

Ludwig on Conditional Actions

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Abstract

In this paper, I discuss Ludwig’s systematic and illuminating account of conditional intentions, with particular reference to my own view (presented in “Conditional Intentions,” Noûs, 2009). In contrast to Ludwig, I argue that we should prefer a formal characterization of conditional intentions rather than a more substantial one in terms of reasons for action (although the conditions that qualify an intention bear on the reasonableness and justifiability of the intention). I then defend a partially different taxonomy of the conditions that might qualify an intention and discuss how the difference bears on the application of the rational pressures of intention. I acknowledge that Ludwig is correct on insisting on the centrality of the *epistemic* element in the antecedent of conditional intentions. But I argue that even when a condition has been settled (that is, when the agent has ascertained that it holds), the intention remains genuinely conditional. In my view, conditions that have been settled are not just part of the background of planning: they continue to qualify the content of the intention (although they come to play a different role when settled). I then discuss how the settling of a condition does not interrupt the *continuity* of the content and structure of the intention—in contrast to Ludwig’s account, where the conditional intention appears to give rise, when the conditions are taken as settled, to a distinct *unconditional* intention. I close by discussing the serious concern that my way of characterizing conditional intentions threatens to swallow most intentions, given that we usually have intentions that rest on our accepting the obtaining of relevant conditions.

1) In spite of the importance and ubiquity of conditional intentions, the philosophical literature on the topic is still surprisingly sparse. Kirk Ludwig (2015)'s paper is a major addition to the extant literature. He offers the kind of systematic and illuminating treatment that I was hoping to find when I first embarked on the study conditional intentions, which eventually led to my account in Ferrero (2009).

There is much to learn from Ludwig's treatment. There are also many important points of convergence between our two accounts. But in this paper I will focus almost exclusively on the points of possible disagreement to further advance and deepen the philosophical discussion of conditional intentions.

2) According to Ludwig, an intention *simpliciter* is a commitment to a plan of action, whereas a conditional intention is a commitment to a contingency plan—a commitment about what to do upon learning that a certain contingency, which is relevant to one's interests, obtains.

In unconditional intending, our commitment to acting is not contingent on finding out that some condition obtains. In conditional intending, instead, we intend to undertake an action on some condition, impinging on our interests, which is still unsettled for us but about which we can find out without undue cost.

I will follow Ludwig in calling the contingency condition C expressed by the subordinate clause of a sentence 'I intend to A if C' the 'antecedent' of the conditional intention. The crucial feature of Ludwig's account is the distinctive *epistemic* status of the antecedent of a conditional intention: its being still unsettled but practically ascertainable before the time of the intended action.

3) Ludwig distinguishes two basic kinds of conditions that might qualify the intention to A.

1. *Reason providing*: unsettled conditions that, if they obtain, provide sufficient reasons for A-ing, and
2. *Enabling*: unsettled conditions that, if they obtain, remove obstacles to A-ing. These enabling conditions, in turn, divide between 'preconditions' (conditions on the possibility of A-ing) and 'qualifying conditions' (those that remove obstacles to the reasonableness of A-ing).

Both kinds of conditions are characterized in terms of the agent's *reasons* to A (or not A). This is a tempting way of thinking of the antecedents of conditional intentions. But I explicitly avoided this characterization in my own work, see Ferrero (2009, 703). In particular, in that work I introduced the category of what I called 'restrictive' conditions (which includes both Ludwig's reason providing and qualifying conditions) as qualifications on the content of an intention—which in turn restrict the success condition of that intention. In my view, when one expresses the conditional intention 'I will A if C,' one undertakes a commitment to

A-in-condition-C rather than, as Ludwig has it, a commitment to A upon ascertaining that C, where C is a sufficient reason to A (given the circumstances when one first learns that C).

I do not want to deny that usually the condition C that qualifies one's intention bears on the reasonableness of A-ing when C obtains. As I wrote in Ferrero (2009, sec. 8), restrictive conditions are associated with the advisability of A-ing, as opposed to its feasibility (which is instead at issue for preconditions—'enabling conditions' in my terminology). Nonetheless, the connection between the restrictive qualification and the reasonableness of A-ing is only indirect.

Although we should expect rational and reasonable agents to qualify their intention to A by appealing to a condition that would count as a sufficient reason to A in the appropriate circumstances, our understanding of what a conditional intention is and demands should *not* depend on this expectation. Why so? For two reasons.

4) First, it is preferable to characterize conditional intentions in structural/formal terms rather than in substantial ones. We should be able to understand what a conditional intention 'I'll A if C' demands and to evaluate its success even if there is no relation between C and A-ing. We can understand and assess the conditional intention 'I will leave the party (here in Chicago) 15 minutes after my arrival if the temperature in Jakarta is 76.5F by then,' even if C is an unrelated and arbitrarily imposed restriction on my leaving the party.

This is not to deny that there might be some more general constraints on the reasonableness and relevance of qualifications imposed on our attitudes, but these constraints on intelligibility and interpretation are not specific to the attribution of intentions. The same holds for the attribution and evaluation of other attitudes (e.g., consider a belief 'if C, then A,' where there is no relation between the antecedent and the consequent).

The distinction between the structural and the substantial demands parallels the distinction between different possible criticisms of the agent. I might criticize the agent for failing to act on a conditional intention as a matter of the violation of the structural demands imposed by the intention as a *conditional* intention, or I might criticize the agent for failing to impose a reasonable restriction on her intention to A. These are different and independent kinds of criticism.

5) Second, one should exercise much caution when talking of reasons for action in conjunction with future-directed intentions. Talk of reasons for action brings up distinct issues that might be easily conflated. To begin with, there is the question of the stability of intentions. Is the rational pressure for stability a matter of a rational requirement or do prospective intentions give rise to reasons to act on them when the time of action is ripe? How does the reason allegedly generated by the ascertaining that C play out with the pressures for stability? Does

the agent acquire a reason to A when she ascertains that C? Does the agent have to be motivated by this reason in order to be A-ing out of her conditional intention? How is the sufficient reason that she has at the time of action related to the reason that she takes to have when she acquires the conditional intention? In addition, there are questions about the timing of the sufficient reason. Is this sufficient reason one that the agent has from her own point of view when she first acquires the conditional intention? Or when she is expected to ascertain that C? The answers to the latter questions are not straightforward in cases where the agent anticipates that her practical and epistemic standpoint might change significantly over time.

This is just a sample of the issues that arise when talking about reasons for action in connection with prospective intentions. In my account of conditional intentions, I tried to be as neutral as possible on some of these questions by keeping separate the following issues: 1. The demands for the stability of intentions; 2. The demands of instrumental rationality; 3. The reasonability of specific intentions; 4. The conditions of satisfaction/success of conditional intentions. In particular, I purposively avoided presenting restrictive conditions in terms of reasons for action. This is not to deny that one might be able to keep the issues separate even when talking, as Ludwig does, of restrictive conditions as reason-generating ones. But if so, one is to make sure to avoid any possible conflation between the different roles that might be played by a 'sufficient reason' to A in relation to the (possibly conditional) intention to A.

6) Another difference between Ludwig and me concerns the taxonomy of the conditions. (Given that some of the terminology introduced in our respective theories is used in slightly different ways, in this section I will index the various kinds of conditions with our initials to avoid any possible confusion.) According to Ludwig, qualifying_{KL} conditions are a species of the genus enabling_{KL} conditions (which includes also preconditions_{KL}), whereas according to my account, qualifying_{KL} conditions fall under the category of restrictive_{LF} conditions (which correspond to reason-giving_{KL} conditions in Ludwig).

What motivates Ludwig in bundling together qualifying_{KL} conditions with preconditions_{KL} is that in both cases the obtaining of the conditions enables the agent to A by removing an obstacle to her A-ing.

Ludwig offers an illuminating discussion of their common operation. Nonetheless, I still maintain that is better to give primacy to a taxonomy based on the distinction between restrictive_{LF} conditions and preconditions_{LF}, so that qualifying_{KL} conditions are better seen as a species of restrictive_{LF} conditions, rather than enabling_{LF} conditions.

Enabling_{LF} conditions concern the alethic and nomic restrictions on courses of action. As such, the agent does not have the same discretionary power in setting up the qualifications on her A-ing. And this difference matters for the exercise of

the practical reasoning that leads to the formation and justification of her intentions. If C is an enabling_{LF} condition on A-ing, all that the agent is to do is to acknowledge that fact. But if C is a restrictive_{LF} condition, it is always open to the agent to commit to A-ing under a different set of restrictive_{LF} conditions. Hence, the question arises of why she should impose the restrictive condition C on A-ing rather than some alternative restrictive condition D.

(Notice that here I am talking about the agent's degree of freedom in setting up the content of the intention. It is a distinct matter—which is thoroughly and convincingly discussed by Ludwig—how the agent is to handle her power to control or influence the obtaining of C—a power that she might have with respect to enabling_{LF} conditions even if she has no discretionary power as to their alethic or nomic necessity relative to A-ing.)

7) The distinction is also relevant to the application of the rational pressures that are distinctive of intentions. As discussed in my earlier work, the distinctive pressures of intention interact in different ways with the two kinds of conditions. This is a further reason to classify qualifying_{KL} conditions as a species of restrictive_{LF} conditions, rather than of enabling_{LF} conditions. At the same time, we should not deny the important analogy that Ludwig has unearthed between qualifying_{KL} and enabling_{LF} conditions as far as they bear on the removal of obstacles to A-ing. To that extent, the taxonomy of conditions discussed by Ludwig is still a useful one, provided that it is used against the backdrop of the other classification. Or so I argue.

8) The most distinctive feature of Ludwig's account is the characterization of the antecedent in *epistemic* terms. For him, the antecedent must be *from the agent's point of view* both unsettled and *practically* ascertainable, that is, ascertainable at a reasonable cost in time to act on it.

As Ludwig correctly remarks, in my own account I did not sufficiently stress this epistemic element. As a result, I offered a much more liberal criterion to count an intention as a conditional one. Whereas all conditional intentions in Ludwig's sense count as conditional in my sense, Ludwig is not willing to count as conditional those intentions whose purported antecedent is 'settled,' that is, intentions where the agent has ascertained that the condition C obtains (where C bears either on the reasonableness or the possibility of A-ing).

Although the latter intention is not conditional, Ludwig does not claim that it is categorical: it is not an intention to A *no matter what* (as long as A-ing is possible). Rather, the intention is 'unconditional.' It is an intention to A under no 'unsettled and practically ascertainable conditions.'

In my paper, I was especially concerned with the distinction between what I called 'pure unconditional' intentions (that is, intentions to A *no matter what*) and 'conditional' intentions, understood in a broader sense than Ludwig does. There

is no disagreement, however, between Ludwig and me over the fact that in what might be called ‘non-categorical’ intentions there are restrictive_{LF} conditions that bear on A-ing (although, as seen before, we disagree on what the bearing amounts to—the conditions qualify the content for me, but they count as reasons to A for Ludwig).

The important issue is that, for Ludwig, when these conditions have been settled, they no longer make the intention to A genuinely conditional: they do not qualify the content of the intention and they do not bear on the conditions of its success. Conditions that are settled are only part of the background of planning. They do not make a difference to the future operation of the intention. At most, they are only conditions on the intention’s *formation*.

I agree with Ludwig that, once settled, a condition C recedes into the ‘cognitive background’ (this is something I explicitly discussed in terms of the move from conditional intentions to what I called ‘circumstantially unconditional’ ones in Ferrero (2009, 709, 715)). Likewise, I agree with Ludwig that a condition plays a different role depending on whether it is settled or not. There is no question that, by default, an unsettled condition C puts a distinctive pressure on the agent to find out whether C obtains (at least for those conditions that are not under the agent’s control or influence). This is an important point that was not sufficiently stressed in my past work.

This much convergence still leaves us at a disagreement over the status of *unconditional* (rather than categorical) intentions. Although I admit that settled conditions do not play the same role as unsettled ones, in my original account I insisted on the idea that the basic way in which intentions are conditional is not affected by the epistemic status of the conditions. There is an underlying *continuity* in the content and structure of the attitude, which is neither interrupted nor lost by the settling of the condition C.

9) Let’s consider two dimensions of this continuity and discuss how they are related to the epistemic status of C.

First, as far as the justification and explication of what one is up to, whether C is settled or not is not as important as the fact that A-ing is qualified by C rather than by some other condition D (or no condition at all). True, once C is taken to obtain, what the agent is to do in promoting her A-ing might look no different from what she would have to do if she were to intend to A *no matter what*, or if she were to intend to A under some other *settled* condition D. Yet one’s justification is sensitive to whether one is qualifying one’s A-ing rather than not, and if one is so qualifying it, the justification is also sensitive to the character of the specific qualification. Hence, it is important that *what* one intends to do still retains the conditional qualification, regardless of its epistemic status.

Second, the retention of the conditional qualification also matters in those cases

where the antecedent might become *unsettled*. After initially coming to believe or accept that C obtains, the agent might change her mind (because of novel information, the discovery of a mistake, or the lowering of costs of investigation, etc. . .). When so, C becomes unsettled once again. According to my account, in such case there is no change in the intention or commitment, which continues to be the conditional intention to A-if-C. The change in epistemic status of C (in either direction) does not affect the content of the intention.

According to Ludwig, instead, the change in either direction is more dramatic, since it is a transition between two kinds of intention, between a conditional and an unconditional one. However, especially when the transition goes from an unconditional to conditional intention, it seems that there is some underlying structure that continues to be preserved, which would account for the expectation that the agent is to re-acquire the condition C that was previously taken as settled, see Ferrero (2009, 709–10). It is exactly the persistence of this underlying deep structure, with its conditional dependencies, that explains my original insistence on the continuity of the conditional structure of the intention across changes in the epistemic status of C.

10) One might not appreciate the need for a deep conditional structure if one focuses on the simple cases where the agent is infallibly certain that C (and A requires no preparation before ascertaining that C). In these cases, all that a conditional intention requires is that one *first* determine whether C obtains. At that point, and only then, one is required to proceed with one's A-ing, without ever thinking back about the status of C.

But in many situations, ascertaining that C does not carry immunity from future revisions of one's belief in C prior to one's A-ing. Even if one is no longer under a pressure to actively investigate the status of C, one is still expected to be able to revert to the intention in its standard conditional form if one learns that C is once again an unsettled matter.

An analogous expectation is present in cases where one settles on C in the mode of what Bratman calls 'acceptance,' that is, cases where one takes C for granted for purposes of practical deliberation. In the case of a conditional intention to A if C, if one accepts that C in Bratman's sense, one discharges the antecedent in order to proceed with further planning without the continuous pressure to actively investigate whether C obtains. But the discharging of C by acceptance does not remove the condition C as a qualification of what one is up to. As I argued in Ferrero (2009, sec. 4), in discharging C one is just moving the condition into the cognitive background, as either a settled or an accepted matter. As a result, one retains the same intention, although one that changes from being conditional to being 'circumstantially' unconditional.

There are only two kinds of cases where there is no need to keep the possibility

of reversion open. First, cases where one is infallibly certain that C. Second, cases in which one embarks on A-ing 'on a risk.' The latter cases, as acutely discussed by Ludwig, are similar to acceptances in that, given the relative costs of ascertaining C, one might take C to obtain for practical purposes. However, when intending 'on a risk,' one also expects that prior to A-ing one won't be able to ascertain whether C at a reasonable cost. As a result, one is going to proceed with A-ing (or at least trying to A) while taking a chance that C is going to obtain. (The danger that one incurs is that, if C does not in fact obtain, one might end up A-ing even if A-ing has in the meantime turned out to be unreasonable. And if one still manages to avoid A-ing, one would do so only after having made potentially expensive investments under the expectation of one's future A-ing.) When one intends to A 'under the risk' that C might not obtain, one never expects to be in a position to give up one's acceptance that C and thus to have to revert to the undischarged conditional intention to A-if-C. By contrast, in the case of acceptance one still leaves open, at least in principle, the option of reverting to intending to A-if-C if warranted by a change in practical or epistemic standpoint. Nonetheless, even in cases of intending under risk, there is still room for a deep conditional structure of the object of the intention, at least for the purposes of justification and explication of what one is up to.

11) Further support for a deep conditional structure is offered by considerations on the *continuity* of the intention: when one comes to believe or to accept that C, one does not thereby acquire a *new* unconditional intention to A. Rather, there is a *transformation* of the very same attitude. The intention becomes 'circumstantially unconditional,' in the sense that there is a change in how the agent is supposed to respond to the rational pressures imposed by the content 'to A-if-C.' First, as correctly stressed by Ludwig, there is no longer a pressure to find out whether C. Second, taking steps to promote A might now become more urgent (or at least carry fewer risks than before, when one was still waiting to determine whether C). In any event, as a result of the ascertaining that C, one is not thereby engaged in a different course of action than the one that was initiated when one first acquired the intention to A-if-C. Nor is one under the guidance of a different, although related, intention. The change is rather all *internal* to the dynamic unfolding of the same intention, which retains the same conditional structure throughout. Or so I maintain.

12) This is not how Ludwig sees the matter. In his account, the acquisition of a conditional intention amounts to the acquisition of a conditional commitment as a disposition to form a *distinct* unconditional commitment to action on accepting that the antecedent obtains. Upon accepting C, the conditional commitment is "executed by way of one's forming an unconditional commitment to do what one was before only conditionally committed to doing and then carrying it out. In

a similar way, a prior intention in being executed leads to an intention-in-action, which must itself be carried out for the prior intention to be carried out.” Ludwig (2015, sec. 6)

Ludwig is explicit that this is a matter of one attitude leading to a different one. He goes as far as claiming that “it would be a mistake to say that the conditional intention *becomes* an unconditional intention, just as it would be a mistake to say that a prior intention becomes an intention-in-action. But it is in the nature of each *to lead* (in the right way) to an intention appropriately related to it in its being executed, and this is required for them to be satisfied” (my emphasis) Ludwig (2015, sec. 6). See also his later statement: “upon setting whether the antecedent of a conditional intention obtains, one way or the other, I *lose* the conditional intention. If it obtains, it leads to an unconditional intention to do what I formerly conditionally intended to do. If it doesn’t, then the conditional commitment is relinquished, its purpose being discharge” (my emphasis) Ludwig (2015, sec. 6)

Unfortunately, Ludwig does not say anything more about what kind of ‘mistake’ is involved in suggesting that a prior intention *becomes* an intention-in-action rather than *leading* to it. Hence, I am not able to offer a specific rebuttal of this claim. But I have elsewhere argued at length for the continuity of intention, see Ferrero (2013) and Ferrero (forthcoming). I would thus be interested in learning more about Ludwig’s objections. This discussion, however, is not specific to conditional intentions. At issue is a larger set of questions about the metaphysics of temporally extended attitudes and activities.

13) Even so, a specific picture of the dynamical unfolding of a single attitude underlies many of my claims about the existence of a deep conditional structure of intentions, a structure that persists across changes in the epistemic status of the antecedents. Let’s see how.

To begin with, both Ludwig and I agree that the agent is under the distinctive pressures of intentions *as soon as* she acquires a conditional intention. These pressures include the pressure to be means-end coherent, which might require that one take steps toward A-ing even prior to the discharging of C. According to my account, there is a straightforward explanation of the continuity of these pressures. For these pressures are a direct product of the persistence of the very same commitment to A-if-C, a commitment that retains its object even when one takes C to obtain. For Ludwig, instead, the continuity of the pressures is only due to the agent’s commitment to be in a position to acquire a distinct (and unconditional) commitment upon the ascertaining that C. According to Ludwig, the agent who undertakes a conditional commitment is thereby committed to the immediate acquisition of a distinct and unconditional commitment upon the ascertaining that C. Maybe the rational pressures operate in the same way for both the conditional and the unconditional commitment. But if so, why can’t we speak of a single

commitment that continues to exist past the ascertaining of C?

One might try to argue for the discontinuity in commitments by showing that the earlier conditional commitment is somewhat weaker than the later unconditional one. But for most of his paper Ludwig does not seem to appeal to commitments of different strengths when discussing the rational pressures on conditional intentions. In the closing pages, however—when he discusses the natural expressions of conditional intentions—he contrasts the case of having a contingency plan with the ‘stronger’ case of having the commitment to doing a certain thing in case certain circumstances obtain. If I am reading him correctly, my own account would be guilty of offering the stronger interpretation of the commitment generated by a conditional intention. But if so, it is unclear to me what the weaker case amounts to, the case in which one is ‘settled’ on doing something in the future on the basis of the contingency plan. If being settled is not a matter of having the stronger commitment, how is it that the distinctive pressures of intention still apply? And if they do apply to the same extent, why speaking of a weaker commitment at all? I thus invite Ludwig to say more on this matter.

14)

What is at stake in rejecting my ‘continuity picture’? Consider the criticisms that might be appropriate at different stages of intending. For the sake of the argument, let’s assume that Ludwig is correct and that, upon ascertaining that C, the agent is supposed to drop the conditional intention and acquire a distinct *unconditional* one. If so, it is in principle possible that an agent might fail to acquire the latter intention once she has dropped the former one. Let’s now imagine that, at a later time, the agent fails to take a necessary means to A-ing. Can the agent be criticized as being means-end incoherent? It does not seem so. At least, she cannot be *directly* subjected to this criticism. For at that point she no longer has any intention (conditional or unconditional) that generates the pressure to take the necessary means to A.

She could still be criticized for her earlier failure to acquire the unconditional intention to A upon the ascertaining that C. In turn, this criticism might prompt her to acquire the unconditional intention to A. If so, she would thereby be subjected to the demand to be means-end coherent and criticized accordingly if she fails to act on it. But as long as she has failed to acquire the unconditional intention, she can’t be *presently* criticized for failing to take the necessary means to A.

15) By contrast, according to my picture, the latter criticism would be entirely appropriate. As long as one has not *abandoned* or *given up* the intention to A-if-C, one is subjected to its distinctive pressures. The obtaining of C by itself does not call for the acquisition of a new intention and attendant commitment. Hence, one can be *directly* criticized if one fails to take the necessary means to A.

This is not to deny that one might have abandoned the intention to A-if-C at any time after one has learned that C. And one might have done so in violation of pressures for the stability of intentions. But my view does not single out the moment at which one settles on C as calling for a specific transition to a novel intention. This novel intention would be one attitude too many.

16) How deep is the difference between Ludwig and me? If we focus only on the operation of conditional intentions, I surmise that there might be much convergence and that it might not be difficult to translate one account into the other. The difference in the metaphysics of temporally extended attitudes could turn out to be deeper but its implications might not be especially visible when we limit our observations to conditional intentions. And the discussion of conditional intentions might not be sufficient to adjudicate the dispute over the continuity vs. discontinuity of attitudes over time.

17) Even without getting into the metaphysical dispute on the continuity of attitudes, one might still find a serious problem with my picture of conditional intentions. As Ludwig correctly and importantly remarks, his view gives central place to the epistemic status of the antecedents. Whether the antecedents are settled or not makes important practical and theoretical differences. As such, their epistemic status should not be ignored or glossed over. The original formulation of my view might be partly guilty of this. By insisting on the continuity of the intention and its conditional structure, I appear to have downplayed, if not even neglected, the difference that their epistemic status makes. Ludwig has convinced me that I need to make amends.

Nevertheless, I believe that my view can accommodate the relevant distinctions. While preserving the suggestion that there is a deep conditional structure, my account should be supplemented with a better articulation of the practical and theoretical implications of unsettled conditions and of what occurs as these conditions become settled. Ludwig is absolutely correct that the basic operation of conditional intentions is to allow our planning agency to handle the conditions that are yet unsettled but practically ascertainable in the foreseeable future. But I believe that my initial discussion of the transition from conditional intentions to the ‘circumstantially’ unconditional ones might already provide the necessary backbones for the additional articulation of the epistemic statuses of conditions (although this work would have to be carried out on another occasion).

18) Incorporating Ludwig’s lesson might not be sufficient, however, to address an additional concern. Ludwig is justly worried that “the category of condition intention on Ferrero’s account threatens to *swallow* all intentions, for it is unlikely that we have any intentions that do not rest on our accepting that some preconditions for action obtain and accepting that some contingent conditions obtain that are relevant to whether we have reasons the what we intend.” (my emphasis) Lud-

wig (2015, sec. 10) In particular, my view seems to fail to distinguish between a genuinely conditional commitment and a commitment that is *conditioned* by the background view of the world.

This is a serious concern and I must confess that I have become increasingly uneasy about this aspect of my original account. I still think that it is of the utmost importance to come to appreciate the extent to which various conditions bear on the objects of our intentions, even when such conditions are not explicitly stated, and *even* when these conditions are settled. But I am worried that I might be incorporating too many of these conditions in the content of intentions rather than relegating them to the background of their formation.

I do not have a ready answer to this concern but I do not think that it can be properly addressed by accepting Ludwig's alternative account. In his view, the only conditions that can qualify a commitment are those that are unsettled but practically ascertainable. His solution errs on the opposite side of mine, since it appears to be overly restrictive. As I have suggested in this paper, there is still an important role to be played by the acknowledgement that the deep structure of many intentions (and the associated commitments) remains conditional even when the conditions are settled. Even so, Ludwig has raised important criticisms that call for a revision of my original account. In particular, I need to offer a better characterization of the central role played by unsettled but practically ascertainable conditions. In addition, I need to draw a distinction between genuine qualifications of intentions as opposed to mere background conditions on their formation. But at the end of the day I still want to resist Ludwig's suggestion that both distinctions should be drawn along the very same line, that is, the line that divides settled conditions from the unsettled but practically ascertainable ones.

19) As I remarked at the outset, I have chosen to focus on the points of disagreement between Ludwig and me. But one should not be misled by the critical focus of my previous remarks. There are several points of deep agreement between our accounts and many insights in Ludwig's account from which we can all learn important lessons.

In these closing paragraphs I just want to highlight one particularly important point of convergence and offer a brief elaboration on Ludwig's discussion of it. We both agree on the broad outline of the conditions of success of a conditional intention. In particular, we both reject the idea that success in pursuing a conditional intention 'I'll A if C' amounts to the satisfaction of the material conditional $C \supset A$. I also endorse the substantive characterization of the conditions success presented by Ludwig, for they appear to be independent of the dispute over the deep conditional structure and the continuity of the attitude.

Ludwig and I agree that, when the antecedent turns out to be impossible to obtain, the conditional intention cannot be made successful. The intention is rather

moot. Ludwig is still willing to talk of a kind of ‘satisfaction’ even when C cannot possibly obtain. This is, however, only a limiting case of satisfaction— satisfaction-by-mootness, so to say. What is more interesting is that he stresses the importance and primacy of the other kind of satisfaction, the one that comes from ‘carrying out’ or ‘executing’ one’s intention.

20) It is interesting to note that this satisfaction is to be further distinguished from the satisfaction of a conditional desire, which can be achieved even when the related intention is not successful. Consider the case in which I have the *desire* not to be at the party if my nemesis shows up. Under normal circumstances, the most common way of satisfying this desire is by forming the conditional intention to leave the party if my nemesis shows up. If he does not show up but I mistakenly think he has, and I leave the party as a result, the intention could be said to have been executed in error. As such, the intention is not successful and the correlated desire goes unfulfilled.

But if my nemesis shows up, it might still happen that I leave the party but *not* in execution of the conditional intention. For instance, I might be kidnapped and taken away from the party room at the very moment when my nemesis shows up. In a case of this kind, my conditional *desire* is satisfied but my intention has not been carried out, see Ferrero (2013). The failure of the intention is not due to its mootness but to the impossibility of carrying out the consequent (possibly because of pre-emption). This is a somewhat unusual case, however. In most situations the non-accidental satisfaction of a conditional desire can only be secured by the executive success of a conditional intention. But the case I have just discussed illustrates another intriguing feature of conditional intentions that is worth of additional investigation.

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