What You Do When You Infer

What is it to make an inference from $p$ to $q$? It’s not just to judge that $p$ and then judge that $q$. To infer $q$ from $p$, you need to judge that $q$ because you judge that $p$. It has proven difficult to explain what that “because” means. Past attempts to explain that have faced deviance and regress problems. These problems are soluble if we understand inference as a kind of intentional mental action. You can infer $q$ from $p$ (for example) when you execute a complex intention to figure out whether $p$ in order to judge whether $q$ (if $p$). One token mental action can accomplish all that at once: it can be both a judgment that $p$ and a judgment that $q$.