

*Why Be Disposed to Be Coherent?**

Niko Kolodny

When someone believes something while also believing its negation, or intends an end without intending what he takes to be necessary means, he ought to do something differently, and he would be doing well if he did. When your attitudes are like this, as John Broome puts it, “You are not entirely as you ought to be.”ⁱ The same goes for many other patterns of attitudes whose contents are formally—that is, logically or arithmetically—incoherent: beliefs whose contents are logically inconsistent more generally, beliefs whose contents are not closed under logical consequence, intentions whose contents one believes are inconsistent, and degrees of belief that do not satisfy the probability axioms.

When one’s attitudes are not formally coherent, in one of these ways, what ought one to do, or what would one be doing well to do, differently? The answer may seem obvious: to make one’s attitudes coherent. And so it may seem obvious that there are “requirements of formal coherence as such”: requirements that direct us to do no more and no less than to make our attitudes formally coherent. Of course, few would say that these are the *only* requirements that apply to us. To do everything that we ought to do, or to do well in every respect, we need to comply with a host of other requirements as well. However, many would agree that as-such requirements are at least part of the picture. So it seemed to me. Yet I have since come to doubt that there are as-such requirements. While I don’t doubt *that* incoherence matters, I doubt that as-such requirements capture *how* incoherence matters. This is the conjecture that I want to explore in this paper.

I will focus on two examples of as-such requirements:

(Simple) Belief Consistency: One is rationally required (either not to believe at t that p , or not to believe at t that not p).

and

Means-End: One is rationally required (either not to believe at t that one will E only if one intends at t to M , or not to intend at t to E , or to intend at t to M).ⁱⁱ

As John Broome has explained, in his pioneering work, as-such requirements are, if valid, “wide-scope” requirements of “rationality.” To say that they are *requirements of rationality* is to say that, whether one conforms to them, in having or lacking an attitude depends only on whether one has or lacks, or had or lacked, some other attitude.ⁱⁱⁱ While as-such requirements require that the contents of one’s attitudes satisfy formal relationships as such, other requirements of rationality require that one’s attitudes satisfy relationships of other kinds. For example, the rational requirement Believed Reason, which we will discuss later, requires that one’s attitudes accord with the reason that one believes one has for them.

To say that as-such requirements are *wide scope* is to say that they do not require one to have or to lack any particular attitude. As-such requirements are wide scope because one need not have or lack any specific attitude in order to be coherent. One can achieve coherence with any given attitude, or without it, by adjusting other attitudes accordingly.^{iv} What as-such requirements require, therefore, is that one satisfy a disjunction: that one have any of several possible coherent sets of attitudes. The “requires” operator takes “wide scope” over the disjunction, instead of “narrow scope” over one of the disjuncts.

My doubts about as-such requirements are animated by two puzzles. The first has to do with the normative and evaluative significance of as-such requirements. If as-such requirements are requirements in an interesting sense, then they must either be normative demands, with which

we ought to comply, or evaluative standards, which we merit some sort of positive appraisal by satisfying. However, it is unclear, in reflection, why we ought, or would be doing well, to comply with them. It is implausible that we ought to strive to make our attitudes coherent for its own sake.^v And, for reasons that I will go on to elaborate, it is unclear that making our attitudes coherent as such is valuable as a means.

The second puzzle is that reason sometimes requires us to be formally incoherent. Reason may not require us to violate Simple Belief Consistency or Means-End, and I will assume in this paper that it does not.^{vi} However, the familiar paradoxes of the lottery and the preface represent cases in which one has conclusive reason for beliefs that violate requirements for more general forms of consistency and closure. Likewise, as related paradoxes show, one can have conclusive reason for degrees of belief that violate the requirement to conform to the probability axioms, at least on plausible definitions of the proper epistemic aim of degrees of belief;^{vii} and one can have conclusive reason for intentions that one believes cannot be jointly realized (and even intentions that cannot, in fact, be jointly realized).^{viii} If we accept that there are as-such requirements, then we must accept that rationality and reason will inevitably conflict: that the world is set up so that even an ideally knowledgeable and responsible agent is fated to be either irrational, or unreasonable.

I cannot hope to vindicate the conjecture in this paper. My aim is to try to make it more plausible by developing the first of these puzzles. In earlier work, I have expressed doubts that as-such requirements are normative in particular cases: that we ought to conform to them in each case in which they apply. Several other writers have expressed similar doubts.^{ix} However, many of these same writers, as well as others, suggest that it is a mistake to start one's search for the significance of as-such requirements by looking at particular cases. The source of their

significance lies, instead, in the *general disposition* to conform to as-such requirements. The disposition to conform to as-such requirements—the disposition to be coherent, for short—is in some way good, or worth having. This is what makes as-such requirements genuine normative demands or standards of evaluation. This shift of focus from the particular to the general is a familiar approach, exemplified by Hume’s famous discussion of the virtue of justice, as well as by various forms of indirect utilitarianism.

There are objections to this approach that are almost as familiar: objections that it does not follow from the fact that the general disposition is worth having that manifesting it in any particular case is worth doing. While I find these objections compelling, and while I will touch on them in section 13, my principal aim in this paper is to make a deeper point: *that it is not even true that the general disposition to conform to as-such requirements is worth having in any sense that might support this line of argument.* The disposition to be coherent does little good, either by itself, or together with other dispositions. Seeing why this is, I hope, will help to make the broader conjecture, that there are no as-such requirements, more plausible. I conclude by suggesting how we might understand the significance of formal incoherence, if, as the conjecture says, we are understand it without as-such requirements.

1. The disposition to be coherent leads to responses that better conform to reason

Why might the disposition to be coherent be thought to be worth having? The proposal that suggests itself most readily is instrumental: that it helps us to conform to reason. John Broome, for example, finds it at least plausible that conforming to as-such requirements leads us to achieve more of what we have reason to achieve.^x Likewise, Michael Bratman has suggested that the justification of principles of means-end coherence and consistency in intention lies in the apparent fact that by conforming to them, agents tend, over the long run, to achieve more of what

they have reason to achieve.^{xi} Significantly, both Broome and Bratman doubt that we have reason to conform to such principles in each particular case.^{xii}

To have a definite measure, let us say that a set of responses A is “more in accord with reason,” or simply “better,” than another set B if and only if the number of responses in A that one has conclusive reason to have *less* the number of responses in A that one lacks sufficient reason to have is *greater* than the number of responses in B that one has conclusive reason to have *less* the number of responses in B that one lacks sufficient reason to have. A is worse than B if and only if it is less. The claim, then, is that the disposition to be coherent leaves one with better responses, or responses more in accord with reason, than one would otherwise have.^{xiii}

Of course, one might complain that this count is too crude a measure. It is not enough simply to tote up the attitudes that one has conclusive reason to have and that one lacks sufficient reason to have. If one wanted a more sophisticated measure, one might add weights to reflect the relative importance of certain beliefs and intentions. Unless the weights were biased in some way, I do not believe that this would significantly affect the results that I go on to discuss. At any rate, it does not seem enough for a proponent of the claim that the disposition to be coherent is worth having simply to register this complaint. He must provide some clear and workable alternative measure. Otherwise, his claim, while insulated from refutation, is at the same stroke deprived of any possible positive support. It remains to be seen what this alternative measure might be.

2. Why conforming to Belief Consistency in each particular case in which it applies does not lead to better attitudes in that case

As I mentioned earlier, some of those who claim that the disposition to conform to as-such requirements leads us to better attitudes deny, correctly in my view, that conforming to as-

such requirements, in each particular case in which they apply, leads us to better attitudes in that case. In this section, I will try to explain why I believe that his claim is correct.

Consider Belief Consistency as an illustration. In all cases, *some* coherent pattern is better than the incoherent pattern of believing that p and believing that not p. Here is why: On a plausible view about the structure of evidence, one has sufficient epistemic reason to believe that p only if the evidence that p is stronger than the evidence that not p.^{xiv} It follows that if one has sufficient epistemic reason to believe that p, then one lacks sufficient epistemic reason to believe that not p. It is also plausible that if one has sufficient epistemic reason, then one has conclusive epistemic reason. There are no cases in which one is permitted to believe something, or not to believe it, take one's pick. While the argument could be reformulated to avoid this assumption, it's plausible, as I say, and, at any rate, it simplifies things.^{xv} It follows that there are three possible evidential situations:

the p-supporting evidential situation: one has conclusive reason to believe that p, but does not have sufficient reason to believe that not p;

the not-p-supporting evidential situation: one does not have sufficient reason to believe that p, but has conclusive reason to believe that not p; and

the suspension-demanding evidential situation: one has neither sufficient reason to believe that p, nor sufficient reason to believe that not p.

If one is in the p-supporting situation, then the coherent pattern of believing p and not believing not p is better than the incoherent pattern of believing both. If one is in the not-p supporting situation, then the coherent pattern of not believing p and believing not p is better than the incoherent pattern of believing both. If one is in the suspension-demanding situation, then the

coherent pattern of neither believing p, nor believing not p is better than the incoherent pattern of believing both.

However, conforming to an as-such requirement is not equivalent to entering into a *particular* coherent pattern. For one conforms to an as-such requirement equally well by entering into a different coherent pattern. Conforming to an as-such requirement should be understood as entering into *any* coherent pattern. So if it is true, in each case, that if one conforms to an as-such requirement, then one arrives at better attitudes, then it must be true, in each case, that if one enters into *any* coherent pattern, then one arrives at better attitudes.

This is not true with Belief Consistency. It is not true that, in all cases, *every* coherent pattern is better than the incoherent pattern. It *is* true in the suspension-demanding situation. However, in the p-supporting situation, the pattern of not believing that p and believing that not p is worse, and the pattern of not believing either is neither better nor worse. And in the not-p supporting situation, the pattern of believing that p and not believing that not p is worse, and the pattern of not believing either is neither better nor worse. Thus, we cannot say that, in each particular case, conforming to Belief Consistency leaves one with better attitudes.

A scope ambiguity may stand in the way of a proper appreciation of this point. In any given case, either one is in the p-supporting situation, or one is in the not-p supporting situation, or one is in the suspension-demanding situation. If one is in the p-supporting situation, then one does better to believe that p and not to believe that not p. If one is in the not-p-supporting situation, then one does better not to believe that p and to believe that not p. If one is in the suspension-demanding situation, then one does better neither to believe that p, nor to believe that not p. It follows that in each case, either one does better to believe that p and not to believe that not p, or one does better not to believe that p and to believe that not p, or one does better neither

to believe that *p*, nor to believe that not *p*. So far, so good. Now suppose we take the liberty of allowing the phrase “one does better” to take scope over the disjunction. Then we get: In any given case, one does better (either to believe that *p* and not to believe that not *p*, or not to believe that *p* and to believe that not *p*, or neither to believe that *p*, nor to believe that not *p*). That is, we get the result that one does better by conforming to Belief Consistency.

It is a fallacy, I believe, to shift scope in this way. Consider: It is true that you are morally required not to kill your neighbor. By disjunction introduction, for any *p*, either you are morally required not to kill your neighbor, or *p* is true. Thus, either you are morally required not to kill your neighbor, or you are morally required to kill your neighbor painfully. This statement does *not* entail that if you kill your neighbor painfully, then you satisfy some moral requirement. What it entails is that if killing your neighbor painfully would not satisfy a moral requirement, then you are morally required not to kill your neighbor. If we allow “you are morally required” to take scope over the disjunction, however, then we get: You are morally required (either not to kill your neighbor, or to kill him painfully). This statement *does* entail that if you kill your neighbor painfully, then you satisfy some moral requirement. I don’t think that this can be right. There is no moral requirement that you satisfy by killing your neighbor painfully.^{xvi}

However, I needn’t insist that this is a fallacy. If the only argument for Belief Consistency that one can offer rests on this sort of inference, then Belief Consistency has the same status as an endless list of contrived disjunctive principles, such as: “Either don’t kill your neighbor, or kill him painfully,” “Either do what you have most reason to do, or dance the Hokey-Pokey,” “Either believe what the evidence supports, or start a nuclear war,” and so on. Intuitively, Belief Consistency seems to many to have a justification that these principles don’t have. This justification, if it exists, must rest on something other than this inference.

3. *Does a disposition to conform to Belief Consistency lead to better attitudes over the long run?*

So far we have been asking whether, in every case, if one conforms to an as-such requirement, one does better. Now we turn to our central question: Whether if one has a disposition to conform to as-such requirements, one does better over the long run.

What is the disposition to conform to as-such requirements a disposition to do? At very least it must be a disposition, whenever the agent has, or would have had, an incoherent pattern, to have instead some coherent pattern. But which coherent pattern? Given that as-such requirements are indifferently satisfied by *any* coherent pattern, it would seem that a disposition to conform to as-such requirements ought to be a disposition to select a coherent pattern *arbitrarily* from among the set of coherent patterns. And it is most natural, if not obligatory, to assume that there is *equal* probability that each coherent pattern will be chosen. Now, it may be that the disposition to conform to as-such requirements interacts with other relevant dispositions in such a way that together those dispositions lead the agent to select a determinate coherent pattern. However, let us assume, for the time being, that the agent has no other relevant dispositions. Thus, the disposition to conform to as-such requirements has the following effect: when the agent would have had an incoherent pattern, he instead has some coherent pattern, selected arbitrarily and with equal probability from among the set of all coherent patterns.

This assumption of arbitrary selection is important, so I pause to stress it. Consider Belief Consistency once again. If one has no beliefs, then one satisfies it. A disposition never to believe anything, therefore, is a disposition to conform to Belief Consistency *by having a specified coherent pattern*. Likewise, if one never believes anything without sufficient evidence, one satisfies Belief Consistency. A disposition never to believe anything without sufficient evidence is another disposition to conform to Belief Consistency *by having a specified coherent*

pattern. Showing that a disposition to conform to Belief Consistency *by having a specified coherent pattern* is worth having would *not* explain the normative or evaluative significance of Belief Consistency. For one conforms to Belief Consistency just as well when one has a coherent pattern *different* from the specified one. But when one has a coherent pattern different from the specified one, one does *not* manifest the disposition that has been shown to be good: namely, the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency *by having the specified pattern*. Why should conduct that does *not* manifest some disposition derive significance from that disposition? By analogy, the disposition not to kill one's neighbor is good, and it is a disposition to conform to the hypothetical moral requirement either not to kill one's neighbor, or to kill him painfully *by, specifically, not killing one's neighbor*. But these facts seem inadequate to justify the hypothetical moral requirement. For when one kills one's neighbor painfully, one does *not* manifest the good disposition. Thus, it seems that the dialectically pertinent disposition to conform to as-such requirements—the disposition to conform to as-such requirements whose value might *justify* as-such requirements—must not be a disposition to enter into a *specified* coherent pattern. It is difficult to see what else it could be if not a disposition to enter arbitrarily into *any* coherent pattern with some positive probability.

With this understanding of what the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency is, we can ask whether one does better to have it. If an agent encountered only the p- and not-p-supporting situations, then conforming to Belief Consistency would leave her neither better nor worse off than not conforming to Belief Consistency. Suppose that she is in the incoherent pattern in the p-supporting situation. If she selects the coherent pattern of believing that p and not believing that not p, then she loses one belief that she lacks sufficient reason to have, and so her “score” goes up by 1. If she selects the coherent pattern of not believing that p and believing

that not p, then she loses one belief that she has conclusive reason to have, and so her score goes down by 1. And if she selects the coherent pattern of suspending belief, then she loses one belief that she has conclusive reason to have and loses one belief that she lacks sufficient reason to have, and so her score stays the same. It's a wash.

She does better with a disposition to conform to Belief Consistency *only to the extent that she encounters suspension-demanding situations*. If she selects the coherent pattern of believing that p and not believing that not p, then she loses one belief that she lacks sufficient reason to have, increasing her score by 1. If she selects the coherent pattern of not believing that p and believing that not p, then she loses one belief that she lacks sufficient reason to have, again increasing her score by 1. And if she selects the coherent pattern of suspending belief, then she loses two beliefs that she lacks sufficient reason to have, increasing her score by 2.

In this way, then, the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency does leave the agent better off. But notice that the agent would be even better off with a disposition not to believe anything at all, or, less radically, a disposition to suspend belief whenever she has, or would have, the incoherent pattern. This would be a disposition to conform to the principle:

Suspend Belief: Whenever does, or might otherwise, believe that p and believe that not p, one is required neither to believe that p, nor to believe that not p.

In p- and not-p-supporting situations, the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief leaves the agent no worse off than the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency. And in suspension-demanding situations, it leaves the agent better off. The agent may do better with the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency, but he does even better with the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief. Indeed, it would not be unfair to say that the disposition to conform to Belief

Consistency leaves the agent better off only insofar as it approximates the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief.

4. The appeal to psychological possibility

At this point, one might protest that the relevant claim is not that the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency is better than every other alternative, such as the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief.

One might propose, first, that the relevant claim is only that having the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency is better *than not having any relevant disposition*. We need not optimize, by having Suspend Belief. We can satisfice, by having either Suspend Belief or Belief Consistency. This claim seems insufficient, however, even if we set aside familiar questions about why satisficing, rather than optimizing, should be enough. Proponents of Belief Consistency are not, in practice, equally proponents of Suspend Belief. They believe that Belief Consistency has some distinctive justification, besides its being an inferior substitute for Suspend Belief.

One might propose, second, that the relevant claim is that a disposition to conform to Belief Consistency is better than every other alternative *taking into account what is psychologically possible*. As Broome writes: “Possessing the rational faculty is plausibly part of the best means of achieving much of what you ought to achieve. By ‘best’ I mean better than other means that are psychologically possible for you.”^{xvii} Perhaps, while it is psychologically possible that we have the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency, it is not psychologically possible that we have the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief, or that we have it without prohibitive cost: that is, cost that renders it a worse disposition to have.

As I will go on to explain, I doubt that, even if one accepts these constraints of psychological possibility, one can show that the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency is better than the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief. Let me register a misgiving, however, that we even ought to accept these constraints of psychological possibility in the first place. The simple point is that the intuition that incoherence matters is not hostage to contingent conditions. It seems *a priori*, as it were, that there is something amiss with a believer who believes that *p* and believes that not *p*. We need not know anything more in order to render a verdict of failure.^{xviii}

Setting this misgiving aside, let us consider the qualified claim that the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency is better than the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief, taking into account what is psychologically possible. To support the claim, one would have to argue that it is psychologically possible that we have the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency without prohibitive cost, but not psychologically possible that we have the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief without prohibitive cost. It is hard to know how to evaluate this claim. To make it slightly more tractable, we might ask: If a designer has the power to give a creature the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency, has he also the power to give a creature the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief, without prohibitive cost? The answer seems plausibly yes. If a designer has the power to give a creature the disposition to enter into any coherent pattern arbitrarily, then he has the power to give a creature the disposition to enter into a specific one of these coherent patterns determinately.

One might claim that this is the wrong kind of psychological possibility. What matters is instead which dispositions are *historically* psychologically possible for us to have, at a given cost, in the future, given the dispositions that we *actually* have *now*. The question is then: If it is historically psychologically possible for us given the dispositions that we actually have now to

have the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency without prohibitive cost, is it historically psychologically possible for us given the dispositions that we actually have now to have the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief without prohibitive cost? One might argue that if we actually have now the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency, but not the disposition to Suspend Belief, then the answer is plausibly “no.” In that case, the cost of having the disposition to Suspend Belief might be prohibitive. Having it would require acquiring it, acquiring it might outweigh the benefit of having it. Resources might be better spent preserving or improving the disposition to Belief Consistency that we already have.

But is the hypothesis on which this reply is based true? Do we actually have now the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency, but not the disposition to Suspend Belief? It strikes me as, if anything, more plausible that we actually have now either the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief, or neither disposition. Recall that the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency is a disposition, at least in the absence of other relevant dispositions, to drop one, or the other, or both beliefs arbitrarily. The simple point is that there is little in our experience to indicate the presence of a randomizing disposition of this kind.

5. Does a disposition to conform to Means-End lead to better attitudes over the long run?

With Means-End, the overall conclusions are much the same, although the details are more complicated. It is less clear than in the case of Belief Consistency, that, in all cases, *some* coherent pattern is better than means-end incoherence. First off, the means-end belief might be false, but nonetheless supported by sufficient evidence. In this case, dropping the belief will not be an improvement, and there is no reason to expect that altering one’s intentions will be either.

Even assuming that the means-end belief is true, however, there may be difficulties. Granted, there are no difficulties if the means-end belief is not supported by sufficient evidence.

In that case, dropping the means-end belief is an improvement. But suppose that the belief is supported by sufficient evidence. Then we must consider one's reason for intending to E. If one lacks sufficient reason to intend to E, then dropping the intention to E is an improvement. If one has conclusive reason to intend to E, then plausibly forming the intention to M is an improvement. One has conclusive reason to intend to E only if one has conclusive reason to E.^{xix} And if one has conclusive reason to E, then plausibly one has conclusive reason, assuming that the means-end belief is true, to intend to M.^{xx} So far so good. But what if one has merely sufficient reason to intend to E? In this case, it is not better to drop the intention to E. Unless it somehow follows that one has conclusive reason to intend to M, it is not better to form the intention to M either. Why should it follow from the fact that one has merely sufficient reason to intend to E that one has conclusive reason to intend to M?

To make the best case for Means-End, I think, we need to slice the relevant responses more finely. Instead of speaking simply of the reason to intend to E and the reason to intend to M, we need to speak of the reason:

- (i) to intend to M, provided one intends to E,
- (ii) to intend to M, provided one does not intend to E,
- (iii) to intend to E, provided one intends to M,
- (iv) to intend to E, provided one does not intend to M.

Our problem, recall, is a case in which one has sufficient reason to intend to E, but not conclusive reason to intend to M, and so does not improve one's situation by dropping one's intention to E, or intending to M. This may seem like a real possibility only because we do not distinguish between (iii) and (iv). While one might well have sufficient reason to intend to E provided one does intend to M, is it not plausible that one has sufficient reason to intend to E provided one does *not* intend to M. In such a case, intending to E is pointless; it will not bring

about E-ing. Thus, insofar as one remains means-end incoherent, insofar as one intends to E without intending to M, one intends E without sufficient reason.^{xxi}

One can have conclusive reason, merely sufficient reason, or not sufficient reason for (i) through (iv), and one can have conclusive reason or not sufficient reason

(v) to believe that one will E only if one intends to M.

This leaves us with a total of 162 reasons-situations. Moreover, in each of these situations, there are *seven* coherent patterns that one can enter into. It would be a daunting enterprise to evaluate the effects of leaving the irrational pattern for each these coherent patterns in each of these situations.

Fortunately, we can summarize the effects. Suppose one leaves the irrational pattern for the coherent pattern of

(A) intending to M, intending to E, and believing that one Es only if one intends to M.

Then one's responses are better or worse by

- (a1) +1 if one has conclusive reason to intend to M provided that one intends to E,
- (a2) -1 if one lacks sufficient reason to intend to M provided that one intends to E,
- (b1) +1 if one has conclusive reason to intend to E provided that one intends to M,
- (b2) -1 if one lacks sufficient reason to intend to E provided that one intends to M,
- (c1) -1 if one has conclusive reason to intend to E provided that one does not intend to M^{xxii}
and
- (c2) +1 if one lacks sufficient reason to intend to E provided that one does not intend to M;

and one's responses are neither better nor worse in reasons-situations in which none of these is true.

Using some (hopefully self-explanatory) shorthand, we can summarize the effects of moving into other coherent patterns as follows:

- (B) intend to M, intend to E, don't believe
same as for (A), plus
- (d1) -1 if c-reason for belief,
- (d2) +1 if not s-reason for belief

(C) intend to M, don't intend to E, believe

(c1) -1 if c-reason to E if not M,

(c2) +1 if not s-reason to E if not M

(e1) +1 if c-reason to M if not E,

(e2) -1 if not s-reason to M if not E

(D) intend to M, don't intend to E, don't believe

same as for (C), plus

(d1) -1 if c-reason for belief,

(d2) +1 if not s-reason for belief

(E) don't intend to M, don't intend to E, believe

(c1) -1 if c-reason to E if not M,

(c2) +1 if not s-reason to E if not M

(F) don't intend to M, don't intend to E, don't believe

Same as (E), plus

(d1) -1 if c-reason for belief,

(d2) +1 if not s-reason for belief

(G) don't intend to M, intend to E, don't believe

(d1) -1 if c-reason for belief,

(d2) +1 if not s-reason for belief

What can we conclude from this? The important thing to notice is the symmetry. For each reasons-situation, say (a1), in which moving into a given coherent pattern, (A) through (G), leaves one better off, there is another reasons-situation, (a2), in which moving into that same coherent pattern leaves one worse off to the same extent. If one confronts different reasons-situations with equal frequency, then selecting coherent patterns with equal frequency leaves one neither better nor worse off. In other words, conforming to Means-End does not leave one better off over the long run than not conforming to Means-End.

Is it plausible that one confronts different reasons-situations with equal frequency? One might argue that it is not. Assume that there are no independent reasons for intending to M or intending to E. That is, the only reason, if any, to intend to M is that it is a necessary means to E-ing and that E-ing is worth taking some sufficient means to it, and the only reason, if any, to

intend to E is that E-ing is worth taking some sufficient means to it (i.e., that the only reasons to intend to E are “object-given”). Further, assume that if one intends to E, then one will take means that, if added to M, would be sufficient for E, that the means-end belief is no more likely to be true than to be false (an assumption that we relax in the next section), and that E-ing is no more likely to be worth any given means than not to be worth those means. Then, it might be argued, first, that (a1) is less likely than (a2). For (a1) will be true only when the means-end belief is true *and* E-ing is worth M, whereas (a2) will be true if either conjunct fails. Since conforming to Means-End affects one’s score either by 0 or -1 when (a2) is the case and affects it by 0 or +1 when (a1) is the case, this “a-asymmetry” tends, other things equal, to leave the agent who conforms to Means-End worse off. Similarly, it might be argued that (e1) is less likely than (e2). Indeed, the assumption that there are no independent reasons to intend to M entails that while (e2) can occur, (e1) cannot. Since conforming to Means-End affects one’s score either by 0 or -1 when (e2) is the case and affects it by 0 or +1 when (e1) is the case, this “e-asymmetry” likewise tends, other things equal, to leave the agent who conforms to Means-End worse off.

However, it might be argued, other things are not equal. (c1) is less likely than (c2). For (c1) is true only when the means-end belief is false and E is worth some sufficient means to it, whereas (c2) is true if either conjunct fails. Since conforming to Means-End affects one’s score either by 0 or +1 when (c2) is the case and affects it by 0 or -1 when (c1) is the case, this “c-asymmetry” tends, other things equal, to leave the agent who conforms to Means-End better off. Moreover, the c-asymmetry comes into play when the agent enters into any of the first six coherent disjuncts, (A)–(F). The a-asymmetry comes into play only when the agent enters into two disjuncts, (A) and (B), and the e-asymmetry comes into play only when the agent enters into two disjuncts, (C) and (D). So, provided that the c-asymmetry isn’t too small relative to the a-

and e-asymmetries, the c-asymmetry might leave the agent disposed to conform to Means-End better off.

Notice, however, that an agent disposed to enter into only (E) and (F)—who always dropped the intention to E—is left even better off. On the one hand, this agent benefits from the c-asymmetry in every case in which the agent disposed to conform to Means-End benefits. On the other hand, this agent is never set back by the a- and e-asymmetries, whereas the agent disposed to conform to Means-End sometimes is. In other words, if an agent is better off with a disposition to conform to Means-End, he is even better off with a disposition to conform to:

Suspend the End: When one does, or would otherwise, intend to E, believe that one will E only if one intends to M, and not intend to M, one is required not to intend, going forward, to E.

The case of Means-End is thus much like the case of Belief Consistency.

6. Does a disposition to be coherent, when joined with a disposition to have true beliefs, lead to better attitudes?

We have been assuming that the disposition to be coherent leads the agent to enter into coherent patterns with equal frequency, because he has no other relevant dispositions. One might protest, however, that agents typically have other dispositions, which interact with the disposition to be coherent, steering the agent into certain coherent patterns and not others. There is a question about how the disposition to be coherent interacts with other relevant dispositions. For the time being, let us assume that a conjunction of dispositions is a disposition for the conjunction: that is, that a disposition that p and a disposition that q together constitute precisely a disposition that p and q.

One possibility is that agents have the disposition to have relevant true beliefs: that they are “accurate.” Something like this is built into Bratman’s claim that agents with reliable beliefs do better by complying with rational requirements.^{xxiii} The question is then whether the disposition to be coherent leaves an accurate agent better off.

The disposition to Belief Consistency, at least, does not. An accurate agent never both believes that *p* and believes that not *p*. So he is never in the incoherent pattern. So the disposition to Belief Consistency does not affect his beliefs. *A fortiori*, it does not make his beliefs better.

The disposition to conform to Means-End does affect the agent’s attitudes, but likewise does not leave the agent better off. Since the accurate agent has relevant true beliefs, his beliefs do not change unless the facts change. The accurate agent cannot conform to Means-End by revising his means-end belief, therefore, unless the facts change. Consequently, he cannot conform to Means-End by entering into patterns (B), (D), (F), and (G). Since accuracy places no further constraint on him, he conforms to Means-End by entering into patterns (A), (C), and (E) with equal frequency. If he confronts reasons situations with equal frequency, then the disposition to conform to Means-End does not leave him better off.

Earlier, however, we noted that the agent might not confront reasons situations with equal frequency: that some reasons situations are less likely than others. The assumption of accuracy may affect this finding. If the agent’s means-end belief is true, one might argue, then there is no a-asymmetry. Now (a1) will be the case simply if E-ing is worth M, and (a2) will be the case otherwise, both outcomes being, according to our assumptions, equally likely. Moreover, if the agent’s means-end belief is true, then the c-asymmetry is strengthened. Now (c1) cannot occur. Both of these effects mean that a disposition to conform to Means-End will benefit an accurate

agent more than it benefits an inaccurate agent. Bratman is correct, therefore, that reliable beliefs are relevant to the case for Means-End. However, by the same token, a disposition to conform to Suspend the End would benefit an accurate agent even more. Thus, our earlier conclusions about Means-End would appear to be sustained.

7. Does a disposition to be coherent, when joined with a disposition to conform to reason, lead to better attitudes?

Another possibility is that the agent is disposed to conform to reason. She has a “positive” disposition to conform:

to have an attitude, if she has conclusive reason to have it,

and a “negative” disposition to conform:

not to have an attitude, if she lacks sufficient reason to have it.

These dispositions may be “conscious,” or “unconscious,” or both. That is, they may or may not involve processes of the agent is immediately aware.

If an agent is disposed to conform to reason, however, then the disposition to be coherent cannot leave her better off. If the agent conforms to reason, she already does optimally; there is no room for improvement. For example, if the agent conforms to reason, then she never both believes that *p* and believes that not *p*. So the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency does not affect her beliefs. *A fortiori*, it does not make them better.

A disposition to conform to Means-End might affect her attitudes, although in unusual cases. For example, she might have conclusive reason to intend to *E* whether or not she intends to *M*, sufficient reason to intend to *M* whether or not she intends to *E*, and conclusive reason to have the means-end belief. In such a case, she might conform to reason without intending to *M*. The disposition to conform to Means-End would change her attitudes, by leading her to form an

intention to M. However, this change would not affect her “score.” It would not leave her better off.^{xxiv}

8. *Is the disposition to be coherent part of the disposition to conform to reason?*

It might be replied that we cannot compare an agent who has a disposition to conform to reason and a disposition to be coherent, on the one hand, with an agent who has a disposition to conform to reason but not a disposition to be coherent, on the other. This is because a disposition to be coherent is a necessary part of any disposition to conform to reason, or at least a necessary part of any disposition to conform to reason that is psychologically possible without prohibitive cost. And this, in turn, it might be argued, explains why an agent does better with a disposition to be coherent. An agent with a disposition to conform to reason clearly does better than any agent who lacks that disposition. So, provided that an agent has a relevant “complementary” disposition, which, together with a disposition to conform to as-such requirements, provides him with the disposition to conform to reason, the agent does better with a disposition to be coherent.

What could this complementary disposition be? To begin with, it cannot be a disposition to have, in any given situation, the attitudes that accord with reason. Otherwise the disposition to be coherent would be otiose. Nor can the complementary disposition be a disposition to have, in any given situation, some *coherent* attitudes that do *not* accord with reason. The disposition to be coherent does nothing to prevent the agent from forming *coherent* attitudes that do not accord with reason. So combining this candidate complementary disposition with a disposition to be coherent would result in a disposition to form coherent attitudes that do *not* accord with reason.

What’s left? It seems that the complementary disposition would have to be the disposition *either* to have the attitudes that accord with reason, *or* to have the incoherent pattern.

Combining this disposition with the disposition to be coherent would result in a disposition to have attitudes that accord with reason. The disposition to be coherent is, roughly, the disposition not to have the incoherent pattern. Under our present assumption that a conjunction of dispositions is a disposition for the conjunction, the resulting disposition would be a disposition either to have the attitudes that accord with reason, or to have the incoherent pattern, and not to have the incoherent pattern. And this is just a disposition to have the attitudes that accord with reason.

To make things more concrete, consider the disposition to conform to epistemic reason. The present suggestion is that the agent's negative disposition to conform to epistemic reason, not to believe that *p* if there is not sufficient evidence that *p*, is composed of the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency:

not (to believe that *p* and to believe that not *p*).

and the complementary disposition:

(*either* not to believe that *p* *or* (to believe that *p* and to believe that not *p*)) if there is not sufficient evidence that *p*.

Observe that this would be a rather inefficient way to design a disposition to conform to reason. In order to give a creature the complementary disposition, we must be able to give the creature the power to *detect*, or to *respond differentially* to, the absence of sufficient evidence. But once the creature can detect the absence of sufficient evidence, then why not design it so that when it detects absence of sufficient evidence that *p* *it does not believe that p*? Our work would then be done; we would have given the creature the negative disposition to conform to reason. Why design it instead so that it responds differentially to the absence of sufficient evidence that *p* *by either not believing that p or both believing that p and believing that not p*? Of course, we can still give the creature the disposition to conform to reason, so long as we give it the further

disposition to conform to Belief Consistency: to not both to believe that p and to believe that not p. But why bother with this detour?

At very least, we can say this. A designer with the power to give a creature the composite disposition, which requires the disposition to Belief Consistency, could also give that creature the simple disposition. By that measure, if it is psychologically possible that we have the composite disposition, it is also psychologically possible that we have the simple disposition. One might suggest, alternatively, that because we actually have the composite disposition and not the simple disposition, it is not historically possible for us to have the simple disposition without prohibitive cost. But this is not a promising suggestion. It is implausible, on its face, that we actually have the composite disposition. As I suggested earlier, it is implausible that we have the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency. And it is even more implausible that we have the complementary disposition: that we are disposed, when there is not sufficient evidence that p, either not to believe that p, or both to believe p and to believe its negation.

The simple disposition, moreover, seems better than the composite disposition in one respect. In some cases, the disposition to Belief Consistency may leave us in the incoherent pattern. It may be imperfect (as ours, if we have it, is). When this happens, the composite disposition risks leaving us with the incoherent pattern, rather than the pattern best supported by reason. The simple disposition, by not relying on the disposition to Belief Consistency, bypasses this risk.^{xxv}

So far we have been considering the suggestion that the *negative* disposition is composite. What about the suggestion that the negative disposition is simple, but the *positive* disposition is composite? We can ignore this suggestion, because the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency would be otiose. The complementary part of the positive disposition:

(*Either* to believe that p, *or* both to believe that p and to believe that not p) if there is conclusive evidence that p

and the simple, independent negative disposition:

not to believe that p if there is not sufficient evidence that p, would suffice for the disposition to conform to epistemic reason. If there is conclusive evidence that p, then there is not sufficient evidence that not p. The only way to satisfy both dispositions is to believe that p and not to believe that not p. The disposition to conform to Belief Consistency is not necessary.

The story with Means-End is similar. The present suggestion is that either the negative disposition to conform to practical reason, i.e.:

not to intend to E if there is not sufficient reason to intend to E, or the positive disposition,

to intend to M if there is conclusive reason to intend to M, is partly composed of a disposition to conform to Means-End. Either we have a complementary disposition

(either not to intend to E, or (to intend to E, to believe that E only if intend to M, and not to intend to M)) if there is not sufficient reason to intend to E

or a complementary disposition

(either to intend to M, or (to intend to E, to believe that E only if intend to M, and not to intend to M)) if there is conclusive reason to intend to M.

These dispositions, like the proposed complements to Belief Consistency, are, first, oddly superfluous, second, not plausibly actual, and, finally, less reliable than the corresponding simple dispositions to conform to practical reason.

9. Does Belief Closure fare better?

There is a danger, here, of overgeneralizing from the cases of Belief Consistency and Means-End. With other as-such requirements, some complementary disposition may be more plausible, although it takes a bit of work to see this. Consider:

(Simple) Belief Closure: If q is a logical consequence of p , one is required (either not to believe that p , or to believe that q).^{xxvi}

If the negative disposition is partly constituted by the disposition to conform to Belief Closure, then the complementary disposition is:

not to believe that p if (there is not sufficient evidence that p and there is no q such that q is a logical consequence of p distinct from p), and
(either not believe that p , or (to believe that p and not to believe that q)) if (there is not sufficient evidence that p and q is a logical consequence of p distinct from p).

This complementary disposition is not plausible. If the *positive* disposition is partly constituted by the disposition to conform to Belief Closure, then the complementary disposition is:

to believe that p if (there is conclusive evidence that p and there is no q such that q is a logical consequence of p distinct from p), and
(either to believe that p , or (to believe p and not to believe that q)) if (there is conclusive evidence that p and q is a logical consequence of p distinct from p).

This is equivalent to simply:

to believe that p if there is conclusive evidence that p .

This “complementary” disposition is plausible, but it is not really a “complementary” disposition at all. It is just the simple positive disposition itself. No role is left for Belief Closure to play.

This simple positive disposition will lead one to believe that q , without any help from Belief Closure, because logical consequence transmits evidence.^{xxvii} If there is conclusive evidence that p , then there is conclusive evidence that q , to which the simple positive disposition will be responsive.

To leave a role for Belief Closure to play, one might try restricting the evidence that p to *noninferential* evidence: that is, evidence that is *not* transmitted by logical consequence. One possibility is the complementary disposition:

to believe that p if, *as far as the noninferential evidence goes*, there is conclusive evidence that p.

Take a case in which, as far as the noninferential evidence goes, there is conclusive evidence that p, but not conclusive evidence that q. The complementary disposition, on its own, might well leave us believing that p and not believing that q. The Belief Closure would then lead us to believe that q. This proposal effects what at first glance seems a plausible division of labor. The complementary disposition ensures that we are sensitive to the noninferential evidence, while the disposition to conform to Belief Closure ensures that we were sensitive to the inferential evidence. The benefit of this division of labor is that we need to keep track only of the noninferential evidence, not of the inferential evidence. The disposition to conform to Belief Closure will ensure that, in effect, we are sensitive to the inferential evidence.

Now, the composite positive disposition to conform to epistemic reason that would be put together from this noninferentially “restricted” positive complement and the disposition to conform to Belief Closure, like the other composite dispositions that we considered earlier, is less reliable than the simple positive disposition, and now in two ways. First, the composite positive disposition inherits whatever imperfections the disposition to conform to Belief Closure might have. Second, if the restricted positive complement malfunctions, and fails to lead one to believe that p, then no tendency remains to lead one to believe that q. By contrast, if the simple positive disposition malfunctions, failing to lead one to believe that p, it may still lead one to believe that q. Nevertheless, it seems not as implausible that we actually have this restricted positive complement as that we actually have any of the complements considered earlier.

Perhaps the disposition that we actually have is less reliable than it might have been. Such is life.

There are, however, more fundamental problems with the proposal. To begin with, the composite disposition, even if it is perfectly reliable, will not suffice for the disposition to conform to reason. The following might be the case:

- (1) q is a logical consequence of p1, and q is a logical consequence of p2
- (2) As far as the noninferential evidence goes, there is insufficient evidence that p1, insufficient evidence that p2, and insufficient evidence that q.
- (3) Nevertheless, all things considered—taking into account both the noninferential and inferential evidence that q—there is conclusive evidence that q. This is precisely because logical consequence transmits the noninferential evidence that p1 and the noninferential evidence that p2 to q. Although these pieces of evidence are insufficient on their own, they are conclusive when taken together.^{xxviii}

The composite disposition would not lead one to believe that q, even though one has conclusive evidence that q. (Problem A.) We need some independent sensitivity to the presence of conclusive inferential evidence. But this just takes us back to the simple positive disposition.

Now let us ask: What negative disposition are we to pair with the composite positive disposition? It won't do to make the negative disposition:

not to believe that p unless led to believe it by the restricted positive complement or the disposition to conform to Belief Closure.

Suppose that:

- (1) As far as the noninferential evidence goes, there is conclusive evidence that P.
- (2) All things considered, there is not sufficient evidence that P.

The composite positive disposition will lead one to believe that P, when there is not sufficient evidence. (Problem B). Worse, suppose that:

- (3) Q is a logical consequence of P.
- (4) All things considered, there is not sufficient evidence that Q. Indeed, there is strong noninferential evidence against Q, and this accounts for the inferential evidence against P that overrides the noninferential evidence that P.

The composite positive disposition would lead one not only to believe that P, but also to believe that Q, when there is not sufficient evidence for either. (Problem C.)

Nor will it do to add the restricted negative disposition:

not to believe that p, if, as far as the noninferential evidence goes, there is not sufficient evidence that p.

In the case that we were just considering, this would dispose one not to believe that Q (avoiding problem C). So far, so good. But the restricted positive complement would lead one to believe that P. (Problem B.) This is, in itself, the wrong result. And when we consider the disposition to conform to Belief Closure, which disposes one either not to believe that P, or to believe that Q, we get a stalemate of conflicting dispositions. (Problem D.) Furthermore, consider what ought to be the easiest case for the noninferential restriction proposal:

- (1) Q is a logical consequence of P.
- (2) As far as the noninferential evidence goes, there is conclusive evidence that P.
- (3) As far as the noninferential evidence goes, there is not sufficient evidence that Q.
- (4) All things considered, there is conclusive evidence that P, and so conclusive evidence that Q.

In this case, we are disposed not to believe that Q, even though we have conclusive evidence for it. (Problem E.) Moreover, we once again have a stalemate of conflicting dispositions. (Problem D).

In sum, in order to get the disposition to conform to reason, we need not only an independent sensitivity to the presence of conclusive inferential evidence, but also an independent sensitivity to the absence of sufficient inferential evidence. But once we have independent sensitivities to inferential evidence, there is nothing Belief Closure to do. Once we are sensitive not only to the noninferential evidence, but also to the inferential evidence, then we

are simply sensitive to all of the evidence. We have the simple negative and positive dispositions to conform to epistemic reason with which we began.

It might be suggested that we ought to understand the restricted positive complement as:

to believe that p if (*all things considered*, there is conclusive evidence that p, and also, *as far as the noninferential evidence goes*, there is conclusive evidence that p).

and join it with the

not to believe that p unless led to believe it by the restricted positive complement or the disposition to conform to Belief Closure.

Although this proposal would avoid problems B–E, it would still face problem A. The more basic difficulty, however, is that the proposal involves the same kind of superfluity that made the complementary dispositions discussed in the previous section so implausible. In order to have this complementary disposition, one must already have the capacity to detect the presence of conclusive evidence that p. So why not respond to that detection by, simply, believing that p? Why instead respond only if one answers yes to the further question, whether, as far as the noninferential evidence is concerned, there is conclusive evidence?^{xxix} The initial appeal of the restricted positive complement that we first considered:

to believe that p if, as far as the noninferential evidence goes, there is conclusive evidence that p

was that it seemed to effect an attractive division of labor. We needed to keep track of only the noninferential evidence; the disposition to Belief Closure would then ensure that we conformed to the inferential evidence. The new restricted positive complement, by contrast, *requires* us to keep track of both the noninferential evidence and the inferential evidence. But it forbids us to respond directly to the inferential evidence that we have kept track of. This seems oddly superfluous. If we are already keeping track of the inferential evidence, why can't we simply

respond directly to it? Why are we required to respond to inferential evidence only indirectly, by conforming to Belief Closure?

10. Does the disposition to be coherent leave us better off, when the disposition to conform to reason fails?

Perhaps any psychologically possible disposition to conform to reason will be imperfect. As a result, it will sometimes leave us with incoherent patterns. It might be suggested that the disposition to be coherent leaves us better off in such situations. This is almost equivalent to the suggestion, which we considered earlier, that the disposition to be coherent leaves us better off when we have no other relevant dispositions, such as a disposition to conform to reason. Our conclusions are roughly the same. Insofar as the disposition to be coherent sometimes leads us, in suspension-demanding situations, to exchange the incoherent pattern for some coherent pattern, it leaves us better off. However, the “disposition to suspend”—that is, the disposition to conform to Suspend Belief, Suspend the End, and similar principles—leaves us even better off.^{xxx}

The only difference is that in the present case interaction with other dispositions may complicate how the disposition to be coherent leads us to exchange the incoherent pattern for some coherent pattern. Presumably, if one is in the incoherent pattern, it will be because one has dispositions to have each of the elements of that pattern. If so, then our assumption that a conjunction of dispositions is equivalent to a disposition for the conjunction is unworkable. The relevant conjunction—having all of the elements of the incoherent pattern and some coherent pattern—is not logically possible. We might assume, instead, that the disposition to be coherent overcomes the “weakest” disposition for an element of the incoherent pattern. When no single

disposition is weakest, perhaps, the disposition to be coherent selects one of the weakest dispositions arbitrarily and militates against it.

One consequence of this may be that the disposition to conform to Belief Consistency rarely, if ever, leads one to suspend belief. Suspending belief requires overcoming two dispositions: a disposition to believe that *p* and a disposition to believe that not *p*. The path of least resistance, as it were, might be to drop only one belief. If this is true, then it further reduces the value of the disposition, which consists in its approximating the disposition to suspend.

Another disposition becomes worth considering in the present context: that is, the context that of an imperfect disposition to conform to reason that sometimes leaves one in incoherent patterns. This is the disposition to respond to incoherent patterns, or to pressures for incoherent patterns, by deploying further sensitivities to reasons, which might determine, with some reliability, which coherent pattern is best supported by reason. At the conscious level, this would consist in reevaluating the reasons for the elements of the pattern, arriving at a judgment about which coherent pattern is best supported by reason, and then conforming to this judgment. There might also be unconscious analogs of this. Since, by definition, this disposition would deploy *reliable* sensitivities, it would lead one to better attitudes.

One might fairly wonder why there should be *further* sensitivities to reasons. If there were sensitivities that might determine, with some reliability, which incoherent pattern is best supported by reason, then they weren't deployed earlier, so that one never entered into incoherent pattern in the first place? Here is one answer. It may be that our disposition to conform to reason consists in coarser- and finer-grained sensitivities. The coarser-grained sensitivities are deployed first. The finer-grained sensitivities, which are more costly to deploy,

are deployed only when there is some indication, such as an incoherent pattern, that the coarser-grained dispositions are not reliable.

The disposition to deploy further sensitivities is perfectly compatible with the disposition to suspend. Or at least this is so if the latter is understood conditionally, as a disposition when no further sensitivities settle the matter, to suspend. Indeed, we may actually have these two dispositions: when we are in incoherent patterns, to deploy further sensitivities, and when this doesn't settle the matter, to suspend. When we become aware of incoherent patterns, we tend to respond by reviewing our reasons, and if this doesn't settle the matter, by suspending judgment.

11. Is the disposition to be coherent necessary for being interpreted as having, or for having, attitudes?

So far we have been exploring the suggestion that the disposition to be coherent is worth having because it leaves us with attitudes more in accord with reason. We can now consider, much more quickly, two other suggestions.

It might be claimed that unless we are disposed to conform to as-such requirements for the most part, we cannot be interpreted as having beliefs and intentions. It might even be claimed that unless we have this disposition, we do not even *have* beliefs and intentions. If such claims are true, then the disposition to be coherent has great significance indeed.

It is doubtful, however, that these claims are true. As we have seen, the disposition to be coherent is not necessary for the disposition to conform to reason. And the disposition to conform to reason would seem to be sufficient for being interpretable. Therefore, the disposition to be coherent is not necessary for being interpretable.^{xxx}

Nor is the disposition to be coherent plausibly sufficient for being interpretable. A coherent agent with mostly false beliefs, for example, would likely not be interpretable. It is

nonetheless possible that the disposition to be coherent might be a contributing part of some sufficient means to being interpretable. The question is what the other part of this sufficient means might be. The other part cannot include the disposition to conform to reason, because that would make the rest of the means, including the disposition to be coherent, superfluous.

It might be suggested that the other part includes the disposition to have relevant true beliefs. This would make a disposition to conform to Belief Consistency superfluous, since the agent would already be disposed never to have the incoherent pattern. However, it would not make a disposition to conform to Means-End superfluous. And, together, a disposition to have relevant true beliefs and a disposition to conform to Means-End might suffice to make one interpretable.^{xxxii} Thus, if one cannot have a disposition to conform to reason, but can have a disposition to have relevant true beliefs, then a disposition to conform to Means-End, if not a disposition to conform to Belief Consistency, might be worth having. Since we can have a disposition to conform to reason, however, this does not, it seems, show that a disposition to conform to Means-End is worth having.

12. Is the disposition to be coherent necessary for having a special status?

The second of the two suggestions is that we need the disposition to be coherent in order to have a certain valuable status. From the foregoing, we know that this status could not be that of being interpretable, or of having propositional attitudes, or of being disposed, perfectly or imperfectly, to conform to reason. What else might it be?

Some creatures might have reasons and be disposed to conform to them without the capacity to be *aware* of reasons as reasons. Perhaps this is true of lesser animals. We have the capacity to be aware of reasons as reasons. This may well give us a distinctive status. At very least, it gives us access to a certain dimension of reality: the normative dimension. This is

something of value. What we need for this capacity, however, is simply the disposition to have beliefs about reasons, which is roughly equivalent to the possession of the concept of a reason. The disposition to be coherent is not necessary for this capacity. Nor is it clear how it might be a contributing part of some sufficient means to it.

In theory, at least, a creature might have the capacity to be *aware* of reasons as reasons without the further capacity to be *guided by* their awareness of reasons as reasons. However, we have this further capacity. This may give us a further, distinctive status. Indeed, it may be what makes us persons or rational agents.^{xxxiii}

Now, it is true that, in order to have this status, we need the disposition to conform to *a* principle of rationality: namely,

Believed Reason: If one believes at *t* that one has conclusive reason for attitude *A*, then one is rationally required at *t* to sustain or form *A*, going forward from *t*, on the basis of the content of this belief, and

if one believes at *t* that one does not have sufficient reason for *A* then one is rationally required at *t* to revise, or to refrain from forming *A*, going forward from *t*, on the basis of the content of this belief, and

if, while still deliberating whether one has sufficient reason for *A*, one does not believe at *t* that one has sufficient reason for *A*, then one is rationally required at *t* to revise, or to refrain from forming *A*, going forward from *t*. [Mike's point.]

However, we do not need a disposition to conform to any rational requirements of formal coherence as such. Nor it is clear how any such disposition might be a contributing part of some sufficient means to the capacity to be guided by our awareness of reasons.

Although we have not found any support for the disposition to conform to as-such requirements, we have found some support for a disposition to conform to one principle of rationality, namely Believed Reason. This disposition gives us a special status. It also has other support. If an agent has true beliefs, including true beliefs about his reasons, then to the extent that he has the disposition to conform to Believed Reason, he in fact conforms to reason.^{xxxiv} It is also plausible that Believed Reason is part of our actual disposition to conform to reason.^{xxxv}

13. If the disposition to be coherent were worth having, would this account for the ordinary belief that we ought to conform to as-such requirements in particular cases?

I have been questioning the claim that a general disposition to conform to as-such requirements is worth having. In this section, I raise a further question: whether this claim, if it were true, could account for our ordinary belief that *particular* instances of conformity are normatively and evaluatively significant.

Where evaluative significance is concerned, the gap between general and particular may be bridgeable. Where a disposition is good in some way, its particular manifestations are typically also good in some way: say, as expressions of that disposition.

Where normative significance is concerned, however, it is less clear how to bridge the gap. It is not, I think, a general truth that when a disposition is worth having, then one ought, or even has reason, to manifest it in each particular instance. This is analogous to a familiar complaint about traditional forms of indirect utilitarianism.

Broome proposes an ingenious solution. It is natural, he suggests, that complaints about a person's failure to cultivate a disposition should be focused on particular failures to manifest it. For the latter is particularly salient evidence of the former. Thus, when we say, "Given that you believe that p, you ought not to believe that not p," what we mean is something like: "To the

extent that you believe that p and believe that not p, this indicates that you have failed to cultivate the disposition to be coherent to the fullest degree, which you had conclusive reason to do.^{»xxxvi}

I don't find this fully persuasive. First, there are cases in which it makes sense to criticize someone as being irrational for a particular instance of incoherence, even though we do not believe that he failed to take steps, that he had conclusive reason to take, to have a disposition that would have led him to avoid that incoherence. Even if we have reason to want a disposition to be coherent to the fullest degree, it does not follow that we have conclusive reason to take steps to acquire that disposition to the fullest degree. At the margins, the costs of improving our disposition—extensive therapy, for example—might be quite high. There is no guarantee that the costs can't outweigh the benefits from the improvement, on any reasonable estimate of those benefits.

Second, there are cases in which we believe that someone failed to take steps, that he had conclusive reason to take, to improve his disposition to be coherent, but do not criticize him for irrationality in any particular case. We may not have witnessed any incoherence, and there may not even be any incoherence to witness. Suppose an agent happens by luck to acquire the disposition to be coherent, even though he failed to take the steps he should have taken to bring that about. Even when confronted with evidence of this failure, we do not criticize him for being irrationally incoherent.

Finally, even when we witness some present failure to manifest some disposition, and know, on this basis, that the agent failed in the past to take steps, which he had conclusive reason to take, to acquire this disposition, it is not generally true that we express our criticism of this past failure to acquire in terms of a criticism of the present failure to manifest. An adult

illiterate, brought up in a suitable environment, without congenital defects, ought to have acquired the capacity to understand the written word. So we might say, “You ought to be able to read this sign. You ought to have acquired that capacity.” But we would never say: “You ought to read this sign here and now. Read it!” It might be replied that there is a crucial difference between this case and the case of someone who lacks the disposition to be coherent: the illiterate, who lacks the *capacity* to read, simply *cannot* understand the sign here and now, whereas the person who lacks the *disposition* to be rational still *can* be coherent here and now, although he isn’t disposed to. This is why it makes sense to say to the incoherent person: “You ought not believe that p here and now; it would be irrational of you to believe it! Don’t!” whereas we would not say to the illiterate: “You ought to read this sign here and now! Read it!” The question, however, is why this difference should matter, if what we are really criticizing, in both cases, is not what the agent is failing to do here and now, but instead what the agent failed to do in the past. In that respect, the two cases are relevantly similar. The agent *could have* acquired the capacity or the disposition.

14. Can we account for the significance of coherence without as-such requirements?

My overarching conjecture has been that there are no requirements of formal coherence as such. In this paper, I have been raising some doubts, in particular, that the normative or evaluative significance of as-such requirements can be explained by the claim that a disposition to conform to them is worth having. Let me review these doubts, in a somewhat different order from that of the preceding discussion. First, I have argued that we can have a simple disposition to conform to reason that does not involve the disposition to conform to as-such requirements. This simple disposition, indeed, would be more straightforward and reliable than the composite disposition that would involve as-such requirements. Second, it is untenable to claim that the

simple disposition is not psychologically possible for us, whereas the composite disposition is. Indeed, it is at least as plausible that we actually have the simple disposition. Third, if this simple disposition to conform to reason is imperfect, and so leads one to have incoherent attitudes, then the disposition to conform to as-such requirements, it is true, is better than nothing. But a different pair of dispositions, to deploy further sensitivities to reason and to suspend, is even better. Again, it is untenable to claim that these other dispositions are not psychologically possible for us, whereas the disposition to conform to as-such requirements is. It is at least as plausible, if not more so, that we actually have these other dispositions.

The discussion up until now has been negative. It does not explain the significance of incoherence. It does not tell us what we ought, or would do well, to do differently, when our attitudes are formally incoherent. Let me conclude, then, by drawing on parts of the preceding discussion in order to sketch a positive account of the significance of coherence.

At the core of the account are certain basic facts about the patterns that reasons take. These facts entail that reasons typically come in patterns such that if we respond as these reasons require—that is, if we have the attitudes that we have conclusive reason to have, and lack the attitudes that we lack sufficient reason to have—then our attitudes will assume a *specific* formally coherent pattern. Indeed, there are certain kinds of coherence such that reasons *always* come in patterns such that if we respond as these reasons require, then our attitudes will assume a specific coherent pattern of that kind. For example, we have sufficient reason to believe that p only if the evidence that p is stronger than the evidence that not p. From this it follows that we have sufficient reason to believe that p only if we lack sufficient reason to believe that not p. And from this it follows that if we respond as our reasons require, our attitudes will assume a specific formally coherent pattern: either not believing that p, or not believing that not p, or not

believing either. If our attitudes are incoherent, therefore, then, typically or always, we do not have the specific coherent pattern that we would have if we responded as our reasons require. And if we do not have the specific coherent pattern that we would have if we responded as our reasons require, then we are failing to respond as our reasons require.

When our attitudes are formally incoherent, therefore, what we principally ought to do, and would do well to do differently, is to respond as our reasons require. To say this is not to say that we ought *to make our attitudes coherent as such*. Granted, if we conform to these reasons, then we will, as a result, acquire a specific coherent pattern. But we can make our attitudes coherent, and satisfy as-such requirements equally well, by acquiring other coherent patterns, that not only do not satisfy these requirements of reason, but also may violate others. Nor is it to say that we ought to do something differently *because our attitudes are incoherent*. We ought to respond as our reasons require simply because our reasons require it. For each response that our reasons require, we would still be required to give it, even if our attitudes were not incoherent. The significance of incoherence, here, is simply *indicative*: it is merely a symptom that, in some way, we are failing to do what reason requires of us. This failure to have the attitudes that reason requires, and not the violation of an as-such requirement, is the primary way in which we are “not as we ought to be.”

It may seem that this cannot be the whole answer. There is some inclination to say that someone who exchanges an incoherent pattern for a coherent pattern has responded rationally, even when that incoherent pattern accords no better with reason. He seems to be doing something that he ought to do, or to be doing well, even though he is not doing what his reasons require. How is this to be explained, without appeal to as-such requirements?

Several different things might be going on here, along a conscious route, or an unconscious route. Consider, first, the conscious route. The incoherence is itself evidence that reason requires some change in the agent's attitudes: that there is some specific (coherent) pattern, different from the (incoherent) pattern he now has, that reason requires him to have. The incoherence, therefore, is itself, typically, a reason to believe that there is some change in one's attitudes that reason requires. There is also, typically, a reason to decide which change this is.^{xxxvii} What may be amiss, therefore, is that the agent fails to respond to these reasons.

If the agent responds to these reasons, then he will deliberate about which change reason requires. Either he will come to a belief about which change this is, or he will not. If he does, then Believed Reason will require him to make that change. If he does not, then Believed Reason will require him to suspend, for the following reason. In deliberating about which change reason requires, he is deliberating about whether he has sufficient reason to have either belief, in the case of Belief Consistency, or to intend to E, in the case of Means-End. And Believed Reason requires one not to have an attitude, if, while deliberating whether one has sufficient reason for some response, one does not believe that that one has sufficient reason for that response. We saw earlier that one does worse with a disposition to be coherent than one does with a pair of different dispositions: first, to respond to incoherence by deploying further sensitivities to reason, and second, to suspend judgment if these sensitivities do not resolve the incoherence. We have just been discussing, in effect, the *conscious* side of this pair of dispositions.

Now consider the unconscious route. Part of our disposition to conform to reason is unconscious. It will usually lead us to leave incoherent patterns for some specific coherent pattern. Usually this pattern will accord better with reason, although sometimes it may not.

While the disposition is reliable, is not infallible. When we leave an incoherent pattern for a coherent pattern that accords no better with reason, we may be led by such a disposition. We may also have other unconscious dispositions to deploy, in response to incoherence, further sensitivities to reason and to suspend judgment if further sensitivities do resolve the incoherence. These dispositions will also lead us leave incoherent patterns for some specific coherent pattern, which on occasion may accord no better with reason.

The proposal, then, is to explain the significance of incoherence with the following elements, in place of as-such requirements:

- (i) what reason requires, which is always or usually some specific coherent pattern of attitudes;
- (ii) reasons to believe that one is failing to respond as reason requires and to attempt to determine what this is, which are provided by the fact that one's attitudes are incoherent; [Fabrizio's point]
- (iii) Believed Reason, which rationally requires one to form the attitudes that one judges reason requires, or, if one arrives at no judgment about what reason requires, to suspend;

and

- (iv) three unconscious dispositions: to conform to reason, to deploy further sensitivities in response to incoherence, and if the incoherence cannot be resolved, to suspend.

It isn't simplicity, needless to say, that argues for this proposal. If anything does, it is that it avoids the puzzles about as-such requirements: the puzzle about their normative and evaluative significance, and the puzzle about their conflicts with what reason requires

There is no puzzle about the normative and evaluative significance of the first two of these elements. They are simply reasons. But what accounts for the normative and evaluative significance of Believed Reason and the unconscious dispositions?

The disposition to conform to Believed Reason is worth having. It is intrinsically valuable, insofar as it gives us a special status, as persons or rational beings. (Notice that this value is not hostage to contingent conditions.) And it is instrumentally valuable, as a contributing part of our actual disposition to conform to reason. These facts may account for the *evaluative* significance of Believed Reason. They may explain why we view the disposition as a kind of virtue, and its manifestations as admirable, in at least one respect.

However, as we have seen, these facts cannot account for the *normative* significance of Believed Reason in particular instances. It does not follow from the fact that the disposition to conform to Believed Reason is worth having that we ought to conform to Believed Reason in each case in which it applies. All the same, Believed Reason attracts “oughts” in particular cases. When it applies to us, we typically feel, “from the inside” as it were, that we ought to respond as it requires. Others can advise us, in a sense, “from the outside,” to respond in that way. “Given that you believe that not p, you ought not believe that p,” they may say; “It would be irrational of you to believe it.”

Elsewhere, I have suggested the following “Transparency Account” as a possible explanation of this. Take someone who satisfies one of the antecedents of Believed Reason, say by believing that he has conclusive reason for some attitude A. When we seem to advise him, “from the outside,” that he “ought rationally” to have A, or that it would be irrational of him to refuse to have A, I suggest, we are telling him, as we might put it, that *from his point of view*, or *as it seems to him*, he ought to have A.^{xxxviii} To say this is not to say that he in fact has

conclusive reason to have it. How, then, are we advising him to have it? By drawing his attention to the content of *his own judgment* that he ought to have it. Thus, a second-person charge of irrationality, “But you ought to believe that p! It would be irrational of you not to!” says, in effect: “Look: as it seems to you, you ought to believe it!” Why does the advisee experience this as advice? More generally, why does being subject to such a rational requirement feel normative “from the inside”? Because, as things seem to the subject, she ought to believe that p. Such is the content of her own judgment, to which we are simply drawing her attention. In other words, given what the antecedents of Believed Reason are, it will always seem to someone to whom Believed Reason applies that she ought to comply with it. In sum, although we don’t have reason to comply with these rational requirements, it cannot but seem to us as though we do. Our tendency to treat Believed Reason as normative results from an inevitable and abiding illusion.

The unconscious dispositions are also evaluatively significant. They are worth having, since they lead us to have better attitudes than we otherwise would. The unconscious processes that are particular manifestations of these dispositions are also plausibly evaluatively significant, even when, in particular cases, they leave us with attitudes that accord no better with reason. They represent a kind of proper functioning.

It does not follow from this, one may object, that these unconscious processes are normatively significant. This is true. Of course, it can be said that these unconscious processes “ought” to occur, where this means nothing more than that this is how the dispositions are “supposed” to function. But this is not a normative claim, in any sense of “normative” that distinguishes it from “evaluative.” The fact that this is how the sensitivity is “supposed” to function is not itself a consideration that carries weight from the first-person standpoint of

deliberation. It is not a reason for us to undergo those processes. Nevertheless, the objection has little force. We should not expect a normative “ought” to attach to unconscious processes.

Unconscious processes do not involve a first-person standpoint of deliberation. It is enough to explain how these unconscious processes are evaluatively significant.

If this is correct, then there is no puzzle about the normative and evaluative significance of the elements that I put forward in place of as-such requirements. Nor is there any puzzle about cases in which reason requires attitudes that are formally incoherent. If we reject as-such requirements, then such cases need not present unavoidable conflicts between reason and rationality. So long as one correctly apprehends what one’s reasons are, Believed Reason will not rationally require one to violate reason. By contrast, as-such requirements would rationally require one to violate reason, no matter how knowledgeable and responsible one was.

Let me end on a concessive note. No doubt, one can make one’s attitudes coherent without doing what one ought to do, or doing well, according to any of these elements. One might form coherent attitudes against reason, not in accordance with any judgment of one’s about one’s reasons, and without being led by any beneficial unconscious disposition. Some may still be inclined to say that one has done what one ought to have done, or done well, in at least one dimension. Such is the appeal of as-such requirements. I suspect, for the reasons that I have given, that this inclination mainly bespeaks our natural tendency to overgeneralize.^{xxxix} Yet some might claim that it reflects our tacit recognition that as-such requirements are ineliminable. On this view, the worth of pursuing the conjecture that there are no as-such requirements is not that we find its truth confirmed. It is instead that we learn that we cannot explain as-such requirements in the ways that first suggest themselves, and so, in turn, that their explanation is less obvious, or they are more basic, than we might have thought. As I say, I doubt that this is

where the pursuit of the conjecture leaves us. But I do not doubt that it will be illuminating if it is.

* This paper has benefited from private comments from Joseph Raz, Sam Scheffler, Seana Shiffrin, and Jay Wallace, and from public discussion of versions of this paper at the Workshop on the Normativity of Reason at the University of Fribourg, the 2006 OSU/Maribor/Rijeka Conference in Dubrovnik, and the Hester Conference on Agency and Action at Wake Forest University, where John Broome gave prepared comments. I am grateful for all of these.

ⁱ See, for example, “Normative Requirements,” *Ratio* XII, 4: 398–419, at 404.

ⁱⁱ For simplicity, I ignore several possible qualifications.

ⁱⁱⁱ A more accurate definition would include the following qualifications: (i) that the attitude is one for which one can have or lack reasons, and (ii) that the significance of one’s having or lacking the attitude does not derive from constituting some further fact that need not involve attitudes. The first qualification implies that relations between nondoxastic perceptual states, for which one cannot have or lack reasons, and beliefs are not relations of rationality, although they may well be relations of reason. The underlying thought is that how things appear to one is part of one’s situation, rather than a stance toward one’s situation for which one is normatively responsible. The second qualification acknowledges that, in certain cases, the fact that one has or lacks an attitude can be a reason to have or lack some other attitude. For example, the fact that I have some paranoid belief is a reason to believe that my medication is wearing off, as well as a reason to believe that someone has a paranoid belief. The fact that I have the belief is significant because it constitutes some further fact that can be described without reference to its being my belief. It is an effect, which indicates the presence of the cause, and it is an instance, which licenses the corresponding existential generalization. Notice further that my paranoid belief can be a reason for another person to believe these things, whereas my belief cannot rationally require anything from another person.

Michael Smith points out to me that we might understand “coherence” to include coherence with the evidence, which might be taken, in turn, to consist in states for which one is not normatively responsible. I do not deny that coherence, in this sense, matters.

^{iv} One exception is that for probabilistic coherence, the degree of belief in logical truths must be unity and in logical falsehoods must be zero. However, one can have any degree of belief in any other proposition, so long as suitable adjustments are made in one’s other degrees of belief.

^v Here the distinction between the normative and the evaluative may be important. It is implausible that we ought to strive to be coherent and that this needs no further explanation, as though being coherent were an end in itself to be set alongside love, friendship, knowledge, beauty, justice, and the avoidance of pain. It is not as implausible, however, that insofar as we are coherent, we qualify for some positive appraisal and that this needs no further explanation. On this view, the problem of conflict, which I discuss in the next paragraph, would remain. And the seeming normative significance of coherence, its tendency to attract “oughts,” would still call for some explanation. In conversations with Michael Smith and Kieran Setiya, they have suggested, if only for the sake of argument, something along these lines: that insofar as we conform to rational requirements, we qualify for a kind of positive appraisal that calls for no further explanation. I suspect, however, that neither Smith, nor Setiya accepts wide-scope, as-such requirements of formal coherence. So there may not be much disagreement on the present

topic. At any rate, I believe that one *can* further explain why the “replacements” for as-such requirements that I discuss in the last section—conforming to Believed Reason and manifesting the unconscious dispositions—should be positively appraised. Among other things, these dispositions lead one to have beliefs and intentions that accord better with reason.

^{vi} However, see the endnote below that begins with ****.

^{vii} Some examples are accuracy measures that treat greater accuracy as more important at the extremes, or that treat degrees of belief in falsehoods as more important than the absence of full belief in truths. Alan Gibbard suggests the first kind of example in “Valuing Truth” (draft). I discuss these at greater length in “Why Have Consistent and Closed Beliefs, or for that Matter, Probabilistically Coherent Credences?” (draft).

^{viii} I believe that the ingenious video game example in Michael Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, ch. 8, is one such case. However, Bratman himself argues that the attitudes in question do not qualify as intentions, precisely because they violate consistency. I discuss this in “Why Have Consistent Intentions?” (draft).

^{ix} Michael Bratman, “Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical”; John Broome, “[Does rationality give us reasons?](#),” *Philosophical Issues* 15 (2005): 321–37. “Is Rationality Normative?”; Niko Kolodny, “Why Be Rational?” *Mind* (2005); Joseph Raz, “The Myth of Instrumental Reason.”

^x “Is Rationality Normative?” p. 9.

^{xi} *Intentions, Plans, and Practical Reason*, p 35.

^{xii} Broome, “Is Rationality Normative?” p. 9; Bratman, “Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical.”

^{xiii} I assume, first, that the claim ignores “state-given” reasons. The only reasons for belief are considerations to the effect that the belief is true or false, and the only reasons for intention are considerations to the effect that success in the intention would be worthwhile. Once we bring state-given reasons into consideration, it becomes much less plausible that the disposition to be coherent leaves one with better responses. It would seem that we could easily contrive state-given reasons, e.g., such as the sanctions of an evil demon, that would make that claim false. Second, I do not, at least not wittingly, assume anything else about reasons for intention. They might be restricted to prudential reasons, or they might be broader. They might be “value-based,” or they might be “desire-based,” so long as intentions can vary independently of desires. Finally, I also understand the claim to be, in the first instance, that the disposition to be coherent leads us to attitudes more in accord with reason, rather than that it leads us to attitudes that achieve some more objective kind of success. The claim is not, for example, that the disposition to be coherent leads us to more true beliefs and fewer false ones. This should not matter much, however, since one would expect that attitudes more in accord with reason are more likely to achieve the more objective forms of success. If our beliefs are in accord with reason, one imagines, then they are more likely to be true.

^{xiv} Some might reject this view, but I doubt that anyone who holds Belief Consistency rejects it.

^{xv} The argument doesn’t require this, but it is independently plausible, and it simplifies things.

^{xvi} This contradicts the views of some modal logicians. Some, for example, accept that from (i) S ought to see to it that p, (ii) necessarily (if p, then q), and (iii) S can control whether q, it follows (iv) S ought to see to it that q. See Belnap, Perloff, and Xu, *Facing the Future*, pp. 298–99. The example that I have given suggests, to my mind, that this view needs to be qualified. Compare Broome, “Normative Requirements,” 402.

^{xvii} “Is Rationality Normative?” p. 9.

^{xviii} Broome, “Is Rationality Normative?” p. 11; and Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, p. 52, appear to disagree.

^{xix} Recall that we are ignoring state-given reasons.

^{xx} These claims are in the spirit of, if not strictly entailed by, the “facilitative principle” formulated by Joseph Raz, “The Myth of Instrumental Reason.” This principle, to my mind truistic, albeit often overlooked, says, roughly, that if one has reason to E, then one has reason to take some sufficient means to E. Raz discusses a further problem, in “Instrumental Rationality: A Reprise,” about *when* M must be intended. This problem may be addressed, to some extent, if not entirely, by formulating Means-End so that M is believed to be necessary *now*. To make the best case for Means-End, I have formulated Means-End in this way.

^{xxi} One might think that, insofar as one’s failure to intend to M is somehow normatively related to one’s intending to E, this relation must be one of rationality, rather than of reasons. One might think this on the grounds that the fact that one does not intend to M is a fact about an attitude. However, as I noted in note ???? above, the fact that one has or lacks an attitude can be a reason in virtue of constituting some further fact, which need not be about attitudes. In this case, one’s failure to intend to M is functioning as an impediment: a feature of the world that prevents one’s intention to E from bringing about one’s E-ing. It is the equivalent of a bum leg, or a headwind. Moreover, whether or not it is an impediment depends on how the world is, not how one believes it to be. What matters is whether intending to M *really is* a necessary means to E, not whether one *believes* that it is. In addition, whether its being an impediment *undermines* one’s reason to intend to E depends on whether E would be worthwhile in the first place. Finally, the fact that one’s failure to intend to M is an impediment, if it is, can be a reason for others: e.g., for them not to rely on one’s E-ing. One’s having or lacking an attitude, by contrast, cannot rationally require anything from anyone else.

One might worry that the pair—its being provided one intends to E (or M) and its being provided one does not intend to E (or M)—do not, together, exhaust the range of relevant conditions. It might be the case that neither is provided: that there is some chance of either. In such a case, one’s reason would presumably be some function of the reason under each of these conditions and the probability of each condition’s obtaining.

A different concern is that such judgments about reasons seem to involve an oddly predictive or theoretical stance on one’s own intentions. I agree that more must be said, but I don’t think this somehow suggests that these judgments are not correct. The same judgments (*modulo* their subject) can be made by an onlooker, and in that context, they seem straightforwardly correct.

In any event, although I believe that one’s having or lacking one intention can affect one’s reason to have or lack another intention, my present purpose in advancing this claim is only to make a better case for the claim that I am arguing against, that conforming to Means-End leaves one with better attitudes.

^{xxii} Objection: “Suppose that one has c-reason to intend to E taking as given that one does not intend to M because one has c-reason to intend to E *whether or not* one intends to M. Why should one’s score be affected in such a case?” Reply: It is not affected in such a case, and our scorekeeping does not imply otherwise. Since (c1) is the case, there is a decrease of one, but since (b1) is also the case, this is offset by an increase of one.

^{xxiii} “Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical”

^{xxiv}**** Might the disposition to conform to Means-End ever leave one worse off? Here we revisit the claim made earlier that someone who conforms to reason does not violate Means-End. Suppose, for example, that the agent lacks sufficient reason to intend to M if he intends to E, has conclusive reason to intend to E if he does not intend to M, and has conclusive reason to believe that he Es only if he does not M. Conforming to reason, the agent does not intend to M, intends to E, and believes that he Es only if he intends to M. Such cases are certainly atypical. They require that there be misleading evidence that intending to M is a necessary means to E. There is a further complication. In such a situation, it is plausible that the agent has conclusive reason to believe that he will not E. Since we are presently assuming that the agent conforms to reason, it follows that he believes that he will not E. I believe that we should accept that if the agent believes that he will not E, then he does not intend to E. So the description of situation may not be coherent.

^{xxv} Of course, the simple disposition may be imperfect, because the agent's differential responsiveness to reason is imperfect. But the composite disposition, which also depends on the agent's differential responsiveness to reason, will be imperfect in the same ways. The point is that the simple disposition avoids the *further* imperfection that comes from relying on an imperfect disposition to conform to Belief Consistency.

^{xxvi} I ignore, for simplicity, possible qualifications about the obviousness of the logical relationship and reasons for having an opinion whether q.

^{xxvii} Someone might deny this, but presumably not someone who claims that a disposition to conform to Belief Closure leads one to attitudes that accord with reason. Again, I ignore, for simplicity, possible qualifications about the obviousness of the logical relationship and reasons for having an opinion whether q.

^{xxviii} For example, the man in the getaway car appears to me in one moment to be Tweedledee and in the next to be Tweedledum. (Or one witness tells me that he is Tweedledee, while another tells me that he is Tweedledum.) There is not sufficient evidence to conclude that he is Tweedledee, and there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that he is Tweedledum. But there may be conclusive evidence for a logical consequence of each of these would-be conclusions: that either he is Tweedledee, or he is Tweedledum.

^{xxix} Thanks to Joseph Raz.

^{xxx} It might be suggested that the disposition to be coherent still has some value as a back-up, in case the disposition to suspend fails. It is doubtful, however, that it could serve this function. It seems unlikely that, where the disposition to suspend fails because the incoherence goes unnoticed, or because some akratic tendency clings to the incoherence, the disposition to be coherent would succeed.

^{xxxi} [Address Seana's criticism.]

^{xxxii} Thanks to Nishi Shah.

^{xxxiii} Thanks to David Owens and Geoff Sayre-McCord.

^{xxxiv} A technical qualification: If the agent is confronted with conclusive evidence for a falsehood or with an absence of sufficient evidence for a truth, then by hypothesis he does not conform to Believed Reason.

^{xxxv} Michael Bratman's work suggests other possibilities. The disposition to conform to as-such requirements in intention may facilitate social cooperation or self-governance, which in turn may have instrumental or even noninstrumental value. Bratman makes a very convincing case that the ability to form *intentions* is necessary for these goods. What is less clear is that the

disposition to conform to Means-End is necessary. On the contrary, it seems that the ability to form these intentions in response to reasons (including, crucially, the ability to form them arbitrarily in response to underdetermining reasons) is sufficient.

^{xxxvi} “Is Rationality Normative?” p. 14.

^{xxxvii} In most cases, there will be conclusive reason for these things. But in some cases there may be reason not to devote one’s attention to reconsidering the reasons.

^{xxxviii} In “Why Be Rational?” I wrote that we are making a descriptive claim about what the person in question believes. I think that this was a mistake. See Jamie Dreier, “Practical Conditionals.”

^{xxxix} In the special case of Means-End, we may be able to account for a further kind of significance, by appealing to what Bratman calls “cognitivist” accounts of instrumental reason. As Jay Wallace, “Normativity, Commitment, and Instrumental Reason,” and Kieran Setiya, “Cognitivism about Instrumental Reason,” suggest, the irrationality that we typically associate with means-end incoherence may be in fact a kind of irrationality among beliefs. As one variant of this approach, it might be suggested that violating Means-End typically involves defying one’s own assessment of the evidence that one will not E, whereas conforming to Means-End involves either complying, or revising, that assessment. Thus, Believed Reason and its unconscious analogues might explain why conforming to Means-End can be or appear significant, in at least one way, even when one violates, and believes that one violates, one’s practical reason for intending E, or against intending M.