

Kantian Constructivism

1. Introduction

In most corners of philosophy one can find a view called “constructivism”. Constructivists about mathematics think that showing some mathematical entity to exist requires its construction by some specified procedure, not merely a *reductio* of its non-existence. Social constructivism is the view that social and cultural factors contribute in significant ways to the nature of a given object. Constructivism about normativity is the view that normative facts—some them anyway—are built out of the attitudes and activities of some specified set of agents by a certain procedure.

These programs are united by two ideas. The first is a qualified anti-realism about their target. To say that something is constructed is to say that it does not exist independently of the basis out of which it is constructed. This isn’t to say that it doesn’t exist at all, or even to deny it “full-blooded” existence, but merely to deny its existence is *sui generis*. The second is that this dependence is somehow subtle, sophisticated, or otherwise non-obvious. This is how constructivism avoids the pitfalls of more simple-minded anti-realisms. Mathematical constructivism is not the view that the only mathematical objects that exist are those actually identified by a flesh and blood mathematician. It is the view that the only objects that exist are those that can be constructed according to an idealization of the procedures of mathematicians. Similarly, no constructivist about normativity would hold that June’s liking a smelly shoe suffices, all by itself, for the shoe to be valuable or gives June a reason to keep the shoe. June’s preference must be ratified by some to-be-specified process of rational scrutiny. This sophistication gives the constructivist the resources to better capture our considered judgments about mathematics, social reality, and normativity than a more artless anti-realism. More generally, it enables them to explain how the discovery of certain facts—the infinitude of prime numbers or the evil of torture—represent genuine achievements rather than navel-gazing.

2. Motivations for normative constructivism

Constructivism about normativity has some unique attractions beyond the generic ones just mentioned. First, it seems to avoid some of the metaphysical problems that normative realism faces. If we are satisfied with the metaphysics of our construction basis, and maintain that our target class of normative facts are nothing “over and above” this basis, then we ought to be satisfied with the metaphysics of these facts as well. Constructivists differ in their ambition on this score. Some aspire to show how normative facts *tout court* can be constructed out of non-normative materials.¹ Others are content to take one domain of normativity for granted in giving a constructivist gloss on another, usually more mysterious domain. They might, for instance, uncritically employ facts

¹ Sharon Street, “Constructivism about reasons” in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 207-45.

about rationality in constructing moral or political facts.² Second, the dependence of the normative on our attitudes and activities that the constructivist proposes eases the threat of alienation. If normative facts are in some sense a reflection of the activity of our own practical reasoning, operating on our own antecedent concerns, then we are less likely to be “left cold” by them—than if they were grounded in lifeless parts of the world. Third, constructivism seems to capture the practicality of the normative. In construing normative facts as the result of a certain activity, it recognizes that, as Korsgaard puts it, “normative concepts are not ... the names of objects or of facts or of the components of facts that we encounter in the world, [but] the names of the solutions of problems, problems to which we give names to mark them out as objects for practical thought.”³

It’s worth saying a bit more about these last two advantages, since some critics think they are not advantages at all. Constructivists have been accused of confusing motivating and normative reasons.⁴ Sure, some critics say, a normative principle that did not reflect an agent’s own evaluative attitudes would provide that agent with no *motivating* reason to comply with it, and so might not bind her, psychologically speaking. But that doesn’t mean that such a principle would not bind her in the sense of presenting considerations that *ought* to move her. Perhaps coldhearted Craig will be unmoved to help suffering Sarah. Nonetheless, Sarah’s suffering is a normative reason (a moral reason) for Craig to help.

This criticism is misguided. The constructivist’s aim is to explain the significance of the long and imperious word used so freely in this objection—to explain what makes something “normative”. To call something normative seems to suggest that it has a special “hold” over us. Why is it that certain sorts of considerations have this “hold” while others—the edicts of a bogus religion or the charges of the fashion police—do not?

When someone tells us that we’ve gone wrong morally or that we’re behaving self-destructively, these charges seem to have a claim on our attention that a charge that we’ve violated the dictates of religious hokum or committed a fashion crime do not. These rules certainly *apply* to us: they are about us, and may be addressed to us.⁵ But this is, as Philippa Foot has put it, merely a “piece of linguistic usage”: we are part of the domain to which they purport application.⁶ From this linguistic fact nothing about the normative authority—the *hold*—of these rules follows.

For the realist the “hold” that normative facts have over us will be something of a brute fact. It just is the case that, e.g., the moral law has it and *Dianetics* doesn’t. Someone who disputes the authority of these normative facts will find the realist’s insistence on that hold to be little more than the begging of questions and the stomping of feet. The constructivist, by contrast, offers an explanation of what this “hold” comes to—

² Julia Markovits, *Moral Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) and John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 89-129.

³ “Realism and constructivism in Twentieth Century Moral Philosophy”, reprinted in *The Constitution of Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 322.

⁴ See, for example, Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 66. For more on this charge in Parfit, see Julia Markovits, “On what it is to matter” in Simon Kirchin (ed), *Reading Parfit* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁵ Cf. Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (1981, p. 122).

⁶ “Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives” reprinted in *Virtues and Vices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 160.

an explanation that is designed to persuade the very person whom those normative facts purport to bind. Normative facts reflect the evaluative perspective of that agent, and are constructed through the activity of practical reason out of the attitudes and commitments of that agent. This connection means that these facts will “stick” to the agent in more than just a linguistic sense because they *matter* to the agent. Whether this “hold” will succeed in moving the agent remains, of course, an open question. Constructivist reasons, after all, reflect not the actual motivations of the agent, but rather those that can be constructed out of her actual concerns through the activity of practical reason. The agent may well, due to shortcomings of rationality, fail to be motivated accordingly.

3. Varieties of normative constructivism

Some constructivists insist that these advantages—metaphysical conservatism, non-alienation, practicality—come with costs. For constructivism to offer these benefits, it must take agent’s actual evaluative attitudes as its construction basis and a thin, procedural conception of practical reason as the construction procedure. But given the wide variation in people’s evaluative attitudes, such a view threatens the universality and objectivity of moral and prudential facts.

This suggests a relativism that can take one of two forms. We could say that the content of a particular normative domain, like morality, is relativized to particular agents and their evaluative attitudes. Thus morality-for-Jeff and morality-for-June could be comprised of distinct normative facts depending on Jeff and June’s evaluative attitudes. If, for example, Jeff simply did not care about the interests of others, even when fully coherent, there would be no obligation to help others in morality-for-Jeff. On the other hand, we might say there is just one morality, but its authority is limited. Here Jeff might be morally obligated to help others, but this would have no more “hold” over him—entail no more about his reasons—than the canons of Scientology. It is worth giving up on such claims to the universal authority of morality, these constructivists think, for the sake of rendering moral facts metaphysically respectable, non-alienating, and practical.

Constructivists who take either of these roads are often called “Humeans”. This is a nod to two Humean doctrines: a strong connection between moral judgment and contingent “sentiments” and skepticism about the powers of practical reason. Hume endorses a formal (or procedural) conception of practical reason, according to which reason tells us how to deliberate about, or with, our ends, desires, or evaluative attitudes, but doesn’t tell us which of these to adopt in the first place.⁷

Bernard Williams is a constructivist of this Humean sort.⁸ He writes that for some agents who are simply unmoved by moral considerations, even after we reason with them, because they lack the relevant evaluative attitudes, there may be no further resources available by means of which to somehow “stick” our moral “ought” claim to the agent; nothing, that is, “except the rage, frustration, sorrow, and fear of someone who sees someone else blandly doing what the first person morally thinks they ought not to be doing.” In this instance, Williams says, “this critic deeply wants this *ought* to stick to the

⁷ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, book II, part III, section III, paragraph 6.

⁸ So is Street.

agent; but the only glue there is for this purpose is social and psychological.”⁹ This glue, he suggests, is all we should be looking for. The issue is not whether our wrong-doer has normative reasons to act better, but whether we can somehow trigger his reformation.

Kantian constructivism can be understood as a response to this view. Kant (and Kantians) share Hume’s (and Humeans’) preference for a formal conception of practical reason. They are skeptical about the “dogmatic” use of reason, in particular the claim that moral facts can be apprehended by reason in the same way that geometrical facts (allegedly) can be. And like Humeans, Kantians are moved by the attractions of metaphysical tractability, non-alienation, and practicality. What distinguishes Kantians is their refusal to concede that these views force us to give up on a universally authoritative morality. On the contrary, many Kantians are attracted to constructivism precisely because they think it is our only hope of establishing the universal authority of morality.

Kant seems to understand universal authority to be part and parcel of our concept of morality. He begins his inquiry by asking what the “supreme principle” of morality so understood could be. Previous efforts at this endeavor, he argues, were bound to fail. Either (like Hume) they made the content of the moral law dependent on the idiosyncratic desires of the individual agent, in which case all hope for universality was lost. Or else (like dogmatic rationalists) they declared the law to be entirely independent of the wills of the agents it claims to bind. This, Kant thought, amounted to much the same thing, since a moral law that did not arise from the will of the agent could bind that agent only if the agent had some desire or incentive to comply. This brings us back, in other words, to the two forms of moral relativism described above: a desire-relativism that is built into the content of morality itself; or a morality that may be *about* all rational agents, but which has no more normative authority over them than the prescriptions of Scientology.

Far from seeing relativism as the inevitable upshot of a constructivist approach to ethics, Kantian constructivists see the answer to the moral relativist as *requiring* a constructivist approach. Kant saw an alternative to the Humean and “dogmatic rationalist” approaches. The supreme principle of morality, he argued, is somehow inherent in the idea of a rational will *as such* and will therefore be universally authoritative not because of some contingent convergence of evaluative attitudes, nor because of the authority of some fact external to the will, but because it is built into what it is to have a practical point of view. In other words, only by recognizing that “the human being ... is bound only to act in conformity with his own will, which however ... is a will giving universal law,”¹⁰ can we avoid both horns of the relativist dilemma.

All this suggests a constructivist project. Discovering the “supreme principle” of morality means discovering a principle that can be constructed by practical reason *as such* from whatever heterogenous material humanity may furnish it with, and thus with a principle that will “stick” to agents no matter their evaluative starting points. This project, Kantians believe, is the key to a defense of moral principles that are universally binding by agents’ own lights. If they are right, then the possibility of a moral law that is universal in form but which is not *alienated* from the agents it claims to bind depends on our showing how a merely formal conception of practical reason can guarantee

⁹ Williams, “*Ought* and moral obligation”, p. 122.

¹⁰ *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:432-3.

convergence on a single principle by all rational creatures as they go about sifting through their endlessly diverse sets of evaluative attitudes.

This is an ambitious project, and, as always, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Unsurprisingly, the doctrines Kantian constructivists are most interested in constructing resemble parts of Kant's own ethical system. In the following sections we canvass arguments dealing with different formulations of the moral law.

4. Constructing universalizability requirements

Kant's first formulation says that you should only act on practical principles that you can also will to be universal laws. There is a relatively straightforward constructivist gloss on Kant's argument for the universal normative authority of this Formula of Universal Law.¹¹ Every practical reasoner faces the problem that is distinctive of practical reason, what amounts to a practical version of the problem of free will. Whether or not we are free in any deep, metaphysical sense, we must act under the assumption that we are free. But action is a causal process: my decision to wiggle my toe *causes* my toe to move, and that has knock-on effects throughout the whole causal order of the universe. So my action must be governed by laws because all causal processes are. But these two requirements seem to push in opposite directions, or, at the very least, they pose a problem that Kant thinks is the characteristic problem faced by practical reason. How can I act so that my action is both law-governed and free?

Suppose I make my "supreme principle of practical reason"—the principle that I employ in evaluating the suitability of all other principles—something that directs us to respond in a specified way to a specified object or end, to pleasure, a piece of zucchini, or Schubert's Trout Quintet. If my behavior is law-governed, then this principle would have to also subsume the behavior of all free and rational creatures. But this is dubious. Not every rational creature will be naturally inclined to respond to zucchini or the Trout Quintet in the way I do. It's unlikely to be a fully general law about the activity of rational creatures, and it certainly isn't a law that reflects the *free* action of all rational creatures. So the idea of a principle organized around a particular object is a non-starter.

What does that leave us with? Well, Kant explains, the only suitable principle will be one that guides our action through its "law-giving form", i.e. *not* one that mentions a particular object, but one that requires no more and no less of us than to act on principles that *could be laws*. And that's just what the Formula of Universal Law requires; it says that our principle of action must be "universalizable". Thus this imperative has normative force for all rational creatures because it is the only adequate solution to the characteristic problem of practical reason faces, the problem of marrying freedom and lawfulness.¹²

What does this show? Even setting aside cavils about the argument itself, we can wonder how much distinctively moral content falls out of it. Hegel famously calls the Formula of Universal Law an "empty formalism", and it's easy to see why. Since the

¹¹ The clearest version of this argument appears in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:19-5:35. The reconstruction offered here takes significant interpretative liberties. On Kant's own views vis-à-vis constructivism see Patrick Kain, "Realism and anti-realism in Kant's second *Critique*", *Philosophy Compass* 1(5), 2006, pp. 449-465.

¹² cf. Christine M. Korsgaard, *Sources of Normativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 97-8.

argument only incorporates other people in a formal way—as things falling within the scope of a universal quantifier—it is mysterious which forms of interpersonal conduct the law will enjoin and forbid.¹³ Kant does claim to derive particular duties from the principle, by arguing that the routine violation of such duties (as if by law) would be either impossible or defeat its own purposes. But his arguments are contentious, and his application of the principle invites a swarm of dubious results. Perfidy seems permissible so long as it is undertaken with hyper-precise principles. And benign plans may turn out to be condemned because of mundane coordination problems.¹⁴

For these reasons many Kantians think that the Formula of Universal Law requires supplementation or amplification by other parts of Kant’s system. Let’s turn to those.

5. Constructing respect for persons

The Formula of Humanity may be a more promising focus for constructivists. Kant says that all persons possess an “unconditioned, incomparable worth”. This “dignity”, as Kant calls it, merits a distinctive form of regard: *respect*. Most fundamentally, this means we must recognize the authority of other persons to make valid claims on us. More specifically, it forbids us from treating others as “mere means”—as things we can employ for our own purposes in complete indifference to their own capacity for rational choice. And it requires us to regard all persons as “ends in themselves”. (An “end” for Kant is anything for the sake of which we act, and thus a broader category than the more familiar notion of the goal an action aims to achieve. Humanity can be an end in this broader sense insofar as we can act for its sake by paying it the appropriate respect.)

Kant says that the Formula of Humanity is a requirement of practical reason as such. His argument proceeds by investigating the way that some values are conditioned on others.¹⁵ It begins with optimism that some of the ends we pursue are ones we have *reason* to pursue:

- (1) I value the ends I rationally set myself, and take myself to have reason to pursue them.

It then appeals to a constructivist-flavored premise:

¹³ On this objection see Sally Sedgwick, “Hegel on the empty formalism of Kant’s Categorical Imperative”, in Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (eds), *A Companion to Hegel* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), pp. 265-280.

¹⁴ For a summary of these problems from the point of view of someone skeptical of the centrality of the Formula of Universal Law to Kant’s ethics (and of the idea of “Kantian constructivism”) see Allen W. Wood, *Kantian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 71-3.

¹⁵ The discussion in this section closely follows the discussion in Markovits, *Moral Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), especially §5.4. Compare the (highly compressed) remarks at *Groundwork*, 4:428-9. For more on this argument as a reading of Kant, see Korsgaard, “The formula of humanity” reprinted in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 106-33, Allen W. Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 124-32, and Jens Timmermann, “Value without regress”, *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(1), 2006, pp. 69-93.

- (2) But I recognize that their value is only conditional: if I did not set them as my ends, I would have no reason to pursue them.

But, Kant asks, why think that we can generate reasons to promote some end just by adopting it? We must, he says, think that we have the power to confer value on our ends by rationally choosing them:

- (3) So I must see *myself* as the condition on the value of my ends—as having a worth-bestowing status.

From this Kant seems to infer that we must accord ourselves *unconditional* worth:

- (4) So I must see myself as having an unconditional value—as being an end in myself and the condition of the value of my chosen ends—in virtue of my capacity to bestow worth on my ends by rationally choosing them.

But at this step, I should also recognize that the same argument holds from your perspective, concerning *your* rational nature, and so consistency requires that I attribute the same worth-bestowing status, and so the same unconditional value, to *you*, and to *any other rational being*:

- (5) I must similarly accord any other rational being the same unconditional value I accord myself.

Hence the formula of humanity:

- (6) I must always act in a manner that respects this unconditional value. I must treat humanity, whether in my own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as means.

As it stands, this argument raises significant worries. Rae Langton, for example, confesses a temptation to describe it as “a chain of non sequiturs.”¹⁶ What’s irrational—more specifically, irrational in the *thin, procedural* sense the constructivist relies on—about simply taking each of my ends to be valuable in itself, unconditionally, and independently of my having chosen to pursue it? And even if I concede that my ends’ value is somehow *conditional on me*, why conclude from this that I must have *unconditional*, intrinsic value? Not all sources of value are themselves valuable, much less intrinsically so. Infection makes penicillin valuable, but isn’t itself valuable; the cubic press, which turns graphite into diamonds, makes carbon valuable, but is itself only instrumentally, not intrinsically valuable. Are we really to conclude that we’re valuable only in the way that the press is valuable—because we turn lumps of valueless world, like lumps of graphite—into the good stuff? And it is far from clear, given what Kant has said, that *I* (rather than something else) must be the *ultimate* source of value of my ends, even if we concede that the source of their value *is* intrinsically valuable. And even if I *am* the intrinsically valuable source of value of my ends, what commits me to thinking *you* are an intrinsically valuable source of value, too?

Let’s look closer at the value dependency claim driving this argument. First consider an ordinary instrumental imperative. If you want good dental health, floss regularly. It would be irrational to value the end of good dental health, but not value

¹⁶ “Objective and unconditioned value,” *Philosophical Review* 116(2), 2007, p. 169.

regular flossing. The value of the more fundamental end implies the value of the instrumental end. Kant's argument suggests that the reverse implication may also hold: the value of an instrumentally valuable end implies the value of the more fundamental end to which it is instrumental. It would be irrational to value regular flossing without valuing good dental health (in the absence of other reasons for flossing). It would be equally irrational, Kant's argument suggests, to value my contingent (non-instrumental) ends without valuing the source of *their* value—the value of the rational nature that set them. If I'm rational, I'll value flossing because I value good dental health because I value pain prevention because I value *me*.

But why think that I am the only possible source of value of my contingent ends? Why can't I, rationally, just take them to be valuable in themselves, unconditionally? Let's start with the easier case: imagine a person who, when asked why he flosses regularly, responds that he does it for its own sake. And imagine that he gives a similar response when we ask him why he does all the other things he does. Such a person's value commitments would strike us as bizarre, in large part because of their total lack of internal coherence. There's just something arbitrary and dogmatic about valuing so many unrelated, unsystematic, contingently-chosen ends, without some more fundamental explanation for why they matter. Compare the epistemic case: a person who, when asked why she believes each of the things she believes, responds, "I just *do*." Rational people's sets of beliefs are not so piece-meal and disconnected. Their beliefs cohere and support each other. Justification may have to bottom out somewhere, but it had better not bottom out in *too* many unrelated articles of faith—especially not articles of faith about which there is intractable disagreement between otherwise rational agents.

One advantage of valuing humanity as an end in itself, and recognizing it as the source of the value of my other ends, is that it can bring *systematic unity* to my ends. A set of contingent ends that includes the end of humanity is rationally preferable to one that does not because it is, to borrow a term from Michael Smith, more "systematically justified". For Kant, the ideal of systematic unity—of having our ends or beliefs stand in a network of mutually supportive, reciprocally justifying relations—is one the principal aims of reason in both its practical and theoretical employments.¹⁷ Systematic unity is a very demanding (perhaps unreachable) ideal, but it is nonetheless rooted in a procedural conception of rationality. It's a matter of my ends' (*inter alia*) standing in the right *relations to each other*, rather than of my having or lacking a particular end. (In a sense, this is the crux of Kant's reply to Hume and the dogmatists: a procedural conception of reason can still be very demanding, if its demands are sufficiently schematic.) If this is right, then there is rational pressure on us, as Kant thought, to search for "an unconditioned condition" of value—an answer to the string of why-questions we might ask about the value of the things we care about.

But the argument so far cannot explain on its own why it's procedurally irrational to trace the chain of value-dependency among our ends back to a *different* starting-point. Many ends, it seems, would increase the coherence and systematic justifiability of our set of ends if we came to see them as the source of value of those ends. As Parfit observes:

¹⁷ For a treatment of the idea that delves into Kant more deeply than we can here, see Karl Schafer on "Rationalist Kantian Constructivism" in "Realism and constructivism in Kantian metaethics", *Philosophy Compass* 10(1), 2015, p. 706.

Consider ... Smith's claim that we can be rationally required to have a more unified set of desires. Mere unity is not a merit. Our desires would be more unified if we were monomaniacs, who cared about only one thing. But if you cared about truth, beauty, and the future of mankind, and I cared only about my stamp collection, your less unified set of desires would not be, as Smith's claim seems to imply, less rational than mine.¹⁸

Parfit's point illustrates that not any kind of unity of ends is, intuitively, equally rational. Reasons judgments lay claim to a validity that is *non-parochial*—that can be recognized from *any* perspective. If we begin, as Kant says we do, from an optimism that that some of the things that matter to us *really matter*—that we have genuine reason to pursue and protect and respect and promote them—then we are claiming more for our ends than just that they're *what we're after*. In this way, our ends resemble our beliefs: if we take our beliefs to be rational, then we take them to be justifiable in a way that *others*, or we ourselves, should our preferences later change, should be able to recognize; we're not merely saying they're what we happen, now, to think.¹⁹ This goal of non-parochialism turns the search for systematic *unity* among our ends into a search for systematic *justifiability*.

The possibility of intrapersonal changes of heart about value pushes us in the same direction. One of the goals of the constructivist project is to identify a conception of value that is non-alienating. The stamp collector may not be alienated now from a conception of value that identifies stamps as the ultimate source of value. But should her values change, she would certainly find herself alienated. Much better, then, to trace the value of her ends back one step further: to her own will. Her own will, after all, is something from which she cannot become alienated.

So much, then, for stamp-collecting. It doesn't even provide stable systematic justification to *our own* ends, much less make sense from the perspective of anyone else's. One of the main advantages of the constructivist conception of reasons, we suggested earlier, was that it seems less *dogmatic* than realist views that posit "external" normative facts that are completely independent of the agent's perspective. But insisting that stamp-collecting is an ultimate worth-bestower is *very* dogmatic. It totally dismisses most other people's perceptions of value from the start, with no way of defending the dismissal. So it's important that the end we recognize as the source of value of our own ends—and the linchpin of their systematic justification—makes sense as *potential* source of value for the ends of others, or, indeed, our own ends later on should our values change.

Stamp-collecting is, of course, not the only, or most plausible, alternative of systematizer of value. *Happiness* seems like a good (and philosophically popular!) candidate. Perhaps we should think our ends are valuable not because we choose them, and we're unconditionally valuable, but because they make us happy, and happiness is unconditionally valuable.

Taking happiness to be the "unconditioned condition" of value makes pretty good sense of most of my commitments, and of many of the commitments of others. But

¹⁸ *On What Matters*, vol. I, p. 80.

¹⁹ Smith embraces of the same standard in "Internal reasons", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55(1), 1995, p. 118.

despite the importance almost everyone attaches to happiness, it cannot, it seems, explain the value we attribute to *all* our ends. Many people value ends quite independently of whether they generate happiness. So the assumption that happiness is “the source of value” will still force us to dismiss many value-commitments out of hand. The transcendental hypothesis that persons’ capacity for valuing is both source and conferrer of value fares better: it allows us to begin with the default assumption that everyone’s ends matter, and correct that assumption only when it actively conflicts with the commitment to the value of humanity.

The goal isn’t, of course, to find an ultimate end that will accommodate *everything* individual people happen to value. The point of a moral principle, after all, is partly to correct our value judgments. But it shouldn’t dogmatically rule out some people’s values as mistaken from the start. We should grant anyone’s ends, not just our own, the benefit of the doubt, as a kind of working assumption, and correct that assumption only when we need to. This at least is the goal and appeal of the constructivist project, as we have interpreted it. If we assume that people are the source of value, then their value can, at a first pass, explain the value of *any* chosen end, though that end could later turn out to be irrationally adopted if it (or its pursuit) necessarily conflicted with respect for the special value of persons.

This argument explains why there is rational pressure on all of us to value humanity as an end, regardless of our contingent ends and commitments, and so provides the first necessary component of a successful constructivist defense of the thesis that rationality requires us to be moral. But the argument also provides a second necessary component of such a defense. It explains why the rationally required end of humanity is *not just one end among others*, but *trumps* those others in cases of conflict, and so can be a source of moral *requirements*. Because the value of humanity is, on the view we’ve sketched here, a condition of the value of any other end whatsoever, it is always procedurally irrational to fail to treat it as an end for the sake of promoting some particular end-to-be-effected. Thus Kant’s moral imperative can never be overridden by instrumental or prudential concerns. Even on a constructivist view of practical reasons, we always have most reason to do as morality requires.

6. Constitutivist supplements

Constructivism is frequently supplemented by claims about the “constitutive” nature of the entities involved in normative construction. There are two reasons this supplementation may be necessary. The first is a problem for more ambitious constructivists who want to give a constructivist analysis of normative facts quite generally (i.e. for Street but not Markovits or Rawls). The procedure that a constructivist suggests yields normative facts is itself normative: there is a right way and a wrong way to go about constructing facts about reasons (for example) from facts about evaluative attitudes. But what is the status of these normative facts? What is it, in other words, that makes one procedure of construction appropriate rather than another?²⁰ The second

²⁰ For objections turning on this question see Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defense* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 44-50, David Enoch, “Can there be a global, interesting, coherent constructivism about practical reason?”, *Philosophical Explorations* 12(3), 2009, pp. 313-39, and Nadeem

problem is more basic. It is the simple fact that, arguments from the previous section notwithstanding, Kantian constructivism is a hard road to hoe. Because practical reasoning as such appears to be such a mutable activity, it is hard to see how we could guarantee that much of anything will be inevitably endorsed by all practical reasoners, much less a demanding moral doctrine like the Formula of Humanity.

These two problems have led a number of constructivists to supplement their arguments in similar fashion.²¹ The idea is that the states involved in practical reasoning have a constitutive nature, and that from the point of view of practical reasoners this constitutive nature has a special normative authority. If this is right, then these constitutive facts may be a source of normative constraints on our construction procedure.

Street, for example, argues that “just as it is constitutive of being a parent that one have a child, so it is constitutive of taking oneself to have conclusive reason to Y that one also, when attending to the matter in full awareness, take oneself to have reason to take what one recognizes to be the necessary means to Y.”²² This constitutive feature, she goes on to say, has normative implications for the person in question. If you take yourself to have conclusive reason to Y, it is correct for you to also take yourself to have a reason to take what you recognize is the necessary means to Y. The construction procedure that Street advances is grounded in claims about what is constitutive of holding an evaluative attitude.

It seems unlikely that the constitutive requirements of *valuing* as such will get Kantian constructivists very far. This is no problem for Street, since she’s a Humean constructivist. But those who turn to constitutivist claims hoping prop up a constructivist defense of a moral doctrine will probably need to look elsewhere. The most common arguments in this genre focus on agency and action. One can argue in the following way. Adherence to a certain moral principle *M* is constitutive of agency. Practical reasoning presupposes that the reasoner is an agent; this is what makes it practical. Therefore, practical reasoning also presupposes adherence to *M*. So insofar as normative facts are constructed from a practical point of view by practical reasoning, *M* has normative authority for all agents *by default*.

This strategy grounds the authority of the construction procedure in facts that do not themselves admit of constructivist analysis. But it does so in a way that should be palatable to constructivists. The appropriateness of a certain construction procedure is not a brute normative fact, and so not something we must be resigned to realism about. Instead, it reflects the conditions on having evaluative attitudes or being an agent, and thus, indirectly, the conditions of reasoning practically. These normative facts, the constructivist can say, are nothing over and above facts about *what* valuing, agency, and practical reasoning ultimately *are*, and so not things that raise further metaethical questions. Secondly, if our concern is to find more “substance” in practical reasoning in hopes of showing that some moral doctrine can be constructed from any practical point of view, a promising place to look is at the metaphysics of the entities that figure in that

Hussain, “A problem for ambitious metanormative constructivism”, in J. Lenman and Y. Shemmer (eds), *Constructivism in Practical Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²¹ For more on why these views are “natural bedfellows”, see Schafer, “Realism and constructivism in Kantian metaethics”, pp. 691-2.

²² “Constructivism about reasons”, p. 228.

activity, entities like evaluative attitudes and agency. In particular, if practical reasoning does presuppose agency, then the metaphysics of agency may have implications for practical reasoning that are not immediately obvious.

The hard part of this strategy is showing that adherence to some moral principle is indeed constitutive of agency. There are a handful of arguments to this effect.²³ We'll mention just one.²⁴ Agency is natural kind like water or gold. And like water and gold, there are constitutive requirements on being a member of the kind. But unlike water and gold, these constitutive requirements are not brute facts about the natural order. Rather, what counts as agency is, in large part, a function of what agents do. This makes agency an “interactive kind”: a kind whose nature is partly constituted by what we do. And that, in turn, makes the constitutive requirements of agency rather special. There are no constitutive requirements of agency on par with having seventy-nine protons or two oxygen atoms. Instead, there is a requirement to behave in such a way that the behavior of ourselves and other would-be agents taken together constitute a kind—that this behavior be sufficiently unified, homogeneous, and systematic to qualify as *some sort* of kind. This requires not adherence to a fixed standard, but *coordination* with other agents. This coordination takes the form of what Kant calls the “legislation of a Realm of Ends”: the making of practical laws that are at once self-given and agreed to by all other rational creatures. Thus, the argument goes, it is a constitutive requirement of agency that we commit ourselves to a certain collective project that turns out to be none other than the creation of a Realm of Ends. If this is correct, then we can understand the appropriateness of a particular construction procedure—the grand construction of value that takes place in the Realm of Ends—as grounded in the demands of agency.

Arguments like this one are premised on the normative significance of agency. But this claim can be resisted. I may wonder why I ought to be an agent rather a kind of creature just like an agent but lacking a key constitutive feature—a “shmagent”.²⁵ That we can entertain this question at all, critics argue, suggests that agency cannot be our Archimedean point.

Given our subject, we will consider a somewhat narrower question: should *constructivists* concede that the shmagency question makes sense? There are two ways to take the challenge. The critic might concede to the constitutivist her account of the constitutive norms of agency, but deny that “agency”, so understood, must be all that important to us, much less inescapable. There may be other, equally viable, ways of being we can take up, with their own normative frameworks. But the constructivist will want to resist this way of interpreting the constitutivist move: after all, her goal is to construct *all* of practical normativity from the constitutive norms of agency. The constructivist constitutivist sees the conditions of agency as the conditions on having a practical point of view at all.

But now the challenge reemerges in a different form. For the critic will likely want to withdraw her initial concession, and deny that there are *any* interesting (for

²³ Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 177-206 and (in a more complicated way) J. David Velleman, *How We Get Along* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²⁴ Kenneth Walden, “Laws of nature, laws of freedom, and the social construction of normativity”, *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 7 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). For a similar argument see Walden, “Agency, morality, and other people”, *Ergo* 5(2), 2018.

²⁵ David Enoch, “Agency, shmagency”, *Philosophical Review* 115(2), 2006, pp. 169-98.

example, moral or prudential) norms that are constitutive of *agency*, now understood in this broader sense. Indeed, any notion of agency presupposed by practical reason as such ought to be just as amorphous as practical reason as such. So it's not clear why we should expect to extract additional normative content by looking at its constitutive nature. Unless, that is, we equivocate between a notion of agency that is relatively definite but not a presupposition of practical reason as such and a notion that practical reason does presuppose but is so contentless that we are unlikely to find anything non-trivial in its constitutive nature. But this objection, it would seem, must be arbitrated on a case by case basis.²⁶

7. Reasoning and other people

We have now surveyed three different approaches to Kantian constructivism. Each of these arguments has a crucial moment when it is suggested that other people play an essential role in an individual's practical reasoning. These moves are pivotal because morality, whatever else it involves, will necessarily include claims about *what we owe to each other*. But we cannot guarantee that all agents will have evaluative attitudes that will ground such obligations by themselves—that everyone will value the welfare of others or take themselves to have reasons to respect their rights. So if we are going to produce a constructivist validation of moral universalism, it seems it will have to be anchored in a claim that the germ of morality can be found in our construction procedure—in practical reason itself.

Each of these moves is also an especially vulnerable part of its respective argument. The argument for the Formula of Universal Law, for example, purports to show that our principles must be universalizable. This standard involves other people insofar as the universalizability of a principle is a matter of whether it can be adopted by those people. But the status that other individuals possess within my practical reasoning because of this requirement seems miniscule. You figure into my practical reasoning not insofar as you have standing to object to what I plan to do (because, e.g., it will harm you) or because you can make demands on me that I must acknowledge. In a sense, you *qua* individual don't matter at all: what matters is whether all persons (a group which happens to include you) could, in principle, adopt my maxim whatever their actual commitments or interests. The concern is that it would be rather surprising if anything worthy of the name "morality" could be constructed from this trifling recognition.

The case we presented for the Formula of Humanity appeals to the demands of anti-parochialism in rejecting the hypothesis that our ends might be systematized by their relationship to the unconditional value of stamp-collecting. Systematicity was supposed to be a demand of reason, but why, one might wonder, think that parochialism is a vice of practical reason? Why think that anyone else's opinion about stamp-collecting is relevant to *my* valuing it?

One part of the argument is particularly prone to this objection. We are imagining a scenario where an agent—call her Clarissa—is investigating the dependence relations of her values with the aim of making them systematically justifiable. The Kantian constructivist says that the best systematizing hypothesis is that Clarissa's own capacity

²⁶ Cf. Evan Tiffany, "Why be an agent?", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90(2), 2012, pp. 223-33.

for valuing—her rational nature or “humanity”—is unconditionally valuable. Suppose that Clarissa agrees to all this. But why not stop there? Why must Clarissa allow that the humanity of others is a source of value for their ends, just as her humanity is of hers? After all, the pressure to make her own value commitments systematically unified doesn’t seem relieved by her making any assumptions about anyone else’s value. Obviously if the constructivist wants to derive the Formula of Humanity from the process of tracing value-dependency, she needs to show why the objective value of rational nature *as such* better systematizes her ends than this egoist alternative. This project, in turn, seems to turn on whether the systematicity that reason prescribes is intra- or interpersonal, whether reason pushes us to bring just our own ends into systematic coherence or to also accommodate the ends of others. If it’s merely intrapersonal, the rationally mandated conclusion would seem to be that *my* rational nature is unconditionally valuable, since *your* value does nothing to explain the value I find in stamp-collecting.

Finally, *pace* the view adumbrated in the previous section, it can be hard to see how the demands of being an agent could introduce an interpersonal dimension to practical reasoning that would ground moral duties. Agency seems to supervene on the agent. Whether I am an agent or a shmagent depends on whether my beliefs and desires are efficacious in the right way, on my having executive control over my actions, on my being free from impairment and coercion, and so on. Robinson Crusoe can be an agent despite his solitude. Other people can certainly interfere with my agency, but there is no condition on my agency that *essentially* makes reference to other people. So it is hard to believe that the demands of agency will be the source of duties or obligations to other people. Or so conventional wisdom says.

Given the importance of these problems to all versions of the constructivist argument, it may be worth confronting the question head-on: why should *you* matter to *my* practical reasoning? And not just in the sense of being an object I can use but in a way that might establish that I *owe you something*.

A potential answer to this question can be found in a particularly striking passage from Kant:

Reason must subject itself to critique in all its undertakings, and cannot restrict the freedom of critique through any prohibition without damaging itself and drawing upon itself a disadvantageous suspicion. There is nothing so important because of its utility, nothing so holy, that it may be exempted from this searching review and inspection, which knows no respect for persons. On this freedom rests the very existence of reason, which has no dictatorial authority, but whose claim is never anything more than the agreement of free citizens, each of whom must be able to express his reservations, indeed even his veto, without holding back.²⁷

There are several intriguing ideas in this passage. The most surprising comes at the end, where Kant says the “claim” of reason consists in the “agreement of free citizens” who are cooperatively engaged in the activity of rational critique. This suggests a radical view about the nature reason: that there is something essentially *social* about the endeavor. This is an important idea, so let’s give it a name:

²⁷ A738/B766

Sociality of Reason. Reasoning is (constitutively) a joint activity to which every rational creature is a party.

We won't pause to consider whether this is Kant's considered view.²⁸ The more pressing question is why we should believe such a thesis. It is, after all, a slightly astonishing thesis. Most of our reasoning, we are probably inclined to think, is solitary, and even when we do reason with other people, it is usually with small and well-defined groups, not all of humanity. So we should be very surprised to learn that an activity was not reasoning simply because it didn't include some of the multitude of rational creatures.

We can only offer the most condensed case for the thesis here. But it starts with observing that, for Kant, reason is a liberating capacity. In the *Conjectural Beginnings of Human History* he explains that most animals are moved by "instinct". For them there is no question of how to respond to an instinctual urge or impulse; a characteristic movement simply follows the instinct. Reason liberates us from this condition by allowing us to "step back" from our own nature and reflect on it: to entertain our instincts as objects of thought and interrogation, rather than spurs to action. The questions we ask in this interrogation will be characteristically normative ones: given that my instincts are no longer brute forces moving me, I can ask whether I *really* have a reason to act as they would have me act, whether the object they steer me toward *really* is good.²⁹

Reason can liberate us from instinct because it is an anti-parochial faculty. It allows and encourages us to step back from our own narrowly animalistic perspective—one where instinct rules—and take up another. It is only from this novel perspective that we can entertain normative questions and, potentially, answer them in ways that produce action contrary to instinct. This is the sense in which reasoning must be an anti-parochial activity if it is to liberate us from instinct. Reasoning well means subjecting our attitudes, beliefs, and inclinations to the scrutiny afforded different points of view. Such scrutiny is the difference between *deciding* to act on a reason that I have endorsed and *submitting* myself to the rule of an instinct.

If reason is anti-parochial in this sense, then I cannot simultaneously understand a judgment—that pleasure is good or sodium combustible—as *reasonable* if I understand it as merely *what I happen to think*. For it to be reasonable I must take it to survive the scrutiny of other points of view, which means, among other things, that I take it to be *justifiable* to those occupying these points of view.

But justifiable how? Onora O'Neill makes one suggestion:

If thoughts and knowledge claims are to be seen as reasoned, they must at least be followable in thought by others who hold differing views: they must be intelligible to those others. If principles of action are to be offered as reasons for action to others with differing ethical and religious commitments, they must at least be principles that could be adopted by those others and used to organize their action.³⁰

²⁸ But see the papers collected in first part of Onora O'Neill's *Constructions of Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²⁹ See especially 8:111ff. The connection between reflection, freedom, and normativity is recurring theme of Korsgaard's *Sources of Normativity*, especially in the second and third lectures.

³⁰ O'Neill, "Constructivism in Rawls and Kant", in S. Freeman, *Cambridge Companion to Rawls* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 358.

One could also demand a stronger kind of justification. Perhaps reasoning requires me to convince others to *share* my reasons—to take them as their own—and more generally aims at an ideal of total convergence amongst all agents. This is a difficult question. Fortunately, we don't have to settle it here. Our concern is whether reasoning is constitutively a joint activity. And we seem to have a case for this proposition, whatever standard of justifiability we prefer.³¹

Suppose we are right that the anti-parochialism of reason means that reasoning about a judgment necessarily involves submitting it to the scrutiny of other points of view and, when an actual person occupies one of those points of view, trying to justify it to them. Because reasoning is a holistic business, this justification will in practice be mutual. You will try to justify your judgments to me, while I do the same to you. And the dyadic case will only be one small part of a massive endeavor, one in which *we* try to justify *our* judgments to *each other*—where “we” includes every creature who can occupy a practical point of view, i.e. every rational creature. This suggests that reasoning is a joint activity in which each and every person is a partner.

According to this account, our private episodes of reasoning are best understood of simulations of the real thing. When I am reasoning about whether sodium is combustible or dancing is worth the effort, I am imagining justifying these opinions to various interlocutors who represent particularly salient alternative points of view. I imagine, for example, people who have epistemic access to the chemical properties of sodium or think that the joys of dancing can be replicated by the right sort of video game. According to the Sociality of Reason, this exercise is not reasoning *per se*, but a simulation of the reasoning that would go on if we consulted actual persons occupying these points of view. If we are knowledgeable and imaginative, it can be a very good simulation, and since many points of view are not occupied by actual persons at all, we are forced to depend on it. The mistake of many contemporary philosophers is mistaking this simulation of reasoning for the real thing.

This account of reason also offers the possibility for an alternative account of what makes a judgment objective. One conception of objectivity centers on distinctive norms. Suppose there's a chess piece on the table in between us. I say that it's a rook, while you say it's a queen. A few normative claims seem clear here: I have *prima facie* reason to care about your opinion of the chess piece, at least one of us has gone wrong and ought to revise their belief, and convergence on questions about the chess piece is a theoretical ideal for us. By contrast if you think canary wine is terrific and I think it repulsive, we would be reluctant to say that any of these normative claims follow. This contrast brings out one conception of objectivity. The first sort of judgment is objective, the second isn't. But what explains the difference? Whence the norms that govern “objective” judgments?

The most common explanation locates the difference in the world. There is just one chess piece between us, and it cannot be both a rook and queen. Because theoretical reason aims to accurately represent facts about chess pieces, one of us must have erred. There is nothing analogous to ground the same norms about canary wine. If we take this approach to objectivity in general, then establishing the objectivity of normative

³¹ For a detailed account of reasoning as a social activity, see Anthony Simon Laden, *Reasoning: A Social Picture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

judgments becomes a matter of discovering normative entities that can play the same role as the chess piece, and thus establishing the truth of normative realism. The Sociality of Reason offers a different explanation. According to this view, reasoning is, in the first instance, an anti-parochial activity, and the norms that distinguish “objective” judgments are valid *by default* for anything I can subject to reason’s scrutiny. They are valid simply because they are constitutive of the process of mutual justification in which reasoning consists. Opinions about canary wine are not objective on this picture because it makes no sense to reason about them: the wine either strikes you as agreeable or not, there’s nothing further to ask, no scrutiny to be applied. Normative judgments have a different fate. Their objectivity doesn’t turn on normative realism, but on whether they merit the scrutiny of reason. And this, in turn, is simply the question of whether there is such a thing as practical reasoning.

What we have here is a pale sketch of an argument for the Sociality of Reason. Reasoning is an essentially anti-parochial activity. It has to be if it is to liberate us from the narrow outlook of our animal nature. What this means, moreover, is that reasoning about a judgment requires subjecting it to scrutiny from other perspectives, and, in particular, justifying it to individuals who occupy those perspectives. This is a joint activity that involves every creature capable of offering and receiving justifications.

How does recognizing the Sociality of Reason help the constructivist arrive at her Kantian conclusion that every rational agent has reason to be moral? We will mention two possibilities. First, the claim can plug apparent holes the arguments already canvassed. The construction of the Formula of Humanity, for example, depended on the idea that the systematization of one’s normative judgments is anti-parochial—that we are aiming not just for systematic values, but *systematically justifiable* ends. One can demur from this contention, however, and in doing so the door is opened to rival hypotheses about the ultimate conditions of value. One rival proposes a quasi-Kantian egoism: that the value of *my* rational nature is the unconditioned condition of all value. Another proposes a quasi-Kantian subjectivism: that for all *x*, the value of *x*’s rational nature is the unconditioned condition of all value-for-*x*.³²

The Sociality of Reason gives us the resources to dismiss these alternatives by justifying and explaining the anti-parochialism of reason. If we are trying to justify our judgments to others, then quasi-Kantian egoism will be an obvious failure. It’s not just that no one will agree that I am the ultimate source of all value, but that this claim is so egocentric that it will not be taken seriously. Justifying it to other people would be like trying to justify solipsism to them. Quasi-Kantian subjectivism cannot be dismissed quite so easily, since it’s not as baldly parochial. The subjectivist treats her situation as symmetrical to that of her fellow agents: insofar as every *x* can undertake the kind of reasoning that Clarissa does, *x* should conclude that *x*’s rational nature is unconditionally valuable *for x*. But the view is still unsatisfying. The subjectivist treats the demands of reason as entirely intrapersonal—as requiring the systematization of an agent’s own values—until the very last moment when she acknowledges that there are other agents engaged in reasoning and tries to accommodate this fact by suggesting that all value claims are relativized to individual agents. This is a perfunctory kind of anti-

³² cf. David Sobel, “Is subjectivism incoherent?”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92(2), 2016, pp. 531-8.

parochialism, analogous to that of the person who first systematizes all her own theoretical judgments about sodium but at the last minute discovers that other people also have perspectives on sodium and tries to accommodate these perspectives in one fell swoop by adopting a simple-minded subjectivism—sodium may be combustible for me but noncombustible for you, water soluble for me but water insoluble for you, and so on. This isn't the utter parochialism of the solipsist, but it's an awkward position.

For one thing, a retreat to this sort of relativism seems like a last resort, at best: to be accepted only if a less relativist alternative cannot be supported. The Kantian constructivist account provides that alternative. For another, the subjectivist story, like the Kantian constructivist one, was supposed to provide justification for our conviction that the things that matter to us *really do matter, normatively*. The story is supposed to offer a supporting *explanation* of their having such value. The subjectivist says our ends matter because we are such that our rational evaluations are value-conferring (albeit only agent-relative-value-conferring). But this seems more like a restating of the phenomenon to be explained than an explanation. The Kantian constructivist story does better on this front. It tells us that our ends are valuable because *we* are valuable—not just valuable *to* someone (as a descriptive, psychological matter), but valuable as ends in ourselves.³³

We will close by sketching a second, more direct route from accepting the Sociality of Reason to accepting something like Kant's Formula of Humanity. This second route takes very literally the suggestion of that thesis that reasoning is of necessity an interpersonal activity. To see how it goes, let's think a bit more about what would follow from thinking of reasoning as a joint activity. There is more than one sense in which one person may *do something* with another person. As Rae Langton has put it:

When my friend and I make a cake, I'm *doing something with* my friend, and I'm *doing something with* flour, chocolate, cherries, brandy—but there is a difference. My friend, but not the flour, is doing something with me. My friend, and not the flour, is doing what I am doing, sharing the activity.³⁴

Langton notes (following Korsgaard) that one place this second, “involved” kind of joint activity is at work is in relationships of mutual accountability, in which the participants hold one another responsible for what they do. Here's Langton again:

When you hold someone responsible, you are prepared to work with them, view them as someone who has goals of their own that you might come to share, or as someone who might come to share your goals. You are prepared to do something with them, in a sense very different from the sense in which you might do something with a tool.³⁵

The basic idea is that properly joint activities constitutively presuppose certain bipolar normative commitments: norms of mutual recognition, accountability, and the observation of rights.³⁶ If we are to take a walk together, we must recognize each other's rights against being abruptly abandoned. If we are to bake a cake together, we must each

³³ For a longer version of this reply, see Markovits, “Reply to Sobel and Kearns”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92(2), 2016, pp. 554-5.

³⁴ Rae Langton, “Duty and desolation”, *Philosophy* 67(262), 1992, p. 487.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. Margaret Gilbert, *Joint Commitment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 23-25.

³⁶ For more on this concept see Stephen Darwall, “Bipolar obligations”, *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 7 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

recognize the standing of the other's opinions about what kind of cake to bake, whether to use butter or shortening, who should mix and who should measure. And in either of these activities we must be prepared to hold ourselves and each other accountable for violations. These norms are part of what distinguishes a joint activity from one where one person uses another as a tool.

The Sociality of Reason thesis asserts that reasoning is a joint activity. Other rational creatures are our partners in this activity, and so reasoning perforce involves holding oneself accountable to others—justifying oneself to others and acknowledging them as creatures with their own goals, their own rational capacities, and the standing to make claims on us and our deliberations.

So reasoning presupposes versions of the bipolar norms described above. But reasoning, unlike cake baking, is neither narrowly circumscribed nor something we can opt out of. On the contrary, it is central to everything we do. So the Sociality of Reason entails the universal and categorical validity of these bipolar norms. We're bound to respect all other people's rational capacities, their standing to make claims on us, and all their goals *in general*. We, are in other words, bound to always treat them as ends in themselves because they are our necessary partners in reason.

This argument has the advantage of being very direct. It bypasses many of the complications that arise in the other arguments for Kantian ethical doctrines and instead purports to draw one of the doctrines—a version of the Formula of Humanity—directly out of the structural demands of reason. The other side of the coin, naturally, is that it relies on a particularly strong rendering of the idea that reasoning is social. For the Kantian constructivist and her immense ambition, such radicalism may be unavoidable.