intend *only* when there is a reason to act. His way of framing the discussion is in terms of one deliberative question giving way to another: the question *whether to intend to A* gives way to the question *whether to A*, as he sees

³³ As there probably isn't. According to Anscombe, one of the admissible answers to the why-question is ‘no reason. I just did it.’ This answer too would show that the action was intentional. But there would, in this case, be no reason to act that the reason to intend could derive from.

³⁴ Shah (2008), p. 2.

³⁵ This is in parallel to the widely accepted “transparency of belief” thesis. See for instance Shah and Velleman (2005).

³⁶ Shah (2008), p. 3; similarly, Hieronymi (2005), p. 449f.

it.³⁷ Thus, only reasons to *A* are relevant to answering the deliberative question whether to intend to *A*.

Shah's aim is to explain why this is so. He explores and rejects a teleological explanation in parallel to teleological explanations of the role of evidence in forming beliefs which claim that the aim of belief is truth. So similarly, the aim of intention is, on this view, to-be-doneness of actions.³⁸ According to the teleological view, intending is a functional state which has to-be-doneness of the intended action as its aim. Since only reasons to act bear on to-be-doneness only they are relevant in regulating intending. As Shah notes, accounts of this kind cannot explain weak-willed actions. After all weak-willed actions are intentional, but weak-willed intentions are not regulated in accordance with the agent's beliefs about what is 'to be done'.³⁹

Shah's proposed explanation is therefore a different one: the concept of intention when employed expressly in deliberation incorporates a normative standard of correctness of intentions formed in deliberation. This normativist answer is supposed to explain why it is impossible to form intentions in deliberation except in response to reasons to act. He does not deny that we can form intentions in a different way when we do not deliberate about what to do. Therefore, the normative standard regulates the forming of intentions when a person who has the concept employs it in deliberation. She may be able to form intentions without deliberating, and without heeding the standard.

However, Shah seems to ignore that normative standards can be violated. When they are, the normative standard normally can be invoked in criticizing the violation. Thus, a person who would form an intention in deliberation in response to non-standard reasons would violate the standard for forming intentions, and she might be subject to criticism for doing so. But that is not what the account was supposed to explain: it is meant to explain why we *can* form intentions in deliberation only in response to reasons to act, not why we *should* do so. Furthermore, with regard to all standards there are sometimes reasons for violating them. So, if there are reasons to intend which do not derive from reasons to act, they may be at the same time

³⁷ This way of setting things up strikes me as unfortunate: Firstly, I doubt that the question *whether to intend to A* is a question that we ask in deliberation at all (except perhaps in special cases like in the Toxin Puzzle). But if we were to ask it, Shah's answer might be plainly wrong: if I started by asking whether to intend having pleasure, say, then, as Shah sees it, I answer it by answering the question whether to do things that give me pleasure. But even if the appropriate answer to the second question is 'yes', the answer to the first may be 'no', since intending to have pleasure may prevent me from having it.

³⁸ McHugh (2012a) argues that the role of evidence in forming beliefs should indeed be explained teleologically: as he sees it, the aim of belief is knowledge. He also argues (McHugh, 2012b) that reasons to intend should be understood in parallel to reasons to believe. Thus the correct account of reasons to intend would also be a teleological one.

³⁹ More precisely, Shah sees a dilemma here: on its one horn, the teleological account is too strong. It cannot explain weak-willed actions. Thus perhaps the regulatory role of 'to-be-doneness' must be weaker so as not to exclude the possibility of weakness of will. But in that case the account cannot explain why it is only reasons for actions that bear on the question whether to intend to do something: why all other considerations are excluded (p. 9f.). Thus the account is either too strong or too weak.

reasons to violate the standard (on this occasion). It may be possible, and it would be normatively correct in this case to form the intention for reasons that are not reasons to act. Shah's view is a combination of DRV and the claim that *only* reasons to act are reasons to intend. But his proposed explanation establishes at most that sometimes when we for intentions in deliberation, but not in response to reasons to act, we violate a standard of correctness. Therefore, Shah's account fails to establish the view he wishes to defend.

2.2. Schroeder's view

Schroeder who occupies the opposing bench argues that there are reasons to intend with are not reasons to act. He accepts that reasons to act are typically reasons to intend, but sets out to show that there are other reasons as well. He discusses a strong version of DRV which he states thus: "R is a right-kind reason [as opposed to the reason for intending in Toxin Puzzle cases] to intend to do A just in case R is a reason to do A."⁴⁰ Schroeder rejects this claim: as he sees it, reasons to intend needn't be reasons to act. There are state-given reasons to intend as well. His focus is on the question whether state-given reasons are 'wrong' reasons in the sense that they cannot be followed directly, and cannot establish the rationality of the attitude for which they are reasons. 'Right' reasons, by contrast, are reasons that can be followed directly, and that can establish the rationality of the attitude that a person forms in response to them.⁴¹ Schroeder's concern is with explaining the difference between so-called 'right' and 'wrong' reasons to intend, trying to show that mapping state- and object-given reasons onto 'wrong' and 'right' reasons respectively is mistaken. There are, Schroeder thinks, 'right' reasons to intend which are state-given.

Schroeder accepts that weak DRV is part of an account of reasons to intend but it is incomplete. He defends in particular the third of the following three claims (but accepts all of them): (1) Reasons to do A are reasons to intend to A, and (2) there are state-given reasons to intend to A (e.g. in Toxin puzzle cases) which cannot be followed directly, and (3) there are further state-given reasons to intend to A which can be followed directly. His ambition is to explain why all three are true and must be true, given the nature of intentions. I will get back to Schroeder's defense of (3) in section 5 below.

⁴⁰ Schroeder (2012), p. 470.

⁴¹ More precisely, Schroeder identifies four "earmarks" (458) of 'wrong reasons' for belief, and three for intentions: wrong reasons are reasons (1) that are difficult to followed directly, (2) that do not establish the rationality of the attitude, (3) that do not establish the correctness of the attitude, and (4) that have a particular 'flavour'. (3) is the one that does not apply in the case of intentions (since it isn't clear that intentions can be 'correct'). I find Schroeder's formulation of (1) unhelpful: whether it is 'difficult' to respond to a reason directly is, I think, irrelevant. It may be difficult to form a belief that one finds unpalatable, even when there is overwhelming evidence for it. I also dispense with (4), since I'm not sure what it is supposed to add. The formulation of (1) that I use is stricter and more demanding, but also less vulnerable to objections, than Schroeder's. Raz (2008) identifies 'non-standard reasons' for attitudes and actions with reasons that cannot be followed directly. I adopt his formulation here rather than Schroeder's. – For a more detailed criticism of Schroeder's use of 'earmarks' see Hieronymi (2013).

3. Are reasons to act reasons to intend?

I will now explore DRV itself, the generally accepted claim that reasons to act are also reasons to intend.

3.1. Omissions, virtuous, and spontaneous actions

Take reasons for omissions, as one clear case showing that reasons to act are not always reasons to intend: reasons not to kill, not to steal etc. It may never cross your mind to kill anyone. You don't have an intention not to kill, because you don't have any relevant attitude at all. But if your reason not to kill were a reason to intend not to kill, you would fail to conform to that reason. Is there anything amiss with your attitudes? Do you have not only a reason not to kill, but a reason not to kill with the intention of not killing? The question is odd. There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with a person who hasn't formed an intention regarding killing.⁴²

But perhaps you have standing intentions not to do any of the actions that you have reason to omit, like a father's intention to look after his child which may be in the background of his actions, becoming occurrent only from time to time. It is difficult to show that an intention that a person is supposed to be not aware of does not exist. But it is important not to reduce intention to belief here.⁴³ If all that there is is the occasional awareness of a reason, then that's not enough to ascribe an intention – neither in the case of omissions nor in the one of the father.⁴⁴ I suspect that we are occasionally aware of reasons not to kill – thus we have beliefs about such reasons. But there is no need to form any intention. The important point for my purposes is that there is nothing rationally amiss with a person who doesn't have intentions regarding all those things she has reason not to do. More mundane cases of reasons for omissions show this even more clearly: I have a reason not to tread on the flowers in your garden, or not to go into space without a spacesuit⁴⁵, but no reason to form an intention – standing, or otherwise – regarding these matters. Therefore, at least in the case of omissions, the reason not to ϕ is not a reason to form an intention not to ϕ .

Sometimes taking a reason to act as a reason to intend would even be objectionable: you have a reason to act kindly, or modestly, but no reason to intend to act kindly, or modestly. As Bernard Williams points out, the kind person doesn't act in order to be kind, and the modest person, lest her modesty be defeated, cannot act with the intention to be modest.⁴⁶

⁴² Daniel Star suggested to me that there may be a reason not to intend to kill. This seems right, but DRV cannot account for this reason. (I discuss a case like this in section 3.5.)

⁴³ Some philosophers argue for a doxastic account of intentions, understanding them as a peculiar kind of belief. See e.g. Velleman (1989) and Setiya (2007). For a poignant criticism of Velleman's view see Langton (2004). I assume here that intentions cannot be reduced to either desires, or beliefs, or a combination of both.

⁴⁴ Might there be a reason to have an intention not to kill, but it is defeated? But defeated by what? After all, the reason not to kill is presumably sufficient or even conclusive in almost all circumstances.

⁴⁵ I owe these examples to Fiona Woollard.

⁴⁶ Williams' claim concerns virtue concepts generally (Williams (1985), p.10f. Daniel Star has suggested to me that while the person who as a reason to act modestly doesn't have an intention to act modestly, she presumably has some intention when she acts on her reason: she just doesn't intend to act modestly *under that description*. And she may have a reason to have some

Virtuous actions are not the only kind of actions where forming an intention whose content derives from the reason to act is self-defeating. When there is a reason to do something because it would be pleasant, forming an intention to seek out pleasure could undermine one's action. When there is a reason to act spontaneously, the intention to do so is certain to be self-defeating. There can be no reason to intend to do something spontaneously, even though there may well be a reason to act spontaneously.⁴⁷

These examples are sufficient to show that strong DRV is false: not all reasons to act provide reasons to intend. But might weak DRV be true? Might it be true that some reasons to act provide derivative reasons to intend?

3.2. What kind of intention?

Let me come back to the distinctions I started with. What kind of intentions does weak DRV apply to? Is the derivative reason a reason for forming a future-directed intention, or a further intention, or is it simply a reason to do intentionally, what one has reason to do? It is normally taken to be about future-directed intentions. It could perhaps also be a reason for a further intention. A reason, *R*, to *X* cannot, by itself, be a reason to *X* in order to *Y*, but it might be a reason to *Y* in order to *X*. That is, my reason to get to London could be a reason to take the train with the intention to get to London. And finally, *R* could provide a derivative reason to *X* intentionally. I will argue that the derivative reasons cannot be understood in any of these senses.

Not all reasons we have to perform an action are reasons to perform the action intentionally. Some actions are inherently intentional like giving a gift. Doing so does not presuppose any future-directed, or further intentions, but one cannot give a gift without intending to do so. The same is true of some other actions (e.g. thanking a person). But not all actions are like this. One can save another's life without intending to do so. Assuming there is a reason to save the person's life is there also a reason to save it intentionally? Does a person who saves someone's life without intending to do so (not intending not to do so, of course) fail to comply with her reasons? I see no reason to think so that wouldn't depend on the specific circumstances of the case. A reason to ϕ is not ipso facto a reason to ϕ intentionally. I will say more about cases like the gift giving one in section 3.6., showing that they too provide no support for DRV.

Furthermore, when we act automatically, or habitually, it is often unclear whether

intention here since it is unlikely that she will successfully act on her reason otherwise. (This is what I call the instrumental reason, and I discuss it in section 3.3.) All of this may well be right. But it doesn't help DRV. DRV doesn't provide a way of deriving reasons to intend when they are not precisely mirroring the content of the reason to act.

⁴⁷ One could object that there is a reason to intend to do *this action* – just not under the description of being a pleasant, or a spontaneous one. But it is not clear how the reason to intend to do the action which is *F* (picked out by some description other than being pleasant or being spontaneous) could derive from the reason to do the action which is *G* (the action described as being pleasant or spontaneous). I'm grateful to Daniel Star for alerting me to the worry.

we intended to do so. Did I intend to take the same way to work that I always take? Assume there is a reason to take this way (it's the shortest, say). Did I fail to comply with a reason to intend if I just trotted along, deeply in thought? Since I'm walking to work intentionally perhaps we can say that I intend to do so. But there is at any rate no reason to form a *future-directed* intention. My habit is sufficiently engrained to trust it without deliberation and future thought. If my action is done with an intention, this intention is simply a feature of acting in the way I do. But every action by which an agent complies with a reason has many features that are irrelevant to complying with the reason, e.g. being done swiftly. At least sometimes, 'being done intentionally' is like this. This shows I think that the derivative reason is not a reason for forming a future-directed intention, nor a reason to act intentionally.

Finally, the reason to act is not a reason for a further intention. There may be a transmission from reasons to take means to doing what one has reason to do. But the transmission does not concern intentions.⁴⁸ If I have reason to get to London, I may have a reason to take the train to London. But it is a separate question whether I have a reason to board the train with the intention to get to London. If I had such an intention, it would no doubt be explained by my reason to get to London. But, as I will show now, if there is a reason for the intention, it does not simply derive from the reason to act.

3.3. Instrumental reasons to intend

This becomes clearer if look at cases like Carl's who does have a reason to form an intention:

Chocolate hazard. Carl is on a diet, but a friend who does not know of his effort to lose weight, has given him some delicious Belgian chocolates. Carl's diet gives him a conclusive reason not to eat the chocolates. But he goes on autopilot and polishes them off.

This is a weak-willed action: Carl believes that he should not eat the chocolates. He eats them because they are delicious, and he does so intentionally. The action is explained by a reason (i.e. that the chocolates are delicious), but this is not a reason for forming the intention to eat the chocolates. Carl's intention to eat the chocolates is *explained* by a reason to act, but he nonetheless doesn't have a reason to intend to eat them. This shows that the proponent of DRV must restrict her case to undefeated reasons anyway – otherwise we would supply the agent with reason to intend that she clearly does not have.

But does Carl at least have a reason to intend *not* to eat the chocolates? Here the answer seems 'yes'. Carl has such a reason because forming the intention *not* to eat the chocolates may stop the autopilot response and prevent him from eating them. Carl has a kind of instrumental reason for forming the intention: having the intention not to eat the chocolates helps him to comply with his reason to lose weight.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Way (2011); Raz (2005)

But the instrumental reason to form the intention is a peculiar one, at least within the dialectic of the current debate on reasons to intend: it is a reason to intend not because there is a reason to act, but because there is value in having the intention. It is, in that sense, a state-given reason. It is different from the reason for forming the intention in the Toxin Puzzle, since in that case there is no reason to act as intended, whereas Carl has such a reason. But the reason to intend does not derive from it in the way DRV suggests. It is explained by the value of the intending. Carl has a reason to lose weight, and a state-given (instrumental) reason for forming the intention not to eat the chocolates, because having this intention helps to keep him on track with his diet.

Reasons for future-directed and further intentions are of this kind: those intentions can be helpful for acting in accordance with our reasons. They explain whatever reason for having an intention a virtuous person has: perhaps she has a reason for intentions concerning various things that she needs to keep track of when she acts kindly.

But there isn't always an instrumental reason of this kind when there is a reason to act in a certain way.⁴⁹ We sometimes comply perfectly well with our reasons to act without giving them any thought (as in the case of habitual actions). Whether or not instrumental reasons for having intentions are common, since they are explained by the value of having the intention, DRV does not account for them.

3.4. Believing that one ought to and intending

But, you may object, is it even possible to believe that you ought to do something and not intend to do it? Isn't believing that one ought to do something and intending to do it the same thing? If it were, then they couldn't come apart and the question whether you could have a conclusive reason to ϕ , but no reason to intend to ϕ would be confused.

There are at least two reasons for rejecting this suggestion: First, weakness of will consists in having a belief that one ought to ϕ , and doing something different intentionally nonetheless. Hence the belief that one ought to (or has a conclusive reason to) ϕ , and the intention to ϕ come apart in weak-willed actions.⁵⁰ Secondly,

⁴⁹ Understanding reasons to intend to be instrumental reasons (they make it more likely that we will do the relevant act) can explain why there is no reason to intend omissions, e.g. to intend not to kill: it would not make it more likely that one will not kill if one forms an intention not to kill. – I'm grateful to Daniel Star for making this point to me.

⁵⁰ Driving this point home would need further argument. One way to avoid the conclusion is Davidson's (1970) who distinguishes between believing that one ought, all things considered, to ϕ , and having an 'all-out' belief that one ought to ϕ . As he sees it, weakness of will shows how those can come apart. Davidson identifies the 'all-out', but not the 'all things considered' belief with the intention. Alternatively, one could claim that in weakness of will cases, the agent has two intentions: one intention that is constituted by her belief that she ought to ϕ , and another intention to do what she ends up doing. This move, however, seems to require two senses of intention, one in which the intention is the same as the belief that one ought to act in a certain way, and another where 'intention' means something different. Neither suggestion seems convincing to me, but I don't pretend to have shown this here. Shah (2008) seems to regard the case of *akrasia* as a conclusive

intentions are not belief-like states: their function is quite different as perhaps intention-in-action shows most clearly. The intention's changing 'shape', as the action progresses, is not determined by trying to represent things as they are but by guiding an agent's behavior towards completing the intended action. The belief that one ought to ϕ and the intention to ϕ are not the same.⁵¹

3.5. Normative reasons

Assuming now that the belief that one ought to ϕ and the intention to do so can come apart, would there be anything wrong if you concluded that you ought to do something, but you didn't form an intention to do it? Would such a case constitute a failure of rationality? There may be different phenomena involved with incline some to answer in the affirmative:

- Perhaps it would be odd (psychologically speaking), if someone did not intend to do what she believes she ought (or has conclusive reason) to do.
- Or perhaps you hear the sentence 'she concluded that she ought to ϕ , but didn't intend to ϕ ' as being about someone who is *en route* to a weak-willed action. And weakness of will is of course a failure of rationality.⁵²
- And not intending to ϕ is not the same as intending not to ϕ . Intending not to ϕ when you believe you ought to may well be irrational.

Leaving those aside, is it irrational not to form an intention when there is a sufficient or conclusive reason to act? In all the examples we considered so far it seems that it isn't. One way of understanding the relation between reasons and rationality is this: if there is a reason R for a person P to respond in a certain way, then - provided P is aware of R ⁵³, and R isn't defeated⁵⁴ - her not responding is a failure of rationality.⁵⁵ We have considered a range of examples where not forming an intention in response to a purported reason to intend isn't a failure of rationality. In all those cases, the relevant conditions were satisfied: there weren't any defeating considerations present, and the agents were aware of the purported reasons. Since there wasn't a failure of rationality, we can conclude by *modus tollens* that there wasn't a reason to form an intention in those cases. *Strong DRV* is therefore clearly false. If we understand *DRV* weakly as allowing for exceptions however, then all the cases we looked at may be of such exceptions. Our inability to find an instance when it would be irrational to form an intention just because one believes to have a reason

objection to the proposal that the belief that one ought to ϕ entails an intention to do so. It may be a strong one, but it isn't conclusive.

⁵¹ This, at any rate, is the assumption I'm working on here. There have recently been interesting defences of doxastic views of intentions see e.g. Velleman (1989) and Setiya (2007). For a poignant criticism of Velleman's view see Langton (2004).

⁵² Having or not having an intention is not crucial for weakness of will. Acting (or not acting) is. A person is weak-willed when she fails to do what she, in her view, ought to do (not when she fails to intend to do what she ought to do). So 'hearing' the sentence as being about weakness of will would actually involve a mistake.

⁵³ ... and perhaps makes no innocent mistakes, such as forgetting.

⁵⁴ We may need the stronger claim that the reason is conclusive here.

⁵⁵ I cannot discuss this suggestion in detail, and it is not uncontested. John Broome (1999) for instance claims that there are rational requirements on the combination of attitudes while being agnostic on the question whether being rational is in any way related to having reasons.

to act does not show that there couldn't be cases of this kind. But it raises serious worries even about *weak DRV*. After all, the examples cover many familiar cases of reasons to act, and don't appear to be of exceptions.

It seems therefore that DRV gets it wrong all the way: the only reasons to intend that we have established – the instrumental reasons – fall outside of DRV, since they are state-given in the sense that they are provided by the value of having an intention.

3.6. Reasons (not) to act with a certain intention

There is a different kind of reasons to intend though:

Poets' contest. W and P are renowned poets, both shortlisted for a prestigious Poetry Professorship. P alerts some journalists to allegations of W's serious misconduct in a previous position with the intention of undermining his candidacy. The plan works out: W withdraws his candidacy. P gets offered the position.

P's action was (perhaps) wrong because of the intention with which she acted: had she acted in a different context, with a different intention her action would have been perfectly acceptable, and right. If so, there is on this occasion a reason for her not to act with a certain intention. This is a non-instrumental reason for not having the intention: a reason to not-act-with-this-particular-intention.

But this reason too falls outside of DRV. P doesn't have a reason not to intend to ϕ , because she has a reason not to ϕ . P's reason not to ϕ simply *is* a reason not to act with the intention of discrediting her competitor. It does not derive from a reason which can be described without reference to the intention. It is not true that P has a reason not to report W to the press, and therefore a reason not to act with the intention of reporting him. There may well be a good reason to report W – just not with this intention. Thus her reason not act with this particular intention does not derive from her reason not to act as DRV suggests it does.

Non-instrumental reasons of this kind are not pervasive, even in the heartland of deontology. Most of the time, intentions don't matter in this way. Imagine I promise to be in my office on Monday morning. As it happens, I am there but I had forgotten about the promise meantime. Is there a rational failure on my part? I hadn't formed an intention to keep my promise (perhaps foreseeing that I would be in my office anyway), but I have kept the promise nonetheless. Reasons to keep one's promises are reasons to do as promised, not reasons to-do-as-promised-with-the-intention-of-keeping-one's-promise. Or alternatively, if you do think that there is something rationally amiss with my not having formed the intention to keep the promise, it must be because you think that reasons to keep one's promise are *ipso facto* reasons-to-keep-one's-promise-with-the-intention-of-keeping-it.

Only when a reason to act is, fully spelled out, a reason for (or against) acting with a certain intention (as in ***Poet's Contest***) is there a (non-instrumental) reason to form an intention (or not to form it). And whatever one thinks of promises, presumably

not all reasons to act take this form. There is a reason to act (or not to act) with a certain intention perhaps only in cases in which the value, or the meaning of the action depends on the intention with which it is done. The earlier examples of giving a gift or thanking someone are like this. While some deontological reasons are of this kind, not all of them are, and none of them is explained by DRV.⁵⁶

3.7. Preliminary conclusions

Much of the existing debate on reasons to intend accepts DRV, but as we have seen DRV faces (i) clear counterexamples, and (ii) it fails to explain those reasons to intend which it is plausible to recognize:

- i. Counterexamples: reasons for omissions; reasons for virtuous actions; reasons to seek out pleasure, or to act spontaneously; habitual actions.
- ii. Reasons to intend that DRV fails to explain:
 - a) Instrumental reasons to form an intention when one has a sufficient reason for doing something, and intending to do it will help to perform the action. Since the instrumental reason is a state-given reason, it is not explained by DRV.
 - b) Non-instrumental reasons (not) to form an intention when one has sufficient reason (not) to act with a certain intention. These reasons don't derive from a reason to act which can be identified without reference to the intention. Therefore, they too are not explained by DRV.

Therefore, the mostly uncontested claim in the debate, DRV, is plainly false. Reasons to act are no reasons to intend, even though they can, when an agent is aware of her reasons, explain the forming of an intention. But any reason that an agent believes to have can do that – even a defeated reason (as in weak-willed actions). That the reason explains the intention is not enough to show that it is a reason to intend.

I suspect that DRV, and its cognates, rest on two mistakes: (a) On assuming that since intentions are formed for reasons, and actions are intentional, there must be, if there is a reason to act, a reason to intend. I hope I have said enough to show why this is a mistake. (b) On assuming that reasons to act are *ipso facto* reasons to act with a certain intention. I have shown that while there are reasons of this kind (e.g. in Poet's Contest), they don't derive from reasons to act which make no reference to the intention.

4. Epistemic reasons and reasons to intend

DRV is an attempt to capture the distinction between standard and non-standard reasons for intentions: to explain what standard reasons are. The possibility to draw

⁵⁶ In addition, there may also be further non-instrumental reasons to intend which are independent of reasons to act (so DRV is once again irrelevant): perhaps a mother who sees that her child is being caught in a vortex of water should at least intend (and perhaps attempt) to rescue the child. There may be nothing she can do in the end. So she doesn't fail to respond to her reasons when she doesn't rescue the child, but there would be something wrong, if she hadn't even intended to do so, or intended to try. A possible explanation would be that having intentions of certain kinds is constitutive of close relationships.

the standard/non-standard distinction leads to thinking of reasons to intend in parallel to epistemic reasons. Epistemic reasons and reasons to intend share a further feature. With regard to both there are three options: (1) believing⁵⁷ that p , (2) believing that not- p , (3) not believing that p , or not- p (that is: abstaining from forming a belief on p); similarly for intentions: (1) intending to φ , (2) intending not to φ , (3) not intending to φ , or not to φ (that is: abstaining from forming an intention with regard to φ -ing).

With regard to reasons to believe, abstention is often at least permissible. For most p , there is no need to form any belief whether p . In the discussion above it seemed that intentions are like beliefs in this regard: for the most part, there is nothing wrong with not forming an intention (i.e. with abstention). This may suggest a strong similarity between the two kinds of attitudes.

But on closer inspection the similarity vanishes. In the case of epistemic reasons, the explanation why there isn't anything wrong with abstaining from forming a belief is often that we have no, or no sufficient, evidence on the matter, and no particular reason to seek further information. Thus for all three epistemic stances towards p , the reasons for withholding or having a belief are normally evidence-based.⁵⁸

What I said about reasons to intend supports quite a different picture: there is nothing wrong with abstaining from forming an intention, even when there is conclusive reason to act in a certain way. The reason why it is acceptable not to form an intention is not that there is space for doubt (because, say, the reason may yet turn out to be defeated), but that forming an intention isn't necessary to comply with the reason to act. This leads to the instrumental account: there are reasons to intend if and when complying with one's reasons to act will be furthered or aided by forming an intention on the matter. And this, as far as I'm aware, has no epistemic analogue.

It is this view of reasons to intend which is at the heart of a certain understanding of intentions and their function: the so-called planning conception of intentions which has been developed by Michael Bratman.⁵⁹ According to it, intentions (future-directed intentions, at least) are partial plans or commitments to future actions, and their functions are to coordinate our actions with others, to allow us to pursue long-term goals, and to act coherently over longer periods of time. I will not discuss this view in any detail. Its striking feature is however, that it focuses from the get-go on what I called an instrumental understanding of reasons to intend: having intentions of a certain kind (perhaps consistent, or coherent ones) is useful for agents like us, agents who form long-term goals, live in societies, and have close relationships with

⁵⁷ I'm only concerned with full belief, not with partial belief or credences here.

⁵⁸ There may non-evidence based reasons for forming beliefs such as that it is necessary to form a view on certain matter now to be able to proceed with an action, for instance. Even when the evidence that p is not conclusive, there may be a conclusive reason for forming a belief whether p in such a case – but the pragmatic reasons for forming the belief now can be followed only if there is at least sufficient evidence that p (or that non- p). In addition to the pragmatic considerations, there may be non-evidence based (state-given) reasons both for forming and for withholding belief. Cf. McHugh (2013).

⁵⁹ Bratman (1987).

others. Thus, the reasons to intend that the planning conception of intentions focuses on are all state-given, in the sense that they are bound up with the value of having intentions.

But state-given reasons are supposedly non-standard reasons. Thus, they should give rise to the problem I sketched at the beginning that non-standard reasons cannot be followed directly. It is time to turn our attention to this main battlefield of the current discussion on reasons to intend: the explanation of non-standard reasons.

5. Further state-given reasons to intend?

Are there further reasons to intend (other than the non-instrumental, and instrumental ones that I described)? Schroeder argues that certain kinds of reasons that do not bear on which action to perform can be reasons to intend. They are, Schroeder thinks, state-given reasons, but they are nonetheless reasons that can be followed directly, and they bear on the rationality of forming intentions. Hence, while being non-standard reasons, they behave quite differently from the reason for intending in the Toxin Puzzle (say).⁶⁰

Take the following example:

Theatre. You consider going to London to see a play. You would have to stay over at a friend's, and you have to tell her now that you are coming, so that she can plan accordingly. You would go only if you can stay with her. You have a reason to decide now whether to go to the theatre tomorrow, and stay with your friend afterwards.

That your friend needs to know ahead of time is not a reason to go to the theatre. So here we have a reason to form an intention which is independent of the reasons for acting as intended. Schroeder takes examples of this kind to show that not all reasons for forming intentions that can be followed directly are reasons to act as intended. That it would be good if you formed an intention now can be, as he sees it, a state-given reason (of the right kind, that is, of the kind that can be followed directly) for forming one.

But is it? Schroeder's observations show that pragmatic considerations of the kind he advances (e.g. that the friend needs to know ahead of time) bear on the question *when* to form an intention.⁶¹ They do so because your response to those pragmatic considerations shapes and determines your options. They may also have a bearing on whether the reasons for doing something are sufficient in the following sense:⁶² perhaps you are not altogether certain whether you would like to see the play. If you had more time, you would study the reviews, and try to find out more

⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion of Schroeder's argument see Hubbs (2013), Hieronymi (2013) and Shah and Silverstein (2013), as well as Schroeder's reply (2013).

⁶¹ Shah and Silverstein (2013) suggest that we should distinguish between two stages of deliberation, one concerning "whether it would be correct to form an intention with respect to p " (103); the other "whether the intention that p is the correct intention to form" (ibid.). I prefer to continue focusing on the reasons rather than on deliberation (as does Schroeder in his reply).

⁶² Schroeder (2012) objects to this suggestion. I don't have the space here to discuss his argument.

about the performance. But if you did that, you couldn't stay with your friend, and you then couldn't go at all. Your options are to decide to go now on the somewhat meager evidence that the play is interesting, or not to go at all. Given that you don't have the option to make a more informed decision, you may find that deciding to go is your best option (even though it is possible that you will find out on the train to London when you read the reviews that you were mistaken – and you know that this may happen). So the reason to form an intention *now* is that you will lose a potentially attractive option if you don't. The sparse evidence may be sufficient given the availability and the value of your options.

The pragmatic considerations Schroeder appeals to are neither reasons to act, nor are they 'state-given' reasons to intend. Remember that I called reasons state-given when there is a reason to intend, because it would be good to have a particular intention independently of there being a reason to act as intended.

But the reason to decide now is not a reason to form any particular intention. It is what is says on the tin: a reason to make up your mind now – nothing more. It is not that there is value in your having the intention to go (say) – not even from your friend's perspective. She needs to know whether you are going to come (not whether you've formed an intention).⁶³ Reasons of this kind abound: reasons to make up one's mind because retrieving further information will be too costly; reasons not to do so because there is no rush, and further information may come in; reasons to decide now because doing so would please or assist another person, and so on. We always decide under conditions of limited resources of time, energy and information, and the expectations and needs of others matter in the way Schroeder describes. But none of this determines the content of the resulting decision – it just bears on when to make it.⁶⁴

Schroeder focuses exclusively on future-directed intentions. His explanation of his so-called state-given reasons follows on from his general explanation of the 'point' of forming such intentions: "According to a natural hypothesis, intention is an attitude whose point is to close off deliberation, in order to allow us to coordinate and control our own actions across time and make decisions at times at which we have more available cognitive resources."⁶⁵ If we were to focus on intention-in-action as the central case, such a thought wouldn't have seemed remotely plausible. Even if we were to grant that forming future-directed intentions sometimes depends on the various conditions that Schroeder describes, the examples only add a gloss to the instrumental reasons for intending that I discussed earlier.

⁶³ To the degree that forming an intention will make it more likely that you carry out your plan, we'll encounter again the instrumental reason for forming intentions here.

⁶⁴ Schroeder (2013) retorts in his reply to Shah and Silverstein that in certain cases the pragmatic considerations bear on which intention to form: if (say) there is, as you know, further information coming in, and it would be reasonable to wait, then the uniquely rational thing to do may be to abstain from forming an intention now. This answer trades on an ambiguity: it treats 'abstaining from forming an intention' as if it were itself a form of intending. But it is not. It is deciding not to form an intention now.

⁶⁵ Schroeder (2012), p. 483. Possibly, something like this is true of decisions. The difference between deciding and intending is most salient for intention-in-action. The intention-in-action guides the action, *after* the agent decided what to do.

However, the instrumental reason already shows that something of the kind Schroeder is after is indeed true: there are reasons that are provided by the value of having the intention, but they are standard reasons in the sense that they can be followed directly. The instrumental reason is sufficient to show that one of the assumptions of the current debate, namely that only reasons to act are standard reasons to intend, is false.

6. Non-standard reasons

How can we explain the behavior of non-standard reasons then? Take the following example:

The New Date. Paul has arranged to take a new love interest to the cinema tomorrow night. This date makes him really nervous and jittery – and things are likely to deteriorate until tomorrow night. If he knew that his good friend Ellie intended to come to the cinema as well, he would feel a lot calmer. Ellie knows this, but she has no interest in seeing the film, and she doesn't believe that her actual presence would do Paul any good. It may be awkward or, at best, it would be irrelevant. So she has no reason to go to cinema tomorrow. But she has a reason to intend to go, because it would help Paul to calm down now.

This, it seems, is a genuine state-given reason to intend to go to the cinema: it would be good to have the intention. It is also a reason that Ellie can't follow directly: she cannot form the intention to go to the cinema for this reason. She could try to deceive herself into thinking that she would like to see the film, even though it isn't true, or she could promise Paul to be there, creating a reason for herself in this way. But she cannot intend to go to the cinema for the reason that her intending this would calm Paul's nerves, knowing that there will be no reason for her to go when the time comes.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ McClennen (1990) claims that we have an ability to form resolutions which he regards as a kind of intention: if Ellie were to resolve to go, then she could both form the intention and go tomorrow (even though there wouldn't be a reason for her to go). I'm not aware of this psychological ability, and at any rate, it looks like a case of having one's cake and eating it too: if the resolution is an ordinary intention, it remains true that Ellie shouldn't go tomorrow (because there is no reason for her to go); if it is different from an ordinary intention – something that creates a reason for her to go tomorrow -, we still need to know how it relates to intentions and what it is. – Compare these 'resolutions' to resolving to follow a policy: perhaps in my earlier example, Chocolate Hazard, Carl ought to resolve, as a policy, not to eat any sweets for the next two months. Following policies of this kind rigidly may well be possible, even in cases where there is no reason to follow them on a particular occasion (because it wouldn't make a difference with regard to the intended outcome, say). The reason for following the policy even then would be that one's resolve will be undermined if one starts to decide on a case-by-case basis, and the result will be that one fails to reach one's goal. Holton (2009) provides an illuminating discussion of the rationale for forming resolutions, and of their nature. But the explanation doesn't apply in the current example (or in the Toxin Puzzle): Ellie will realize all her goals perfectly well if she forms an intention now, and then doesn't follow it tomorrow – even though nothing changes between now and tomorrow, and she knows all of this now. The reason for following the policy rigidly (in Chocolate Hazard) is a reason for following it in the particular

But with just a small amendment to the example, Ellie could follow the reason directly: imagine she would actually quite like to see the film – and this is not the result of self-deception. She believes that the film promises to be really interesting. Now the fact that Paul would feel a lot calmer if she formed the intention to go could be her reason to form the intention and then go tomorrow (rather than on some other day). Calming Paul could even be her reason to go at all. After all, there are many films that Ellie would quite like to see, but doesn't have the time to go to. That it would be good if she had this intention could be decisive for making the time to actually go. So the alleged 'wrong' reason that it would calm Paul down, if Ellie intended to go as well, has changed its stripes: it has turned from a reason that cannot be followed directly into a reason that can be followed directly. It pulls its weight as a reason, since without it Ellie wouldn't have decided to go tomorrow, or to go at all. What made all the difference is the presence of a reason to act as intended which, on its own, would not have been decisive for Ellie to intend to go.

One hypothesis for explaining why state-given reasons cannot be followed directly could be that they are, when unaccompanied by reasons to act as intended, insufficient.⁶⁷ But that doesn't seem convincing. After all, they can be extremely strong reasons (as in the Toxin Puzzle, on which the **New Date** is modeled) and they can stand unopposed. It would be hard to see in such cases why they wouldn't be sufficient for forming an intention. Furthermore, we have seen already that we are sometimes quite good at forming intentions for insufficient reasons, as in weakness of will cases. So the peculiar inability to follow the state-given reason directly cannot be explained in this way.

Nonetheless, the explanation of the peculiar nature of these reasons should start from the observation that any reason to intend can be followed directly only if it is accompanied by a reason to act as intended. This makes all the difference in the **New Date**, as well as for the state-given instrumental reasons to intend that I described earlier. They are always necessarily accompanied by a reason to act as intended: there is an instrumental reason to form an intention only because intending to act makes it more likely that the agent will act as she independently has reason to do. There wouldn't be an instrumental reason to form an intention, unless there was a reason to act. This explains why there is no problem with following instrumental reasons of this kind directly, even though they are state-given.

It is not possible, it seems, to form a future-directed intention, knowing that, if nothing changes, there will be no reason to act on the intention when the time of action comes. It might be useful to remember McDowell's thought here that a future-directed intention morphs into an intention in action, provided that the agent doesn't change her mind or forget the intention, and keeps time. The same intention, the future-directed intention, becomes an intention in action, under those conditions. This may help understanding why it is a condition on forming future-

case: acting on the resolution produces overall the best result. In Toxin Puzzle cases this is not so. McClennen doesn't seem to notice this discrepancy between the two scenarios.

⁶⁷ McHugh (2013).

directed intentions that it must be true that the agent believes there to be some reason for acting as intended. But in Toxin puzzle cases, the agent knows that there will be no reason in favour, and even a reason against, acting on the future-directed intention. There is no butterfly, intention in action, that the caterpillar, future-directed intention could become – at least not if the agent is rational, and responds appropriately to the reasons she believes to have. And she knows this ahead of time. So she cannot rationally form the future-directed intention.

7. Conclusion

Actions are often done with an intention. In those cases, there always is something that the agent takes to be a reason for acting as she does, and that reason explains the intention. Intentions are closely related to reasons in this way. The explanation of an intention reveals what the agent takes to be a reason for acting as she did. But it would be a mistake to conclude that therefore reasons to act are reasons to intend. We haven't found any cases in which the reason to intend simply derives from the reason to act, and we have seen that in many case not intending to do what you believe you have sufficient, or even conclusive reason to do isn't irrational.

In addition, there are sometimes state-given reasons to intend. They seem to be good reasons for forming a future-directed intention, and they raise the question why we cannot follow them directly. I ventured a tentative answer to this question.⁶⁸

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