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## Intention and Motivation

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# ***Intention and Motivation***

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# Intention and Motivation

By

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## 1. Introduction: Locating the topic, and its significance

What is the role of intentions in the actions<sup>2</sup> intended? What do they contribute, and how do they contribute to the occurrence of the intended actions?<sup>3</sup>

The paper will offer an account of acting with an intention and of having an intention to act. It will not offer an account of intentional action, merely suggesting that when intentional actions are not actions done with an intention, their explanation as intentional relates to that of actions with intentions, showing how like them and unlike them they are. Motivation will be discussed mainly to distinguish its role in leading to action from the role played by intentions.

It would help in discussing our question(s) to bear in mind the broad significance in people's life of the actions to which they relate. To put it loosely, these actions are special in being the ways in which people can deliberately affect, or try to affect, how things are in the world, including in their own life. Needless to say, the success of a person's life, meaning here how good it is for that person, depends on much else. It is affected by what he picks up about himself and the world without even noticing, just in virtue of being awake. It is affected by events affecting his body, by his bodily sensations, and by his perceptions, including those that are involuntary. It is coloured by his emotional reactions to what is happening to him without his involvement at all, or with involuntary participation on his part. But deliberately to affect how things are one needs to act, or, given that deliberately letting things happen is one way of deliberately affecting how things are, omit to act. Not all

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for helpful comments to Felix Koch, Jay Wallace, Jan Gertken and other participants in Jay Wallace's colloquium at the Humboldt University, Berlin, where an earlier version of the paper was discussed.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the paper I will use 'actions' to include activities and omissions, as well as mental actions.

<sup>3</sup> The paper complements, develops, and slightly modifies some points made in 'Intention and Value' (forthcoming, currently available on SSRN).

our actions and omissions do deliberately affect how things are. Many are, in one way or another, failures that happen in the course of attempting deliberately to affect how things are: we may aim to do one thing and by mistake do another. Or, in the course of doing or attempting an action we may accidentally (also) do another. Or, our action may just fail, or backfire and never affect things as we set out to do. There is also a second class of actions that never, as I shall say prejudicially, rise to the level of deliberately affecting or attempting to affect how things are. These divide into many subclasses. There are expressive actions, like shouting in surprise, or banging one's head in self-reproach, which express our attitudes and emotions, while not having any purpose, not even to express what they express. There are actions we do in complete indifference regarding their actual meaning or outcomes. There is what we do because we are living organisms, like breathe, or blush, smile, or tense up, mostly without even being aware that we have done them, but they are actions that we can, if we try, suppress or modify at least to a certain degree. There are other classes and subclasses. They are, some of them, of great significance for people's self-image, and for the ways people are perceived by others. Some people are accident-prone; others are transparent, as their body postures and facial expressions reveal their thoughts and feelings all too clearly. Some are pedantic and meticulously self-controlled, while others are relaxed, more happy-go-lucky. Actions of these classes contribute to making people what they are in these and related ways. It is worth remembering, as I am about to focus on actions taken deliberately to change or preserve how things are, that other actions, though in some ways perhaps less developed, are nonetheless of great importance in people's lives.

That having been said, it is significant that many of the actions that do not constitute, and do not lead to any deliberate impact on how things are, are related to actions that do: some of them are failed attempts. Others are unintended consequences of actions deliberately aimed to affect things in certain ways. Others still are marginal cases of acts aimed at a specific effect (as when the agents are indifferent whether the intended impact is achieved or not). This is hardly surprising. We have an abiding interest in affecting how things are with ourselves and beyond, and we can only secure such effects at will by our actions (including activities and omissions).<sup>4</sup> Those actions of ours that aim to achieve such results are undertaken for a purpose, the purpose being that the act shall constitute or secure a result of a particular kind, which may be very specific (to chew the bread in our mouth) or much

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<sup>4</sup> Using von Wright's distinction between results and consequences in **Norm and Action**.

more general and unspecific (to place us in a situation where advantageous options will come our way).

## 2. Some basic distinctions

The divide between actions for a purpose and other actions is one of two major divides among types of actions, considered in light of our actual or possible impact on the world. It is tempting to identify actions taken with a purpose or for a purpose with intentional actions, the intention being to achieve the purpose. However, there are quite a few kinds of intentional actions that are not done for a purpose. There are at least two radically different kinds of actions that are intentional but that are not done for a purpose. One kind, identified by Bentham in his account of responsibility, is the bringing about of foreseen but unintended results or consequences, which are performed while also doing something for a purpose.<sup>5</sup> The second class are actions that are independent of any action with a purpose, and that one could control, but as one does not do them to secure a purpose, they require, and typically enjoy, less attention from the agent. Similarly, there is no particular way in which they should be performed, and typically deviation from any pattern of performance does not indicate a flaw or a mistake in their performance. This does not mean, however, that their performance, or the ability to perform them, is unimportant, or that it is of mere marginal importance in the life of people.

Which kinds of actions belong with the second kind is controversial. A relatively uncontroversial kind are expressive actions.<sup>6</sup> Arguably actions like doodling are also intentional, though they too do not have a purpose, and are often undertaken without fully noticing that one is performing them.<sup>7</sup> The expression 'actions taken for a purpose' is

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<sup>5</sup> They are not always considered intentional. By and large the bringing about of those consequences is intentional if foreseen with certainty or close to certainty. Bentham writes that an act may be said to be obliquely or collaterally intentional regarding its consequence if "the consequence was in contemplation, and appeared likely to ensue in case of the act being performed", but that was not part of what determined the agent to act. INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALS AND LEGISLATION, edited by J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart (Methuen: London & New York, 1970) p. 86. I suspect that while often what one 'intends obliquely' is not something that one intends to do, sometimes it would be appropriate to say that it is – much depends on the proximity of the unintended aspect of the action to its intended aspects, and on the point of the relevant discourse.

<sup>6</sup> Hursthouse, R. 'Arational Actions', *Journal of Philosophy* 1991 (88) 57. See also Raz, J. 'Agency, Reason and the Good' in *Engaging Reason*, Oxford: O.U.P. 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Though typically actions of which the actor says something like 'I did it for no reason' are typically done for a reason, though perhaps an unremarkable one, or a reason to do something, where other kinds of action would have done as well.

roughly co-referential with 'actions taken with an intention', and we may use them interchangeably.

So, 'X  $\phi$ -ed intentionally' does not entail that X had an intention to  $\phi$ . Having intentions means being set to act for a relatively specific purpose. Why not merely being set to perform a particular action? No reason; that is not what is excluded by the requirement. One's purpose can be to perform that (kind of) action. What is excluded is having no purpose in performing the (intentional) action, performing it without having in mind anything to achieve, not even to achieve its performance.

Is it that having an intention to  $\phi$  without having a purpose for the sake of which one is set to  $\phi$  is irrational? Or is it impossible? According to the account I will shortly develop it is impossible: if one acts with an intention (or if one has an intention to act) one acts for a purpose (or one has a purpose to be achieved by that action) the default being the purpose of performing that action. It is so in virtue of the nature of intentions. In saying this I am taking 'intention' and its cognates to refer to a psychological phenomenon, but I am not assuming that all utterances of the word do so, not even all linguistically acceptable utterances of the word, not even when they are used to refer (think, e.g., of the intention of parliament). This paper is not concerned with either language use or word meaning.

The second fundamental divide between kinds of actions (the first being between action with an intention and other actions) is between actions, or more broadly: things we do, that we can control, and those we cannot. Those we can control we can take or avoid for a purpose, even though on some occasions they are performed but not for a purpose. Those we cannot control we cannot take for a purpose.<sup>8</sup> Arguably, the kinds of action that we can control, whether or not any instance of the actions of these kinds is controlled, and that are therefore actions that it is possible to perform with an intention, are actions that are performed by us, whereas actions that we cannot control are performed by our bodies or part of our bodies: I smile, sometimes involuntarily, sometimes purposefully, but my stomach digests.<sup>9</sup> If this is so it underlies the centrality of having intentions and acting with

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<sup>8</sup> Both distinctions are matters of degree, and both admit of wide margins of indeterminacy.

<sup>9</sup> The boundary between what we do and what happens to us is, naturally, vague, and so is the degree of control we can exert over various happenings. That I stumble was not my doing (except when I stumble deliberately). Perhaps that I slipped on the way to the door was my doing, or perhaps it was not. It is possible that I would not have slipped had I paid more attention to what I was doing. So perhaps it is something I did, at least when that condition obtains.

intentions to our understanding of human actions, and to the ways in which we are active rather than passive.

These divisions downplay the importance of the distinction between intentional actions and those that are not intentional. Merely intentional actions, that is actions that are intentional but are not performed for any purpose, share many characteristics of intentions, including possibly their motivations. They are, like actions done for a purpose, actions that we are responsible for, and thus they share the conditions of responsibility, though there may be assessments of actions that are unique to actions done for a purpose.

### 3. Motivation

The intentions people have are relevant to the explanation of why they act as they intend to act. Moreover, intentions are part of what produces the action, as we may awkwardly say, meaning that they feature in the explanation of actions as a cause (a causal factor) of the action. That much is clear from the fact that propositions of the kind 'X  $\phi$ -ed because he intended to  $\phi$ ' can be straightforwardly true. That an act was intentional does not imply any significant information about why it was performed, or about what caused it. For example, the same expressive act, let us say banging the table, may be caused by anger or frustration or exasperation etc. However, if an action is done with an intention the intention is relevant to its explanation in a more informative way: The intention is a causal factor of the action, and its content plays a role in the explanation of the act. So, of course, is also the motivation that led to the action.

Needless to say, not all causal factors that explain actions are part of their motivations. One may drop a glass because the heat makes one's hands slippery, or because one is anxious. But neither the sweat or the heat nor the anxiety do motivate the action, nor do they motivate the person to act as he did. These are causal factors regarding which the agent is passive. Neither do all factors regarding which agents are active belong with their motivation. For example, that the agent understands that the gun is loaded or that he falsely believes that it is loaded are causal factors, and are part of the explanation, for his removing the gun from children, but they do not motivate such actions.

Informally speaking, motivations are psychological states, dispositions etc. that incline one to take an action of a particular kind, that prompt one to perform a particular kind of action. They can motivate a deliberate action with a purpose (inviting a friend to dinner) or an

intentional expressive action, done with no purpose in mind (banging the table in frustration, touching one's hair in anxiety<sup>10</sup> about one's appearance).

Naturally, reasons to do something can motivate one to do it: that I will have a higher salary if I accept a new job offer may well motivate me to accept it. When an action is motivated by a reason for it the motivation would include other conditions, or – as we would also say – there are additional motivations, which explain what about the agent's psychology enables him to respond to, to be motivated by, a reason of that kind. For example, I might have been motivated by a love of luxury, or by being disposed to pursue luxury at the expense of stability. Or, I may have been motivated by fear of loss of respect from colleagues if I did not accept, what would commonly be regarded as, a superior offer. The motivations, we may say, constitute a chain: one specifying the other, and they may constitute several chains. Some of the chains may parallel chains of reasons: the pleasure of luxury leading in the instant case to the value of the higher income that will facilitate its attainment. But not all motivations need parallel chains of reasons.

It may occur to one that reasons are mere shadows of motivations. That thought may betray a mistake about the way motivations work. A motivation to perform an action may be the push factor featuring in an explanation of the action, if it were performed. But it can never constitute the whole explanation. It works, when it does, in combination with other causal factors and they explain how the motivation succeeded in leading to the action. Other factors may explain how the motivation overcame fear, anxiety, laziness or other such inhibitors and distractors. They explain how the agent identified that the circumstances make performance of that action possible, how conflicts between diverse and incompatible motivations were resolved and more.

The fact that an action was done for a reason provides one kind of explanation for the effectiveness of the motivation for it. It means that the agent considered whether to perform the action and 'approved' (metaphorically speaking) its performance, though it does not specify the extent of the deliberation, which could have been elaborate consideration of the cases for and against the action but could also have been merely that the agent's rational powers were alert and alerted to the possibility of that action and did not stop it from going ahead. Nor does it indicate the strength of the 'approval'. I will explain this point below.

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<sup>10</sup> Note that here the anxiety has a different causal role than in the example above.



First note that there are two ways in which motivation can be related to reasons, and any number of combinations and variations on these two. In simple cases the agent, aware (or thinking that he is) that he is motivated to pursue some purpose (without that motivation being based on a belief in the value of being so motivated or the value of the purpose), deems its satisfaction to be good (either because it is good to satisfy the motivation and reduce its hold on him – while unsatisfied it may be distracting, paralysing, painful, etc. – or because the purpose it aims at is good) and acts on it. In the other kind of case, the agent, believing that there is some good in the action (or in intending or in trying to perform it) is motivated for that reason to perform it. To illustrate: I may hate Jeremy. My hatred may motivate me to be careless with his safety, when, let us say, I repair his car. In that case, while I repair the car intentionally, I negligently fail to observe all the safety checks required in this kind of repair. The hatred motivates my neglect, possibly unconsciously, but it does not involve any intention. The hatred may also make me refuse his request to look after his cat while he is away for the weekend. Here too I may be unaware of my hatred. I think that I am motivated by something else (my need to look after my baby perhaps) whereas in fact I am motivated by (or also by) the hatred. My reason, as I believe, for refusing the request is to make sure that I look after my baby.<sup>11</sup> But it could be different and my reason could be that my hatred is justified, and should guide my action towards him. In that case, my reason is to treat him as he should be treated, being hateful as he is. Here the hatred, approved by my rational powers, becomes the reason that motivates my intention. Things are different when the recognition of the value of the action comes first: I learn of a stunningly beautiful and innovative theatrical event, and learn that there is reason to go to it. Given that that reason chimes in with my taste for the theatre (it would have been different had I learned of a beautiful and innovative pop concert, given that I have no taste for pop) I intend to go to the event for the reason that it is so good (in those ways). The strength or stringency of many reasons depends on agents' tastes and/or their ability to appreciate and enjoy whatever is good in the action. Given that one's 'approval' of an action depends on one's view of the alternatives to it, the 'approval' may be qualified, at times conditional (conditioned by various factors), including the mood of the agents when the opportunity to act arises. Furthermore, often the 'approval' will be in light of an awareness that there are

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<sup>11</sup> For intentional actions in which the believed reason is a masking reason, masking the agent's motivation from him, see my 'The Guise of the Bad' **Journal of Ethics and Social Policy** X(3) July 2016.

other options available to the agent that are no worse. In such cases, the formation of the intention is not dictated by the value of the choice. Some other process determines which motivation dominates, though all that is subject to the agent's 'approval' of it or its object, whichever way it may be reached.

#### 4. Intentions: preliminaries

Do intentions motivate? I intend to visit John next Saturday. What motivates me to do so? Perhaps that I miss him, or that I need to inform him of new developments in our company, etc. Those facts may also motivate my forming the intention to visit him, but that intention cannot motivate my visiting him. It comes too late, it is formed when I am already motivated, and because of that motivation. Nor does the intention become my motivation once I have it. The intention lapses if my motivation evaporates – I will return to this point later. True, as we noted, sometimes people correctly say that they did what they did because they intended to do so. Such statements point out that the act was done for a purpose, and therefore that the agent was motivated to pursue that purpose. But it does not tell one what the motivation was.

It would seem that on the one hand intending to perform an act is part of the causal factors that, if the act is performed with that intention, bring about its performance, but its role in bringing about the performance is not in motivating it. That is not in itself surprising. We saw that acts that were done because the agents were motivated to do them are caused by the motivation alongside other factors. But what are intentions and what role in as it were the production of an action done with an intention do they play?

First, *what kind of thing are intentions?* Are they mental states, actions, events, dispositions or what? I agree with those who reject all such possibilities, taking intentions to be *sui generis*. They are, one might say, a condition of the agents who have them. Nothing is gained by using the expression 'condition of the agent' rather than the common ones: 'I intend to ...', 'I have the intention to ...'. Of course, saying that intentions are *sui generis* implies that they are not susceptible of a reductive explanation. It does not imply that they are some sort of basic mental element. Intentions are manifested in and constituted by a myriad of other mental and physical conditions: they involve beliefs, imaginings, dispositions, alertness and others, as is appropriate to the specific intention concerned and the conditions of the agents. We can provide illustrations of what constitutes having some intention in some

circumstances, but we are far from having a general theory that would enable us to state generally what having intentions consists in. The explanation of intentions offered here consists of illustrations that are chosen to bring out the relations between intending to do something in the future and acting with an intention.

Second, *what are the objects of intentions?* The paper considers actions, activities and omissions as objects of intentions. But I can intend to be at home tonight, though being at home is neither an action nor an omission. And I can intend my son to graduate next year, or intend never to mix business with friendship (intend that my life will conform to this principle), or never to be in debt. Reflection on such cases shows that they entail an intention to do something to secure the condition intended. Such cases can be regarded as abbreviated statements that one intends the action that will secure that condition, when its nature is implied by the condition, given the context of the statement of the intention. They are particularly apt when the act intended is rather unspecific, perhaps merely to see to it that the condition obtains if I can help it. That is supported (and in turn supports) the explanation of intentions as involving being guided by a purpose, as will be seen below.

Third and final preliminary, *who can have intentions?* Obviously, agents and only agents, but not all agents. My heart pumps along, but with no intention to do so or anything else. Given that having a purpose is essential to having intentions, and that most of the other essential properties of intentions follow from it, we can safely say that only agents who can have purposes can have intentions.<sup>12</sup> The capacity to have a purpose involves a capacity to pursue a purpose, which is a complex capacity: (a) an ability to understand (at least to some degree) the nature of the purpose, (b) an ability to have some idea of how it can be pursued, and (c) enough ability to recognise one's environment to enable one to form a reasonably accurate judgement on whether it allows for the pursuit of the purpose and how, and (d) enough control of oneself and the environment to engage in such a pursuit such that its success, if it succeeds, may be due to the skills of the agent in doing whatever it is he was doing.

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<sup>12</sup> The paper discusses intentions of animals that can have intentions. There are other agents capable of having purposes and intentions. Most notably, there can be group agents, e.g. people of Nicaragua, the inhabitants of London, the students of Oxford, and rule-constituted agents, e.g., corporations, states, universities, clubs. The account given in the paper helps in understanding when and how they act with intentions, but it cannot apply to them without modification. Regarding non-human agents: see some observations in my article INTENTION AND VALUE.

Some people would say that I forgot to include a capacity to adopt purposes, and a capacity to abandon them if they get one nowhere. There is a case for arguing that for some kinds of purposes, having the capacity to have them involves a capacity to abandon them when there is no point in pursuing them anymore. It is the concomitant of the ability to determine when to pursue and how. Though, perhaps the pursuit of some purposes would, given the nature of the purpose, run into the sand fairly quickly when unsuccessful, and the question of abandoning them never arises.

Analogously, given that some purposes cannot be pursued except through adopting and pursuing subsidiary purposes, the capacity to have such purposes involves a capacity to adopt appropriate sub-purposes. Some purposes are simple or direct enough not to require such a capacity. None of these considerations requires that all an agent's purposes will be adopted by it. A robot may have purposes implanted in it and it may develop intentions to pursue them. And so can living animals. They may be born with a disposition that once triggered causes them to have a purpose not of their own choosing, not one adopted by their own will. And the same is true of some of the purposes of human beings. The objection may be raised that unless people choose their purposes they are not really theirs, or they are not authentically theirs. But in these cases, as in others, the genuineness or authenticity of purposes is manifested in the attitude the agents have to them as demonstrated by the ways they are pursued and by attitudes independent of their actual pursuit.

#### 5. From purpose to intention: being decided

Intentions involve having a purpose, and that implies that the purposes affect one in a special way. One who has a purpose to perform an action or to see some other end realised, intends that action or intends to bring about or facilitate that end. Whoever intends to perform an action has a purpose in doing so, which can be just to do the action (or to intend to do it<sup>13</sup>) but it could also be to achieve some other end that that action (as he believes) will achieve or facilitate.

One who has a purpose is motivated to pursue it, and that motivation overcomes the inhibiting and distracting factors, and pro tem overcomes conflicting motivations. As we noted, the motivation and therefore the purpose it sustains, may cause one to do something

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<sup>13</sup> See, for the explanation of this possibility, my discussion of the toxin puzzle in **From Normativity to Responsibility** p. 51-52

accidentally, or be a causal factor in doing something accidentally. There are also the myriad ways in which a purpose may motivate or bias agents (epistemically and practically) subconsciously. Assuming, however, that there are no subconscious intentions<sup>14</sup>, the paper is concerned only with the way purposes contribute to having intentions through these purposes being known, and consciously pursued.<sup>15</sup>

What makes the difference when we intend to pursue a purpose, what makes such cases cases of having an intention? Some people say that having an intention is the beginning of performing the intended action, that it is itself an activity.<sup>16</sup> In thinking about these matters it is important to bear in mind that while sometimes we come to have intentions by an action, by forming the intention, at other times this is not the case. We just come to have them, sometimes without even noticing. At a certain point we may realise that we have an intention. Or we may have had them for a long time without realising that that is so. However, the crucial point is that even when we form them, having the intentions, once formed, is not an action or an activity.

The objection to the Thomson-Moran-Stone view is that it is factually false. We have intentions to do things in the future while we are not doing them or beginning to do them. The motivation for the view is not sensitivity to our experience, but a theoretical point that can be put by saying that in intending to  $\phi$  we have already started moving towards  $\phi$ -ing; we are already closer to  $\phi$ -ing than we were before we had the intention. That seems to me a cogent point and explaining it is the main difficulty in explaining an intention. The core of the explanation is simple: There is a step or a stage, call it what you will, in any action done

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<sup>14</sup> I am using 'subconscious' in a way that implies some psychological resistance to bringing what is subconscious to one's conscious awareness. Needless to say, as is the case with beliefs, assumptions, etc., one is not always aware of one's intentions, and one may come to have them or to abandon them without being aware of the fact at the time. The difficulty with the thought that intentions can be unconscious is that the repression involved appears inconsistent with agents' 'approving' of their intentions or of the pursuit of their object. I take no position on that issue.

<sup>15</sup> Having a purpose should not be confused with being attracted to something or believing that there is some point, value, in securing it. One can be attracted to something without it being one's purpose or goal to secure it, and one can believe that it has value without having such a purpose.

<sup>16</sup> These views are inspired by Anscombe, E., **Intention**, Blackwell's 1963, cf. pp.90ff; for subtle recent versions see Thompson, M., **Life and Action**, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008; and Moran, R. and Stone, M., 'Anscombe on Expression of Intention,' in **New Essays on the Explanation of Action**, C. Sandis (ed.), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 132.

for a purpose that occurs whenever one has the intention for that action, even if that intention is held prior to the action. That is, though this is only a rough first approximation, actions done for a purpose where the intention to perform them was conceived and held ahead of the time of the action (and I mean more than merely briefly before the action) are somewhat different from actions for a purpose performed with no prior intention – there is an element in the latter that is missing in the former because it has already taken place when the agent conceived the intention to perform it. What is the difference?

I will call it ‘being decided’, being decided to pursue that purpose, using the expression somewhat stipulatively to indicate a condition (of the agent) without any implication regarding the way one came to be in it. For example, without an implication that one is decided because one has reached a decision, normally after some deliberation. One may go to sleep undecided and wake up decided, and one may be unaware of the fact, having forgotten that the indecision was there. Being decided does, of course, imply that there is no need to decide. It does not mean that one cannot or should not decide, one can always revisit one’s purposes; but as things are one is already decided. Nor does it mean that one will remain decided to pursue this purpose until one either acts or decides not to. We often slip in and out of that condition unnoticed; both acquiring and abandoning intentions can happen in such ways.

Can we describe the psychological features in which being decided manifests itself? Many are contingent on the individual concerned. The following three may be essential:

One continues to accept the acceptability of pursuing the purpose. This may involve belief, not necessarily expressed in these terms, that the case for pursuing the purpose is not defeated by contrary factors. Possibly, this condition may be weaker than a belief, consisting merely in the fact that one’s acceptance of the pursuit of the purpose is close to one’s awareness, is easily recalled to mind, etc., and that acceptance has not been reversed or rejected.

Second, one is alert to opportunities for performing the act that one is decided to perform, alert to the occurrence of circumstances in which its performance is possible (that is, circumstances in which one is likely to do it if one tries) and in which the cost, the adverse consequences of doing it are relatively small.

Third, one is alert to the occurrence of changes, or the likely occurrence of changes, that will make performing the act less advantageous or that would facilitate its performance, i.e. making it more likely when tried. And by the same token one is alert to changes that

improve one's knowledge of whether existing conditions facilitate performance of the act or make it more or less advantageous.

Being alert means being primed to notice and react. It is a condition that can be dormant and inactive for a long time, but when something one is alert to occurs one becomes aware of it and can react as appropriate. What is appropriate depends on the circumstances and on the capacities of understanding and action of the agents concerned.<sup>17</sup>

Being decided does not include any emotional reactions – it may be accompanied by many and diverse ones, or none. It does not include any other preparations to perform the actions. Some may be undertaken or none. They are not essential to having an intention. It includes a psychological orientation made to lead to the action, by alerting agents to an appropriate or right time to perform the action, and a system of alerts that may help to steer agents away from a course that would make acting with the intention impossible or more difficult or costlier, and alert agents to a course that would facilitate performing the action, or simply alert them that the pros and cons of maintaining the intention may change.

Two omissions may be alleged: first, I did not explain the way in which intentions are normative, and this includes failure to explain how they motivate the intended action.

Second, I did not explain how we come to have intentions, only what they consist in once we have them. I'll take the second objection first.

#### 6. From purpose to intention: How do we become decided?

The characterisation of being decided has implications regarding conditions that must obtain for intentions to be formed. Most importantly for our purpose, agents can only intend to perform actions that they believe that they know how to perform or how to attempt to perform. Therefore, agents can only have intentions if they believe that they know something about the conditions in which the actions can be performed.

Incidentally, this condition does not apply to having a purpose. Agents who do not have any idea about the conditions in which an action can be performed can have the purpose of performing it. Having a purpose is closer to having a vague aspiration to perform the action,

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<sup>17</sup> Jay Wallace suggested to me that motivations may involve the very same systems of alert that I attribute to intentions. Other psychological conditions may well involve their own systems of alerts. But motivations do not involve the alert conditions I listed above. I may be motivated to pursue a goal that I know to be too unlikely ever to be realized (climbing Everest). In such a case it will, typically, not be accompanied by these alerts. The same is true when my motivation is believed by me to be unacceptable, or just decisively defeated by contrary reasons.

at some time, than to having an intention. Intentions require more knowledge about what is required for their fulfilment. Those who have a purpose have some related intentions, but they can be no more than the intention to find out what it would take to achieve it.

Back to the question how do agents come to have or to form intentions? What needs explaining is how an agent with various motivations, and therefore inclined towards various possible purposes, comes to have the intention to pursue one of those purposes. There is no simple explanation that applies to all cases, and no single type of explanation.

Explanations are likely to turn on the inter-relations among the agent's motivations, his capacities and his circumstances. It could be that one of the motivations (perhaps 'the lust of the blood') came to dominate his mental horizon to the exclusion of all else, 'forcing' his will to pursue it (forcing 'a permission of the will'). Or it could be the extreme opposite, and total boredom and the lack of any ability to focus on anything, led the agent to pick on some trivial purpose that just happened to be easy to pursue at the moment. The variety of possible explanations is enormous. To make progress we need to identify general capacities that prioritise, probably conditionally, some of our purposes over others, perhaps in the way that we feel that fear of immediate danger silences any other purpose and mobilises the agent to flight or to fight. Though this is probably an extreme rather than a typical case, and in any case real psychology should take over from folk psychology at this point.

We are familiar, however, with one capacity crucial in that matter: Our rational faculties. Different agents, e.g., different animal species, have rational powers to various degrees. Our rational powers play a crucial role in coming to have intentions. During waking times our rational powers are always engaged, actively monitoring that changes in our beliefs, intentions, emotions are rationally ok. When the powers function properly they make sure that we form intentions when we have adequate reasons to do so, and we do not form intentions when there is no reason to do so. In these ways our rational powers contribute to the process of forming intentions, and in some cases they are decisive. But in many, probably most cases they are not. They screen out improper possible intentions, but they do not determine which of many possible purposes we should pursue: there is something to be said for each of them, and nothing to show that any is superior to the others. So, the rational powers are satisfied with any choice among such possible purposes. The choice itself, while influenced by our rational powers, is determined in other ways.

## 7. Do intentions involve commitments? – Part I:

Some people think that



(1) to intend to  $\phi$  is or involves being committed to  $\phi$ .

Others think that

(2) intending to  $\phi$  involves having, and being committed to, a plan about how to  $\phi$ , or a way of conducting oneself leading to or ending with  $\phi$ -ing.

Needless to say, the truth of such views depends in part on the meaning of ‘commitment’ as used in expressing these views. I will be interested only in commitments in the sense of undertakings that can be broken, where breaking them is, *pro tanto*, a fault, something that should not have happened. In other words, commitments, understood in this sense, are reasons to act as one is committed to act. If intentions are commitments, or if in any other ways they are practical reasons, that is if they are reasons to perform actions that possibly one had no reason independent of the intention to perform, then they are normative.

The normativity of intentions has been ably discussed by a number of authors. Quite a few take the view that intentions are normative.<sup>18</sup> Others deny that they are.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See for a variety of views of that kind the essays in Bruno Verbeek (ed.) **Reasons and Intentions**, : Routledge, 2016. As with a number of the contributions to this volume, sometimes intentions themselves are taken to be reasons for the people who have them to perform the intended action, and sometimes they are such reasons only if some conditions obtain, or along with other facts. See also Michael H. Robins, ‘Is It Rational to Carry out Strategic Intentions?’ **Philosophia** (Israel) 25, nos. 1–4 (1995): 191–221 Some writers focus on decisions in ways that suggest that the same is true of all intentions, e.g. C. Korsgaard (**Self-constitution**, Oxford:, 2009 – see p. 77 and elsewhere). In this she resembles authors who took intentions to be similar to or kinds of self-addressed commands: see Hector-Neri Castañeda **Thinking and Doing**, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, and A.J.P.Kenny **Action, Emotion and the Will** : Routledge 1973. Scanlon takes intentions to be tie-breaking reasons in Scanlon, T. M. ‘Reasons: A Puzzling Duality’ in R. J. Wallace, P. Pettit, S. Scheffler and M. Smith (eds.) **Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz** , Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004 p. 237.

<sup>19</sup> Or, use ‘normative’ in a different sense. Forming intentions involves one’s rational powers, and that may motivate some people to regard intentions as normative. Besides, intentions affect the direction of one’s attention (one is alert to some phenomena and not to others), and in doing so they affect which reasons one is attentive to (though not which reasons one should attend to). This too may induce people to think of intentions as normative. I use the term to indicate that what is normative is a reason or provides reasons. Finally, a person who ‘forms an intention’ and the next moment re-examines it, checks whether he really approves of the action, and does this again and again at short intervals, suffers from a neurotic anxiety that prevents him from forming intentions. When he is chronically reconsidering any intention he is not decided. Some people may think that if chronic indecision undermines one’s ability to hold intentions then dropping an intention soon after one formed it is inconsistent with having it in the first place, and shows that having an intention is a reason for not abandoning it. But that is, of course, a non-sequitur.

Long ago, I suggested that some intentions or the way they are formed are reasons for the intended act. I will call them decision-based intentions, or decisions for short.<sup>20</sup> The distinction between decision-based intentions and intentions that are not reasons for the intended act is not linguistic. The use of 'decision' is a guide, not a test – though it is an unfailing guide where group decisions and decisions of agents constituted by normative rules (states, corporations, universities, clubs etc.) are concerned. The difference can be established, e.g., by asking whether 'I have already decided to  $\phi$ , it is wrong, or inappropriate etc. to reopen the question' is ever a correct response to a request or attempt to revisit the decision. It is easiest to see the way decisions are normative when thinking of decisions of rule-constituted bodies. Take a mundane example: a social club provides a reading room with newspapers for its members. The list of newspapers provided has been decided yesterday by a vote of the club committee. One of its members is dissatisfied and proposes to drop two of the papers the committee decided to provide. He is told: 'but we have just decided this matter yesterday'. 'True, he says, but that is not a reason for including the two papers I object to. Reasons for them have to relate to the merit of having them here. That we have decided yesterday shows no merit in having them.' 'Indeed', the Chair of the committee replies. 'But it is a reason for not reconsidering the matter. You cannot run an organisation if its decisions can be challenged all the time.'

Whether one agrees with the Chair or not is immaterial. Everyone, I assume will recognise that that is a common response, that such responses are accepted as adequate by organisations and that is sufficient to show that they are reasons, for those organisations, against reconsidering (without restriction) matters settled by their own decisions.

Organisations take their decisions to be reasons against revising their decisions except where the rules and customs of the organisation permit.

At the time when I explained the way decisions are normative I advanced the view that they are normative by being a certain combination of first and second order reasons. This may or may not have been a successful analysis of their normative character. The success of that analysis is immaterial here. What matters is that decisions, being reasons for constraining the occasions on which it would be proper to revise the intentions based on them, belong with a special kind of reasons, which – following H.L.A. Hart – I called content-independent

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<sup>20</sup> "Reasons, Decisions and Norms", MIND [no of issue](1975) 481-499 and **Practical Reasons and Norms**, Oxford: OUP, 2nd ed.1990.

reasons, for their rationale is not based on the quality of the content of those intentions.<sup>21</sup> Besides,, the argument for decisions being such reasons does not depend on the value or utility of their being such reasons. The argument establishes that there is a coherent concept of decisions as normative, based on the coherent way in which many decisions are understood by those making and applying them. Whether or not any particular decision that is taken by those who make it to be a reason is indeed a valid reason, is a separate issue. Sometimes they are and sometimes, not. Some writers suggested that if intentions were not normative, planning and co-ordination, intra-personal or inter-personal, would have been impossible. I suspect that this is factually false. True, planning and co-ordination require some predictability of people's future conduct. But predictability is on safer grounds when it relies on people's dispositions and habits than on their commitments, even when they have commitments.

#### 8. Do intentions involve commitments? – Part II

Not all intentions are decision-based in the sense explained. Many are formed in contexts in which those who form them take themselves to be choosing among several acceptable options.

'Red or White?', 'Red, please', I say as I form the intention to drink red wine with my food. But by the time the host returns with the wine, I have changed my mind, and ask for white. Not because of any new information or a new assessment of the reasons for and against them, but simply because I now feel more like having white wine.

'I thought you intended to find opportunities to spend time with him, in order to get to know him better, and now you seem rather lukewarm, and more inclined to avoid his company. What happened?' 'Nothing, really. I don't know why but I am no longer interested in getting to know him'.

These are unremarkable examples, suggesting that, other things being equal, intentions are not normative. People, or many people, may be disposed towards stability and be disinclined to change intentions once formed. But that does not mean that they have reason to do so. But perhaps this view overlooks something. It may be thought that the fact that forming

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<sup>21</sup> See for the broader context Chapter Eight of **Between Authority and Interpretation** (Oxford: O.U.P. 2009). They provide content-independent justification for action, which is non-transitive, that is: that A is a reason for B and B a reason for C does not entail that A is a reason for C.

intentions or deciding to change them are intentional actions, and therefore done for a reason, implies that changing or abandoning one's intentions is also done by a (mental) action, and therefore can only be done for a reason, or at least that when it is done rationally it is done for what the agent takes to be a reason. However, this argument does not apply to the many intentions that one comes to have or that one discards without reflection and without even being aware of the change, at least not at the time it happened. Therefore, it fails to show that intentions as such are normative.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the fact that there is generally nothing wrong in changing one's intentions raises doubt about their normativity.

Needless to say, there can be reasons for and against having certain intentions, whatever way they are formed. Nor is it surprising that in some circumstances the having of one intention may be a reason against having another (e.g., their combination may lead to adverse reactions from other people).<sup>23</sup>

One variant of the normativity of intentions thesis takes an intention to  $\phi$  to be a reason to  $\phi$  because if you intend to  $\phi$  you are committed to maintain that intention, and therefore to act on it, unless there is reason to revise or abandon it. Bratman's Bootstrapping objection refutes a simple version of that view. If intentions were reasons for the action intended we would be able to manufacture reasons, for any actions, at will simply by forming intentions to perform them. This could not only provide, by the whim of agents, reasons to perform pointless actions, but will sometimes tip the balance, making an action there is conclusive reason not to perform into one that there is a conclusive reason to perform.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> There is nothing surprising in our ability to do something deliberately that we sometimes do without deliberation. I can deliberately think about my mother, but thinking about her may be prompted without deliberation, simply because something reminds me of her, etc.

<sup>23</sup> Some people think that beliefs are normative because (and I will assume that to be true) we have reason not to believe anything unless it is true (one ought to believe that  $p$  only if  $p$  is true). That does not show that beliefs are commitments nor that they constitute reasons of any kind. It does not show that beliefs are normative if normative means 'constitutes or provides reasons'. Some people think that we ought not have contradictory beliefs. That is false (For a detailed argument see my **From Normativity to Responsibility**, chapter 8: 'The myth of instrumental reason'), but even if it were true it would not show that, say, believing that  $p$  is a reason not to believe that not- $p$ . It will merely show that the fact that the conjunction of  $p$  and not- $p$  is false is reason not to believe that ( $p$  and not- $p$ ). I mention these points about beliefs as there are analogies, often exploited in the discussions of intentions, between them and beliefs. These analogies show that by their nature intentions, like beliefs, are subject to reasons. But that is not the issue explored here.

<sup>24</sup> See Michael Bratman, **Intentions, Plans and Practical Reason** : Harvard 1987, pp.

There is something to this objection but not as much as Bratman and Broome assume. For one thing, we cannot form intentions, or sustain ones that we have, at will. We can only have them when, as we see things, there is a reason for us to perform the intended action.<sup>25</sup> For another, the thought that a mental state or condition that is aimed at an action cannot change the reasons for that action is itself implausible.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned above, decisions, or some decisions, are a special kind of reasons for action. Still the bootstrapping argument shows that intentions that are not decisions are not reasons for the intended actions and those that are decisions are not ordinary reasons.

The debate about the normativity of intentions is not settled by that objection. Intentions may be reasons for something other than the intended action (perhaps a reason for the agent to believe that he or she would perform it, or a reason to facilitate performance of the intended action), or the intention may be a reason only along with other facts, or conditional on other facts. So, the road to realising the normative character of intentions may lie in the second view, that intending to  $\phi$  involves having a plan to  $\phi$ . That thesis, initiated by Bratman<sup>27</sup>, dominates much of the discussion in the area. At first blush it seems to be an exaggeration. The kernel of truth is that one can intend to  $\phi$  only if one has some knowledge of what  $\phi$ -ing is, and if, when  $\phi$ -ing is not a basic action, one has some idea how to try to  $\phi$ . Absent such knowledge one cannot be decided to  $\phi$ . But remembering that one can intend to  $\phi$  in the remote future, and that  $\phi$ -ing can be a relatively unspecified action (I intend to protect the interests of my grandchild, born yesterday, once he grows up and becomes independent) it appears that no plan need be involved.

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24-27 and following him John Broome, 'Are Intentions Reasons?' in Arthur Ripstein and Christopher Morris (eds), **Practical Rationality and Preference: Essays for David Gauthier** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Their arguments are improved upon by John Brunero 'Are Intentions Reasons?' ' **Pacific Philosophical Quarterly** 88 (2007) 424. At pp. 227-8 Brunero remarks how unlike ordinary reasons intentions would be were they reasons. He also warns against Broome's argument (*ibid.*) that if intentions are reasons they are self-justifying, noting that that is not the case if intentions to  $\phi$  are reasons to  $\phi$  rather than reasons to intend to  $\phi$ . Of course, if they are reasons for the intended action they are also reasons to intend in cases where that would facilitate the action, that is would help its performance.

<sup>25</sup> See my 'Intention and Value' and **From Normativity to Responsibility**, Oxford: OUP 2011 chapter 4.

<sup>26</sup> See Richard Holton, **Willing, Wanting, Waiting**, Oxford: OUP 2009, chapter 7; Ned MacLennan **Rationality and Dynamic Choice**, Cambridge: 1990. In one form or another these considerations are recognised by Bratman.

<sup>27</sup> See **Intentions, Plans and Practical Reason**.

But this may be too hasty. A closer look suggests, or so it is argued, that intentions are normative in that an intention to  $\phi$ , when combined with certain beliefs (e.g. that one would not  $\phi$  unless one first  $\psi$ s), is a reason to intend to  $\psi$ , because it would be irrational to intend to  $\phi$  while holding those beliefs without intending to  $\psi$ . Given the irrationality of that combination of intentions (or their absence) and beliefs, it is argued, there is a reason to avoid such an irrational combination.<sup>28</sup> I have argued elsewhere that the fact that something is or would be irrational is not a reason to avoid it and that we have no general reason to avoid contradictory or conflicting beliefs and intentions<sup>29</sup>, and Bratman's and others' attempts to show that they are reason-giving in the case of intentions are not yet convincing.

But am I not missing the crucial point? Being decided would, if my rational faculty functions well, alert me to circumstances relevant to the success of my intention, but it would do nothing to advance the success of the intention or protect it from failure. I learn that unless I  $\psi$  now I will be unable to  $\phi$  as intended. According to my account, it appears that that is it, so far as my intention goes. Of course, given that it is one of my purposes to  $\phi$ , I may  $\psi$ . But that has nothing to do with my intention. So far as my intention goes I could just do nothing. I agree that that is implausible, but it is not how things are according to my account. There are two ways to understand my account. First, intending to  $\phi$  is being decided to  $\phi$ , given that  $\phi$ -ing is a purpose of the agent, and because of that. Having that purpose is not part of the intention, but it is a presupposition of having the intention. So understood, my account of intention implies that if I know that  $\psi$ -ing is necessary to  $\phi$ -ing and I do not  $\psi$  then, depending on a more complete specification of the circumstances, either I abandoned my purpose to  $\phi$  or I am irrational. If I abandoned the purpose then I no longer intend to  $\phi$ , and my intention is also abandoned. There is a second way to understand my account, according to which intending to  $\phi$  consists in (a) having the purpose to  $\phi$ , and (b) being decided to  $\phi$ , (c) because one has that purpose. If one knows that  $\psi$ -ing is necessary to  $\phi$ -ing and does not

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<sup>28</sup> See Broome 'Are Intentions Reasons?', and Bratman's pragmatic argument in **Intentions, Plans and Practical Reason**, and his later argument from the conditions of self-governance in Michael Bratman, 'Intention, Practical Rationality, and Self-Governance,' **Ethics** 119 (2009): 411. That last argument is criticized by John Brunero in 'Self-Governance, Means-Ends Coherence, and Unalterable Ends' in **Ethics** 120 (April 2010): 579

<sup>29</sup> See **From Normativity to Responsibility**, chapter 8 on 'The Myth of Instrumental Rationality'. See also Niko Kolodny, 'Why Be Rational?' **Mind** 114 (2005) 509, 'How Does Coherence Matter' **Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society** 107 (2007) 229, 'The Myth of Practical Consistency' **European Journal of Philosophy** 16 (2008) 36.

$\psi$  the same follows: depending on further specification either one is irrational or one has abandoned one's purpose and intention. So, whichever way one takes the account it does not imply that it is possible for an agent to be indifferent to known or believed circumstances that affect the possibility of success or failure in acting as intended. It is merely indifferent as to whether the agent reacts by abandoning the intention or not. Of course, most of the possibilities that being decided alerts one to are not all or nothing conditions, but circumstances that make  $\phi$ -ing easier or more difficult, less or more costly, etc. The account, whichever way you take it, does not prescribe any reaction here either. It implies that once aware of such conditions the agent will react, depending on his judgement and motivation at the time. The agent's reaction may be wise or foolish, and that is not determined or required by his intention. His intention is not normative. That allows the account to permit great sensitivity to the circumstances, and maintains the basic insight that one may change one's intentions for any number of reasons or for no reason at all. One's heart may no longer be with that purpose.

The picture drawn here is simplified. It suggests that motivation and intention are seamlessly aligned, in that their motivations move agents towards their intended actions, while their intentions monitor that they are on course towards these actions so long as they are motivated to perform them. As one would expect the relations of motivation and intention are often more complex. Here are some examples: 1) Intentions to perform an action may persist while the motivation for the action changes. 2) There may be a time lapse between the fading motivation and abandoning the intention, partly because one may not be aware of the change in motivation, partly because motivations are of different strengths, whereas intention are (by and large<sup>30</sup>) all or nothing, and partly because one may be mistaken about one's motivations (sometimes one thinks that one is motivated to  $\phi$  because one wishes to be motivated to  $\phi$ , etc.). 3) Belief, shared by some philosophers, that once one intends to  $\phi$  one should not abandon the intention, or that one may abandon it only under restrictive conditions, may in itself motivate one to keep to the intention. Believed reasons can motivate even when mistaken, and even when irrational. 4) Motivation can be conditional (if I am offered a job in the city I will buy a house there) but if one believes that the condition will be met one may, rationally, form an unconditional intention to do what one would be motivated to do (given that I will be offered a job in the city, I intend to buy a house there).

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<sup>30</sup> There are, of course, half-hearted intentions, etc.

5) Depending on one's character, having formed an intention to  $\phi$  may strengthen or weaken one's motivation to  $\phi$  (e.g., some people always doubt the wisdom of their own decisions). But there are some motivations generated by having intentions, at least in some types of cases. If the intention concerns something one cares about (I intend to get elected to the committee) then success in acting as intended may affect one's self-image (as competent, effective, in control etc.) and that may add to one's motivation, and in some cases it may also give one new reasons to do as one intends because one so intends.<sup>31</sup>

Complications, mixed cases, etc. are to be expected in coming to understand our mental life. They do not change the basic view: intentions are neither normative nor are they plans. But if no plan is involved, what determines that the action when performed is done because one intended to perform it, that it is done in pursuit of that very intention? After all, that I intend to  $\phi$  and I  $\phi$  does not establish that I  $\phi$  intentionally, let alone that I  $\phi$ -ed with the intention that I had to  $\phi$  before I did so. I may  $\phi$  accidentally even when I intend to  $\phi$ , and I may  $\phi$  with the intention to  $\phi$ , but not the same intention I had last week. I may do so with an intention conceived at the time when I (begin to)  $\phi$ . The question invites us to examine the relation between future intentions and intentions in action.

## 9. Guidance

Intending to  $\phi$  is being decided to  $\phi$ . One implication of being decided to  $\phi$  is being guided to  $\phi$ , or  $\phi$ -ing guided by that intention. When we  $\phi$  with the intention to do so the intention guides the action, which means that it keeps us on track towards successful completion of the action (though that is not always achieved; even after we started the action we may fail to do what we intended). In simple actions, such as opening a window, the guidance consists in a feedback process that monitors the movement of the arm and keeps it on target to reach the window handle etc. In complex actions such as baking a cake it consists in

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<sup>31</sup> Some other claims sometimes made about intentions show that their authors think of some subclasses of intentions. For example, it is sometimes said that forming an intention terminates deliberation on whether to perform the action. It may but need not do so. For one thing, intentions are not always preceded by deliberation, and when they are not there is nothing to terminate. For another, when forming an intention is preceded by deliberation, its formation indicates that the agent reached some conclusion in his deliberation (e.g. that he approves of the action), but he may continue deliberating about the case for the action: perhaps it is even stronger than he is currently thinking (which would not of course change the intention) or perhaps it is not. Forming an intention suggests that the agent feels that he need not deliberate further, not that he cannot usefully do so nor that he should not.



monitoring the component acts, making sure of their success, that they are performed in the right order etc.

How does being guided by an intention relate to being decided? As having an intention is being decided, it should be a manifestation of being decided. It is a process or activity that is the product of the two aspects of being decided: being alert to opportunities to perform the action and to likely changes that will make its performance easier or more difficult or costly. Remember that agents who have intentions are motivated to pursue a purpose that they are decided to pursue. What would make them perform the intended action is ultimately their motivation. They would let the intention fade away or abandon it outright once they lose their motivation to perform the action. While they are motivated, the intention keeps them on track, keeps them alert to opportunities to perform the action and to occasions where they may wish to take action to avoid making its performance more difficult, etc. The intention itself does not make them do any of those things. It just alerts them to the opportunities and the problems. Sometimes these alerts will invite re-examination of the intention, and may lead to abandoning or modifying it. Sometimes they will lead to the action being performed.

In this latter class of cases the agents, motivated as they are, start doing what they intended to do, or attempt to do it, and the intention, which is still with them, continues to function as before: alerting them to the fact that to complete the action they should move their arm to the left, etc., and avoid the obstacle on the right, etc. In short, there are not two kinds of intention: a future-directed intention and an intention in action. There is only one kind of intention and it functions both before the time for the action arrives, and during the performance of the action, both times in the same way, adapted to the specific conditions in which it functions.

Do these comments answer the question: when does an agent who  $\phi$ -s with an intention to  $\phi$ , act for the same intention to  $\phi$  that he had prior to the action? Yes and No. In so far as the question has a definite answer it is answered by applying these comments: If the agent was decided to  $\phi$  and remained so decided until he  $\phi$ -ed being guided by the same alert conditions that constituted his intention all along then it was the same intention. But not infrequently there will not be a definite answer to the question. The continuity of the intention is not always easily established. Suppose one forgot one's intention to  $\phi$  for a while, and during that period was not alerted to changes to which being decided would have alerted one. But then one again intended to  $\phi$ , and, suppose that one never thought about

the lapse in the middle, one was not or not fully aware of it. Did one's intention malfunction for a period but remain the same? Was it abandoned and then one came to have a new intention with (near-) identical content? There is often no answer and usually no importance in having an answer.

There are other sources of similar indeterminacies. I will mention only one, which is both common and interesting. Purposes evolve with time and intentions may evolve with them. My intention to protect the interests of my grandchild once he reaches maturity may morph into an intention to buy him a flat at that time. I intend to secure his interests by buying him a flat, and come to think that that would fully fulfil my original intention. When the time comes I buy him a flat with the intention of buying him a flat. Do I also in buying him a flat secure (to a degree) his interests with the intention to do so that I have had all along? Do I buy him a flat with that intention? Notice that once my intention morphed, and either implicitly or explicitly I came to the view that buying him a flat, and nothing else, is my way of securing his interests, my alerts change. I am no longer alerted to opportunities to secure his interests in other ways, nor to any changes that may facilitate or impede such other ways of securing his interests. Do I still have the original intention? Yes, because I do intend to buy him a flat in order to secure his interests. No, because I am no longer pursuing the open purpose of securing his interests. And this is a particularly simple case. Often intentions develop in much more complex ways. Often the result would be that while my intentions are reasonably clear, whether they are one or two etc. has no answer, and normally that would not matter.

## 10. Conclusion

I offered an account of intentions, which hopefully fits the facts, and which explains the relative role of motivation and intention in leading to actions with intention. Both play a role in leading to the action, but whereas motivations so to speak propel the agent to act, intentions keep him on course. With rational beings like mature humans, motivations involve the adoption of a purpose for a reason, though the reasons alone often do no more than establish that the purpose is eligible, and other factors determine the agent to choose it among other eligible factors. A purpose becomes an intention to perform actions that facilitate its realisation or that constitute its realisation when the agent is decided to pursue it. The reasons and motives to pursue a purpose do not always establish a case for intending to perform these actions well ahead of the time at which it would be appropriate to pursue them. But sometimes they do, and often it is rationally optional whether to form an advance

intention or not, in which case the agents' personal characteristics will or will not lead them to form such advance intentions.

Advance intentions and intentions in action are one and the same kind of intention. They consist of being alert to opportunities to perform the intended action and in being alert to likely changes that bear on the desirability and ease of performing it. Such awareness guides the agent to adjust the intentions or, in the process of performing the action, to progress with its performance in a way leading to successful completion. Throughout the period in which one intends to perform the action, including the time it is being performed, the motivation to perform it is the propelling force. Intentions themselves, while contributing to the production of the action, do not motivate it, nor are they normative reasons to do it or anything else, except when contingent circumstances make them so.