

Imperfect Reasons and Rational Options

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AGENTS OFTEN FACE a choice of what to do. And it seems that, in most of these choice situations, the relevant reasons do not require performing some particular act, but instead permit performing any of numerous act alternatives.¹ It seems, for instance, that I could now, in accordance with reason, do any of the following: watch TV, read a novel, volunteer for Oxfam, work on this paper, play with my daughter, or prepare for my next lecture. Following Joseph Raz, I will call this the *basic belief*. Raz calls it the *basic belief*, because it seems sufficiently entrenched in our commonsense thinking that we should give it “credence unless it can be shown to be incoherent or inconsistent with some of our rightly entrenched views.”² As he sees it, then, the basic belief is one of our starting points, and our task is to explain it rather than to defend it. However, even just explaining it is not easy, for it seems that there could be such rational options only if there were exactly equal reason to perform each of the optional act alternatives, and yet

¹ In this paper, I will be concerned with objective rationality, not subjective rationality. An act is objectively irrational if and only if the agent has decisive reasons not to perform the act. The objective rational status of an act is purely a function of the reasons for and against it and its alternatives, regardless of whether or not the agent is aware of them. By contrast, the subjective rational status of an act depends, not on what reasons there are, but on what reasons the agent takes there to be, or, alternatively, on the practical mental functioning of the agent—see Parfit’s *Climbing the Mountain* (manuscript) and Gert’s *Brute Rationality* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), respectively. The reader should assume that, unless otherwise qualified, I am talking about objective rationality whenever I use the word ‘rational’ or any of its variants.

² See his *Engaging Reason* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 100.

it is difficult to believe that such is the case. It is difficult to believe, for instance, that I have just as much reason to watch TV as to either volunteer for Oxfam or work on this paper. After all, volunteering for Oxfam seems vastly superior to watching TV in terms of the amount of impersonal good that it would do, and working on this paper seems vastly superior to watching TV in terms of the amount of personal good it would do me. Moreover, the fact that, in many of these choice situations, the relevant act alternatives remain optional even when there is an increase in the number and/or strength of the reasons that favor just one of the alternatives shows that their optional status cannot be due, in the first place, to a perfect balance of reasons in support of each act alternative.³ Consider, for instance, that it would still be rationally permissible for me to continue working on this paper even if there was a slight increase in the strength or number of reasons that favored one of my other options, as where Oxfam institutes a new policy of providing volunteers with a free, delicious lunch. So the puzzle is to explain how, in most choice situations, there could be so many optional act alternatives if, as seems to be the case, there is not exactly equal reason to perform each of these alternatives.

I will argue that this puzzle can be solved by taking a broader view of things and that, once we take this broader view, we find that there is in fact equal reason to perform each of the more broadly conceived alternatives. As I will demonstrate, the relevant alternatives are not, as we've been assuming, the particular acts available to the agent at a given moment, but rather the various courses of actions that she could perform over the remainder of her life.

³ See Joshua Gert, "Normative Strength and the Balance of Reasons," *Philosophical Review* 116 (2007): 533-562.

Reasons for action are, at least, sometimes provided by facts about which ends are worth achieving. But such facts often fail to support any specific act-token, for there is often more than one way to achieve the same end. Thus, some facts provide a reason to perform any of the various act-tokens that would each achieve the same worthy end. And others provide a reason to undertake any of the various courses of action that would each ultimately achieve the same worthy end. I'll illustrate each in turn. First, the fact that I need to get to the airport provides me with a reason to take any of the following equally attractive means of getting there: a taxi, a bus, or a train.⁴ Second, the fact that I need to spend one of the next two days painting the fence and the other grading exams to meet certain important deadlines provides me with a reason either (a) to spend tomorrow grading exams and the next day painting the fence or (b) to spend tomorrow painting the fence and the next day grading exams. These sorts of reasons are what I call *imperfect reasons*, for they are analogous to imperfect duties in that they allow for significant leeway in how one chooses to comply with them.⁵ Just as the imperfect duty of beneficence requires only that one be beneficent to a certain extent but leaves it up to one's discretion to whom and on which occasions to be beneficent, imperfect reasons speak in favor of achieving the same worthy end but leave it up to one's discretion which of the equally attractive means to achieving that end to take.

⁴ Assume that these are all equally attractive given their comparative cost, comfort, and convenience. I borrow this example from Joshua Gert's "Requiring and Justifying: Two Dimensions of Normative Strength," *Erkenntnis* 59 (2003): 5-36, p. 10.

⁵ Jonathan Dancy calls such reasons "unfocused reasons" and Raz calls a subclass of such reasons "reasons that are not time-specific." See Raz's *Engaging Reason*, p. 100, and see Dancy's "Enticing Reasons," in *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, by R. J. Wallace, P. Pettit, S. Scheffler, and M. Smith (eds.), 91-118, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Imperfect reasons arise in what Joshua Gert calls *multiple-option cases*, cases where some end result is what there is most reason to achieve and where there is more than one equally attractive means to achieving that result.⁶ In such multiple-option cases, it is rationally permissible to take any one of the equally attractive means to achieving that result. Thus multiple-option cases are cases where the relevant reasons (viz., imperfect reasons) do not require the performance of some particular act, but instead permit performing any of the numerous act alternatives that constitute an equally attractive means of achieving the same worthy end.

That there are multiple-option cases where the relevant reasons are imperfect reasons is, I take it, uncontroversial. But if the existence of imperfect reasons and multiple-option cases is as uncontroversial as I claim, we might wonder why philosophers such as Gert and Raz have felt that they cannot account for the basic belief simply by appealing to the existence of multi-option cases.⁷ The answer is that they both believe that multiple-option cases are insufficiently numerous to account for the basic belief. To demonstrate this, Raz uses a case in which a woman named Mary has the opportunity to see a powerful performance of a good play at her local theater tonight but decides to stay home instead. Raz's view is that both alternatives—going to the theater and staying home—are rationally permissible. And although he admits that many reasons are imperfect reasons (or what he calls reasons that “are not time-specific”), he denies that such reasons allow us to account for the basic belief. He says:

⁶ See his “Requiring and Justifying: Two Dimensions of Normative Strength,” p. 10.

⁷ Joshua Gert resorts to claiming that reasons have two separable dimensions of normative strength, and Raz resorts to claiming that there are widespread incommensurabilities in value. See Gert's “Requiring and Justifying: Two Dimensions of Normative Strength” and Raz's *Engaging Reason*.

In many cases the reasons for doing one thing or another are not time-specific: the same reasons and the same opportunity to conform to them will apply on a number, sometimes an indefinite number, of occasions. This does not, however, explain the basic belief. Quite apart from the fact that delay is not costless, the basic belief applies to time-specific reasons as well. Mary, in our example, does not have to go to the play even on the last evening of its run. She may still just not feel like it and do something else instead.⁸

Likewise, Gert believes that the set of cases in which there are rational options is broader than the set of multiple-option cases. To prove it, Gert appeals to the fact that it is rationally permissible both to sacrifice \$200 to prevent forty children from suffering from serious malnutrition for forty days and to refuse to do so, choosing instead to spend that money on oneself. As he sees it, this is a classic case of a rational option, but he denies that this is a multiple-option case. Gert claims that the choice between (a) making a sacrifice for an altruistic reason and (b) not making this sacrifice cannot be seen “as alternate ways of pursuing the same end or acting on the same reasons.”

This, I will argue, is mistaken. I will show that (a) and (b) can be construed as two alternative ways of pursuing the same end. As Gert admits, it is crucial to get the level of description right, for whether it’s true that I am doing something that I am rationally required to be doing depends on how we describe what it is that I am doing.⁹ To illustrate, consider again the case where I must get to the airport, and let us assume that I happen to be taking a taxi to get there. If we ask whether I’m rationally required to be

⁸ Raz’s *Engaging Reason*, p. 100.

⁹ Gert’s “Requiring and Justifying: Two Dimensions of Normative Strength,” pp. 13-14.

doing *what I am doing*, the answer will depend on the level of description. If we describe what I am doing as taking a taxi to the airport, the answer will be “No,” because taking the bus is an equally attractive means of getting there and I am rationally permitted to do that instead. By contrast, if we describe what I am doing, more generally, as going to the airport, the answer will be “Yes,” because I am rationally required to go to the airport (or so we are supposing). So, at one level of description, I am rationally required to be doing *what I am doing*, and, at another, I’m not.

I think that the same can be said of Gert’s example (and, as we’ll later see, of Raz’s example as well). At a more general level of description, there are two courses of action that I might take over time, one that includes acting self-interestedly now and acting altruistically later and another that includes acting altruistically now and acting self-interestedly later, and it is plausible to construe these two courses of action as two ways of trying to achieve the same thing: a reasonably choice-worthy future, containing a reasonable proportion of both egoism and altruism.¹⁰ If we think that any reasonably choice-worthy future will contain both moral and prudential goods in some reasonable proportion, then it does not matter whether or not I perform a self-sacrificing, altruistic act now or later so long as, either way, these acts are a part of a course of action that will result in a reasonable balance being struck over time.¹¹

¹⁰ I think that what constitutes a reasonable proportion of various goods will vary from one agent to another depending on the history and circumstances of each.

¹¹ We all have to balance various factors in our lives (e.g., career, family, entertainment, personal projects, and the welfares of those who are sorely in need of our assistance), but it would be a mistake to think that the best way to balance all these factors is going to be the same for each of us and also a mistake to think that, for each of us, there will be only one way to strike a reasonable balance among such factors.

In Raz's case, we can, I think, say something similar. If we acknowledge that Mary conceives of her agency as being extended over time, then we may think that, at the relevant level of description, the pertinent choice is not between seeing this play on its last night and staying home, but between two courses of action, containing a good proportion of relaxation and cultural enrichment. It's true that this is a good play and that this is Mary's last opportunity to see it, but this will not be the last opportunity she has to do something comparably entertaining and culturally enriching, and surely Mary isn't required to take advantage of every such opportunity, but only to take advantage of a sufficient number of them. On the broader view, then, what each of us, including Mary, should be trying to do is to undertake a reasonably choice-worthy future, and, for most of us, any reasonably choice-worthy future will include both relaxing and culturally enriching activities.

So while admitting that there are multiple-option cases, philosophers such as Gert and Raz think that such cases are insufficiently numerous to account for the basic belief. This, I've been arguing, is mistaken. Raz and Gert fail to see that most typical choice situations are multiple-option cases, because they fail to view our choices from the appropriate level of description: that of choosing between various courses of action over time. Below, I describe a theory of objective rationality that takes this broader and more appropriate level of description into account.

At any given moment, t_i , prior to death, there are various ways a subject, S, might live out the rest of her life. For each possible way of completing S's life, there is a whole series of actions that S will perform if and only if S completes her life in exactly this way.

Each of these possible ways of acting over the remainder of S's life is what I call a future course of action—an "FCA" for short—available to S at t_i . The theory of objective rationality that I'll be defending holds that what it is objectively rational for an agent to do next is a function of the choice-worthiness of the various FCAs available to her at present, where one FCA is, for S, more choice-worthy than another if and only if S has more reason, all things considered, to choose it over the others.¹²

In assessing whether it would be in accordance with reason for S to perform some act (or series of actions), we must, on this theory, first determine which FCAs available to S are reasonably choice-worthy. Then we judge this act (or series of actions) to be in accordance with reason just in case it is contained within one of these reasonably choice-worthy FCAs. Call this the *Future-Course-of-Action Theory of Objective Rationality*:

FCAT S is, as of t_i , rationally permitted to perform a set of actions—where a set might include either an individual act-token or a series of act-tokens—if and only if there is a reasonably choice-worthy FCA available to S at t_i in which S performs that set.¹³

¹² I acknowledge that people don't actually make these choices regarding which FCA to undertake.

¹³ This is adapted from the sort of account of unconditional moral obligation that Fred Feldman gives in his *Doing the Best We Can: An Essay in Informal Deontic Logic*, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1986) and that Michael J. Zimmerman gives in his *The Concept of Moral Obligation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

There are, at least, three possible views about what counts as being a reasonably choice-worthy FCA, one maximizing view and two satisficing views. These are (1) an FCA is reasonably choice-worthy if and only if it is maximally choice-worthy, that is, if and only if there is no available alternative FCA that is more choice-worthy than it, (2) an FCA is reasonably choice-worthy if and only if it is sufficiently close to being a maximally choice-worthy FCA or, if none are, is maximally choice-worthy, and (3) an FCA is reasonably choice-worthy if and only if it is sufficiently choice-worthy or, if none are, is maximally choice-worthy. For more on the two types of satisficing views on which (2) and (3) are modeled, see Thomas Hurka, "Two Kinds of Satisficing," *Philosophical Studies* 59 (1990): 107-111.

FCAT allows us to account for numerous rational options. For instance, S will have the option to act either altruistically or self-interestedly at t_1 provided that there is both a reasonably choice-worthy FCA available to S at t_0 in which S acts altruistically at t_1 as well as a reasonably choice-worthy FCA available to S at t_0 in which S acts self-interestedly at t_1 . And likewise for the various other sorts of acts that constitute the set of available act alternatives that accord with reason. Since one FCA will often be just as choice-worthy as another if it contains the same proportion of various act-types, it simply does not matter which act-token I perform next so long as it is part of a series of act-tokens that constitutes a future course of action that strikes some reasonable balance among these various act-types. So the basic belief only seemed puzzling, because we were taking too narrow a view of our choices. If I am considering my choice of what to do from a perspective that ignores the fact that my agency is extended over time, it does seem difficult to believe that I have just as much reason to relax by watching TV as to volunteer for Oxfam or to work on this paper. But when we take the broader view and compare FCAs that all involve the same balance of relaxing acts, altruistic acts, career-furthering acts, etc., we see that they are all equally well supported by reason. And thus I have the option to perform any one of these types of acts now provided they are each part of an FCA that contains a reasonable proportion of acts of these various types.

My use of the word 'available' here is meant to be same as those who state act-utilitarianism as the view that an act is permissible if and only if there is no *available* act alternative that would produce more utility than it would.

To take a more concrete example, suppose that I am rationally permitted to perform either a_1 or a_4 at t_1 but that I am rationally required to perform one of these two at t_1 . This means that if we were to rank the FCAs available to me at t_0 , we would find (i) that there is, at least, one FCA in which I perform a_1 at t_1 that is reasonably choice-worthy, (ii) that there is, at least, one FCA in which I perform a_4 at t_1 that is reasonably choice-worthy, and (iii) that there is no FCA in which I perform neither a_1 nor a_4 at t_1 that is reasonably choice-worthy. So my options are:

- (A) Undertake a reasonably choice-worthy FCA by performing a_1 at t_1 .
- (B) Undertake a reasonably choice-worthy FCA by performing a_4 at t_1 .
- (C) Undertake an FCA that is not reasonably choice-worthy by performing, at t_1 , some act other than either a_1 or a_4 .

Note, then, that this is a multiple-option case, for there is more than one way to pursue the same end: specifically, that of undertaking a reasonably choice-worthy FCA. And the reason that I have to perform a_1 at t_1 (viz., that doing so is a means to undertaking a reasonably choice-worthy FCA) is an imperfect reason, for it is equally a reason to perform a_4 at t_1 .

Return now to Gert's case, where the permissible options are:

- (a) Make a sacrifice for an altruistic reason.
- (b) Do not make the sacrifice.

Gert denies that this is a multiple-option case, for he claims that “[s]uch pairs cannot plausibly be construed as alternate ways of pursuing the same end or acting on the same reasons.”¹⁴ However, he gives no argument for this claim; he must just think that it’s obvious. But it is not at all obvious. Indeed, as I’ve shown, (a) and (b) could be two alternative ways of pursuing the same end: that of completing one’s life in a reasonably choice-worthy way. Furthermore, (a) and (b) can be construed as two alternative ways of acting on the same reason: specifically, the imperfect reason one has to undertake a reasonably choice-worthy FCA. Indeed, for all we know, Gert’s (a) and (b) are just my (A) and (B) above.

On FCAT, an agent’s reason to perform some particular act always derives from some reason that she has to undertake a future course of action in which she performs that particular act. So, for instance, the fact that my performing a_1 at t_1 would benefit forty orphans (where a_1 is, say, my clicking on some button that will transfer the money in my savings account to some needy orphanage) is a reason for me to undertake a future course of action in which I perform a_1 at t_1 and, from this, derives my reason to perform a_1 at t_1 . Absent any reason to undertake a course of action in which I perform a_1 at t_1 , I would have no reason to perform a_1 at t_1 . Likewise, the fact that my performing a_4 at t_1 would allow me to avoid making any significant sacrifice at this time (where a_4 is, say, my clicking on some button that will prevent the transfer) is a reason for me to undertake a future course of action in which I perform a_4 at t_1 and, from this, derives my

¹⁴ Gert’s “Requiring and Justifying: Two Dimensions of Normative Strength,” p. 13.

reason to perform a_4 at t_1 . At the most basic level, then, agents have reasons for and against undertaking various future courses of action and, from these, derive reasons for and against performing the particular actions of which these future courses of action are comprised. I have a basic reason to undertake a future course of action that is reasonably choice-worthy, and, from this, I derive equal reason both to perform a_1 at t_1 and to perform a_4 at t_1 , for both particular acts constitute an equally effective means of undertaking a reasonably choice-worthy FCA.

The idea that reasons for performing particular acts ultimately derive from reasons to undertake certain courses of action can, at first, seem strange. On reflection, though, it shouldn't seem strange at all. Consider, first, that there are many clear instances in which whatever reason one has to perform a particular action depends entirely on there being some reason to undertake a future course of action that includes that particular act. Suppose, for instance, that I don't enjoy getting out my gardening tools, but that I do enjoy gardening and that I can't garden unless I get out my gardening tools.¹⁵ Clearly, in this case, the reason I have to get out my gardening tools derives from the reason that I have to undertake the FCA that includes my getting out my gardening tools and subsequently performing all the other acts that lead up to and then constitute my gardening. Unless I have some reason to undertake this FCA, I don't have any reason to perform the necessary means: that is, to get out my gardening tools. The same is true of all the other particular acts that I might perform at a given moment. Consider, for instance, the case where I'm grading a set of exams. I don't have any reason to read the

¹⁵ I borrow this example from Feldman, *Doing the Best We Can*, pp. 5-7.

first sentence of the first exam absent some reason to undertake the course of action in which I grade the entire first exam. And I don't have any reason to grade the first exam absent some reason to grade the entire set of exams. And we shouldn't stop there, for it seems that I don't have any reason to undertake the course of action in which I grade the entire set of exams unless I have some reason to undertake some longer, more extended FCA that includes my grading that entire set of exams. Ultimately, it seems that the reason that I have to perform any specific act derives from whatever reasons there are to undertake some FCA that includes my performing this specific act. So I don't think that FCAT should, on reflection, seem strange at all. And, even if it did, we should accept it, for it allows us to account for the basic belief.

FCAT allows us to account for the basic belief, for, on FCAT, it is plausible to suppose that the range of multiple-option cases will be just as wide as the range of cases in which we have rational options. Of course, there are other ways we might account for the basic belief (e.g., by claiming that the relevant reasons are incomparable¹⁶ or by claiming that reasons have two separable dimensions of strength¹⁷), but FCAT has an important advantage over such rivals: FCAT accounts for the fact that although it may be rational for me to take any individual future opportunity to perform, say, an altruistic act, it would not be rational for me to take every future opportunity to perform an altruistic act. If I were to spend all of my future performing altruistic acts, when would I get to have any fun? Who would take care of my family? And how would I ever complete my personal projects? It seems that a future of pure altruism is not a reasonably choice-

¹⁶ Raz, *Engaging Reason*.

¹⁷ Gert, *Brute Rationality*.

worthy one—not for me, at least.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is rational for me take almost any given future opportunity to perform an altruistic act, for there are, it seems, reasonably choice-worthy FCAs—FCAs that contain no more than a reasonable proportion of altruism—available to me in which I perform an altruistic act at that specific future opportunity.

FCAT's rivals, by contrast, cannot account for such intuitive judgments—at least, not without supplementation. Consider Gert's view. Gert accounts for rational options by supposing that the relevant reasons in support of many of the available act alternatives have more justifying strength than the opposing reasons have requiring strength.¹⁹ For instance, Gert claims that the reason one has to benefit oneself has no requiring strength, but sufficient justifying strength to justify acting contrary to opposing reasons in most typical choice situations.²⁰ In this way, Gert is able to account for the rational option to perform, in most typical choice situations, any of various self-benefiting acts, such as going to see a movie, working to advance one's career, and spending time with one's family. Gert also claims that, like the reasons one has to benefit oneself, altruistic reasons have no requiring strength, but only considerable justifying strength.²¹ And, in this way,

¹⁸ A life of pure altruism might, however, be reasonably choice-worthy for someone who, given her unique abilities and opportunities, could accomplish something truly extraordinary by dedicating her life exclusively to some altruistic end.

¹⁹ Roughly speaking, a reason has justifying strength to the extent that it can make it rationally permissible to perform acts that it would otherwise be objectively irrational to perform, and a reason has requiring strength to the extent that it can make it objectively irrational to refrain from performing acts that it would otherwise be rationally permissible to refrain from performing (Gert, *Brute Rationality*).

²⁰ On Gert's view, the only reasons that have any requiring strength are those that one has to avoid non-trivial harms to oneself (*Brute Rationality*, especially p. 141).

²¹ Gert says, "It is the official position of this book that altruistic reasons can *never*, in themselves, rationally require action, even though such reasons can justify actions that stand in need of justification" (*Brute Rationality*, p. 89).

Gert is able to account for the fact that, in many typical choice situations, the agent has the rational option of either doing something altruistic or doing something self-benefiting. More precisely, *Gert's Theory* is this:

GT An act is objectively irrational “if and only if it will bring some harm to the agent and will not bring any compensating benefit to anyone (including, but not limited to, the agent).”²²

Unfortunately, GT, unlike FCAT, offers no account of how to determine the rational status of a series of actions.²³ But, perhaps, we could rectify this by supplementing it with the following:

GT* A series of successive actions is objectively irrational “if and only if it will bring some harm to the agent and will not bring any compensating benefit to anyone (including, but not limited to, the agent).”²⁴

²² Gert, “Normative Strength and the Balance of Reasons,” p. 544. For a more precise statement of his view, see Gert, *Brute Rationality*, p. 141.

²³ Consider Smith, a man who enjoys gardening but who dislikes both getting his gardening tools out beforehand and putting them back again afterwards. A theory of objective rationality should be able to account for the following intuitive judgments: (1) it is, as of t_1 , rational for Smith to get out his gardening tools at t_5 , for there is a reasonably choice-worthy FCA available to Smith at t_1 in which Smith gets out his gardening tools at t_5 and gardens at t_6 , (2) it is, as of t_1 , rational for Smith to put his gardening tools away at t_6 , for there is a reasonably choice-worthy FCA available to Smith at t_1 in which Smith gets out his gardening tools at t_4 , gardens at t_5 , and puts his tools away at t_6 , but (3) it is not, as of t_1 , rational for Smith to perform a series of actions in which he gets out his gardening tools at t_5 and then, straight away, puts them back at t_6 , for there is no reasonably choice-worthy FCA available to Smith at t_1 in which Smith performs this series of actions—there’s just no point to Smith’s taking out his gardening tools and then, straight away, putting them back, for he dislikes both tasks.

²⁴ Gert, “Normative Strength and the Balance of Reasons,” p. 544.

GT* can account for some intuitive judgments, but it cannot account for our intuition that it would be irrational for me to take every future opportunity to perform an altruistic act, for let's presume, as is likely true, that each one of these self-sacrificing altruistic acts would produce a net benefit for others that would more than compensate for the self-sacrifices that I make in performing them. To account for such intuitions, then, Gert must supplement GT, not with GT*, but with something very close to FCAT—specifically:

FCAT* S is, as of t_i , rationally permitted to perform a series of successive actions if and only if there is a reasonably choice-worthy FCA available to S at t_i in which S performs that series.²⁵

Gert must supplement GT with FCAT*, for anything short of FCAT* would allow that there are certain series of actions that it would be rational to perform even though there is no reasonably choice-worthy FCA available to the agent that contains that series. And that's just not plausible. How could it be rational to act so as to ensure that one does not live out the rest of one's life in a reasonably choice-worthy way? Now, having realized that Gert must supplement GT with FCAT*, we should ask: "What intuitive judgments might GT plus FCAT* account for that FCAT can't?" The answer, I think, is "none." And

²⁵ FCAT* is nearly identical to FCAT except that the word 'set' has been replaced with the word 'series' so as to ensure that FCAT* will not render any verdicts about particular actions—this ensures that FCAT* will not conflict with GT. I take it that whereas a series of actions must contain more than one action, a set of actions can contain only one action. If I'm wrong about this, then let me just stipulate that this is how I'll use the words 'set' and 'series'.

if I'm right, then the principle of parsimony directs us to supplant GT with FCAT rather than supplement it with FCAT*.

I've argued that, at the most fundamental level, agents have reasons for and against undertaking various FCAs and, from these, derive reasons for and against performing the particular acts (or series of acts) of which these FCAs are comprised. Thus, the most basic reason that any agent has is to undertake an FCA that is reasonably choice-worthy. This reason, I've argued, is an imperfect reason, for it supports equally all of the various particular acts that constitute a means to undertaking such a course of action. Since, in most choice situations, many of the available act alternatives constitute ways of acting on this imperfect reason, we find that the relevant reasons permit performing any of these various act alternatives. And this, I've argued, is how we can best account for the basic belief. In the process of making these arguments, I have developed and defended a new theory of objective rationality, which I call FCAT. I've argued that this theory is promising, not only because it enables us to account for the basic belief, but also because it has an important advantage over its rivals: it can more parsimoniously account for our belief that although it would be objectively rational, in most particular instances, to choose to do one type of activity rather than another, it would be objectively irrational to choose, in every possible instance, to do the one rather than the other.