

UNITY OF REASONS

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There are at least two basic normative notions: *rationality* and *reasons*. The structure of a normative theory depends in significant part on how these normative concepts are interpreted and how they are related to each other.¹ Some normative theories explain rationality in terms of reasons while others explain reasons in terms of rationality. That is, some say an agent is rational because she responds correctly to (believed) reasons while others say that facts are made into reasons by the attitudes and commitments of rational agents.

The dominant normative account of reasons nowadays, which we can call *primitive pluralism about reasons*, holds that some reasons are normatively basic and there is no underlying normative explanation of them in terms of other normative notions. Certain reasons can be explained in terms of other reasons, but an irreducible plurality of reasons is primitive, which means that they are not explained by other reasons or by other normative concepts such as values or desires.² Rationality, on this view, is a matter of correctly responding to reasons that exist or that one takes to exist.³

¹ This way of describing the distinctive aims and subject-matter of normative theory is generalized from Rawls' understanding of moral theory: "There are three basic moral notions: the good, the right, and the morally good (moral worth of persons). The structure of a moral theory depends on how these notions are defined and related to one another. It is characteristic of teleological theories that they start with an independent definition of the good and then define the right as maximizing this good." (Rawls 1999a: 242)

² Proponents of substantive realism about reasons include (Dancy 2004; Nagel 1978; Parfit 2009; Raz 1999; Scanlon 1998). Scanlon claims that all reasons are normatively basic in this sense, in part because he believes in buck-passing accounts of value, while others claim that some, but not all, reasons can be explained in terms of values.

³ (Scanlon 2003a: 15).

Kantian constructivism about reasons, understood as a normative rather than a metaethical theory⁴, is the reverse view: Rationality is the primitive normative notion that picks out which non-normative facts are reasons for what and explains why those normative relations hold.⁵

As I have characterized them, primitive pluralism about reasons and Kantian constructivism about reasons are competing “first-order” claims within normative theory about the relationship between two normative concepts, namely reasons and rationality.⁶ These views should not be confused with metaethical theses about whether the truth or

⁴ The term ‘Kantian constructivism’ can be used to name a metaethical and a normative view. The term ‘intuitionism’ suffers from the same kind of ambiguity: As a metaethical theory, intuitionism holds that there is an independent moral order that we know by intuition, and our beliefs about it in turn motivate us to act in virtue of our psychological nature as rational agents. But as a normative theory, intuitionism can also mean that there is a plurality of basic and conflicting values or principles that have to be weighed against one another on the basis of intuition to determine how we ought to act. One can be an intuitionist in the first sense but not the second (e.g. Sidgwick), in the second but not the first (e.g. perhaps Bernard Williams), or in both senses (e.g. W.D. Ross). Similarly, Kantian constructivism, as a metaethical view, can mean that the truth of all moral judgments is determined by the reactions of rational agents, but as a normative view, it can mean that some normative claims are valid or reasonable valid in virtue of being outcomes of a “procedure of construction” in which actual or hypothetical agents react to, choose or otherwise settle on principles of justice, moral rules, values, etc. Normative constructivists need not deny the existence of an independent moral order; they can allow that some moral claims are true in virtue of facts, entities or truths that exist independent of their procedures of construction. My focus in this essay is on Kantian constructivism about reasons, understood as a normative rather than as a metaethical theory.

⁵ Defenders of Kantian Constructivism about reasons include (Hill 2012b; Korsgaard 1996b; Rawls 1999b; Street 2008). I mostly set aside theoretical reasons, although a fully worked-out Kantian constructivist view would have to show how those reasons are also explained by rationality as well.

⁶ My concern in this essay is not about metaethics at all; instead, I take up a “first-order,” normative, question about how two basic normative notions, rationality and reasons, should be interpreted and related to one another in a normative framework. The best analogy to the issue I am raising is the longstanding debate in normative ethical theory about whether or not the “right” is prior to the “good.” Consequentialists, for example, hold that there are values that are independent of moral principles of right and that such principles are defined by what maximizes the good. Some non-consequentialists, by contrast, claim that moral principles of right do not always depend on what is antecedently valuable. The various normative ethical theories that interpret and relate the normative concepts of right and good are consistent with most any metaethical view about the truth-makers of moral judgments. Similarly, I claim, normative theories must also take a position on whether they regard reasons as primitive normative notions or whether they explain reasons in terms of other normative concepts, such as the concept of rationality. No matter which way this normative question is settled, the resulting frameworks are also consistent with moral realist, expressivist or Kantian constructivist metaethical theories.

validity of all normative claims is determined by an independent normative order, by the reactions of agents who take up a practical standpoint, or by some combination of these.⁷

How are we to adjudicate the fundamental normative dispute between those who think that reasons are normatively primitive and those who think that reasons are somehow explained by the reactions that ideally rational agents would have if they were fully exercising their powers of reasoned deliberation, judgment and inference guided by the norms, standards and criteria of rationality. Just as the dispute between consequentialists and non-consequentialists about the normative priority of the right and the good cannot be settled on metaphysical or epistemological grounds, so must we engage in normative theorizing to decide the normative priority of rationality and reasons.

Primitive pluralism about reasons and Kantian constructivism about reasons face normative challenges that pull in opposing directions. According to the *unity objection*, primitive pluralism about reasons lacks sufficient normative unity and structure. It ends normative inquiry too early, closing off the possibility of a unifying normative explanation of why the supposedly primitive reasons that exist are actually reasons.

According to the *particularity objection*, Kantian constructivism about reasons, which aims to explain all reasons in terms of rationality, cannot capture the wide variety of reasons that are recognized in commonsense.⁸ As Scanlon puts the worry: “I do not believe the idea of rational agency is rich enough to yield all the claims about reasons that seem evidently correct” (c.f. Scanlon 2003a; Scanlon 2003b, 2007; 2011: 124).

⁷ For meta-normative discussions about what grounds the truth of moral claims see (Darwall et al. 1992; Enoch 2011; FitzPatrick 2005; Lavin 2004; Shafer-Landau 2003; Wright 1992).

⁸ (Scanlon 2003a, 2003b, 2007; 2011: 124).

The aim of this paper is to suggest that if Kantian constructivism about reasons were built on a substantive, rather than merely formal, conception of rationality then it would stand a better chance at *unifying* the *particular* reasons we would endorse on due reflection.⁹ The idea of expanding the notion of rationality to include features that are not just about the consistency and coherence of mental states is likely to meet with suspicion, so my more specific aim is to explain how one might argue for a substantive conception of rationality and illustrate how such an account could be used to explain a variety of reasons that seem to exist. The groundwork I lay in this paper, I explain, is an essential first step in the larger project of developing a version of Kantian constructivism about reasons that might eventually explain all reasons in terms of rationality. I do not take up this more comprehensive task here but instead try to show that such work is not doomed from the start and should proceed on an expanded notion of rationality.

My plan is as follows: I begin by characterizing how one version of primitive pluralism about reasons has, again and again, successfully resisted attempts at reducing all reasons to other normative notions, such as values, desires or normative principles. Then I express this basic criticism in the form of a dilemma for Kantian constructivism about reasons: Either a putative conception of rationality is thick enough to capture the reasons of commonsense, in which case it is not a conception of *rationality* that can play the explanatory role that Kantian constructivism assigns to it; or a putative conception of rationality can play that role, in which case it is too thin to capture the reasons we recognize in commonsense. I argue that three prominent versions of Kantian

⁹ The most common conceptions of rationality in the contemporary literature make rationality purely formal, a matter of the consistency and coherence of our mental states (Broome 2010; Kolodny 2005; Smith 2004) although there is a Kantian tradition that makes rationality a matter of being reasonable as well (Hill 1991, 1992b, 1992a; Rawls 1999a, 1999b).

constructivism about reasons face serious difficulties in responding to this dilemma. The solution, I claim, is for defenders of Kantian constructivism about reasons to expand our notion of rationality to include substantive as well as formal elements. Restricting my scope to three non-formal features, self-preservation, exercise of one's rational capacities and reciprocity, I develop a strategy for how one might justify incorporating these elements into a conception of rationality. That strategy is to lay out a substantive conception of rationality as a plausible normative starting point, explain how it fits with commonsense, and suggest how a normative theory built on that basis is more likely than others to achieve full and wide reflective equilibrium. I then illustrate how a unified account of rationality, with these substantive yet abstract elements, can generate a wide variety of particular reasons. I conclude by responding to two objections that a defender of primitive pluralism about reasons might raise against my account.

Primitive pluralism about reasons

T.M. Scanlon is a prominent defender of primitive pluralism about reasons. He has developed a powerful two-part strategy against attempts at reducing reasons to *values, desires or principles about what we ought to do*: First, there is the particularity objection, which says that the wide variety of reasons that exist are just too complicated to be explained by these other normative notions. Second, the tables are then turned by suggesting that these other concepts are actually better explained in terms of reasons rather than the other way around.¹⁰ According to Scanlon's strategy, then, the reasons of everyday life are too varied, complicated and specific to be captured by these other normative notions, so we must take reflective commonsense at its face and admit a

¹⁰ This strategy is most prominent in (Scanlon 1998).

plurality of unexplained reasons; but, fortunately, treating the notion of a reason as primitive proves quite fruitful in explaining various other normative notions.

For example, one might begin with the idea that states of affairs are intrinsically *valuable* and then try to explain all the practical reasons there are in terms of promoting better ways the world might go. The first prong of Scanlon's response is that many of the reasons we recognize resist this type of teleological explanation, such as those of friendship. Our reasons also seem to come from a variety of sources, which makes it unlikely that they all stem from a single value property such as human welfare. The second prong is a buck-passing counter-proposal, which starts with a wide variety of reasons that people have to adopt positive attitudes towards certain things and to treat them in various ways, and then proceeds to explain the value of something in terms of the reasons its natural features give us to value it.¹¹

The best case for primitive pluralism about reasons, according to Scanlon, is thus a holistic one: Defenders of that view are unwilling to sacrifice the complexity and variety of reasons we recognize in commonsense and they think that primitive pluralism about reasons is deeply embedded in compelling accounts of other normative notions. The evident plausibility of a comprehensive and interconnected normative theory that treats reasons as primitive, according to Scanlon, provides strong indirect support for primitive pluralism about reasons itself. Even if a distinct normative notion could somehow capture the reasons of commonsense, strong reasons remain for thinking that the order of explanation would still begin with reasons. On the whole, even though some reasons may be explained in terms of values, desires or normative principles, defenders of primitive pluralism about reasons claim that normative theories that admit reasons as

¹¹ Scanlon calls this a 'buck-passing' account of value.

among their starting points are more likely than any others to match our considered normative judgments on due reflection.

Kantian constructivism about reasons

There may still be doubts that primitive pluralism about reasons relies too heavily on particular judgments about what facts are reasons for what as well as judgments about how reasons combine together. Primitive pluralism about reasons seems to cut off normative ‘why’ questions that could help to unify and structure the supposedly primitive reasons that exist. W.D. Ross argued for a version of primitive pluralism about reasons that seems sensible as a sort of default position in ethical theory, but there is a natural drive for an underlying explanation of the “unconnected heap” of *prima facie* duties he proposed and for more determinate guidance about what to do when they conflict.

How should we assess primitive pluralism about reasons if we cannot easily disentangle it from the core of various reasonable normative theories? Until we have adequately studied competing normative frameworks that aim to impose more structure on reasons but also aim to capture the complexity and variety of reasons we recognize in commonsense, we cannot be sure whether primitive pluralism about reasons is correct or not. The best offense against primitive pluralism about reasons is a good defense of a competing view.

Kantian constructivism about reasons starts with *rationality* as the most basic normative notion and uses that idea to explain how fully rational persons, on their own or together, could or would reason about and render judgments on normative issues under certain specified conditions. Reasons are empirical facts that figure in their rational deliberations or are picked out by the principles they specify or the judgments they make

when they are fully exercising their powers of reason. Appropriately responding to independent reasons is not what makes someone rational; instead, the constitutive rational principles, deliberations and judgments of rational agents provide a unified framework that determines which facts are reasons for what.

Why are defenders of primitive pluralism about reasons skeptical about explaining the reasons that evidently exist by appeal to the idea of *rationality*? Perhaps their concerns can be partially captured in the form of a dilemma for Kantian constructivism about reasons:

- (1) If a putative conception of rationality is genuine and can play the explanatory role that Kantian constructivism about reasons assigns to it then it will be too thin to capture the reasons of commonsense.
- (2) If a putative conception of rationality is robust enough to generate all the reasons there are then it is not actually a conception of rationality that can play that explanatory role.
- (3) Therefore, no genuine conception of rationality can explain all of the reasons that seem evidently correct.

One way to explain this dilemma is to illustrate how two of the most prominent versions of Kantian constructivism about reasons seem to fall on separate horns of it.

Onora O'Neill's (1990; 1996; 2003a; 2003b) version of Kantian constructivism emphasizes that Kant's critical method is fundamentally a rejection of arbitrary authority, whether that of God, other people, our own feelings, or 'intrinsic' values and reasons that exist independently of us. O'Neil imagines a plurality of human persons who share a common world where there is no transcendent or pre-established (e.g. instinctual)

harmony or modes of coordination among them about how to interact with one another.¹² If persons in such a world are to interact with one another without relying on force or external standards, they must use their powers of reasoning to construct a shared plan that has authority over them.¹³ There are no procedures that guarantee agreement on any specific plan, so these people must at least refrain from acting on principles that cannot possibly figure in any plan that all could agree to.¹⁴ In other words, if persons in such a world are to coordinate with one another at all, they must refrain from acting on maxims that defeat the possibility of interaction.¹⁵ The most fundamental principle of practical reason, according to O'Neil, is thus the Formula of Universal Law, which requires us to act only on those maxims that we can at the same time will that they be universal laws.¹⁶

Principles of practical reason, according to O'Neil, are not algorithms: They only provide negative constraints on our actions and they do not determine a particular plan of coordination.¹⁷ Practical reason more generally is not algorithmic either: We employ this faculty by deliberating and judging in ways that are constrained, but not fully captured or determined, by principles of practical reason.¹⁸ Within the constraints of the principles of practical reason, people who inhabit a common world and who seek to coordinate and interact with one another without force or externally imposed authority must seek a commonly agreed upon plan through an ongoing, discursive and public process of reasoned deliberation and judgment.

¹² (O'Neil 1990: 16, 23, 27).

¹³ (O'Neil 1990: 20, 22, 27).

¹⁴ (O'Neil 1990: 21-23).

¹⁵ (O'Neil 1990: 23, 27).

¹⁶ (O'Neil 1990: 8, 21, 23).

¹⁷ (O'Neil 1990: 17).

¹⁸ (O'Neil 1990: 8, 19, 167-8).

The non-algorithmic constructive procedure O’Neill describes does not include idealizations such as a ‘veil of ignorance’, a ‘well-ordered’ society or appeals to what hypothetical agents ‘would’ choose as opposed to what any rational person ‘could’ choose. The most basic principles of rationality, according to O’Neil, have a “formal character,” they concern the relationship among mental states.¹⁹ Principles of rational prudence prohibit “internal inconsistency” of our maxims as well as “volitional inconsistency” among our maxims and the specific intentions we adopt in pursuit of them.²⁰ And the Formula of Universal Law “merely demands that certain standards of consistency be observed in action;” this principle “is, above all, a test of the mutual consistency of (sets of) intentions and universalized intentions or principles.”²¹ The basic principles of reason that O’Neil discusses do not place substantive, non-formal demands on us, such as to preserve our lives or exercise our rational abilities; they simply forbid us from willing inconsistent maxims and intentions as well as forbid us from willing maxims that are inconsistent with willing them as universal laws. Substantive and non-formal requirements of reason, according to O’Neil, derive from the Formula of Universal Law in conjunction with principles of rational prudence.

¹⁹ (O’Neill 1990: 104).

²⁰ (O’Neill 1990: 89). A maxim is internally consistent, according to O’Neil, if it does not contain incompatible aims that cannot be achieved (O’Neill 1990: 89). Volitional consistency, which holds between a maxim and the specific intention(s) we adopt in pursuit of it or between the specific intentions themselves, is determined by further principles of practical prudential reason (O’Neill 1990: 91). O’Neil discusses five “Principles of Rational Intending” without denying that there could be others (O’Neill 1990: 90-93). All of them seem to have a “formal character” because they concern the relationship among mental states. First, if we will a maxim then we are rationally required to adopt a specific intention to pursue all necessary and available means to the goal contained in that maxim. Second, rationality also requires us to intend some sufficient means to what we fundamentally intend. Third, rationality requires us to intend to make available all necessary and some sufficient means to what we fundamentally intend when they are unavailable. Fourth, rationality also requires us to intend all necessary and some sufficient components of what we fundamentally intend. Fifth, the specific intentions we adopt in pursuit of a maxim must be consistent with one another. Finally, rationality requires that the “foreseeable results of the specific intentions adopted in acting on a given underlying intention be consistent with the underlying intention” (O’Neill 1990: 92).

²¹ (O’Neill 1990: 83; 103. See also p. 92).

In response to the second horn of the dilemma, O'Neill can plausibly argue that the Formula of Universal Law, in the relatively thin form she endorses, is a constitutive principle of rationality with explanatory power. The principle is not altogether formal, but it is close, by requiring us to will only maxims that, if they were made into universal laws, could possibly be *consistent* with each person's actual set of maxims and with the prudential "Principles of Rational Intending," which are themselves more or less concerned with the consistency and coherence of each agent's own mental states.

Once we confine ourselves to a quasi-formal conception of rationality, however, the first part of the dilemma looms, for we must now explain how a procedure grounded in rationality of this kind is thick enough to generate the rich diversity of reasons we recognize in commonsense.²² This is the old charge of empty formalism – how can such a seemingly sparse principle, such as the Formula of Universal Law as O'Neil understands it, capture and explain all of the particular requirements of morality, let alone all of the moral reasons that we recognize in commonsense? For one thing, O'Neill's version of FUL only rules out maxims, it does not seem to tell us what positive actions we ought to take.²³ Identifying an agent's maxim is notoriously difficult and maxims can often be easily redescribed in ways that threaten to rig the results of the procedure. There are also various "false-positive" examples, such as "I will commit violent acts for revenge", and "false-negative" ones, such as "I will play tennis on Sunday mornings to avoid crowds."²⁴ O'Neill has been admirably working to answer the concern raised by this first horn, but many philosophers remain skeptical about the prospects of explaining the reasons there are on the basis of such a limited conception of rationality.

²² This kind of objection is raised by (James 2007; Lavin 2004; Setiya 2003).

²³ (O'Neill 1990: 24, 103)

²⁴ (Herman 1993; Kerstein 2002).

Rawls proposes a different version of Kantian constructivism that looks to common moral consciousness and our public political culture to specify a conception of rational agency that is far more substantive and moralized than O'Neill's. According to him, we have two senses of 'rational' in ordinary language, a formal one that roughly means logical and effectively pursuing one's ends and a more general one that means 'based on reason' and so includes formal rationality along with reasonableness as well. Being reasonable involves being sane, judicious, fair-minded and sensible. Rawls illustrates the distinction between formal rationality and reasonableness with the example of driving a hard bargain, which can be quite rational in the formal sense because it is in one's interest, though it is sometimes unreasonable, because it is unfair to take advantage of someone's inferior bargaining position.

Rawls' conception of rationality is quite thick and includes substantive elements because a rational agent, according to him, is both rational in the formal sense and reasonable as well. More specifically: Reasonable people "are ready to propose, or to acknowledge when proposed by others, the principles needed to specify what can be seen by all as fair terms of cooperation" (Rawls 2001: 191). A reasonable person is willing to listen to reasons offered by others as such and to recognize ways in which reasonable people may disagree with one another, whereas a purely rational person is only willing to do so if this promotes his ends. And a reasonable person has a regulative desire and higher-order interest to fully realize her rational and reasonable nature by developing and exercising all of her powers of reason, which involve forming and pursuing a conception of the good within the constraints of mutually recognized fair social cooperation in

which she is seen as an active participant.²⁵ What it is to be a reason in general, Rawls says, is to be explained by the deliberations, judgments or choices of reasonable and rational agents in virtue of their nature as such (1999b: 306).

By specifying a substantive conception of rational agency, one that includes various unconditional and non-formal commitments, dispositions, motivations and interests, Rawls may have enough materials to capture the reasons of commonsense with the help of one or more constructive procedures. But if he can avoid the first part of the dilemma in this way then the second part of the dilemma becomes more daunting – why should we think that this thick idea is a conception of *rationality* at all with the requisite explanatory power? Any attempt to justify such a significant expansion of rationality, it seems, will be arbitrary, circular or render Kantian constructivism about reasons uninteresting.²⁶

For one thing, if Rawls' conception of the person is taken from the public political culture of the historical period in which we happen to live, as he sometimes suggests, then his putative conception of rational agency seems to be arbitrary, contingent and lacking in normativity. Second, if the proposed supplements are adopted because we recognize that there are *reasons* for us to treat ourselves and one another in certain ways then the resulting conception of rational agency would appear to be circular if we later claim that it is the source of all reasons. Third, if we make the idea of rationality too thick by incorporating most all aspects of normativity then Kantian constructivism about reasons would be far less interesting as an explanatory claim about the nature of reasons.

²⁵ Rawls calls this a “reasonable moral psychology.”

²⁶ Objections of this sort are raised by (Rawls 1993: 82).

One way to avoid the dilemma for Kantian constructivism about reasons may be Christine Korsgaard's constitutivist strategy. According to Korsgaard (2009b, 2009a), the Categorical Imperative, as the supreme principle of rationality, is constitutive of all action, so our actions are necessarily guided by what is most objectively and subjectively good and reasonable.²⁷ On Korsgaard's account, reasons are constructed in the following way:

To put it in my own terms, when an agent determines whether she can will a maxim as universal law, she is determining that she can endorse a certain consideration in favor of doing something and therefore can treat it as a reason (Korsgaard 2003: 118).

There are various questions one might have with Korsgaard's challenging position, but if her version of constitutivism can be justified then it offers a compelling way of resolving the dilemma I described for Kantian constructivism about reasons. On the second horn, if Korsgaard is correct that whenever we act we thereby take our reasons to be reasons for everyone, and so necessarily regard our maxims as universal laws, then her view justifies an expanded notion of rationality. On the first horn, Korsgaard has drawn out several implications of her thick conception of rationality that, according to her, suggest how it may be able to generate all of the reasons that exist.²⁸

Korsgaard's brand of constitutivism may be a promising strategy for avoiding the dilemma, but it comes at the expense of a conception of action that some have found

²⁷ Korsgaard argues roughly as follows: When we deliberate, we suppose that we can stand apart from our various incentives to act. We always take ourselves to be acting on maxims that can be willed as universal laws, but this does not mean that what we do is always morally justified. In some cases, we may be swept away by natural impulses, which would mean we did not exercise our will in behaving in that way, for the will is identified with practical reason. There can be misuses of our practical reason when we think our maxims are morally justified even though they are not, in which case our choices are not genuine acts of will but rather defective actions that were aiming to be morally appropriate.

²⁸ (Korsgaard 1996b, 2009b, 2009a).

implausible.²⁹ In particular, Korsgaard's view does not allow for cases in which we knowingly and willingly do wrong.³⁰ It seems evidently possible that someone who is committed to morality may nonetheless knowingly decide to act contrary to it, and even do so fervently, with gusto and resolve. Korsgaard responds to this concern by accepting the claim that clear-headed and deliberate wrongdoing is impossible on her view but she also argues that her view can nonetheless explain immoral actions as those in which we try but fail to satisfy moral standards, perhaps as a result of moral self-deception.³¹ Some may still doubt, however, that all acts of deliberate cruelty, for example, are actually failed attempts at doing the right thing.

In sum, the prospects for Kantian constructivism about reasons look bleak. O'Neill may have described a genuine conception of rationality but it is probably too thin to explain the reasons of commonsense; Rawls' idea of rationality may be thick enough to capture those reasons but he may not have actually given a sufficiently explanatory account of rationality; and Korsgaard may have successfully described a plausible conception of rationality that is also sufficiently robust but at the expense of excluding certain kinds of immoral actions from the space of reasons altogether.

Substantive conceptions of rationality

The dilemma for Kantian constructivism about reasons is that a putative conception of rationality cannot both capture the reasons of commonsense and also count as a conception of rationality that can explain why those facts are reasons. Defenders of Kantian constructivism about reasons, it seems, must radically pare down which considerations are in fact reasons, or they can try to justify expanding the notion of

²⁹ (Enoch 2006; FitzPatrick 2005; James 2007).

³⁰ (Korsgaard 1996c, 1996a).

³¹ (Hill 2012a).

rationality in some other way. The first option is unacceptable, but if rationality does include non-formal and substantive elements, those that are not just about consistency and coherence among mental states, then there would be some hope that rationality could capture the reasons we recognize in commonsense. But how might one argue that there are non-formal and substantive features of rationality given that rationality is widely regarded as a purely formal notion concerning relations of consistency and coherence?

One approach to answering this question is to follow the lead Scanlon sets in his holistic defense of primitive pluralism about reasons. Scanlon does not aim to offer a complete proof of that view; instead, he suggests that a normative theory that takes reasons as primitive is more likely to capture and explain our considered normative judgments than other normative theories on due reflection. A defender of Kantian constructivism about reasons could similarly argue for a substantive account of rationality by laying it out as a normative starting-point, showing how it connects with common normative thinking, and building a normative theory on the basis of it that would be endorsed as a whole on due reflection. But instead of beginning with a set of primitive reasons, advocates of Kantian constructivism about reasons should clarify and explain a substantive conception of a rational agent and show how it can capture the reasons we recognize in commonsense.

Let's focus on three putative and substantive requirements that a defender of Kantian constructivism about reasons might incorporate into her conception of rationality alongside formal requirements such as avoiding contradictory beliefs and the Hypothetical Imperative:

Self-preservation – Rationality presumptively requires an agent to be committed to preserving his own existence as a rational agent.

Exercise – Rationality presumptively requires an agent to be committed to exercising his rational capacities as a rational agent.

Reciprocity – Rationality requires an agent to be committed to acting only in ways that are justifiable to other rational agents.

Here are a few points of clarification about how I understand self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity. First, this is not meant as a complete conception of rationality, for there may be other formal and substantive requirements that could be included as well. Second, these three requirements are not formal, they are not about good mental house-keeping, but are instead substantive (presumptive) requirements to develop and maintain unconditional commitments. Third, having a commitment in the relevant sense is a matter of setting a policy for oneself and being disposed to act accordingly, even though an agent may not always choose to follow her own standards. Fourth, reciprocity is an all-things-considered requirement that takes precedence over self-preservation and exercise, which are presumptive requirements that can be defeated in various contexts by other features of rationality. In calling them *presumptive* requirements I mean at least that they become full-fledged requirements when no other rational requirements conflict with them, but I leave open whether they can be entirely defeated or simply outweighed in conflict cases. I have also not specified the relative priority of these defeasible commitments, so it may be rational, for example, to endure great personal risk or even to commit suicide if doing so is required by other aspects of rationality.

In the following five sub-sections, I use the method of reflective equilibrium to argue that self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity are (presumptive) requirements of rationality. First, I explain how the concept of rationality does not rule out incorporating such substantive elements into a theory of rationality. Second, I highlight the role that substantive conceptions of rationality have had, throughout history, in philosophical reflections about the nature of reason. In the final three sub-sections, I explore a variety of considered normative judgments that many of us have and explain how they give us reason to think that a comprehensive conception of rationality that we would endorse on due reflection would include substantive elements such as self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity.

The concept of rationality

In claiming that a plausible conception of rationality could include these elements, I am relying on a distinction Rawls makes between concepts and conceptions.³² The concept of rationality, which means something like ‘having to do with reason’, can be distinguished from various conceptions of rationality. People can agree on a vague definition of the concept of rationality along these lines but disagree about what more specific principles, standards, values or ideals are needed to interpret and apply it. Conceptual and linguistic analysis alone, according to Rawls, is insufficient to yield determinate and specific interpretations of normative concepts. A conception of rationality is instead an accurate or sound analysis of that concept just in case the conception matches our considered normative judgments in reflective equilibrium.³³ A sound conception of rationality is a favorable replacement for that concept in our thought

³² (Korsgaard 2008: 110-17; 2009a: 27-34).

³³ Ibid.

and speech even though the expressions we use to refer to that conception may not have the same linguistic meanings in ordinary usage as the terms we use to refer to the concepts they interpret.³⁴ Finding a sound analysis of a normative concept, according to Rawls, does not establish that the conception is true, it merely provides an explication of our considered moral judgments in reflective equilibrium. The formal theories of rationality employed by economists and decision theorists, for example, are among the possible ways of interpreting the concept of rationality, but they may not be the only possible ones once we distinguish between the concept of ‘having to do with reason’ and various conceptions of that concept.

Although conceptual and linguistic analysis may not be enough to establish that a particular conception of rationality is correct or sound, there may be conceptual constraints that any candidate conception must satisfy if it is to count as a conception of rationality as opposed to a conception of some other normative concept. If substantive conceptions of rationality are possible then they need to satisfy conceptual constraints that are part of the concept of rationality, so we should investigate what those constraints might be.

The concept of rationality does seem to have several conceptual features that distinguish it from other concepts, such as impulse, instinct, feeling, perception and faith. These features include the following: First, requirements of rationality are valid for all rational agents. Second, agents are rationally criticizable if they violate requirements of rationality. Third, requirements of rationality are necessary in the sense that rational agents ‘must’ follow them whether they want to or not and fully rational agents would follow them. Fourth, the most basic requirements of rationality are universal in the sense

³⁴ Ibid.

that they apply to all rational agents as such in all circumstances. Fifth, we expect stable convergence in the judgments and actions of fully rational agents when they reason about a wide variety of matters on the basis of the same facts, and such reasoned conclusions are worthy of our acceptance. That is, if two fully rational agents who take into account the same empirical facts deliberate about a question then, in most cases, they will arrive at the same judgments about what to do or think. When this happens, we imperfectly rational agents have reason to accept the verdicts that would be reached by ideally rational agents. Finally, fully rational people reason on the basis of mutually recognized rules and evidence and aim to reach agreement on the basis of deliberation, discussion and judgment rather than propaganda, rhetoric or prejudice.

None of these conceptual elements, however, excludes the possibility that a conception of rationality can include substantive features such as self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity. First, these requirements are meant to be valid for all rational agents. Second, such agents are rationally criticizable if they are not committed to preserving their own lives, exercising their rational capacities or reciprocating with others. Third, rational agents must follow these requirements whether they want to or not while fully rational agents would have these commitments. Fourth, these requirements apply to all rational agents in all circumstances. Fifth, as I will illustrate in the penultimate section, fully rational agents who had these commitments and who deliberated on the basis of the same empirical knowledge would tend to reach the same judgments about, for example, when they should save one another's life or refrain from undermining one another's rational capacities. Finally, fully rational agents can appeal to

these requirements to reach agreement through persuasion rather than through force, brainwashing or manipulation.

This is not to say that the defining features of rationality give us grounds for thinking that a defensible conception of rationality should include these features, still less is it to say that these features are themselves analytic components of rationality. The point, instead, is that substantive interpretations or conceptions of rationality are not ruled out by these widely accepted analytic components of the concept of rationality.

Someone who is opposed to incorporating substantive elements of any kind into a conception of rationality, however, could try to argue for a further conceptual feature of rationality, namely that rationality is *formal* as well, that is, all requirements of rationality are necessarily concerned only with consistency and coherence among mental states.³⁵ As a conceptual matter, on this view, there is no rational assessment of final ends regardless of how wrong, vicious, wacky or unjustified they may be. Instead, rationality requires us to avoid contradictory beliefs and take the believed necessary means to our ends or give them up; a fully rational person organizes and schedules her ends efficiently; and rationality may require us to have whatever desires we believe we have most reason to have or to abandon those judgments. Formal rationality cannot generate reasons to have particular mental states because its requirements are conditional, they leave us with options about how to resolve incompatibilities among them – all things equal, we are no less rational for abandoning one contradictory intention over the other, for instance. What we have substantive reasons to do is therefore treated as a separate matter from rationality.

³⁵ (Rawls 1999b: 5, 9, 44-5, 95-6).

The best conception of rationality may be purely formal, but it does not seem that the meaning of ‘rationality’ or an analysis of that concept provide us with enough resources to establish this analytically. A different approach is to treat formal ways of thinking about rationality as candidate *conceptions* of rationality and assess them holistically to see if they match our considered normative judgments on due reflection. For one thing, certain principles of inductive and abductive reasoning are plausibly regarded as features of rationality even though some of them are not altogether formal. And, if we are clear to distinguish the notion of rationality as it figures in, for example, rational choice theory from a more general idea of rationality as ‘having to do with reason’ then defenders of such views can hold that substantive conceptions of rationality are not excluded on conceptual grounds alone even though, as they see it, formal conceptions of rationality do a better job at organizing our considered normative judgments on due reflection.

The main point of this sub-section is that the defining features of the concept of rationality are not sufficient to exclude theories of rationality that include substantive elements. Real definitions of normative concepts place constraints on what can count as an interpretation of them, but in order to assess whether formal or substantive theories of rationality are correct, we should look beyond analytic methods of conceptual and linguistic analysis and instead examine which conceptions of rationality best capture our considered normative judgments on due reflection.

Rationalism in the history of moral philosophy

If certain substantive conceptions, such as the one I partially sketched, count as candidate theories of rationality that should be assessed by their ability to capture and

organize our considered normative judgments on due reflection, a defender of formal conceptions of rationality might nonetheless think that such views are just too radical to be taken seriously. Yet a prominent issue in the history of moral philosophy has obviously been about how to understand reason, how it differs from sentiment, what role it plays in deliberation, how it relates to morality, and so on. Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hobbes, Hume, Leibniz, Kant and others had very different views about rationality, some of which were exclusively formal while others were substantive and thick, but arguably they were offering different interpretations of the same basic concept of rationality as ‘having to do with reason.’ These philosophers had subtle and complicated views about the nature of reason that should guide us as we attempt to formulate a conception of rationality that matches our considered judgments on due reflection. Substantive conceptions of rationality should not be dismissed out of hand as already refuted or as novel but untested, for there is a long tradition within normative theory to thinking about rationality as more than just consistency and coherence among mental states.

Assessing substantive conceptions of rationality

If we assume that at least some substantive theories count as conceptions of rationality and that they should not be immediately dismissed as too radical to be considered then we should examine how well those conceptions are likely to fare in capturing and explaining our considered normative judgments on due reflection. This is the normative, rather than metaphysical or epistemic, test we are using for deciding whether a conception of rationality is sound or correct. Among the considered normative judgments that we must consult in order to specify a conception of rationality that we would endorse in reflective equilibrium are ones that in various ways make use of the

idea of ‘having to do with reason.’ When we make judgments about ‘reasoning’, ‘reasonableness’, ‘rationalizations’, ‘rationales’, and ‘reason’ and ‘reasons’,³⁶ we often mean that a person, action, character trait, transition among mental states or something else is or is not based on reason.

Here are some examples of such normative judgments: We judge that a mob *recovered their reason* before going on a rampage, we may try to *reason with* a prudent person who is nonetheless about to commit a crime, we may judge that a “government of reason is better than one of force,”³⁷ we could judge that certain psychopaths are *beyond reason*, we sometimes reject someone’s *rationale* as biased and prejudicial, we might rely on a *reasonable person* test to consider how a conscientious, appropriately informed, fair-minded person would act in cases in which she may harm others, we judge that a colleague’s ranking of job candidates has *the weight of reason* behind it, we judge that a price is *reasonable*, we think it is *irrational* to give no weight to one’s future wellbeing, we say that the administration’s *reasoning* is flawed because it did not take proper account of the interests of some people, we think that there are good *reasons* to be generous to our neighbors and that it *stands to reason* that they should reciprocate.

A sound conception of rationality must capture and explain judgments of these various kinds in order to stand in reflective equilibrium with our considered normative convictions. It is unlikely that a formal conception of rationality will be able to do so, given that some of our firmest normative judgments of reason are in many cases not just

³⁶ One can certainly argue that apparent similarities mask deep underlying differences – in spite of their common etymologies, for example, John Broome claims that “the connection between rationality and reasons is not very close” (Broome 2010; Rawls 1999b; Scanlon 1998) because being a rational person is a matter of good mental house-keeping while reasons tend to be substantive considerations that count in favor of adopting attitudes.

³⁷ (Broome 2010: 288).

limited to assessments of consistency and coherence among mental states but are also evaluations of, for example, sensitivity to evidence, open-mindedness, strength of will, wisdom and fairness. There is reason to think, therefore, that a sound interpretation of the concept of rationality, when understood as the concept of ‘having to do with reason,’ will include substantive as well as formal elements.

Judgments about rational persons

We can illustrate this way of assessing conceptions of rationality, including the partial conception I have proposed, by considering the judgments we regularly make about the commitments, attitudes and actions of rational, in the sense of reason-governed, agents. A reason-governed person, we tend to think, not only has consistent beliefs and pursues her ends efficiently, but such a person is also sane, judicious and sensible, she exercises good judgment, and she treats others fairly. We call someone irrational if she is senseless, stupid, unfair, unreasonable or lacking sound judgment. If someone really does not care at all about her life and makes no effort to protect it, we would tend to say she is irrational for her indifference. If she recklessly endangered her life for the mere thrill of it, attempted suicide out of passing grief, or allowed herself to be killed for another’s enjoyment, we would likely regard her as unreasonable for not having proper respect for oneself. We tend to judge that there is something rationally criticizable, in a broad sense, about a person who is indifferent to her continued existence, who would just as soon perish as live. We would tend to think such a person lacks good sense, and we might express our concern by imploring, for example, an extreme sports enthusiast or a person contemplating suicide out of self-contempt to “be reasonable,” although we may

not be so quick to judge as unreasonable someone who sacrifices herself to save others or to end her own excruciating pain.

Similarly, if someone did not care at all about exercising her rational capacities, but was content to allow her powers of mind to waste away, we would not regard her as fully reasonable. A person who did not think for herself, who rarely questioned authority, who seldom reflected on moral matters or who usually refused to deliberate about her values, aims and aspirations would not be someone who we would regard in commonsense as a person who is fully governed by reason.

And, our commonsense idea of a reasonable and rational person is not that of a complete altruist, but nor is she wholly self-interested; instead, a person who is fully governed by reason is fair, she makes reasonable demands but does not take excessive advantage of her bargaining position, she is willing to do her fair share and abide by common standards as long as others are willing to do the same even when doing so requires her to sacrifice some of her interests. Many of our considered normative judgments about rational persons thus seem to include a basic idea of reciprocity, mutuality and giving the same to others.

The method of reflective equilibrium makes it difficult or impossible to conclusively prove that rationality includes these requirements of self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity, but taken together, the commonsense assessments we make of one another as reasonable or unreasonable suggest that a conception of rationality that we would endorse on due reflection likely includes not only formal elements but also these substantive ones as well.

Judgments about reasons

A further class of considered normative judgments that a sound conception of rationality must accommodate are those about what agents have *reasons* to do. We tend to recognize, in particular, that agents have reasons to care about their continued existence as such, to exercise their rational powers, and to avoid acting in ways that are not justifiable to others. A conception of rationality can capture and explain these judgments by incorporating substantive elements, such as presumptive requirements of self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity.

Allowing normative judgments about particular reasons to influence our understanding of rationality may, however, seem circular when a defender of Kantian constructivism about reasons turns around and claims that, from the standpoint of her normative theory, those reasons are explained in terms of rationality. However, if our goal is general and wide reflective equilibrium then considered normative judgments at all levels of generality, including ones about reason-governed persons and ones about specific reasons, are relevant pieces of evidence that we are trying to capture and explain as we build a conception of rationality. Suppose we postulate, as a provisional but central component of a theory of rationality, that anytime there is a genuine reason, there must be an explanation of it in terms of rationality. As we fill in the details of this view, we must consult our considered convictions about the nature of a rational and reasonable person. There may be judgments about particular reasons, however, that do not seem to have a basis in rationality. When there is an apparent conflict between a theory of rationality and our judgments about particular reasons, holism gives us a number of options: We could abandon the judgment that some fact is a reason; we could give up the

“load bearing” supposition that all reasons are explained in terms of rationality; or we could add new elements to our conception of rationality to accommodate the reason. Which option we should take depends on which of the resulting normative theories as a whole is more likely to stand in reflective equilibrium. It would not necessarily be circular to take the third option, and so incorporate new elements into our conception of rationality, in order to accommodate judgments about particular reasons. This is because we could think that our considered judgment that some reason exists alerts us to the need for some additional element of rationality that we have not yet noticed.

By analogy, if a mathematician finds a specific claim plausible, this may set her looking for a proof of it that, if found, explains why the claim is true. Or, to take another example, Rawls constructs his account of the original position in part on the basis of specific judgments about the justice and injustice of specific social policies, such as slavery, even though he thinks that those policies are justified or not by the original position itself.³⁸

Defenders of Kantian constructivism about reasons can therefore, without circularity, appeal to intuitions about particular reasons in constructing our theories, and when we do so we may find that we can explain certain judgments about reasons only by assuming that rational agents, in virtue of their nature as such, are rationally committed to preserving themselves, to exercising their rational powers, and to acting only in ways that are justifiable to one another. What originally seemed to be primitive reasons, on this view, are actually reasons in virtue of the attitudes, commitments and choices of rational agents.

³⁸ (Jefferson et al. 1905: 15:284).

My aim in this section has been to motivate and explain a way of thinking about rationality that is not excluded on conceptual grounds, that falls within certain rationalist traditions in the history of philosophy, and that conforms to many commonsense normative judgments we tend to make involving the idea rationality. I have not attempted to fully demonstrate that rationality includes substantive elements such as self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity, although I have suggested that these are plausible candidates for inclusion in a conception of rationality that aims to account for our considered normative judgments about what ‘has to do with reason.’ It may be that no coherent conception of rationality can capture and explain all of these judgments on due reflection, but a version of Kantian constructivism about reasons based on a substantive conception of rationality is not yet at a stage of development for us to say with much confidence whether that project is doomed to failure or destined for success. If, as I have suggested, a conception of rationality can be substantive and still play an explanatory role then defenders of Kantian constructivism about reasons should turn their attention to the first horn of the dilemma I described to see whether such substantive conceptions of rationality are robust enough to capture and explain the reasons we ordinarily recognize in commonsense.

A partial constructivist procedure

Even if we allow a conception of rationality that includes a few substantive yet thin features such as self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity, it is still not clear whether that idea can capture the reasons we recognize in commonsense. In response to the second horn of the dilemma for Kantian constructivism about reasons, I have argued that substantive conceptions of rationality can count as genuinely explanatory, but the

first horn requires giving some sense of how a substantive conception of rationality along these lines can generate all of the reasons that seem evidently correct – the proof is in the pudding.

It is important for such a project to separate out the kinds of reasons we are trying to capture with the idea of rationality, such as those of personal virtue, interpersonal morality, justice, prudence, the environment, animals and aesthetics. Whether or not Kantian constructivism about reasons can eventually explain all reasons in terms of rationality, my main aim has been to show that such work can and should proceed on a substantive notion of rationality.

To briefly illustrate how one such explanation might go, consider what kinds of *moral reasons* can be generated by a specific kind of constructivist procedure in which ideally rational agents who are committed to self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity aim to settle on mid-level principles of interpersonal morality that are rationally acceptable to all of them. The proposed rational requirements of self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity are not themselves constructed; they are simply laid out. What is constructed is a set of other-regarding moral principles that can capture and explain a larger set of reasons we recognize in commonsense.

A constructivist procedure of this sort is meant to represent, in procedural form, all of the norms and criteria of correct practical reasoning, both moral and empirical, that should guide our assessment of actions and principles. Our moral reasoning is valid or sound just in case it satisfies the requirements of the procedure, but we need not consciously use the procedure in our deliberations in order to reason correctly. Our actions are right or wrong depending on whether they would be allowed or rejected if we

were to carry out this procedure correctly. The basic idea is to begin with substantive but thin self-regarding interests that rational agents have in virtue of their nature as such and combine them with their overriding commitment to reciprocate with one another to construct other-regarding moral requirements, which would then pick out and explain additional moral reasons for how to treat one another.

As a type of constructivist theory, Kantian constructivism about reasons is not limited to a subsumptive model of justification in which reasons follow logically from principles of rationality along with non-moral facts, although some reasons may be generated in that way – for example, rational agents are disposed to preserve themselves, but in our world having sufficient nutrition is necessary for a rational human being to persist, so such people have reasons to acquire enough food to survive. Kantian constructivism about reasons can also rely on procedures of construction, in which rational agents take up a specified point of view from which they work out, on their own or together, solutions to practical problems on the basis of reasoned deliberation and judgment. We then regard their deliverances as valid or reasonable *because* they result from a justified procedure of construction, and we regard as reasons those facts that weigh in their deliberations or are picked out by the principles they select.³⁹

Suppose that the most basic requirement of rationality is to follow those principles that are justifiable to all rational agents if they were fully rational and were to take up a suitably impartial point of view. Rather than settle on specific moral principles at the outset, these hypothetical legislators could proceed in stages, which are distinguished by

³⁹ Such a procedure may simply be an epistemic device for getting at independent moral facts; it could also be that some moral claims are true in virtue of resulting from this procedure. I do not take a position on this metaethical dispute here; instead, I say that moral claims are valid, reasonable or justified because they result from a rational procedure of construction while leaving open what determines their truth or falsity.

the scope of the principles at issue, the sort of rational agent that the principles apply to, and the circumstances in which those agents exist.

At the first stage of the theory, the subject of the agreement is mid-level principles of interpersonal morality that apply to all rational agents in all circumstances. The parties are motivated by the self-regarding rational commitments that are constitutive of their nature as rational agents. The parties are not moved by subjective characteristics, desires or inclinations, nor are they moved by reasons that are independent of their rational nature. And their decisions are made on the basis of information that is relevant to the task of specifying universal rational standards.

At such an abstract level, the hypothetical legislators may only have sufficient grounds to settle on a few very general and vague presumptions and values that are to be interpreted and applied by further stages that take account of more information. If rational agents are presumptively committed to preserving themselves as rational agents then each one of them would presumptively insist that his or her own life be preserved. Any candidate principle that allows certain kinds of killing would be rejected by those who stand to lose, which suggests that the parties would likely settle on a presumptive principle against killing one another. This constructed moral principle would then explain why additional non-moral facts are reasons not to perform certain actions. For instance, the fact that some action would result in someone else's death is a reason not to do it because rational agents who were committed to their own preservation would agree to a principle against killing one another.

To take another example, if ideally rational agents are presumptively committed to exercising their rational capacities then they would reject principles that denied this

opportunity to some or did not ensure the conditions necessary for everyone to do so. Instead, they would likely choose a presumptive principle against thwarting or undermining anyone's ability to exercise her rational capacities. The fact that performing some action would interfere with another person's ability to think rationally, for instance, would then be a reason not to do so because ideally rational agents who were committed to exercising their own rational capacities would settle on a prohibition against interfering with one another's rational capacities.

With these and other abstract moral principles as fixed, we can then move down a level and ask a more specific question, namely, what moral principles should govern rational *human beings* in the *natural world*. This more specific task is to specify more determinate principles that apply to a particular kind of rational agent in a specific context. Here it becomes relevant that, for example, human persons have bodies that make us vulnerable in various ways, that food, shelter and medicine are scarce, and that we may sometime need others to save our lives. As in the first stage, we abstract from the particular ends, physical characteristics and psychological tendencies of particular human persons as well as from specific historical and geographic circumstances in which the agents live. The ideal legislators are supposed to deliberate and choose on the basis of their self-regarding rational interests, but as embodied human persons living in the natural world, their rational interests are given fuller content. For instance, their rational interest in preserving themselves extends to ensuring that their basic human needs are satisfied and their rational interest in exercising their rational capacities extends to ensuring that they do not suffer excruciating pain. In light of these more robust rational motivations as human persons, parties at this second stage are likely to settle on

principles that, for instance, presumptively prohibit drowning others, withholding life-saving aid and causing excruciating pain, which would in turn explain why we have reasons not to perform such actions.

At this stage, however, the parties are unlikely to legislate for every type of social arrangement or set of natural circumstances. Further stages could be defined for addressing more specific questions about, for example, what moral principles should govern physicians or police officers in professional contexts, how specific communities should handle food shortages, how much life-saving aid members of our society are required to give one another, how much risk ambulances can impose on other drivers, etc. In addressing these questions, the parties are guided by the principles chosen at higher stages and deliberate on the basis of their rational interests, which are given further content by facts about their animal nature and the natural world they occupy.

Non-moral facts become reasons, on this view, because they are picked out by rational interests, figure in the deliberations of the hypothetical agents, or are singled out by the resulting principles that they construct. My aim in briefly sketching this partial procedure has been to illustrate how a set of relatively thin but substantive features of rationality, such as self-preservation, exercise and reciprocity, can be used to generate a wide variety of reasons that we recognize in commonsense. There are other ways of specifying such a procedure, and different procedures may be needed for other kinds of reasons, but what I have attempted to explain is a different way of theorizing about the relationship between reasons and rationality that deserves further development and refinement.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ I have been working on this larger task in [Citations suppressed for blind review].

Conclusion

Defenders of primitive pluralism about reasons might raise at least two objections to the defense of Kantian constructivism about reasons that I have partially described. First, they might claim that the set of substantive rational elements I have suggested appear to be unconnected and open-ended. The original worry I raised with Scanlon's version of primitive pluralism about reasons was that it similarly seems to lack sufficient normative unity and structure by supposing that a variety of primitive reasons exist with no unifying normative explanation of why they are actually reasons. In response to this concern, part of the task for Kantian constructivism about reasons, going forward, is to justify any further expansions to the notion of rationality in a way that retains its unified explanatory power. Two of the substantive features I have proposed, however, are unified in some way, by their concern with protecting and exercising the powers of rationality in oneself; while the moral concern with reciprocity has to do with justifying ourselves to other rational agents. This conception of rationality seems to be more unified than a hodge-podge of specific and context sensitive reasons of the kind that figure in Scanlon's view and it has the added potential to explain those particular reasons as well.

Second, defenders of primitive pluralism about reasons may also attempt to respond to the unity objection by coopting the strategy I have suggested. They could attempt to structure and systematize the reasons of commonsense in terms of fewer and more basic reasons we have to preserve and utilize our rational capacities and reciprocate with others. This would be a welcome result for those who are concerned with unifying reasons, but it would not settle one way or the other whether reasons or rationality is the

more basic normative notion. In the meantime, defenders of Kantian constructivism about reasons may wish to study and elaborate various substantive conceptions of rationality as a way of unifying and explaining the particular reasons that seem to exist.

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