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# Intentions, action, and reasons. A new look at the Toxin Puzzle

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## Résumé

Imagine you're offered a great deal of money to intend today to drink a toxin (that will make you severely sick) tomorrow. This scenario is known as the 'Toxin Puzzle'. The talk has three aims.

First, to discuss a variety of replies to the following question: why, in the Puzzle, do we seem incapable of forming the intention to drink the toxin, despite having good reasons for doing so? It has been argued that the explanation of why one cannot form the intention is that the reason one has in the scenario is a state-given reason for forming an intention, and state-given reasons don't constitute real reasons for intentions; or that one cannot form the intention to drink the toxin because one doesn't see any reason for drinking it, and we can only form intentions when we have reasons for acting in some way; or because one doesn't believe that one will drink the toxin, and an intention to do something is or entails a belief that you'll do it. I'll argue that none of the three replies suggested so far in the literature is persuasive.

Second, I draw on this discussion to show what I believe is the real problem underpinning the Toxin Puzzle: i.e., why can we intend to do things when there are reasons against doing them or (if there's at least a state-given reason) when there's no particular reason for doing them, but we cannot form *for state-given reasons* intentions to do things we have reasons against? This, I argue, is the real question raised by the Puzzle, and one that has not been properly addressed so far.

Lastly, I suggest ways of dealing with this question, and I reflect on what the Puzzle can teach us on intentions to act, their nature or rationality.

**Mots-Clés:** Intention, action, reasons, rationality, Toxin puzzle

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