Intentional Action and the Praise-Blame Asymmetry

Hindriks, Frank

Published in:
Philosophical Quarterly

DOI:
10.1111/j.1467-9213.2007.551.x

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2008

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

Copyright
Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment.

Take-down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): http://www.rug.nl/research/portal. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

Download date: 17-09-2023
Recent empirical research by Joshua Knobe has uncovered two asymmetries in judgments about
intentional action and moral responsibility. First, people are more inclined to say that a side effect
was brought about intentionally when they regard that side effect as bad than when they regard it as
good. Secondly, people are more inclined to ascribe blame to someone for bad effects than they are
inclined to ascribe praise for good effects. These findings suggest that the notion of intentional action
has a normative component. I propose a theory of intentional action on which one acts intentionally if
one fails to be motivated to avoid a bad effect. This explains the asymmetry concerning intentional
action. The praise–blame asymmetry is explained in terms of the claim that praise depends on being
appropriately motivated, whereas blame does not.

Joshua Knobe has discovered an asymmetry in judgments about praise and blame in relation to the side effects that actions generate. When the side effects of actions are harmful, people are far more inclined to blame the agents than they are to praise them when the side effects are beneficial, even if in neither of the two kinds of case did the agents care about the occurrence of the effect. I believe there is a simple explanation for this praise–blame asymmetry, which many regard as puzzling. When the side effect of S’s action has positive moral worth, S does not deserve any praise, because, by hypothesis, the fact that this action would have that effect did not play any role in S’s reasoning. After all, S did not care about the occurrence of the effect. When the side effect has negative moral worth, S does deserve blame, because the fact that the action would have the harmful effect should have played a role in S’s reasoning, but did not.

Knobe also reports an asymmetry in judgments concerning intentional action. People are more inclined to judge that an effect is brought about intentionally when the effect is harmful than they are when it is beneficial. This second finding can be explained in a way which resembles my
proposed explanation of the praise–blame asymmetry. Concerning the beneficial effect, people judge that it is not brought about intentionally because it has played no role in the practical reasoning of the agent. In relation to the harmful effect, observers do conclude that it is brought about intentionally. In this case, S ignores a consideration which should have been treated as a reason against performing the action. Again the fact that S does not care about bringing about the effect is crucial to the explanation of this asymmetry concerning judgements about intentional action.

My hypothesis, then, is that both asymmetries can be explained in terms of the considerations which an agent takes or should take into account when thinking about what to do, i.e., in terms of motivating and normative reasons (§I). The key implication of the explanation offered here is that the notion of intentional action has a normative component: it should partly be explicated in terms of normative reasons. I present a theory of intentional action which accommodates this idea in a natural way (§II). I end by contrasting my view with explanations which others have offerred (§III). Some have argued that the asymmetry in judgements about intentional action is to be explained in terms of the asymmetry in judgements about praise and blame, in spite of the fact that common sense has it that judgements about intentional action are in some sense prior to those about moral responsibility. My explanation is more general in that it can explain why both views may seem correct, even though both are mistaken. Knobe claims that when making judgements about intentional action people attend to different features ‘depending on whether the behaviour itself is good or bad’.2 But he does not specify these features. As the explanation offered here facilitates identification of the relevant features, it has more depth than Knobe’s explanation.

I. EXPLAINING THE ASYMMETRIES

I.1. The asymmetries

In an experiment which I shall call ‘the chairman experiment’, subjects were randomly assigned to a version of the chairman scenario which included either a help condition or a harm condition. Subjects allotted the harm condition read the following scenario:

The vice-president of a company went to the chairman of the board and said ‘We are thinking of starting a new programme. It will help us increase profits, but it will also

harm the environment.' The chairman of the board answered 'I don’t care at all about harming the environment. I just want to make as much profit as I can. Let’s start the new programme.' They started the new programme. Sure enough, the environment was harmed.3

Subjects given the help condition read the same scenario, except that ‘harm’ was replaced by ‘help’. Subsequently they were asked how much blame or praise the chairman deserved for the effect his decision had on the environment (on a scale from 0 to 6). They also answered the question whether they thought the chairman intentionally harmed or helped the environment.

Most of the subjects who read the scenario with the harm condition said that the chairman brought about the side effect intentionally (82%), whereas most of those who were confronted with the help condition said that the chairman did not bring about the side effect intentionally (77%). These results are statistically significant, so they reveal a stark asymmetry between judgements about intentional action in relation to beneficial versus harmful effects. I shall call this ‘the intentional action asymmetry’. In addition to this, subjects said that the chairman deserved a lot of blame in the harm condition, but very little praise in the help condition (these results are statistically significant as well; the mean values are 4.8 and 1.4 respectively). I shall call this ‘the praise–blame asymmetry’. Finally, the total amount of praise or blame which subjects offered was significantly correlated with their judgements about whether or not the side effect was brought about intentionally.

I.2. Explaining the praise–blame asymmetry

In setting out to explain the praise–blame asymmetry, we should note that neither in the help nor in the harm version of the scenario does the chairman care about the environment. This fact stops people from praising him in the help scenario, while it does not stop them from blaming him in the harm scenario. The underlying idea is, roughly, that praise requires effort on the part of the person who receives it, while blame does not. People are praised for bringing about morally good consequences only if they performed the relevant actions in order to bring about those effects. If this is the case, the effort expended in performing the action was made at least in part for this purpose. There is no such requirement for blame. A failure to pay attention to a morally bad consequence of one’s action is perfectly compatible with blame. The praise–blame asymmetry, then, can be explained in terms of the following contrast: people need to be motivated appropriately in order to be praiseworthy, but not to be blameworthy. All there is to the praise–blame asymmetry is that people are not praised for bringing about a beneficial

effect when they do not care about it, whereas they are blamed for bringing about a harmful effect when they do not care about it.4

The point can also be made in terms of motivating and normative reasons. Motivating reasons play a role in explaining actions; normative reasons serve a justificatory role. More precisely, a motivating reason is a consideration one actually takes into account, treating it as reflecting favourably on the action one actually performs. A normative reason is a consideration which counts in favour of or against an action and which one should take into account when considering it, irrespective of the question whether one does so.5 Normative reasons often pertain to the effects of our actions. This can be made explicit in terms of what I call ‘the side effect deliberation norm’ (SDN), which appears to govern practical deliberation:

SDN. When a side effect is morally significant, one should take it into consideration while deliberating about what to do.

Violation of (SDN) blocks praise, but does not block blame. When the side effect is morally bad, a violation of (SDN) justifies blame. After all, one fails to take into account a consideration one should pay attention to, i.e., a normative reason. When the side effect is morally good, a violation of (SDN) stops observers from praising the agent. Praise is justified only when one is motivated by the considerations which one should take into account, i.e., only when one’s motivating reasons are suitably aligned with the normative reasons that bear on the action at issue.

As he does not care about the environment, the chairman violates (SDN) in both versions of the scenario. So in neither version of the scenario does he assign weight to the consequence of his action, even though it is morally significant. At the same time, most people believe he should have attached weight to the effect the business strategy has on the environment, and assume that he is aware of the normative significance of the environment. Maybe businessmen have a duty not to harm the environment, but no duty

4 McCann provides a similar explanation of why the chairman is not praised in the help version of the scenario: ‘once the chairman disavows this interest, we have no reason to consider him praiseworthy for helping the environment’. See H.J. McCann, ‘Intentional Action and Intending: Recent Empirical Studies’, Philosophical Psychology, 18 (2005), pp. 737–48, at p. 743. However, in spite of the counter-evidence he presents, McCann maintains (pp. 740–41) that the chairman intends to harm the environment in the harm version. On my view the chairman merely does so intentionally.

5 Motivating reasons are often taken to be psychological states, as in M. Smith, The Moral Problem (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). I do not mean to rule out this possibility: I use the term ‘consideration’ merely to get across the distinction between normative and motivating reasons. Similar distinctions are made using different terms, including ‘justifying’ versus ‘motivating’, as in W. Frankena, ‘Obligation and Motivation in Recent Moral Philosophy’, in A.I. Melden (ed.), Essays on Moral Philosophy (Washington UP, 1995), pp. 40–81, and ‘normative’ versus ‘operative’, as in T.M. Scanlon, What We Owe to Each Other (Harvard UP, 1998).
to help it, at least not if this is at the expense of the amount of profit made. If
so, opportunities to help the environment only need to be taken up when
they have no (or hardly any) effect on the amount of profit a business will
make. This means that in many situations in which a business strategy is
expected to benefit the environment, businessmen hardly need to stop and
think about it. Not caring, however, is never the appropriate attitude. So the
chairman’s lack of appropriate motivation explains the lack of praise.
Attributing blame is explained by the fact that he acts while ignoring an
important moral consideration which he should treat as a reason against
implementing the strategy. The puzzlement which contributors to the de-
bate, including Adams and Steadman, Knobe, McCann and Nadelhofer,
have expressed in response to the praise–blame asymmetry suggests that
they expected the chairman to be praised for helping the environment as
much as he is blamed for harming it. His violation of (SDN) explains why
this is not the result. Since he does not care about the environment, the
chairman’s reasoning is morally flawed both in the harm and in the help
versions of the scenario (in this respect they are symmetrical).

I.3. Explaining the intentional action asymmetry

The distinction between motivating and normative reasons also provides the
key to the explanation of the intentional action asymmetry. It is generally
agreed that when one performs an action (in part) in order to bring about a
certain effect and one’s action does indeed generate the effect in the ex-
pected manner, the effect is brought about intentionally. This means that an
effect can be brought about intentionally as a result of the fact that it
functions as a motivating reason for performing the action that generates the
effect, i.e., as a result of the fact that one ascribes positive significance to
the expected occurrence of the effect. What I propose to add to this in order
to explain the asymmetry is as follows: we bring about an effect intentionally if we
perform the intended action even though believing that we ought to treat the effect as a
reason not to perform the intended action. When this is the case, we should ascribe
negative significance to it, but we fail to do so. This implies that we can
bring about an effect intentionally even if we ascribe no significance to it in
deliberation. In other words, an effect can be brought about intentionally as
a result of the fact that its expected occurrence provides a normative reason
against performing an action even if we ignore this reason.6

6 This appears to be one of the things that Harman is after when he claims that ‘One can
do something intentionally even though one does not intend to do it, if one does it in the face
of what ought to be a reason not to do it and, either one tries to do it, or one does it as a
foreseen consequence of something else that one intends to do’: G. Harman, ‘Practical
How can these ideas be used for explaining the intentional action asymmetry? Again the focus is on the fact that the chairman does not care about the effect he brings about. In the help version of the scenario, the fact that he is not motivated to help the environment explains why people say he does not do so intentionally. In the harm version, the chairman fails to be moved by a consideration to which he should ascribe negative significance, the harm that will be done to the environment when he pursues the profit-maximizing strategy. The suggestion I have made entails that because of this, the chairman harms the environment intentionally. After all, he ignores a normative reason against performing the action. So the intentional action asymmetry is explained by the fact that in the help version of the scenario the chairman fails to have the motivating reason which would have made his act of helping the environment an intentional one on the one hand, and the fact that in the harm version of the scenario the chairman fails to be motivated in the way he should be on the other.

The explanation of these judgements in the harm version can be made more precise in terms of what I shall call ‘the deontic significance thesis’:

DST. An agent $S$ $\phi$ intentionally if $S$ intends to $\psi$, $\phi$ by $\psi$, expects to $\phi$ by $\psi$, and $\psi$ in spite of the fact that he believes his expected $\phi$ing constitutes a normative reason against $\psi$ing.

This means that ignoring a normative reason or failing to be motivated to avoid a wrongdoing lies at the heart of a sufficient condition for acting intentionally. In the next section I shall argue that (DST) is not ad hoc but fits seamlessly into an overall account of intentional action.

II. A THEORY OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

According to what Bratman has called the ‘simple view’ of intentional action, one intentionally $\phi$s only if one intends to $\phi$. Knobe’s experiments reveal that this view is implausible. The chairman does not intend the harm his action causes. The main alternative to the simple view is the ‘single phenomenon’ view, according to which intending and acting intentionally involve a common state. I shall follow Bratman in assuming that this state is


8 See McCann, pp. 740–1, for data which support this, used by McCann to bolster the simple view; see also F. Adams and A. Steadman, ‘Intentional Action in Ordinary Language: Core Concept or Pragmatic Understanding’, Analysis, 64 (2004), pp. 175–81, and ‘Intentional Actions and Moral Considerations: Still Pragmatic’, Analysis, 64 (2004), pp. 264–7. For a view opposing McCann, which I share, see Knobe, ‘The Concept of Intentional Action’; T. Nadelhofer, ‘On Trying to Save the Simple View’, Mind and Language, 21 (2006), pp. 365–86.
an intention. The idea is that one intentionally \( \phi \) only if one intends to \( \psi \), where \( \psi \) may (but need not) be distinct from \( \phi \). This view can be developed in several ways. In this section, I shall formulate a version of the single phenomenon view which accounts for the intentional action asymmetry.

One way in which one can \( \phi \) intentionally is, of course, by intending to \( \phi \). \( \phi \)ing may be the only thing one aims at. However, one can also intend to \( \phi \) if one expects to \( \phi \) in the course of performing another action \( \psi \) which one intends. This will be the case if one \( \psi \)s in part because one expects to \( \phi \) in the course of \( \psi \)ing. In other words, one ascribes positive significance to the fact that one’s \( \psi \)ing will lead to one’s \( \phi \)ing while deliberating about whether to \( \psi \). In such cases, one’s expectation to \( \phi \) in the course of \( \psi \)ing is a motivating reason for one’s \( \psi \)ing. Suppose, for instance, that the chairman does care about the effect that the business strategy has on the environment. In relation to the help condition, this means that he supports the profit-maximizing strategy in part because it helps the environment. This implies that he supports it in order to benefit the environment. This in turn implies that he intends to benefit the environment, which means of course that he does so intentionally. In such cases acting intentionally is a matter of ascribing positive significance to an effect of the action at issue. When one ascribes positive significance to its expected occurrence, an effect ceases to be a side effect and becomes an intended effect, and the act of bringing it about becomes an intended action. The claim ‘One \( \psi \)s intentionally if one \( \psi \)s and intends to do so (in part) because one expects to \( \phi \) by \( \psi \)ing’ I shall call ‘the positive significance thesis’ (PST).

(PST) reveals that intentional action is intimately connected with reasons for action. On the theory of intentional action presented and defended here, this is what unites all instances of acting intentionally: intentional action concerns the reasons we consider or fail to consider while deliberating about what to do. (PST) as such is consistent with the simple view of intentional action. In order to account for the intentional action asymmetry, however, this view has to be abandoned. Those who reject the simple view thereby embrace the idea that one can bring about an effect intentionally without intending to bring it about.\(^9\) If one intends to bring about an effect, one has a reason for doing so, which may just be that one wants to do so. I might, for instance, board a plane in order to get to New York. The state of affairs of my being in New York is the intended effect of my action. It appears that bringing about an effect intentionally is not only consistent with having a reason which counts in favour of doing so, but also with having a reason against doing so. The purpose of my trip to New York might be to visit a

friend. My friend might live in a dangerous part of New York. As I do not want to go to dodgy places, the fact that she lives in a dangerous area is a reason for me not to visit her. However, as it happens, my wanting to see her wins. It seems that in this case I go to the dangerous neighbourhood intentionally, because I visit her in spite of the fact that she lives in a dangerous neighbourhood. As I have no reason for going to such a neighbourhood, I do not intend to do so. The only thing I intend to do is to visit my friend.

Gilbert Harman's well-known sniper example supports the idea that such a condition is indeed relevant to doing something intentionally: 'In firing his gun, the sniper knowingly alerts the enemy to his presence. He does this intentionally, thinking that the gain is worth the possible cost. But he certainly does not intend to alert the enemy to his presence' (Harman, p. 433; my italics). The unintended effect of the sniper's firing his gun is that the enemy is alerted to his presence. His action of alerting the enemy is performed intentionally because he expects that he will alert the enemy by firing his gun, and he fires his gun in spite of the fact that he does not want to alert the enemy. In cases like this, the agent intends to \( \psi \), does not intend to \( \phi \), \( \phi \)s by \( \psi \)-ing, and expects to do so. In addition to this, the agent intends to \( \psi \) in spite of the fact that he does not want to \( \phi \), or what is supposed to be equivalent, that he takes the fact that he will \( \phi \) by \( \psi \)-ing to be a reason against \( \psi \)-ing. I call the claim that these conditions suffice for \( \psi \)-ing intentionally 'the negative significance thesis' (NST).

In the previous section, I suggested that one might do something intentionally without intending it when one does it in spite of the fact that one has a normative reason against doing it. Suppose that when in New York I decide to take a taxi. All I care about is arriving at my friend's house at the time we agreed upon, and I am running late. I see a pregnant woman trying to get to the taxi rank. Apparently she is in early labour. As I can move more quickly, I get to the taxi rank first, and take the only taxi available at that time. Presumably I ought to have given way to the pregnant woman and helped her to get into the taxi. Instead, I prevent her from taking the taxi to get to the hospital. As I know I should care about the woman, I prevent her intentionally. After all, I ignore a normative reason that counts against taking the taxi myself. Cases like this are similar to (NST)-cases in that they concern situations in which the agent intends to \( \psi \), does not intend to \( \phi \), \( \phi \)s by \( \psi \)-ing, and expects to do so. What is distinctive about them is that the agent intends to \( \psi \) in spite of the fact that he believes he ought to treat the fact that he will \( \phi \) by \( \psi \)-ing as a reason against \( \psi \)-ing. The deontic significance thesis (DST) is the claim that this suffices for \( \psi \)-ing

---

10 See Bratman, *Intention, Plans*, p. 123, and Knobe, 'The Concept of Intentional Action', p. 220, for other examples which are accommodated by the (NST).
intentionally. It serves to account for cases in which an agent does not ascribe any significance to an effect but still brings it about intentionally.

The upshot is that there are at least three ways in which one can do something intentionally, captured by the three theses presented above, (PST), (NST) and (DST): first, by wanting to do the action that one expects to do in the course of performing an intended action; secondly, by performing the intended action in spite of not wanting to do the action that one expects to do in the course of performing it; thirdly, by performing the intended action in spite of the fact that (one believes that) the unintended action provides a normative reason (which need not be overriding) against performing the intended action. These can be combined into an analysis of intentional action (IA).

IA. An agent S φs intentionally if S intends to ψ, φs by ψing, expects to φ by ψing, and
(a) S intends to ψ, because he expects thereby to φ, or
(b) S ψs in spite of the fact that he does not want to φ, or
(c) S ψs in spite of the fact that he believes his expected φing constitutes a normative reason against ψing.11

According to (IA), one’s φing intentionally can be due to one’s ascribing positive or negative significance to it when deliberating about ψing, or to the fact that one should ascribe negative significance to it. This analysis makes it easy to see why judgements concerning intentional action are asymmetric when the cases considered involve morally significant effects about which the relevant agent does not care. Because of the fact that one ought to assign weight to harmful effects in one’s reasoning, condition (c) can be satisfied even though the agent at issue does not care about the effect. However, even though one ought to assign weight to beneficial effects in one’s reasoning as well, there is no condition analogous to (c) which can apply when one does not care about a beneficial effect. Instead, failure to satisfy condition (a) explains why people say one does not do it intentionally.

(DST) entails that intentional action should not be analysed in terms of motivating reasons only, but in terms of normative reasons as well. In other

11 This analysis of intentional action is incomplete in at least three respects. First, it does not cover cases in which one’s φing is a reason for ψing without this implying that one intends to ψ (see, for instance, Bratman’s well known video-games example: Intention, Plans, pp. 113–15). Secondly, it does not accommodate the way in which skill and deviant causal chains influence judgements concerning intentional action. Thirdly, it does not account for experimental results concerning luck: see, for instance, Nadelhoffer, ‘The Butler Problem Revisited’, Analysis, 64 (2004), pp. 277–84. I plan to address cases involving luck in future work. See A. Mele and P. Moser, ‘Intentional Actions’, Nous, 38 (1994), pp. 39–68, for an excellent discussion of how skill and causal chains should enter the analysis. Bratman (p. 121) formulates a condition which covers cases like his video-games example and is compatible with (IA).
words, intentional action has a normative component. Even though the idea that the concept of intentional action includes a normative condition is very controversial,\textsuperscript{12} it is quite intuitive on the line I defend here. After all, this way of acting intentionally is a matter of ignoring a consideration which should be treated as a reason against implementing the strategy, or of knowingly violating (SDN). The fit with the observed asymmetries provides further support for this idea.

III. INTENTIONAL ACTION AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

It is commonly supposed that whether or not someone performed an action intentionally is relevant to moral responsibility. For instance, that a harmful action is done accidentally rather than intentionally can function as a mitigating circumstance. When it does so, the agent should receive less blame as compared to a similar situation in which he performs the action intentionally. Most contributors to the literature on the praise–blame asymmetry and the intentional action asymmetry seem to hold or to have held the view that common sense has things backwards here. Judgements concerning moral responsibility feed into judgements about intentional action, rather than the other way round.\textsuperscript{13} Malle and Nelson argue that judgements about blame bias judgements about intentionality.\textsuperscript{14} Nadelhofer maintains that judgements about praise and blame can influence judgements about intentional action, but also allows that the moral character of the effects may do so.\textsuperscript{15} Adams and Steadman, as well as McCann, defend the view that denying that the chairman harms the environment intentionally carries with it the pragmatic implicature that he should not be blamed. As most of the people questioned want to blame the chairman, they say instead that he did harm the environment intentionally. Some have gone as far as claiming that the praise–blame asymmetry in combination with the fallacious belief


\textsuperscript{13} One might easily get the impression that Knobe also believes that the praise–blame asymmetry explains the intentional action asymmetry. This is suggested by his claim that ‘this asymmetry in people’s assignment of praise and blame may be at the root of the corresponding asymmetry in people’s application of the concept intentional’ (‘Intentional Action and Side Effects’, p. 103). However, he explicitly argues against this idea in his ‘Folk Psychology and Folk Morality’, and in J. Knobe and G. Mendlow, ‘The Good, the Bad, and the Blameworthy: Understanding the Role of Evaluative Reasoning in Folk Psychology’, both in Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, 24 (2004), pp. 270–9, 254–6.


that blame requires intentional action explains the intentional action asymmetry.\(^{16}\) An important argument in favour of the explanation I offer in this paper is that it can account for both of these perspectives on the relation between intentional action and moral responsibility.\(^{17}\)

In effect, I have argued that both asymmetries have a common denominator: motivating and normative reasons for action (see §§I.2–3). When two factors depend in an analogous way on a third, it is often easy to be misled into thinking that one of them is in some sense prior to the other. Suppose, for instance, it were found that poor people watch more television including violent programmes than others do, and also commit more violent crimes. This information by itself is insufficient for determining whether watching violent programmes causes or increases the incidence of violent crimes. Instead, it might be that both can be traced back to poverty. The claim implicit in the analysis defended here is that there is no order of priority relating intentional action on the one hand with moral responsibility on the other. Instead, what matters to both is what motivates agents and what should have motivated them.

How does my explanation of the asymmetries compare with Knobe’s analysis? As indicated earlier, Knobe holds that the moral character of the effect can influence judgments about intentional action (which is, of course, also relevant to an adequate explanation of the praise–blame asymmetry). This is born out by my explanation. (DST) refers to a normative reason not to perform a particular action or bring about a particular effect. This implies that bringing about the effect as such is bad (although there might be circumstances in which one should do so). In addition to this, Knobe has suggested in ‘The Concept of Intentional Action’ that, depending on the moral character of the behaviour, different features might be relevant for determining whether or not an action was performed intentionally. Although he has mentioned several candidate features, Knobe has not

---


\(^{17}\) As I remarked in fn. 8, Adams and Steadman as well as McCann try to save the simple view according to which one performs an action intentionally only if one intends that action. The strongest argument against this view is that people often say that an action is performed intentionally while also claiming that it was not intended: see McCann, and Nadelhoffer, ‘On Trying to Save the Simple View’. The point of the comparison offered here, then, is not to provide further arguments against the simple view. Instead, it is to bolster my claim that (IA) provides a plausible explanation of the intentional action asymmetry. In addition to being a natural extension of existing theories of intentional action, it can be used to make sense of the ways in which people have responded to the asymmetries. 
provided anything like a systematic account which explains the intentional action asymmetry. The theory of intentional action presented in the previous section does this. Hence it provides for a deeper explanation.

(IA) facilitates the identification of the features that explain the asymmetry. In all cases, the effect is expected or foreseen. When the side effect is good, people wonder whether the agent is treating this as a reason for doing \( \psi \). The question is whether the agent is appropriately motivated (which presumably entails trying to bring about the effect). In the experiments it is assumed that this is not the case (the chairman is assumed not to care about the environment\(^{18}\)). So people judge that the agent does not \( \phi \) intentionally. When the side effect is bad, people focus on the fact that the agent \textit{ought} to treat it as a reason against \( \psi \)ing (given (DST), the relevant factor is whether he is aware of this, but it appears that people presuppose that he is when they form their judgements). After all, whether the agent treats it in this way is irrelevant to the question of whether he does it intentionally. So when the behaviour is good, people attend to the considerations the agent actually takes into account, while when the behaviour is bad people focus on what he should consider, irrespective of whether he does. The overall conclusion to be drawn from the two asymmetries, then, is that the notion of intentional action should not only be analysed in terms of motivating reasons, but also in terms of normative reasons.\(^{19}\)

\textit{University of Groningen}

\(^{18}\) An analogous assumption is made in the lieutenant experiment reported in Knobe, ‘Intentional Action and Side Effects in Ordinary Language’.

\(^{19}\) I am grateful for valuable comments from Michael Bratman, Martin van Hees, Joshua Knobe, Arto Laitinen, Teemu Toppinen and two anonymous referees.