

Note that these two ideas, taken together, still do not entail that an intention to A actually requires a belief that one will A. And, indeed, there is reason to reject such a purported connection between intention and belief as overly strong. Two sorts of examples are relevant here.

First, there seem to be cases in which there is intention in the face of agnosticism about whether one will even try when the time comes. I might intend now to stop at the bookstore on the way home while knowing of my tendency towards absentmindedness—especially once I get to my bike and go into “automatic pilot”. If I were to reflect on the matter I would be agnostic about my stopping there, for I know I may well forget. It is not that I believe I will not stop; I just do not believe I will.

Second, there seem to be cases in which there is intention in the face of agnosticism about whether one will succeed when one tries. Perhaps I intend to carry out a rescue operation, one that requires a series of difficult steps. I am confident that at each stage I will try my best. But if I were to reflect on the matter, I would have my doubts about success. I do not have other plans or beliefs which are inconsistent with such success; I do not actually believe I will fail. But neither do I believe I will succeed.

Examples such as these do not prove that an intention to A does not require a belief one will A; it remains open to the defender of that view to insist that the intentions in such cases are conditional in some way, or otherwise qualified. But I do think such examples are worrisome enough that I would do well to develop my account of intentions and plans in a way that does not require the strong assumption that to intend to A I must believe I will A. And that is what I will try to do. I will suppose that a normal role of an intention to A is to support an expectation that one will A; and I will also suppose that there is, other things equal, an important kind of irrationality involved in intending to act in ways inconsistent with one’s beliefs. But I will not suppose that each and every intention to A involve a belief that one will A.

*Intentions, Plans, and Practical Reason*

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SCLI Publications, p.38.