

## UNCERTAINTY AND INTENTION

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IT IS COMMON to express intentions using future-tensed indicative sentences that seem grammatically and semantically fit to express beliefs.<sup>1</sup> Let us consider the following example, which we can call *Sunday Eggs*. On Sunday morning, your roommate reports that you are out of eggs. Your day is wide open, so you say:

(1) I will go to the store today.

By uttering (1) in the scenario *Sunday Eggs*, you have expressed an intention to go to the store on Sunday, and it seems that you have also expressed a belief that you will do so. The expression of the intention and the expression of the belief in uttering one sentence makes the attitudes seem at least intimately related, if not identical; this is one of multiple reasons in favor of a popular thesis about the relationship between intention and belief:

*Intention Implies Belief:* If *S* intends to  $\phi$ , then *S* believes *S* will  $\phi$ .<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, it seems like in uttering (1) in *Sunday Eggs*, you are expressing an intention that commits you to going to the store today. Here is a general statement inspired by this scenario:

- 1 Anscombe, *Intention*; Velleman, "What Good Is a Will?"; Marušić and Schwenkler, "Intending Is Believing."
- 2 For the suggestion that the fact that we simultaneously express intentions and beliefs is a reason in favor of Intention Implies Belief, see Marušić and Schwenkler, "Intending Is Believing," 319. So-called cognitivists about practical rationality or intention accept and often argue in favor of Intention Implies Belief. See Harman, "Practical Reasoning"; Setiya, "Cognitivism about Instrumental Reason"; Velleman, "What Good Is a Will?"; Marušić and Schwenkler, "Intending Is Believing." Grice proposes the view about acceptance rather than belief ("Intention and Uncertainty"). There are also many arguments against this view, including Davidson, "Intending"; Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason* and "Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical"; Holton, "Partial Belief, Partial Intention"; Kolodny, "The Myth of Practical Consistency," 372–73; Brunero, "Against Cognitivism about Practical Rationality."

*Intention Implies Commitment*: If  $S$  intends to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  is committed to  $\phi$ -ing.<sup>3</sup>

So a first pass way of thinking of ascriptions like (1) can make both Intention Implies Belief and Intention Implies Commitment seem attractive. In this paper, I will explore an intention ascription similar to (1) that challenges, rather than supports, the combination of Intention Implies Belief and Intention Implies Commitment.

Consider:

*Friday Eggs*: You bake a lot of cookies that week, and on Friday morning, your roommate notes that you are again out of eggs. Friday is busier than Sunday, so you say:

(2) I will probably go to the store today.

In uttering (2) in *Friday Eggs*, it seems, again, that you have expressed a sort of intention. But there is a difference between (1) and (2), signaled by the addition of “probably.”<sup>4</sup>

- 3 Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, 107–10. I will discuss this further in section 4.2. Some authors mentioned in note 2 above construe these commitments as identical to the commitments of beliefs. See Velleman, “What Good Is a Will?”; Marušić and Schwenkler, “Intending Is Believing.” However, it seems possible to distinguish these conceptually, as when Hieronymi says “an intention is a commitment to doing something, where a belief is a commitment to a claim as true” (“Controlling Attitudes,” 56). A nearby point is that intending to  $\phi$  settles what one will do. See Mele, “Intention, Belief, and Intentional Action,” 26; Hieronymi, “Controlling Attitudes,” 56.
- 4 A reviewer notes that neither of the following, which seem related to (2), are quite felicitous in *Friday Eggs*:

(2a) I intend to probably go to the store today.

(2b) I probably intend to go the store today.

There are two main hypotheses about the semantics and pragmatics of “probably.” The traditional position claims that “Probably  $p$ ” is context sensitive and can be paraphrased as: the relevant probability function in the context assigns a high value to  $p$ . See Dowell, “A Flexible Contextualist Account of Epistemic Modals”; Lennertz, *Reasoning with Uncertainty and Epistemic Modals*. But it would be strange in an ordinary case like *Friday Eggs* to have an intention about the value that the relevant probability function assigns to going to the store; this is one possible explanation of the infelicity of (2a). By contrast, the nontraditional, popular view says that sentences of the form “Probably  $p$ ” do not encode propositions at all; they are used to express the speaker’s high confidence or credence in  $p$ . Here are two quick arguments in support of this claim, though there are others, e.g., the animal/baby thought argument in Yalcin, “Epistemic Modals,” 997, and “Nonfactualism about Epistemic Modality,” 308; Price, “Conditional Credence,” 19; Frankish, “Partial Belief and Flat-out Belief.” First, no concept of probability makes sense of what is said using ordinary utterances, like (3):

(3) The Sparks probably won last night.

In this paper, I argue that a speaker who utters a sentence like (2) in a scenario like Friday Eggs expresses attitudes that are inconsistent with either Intention Implies Belief or Intention Implies Commitment. I do so by exploring what a speaker who utters (2) expresses in a range of situations. I find that there are two plausible accounts of what you express in an ordinary situation like Friday Eggs: an ordinary intention without a belief—so that Intention Implies Belief is false—or a partial intention that does not commit you to going to the store—so that Intention Implies Commitment is false.<sup>5</sup>

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When a speaker utters (3), they are not talking about notions of probability like the relative frequency of possible Sparks wins last night to possible Sparks games last night; nor are they talking about the objective quantum chance of a Sparks win last night. The same consideration, purveyors of this argument claim, applies to any other notion of probability. See Maher, “The Irrelevance of Belief to Rational Action,” 367; Christensen, *Putting Logic in Its Place*, 18–20; Ross, *Acceptance and Practical Reason*, 189; Eriksson and Hájek, “What Are Degrees of Belief?,” 206–7; Staffel, “Can There Be Reasoning with Degrees of Belief?,” 5357; Konek, “Probabilistic Knowledge and Cognitive Ability,” 514; Moss, *Probabilistic Knowledge*, 2; though see Moon and Jackson, “Credence,” for a reply. Second, “Probably *p*” does not embed well under attitude verbs that take propositions—other than acceptance ones like “believe” and “know”:

(4) Jane fears probably being confined in small spaces.

(5) Sally hopes that her son probably gets a good grade.

It is hard to understand what is meant by (4) and (5) without removing “probably” altogether in interpretation, suggesting that there is no proposition expressed by “Probably *p*”. If propositions are the objects of intentions, as well as hopes and fears, that would mean that (2a), like (4) and (5), is not well formed. What about (2b)? It is used to either express high confidence that you have an intention to go to the store (the popular view) or convey that the relevant probability function in the context assigns a high value to the proposition that you intend to go to the store (the traditional view). Either is a strange thing to express or convey, given that we often assume a thinker’s intentions are transparent to them. The reviewer suggested that to talk naturally in this way, we must dispel this assumption of transparency, as in “Since starting psychoanalysis, I have come to think that I probably intend to go to the store.” Without the suggestion of the failure of transparency—implied by the psychoanalysis clause—it makes sense that (2b) would be infelicitous. It is also worth noting that the strangeness of (2a) and (2b) in Friday Eggs contrasts with the naturalness of (2), suggesting that we should not try to analyze (2) as either (2a) or (2b).

5 The first diagnosis interprets our case as generally analogous in structure to proposed counterexamples to *Intention Implies Belief*. Bratman uses an example where a person is simultaneously playing two video games (*Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, 113–15); Mele gives an example involving an uncertain free-throw shooter (“Intention, Belief, and Intentional Action,” 19–20). The second diagnosis interprets the case as related to those proposed to motivate the existence of partial intentions. See Chan, “A Not-so-Simple View of Intentional Action”; Holton, “Partial Belief, Partial Intention”; Shpall, “The Calendar Paradox”; Goldstein, “A Preface Paradox for Intention”; Beddor, “Fallibility for Expressivists”; Jian, “Rational Norms for Degreed Intention (and the Discrepancy between Theoretical and Practical Reason).” Our investigation is interesting in a way that goes beyond those

## 1. PRELIMINARIES: COMMUNICATING WITH SENTENCE (1)

It is easiest to start our explanation of what you express in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs by fleshing out our picture of what goes on when you utter (1) in Sunday Eggs:

(1) I will go to the store today.

As we said, it appears that you do at least two things: you express a belief that you will go to the store today, and you express an intention to go to the store today. The default linguistic explanation of how this would happen is that one of these speech acts is connected in a close way to the meaning of the sentence while the other is less explicit. We can call the first act the direct speech act. In Sunday Eggs, you express the belief that you will go to the store today as the direct speech act. Additionally, you use the direct speech act as a way of performing an indirect speech act—one that is less closely connected with the meaning of the sentence. In Sunday Eggs, you express the intention to go to the store today as an indirect speech act. Direct and indirect speech acts are analogous to Grice's notions of saying (or making as if to say) and implicating, respectively.<sup>6</sup>

The mechanism by which your roommate can infer your intention from your utterance of (1) is broadly Gricean, based on general reasoning about your state of mind. They could reason that in uttering (1), you expressed the belief that you will go to the store today. And they could wonder why you believe that. Since going to the store today is something you would want to do in order to get eggs, and since it seems like doing so is under your control, they could

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earlier treatments for two reasons. First, it can be easier to have judgments about cases involving conversations, and this can highlight the problems for the accepted views in more natural examples than some discussed in the literature—like Bratman's video game case in *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, 113–15, or the preface paradox for intention in Shpall, "The Calendar Paradox," and Goldstein, "A Preface Paradox for Intention." Second, it is independently interesting how intention-like attitudes are ascribed using sentences like (2), and understanding this helps us better appreciate or, as we will see in section 4.3, critique arguments in the literature that rely on "I will  $\phi$ " constructions as canonical for expressing intention. Thanks to Jay Jian for discussion.

6 Grice, "Logic and Conversation." Expressing intentions calls for thinking of speech acts (or expressing mental states) in general, rather than just assertion or saying (or expressing beliefs). Grice realizes this general point: "I have stated my maxims as if this purpose [of communication] were a maximally effective exchange of information; this specification is, of course, too narrow, and the scheme needs to be generalized to allow for such general purposes as influencing or directing the actions of others" ("Logic and Conversation," 28).

conclude that you are not merely predicting that you will go to the store but that you intend to do so.<sup>7</sup>

There are a number of reasons to prefer this picture to one that says that expressing an intention to go to the store in uttering (1) is the direct speech act—closely tied to the meaning of (1). First, as has been widely noted, many sentences with (1)'s form are not used to express an intention at all.<sup>8</sup> For instance:

(6) I will be sick.

It would be strange if the meaning of (1) constrains its direct speech act to be an expression of an intention, while the meaning of (6)—which has the same form—does not. More importantly, whether an intention is expressed by a sentence of this form depends on the context in which the sentence is uttered.<sup>9</sup> In the nonstandard but possible context where one swallows something one should not, one can utter (6) to express an intention to be sick. And in non-standard contexts, one can utter (1) without expressing an intention:

*Sleepwalker:* You know you are a predictable sleepwalker. When you take an afternoon nap, you always sleepwalk to the store. You are going to nap on Sunday, and your roommate asks where you will sleepwalk to. You reply with (1).

In uttering (1) in *Sleepwalker*, you express a belief that you will go to the store but do not express an intention to go to the store.

Finally, it appears that we can cancel the expression of an intention, even in a context in which it appears natural to assume it has been performed:

(7) I will go to the store today. Sandy will drag me there as she always does. I will try as hard as I can to get out of it, but I am sure I will fail.<sup>10</sup>

7 This phenomenon may be like *generalized* conversational implicature, where “the use of a certain form of words in an utterance would normally (in the absence of special circumstances) carry such-and-such an implicature” (Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” 37). Those who think that forms of sentences like (1) are particularly well suited to defeasibly express intentions might also use the notion of *standardization* as a model, from Bach and Harnish, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*.

8 Anscombe, *Intention*.

9 Asarnow uses a similar example to make this point (“Noncognitivism in Metaethics and the Philosophy of Action,” 6–7).

10 For the claim that we can cancel the expression of an intention like an implicature, see Asarnow, “Noncognitivism in Metaethics and the Philosophy of Action,” 17–18.

By way of comparison, the reader can note that a speaker who uses (1) will express their belief in any context in which they are sincere and that this expression cannot be cancelled by adding more information (as in [7]) without retracting one's utterance of (1) itself. This is strong evidence to think that, in uttering a sentence like (1) in a scenario like Sunday Eggs, you directly express your belief and indirectly express your intention.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. POSSIBLE INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS PERFORMED IN UTTERING (2)

Now, consider again sentence (2):

(2) I will probably go to the store today.

In what respects are the speech acts a speaker performs in using (2) like those performed in using (1)? It seems natural to think that in uttering (2) you directly express high confidence (credence) that you will go to the store today.<sup>12</sup> This is analogous to the belief you express in uttering (1). The key question is what,

- 11 As a reviewer notes, the arguments in this paragraph assume two features of what is directly expressed by a speaker. First, it is not cancellable; we cannot take back what is directly expressed without revoking our commitment to what is conveyed in using those words. Second, it is context insensitive in the following weak sense: the same sentence cannot be used in different contexts to directly express different sorts of mental states. (This leaves open that language is context sensitive in the more standard way of having the content of the state of mind directly expressed depend on the context, as the belief that is directly expressed by a use of "I am hungry now" depends on who is speaking and when.) These two assumptions are standard in Gricean and similar paradigms, though they might be denied by more radical views. For instance, the essays of Travis, *Occasion-Sensitivity*, present a paradigm in which it is natural to deny the latter assumption. However, not only are these assumptions standard, they strike me as extremely natural. It is hard to even state the first assumption, since a direct speech act is just the one that the speaker is fundamentally committed to—and, so, it could not be cancelled without revoking commitment to what was directly done in uttering the sentence. Denying the second assumption is comprehensible but, I think, implausible. I do not have space to fully discuss the issue here, but I suspect that a picture of the connection between language and its use that allowed such a radical sort of context sensitivity lacks the systematicity that would be required for language being as vastly helpful as it is for communication.
- 12 Yalcin suggests that "in asserting something like [(2)] one may express an aspect of one's credal state, without describing that state. One expresses one's confidence, that is, without literally saying that one is confident" ("Bayesian Expressivism," 125). Rothschild makes a similar proposal, that one suggests that conversational participants adopt a given credal state in "Expressing Credences," 103. See also Price, "Does 'Probably' Modify Sense?"; Yalcin, "Epistemic Modals," "Nonfactualism about Epistemic Modality," and "Context Probabilism"; Moss, "On the Semantics and Pragmatics of Epistemic Vocabulary" and *Probabilistic Knowledge*; Swanson, "The Application of Constraint Semantics to the Language of Subjective Uncertainty." See note 4 above for related discussion.

if any, indirect speech act you perform in uttering (2). As with most cases of indirect speech acts, which one is performed by a speaker who utters (2), if any, will be different in different contexts. There are many indirect speech acts that could occur in less typical contexts that I will not discuss.<sup>13</sup> But I will survey some common ones in this section, eventually coming to what you plausibly express by using (2) in the ordinary context at issue, Friday Eggs.

### 2.1. *None*

In some contexts, a speaker uses a sentence like (2) without performing any indirect speech acts related to their intentions:

*Sleepwalker\**: You know you are a predictable sleepwalker, but not quite as predictable as in Sleepwalker. When you nap, you *usually* sleepwalk to the store. You are about to nap, and your roommate asks where you will sleepwalk to. You reply with (2).

You express your high credence that you will go to the store, but you do not communicate anything indirectly about your intentions.

However, not all utterances of (2) are like this. Many *do* involve you indirectly communicating something about your intentions. To deny this would be to treat all utterances of (2) quite differently than utterances of (1), which very often involve you indirectly communicating something about your intentions.

### 2.2. *Conveying Confidence in a Future Intention*

One case of this sort occurs when a speaker uses (2) to communicate that they are confident they will, in the future, form an intention to go to the store:

*Combos*: You currently think going to the store is a bad idea, so you do not have an intention to do so. But you think it is likely that you are going to have some drinks later, and you know that if you do have those drinks, buying a party-size bag of Combos will seem like the thing to do. So you think that if you come to be under the influence, you will intend to go to the store. Thus, you utter (2) to your roommate.

At the time of your utterance, you do not have an intention about what you will do. But it does seem that in addition to directly expressing your high credence that you will go to the store, you also indirectly express high credence that you

13 Even in ordinary contexts, we can perform all sorts of indirect speech acts, e.g., conveying that grandma is not feeling well, that the mechanic fixed the car, or even that I will not go to the store today (using sarcasm).

will come to intend to go to the store. That is, you indirectly communicate your current state of mind about what you will intend in the future.<sup>14</sup>

I suspect that cases like Combos are less common than cases where you express a current intention-like state. Friday Eggs seems to be one where you express something intention-like. When you reply to your roommate with (2), it does not seem that you are expressing or conveying uncertainty about either your present *or your future* state of mind. Furthermore, in Friday Eggs you are subject to some characteristic norms on intending when you utter (2), not merely later after making a further decision. For instance, after uttering (2) in Friday Eggs (but not in Combos), lending your car to a friend for the entire day would violate a norm if driving your car is a known necessary means to going to the store. This suggests that the intention that generates this norm (intend the necessary means to your end) is something you have at the time of utterance.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.3. *Expressing a Conditional Intention*

One reason to utter (2) rather than (1) is that you do not know whether things will work out for you to go to the store.<sup>16</sup> You might not know whether you will finish your other errands, or whether the store stays open until nine o'clock, or whether you will still have the motivation to go after dinner. Let us look at a slight variant of Friday Eggs:

*Friday Eggs\**: You bake a lot of cookies that week, and on Friday morning, your roommate notes that you are again out of eggs. Friday is busier than Sunday. You tell your roommate that you cannot make it to the store until 8:15 PM and that you suspect, but are not sure, that the store is open until 9:00 PM on Fridays. You then utter (2).

14 Thanks to a referee for helpfully suggesting a case with the structure of Combos, rather than my earlier attempts, which made this point less effectively. David Braun (personal communication) notes that there are cases where you do not presently intend to  $\phi$  but believe you will come to intend to  $\phi$ , while being confident, but not believing, that you will, when the time comes,  $\phi$  based on that intention. Here, your uncertainty is about carrying out, rather than forming that intention. As in Combos, there seems something amiss. Either your present self views your future intention as irrational (as in Combos) or you violate a plausible reflection principle, where believing you will rationally have an intention in the future rationally requires you to have that intention now.

15 Thanks to Justin Snedegar for discussion.

16 Thanks to Laura Tomlinson Makin for suggesting and showing me a way of reasoning into the position discussed in this section. And thanks to Luis Rosa for discussion and for showing me that some of my previous arguments against this view were unconvincing.



It seems that in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs\*, you indirectly express a *conditional* intention to go to the store today if the store stays open until nine o'clock. If you knew that it did, then you would have uttered (1) rather than (2).

It is plausible that there are conditional intentions, which are not judgments about what you will intend in the future, if you learn that the condition obtains. Rather, they are intention-like right now. Ludwig, for instance, thinks that as intentions are states that guide us in planning, conditional intentions are states that guide us in contingency planning.<sup>17</sup> And conditional intentions give rise to intention-like norms.<sup>18</sup> It is plausible that in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs\*, you indirectly express this sort of attitude.

But you do not do so in the original Friday Eggs.<sup>19</sup> The key difference between Friday Eggs and Friday Eggs\* is that in the latter you give your roommate much more information about what your future actions are contingent on. A natural view of what goes on in an instance of communication is that a speaker utters some bits of language in their surroundings to express or convey something, and a hearer processes the utterance with the surroundings also in mind to come to grasp what the speaker expressed or conveyed. A hearer who understands the words in (2) in Friday Eggs will not, in general, be able to figure out the condition of the purportedly expressed conditional intention. In hearing your utterance of (2) in Friday Eggs, will your roommate take you to have expressed a conditional intention to go to the store if you finish your other errands, or if the store stays open until nine o'clock, or if you still have the motivation to go after dinner, or if some other condition obtains?<sup>20</sup> As an

17 Ludwig, "What Are Conditional Intentions?"; see also Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*; Lennertz, "Quantificational Attitudes."

18 Ferrero, "Conditional Intentions"; Ludwig, "What Are Conditional Intentions?"; Lennertz, "Quantificational Attitudes."

19 The considerations discussed in what follows are similar to those that Shpall uses to make the case against a conditional intention construal of what he calls inclinations (or partial intentions) ("The Calendar Paradox," 818–19).

20 One might think that the hearer will be able to figure out some plausible condition. But there are two worries here. First, this does not explain how a hearer might report your utterance of (2) to a third party, without sharing the details of the context of utterance. Nonetheless the third party can know what you communicated, suggesting that the condition, and, so, the conditional intention, was not essential to it. Second, though the hearer might be able to, in many cases, take up your utterance in a way that seems somewhat plausible, there is no good reason to think that they will grasp a particular condition that you intended to convey; in many cases, it seems that there *is not* any particular condition that you intended to convey. I suspect the most plausible way forward for the presser of this objection is to accept the heterodox idea that a speaker and hearer can communicate without the latter grasping what the former has expressed or conveyed. See Buchanan, "A Puzzle about Meaning and Communication."

analogy, suppose that you utter to a passerby on the street, “I am ready.” The passerby has no way of knowing what you have expressed; are you ready for breakfast, for your job interview, for the apocalypse, for something else? This is not successful communication. If we are only focused on which conditional intention you express, we should expect a similar breakdown of communication in uttering (2) in a situation where there is not a lot of shared background information, like Friday Eggs (though not in Friday Eggs\*, given your more robust shared beliefs).<sup>21</sup> But we do not see such a breakdown.

It is helpful to think by analogy to how we express beliefs. Consider again:

(3) The Sparks probably won last night.

Why might you utter (3) rather than (8)?

(8) The Sparks won last night.

One reason is that you do not know whether things turned out in the way that would make the Sparks win. You might not know whether their star player, Nneka Ogwumike, fouled out or whether they held onto their third-quarter lead. So instead of uttering (8), you utter (3). We might conclude that in uttering (3), you are expressing a conditional belief—perhaps the conditional belief that the Sparks won last night if Ogwumike did not foul out or the conditional belief that the Sparks won last night if they held onto their third-quarter lead. This suggestion might diagnose what you convey on particular occasions, but it is not plausible for all cases. Though your judgment that the Sparks probably won last night might be grounded in contingency reasoning about what happens if Ogwumike fouls out or if they blow their lead, these thoughts are not the judgment itself. So they are not what you typically express in uttering (3). Likewise, things are similar for the analogous case of conditional intentions. In our scenario, whatever intention-like state you indirectly express by uttering (2)

21 Perhaps what is indirectly conveyed is that there is some condition or other, such that you conditionally intend to go to the store if that condition obtains. Knowledge of this, together with what is directly expressed—your high credence that you will go to the store—might tell your roommate a lot about your mental state. I agree that worries about communication/coordination do not apply here. But I do not think this diagnosis suffices to explain the strength of the attitude you convey that you have in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs. This is because if you have a conditional intention whose condition does not obtain, you can neither succeed nor fail at carrying it out. See Ferrero, “Conditional Intentions”; Ludwig, “What Are Conditional Intentions?”; Lennertz, “Quantificational Attitudes.” Ferrero calls such conditional intentions *moot* (“Conditional Intentions,” 705). But it seems that by uttering (2) in Friday Eggs, you express the sort of attitude that can be carried out or not when the time comes, regardless of any conditions obtaining or not. Thanks to Luis Rosa for discussion.

in Friday Eggs may be supported by conditional intentions to go to the store if various contingencies do or do not obtain and your confidence that they will obtain. But these conditional intentions are not what you express in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs.<sup>22</sup>

#### 2.4. *Expressing a Partial Intention*

If we continue to think by analogy to belief, we will be struck by another possibility for what you indirectly express in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs. It is commonly said that (2) is used to directly express a partial version of the state that (1) is used to directly express (belief).<sup>23</sup> Perhaps in many scenarios, including Friday Eggs, (2) is used to indirectly express a partial version of the state that (1) is used to indirectly express (intention).<sup>24</sup>

- 22 As an analogical consideration, this is not a knockdown argument. One disanalogy is that the credence expressed by a speaker who utters (3) is expressed *directly*, while a proponent of the claim that a speaker who utters (2) in Friday Eggs expresses a conditional intention says they do so only *indirectly*. However, it is not clear why this would make the conditional intention picture for (2) more plausible than the conditional belief one is for (3).
- 23 As I will discuss further in note 48 below, Moon shows that conceiving of these attitudes as partial beliefs is incorrect in “Beliefs Do Not Come in Degrees.” But that is no impediment to the analogy in the text, if conceived of more carefully, as one where partial intentions relate to ordinary intentions as attitudes of confidence, or credences, relate to belief. It is worth noting that some authors take the heterodox position that (1) and (2) are, at least often, both used to express the same sort of attitude (belief), though the latter is toward a probabilistic content. See Lance, “Subjective Probability and Acceptance”; Hawthorne and Stanley, “Knowledge and Action”; Moss, *Probabilistic Knowledge*; Dogramaci, “Rational Credence through Reasoning”; Moon and Jackson, “Credence”; Lennertz, “Noncognitivism and the Frege-Geach Problem in Formal Epistemology.”
- 24 Authors who have motivated the existence of partial intention by analogy to partial belief or credence have not considered using these states to explain what speakers express in using sentences like (2). See Chan, “A Not-so-Simple View of Intentional Action”; Holton, “Partial Belief, Partial Intention”; Shpall, “The Calendar Paradox”; Goldstein, “A Preface Paradox for Intention”; Beddor, “Fallibility for Expressivists.” Jian casts doubt on the analogy between partial intentions and partial beliefs or credences in “Rational Norms for Degreed Intention (and the Discrepancy between Theoretical and Practical Reason).” Marušić and Schwenkler take themselves to be doing something similar, though their analogy is not to credences (“Intending Is Believing,” 322–28). Instead, they take partial intentions to be either conditional intentions or what they call *weak intentions*. We have already discussed how the former relate to our case. As for the latter, Marušić and Schwenkler say that one has a weak intention when “she anticipates that she may abandon this intention in the face of difficult or tempting circumstances” (326). I suspect that, in contrasting weak from other intentions, they are overplaying the settledness of ordinary intentions and beliefs. It is rare to intend something regardless of what temptations arise. For instance, almost everything I intend to do would be reconsidered if I were offered a billion dollars to do something else. In a similar way, almost everything I believe would be reconsidered if I were to obtain overwhelming evidence against it. Ludwig and Bratman

This relies on there being such things as partial intentions. But what are partial intentions? Holton says they

are certainly like all-out intentions in many respects. They play the same roles of curtailing deliberation, resolving indeterminacy, and enabling coordination that intentions play: you fix on a small number of plans from the many that occurred to you and that you might have pursued, and as a result of this you can coordinate around your other plans . . . and with other people. . . . What distinguishes the states you are in from normal intentions is simply that they are partial: they stand to all-out intentions much as partial beliefs stand to all-out beliefs.<sup>25</sup>

It seems reasonable that in the scenario described above, you have a partial intention of the sort characterized here (though, as I will discuss below, our scenario is not consistent with Holton's full account of partial intentions). For instance, you do not leave the question about what you will do today totally open. Furthermore, you indirectly express a state that induces some other requirements on you. Remember what we said above in the scenario where you require the car to get to the store, but loan it to your neighbor all day after sincerely uttering (2) to your roommate. Your roommate is likely to say "Dude, what the hell?" You appear to violate a sort of means-end consistency norm stemming from the attitude you expressed.

There is more to say about different conceptions of partial intentions, and there are reasons to doubt that, on some of these conceptions, you indirectly express a partial intention in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs. We will return to this topic in section 3. I will now investigate another promising account.

### 2.5. *Expressing an Ordinary Intention*

The sorts of considerations I discussed in the previous subsection do not differentiate two hypotheses for what you indirectly express in uttering (2) in Friday

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offer similar considerations against Ferrero's picture of almost all intentions as conditional. See Ludwig, "What Are Conditional Intentions?"; Bratman, "Simple Intention." See Ferrero, "Conditional Intentions." This may mean that the fact that intentions are often weak in Marušić and Schwenkler's sense in similar ways to belief can help them avoid the sort of objection they address when they discuss weak and conditional intentions. See Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, 37; Mele, "Intention, Belief, and Intentional Action," 19–20. But it does not seem to help in our project of understanding what you express in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs. Finally, Nathaniel Baron-Schmitt suggested to me that you might express an attitude that is distinct from though similar in some ways to partial intention: (strongly) considering. Muñoz discusses this sense of considering and distinguishes it from partial intention in "Thinking, Acting, Considering" (255–56).

25 Holton, "Partial Belief, Partial Intention," 41.

Eggs: a partial intention to go to the store and an ordinary (full) intention to go to the store.<sup>26</sup>

Consider, again, the continuation of our scenario where you lend the car to your neighbor, and your roommate responds with “Dude, what the hell?” Notice your roommate’s reaction could be the same if you had uttered (1) rather than (2). It seems that you violate the same sort of norm in each case. A straightforward explanation of this fact is that you do violate the same norm in each case because you have an intention-like attitude in each case, which generates that norm. That attitude might, as suggested in the previous section, be a partial intention. But the parallel of the cases suggests it might be more reasonable to think that it is an ordinary intention.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. COMPARING THE PARTIAL AND ORDINARY INTENTION DIAGNOSES

So what do you indirectly express in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs: a partial or an ordinary intention? In this section, I will compare the *partial intention diagnosis* and the *ordinary intention diagnosis*. I will show their relative advantages, though I will leave it to the reader to decide which is more plausible. Either way, as I will show in section 4, there is an important challenge for some natural principle about intention.

#### 3.1. In Favor of the Partial Intention Diagnosis

A first-pass reason for preferring the partial intention diagnosis to the ordinary intention diagnosis of your utterance in Friday Eggs is easy to find. It seems you express something weaker when you utter (2) in Friday Eggs than when you utter (1) in Sunday Eggs. So we should think that you express a partial, rather than an ordinary intention. However, this first pass reason is not decisive on its own. The advocate of the ordinary intention diagnosis could explain the intuitions about differing strength in terms of what is directly expressed—high confidence rather than belief.

26 This is what Chan calls an intention *par excellence* (“A Not-so-Simple View of Intentional Action,” 5).

27 My descriptions of the scenarios Sleepwalker, Sleepwalker\*, Combos, and Friday Eggs\* include more intricate and somewhat obscure details than my description of the original scenario, Friday Eggs. We might think that we could differentiate a partial intention version of Friday Eggs from an ordinary intention version if we filled in the details. That may be true. But in many ordinary situations there often are not that many relevant details known to the conversational participants. My interest in Friday Eggs is an interest in what is going on in these ordinary situations. Thanks to Jay Jian for discussion.

There might be reason to think not just that you express something weaker with (2) in Friday Eggs than with (1) in Sunday Eggs, but that the *intention* expressed in uttering (2) is weaker than the *intention* expressed in uttering (1). Consider, for instance, if something comes up and you do not go to the store. Some have suggested that it is natural for your roommate to confront you about not going to the store in the case of Sunday Eggs, but it seems less natural for them to do that in the case of Friday Eggs. I think we should distinguish two questions: (i) Did you carry out your intention? (ii) Are you blameworthy? What it takes for you to carry out your intention in both Friday Eggs and Sunday Eggs is the same: you go to the store. So that would not explain your roommate's variable response. But it might be that you are blameworthy in Sunday Eggs but not in Friday Eggs. A natural thought is that in Sunday Eggs you express an ordinary intention which involves a full commitment toward going to the store, while in Friday Eggs you express a partial intention that does not involve a full commitment. Your roommate might think that you should be blamed since you gave them reason to rely on you completely in Sunday Eggs, but not in Friday Eggs.<sup>28</sup>

While this sort of example is a reason in favor of the partial intention diagnosis, it does not refute the ordinary intention diagnosis. An advocate of the ordinary intention diagnosis might give a slightly amended explanation where what licenses your roommate to rely on you is not the strength of your commitment, which might be full in both cases, but the strength of the belief you express, which is full in Sunday Eggs but not in Friday Eggs. This explanation is consistent with the ordinary intention diagnosis. I lack a firm judgment about whether this explanation is as good as the one from the previous paragraph, so it is not clear to me whether the partial intention diagnosis has an advantage here and, if so, how strong it is.<sup>29</sup>

In personal communication, Nathaniel Baron-Schmitt has suggested another reason to prefer the partial intention diagnosis, which comes from looking at a different utterance in the same scenario as Friday Eggs:

*Friday Eggs May:* On Friday morning, your roommate notes that you are again out of eggs. Friday is busier than Sunday, so you say:

28 Luis Rosa suggested this sort of case to me. Note that what stops you from going to the store must not be catastrophic or unforeseeable. A catastrophic or unforeseeable event would exonerate you in both cases.

29 This is because I lack a firm judgment about whether blame in Sunday Eggs, if you did not go to the store, comes from a negative evaluation of your failing to carry out your plan/commitment or from a negative evaluation of your asserting something false that your roommate relies on. If it is the latter, the ordinary intention diagnosis's defense from this objection will likely be satisfying. Thanks to Jay Jian for discussion.

(9) I may go to the store today.

Your utterance is felicitous, and if you express an intention, it seems implausible that it is an ordinary intention. We can see so by thinking about what would happen if you uttered (10) rather than (9) in Friday Eggs May:

(10) I may go to the store today, but I may not.

If sentences like (9) are used in scenarios like Friday Eggs May to indirectly express ordinary intentions, then it would seem that (10) would be used in Friday Eggs May to indirectly express contradictory intentions—to go to the store and to not go the store. But you could utter (10) without expressing contradictory intentions. The partial intention diagnosis could easily explain what is going on by saying that what you express is a partial, not ordinary intention—and a partial intention to go to the store and a partial intention to not go to the store can be consistent. Since we should want a diagnosis of what goes on in Friday Eggs that can also explain the very similar goings on in Friday Eggs May, it appears that the partial intention diagnosis has an advantage here.

There are two plausible responses that the ordinary intention diagnosis could give. First, they could deny that either (9) or (10) is used to express any sort of intention (at least in Friday Eggs May). One reason to think this is that if one says (9) and then goes to the store, it is not clear that we should say they carried out their intention.<sup>30</sup> Second, an advocate of the ordinary intention diagnosis could say that even though sentences like (9) are sometimes used to express ordinary intentions (in scenarios like Friday May Eggs), sentences like (10) never are. This might appear *ad hoc* since (10) is just the conjunction of two sentences with (9)'s form. But it is important to remember that the expression of an intention is an indirect speech act; it is a pragmatic, rather than an encoded, compositional phenomenon. And one thing that could surely cancel an implicature generated by a use of (9), even in a context that would otherwise support it, is the claim that the opposite may happen. If either of these explanations is correct, then the ordinary intention view may still be right.

### 3.2. In Favor of the Ordinary Intention Diagnosis

One reason for preferring the ordinary intention diagnosis to the partial intention diagnosis is parsimony. The partial intention view posits a new sort of

30 One worry with this response is that I have been told that (2) and (9) are translated to the same sentence in Mandarin. I do not have space to adequately explore the fallout of this here, but it seems to be a *prima facie* reason to think that if you express an intention in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs, you can do so by uttering (9) as well. Thanks to Jay Jian and Mengqun Sun for discussion.

mental state; our picture of the mind needs to include not only ordinary intentions but partial ones. However, theorists have posited partial intentions for reasons other than explaining what you express in uttering a sentence like (2) in a scenario like Friday Eggs. For instance, Chan argues that partial intentions make sense of variation in the stringency of consistency constraints on intentions, especially in cases like Bratman's video game player.<sup>31</sup> Marušić uses partial intentions to understand Bratman's example where he intends to stop at the bookstore but does not believe that he will.<sup>32</sup> Goldstein and Shpall use partial intentions to solve a preface paradox-like problem involving intentions.<sup>33</sup> These examples show that there are independent motivations for partial intentions.

A more serious worry for the partial intention diagnosis is that the belief analogy used to motivate it is not so strong.<sup>34</sup> For instance, partial intentions do not obviously come with the fineness of grain that credence does. Suppose that in Friday Eggs you utter, instead of (2):

(11) It is 75 percent probable that I will go to the store today.

You directly express a credence of degree 75 percent that you will go to the store today. But it is not clear that you indirectly express any sort of partial intention (e.g., if you do later go to the store, it does not sound natural to say that you have carried out your intention). And if you do express a partial intention, it is not clear that it is a state whose degree can be measured quantitatively, as 0.75.

A related puzzle is why, if there are partial intentions with an analogous structure to credences, it is difficult to indirectly express low-degreed intentions. For instance, imagine that in Friday Eggs you utter:

(12) It is improbable that I will go to the store today.<sup>35</sup>

31 Chan, "A Not-so-Simple View of Intentional Action"; Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, 113–15.

32 Marušić, *Evidence and Agency*, 58–63; Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, 37.

33 Goldstein, "A Preface Paradox for Intention"; Shpall, "The Calendar Paradox."

34 For extensive discussion of similar points, see Jian, "Rational Norms for Degreed Intention (and the Discrepancy between Theoretical and Practical Reason)."

35 The fact that we do not use sentences like (12) to express intention-like attitudes might be abductive reason not only against the existence of partial intentions, but also for a substantive condition forbidding ordinary intentions toward actions that you have low confidence that you will perform. Mele says:

Ordinary speakers of English are disinclined to attribute intentions to *A* to agents who estimate their chances of succeeding in *A*-ing as less than even. What accounts for this, I suspect, is not just that there is something very odd about such *assertions* as "I intend to *A* but I believe that I probably will not *A*," but also that the ordinary concept of intention incorporates a confidence condition—perhaps only a negative one. ("Intention, Belief, and Intentional Action," 28)



If I do go, we should not say that I carried out my intention. These points suggest that either there are no partial intentions, we do not indirectly express them in this sort of language, or partial intentions do not have the fineness of grain of credences.<sup>36</sup> In the first case, we should agree that it is an ordinary intention that you indirectly expressed by uttering (2) in Friday Eggs. In the second case, we are left with a puzzle about why we can easily express some sorts of our partial intentions (strong, qualitative ones) but not others. In the third, partial intentions will not have quantitative strengths. I will not try to dissolve the puzzle generated if the second possibility is true, though I am not ruling out this way forward. Instead, I will investigate a popular picture of partial intentions from Richard Holton which denies that they have quantitative strengths.<sup>37</sup>

Holton maintains the analogy between belief and intention by claiming that neither intention nor belief comes in quantitative degrees. What makes an intention partial for him is that there is an alternative intention to achieve the same end. For instance, since your end is to procure eggs, in order for your intention to go to the store (as a means to getting eggs) to be partial, you must have an alternative intention designed to get eggs. But Marušić notes that this should not be a general requirement for having a partial intention.<sup>38</sup> It is not required in Friday Eggs. Your attitude directed at going to the store may be accompanied by no other attitudes that set getting eggs as a goal. So either that state is not a partial intention (and is likely an ordinary intention) or Holton is wrong that alternative intentions are required for an intention to be partial.

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Thanks to Catherine Rioux for discussion.

36 Regarding the first possibility, Julia Staffel suggested to me that it is natural to say things like:

(13) I sort of intend to go to the store.

(14) I strongly intend to go to the store.

This appears easily explicable if we accept partial intentions. But we can also explain utterances of (13) and (14) without referring to partial intentions. First, “sort of” is not typically used to introduce degrees but to characterize situations where it is indeterminate whether a qualitative concept applies (e.g., “He is sort of bald,” “I sort of understand what you are saying”). Second, though “strongly” often is a degree modifier, it can also signal stability or robustness. So when I say that I strongly believe my mother’s testimony, I might mean that I believe it and would continue to do so even if evidence to the contrary were mounted against it; not only do I believe it, but I conditionally believe it, given all sorts of countervailing evidence. Likewise, strongly intending may simply be an intention that I am committed to in a way that is stable even were I to encounter strong countervailing reasons. This can be so even if the intention does not come in degrees.

37 This contrasts with Chan, “A Not-so-Simple View of Intentional Action”; Goldstein, “A Preface Paradox for Intention”; Beddor, “Fallibility for Expressivists.”

38 Marušić, *Evidence and Agency Norms of Belief for Promising and Resolving*, 60; see also Archer, “Do We Need Partial Intentions?”

Another option says that a partial intention is distinguished by having a mere partial belief in its success.<sup>39</sup> But according to this view, the partial intention diagnosis of Friday Eggs seems indistinguishable in substance from the ordinary intention diagnosis. Both claim that (i) you directly express a high credence that you will go to the store and (ii) you indirectly express an attitude directed toward going to the store that can be carried out or not, structures your deliberation, and makes you subject to characteristic intention-like norms. They merely disagree on whether to call this an ordinary intention because of these features, or a partial intention because it is accompanied by a credence.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTENTION-LIKE AND BELIEF-LIKE ATTITUDES

In section 3, we saw reasons to prefer the partial intention diagnosis of what you indirectly convey in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs to the ordinary intention diagnosis, and reasons for the opposite conclusion. Both are still open possibilities. Either way, we will have to reject at least one of the principles from the introduction, *Intention Implies Belief* and *Intention Implies Commitment*.

##### 4.1. Consequences of the Ordinary Intention Diagnosis

Suppose the ordinary intention diagnosis of what you indirectly express in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs is correct. Let us look in more depth at what you communicate. Typically, if you directly express some degree of credence in a proposition, you imply that you do not believe that proposition (even though high confidence is compatible with belief). This is an implicature that arises due to Grice's Maxim of Quantity: "Make your contribution as informative as is required."<sup>41</sup> For example, it would be strange to say that most people came to the party when they all did. A hearer can reason that if everyone came to the party, you would have said so, so in saying that most people came, you imply that not all of them did. Likewise, it would be strange to express that you are pretty confident of a proposition when you believe it. In Friday Eggs, a hearer can reason that if you believed you would go to the store, you would have just

39 Chan develops a view like this in "A Not-so-Simple View of Intentional Action." Other authors consider and reject this view. See Holton, "Partial Belief, Partial Intention," 41–42; Shpall, "The Calendar Paradox," 822.

40 Chan entertains a similar objection to his view and gives a response in "A Not-so-Simple View of Intentional Action," 7–8. A full evaluation of this move is beyond the scope of this paper.

41 Grice, "Logic and Conversation," 26.

said (1). Given this, we should say the following about Friday Eggs: in uttering (2), you directly express high credence that you will go to the store, implicate that you do not believe that you will go to the store, and indirectly express an intention to go to the store.

You have thereby communicated a state of mind that is obviously inconsistent with one of our theses from the introduction. If you are sincere, then the following thesis must be false:

*Intention Implies Belief:* If  $S$  intends to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  believes  $S$  will  $\phi$ .

Some people who accept Intention Implies Belief do so because they think that intending to  $\phi$  is or involves believing that you will  $\phi$ .<sup>42</sup> But the ordinary intention diagnosis creates problems, even for those who reject this metaphysical claim, as long as they accept Intention Implies Belief.

Some might think that intention does not imply belief, but *rational* intention does:

*Rational Intention Implies Belief:* If  $S$  is rational and intends to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  believes  $S$  will  $\phi$ .

This would be shown to be false by the ordinary intention diagnosis of Friday Eggs provided that you were sincerely expressing a *rational* combination of attitudes in uttering (2). This seems reasonable, given the ease with which we utter and accept others' utterances of sentences of the form "I will probably  $\phi$ ."<sup>43</sup>

This does not mean that there are no connections between intention and belief-like attitudes. The ordinary intention diagnosis is consistent with (though it does not entail or even strongly support) the following three views:

*Intention Implies High Confidence:* If  $S$  intends to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  has high confidence that  $S$  will  $\phi$ .<sup>44</sup>

42 Marušić and Schwenkler, "Intending Is Believing"; Harman, "Practical Reasoning."

43 Those with cognitivist sympathies may wonder how we are to explain the rational norms on intention if we reject these theses. My project here is not to vindicate any explanation of those norms, but they are right that we would need to avail ourselves of a non-cognitivist explanation as in Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*. This sort of challenge to noncognitivism is commonly made in the metaethics literature. See Hale, "Can There Be a Logic of Attitudes?"; van Roojen, "Expressivism and Irrationality"; Schroeder, *Being For*. And there is a similar advantage for cognitivist accounts of confidence or credence in formal epistemology. See Moss, *Probabilistic Knowledge*; Lennertz, "Noncognitivism and the Frege-Geach Problem in Formal Epistemology." Thanks to Catherine Rioux for discussion.

44 Holton discusses, with some pessimism, a similar thesis involving his notion of partial belief in "Partial Belief, Partial Intention." In "Instrumental Rationality," Wedgwood

*Intention Implies Lack of Disbelief*: If  $S$  intends to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  does not believe  $S$  will not  $\phi$ .<sup>45</sup>

*Intention Implies Belief in Possibility*: If  $S$  intends to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  believes it is possible that  $S$  will  $\phi$ .<sup>46</sup>

Whether and which of these is correct is not determined by our investigation of utterances of sentences like (2) in situations like Friday Eggs. Perhaps there are other data about communication that can cast light on these theses, or perhaps their status must be decided independently of data about how we express our intentions.

#### 4.2. Consequences of the Partial Intention Diagnosis

Now suppose, instead, that the partial intention diagnosis is correct. On one reading of Intention Implies Belief, where “intends” picks out any intention, partial or full, but “believes” picks out only ordinary beliefs, it is false for the reasons discussed in the previous section. Nonetheless, we might think that a graded version of this thesis is more plausible:

*Intention Implies Belief\**: If  $S$  intends, to degree  $n$ , to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  has credence, of degree  $n$ , that  $S$  will  $\phi$ .

This may be a plausible principle that is in line with the motivations of at least some advocates of the original principle (though I am skeptical it would satisfy some, for the reasons discussed below).<sup>47</sup> Because of this complication, I want to spend this section discussing the other principle from the introduction:

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endorses a principle that stands in relation to Intention Implies High Confidence as Rational Intention Implies Belief stands to Intention Implies Belief:

*Rational Intention Implies High Confidence*: If  $S$  is rational and intends to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  has high confidence that  $S$  will  $\phi$ .

And Setiya proposes a different relationship between intention and confidence: “In doing  $\phi$  intentionally, one is more confident that one is doing it than one would otherwise be” (“Practical Knowledge,” 391).

45 Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*; Mele, “Intention, Belief, and Intentional Action.”

46 Wallace, “Normativity, Commitment and Instrumental Reason.”

47 “Intention Implies Belief\*” is a misleading name for this principle. The claim that belief comes in degrees or there are partial beliefs, despite being a popular way of speaking, is not *strictly speaking* plausible. Moon mounts convincing arguments against it in “Beliefs Do Not Come in Degrees.” We, of course, have states of confidence or credences that are like beliefs in some ways (though different in others). Indeed, the huge literature on the relationship between credence and belief signals tacit acceptance that credences are not mere partial versions of ordinary beliefs. See, for instance, Jackson, “The Relationship

*Intention Implies Commitment:* If  $S$  intends to  $\phi$ , then  $S$  is committed to  $\phi$ -ing.

If we accept the partial intention diagnosis, then a traditional reading of this principle is false.

To see why, let us think about what it is for  $S$  to be committed to  $\phi$ -ing. Marušić and Schwenkler suggest it is a truth commitment to the proposition that  $S$  will  $\phi$ .<sup>48</sup> Those who accept this notion of the commitment implied by intention often also accept Intention Implies Belief. Indeed, on this conception Intention Implies Commitment does not tell us much more than Intention Implies Belief. But, as Velleman notes, for theorists of a cognitivist persuasion, this sense of commitment plays the role of intention.<sup>49</sup> Because it is a truth commitment to something that is up to the agent, it has the functional role of a commitment to an action.

We can follow Bratman in characterizing a commitment to an action,  $\phi$ , as having a certain functional role.<sup>50</sup> This role includes, at least, structuring our actions as we approach the time to  $\phi$  and guiding our practical reasoning about whether to  $\phi$ , and introducing norms on both of these. If we are committed to  $\phi$ -ing and we do not change our minds, then as it becomes time to  $\phi$ , we should and will tend to do so. And if we are committed to  $\phi$ -ing, we should not and will tend not to reconsider whether to  $\phi$ .<sup>51</sup>

Let us suppose that the partial intention diagnosis is correct—that you indirectly express a partial intention to go to the store in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs. Then it seems that you are not committed to (or settled on) going to the store in the sense just discussed. For instance, it may become time to go to the store, but still, you might not do it. And you may reconsider whether to go to the store in the interim. Furthermore, a defender of the partial intention diagnosis will claim in some cases that not going, or reconsidering, does not

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Between Belief and Credence.” We can, of course, use terms in ways we want, provided that we do not confuse an ordinary notion like belief with a technical one like partial belief. So we should realize that Intention Implies Belief\* is not an obvious or innocuous generalization from Intention Implies Belief but is a substantive principle that requires independent motivation.

48 They say, “When we intend to do something, just as when we believe something, we have made a commitment: we have settled a question or reached a conclusion” (“Intending Is Believing,” 321). See also Velleman, “What Good Is a Will?,” 209–10.

49 Velleman, “What Good Is a Will?,” 210.

50 Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, 107–10.

51 These features of commitment may also be shared by Mele’s notion that an intention to  $\phi$  implies that one is settled on  $\phi$ -ing. See Mele, “Intention, Belief, and Intentional Action”; Hieronymi, “Controlling Attitudes.”

directly violate any norms.<sup>52</sup> So we have a scenario where you have an intention to go to the store but are not committed to doing so. Intention Implies Commitment is false.

Here are two natural replies that result. First, those who avow Intention Implies Commitment might not mean to be talking about partial intentions, but only ordinary ones. So they might retain the thesis in this way. This is fine, but it then is difficult to make sense of how partial intentions help with our original problem. In what sense are partial intentions *intentions* at all if they do not have some of the central features of intentions, which come from intentions being commitments?

The second reply accepts that what makes intentions partial is that the corresponding commitments are partial.<sup>53</sup> More precisely:

*Intention Implies Commitment\**: If *S* intends, to degree *n*, to  $\phi$ , then *S* is committed, to degree *n*, to  $\phi$ -ing.

Degree of intention mirrors degree of commitment. I want to note, however, that our ordinary notion of commitment does not come in degrees. When we think about ordinary commitments, like one to pick up the kids from practice or to give up chocolate for Lent or to love and cherish until death do us part, we are thinking of ordinary, all-or-nothing states. It does not make sense to talk about a partial commitment to pick up the kids or to refrain from eating chocolate or to marry.<sup>54</sup> Goldstein attempts to generalize Bratman's notion of commitment so that it can be partial.<sup>55</sup> Such a picture might be a right, but it is quite far from the standard one in which intentions are attitudes that commit you, in the ordinary sense, to reasoning and acting in certain ways.

52 An anonymous reviewer insightfully notes that this can depend on the reason that one's intention is partial. In many cases a partial intention will rule out reconsideration. The partialness of the intention in these cases comes not from openness to reconsideration, but from uncertainty about how the world is—in our case about whether the store will be open when I am able to go. I think the reviewer has hit on an extremely important distinction between different ways that an intention might be partial—one that they note has normative consequences. I do not have space here to fully explore this, though I hope that it will be taken up in future work—both my own and others'.

53 Advocates of partial intentions often talk about them as partial commitments. See Shpall, "The Calendar Paradox"; Goldstein, "A Preface Paradox for Intention"; Beddor, "Fallibility for Expressivists," 771; Jian, "Rational Norms for Degreed Intention (and the Discrepancy between Theoretical and Practical Reason)."

54 There are commitments we might describe as weaker or more measured, like one to give up chocolate for Lent, except on Fridays, or to love and cherish until death—or substantive and important differences in our life goals—do us part. But these differ not in the strength or degree of commitment but in what we are committed to.

55 Goldstein, "A Preface Paradox for Intention," 6.

I suspect that many would agree on this count with Wedgwood's remark that "while there are degrees of belief, there are no degrees of intention."<sup>56</sup> What we have seen here is that accepting the partial intention diagnosis of what you express in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs requires accepting partial intentions in a robust sense—where they lack the commitment or settledness of ordinary intentions. (For instance, the account we discussed above where partial and ordinary intentions were distinguished merely by the strength of the accompanying belief/credence would not do here.) This requires a richer and more fine-grained picture of intentions and their features.<sup>57</sup>

For simplicity, I will continue to talk as if Intention Implies Commitment is false if the partial intention diagnosis is right. But the reader should keep the preceding caveats in mind.

### 4.3. Shared Consequences

One consequence of either diagnosis of what you convey in uttering (2) in Friday Eggs is a plausible response to a linguistically based argument in favor of Intention Implies Belief. Velleman argues that if we deny a tight connection between belief and intention, we are left with a puzzle about why the natural way to express an intention to  $\phi$  is to say we will or are going to  $\phi$ . For if intention did not imply belief, then we should be able to felicitously utter sentences which come out to be Moore paradoxical:<sup>58</sup>

- (15) I will go to the store today, and (but) I do not believe that I will.

Velleman is partly right in that sentences of the form "I will  $F$ " are natural expressions of intentions. But this is only the natural form of expressing an intention to  $\phi$  when the speaker also believes that they will  $\phi$ . Regardless of whether one accepts Intention Implies Belief, they should say, as we did in section 1, that if you use a sentence like (1), you directly express a belief to go to the store:

- (1) I will go to the store today.

<sup>56</sup> Wedgwood, "Instrumental Rationality," 302.

<sup>57</sup> Some authors who advocate for partial intentions explicitly develop such a picture and note that it might seem "radical." See Shpall, "The Calendar Paradox," 802–3. Shpall calls such partially committed states *inclinations*, where being inclined contrasts with being *settled*. For arguments that the picture for partial intentions will have to be quite different than the one for partial beliefs or credences, see Jian, "Rational Norms for Degreed Intention (and the Discrepancy between Theoretical and Practical Reason)." This is in contrast to Goldstein, "A Preface Paradox for Intention"; Shpall, "The Calendar Paradox."

<sup>58</sup> Velleman, "What Good Is a Will?," 206–7; Grice, "Intention and Uncertainty," 269.

This explains why (15) sounds Moore paradoxical; it is Moore paradoxical. But there is a different natural way of expressing an intention, whether ordinary or partial, toward  $\phi$ , when the speaker does not believe that they will  $\phi$ , but merely has confidence that they will. A natural form for doing so is “I will probably  $\phi$ .”<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, we might think that the following also does not sound felicitous, though it seems predicted to be so if either of our diagnoses is true:

(16) I’ll probably go to the store today, and (but) I don’t believe that I will.

I agree that this is strange, but it is because of the tendency to read “I do not believe  $p$ ” as “I believe not- $p$ ” (e.g., “I do not believe you are telling the truth” is usually read as “I believe you are not telling the truth”). We can avoid this complication by eschewing the “do not believe” construction and relying on the idea that belief rules out alternative possibilities and chances, as well as uncertainty, while mere credence does not. The contrast is then stark between the cases the objectors think are bad and the cases where intention is expressed along with uncertainty:

(15′) I will go to the store today, and (but) I might not/there is a chance I will not/I am not sure I will.

(16′) I will probably go to the store today, and (but) I might not/there is a chance I will not/I am not sure I will.

In either diagnosis, the felicity of (16′) suggests that Velleman’s argument for Intention Implies Belief should not be convincing.<sup>60</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

A quick look at uses of first personal future-tensed sentences like (1) suggests that intending to do something implies believing that you will do it and being committed to (or settled upon) doing it. But we have seen that similar but overlooked sentences like (2) are used in ordinary scenarios in ways that are inconsistent with at least one of Intention Implies Belief and Intention Implies

59 Holton gives a similar defense but does not recognize the naturalness of the “I will probably  $\phi$ ” construction: “Where that belief is lacking, intention is more naturally reported by saying that one intends to act (or that one will try to act, if the act of trying can be separated out), often with a qualification that one is unsure of success” (“Partial Belief, Partial Intention,” 52). See also Williams “Deciding to Believe,” 138.

60 Thanks to Justin Snedegar for discussion of these nuances. And thanks to Aness Webster for leading me to realize that both diagnoses can explain the range of data related to Velleman’s argument.



Commitment. In one plausible diagnosis, the speaker of (2) expresses an intention to go to the store but does not believe that they will. In the other plausible diagnosis, the speaker's intention to go to the store is partial and, so, does not commit them to going. Either way, some piece of the natural, first-pass picture of intentions is incorrect.<sup>61</sup>

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