

## RATIONALITY, SHMATIONALITY EVEN NEWER SHMAGENCY WORRIES

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THIS PAPER takes aim at constitutivist theories of the normativity of structural norms of rationality. Put generally yet briefly, constitutivists attempt to explain the force or applicability of various types of norms by appealing to how they constitute agency. The number of accounts of moral norms based on this strategy has recently skyrocketed.<sup>1</sup> However, constitutivism can in principle be used to formulate theories about other norms, too, and I shall focus on constitutivism about the applicability and force of structural principles of rationality.<sup>2</sup> This includes principles of means-ends coherence (sometimes called “instrumental rationality”), *enkrasia*, and the like.

Attempts to explain the applicability and force of principles of structural rationality using constitutivist means make much dialectical sense. The normative force of such principles has been much disputed. Some philosophers deny their force, and others even deny that they exist independently of normative reasons.<sup>3</sup> In virtue of such skeptical challenges, one may wonder if constitutivism may come to the rescue. Despite not endorsing constitutivism himself, John Broome writes:

- 1 See, for example, Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics*; Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity and Self-Constitution*; Smith, “Agents and Patients,” “The Magic of Constitutivism,” and “Constitutivism”; Velleman, *How We Get Along*; and Walden, “Laws of Nature, Laws of Freedom, and the Social Construction of Normativity.”
- 2 See, for example, Bratman, “Intention, Belief, and Instrumental Rationality,” “Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical,” “Intention, Practical Rationality, and Self-Governance,” and *Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*; Brunero, *Instrumental Rationality*; Goldman, *Reasons from Within*; Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*; Roughley, *Wanting and Intending*; Smith, “The Explanatory Role of Being Rational” and “A Puzzle about Internal Reasons”; and Southwood, “Vindicating the Normativity of Rationality” and “Constructivism and the Normativity of Practical Reason.”
- 3 For the former, see Kolodny, “Why Be Rational?”; and Lord, *The Importance of Being Rational*. For the latter, see Henning, *From a Rational Point of View*; Kiesewetter, *The Normativity of Rationality*; and Raz, “The Myth of Instrumental Rationality.”

An account of the nature of rationality might imply that rationality is normative. For instance, it is plausible that rationality is constitutive of agency, so that if we were not rational we would not be agents. It may be that, being the acting creatures we are, we cannot help taking rationality as normative. If so, an argument might be built on that fact for the conclusion that rationality actually is normative.<sup>4</sup>

A common objection to constitutivism about moral norms, however, charges it with failing to explain why we cannot be so-called shmagents—namely, very much like agents but without commitments to the constitutive features of agency that would explain why we are subject to the norms that are constitutive of agency.<sup>5</sup> One may, then, very reasonably wonder whether shmagents also generate problems for constitutivism about structural rationality. Exactly that is what I shall argue, at quite some length, in this paper.

“Shmagency” worries gain particular pertinence because the shmagency objection has recently been the subject of much debate. In response to Enoch’s original worry, many have argued that constitutivist norms are inescapable or valuable, thus immunizing them from the challenge and possibly even explaining their normativity.<sup>6</sup> But, simultaneously, novel versions of the challenge have been launched.<sup>7</sup> These developing and, in some ways, more sophisticated versions of the shmagency objection set the stage for this paper. Utilizing and extending them further, we can articulate shmagency worries that cause problems for constitutivism about structural rationality.

I start in section 1 by outlining constitutivism about structural rationality. In section 2, I outline the key attractions of that view. In section 3, I introduce the shmagency objection and develop two versions that generate problems for constitutivism about structural rationality. In the following sections, I apply them to several constitutivist views. Section 4 is dedicated to what I call first-person authority views, section 5 to single-mental-state views, and section 6 to systems-of-mental-states views. All these accounts of the normativity of structural norms of rationality suffer from the two shmagency objections articulated and defended in section 3. I wrap up in section 7.

4 Broome, *Rationality through Reasoning*, 204.

5 Enoch, “Agency, Shmagency” and “Shmagency Revisited.”

6 For example, Ferrero, “Constitutivism and the Shmagency Challenge” and “Inescapability Revisited”; Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics*; Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*; Smith, “The Magic of Constitutivism”; and Velleman, *How We Get Along*.

7 Enoch, “Shmagency Revisited”; Leffler, “New Shmagency Worries”; and Tiffany, “Why Be an Agent?”

## 1. CONSTITUTIVISM ABOUT STRUCTURAL RATIONALITY

To discuss shmagency objections to constitutivism about structural rationality, it will help to first say something about which views count as constitutivism about structural rationality. Broadly speaking, I take constitutivism to involve a type of explanation of the force or applicability of various types of norms that appeals to how they are involved in constituting agency. But it will help to be more specific.

We will first need to narrow down our subject matter. As mentioned above, there are many types of constitutivism. Here, however, we are concerned with constitutivism about norms of structural rationality. These are norms of coherence that govern the structural rationality of combinations of mental states for agents. Typical examples include the following:

*Instrumental Irrationality:* If  $A$  intends to  $\phi$ , and  $A$  believes that  $\psi$ -ing is a necessary means to  $\phi$ -ing, and  $A$  does not intend to  $\psi$ , then  $A$  is irrational.

*Modus Ponens:* If  $A$  believes that  $p$ , and  $A$  believes that  $p \rightarrow q$ , and  $A$  does not believe that  $q$ , then  $A$  is irrational.<sup>8</sup>

I shall use these two norms to illustrate structural rationality. While they are formulated negatively in the sense that they specify when  $A$  is irrational, they can also easily be reformulated into positive requirements of rationality if one takes an agent to be, in relevant ways, in at least one respect instrumentally rational if they are not irrational in the way Instrumental Irrationality specifies, and in at least one respect epistemically rational if they are not irrational in the way Modus Ponens specifies.<sup>9</sup> As such, these norms are paradigmatic norms of structural rationality. While slightly different formulations of them may be given, they are the *type* of norms I am concerned with—yet there may, of course, also be other norms of the same type.

A second issue here is that the literature on structural rationality has been developing rapidly recently. This leaves it unclear which accounts of it one may want to count as constitutivist, and therefore also which versions are targeted by the shmagency objections. To clarify this, I shall introduce a schema for

8 These formulations of the principles are taken verbatim from Kiesewetter, *The Normativity of Rationality*, 15.

9 I do not, however, say that agents are rational *if and only if* they would not be irrational according to these norms, for there are presumably other norms of rationality, cases of arationality, or possibly even nonstructuralist aspects of a full theory of rationality—such as responsiveness to reasons—that they do not capture. For a view that incorporates both structural rationality and reasons responsiveness, see Worsnip, “What Is (In)coherence?” and *Fitting Things Together*.

constitutivism about structural rationality, and I shall use it below to show how various accounts of rationality are constitutivist.<sup>10</sup> The schema is:

*Structural Rationality Constitutivism:* An account  $T$  of structural rationality  $S$  is constitutivist iff  $T$  entails that  $S$  is normative because  $S$  is, or is normative *in virtue of*, some property or properties of the constitutive feature or features  $C$  of an aspect of agency  $A$ , where  $C$  constitutes something as an  $A$ .

The variables mean the following:

$T$  = a theory that aims to explain the normativity of  $S$ .

$S$  = principles of structural rationality.<sup>11</sup>

$C$  = a constitutive aim, principle, or other relevant constitutive feature or features of agency.<sup>12</sup>

$A$  = anything conventionally associated with agency, such as action, agency itself, propositional attitudes, or selfhood.<sup>13</sup>

Some clarifications will also be helpful. First, by “ $S$  is normative,” I mean to stipulate what “normative” is for present constitutivist purposes. That can be one or both of the following things: why structural principles hold for or apply to an agent or why they have normative force for her. “Holding for or applying to an agent” indicates that an agent is subject to the norm, and “having normative force for her” means that there is a way in which a norm authoritatively prescribes something for the agent.<sup>14</sup> It is sometimes unclear which of these

10 The schema and characterization are adapted from my *The Constitution of Constitutivism*, ch. 1.

11 I use the terms “principles,” “norms,” and “requirements” interchangeably here.

12 Here, a constitutive aim means that a goal constitutes some aspect of agency. For example, a belief might be constituted by aiming at truth. Constitutive principles are slightly different: perhaps the categorical imperative is constitutive of agency as per Korsgaard’s *The Sources of Normativity* and *Self-Constitution*. But that does not mean that one aims at principles in the same way as truth might be the aim of belief: principles rather structure reasoning. For more on the distinction, see Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics* and “Constitutivism about Practical Reasons.”

13 For simplicity and readability, I sometimes lump these aspects of agency together under the umbrella term “agency.”

14 The language of “normative force” and “authoritative prescriptivity” here could easily be contested, but I am using it stipulatively. What I am after is the extra property of norms in virtue of which they bind agents to following them independently of what the agents want themselves, but the literature is unclear on how to label that and indeed on how the property should be characterized. Even different constitutivist views imply different things. We can, however, bring out what I have in mind using a nonconstitutivist analogy. Foot famously takes the rules of etiquette and ethics to apply categorically to agents, so that

properties philosophers have in mind when they discuss whether rationality is normative, but context should make clear what I have in mind below.

Second, it matters that *S* is normative in virtue of some *property or properties* of the constitutive features *C*. *S* need not be normative *just* in virtue of the constitutive feature or features themselves: some writers on the normativity of rationality indicate this, whereas others do not.<sup>15</sup> But we can take some inspiration from the literature on constitutivism about moral norms to see that there often is a deeper underlying property that does explanatory work here.

This is so because many philosophers assume that the constitutive features only need to serve to *transmit* normativity from some other source.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, many think that some aspect of agency is independently valuable or inescapable and that *that* is what explains why their norms have force.<sup>17</sup> This is so even though value or inescapability need not be constitutive of agency. A full constitutivist explanation of a norm such as the categorical imperative (CI) being constitutive of agency might, instead, say that CI is constitutive of agency, agency is in some relevant sense inescapable, that kind of inescapability

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they are always subject to them, but denies that the norms intrinsically have what I am here calling normative force or authoritative prescriptivity, so that agents need not follow them absent something external to etiquette or ethics itself (such as a reason) that prescribes that they do so (“Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”). What I am after with “authoritative prescriptivity” is the extra property of norms of structural rationality that would make them such that agents are bound to follow them independently of what they want themselves—and that Foot denied that etiquette and ethics have. The reader is however free to plug in their own terminology or characterization instead, perhaps calling it “normative oomph” or maybe “categoricity” (though not in Foot’s sense).

Nevertheless, like me, many constitutivists are after this extra thing about some norms that is supposed to bind agents beyond their being subject to the norms, whether they are talking about rationality, morality, or something else. In this search, a strength of constitutivism is that it need *not* be committed to interpreting normative force as reason-givingness: normative force *qua* authoritative prescriptivity is more general than that. While some may think it consists of giving a reason, most appear to think that constitutive aims or principles are likely to possess some kind of normative force other than that, such being inescapable or valuable. In fact, the normative force of reasons is itself something that constitutivists might be inclined to explain using the constitutive features of agency (cf. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*). I return to this point in section 2 below.

15 For the former, see, for example, Brunero, *Instrumental Rationality*. For the latter, see, for example, Bratman, “Intention, Practical Rationality, and Self-Governance” and *Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*; and Roughley, *Wanting and Intending*.

16 Ferrero, “The Simple Constitutivist Move.”

17 For example, Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics*; Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*; Velleman, *How We Get Along*; and Smith, “The Magic of Constitutivism”; cf. Ferrero, “Inescapability Revisited” and “The Simple Constitutivist Move.”

explains normativity—and *therefore*, CI is normative.<sup>18</sup> An analogous line of argument can be developed using value.<sup>19</sup> Here, the idea is that some norms are constitutive of some valuable form of agency and are therefore valuable themselves. In either case, it is not being constitutive of agency by itself that explains normativity; rather, being so *transmits* normativity.

## 2. WHY CONSTITUTIVISM ABOUT RATIONALITY?

Constitutivism is now introduced. But why care? In the introduction, I indicated that it might serve to explain the normativity of norms of rationality. We may disentangle and expand on that point, for it is in fact based on several reasons to care about constitutivism. Of these, several will matter greatly in the critical discussion below.

A first, very general, reason to be interested in constitutivism about structural rationality is that constitutivism might be independently attractive. Perhaps one holds a general constitutivist position in the philosophy of action or thinks beliefs very plausibly are constituted by aiming at truth. If one simultaneously thinks that the normativity of structural rationality ought to be explained, one had better come up with an explanation that fits this picture.

A second and more specific point is that constitutivism might seem explanatorily *promising* with respect to some more important phenomenon, such as normative force. This seems to be what John Broome hints at in the quotation in the introduction. Perhaps one thinks constitutivism seems like a strong contender when it comes to the normative force of moral norms, and so, then, that it might also be a strong contender regarding norms of rationality.

Third, constitutivism might seem *especially* promising for explaining normative force because it need not do so using normative reasons. Much has been written about the relation between structural principles of rationality and normative reasons, but the normative force of rationality need not be understood in terms of reasons on constitutivist accounts: in fact, constitutivism is sometimes used to explain the force of reasons itself.<sup>20</sup> As indicated above,

18 This is the picture in Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*. To be clear, the version of CI that Korsgaard thinks is most deeply constitutive of agency is the formula of universal law (roughly: “act only in a way such that your maxims could be made into universal law”). She also thinks that the hypothetical imperative, or HI (roughly: “take means to ends as a necessary feature of forming a will, on pain of irrationality”), is so constitutive. I return to both imperatives below.

19 The most paradigmatic example is Smith, “The Magic of Constitutivism.”

20 The most paradigmatic example is Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*.

constitutivists can perhaps take that force to depend on something entirely different from reasons, such as value or inescapability.

Fourth and finally, one might think norms of rationality are universally binding in the sense that they hold for all relevant entities, whichever they are: presumably all agents, at the very least.<sup>21</sup> If *S* norms are constitutive of agency, one might be tempted by a constitutivist explanation to guarantee universality, for if one takes *S* to be constitutive of some aspect of agency shared by all agents, constitutivism appears to guarantee it for them.

There are, then, at least four reasons to be interested in constitutivism about structural rationality. They generate a *prima facie* case for developing constitutivism about structural rationality, and several indicate that constitutivism is an attractive contender for generating the right kind of explanation of normative force. But whether constitutivism works is still an open question. In moral philosophy, it has suffered significant pushback, not least from the shmagency objection.<sup>22</sup> I now turn to it.

### 3. SHMAGENCY

The shmagency objection is probably the most prominent argument against constitutivism about morality.<sup>23</sup> I shall briefly introduce it, consider the two leading objections to it, and then show how responses to these lead to new and more sophisticated shmagency worries. I start with the reply from dialectical inescapability, which leads to shmagency as modal escapability. Then I turn to the reply from value, which leads to shmagency as underdetermination. It is these types of shmagency that, I argue, create major problems for constitutivism about structural rationality.

First things first. The shmagency objection is based on the idea that one can be very much like an agent without quite being one.<sup>24</sup> Hence, one might

21 For example, Brunero, *Instrumental Rationality*, ch. 7; and Way, "Reasons and Rationality."

22 See, for example, Enoch, "Agency, Shmagency" and "Shmagency Revisited"; Leffler, "New Shmagency Worries"; and Tiffany, "Why Be an Agent?"

23 There are also many other prominent objections, such as whether the constitutive aims individual constitutivists propose are plausible, and the problem of bad action, according to which it is unclear how we can act poorly if action is constituted by following some norm. The latter has often been presented as the main problem for constitutivism about rationality, such as by Kolodny ("Why Be Rational?") and Wedgwood (*The Value of Rationality*). For surveys of constitutivism in moral philosophy, including extensive further references to discussions of these problems, see Katsafanas, "Constitutivism about Practical Reasons"; Leffler, *The Constitution of Constitutivism*; Smith, "Constitutivism"; and Tubert, "Constitutive Arguments."

24 Enoch, "Agency, Shmagency."

be able to escape whichever norms are constitutive of agency. Consider chess. Chess has rules, and it also has aims—plausibly, to win, or at least to draw if one cannot win. But why play chess and be committed to its rules and aims? Perhaps one just does not care about winning and rather would prefer to go do something else. The same question can be asked about agency. Why be an agent and committed to its rules or aims? In other words, why be an agent rather than a shmagent?

There are two dominant responses to this worry. The first is to argue that agency is *dialectically inescapable*: it is such that attempting not to be an agent still involves agency and hence a self-contradiction. The second relies on positing some *value* that explains why agency is valuable and, hence, justifies agency rather than shmagency. I start by discussing the dialectical inescapability reply and proceed to defend the modal escapability worry to which it gives rise.

Many constitutivists argue that norms that are constitutive of agency are *dialectically inescapable*.<sup>25</sup> To clarify this point, we should start with a distinction between two perspectives from which we may wonder whether to be agents or shmagents: an *internal* and an *external* perspective. Asking the shmagency question internally is ordinarily considered unproblematic: doing so is for an agent to ask whether they have reason to be an agent, but then they do that while committed to the norms of agency.

The external question is different, but dialectical inescapability is thought to block the possibility that one could take up a standpoint external to agency and ask whether one should be an agent. This is because insofar as one is an agent, one cannot escape agency by deciding not to become one on pain of self-contradiction.<sup>26</sup> Hence, insofar as one is an agent, one cannot get out of one's agency without exercising one's agency—the act of escaping it is also subject to its norms. This is why agency differs from chess.

But there are new shmagency worries.<sup>27</sup> In response to the dialectical inescapability point, one might think that the real issue is not escapability for actual agents but rather *modal escapability*. Suppose someone is very much like an agent but not an agent by constitutivist standards from the start. They might be a *sophisticated shmagent*. Consider, then, an ambitious view such as Korsgaard's, according to which agency commits us to the categorical and hypothetical imperatives (CI and HI, respectively), and we explain the force of CI

25 Ferrero, "Constitutivism and the Schmagency Challenge"; cf. Leffler, "New Shmagency Worries."

26 As Ferrero puts it: agency is *the enterprise of the largest jurisdiction*, covering all actions, and *closed under reflection*, so that reflecting on or acting so as to escape agency still involves a commitment to its norms ("Constitutivism and the Schmagency Challenge").

27 Leffler, "New Shmagency Worries."



and HI by saying that they are constitutive of our agency together with some background premises such as the claim that acting, and hence our agency, is our inescapable plight.<sup>28</sup> This view appears unable to explain why CI still seems to bind shmagents whose psychologies do not constitutively feature it. In fact, for that very reason, it does not seem to apply to or have force for them. Such shmagents do, therefore, occupy a position external to agency—yet they might quite reasonably ask whether they should be agents or shmagents from that external perspective, for they may wonder whether they should take on a norm such as CI (or HI).

There are many ways to cash out this possibility, for there are many psychological profiles that lack constitutivist commitments. For example, instead of commitments to CI and HI, a Martian shmagent could have a Humean belief/desire psychology, where their movements ordinarily are explained by being caused by belief-desire pairs in the right way. Or a Saturnian shmagent could have a besire-based psychology, where their movements are explained by a mental state that both represents some fact and aims to make the agent realize that fact (probably together with extra means-beliefs).

Sophisticated shmagents indicate that constitutivism is extensionally inadequate for two reasons. First, even though sophisticated shmagents do not count as agents according to views like Korsgaard's, one can easily stipulate that "they are intelligent; are knowledgeable; perform what looks a lot like actions for what looks a lot like reasons; are capable of (what seems to be) deliberation and reflecting on what they do; and are able to prefer different behaviours."<sup>29</sup> If so, a norm such as CI should apply to and have force for them just as much as ordinary agents: they appear sophisticated enough to be part of our normative practices. But constitutivists who think agency has significant normative commitments, such as Korsgaard, cannot explain that.<sup>30</sup>

Second, the final reason mentioned in section 2 for going constitutivist applies here too. Many want to explain norms with universal normative force: they apply to and have force for all relevant entities. This is so whether we

28 Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*, 1–2.

29 Leffler, "New Shmagency Worries," 132–33.

30 An important addendum is that many think that Kant's, or at least Korsgaard's, view is not just a view of moral principles but also a view of principles of rationality. It is unclear whether these should count as principles of structural rationality, but if they do, one might wonder whether a Kantian approach to rationality might work if one opts for a constitutivist explanation of *structural rationality*, whatever we make of morality. However, the very fact that Korsgaard's view is the standard example of a constitutivist view of morality that does not seem to deliver in the face of shmagency worries indicates that it will have problems on the rationality side too.

discuss morality or rationality. For example, Kantians presumably want to explain the force of CI for creatures whose behavior should be explained by the Humean theory of motivation or desires but lack intrinsic commitments to CI. The same seems true regarding norms of rationality. So it is not just that we should include some shmagents in our practices. Perhaps constitutivism explains the force of norms for too few entities.

Here, one might suspect that Korsgaard's so-called plight inescapability can help with shmagency as modal escapability. Plight inescapability says, roughly, that agents continuously face new situations where they have to act, which means that not taking action is also a way of taking action: agents are always bound to live up to the norms of agency, even if they try not to. But plight inescapability will not help. It is quite possible to be a shmagent who has to live up to the plight of shmagency, for *what* one has to live up to depends on how one is constituted, not on whether living up to it is inescapable.<sup>31</sup> If one has a belief/desire- or desire-based psychology, then that ends up being what one has to live up to. So constitutivist agency seems modally escapable whether or not it is plight inescapable.

Now to the second of the two novel shmagency worries. It, too, can be developed in response to a constitutivist response to the original objection. This time, the constitutivist response is that constitutivist-style agency is relevantly *valuable* (or otherwise normatively justifiable—feel free to trade in your value coins for some other normative currency here, but I shall use the language of value for simplicity).<sup>32</sup> Whether or not they intend to endorse it formulated in exactly this way themselves, versions of this argument are implicit in, *inter alia*, positions taken by Michael Smith and Michael Bratman.<sup>33</sup> Their thought is that normatively constituted agency is valuable, so it is *ipso facto* valuable to conform to the norms that constitute it. We can then reply to the shmagency objection by saying that being an agent rather than a shmagent is normatively valuable for to us, or that the value of agency matters more than that of shmagency.

In response to this worry, I formulated another new shmagency objection that I called shmagency as underdetermination.<sup>34</sup> That formulation, it has turned out, was unfortunately somewhat obscure, so I shall attempt to develop

31 I suspect that *no* type of inescapability is fully modally escapable because of the reason given in the main text. But discussing all possible types of inescapability that constitutivists have proposed would take us too far afield. See Ferrero, "Inescapability Revisited" and "The Simple Constitutivist Move" for important distinctions, however.

32 Previously, I toyed with calling this type of justification "normative inescapability" (Leffler, "New Shmagency Worries"). But there is something to be said for skipping that label: there are too many uses of "inescapability" anyway.

33 Smith, "The Magic of Constitutivism"; Bratman, *Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*.

34 Leffler, "New Shmagency Worries," 140–43.

it. Its core point is this: to reply to the shmagency objection, constitutivists who appeal to value are committed to saying that the value of agency supports or justifies being an agent *rather than* a shmagent, or at least is such that the value of agency matters much more than that of shmagency (e.g., we are to maximize the value of agency but not of shmagency; so, assuming their values count for as much *ceteris paribus*, the former now outweighs the latter). For if they would not, they would not have shown that the value in question justifies being an agent rather than a shmagent, so the value-based response to the question of whether to be an agent rather than a shmagent would not show that it is agency rather than shmagency that is justified. This means that constitutivists who opt for the value-based response to the shmagency objection need to show that the value of agency justifies agency rather than shmagency. But they do not. Sometimes, the value in question lends equal support to both, and sometimes, the value even supports shmagency rather than agency. So it is underdetermined whether the value supports agency rather than shmagency.

Let me articulate this point in greater depth. The shmagency-as-underdetermination worry already accepts the assumption that what is constitutive of agency has some value. But the problem is that unless it is shown that it is valuable to follow the norms that are constitutive of agency *rather than* those of shmagency, we do not have a response to the shmagency objection, for nothing would support our being agents and following its norms rather than the norms of some shmagent. The value of agency would then not be significant enough to do the theoretical work it is supposed to do to reply to the shmagency objection. This would suggest that constitutivism is false.

We may, again, use a version of Korsgaard's Kantian constitutivism to exemplify the point. As mentioned, she thinks that all (human) agents always are committed to CI. (For simplicity, ignore HI for now.) Assume also, now unlike Korsgaard, that you were to justify CI with some value of your choice. For simplicity again, perhaps we bring about happiness in the world if we are agents who have CI as a feature of our psychologies.

It is, however, easy to think of occasions on which being committed to CI will not help to bring about happiness in a way that an alternative does not do just as well or better. Assume that some version of the golden rule, saying that one ought to treat one's neighbor as one would want to be treated oneself, makes people equally happy as CI proper. Then it seems just as valuable to be a shmagent committed to the golden rule as an agent committed to CI. So the value of happiness does not support CI of agency rather than the golden rule of shmagency.

Alternatively, assume that a murderer comes knocking on the door every Tuesday to ask about a friend who is inside, we have normal desires and

commitments, and CI requires us not to lie to the murderer. Then it seems that a value-based justification of CI would entail that we are better off being shmagents who are committed to CI on every day of the week except Tuesdays. Then we can lie to the murderer and be happy that our friend does not get murdered. But people whose psychology disposes them to act on the golden rule or on a rule like *CI-except-on-Tuesdays* are not agents on Korsgaard's account: she needs all agents to always be committed to acting on CI. They are, rather, shmagents.

Generalizing, unless a constitutivist can show that the value they appeal to supports agency rather than some sort of shmagency in the vicinity of agency, they have not shown that the value supports being committed to the demands of agency rather than some form of shmagency. As such, they have not shown why value supports or justifies agency rather than shmagency.

Objection: following CI is likely to bring about *some* amount of happiness, even if other norms could also be valuable in virtue of the happiness they bring about. Does that not mean that it would be valuable to go with CI after all, though perhaps *pro tanto* rather than all things considered? Yes, it would be. But again, the underdetermination objection accepts that agency has some value. What constitutivists need is the comparative claim that the value justifies or supports agency *rather than* shmagency (or that the value of agency needs to be treated as more important). Otherwise, they have not shown that it is agency rather than shmagency that is justified or supported. And this is quite orthogonal to the *pro tanto*/all-things-considered distinction: we may reasonably wonder whether the value in question supports CI rather than some alternative both *pro tanto* and all things considered. However, it is hard to see why agency would be more valuable than shmagency or have value that we would have to treat as more important than that of shmagency. It is very plausible that shmagency is just as valuable or even more valuable than agency. We see that with the golden rule or *CI-except-on-Tuesdays* examples.<sup>35</sup>

Another objection: Could the constitutivist perhaps stipulate that the value of rationality is to be maximized, making it look straightforward that constitutive norms of rationality will count for a lot? Unfortunately, maximizing that value rather than some other seems quite implausible. There are always cases of so-called rational irrationality.<sup>36</sup> If a burglar threatens to kill your family and you have to have the combinations of mental states that an irrational shmagent

35 This point is analogous to a familiar objection to rule consequentialism: much like it is rule fetishistic to cling to a rule justified by some value in a moral context when there is some other rule that brings about just as much or more of the value, it seems constitution fetishistic to say that whatever value supports our being constituted as agents supports it rather than other, equally or more valuable, shmagency constitutions.

36 For seminal discussion, see Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*.

rather than a rational agent would have to save them, the value of shmagency surely trumps that of rationality. In this case, it is more valuable to be a shmagent rather than an agent: being an agent might even have negative value. Yet it is hard to specify when and where shmagency might be equally or more valuable than agency. So constitutivists have much explanatory work to do if they want to show how it is agency rather than shmagency that is justified or supported by some value.

In summary, all this means that the shmagency objection remains deeply concerning for constitutivists in spite of their standard replies. Even worse, the new shmagency worries risk being problematic for various types of constitutivism beyond Korsgaard's—including, as I shall argue, various types of constitutivism about rationality. The new worries show that leading constitutivist replies from inescapability or value do not help to defend it, even though arguments for constitutivism about structural rationality often rely on inescapability or value.

Hence, I shall proceed to launch the shmagency challenges of modal escapability and underdetermination against constitutivism about the normativity of structural principles of rationality and argue that they go unmet. So constitutivists about structural rationality suffer from versions of these new shmagency worries. As a result, they appear unable to explain why the norms of structural rationality apply to and have force for all relevant entities.

#### 4. FIRST-PERSON-PRIVILEGE VIEWS

I start with Nicholas Southwood's view.<sup>37</sup> It fits the constitutivist schema well: Southwood argues that requirements of structural rationality *S* are normative in virtue of being constitutive *C* of having a first-personal standpoint *A*.

For Southwood, a standpoint is "constructed out of our particular beliefs, desires, hopes, fears, goals, values, and so on, and relative to which things can go well or badly. Our standpoints describe what matters to us; they are ones in which we are invested."<sup>38</sup> It is because the requirements of rationality are constitutive of our standpoints that they apply to us.

Southwood also thinks that the normative force they have is a special kind of first-personal normative force. What that might be is unclear, but we can run

37 Southwood, "Vindicating the Normativity of Rationality" and "Constructivism and the Normativity of Practical Reason." For other criticism, see Broome, "Replies to Southwood, Kearns and Star, and Cullity"; Coons and Faraci, "First-Personal Authority and the Normativity of Rationality"; and Levy, "Does the Normative Question about Rationality Rest on a Mistake?"

38 Southwood, "Vindicating the Normativity of Rationality," 26.

with the idea for now, for there are deeper worries ahead. Southwood can be read as taking it to be constitutive of standpoints to adhere to norms of structural rationality. But could we be such that we just have something very much like standpoints (of Southwood's type) without committing ourselves to the norms? Call them "shmandpoints."

I think we can have shmandpoints. It does not seem like we, descriptively, necessarily have Southwood's first-personal standpoints in the sense that we have things that matter to us or we are invested in. Perhaps we can be easily swayed by fashion, whether in the form of winds of political rhetoric or just changing social mores more broadly, therefore attaining or retaining new desires, emotions, goals, and values. Maybe we even do that without responding to reasons: some people happily try out what is new just because they can. Or perhaps we are just inclined to change our minds without being responsive to reasons: one day we feel like taking a swim, on another like taking a walk. If so, things would not seem to matter to us or like we were invested in them, for if something did matter to us or we were invested in it, we would not be willing to give it up for no reason. Yet we may have ephemeral and fickle desires, emotions, goals, or values that do not require reasons to change. They may come and go without us having much commitment to them.<sup>39</sup>

If it is possible to have a shmandpoint rather than a standpoint, standpoints seem modally escapable. And there are certainly possible creatures who do. Call them Mercurians, though possible humans also fit the profile. By stipulation, they are born disposed to be easily swayed by fashion or otherwise with an inclination to change their minds for no reason. Again, they only have shmandpoints, not standpoints. From there, however, they can ask the question of whether to have shmandpoints or standpoints, and hence ask the shmagency question from an external point of view. This means that Southwood fails to explain the applicability and, therefore, force of norms of rationality for the Mercurians.

Southwood's view, therefore, seems extensionally inadequate in virtue of both motivations for the modal escapability version of the shmagency challenge mentioned above. First, we can stipulate that the Mercurians (or fickle humans) have all the other properties that make them appropriate to include in our normative practices—intelligence; knowledgeability; the ability to perform something like actions for things that are much like reasons; capacities for

39 One could attempt to stipulate that just having certain desires, emotions, goals, or values means that they matter to one or that one is invested in them in some thinner sense, such that one could still give them up for no reason. But it seems Moore contradictory to say " $x$  matters to me, but I would be willing to give up  $x$  for no reason" or "I am invested in  $x$ , but I would be willing to give up  $x$  for no reason." Here we are no longer in the territory of mattering or investment.

deliberation and reflection; and preferences for different things—so the norms should apply to them. Second, because of this stipulation, it is also plausible that if we want to explain norms of rationality with universal force, they should apply to the Mercurians.

Southwood might reply that my focus is off: maybe there are Mercurians, but even their shmandpoints would be governed by norms of structural rationality, so the objection is beside the point. But presumably, the Mercurians need not be committed to a norm like Instrumental Irrationality either. Perhaps they sometimes—often enough to survive—manage to take means to ends because their desires direct attention to the means to their satisfaction rather than out of a separate capacity or disposition to do so. So the norm need not be *constitutive* of a shmandpoint consisting of ephemeral and fickle desires, emotions, goals, or values.

Another line of argument would be to claim that it is valuable to have standpoints, *ipso facto* taking the second of the two constitutivist reply routes to shmagency outlined in section 3. But it seems unlikely that having practical standpoints that we are invested in necessarily is going to be very valuable. One can easily see how changing one's values and normative commitments—including commitments to rationality—along with fashion trends could be prudentially beneficial. Or just think of the burglar case in which you have to be structurally irrational to save your family and add that there may be very many burglars in the world. In turn, this means that it is very hard to explain to what extent, if any, the value of having a practical standpoint supports having a standpoint rather than a shmandpoint. This opens up space for a version of the underdetermination worry. Why have standpoints rather than shmandpoints? Good question.

Southwood has, however, developed his view. Instead of discussing his earlier view further, we can make a fresh start with it. In more recent work, he suggests that the norms of practical reason apply and have force because they govern answers to the question of “what to do,” where that is a question of truths that determine what “the thing to do” is.<sup>40</sup> “The thing to do” just means a correct answer to the question we attempt to answer when reasoning practically. This is the question of “what to do”—and the question of “what to do,” Southwood adds, is the question one attempts to answer when one uses one's faculty of practical reason. It is not answered just by appealing to what is required by being an agent.

Southwood's new view does, therefore, not seem constitutivist. But it can be reformulated. Perhaps the theory *T* could say that the faculty of practical

40 Southwood, “Constructivism about the Normativity of Practical Reason.”

reason is (at least partially) constitutive of agency, and, hence, that answering the “what to do” question *C* is (at least partially) constitutive of agency *A*—and that *that* involves norms of structural rationality *S*. Alternatively, perhaps practical reason *C*, including *S*, is an *aspect* of agency *A* whether or not it is constitutive of agency *simpliciter*. With such maneuvers, we can generate forms of constitutivism based on Southwood’s later view. In virtue of the attractions of constitutivism in section 2, these are interesting to discuss regardless of which view Southwood now endorses.

However, the reformulated views have no responses to shmagency objections either. Let us start with the modal escapability worry. Instead of asking “what to do” questions about “the thing to do” guided by practical reasoning, it is easy to imagine creatures who could aim for “the thing to shmo” rather than “the thing to do” and make use of some ability of “practical shmeasuring” rather than “practical reasoning” to get there. And practical shmeasuring need not be guided by norms of structural rationality such as Instrumental Irrationality; it could be guided by some other set of norms instead, such as *Instrumental-Irrationality-Except-at-2:00 AM-on-Tuesdays*. Call that a principle of “shmatationality.”

Doing is modally escapable when contrasted with shmoing. At the very least, there can shmagents who have a faculty of practical shmeasuring that allows them to *shmo* using principles of shmatationality rather than *do* using principles of rationality. These shmagents need not be incompetent or unsophisticated; in fact, it will be very hard to differentiate committed followers of Instrumental Irrationality from followers of Instrumental-Irrationality-Except-at-2:00 AM-on-Tuesdays, so they may very well ask the external shmagency question from their perspective. But then the normativity of Instrumental Irrationality is not explained in their case, much like how the normativity of norms constitutive of standpoints is not explained in the case of agents who are committed to shmandpoints. Nevertheless, as before, we want to include them in our normative practices and explain the force of norms of rationality for them. We can stipulate that they are sophisticated enough for that.

Furthermore, shmagency as underdetermination reappears here too. Perhaps it is valuable to be an agent who settles on the thing to do using norms of structural rationality. But when and to what extent? It is unclear why any value would support Instrumental Irrationality over Instrumental-Irrationality-Except-at-2:00 AM-on-Tuesdays, given their similarity. And things get trickier still at some worlds. Somewhere in modal space, an evil demon punishes us for eternity if we go with the former rather than the latter. So the underdetermination version of the shmagency objection applies here too. It is unclear why it would be more valuable to be a doer rather than a “shmoer,” and hence we lack reason to suppose it is valuable to be agents (doers) rather than shmagents (shmoers).



To sum up, regardless of version, Southwood's first-person-privilege view seems rather implausible when construed as a form of constitutivism. It allows us to be shmagents both modally and evaluatively. In fairness, Southwood does not appear to treat his later view as constitutivist, and to the extent that it is not a constitutivist view, it might be off the hook from the objections presented here. But that simultaneously means that it might not have the potential theoretical benefits of constitutivism.

## 5. SINGLE-MENTAL-STATE VIEWS

It is now time to consider single-mental-state view. On such accounts, tokens of some particular type of mental state are wholly or partially constituted by some norm of rationality—as well as such that they can explain the applicability and force of that norm. For example, it might be constitutive of an intention to  $\phi$  to be disposed to take the necessary means  $\psi$  one believes there are to  $\phi$ , as per Instrumental Irrationality.<sup>41</sup> I shall consider three types of single-mental-state view of this kind, regarding beliefs, intentions, and desires. I shall first outline each and then argue that they suffer from the shmagency objections.<sup>42</sup>

### 5.1. Beliefs

Perhaps the most famous nonmoral constitutivism is constitutivism about belief. The idea here is that beliefs are (at least in part) constituted by aiming at truth.<sup>43</sup> While this thesis can be descriptive, and hence concern whether we

41 This brief description raises further theoretical questions that also appear for the views I shall discuss below. (I want to thank an anonymous reviewer for pushing me to make them explicit.) For one example, is it possible to intend without taking known necessary means, and therefore even possible to intend instrumentally irrationally? This is a version of the problem of bad action for constitutivism but applied to intentions rather than actions: presumably, constitutivists need an answer (cf. note 23 above). Other questions are familiar from the literature on norms of structural rationality: for example, should we cash out Instrumental Irrationality in wide- or narrow-scoping terms, such that  $A$  either can stop intending to  $\phi$  or start to intend to  $\psi$ ; or does  $A$  have to start to intend to  $\psi$  on pain of irrationality? Fortunately, we can sidestep these concerns here: they are orthogonal to shmagency worries.

42 Some philosophers sometimes appear to embrace versions of both single-mental-state views and what I call system-of-mental-states views below, including Brunero (*Instrumental Rationality*), Bratman (*Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*), and Goldman (*Reasons from Within*). Sometimes they talk about the constitutive norms of token mental states, and sometimes about systems fitting together. Insofar as I discuss both types of views in different places, I will also cover their views throughout my discussion.

43 This is a familiar view and references snowball quickly. For now, however, see Bratman, "Intention, Belief, and Instrumental Rationality," "Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical," and *Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*; Brunero, *Instrumental Rationality*; Railton, "On

tend to actually believe the truth, the important part here is normative. The idea is that beliefs are constituted wholly or in part by some norm according to which we aim to get at the truth. Perhaps we aim to believe  $p$  based on the evidence for the truth of  $p$ , or give up  $p$  if the evidence contradicts  $p$ . Responding to the evidence in such ways could be at least part of what it is to believe that  $p$ .

On this account, we can hope to explain at least epistemic norms such as Modus Ponens. As Modus Ponens is truth preserving, if one aims at believing the truth, one should form a belief that  $q$  on pain of irrationality if one believes that  $p$  and that  $p \rightarrow q$ . Possibly, however, beliefs may also contribute to explaining structural norms of practical rationality. If one is a so-called cognitivist about norms of practical rationality, one takes action to involve belief in some relevant manner, and it is the norms of belief that explain norms of practical rationality.<sup>44</sup> For example, if intentions are a species of belief, a norm such as Instrumental Irrationality could be cashed out as saying that one is irrational if one holds inconsistent beliefs and does not make one's intentions consistent with beliefs about the necessary means to satisfying them.

Understood as such, the single-mental-state view of norms of rationality constituting beliefs fits the constitutivist schema. The theory  $T$  of some norms of structural rationality  $S$  takes them to be constitutive  $C$  of belief, and these are an aspect of our agency  $A$ . Probably, additional assumptions are needed to explain why the norms have force—perhaps believing is inescapable or valuable—but at least we can explain why they *apply* to people.

It is, however, perfectly possible to have “shmeliefs” rather than beliefs, in the sense that one has mental states about reality that need not be responsive to a truth norm. There are many possibilities familiar from the literature on belief and belief-adjacent mental states that do not seem esoteric enough to have to be the mental states of aliens: ordinary humans quite possibly instantiate them all. I shall focus on three examples.

First, it seems possible to entertain thoughts—in a broad, colloquial sense—without a truth aim. The summarizing label of “entertaining” is mine, but it usefully brings together many nonbelief attitudes one may contrast with belief.<sup>45</sup> For example, one may entertain a proposition by *pretending* that it is true when

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the Hypothetical and Non-Hypothetical in Reasoning about Belief and Action”; Velleman, “On the Aim of Belief”; Velleman and Shah, “Doxastic Deliberation”; and Williams, “Deciding to Believe.”

44 Harman, “Practical Reasoning” and *Change in View*; Setiya, “Cognitivism about Instrumental Reason”; Velleman, *Practical Reflection* and “What Good Is a Will?”; and Wallace, “Normativity, Commitment, and Instrumental Reason.”

45 For inspiration and cases, see Velleman’s “On the Aim of Belief” and the follow-up paper by Velleman and Shah, “Doxastic Deliberation.”

playing with a child. Or one may entertain propositions *for argument's sake* without aiming at truth with the acceptance of that proposition. Or one may entertain a proposition as a *hypothesis*, holding it conditionally on further testing but nevertheless independently of its truth value when forming it.

Second, perhaps it is possible to “alieve” something without believing it.<sup>46</sup> Aliefs are mental states with a special kind of associative structure: they involve affective, representational, and behavioral content activated by the environment. If it is dark outside, one may alieve that spooky ghosts are on the move, that going outside is dangerous, and that one should not go out for a walk. But aliefs are not beliefs. They need not involve regarding something as true. This does, in fact, explain at least some cases where they stand in tension with beliefs, as they are thought paradigmatically to do. One may truly believe going outside is safe yet alieve that it is not.

Third, perhaps there are intuitions that are *seemings* about reality without being beliefs.<sup>47</sup> George Bealer, for example, characterizes intuitions phenomenologically as intellectual seemings that are neither beliefs nor mere hunches: they present certain facts as necessary. Importantly, they do so fairly nonplastically, that is, without changing often even in response to evidence. For example, I have a strong intellectual seeming that the gambler's fallacy is not fallacious, despite learning the opposite when I studied statistics many years ago.

Assume, then, that there are creatures who only have belief-like mental states that are not guided by a truth norm, whether these are entertainings, aliefs, or seemings that *p*. You decide whether they are humans or Neptunians; in either case, they are shmeliervers. The shmeliervers need not be committed to altering their belief-like states in accordance with the evidence, for none of these mental states are constituted by a truth norm. The shmeliervers are then, in a sense, external to agency, but they may very well wonder whether to be believers or shmeliervers from their perspectives.

However, the truth norm for belief should be applicable to and have normative force even for the shmeliervers. It seems epistemically outrageous that someone could have mental states about reality that are not regulated by the evidence: imagine being in a political discussion with someone who claims only to entertain, intuit, or alieve in propositions such that they see no need to respond to evidence that contradicts their claims. Yet a single-mental-state constitutivist cannot straightforwardly explain why evidential norms would apply to this person. Perhaps the norms in fact do, but if so, that would be in

46 Gendler, “Alief and Belief.”

47 Bealer, “Intuition and the Autonomy of Philosophy”; cf. Huemer, “Compassionate Phenomenal Conservatism.”

virtue of something other than the mental states of the shmelievers: for example, in virtue of the value of good public deliberation. Hence, the truth norm of belief is modally escapable and the constitutivist view extensionally inadequate.

Instead, one plausibly needs to appeal to some value of belief to defend norms of rationality as constitutive of belief. It seems extremely plausible that it is valuable, in general, to have (true) beliefs. They are crucial not just for good public deliberation but to represent means in action; they are likely to be integral to our identities; and, in cases such as Pascal's, they might even bring great rewards.

But then the underdetermination worry looms. Such pragmatic considerations do not say much about whether or when it is valuable to believe or shmelieve. This means that the norms of rationality implicit in belief remain underdetermined. Gesturing at the instrumental benefits of believing truly would not get us a view that tells us whether to be believers that  $p$  or shmelievers that  $p$ , for just speaking of instrumental benefits does not guarantee that the norms constitutive of beliefs *rather than* of shmeliefs will bring the benefits in question.

Now, there is of course a literature on instrumentalist justifications of epistemic norms.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps true beliefs matter in general because they are likely to be conducive to us achieving our aims. Or perhaps epistemic reasons constitutively are reasons to believe that  $p$  because they improve the satisfiability of our aims. Could a constitutivist not opt for a value-based justification of beliefs (or other epistemic phenomena) such as that?

Unfortunately, the problem with such views is that truth need not be what uniquely satisfies our aims; it has yet to be shown why being believers rather than shmelievers is justified. Sometimes it seems better to believe in Santa than to believe that Santa does not exist. What kind of believers (or shmelievers) it is valuable to be in the light of potentially diverging concerns is exactly the question we are trying to answer. As such, shmagency as underdetermination is a pertinent worry here too.

Another response to shmagency as underdetermination is to argue that the deliberative question of whether to believe that  $p$  is transparent once the question of whether  $p$  is answered. The latter settles the former, so there is no further question to be asked about their interrelation: it is always truth that settles what to believe in deliberation. This could even rule out Pascal's wager cases, where practical benefits seem to come into play, since we may not want to count them as genuine deliberation.<sup>49</sup>

48 For some prominent examples, see Cowie, "In Defence of Instrumentalism about Epistemic Normativity"; and Kornblith, *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature*.

49 Velleman and Shah, "Doxastic Deliberation," 530n15.

However, this argument just pushes the underdetermination worry one step further down the line. Sure, you can define deliberation as involving only reasoning about genuine beliefs. But then the pragmatic question will instead become: Is it more valuable to be a deliberator or a “shm liberator”?—namely, someone who “shm liberates” rather than deliberates with the aim of holding nonbelief mental states such as entertainings, aliefs, or intuitions that are useful rather than true. So the underdetermination worry reappears. Therefore, I conclude that single-belief constitutivism suffers from both shmagency objections.

## 5.2. Intentions

Another common way to explain rational norms makes use of intentions. There are many theories of intentions, however, and I cannot discuss them all here. I shall instead assume that on the relevant accounts, intentions are part of the explanation of the force and applicability of the norms that constitute them and are distinct from beliefs or desires (treated in sections 5.1 and 5.3, respectively). If we are inspired by Bratman, for example, we might take intentions to be mental states that functionally aim to execute and coordinate our plans.<sup>50</sup>

The core idea on single-intentions accounts is that norms of structural rationality are constitutive of intentions. For example, Instrumental Irrationality is a plausible contender for that. It might very well be constitutive of an intention to be disposed to avoid that type of irrationality: if  $A$  intends to  $\phi$ , and  $A$  believes that  $\psi$ -ing is a necessary means to  $\phi$ -ing, and  $A$  does not intend to  $\psi$ , then  $A$  is irrational.<sup>51</sup> This would also make single-intentions views fit the constitutivist schema. Our theory  $T$  of some norms of structural rationality  $S$ , such as Instrumental Irrationality, is to treat them as constitutive  $C$  of some aspect of our agency—namely, intentions  $A$ .

Intentions construed as such are, however, modally escapable. Consider again the Martians and Saturnians. They are similar enough to Korsgaard-style constitutivist agents committed to CI, but they are not disposed to follow it. Instead, the Martians have beliefs and desires, and the Saturnians have besires (and beliefs). They seem similar enough to agents to be such that we should

50 Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason and Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*. Note, however, that Bratman’s full view is complex and might be best interpreted as a systems-of-mental-states view, as per section 3 below.

51 Depending on how one fills in the details here, perhaps  $A$  does not truly intend to  $\phi$  unless they also intend to  $\psi$ . On a weaker account, perhaps  $A$  has to start to *try* to form the new intention but need not necessarily succeed. The former possibility raises a version of the problem of bad action about intentions: cf. notes 23 and 41 above for details and references. But again, shmagency is a concern separate from these details.

explain how norms hold for them, yet they need not count as agents in Korsgaard's view, for they lack commitments to CI.

*Mutatis mutandis*, this line of reasoning carries over to intentions. It might be constitutive of action to act based on an intention that is constituted by a norm of rationality. But then there are many possible creatures who do something *very much like* acting, and in whose cases constitutivists about norms of rationality constitutive of intention fail to explain norms of rationality. It is quite possible that they have intentions in either some sense other than ordinary humans—perhaps belief-desire pairs count as Martian intentions—or that they lack intentions at all—perhaps belief-desire pairs should not be interpreted as intentions. Regardless, the Martians and Saturnians escape Instrumental Irrationality, so they can ask an external shmagency question. Yet modal escapability is problematic for by now familiar reasons. We can stipulate that the Martians and Saturnians are similar enough to plausibly be included in our normative practices, and we want to explain how the norms hold universally, not just for some relevant entities.

One may, however, be tempted to think that it is not so bad to avoid explaining a norm such as Instrumental Irrationality for the Martians and Saturnians.<sup>52</sup> After all, Martians and Saturnians do not have intentions construed as distinct mental states, and the thought here is that Instrumental Irrationality is constitutive of such intentions. Why should they have it?

Martians and Saturnians should have it because taking means to ends no doubt matters to them too, much like it does to humans with intentions. That is how “actions” are brought about according to the Humean picture that holds for the Martians, as well as, plausibly, according to the besire model of motivation that holds for the Saturnians. But then, Martians and Saturnians also seem able to have combinations of mental states where they have ends given by desires or besires that they fail to combine with relevant and available means beliefs, and hence seem irrational. Why this is problematic should be explained, whether we are concerned with entities who count as agents by some constitutivist standard or not.

Instrumental Irrationality is one way to articulate a norm of means-ends coherence, but there could also be others. Hence, the constitutivist who wants to explain the normativity of that norm using intentions faces a choice that stems from the Martians and Saturnians. They can either say that the normativity of Instrumental Irrationality should be given the same explanation for Martians, Saturnians, and humans, or they could opt for some other explanation regarding the Martians and Saturnians. The former option seems unpalatable,

52 I want to thank an anonymous reviewer for helping me think through this objection.

as Martians and Saturnians *ex hypothesi* lack intentions, but why should we not go with the latter?

There is an analogous worry regarding normative reasons for shmagents. When I discussed it previously, I argued that the “reasons” of sophisticated shmagents are similar enough, pretheoretically, to human reasons to seem apt to be given the same explanation.<sup>53</sup> However, this is less clear in the case of principles of rationality, as *ex hypothesi*, the Martians and Saturnians lack the intentions that might be partially constituted by Instrumental Irrationality. They are in this respect dissimilar to us. In fact, this point even risks undermining the reasons for which modal inescapability seems problematic. First, instead of treating them like us in our normative practices, perhaps their difference from humans with intentions means they can be part of our normative practices *in a different way*. Second, instead of explaining means-ends coherence with universal applicability to them and us, the dissimilarity might indicate that they no longer count as relevant entities in whose cases we need to explain it.

However, whether or not these reasons are ultimately undermined, I think we have good reason to strive for an identical explanation of the normativity of means-ends coherence for sophisticated shmagents and humans. This reason comes from theoretical virtue. A theory that explains how instrumental rationality works for us in one way but in other ways for sophisticated shmagents—presumably, in different ways depending on the different ways in which shmagents are not agents—seems awkwardly disunified.

Such a view would fail to possess many familiar theoretical virtues. It is not parsimonious, as it admits of several explanatory mechanisms rather than just one. It lacks theoretical unity for the same reason. It is ad hoc, as it seems to invite novel explanations in response to novel counterexamples (there is one for Martians, one for Saturnians, etc.). It is not conservative, as it does not integrate our new explanations with previous theories by explaining means-ends coherence norms for Martians and Saturnians in the same way as it explains them for humans. And perhaps most importantly, it lacks many aspects of explanatory power: it is very sensitive to changes in background conditions about how the psychology of some particular creature works; it lacks a precise *explanandum*, as it tries to explain different kinds of means-ends coherence; and it lacks cognitive salience, as it requires reformulation to explain means-ends coherence norms for many different conceivable psychologies.<sup>54</sup> So we had better avoid a disunified view.

53 See Leffler, “New Shmagency Worries,” 130n26, 134–35.

54 Here I rely on the compelling approach to explanatory power from Ylikoski and Kuorikoski, “Dissecting Explanatory Power.”

The modal escapability version of the shmagency objection remains, then. Could we instead reply to the original shmagency worry by appealing to the value of intentions? Then we might perhaps also explain why having them rather than being Martians or Saturnians without them is justified by their value. And intentions certainly seem to have their uses. First, as Bratman famously has emphasized, they are *efficient*: they help to coordinate our actions with ourselves socially and over time. Second, as Bratman has also emphasized, they may help us be *self-governing*. The thought, roughly, is that we can govern our own actions if we have long-term plans, whereas agents without plans fail to do so well. Third, we may think that intentions allow us to be part of our ordinary practices of moral responsibility, for adhering to the norms of practical rationality is what makes us the sources of our actions and therefore able to be held responsible and take responsibility ourselves. Call the latter *moral participation*.<sup>55</sup>

However, underdetermination worries nevertheless remain. It is unclear *how* and *when* it is valuable to have intentions. Even though intentions may have several kinds of value, which may make us subject to their implicit norms of rationality, cases of rational irrationality still abound: if a burglar will kill your family if you do not act in a way that would count as irrational with respect to your intentions, that surely outweighs whatever value the intentions may have. Or if that case is not extreme enough, perhaps an evil demon will punish you forever unless you act in a way that contradicts whichever norm might be constitutive of intention.

Cases multiply easily, and as long as they are possible, what is valuable here does not seem to be intentions that feature Instrumental Irrationality but rather following some norm similar to it that allows for relevant exceptions. In other words, these cases indicate that agency does not appear justified or supported by value, in contrast with shmagency. This is shmagency as underdetermination again.

Perhaps it could be replied that the values of intention add up. Efficiency, self-governance, and moral participation *together* may make it very valuable to have intentions governed by the right norms. That seems right, but unhelpful. For as long as there are possible cases of rational irrationality available—and there always are, because we can always formulate more extreme versions (perhaps unless one makes oneself structurally irrational, life as we know it will cease tomorrow and everyone who has ever lived will be tormented forever)—we are led into a situation where the value of having intentions in fact does not support having intentions but rather something much like them. As such,

55 For efficiency, see Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*. For self-governance, see Bratman, *Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*. For moral participation, see Roughley, *Wanting and Intending*.



it seems better to have “shmintentions” that are not governed by the norms constitutive of intentions. That, too, is shmagency as underdetermination again.

### 5.3. *Desires*

The final single mental state I shall consider is desire. On one account, taking means to ends is instrumentally rational because it is constitutive of desire to do so.<sup>56</sup> Here, the relevant aspect of agency *A* is desires, the constitutive feature *C* is a norm of instrumental rationality, and structural rationality *S* in the form of instrumental rationality might be explained by how it is constitutive of desires. This yields a theory *T* of instrumental rationality. Admittedly, the norm that is explained here would have to differ slightly from Instrumental Irrationality, as it is formulated in terms of intentions rather than desires. But that is a minor tweak.

A bigger issue is that desires are modally escapable. We can easily imagine creatures without them. The Saturnians, for example, have besires instead. This gives rise to the same worries about extensional inadequacy as it does about single-belief or single-intention views. There is a space external to agency where someone asks shmagency questions about desires, but the norms constitutive of desires do not hold for them, for they lack desires; yet we want to include besiring creatures in our normative practices. This is because we can stipulate that besiring creatures are relevantly similar to us by being intelligent, knowledgeable, and so on. And the universality intuitions give us some reason to want to explain the force of Instrumental Irrationality for them, too.

But are desires really escapable? The Humean theory of motivation is a venerable account of the explanation of action, and it says that an action is an action in virtue of being caused and rationalized in the right way by belief-desire pairs. If desires are constitutive of action, perhaps they are inescapable in some important sense for all relevant entities. Maybe desires can do a surprising amount of work if we accept the Humean theory of motivation.

However, not even the Humean rationale works. This is so for two reasons. First, the Saturnians might well be shmagents who “shmac” rather than act. But the point of the modal escapability worry is to show how entities who do not count as agents according to some constitutivist views still have psychologies that should be subject to norms. Second, even supposing that desires are necessary for action and that the Saturnians act, *what kind* of desires feature in action still seems variable. Maybe actual agents have desires that are partially constituted by principles of rationality, but other possible creatures may have desires

56 For examples of defenses, see Goldman, *Reasons from Within*; Smith, “A Puzzle about Internal Reasons”; and Railton, “On the Hypothetical and Non-Hypothetical in Reasoning about Belief and Action.”

that are phenomenal, consisting of experienced urges that are not constituted by principles of rationality. Perhaps these are the desires of Jupiterians. But as before, we want to explain the normativity of rationality for the Saturnians and the Jupiterians—they can be stipulated to be sophisticated enough to be part of normative practices, and we want universality in our explanations—so the problem remains regardless.

Are, then, desires that are constituted by principles of rationality valuable and therefore such that we can avoid the shmagency objection? I am not sure why they would be, but even if we could come up with some reason for thinking so, the by now familiar underdetermination worry would remain. It would do so regardless of why we would consider them to be valuable, for to what extent it is valuable to have desires governed by a norm of instrumental rationality rather than, for example, desires or desires that are phenomenal urges is a question that turns on the rational irrationality counterexamples we can construct. And we can always construct more.

It is, instead, time to summarize. So far, in section 4, I have criticized first-person authority views that take principles of rationality to be constitutive of standpoints. In section 5, I criticized single-mental-state views. I focused on beliefs, intentions, and desires, and argued that shmagency objections were problematic for them all. But what if we were to think of mental states as hanging together in *systems* that also are partially constituted by principles of rationality?

#### 6. SYSTEMS-OF-MENTAL-STATES VIEWS

Another possibility is this: maybe mental states hang together in *systems*, and it is constitutive of these systems to be subject to norms of rationality. The core idea here is that mental states can be properly or improperly organized in systems of interrelated states, where these systems also are partially constituted by rational requirements.<sup>57</sup> What differentiates these from single-mental-state views is that the requirements are constitutive of systems that feature tokens of many types of mental states, such as intentions, beliefs, or desires, rather than of single tokens of the states.

There are many systems views. According to Bratman, there can be different kinds of agency, but a kind of self-governing cross-temporal agency is constituted in part by certain principles of rationality.<sup>58</sup> He even thinks that it is

57 Southwood discusses similar views using the terminology of functioning (“Vindicating the Normativity of Rationality”), but as not all views here need be functionalist, I opt for the broader language of systems.

58 Bratman, “Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical,” “Intention, Practical Rationality, and Self-Governance,” and *Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*.

constitutive of individual intentions to organize our actions together with our other intentions—though, presumably, the connections between mental states here also involve other states, such as beliefs, made explicit in a norm such as Instrumental Irrationality.

Some different versions of the systems-of-mental-states view have also been defended by Smith. Sometimes, Smith has indicated that an agent's entire psychology must hang together.<sup>59</sup> On one interpretation of this idea, it is natural to think that principles of rationality are partially constitutive of an agent's psychology, at least when the agent is functioning perfectly. Smith has also sometimes hinted at a weaker view.<sup>60</sup> Here, he argues that Humean agents need to combine beliefs and desires using modally sensitive rational capacities to act. The idea is then that the belief-desire pairs that generate actions on the Humean theory of motivation in fact should be thought of as belief-desire-rationality triples. This would make action in part constituted by rationality and make a belief-desire psychology a kind of system that is regulated by requirements of rationality.

Other versions of this view have recently been developed in the context of the burgeoning post-Broome literature on structural rationality. Alex Worsnip, for example, explains the normativity of rationality in a slightly different way from most constitutivists but nevertheless wants to locate principles of rationality in people's psychologies to give an account of their ontology.<sup>61</sup> And John Brunero attempts to explain the force of at least some norms of rationality in this way. He calls this view "non-normative disjunctivism." This view "looks to the logical relations among the contents of your attitudes, and the constitutive aims of those attitudes, to explain why something is amiss in [the case of irrationality]."<sup>62</sup> Taking beliefs to aim at truth and intentions to aim at effective controlled action, Brunero argues:

If your belief that you must intend to buy a ticket in order to take the train to Charleston achieves its constitutive aim (truth), then you'll take the train to Charleston only if you intend to buy a ticket. But since you don't intend to buy a ticket, you won't take the train to Charleston. If this is so, your intention won't succeed with respect to its constitutive aim. So, given your combination of attitudes, either you're wrong about the need to intend to buy the ticket, and so your belief fails to achieve its constitutive aim, or you won't take the train to Charleston, and so your intention will fail to achieve its constitutive aim. In other words, your

59 Smith, *The Moral Problem* and "The Magic of Constitutivism."

60 Smith, "The Explanatory Role of Being Rational."

61 Worsnip, "What Is (In)coherence?" and *Fitting Things Together*.

62 Brunero, *Instrumental Rationality*, 197.

failing to intend to buy a ticket has ensured a constitutive aim failure: either your belief is false or your intention will not succeed.<sup>63</sup>

Here, beliefs and intentions in combination do in some cases ensure the failure of at least one of the attitudes. Hence the disjunctivism. But whether we are concerned with Bratman's, Smith's, Worsnip's, or Brunero's views, systems of mental states count as constitutivist. The systems are aspects of—or even all of—our agency *A*, and the norms of rationality *S* themselves are partially constitutive of them *C*. These norms are therefore supposed to apply to us, and, in combination with further premises, are often taken to have normative force.

As Southwood has noted, however, this type of view seems *prima facie* obviously susceptible to the shmagency objection.<sup>64</sup> Why be the type of agent Bratman, Smith, Worsnip, Brunero, or others posit rather than some shmagent? Good question. Modal escapability does in fact seem particularly pertinent here. Neither the shmandpoint Mercurians, the belief-desire-pair Martians, the besire Saturnians, the shmelf Neptunians, nor the desires-as-urges Jupiterians are committed to these psychological systems, so there are standpoints external to agency from which they may ask shmagency questions. And as usual, we can stipulate that they are sophisticated enough to be included in our normative practices and that we want to explain the universal force of rational requirements in a way that includes them. Hence, modal escapability is a problem here too.<sup>65</sup>

It seems much more feasible to defend systems views using other values. That is, in fact, what both Bratman and Smith have done. For Bratman, planning agency involves efficiency and self-governance, and we may also want to add Neil Roughley's moral participation point to the picture. And for Smith, agency is a goodness-fixing kind.<sup>66</sup> To be good *qua* agent is to be fully coherent, so being fully good *qua* agent and to be fully coherent amount to the same thing.

63 Brunero, *Instrumental Rationality*, 196–97.

64 Southwood, "Vindicating the Normativity of Rationality."

65 As in section 3.2 above, it might perhaps be thought that as writers such as Bratman and Brunero talk about instrumental rationality in the context of intentions rather than beliefs and desires, some of these worries need not be issues for them. They might only be concerned with creatures with systems of mental states that feature intentions in their sense of the word. However, this worry also received a reply above. We should explain the normativity of norms such as Instrumental Irrationality for creatures such as belief-desire-pair Martians and not just for those with a certain type of intentions as long as they take means to ends, or else our theory will be problematically disunified: it will lack parsimony and unity, be ad hoc and unconservative, and lack explanatory power.

66 Again: for efficiency, see Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*. For self-governance, see Bratman, *Planning, Time, and Self-Governance*. For moral participation, see Roughley, *Wanting and Intending*. And for goodness-fixing agency, see Smith, "The Magic of Constitutivism."

May we then defend the normativity of rationality by appealing to the value of agency on systems-of-mental-states accounts? Unfortunately, the same issues as before remain—and for the same reasons. It is unclear how or when systems are valuable, so it is quite unclear to what extent these values support having systems rather than “shmystems” of mental states: shmystems that are very much like systems of mental states, but are governed by norms of rationality rather than other, similar, norms. Hence, underdetermination remains a worry.

Or does it? In section 5.2 above, I mentioned we could add up the reasons of efficiency, self-governance, and moral participation to strengthen the case for Bratman’s famous account of intentions. While that argument did not work, we may perhaps want to add further values still to them, such as the value of being fully good *qua* agent. Is *that* enough to say that agency rather than shmagency is supported by the value of agency?

I doubt it. We can always formulate new cases of rational irrationality, whether they are cases of burglars, demons who will punish us for eternity, or cases where, unless one is rationally irrational, life as we know it will cease tomorrow and everyone who has ever lived will be tormented forever. As long as there are such possibilities, it seems better to be such that one is constituted by a norm that is similar to a norm of rationality but allows exceptions to accommodate the cases. Shmagency rather than agency seems justified by value again.

A more promising reply is to say that agential goodness is a *kind* of value that is different from others. The thought here is that the full goodness of an agent *qua* agent does not admit of exceptions in the way that ordinary values or reasons might do. Those values and reasons may be weighed against other considerations, but perhaps the value of agency is not a type of value that may be. Then agential goodness seems more universally applicable: if good agency is coherent agency, then what is best for an agent *qua* agent is to be fully coherent, no exceptions allowed. Might that justify a systems-of-mental-states view?

The problem here is that the view seems normatively inadequate. Again, we can always formulate extreme cases of rational irrationality. Is it truly better for an agent even *qua* agent to be fully coherent and rational than to avoid cases where all life ceases to be and everyone, including that agent, gets tormented forever? I doubt that. Even if consequences for other agents do not matter at all to the agent, they will be tormented forever themselves. That does not seem to be a good way for an agent to be an agent.

One final possibility. Maybe systems-of-mental-states views are different from single-mental-state views in another way. While failing to live up to some single-mental-state norm *ipso facto* could entail that one does not have the mental state constituted by being disposed to follow that norm, when we are concerned with systems of mental states, one can sometimes fail to live up to

the norms that constitute some mental states but still have *systems* of mental states that feature them. If so, maybe cases of rational irrationality can be mitigated. Maybe it is sometimes more valuable to be irrational with respect to some intention or belief token one has, but one can still maintain a system of mental states guided by norms of rationality on aggregate.

However, it is easy enough to reformulate the cases to generate underdetermination concerns again. Perhaps life as we know it will cease tomorrow and everyone who has ever lived will be tormented forever if one has a *system* of mental states governed by certain rational norms that are similar to but other than Instrumental Irrationality, such as Instrumental Irrationality-Except-at-2:00 AM-on-Tuesdays. So underdetermination remains worrisome.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Recap time. I introduced constitutivism about structural rationality in section 1. In section 2, I presented some of its attractions. In section 3, I introduced the shmagency objection and defended two recent versions: modal escapability and underdetermination.

Then, I applied these objections to constitutivism about the normativity of structural rationality. In section 4, I argued that the shmagency worries remain significant for first-person-privilege views. In section 5, I argued the same thing for single-mental-state views. In section 6, I showed that the worries apply to systems-of-mental-states views.

Is there a general way to avoid the worries? I am skeptical as long as all the original motivations for constitutivism about rationality are adhered to. However, the assumption that sophisticated shmagents ought to be incorporated into our normative practices and the intuition of universality, which entails that norms of rationality are supposed to be normative for a very extensive range of possible agents and shmagents, might maybe be done away with. If so, maybe norms of rationality can be binding for *some* agents (or sophisticated shmagents) even if they are not for all agents (or sophisticated shmagents). With a suitable take on which norms these are, perhaps the norms will be binding for at least the vast majority of human beings. Such a view may still be defensible. Whether it is, however, will have to be a topic for elsewhere.<sup>67</sup>

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67 This paper develops and extends some arguments in my “New Shmagency Worries” and *The Constitution of Constitutivism* (esp. chs. 1 and 3 and app. B) by running them as problems for constitutivism about structural rationality rather than moral reasons. I am grateful to

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everyone who provided input on those pieces way back when. For feedback on this manuscript, I want to thank Janis Schaab and Michael Bratman for correspondence, an audience at EIDOS at Durham—especially Susan Notess and Sarah Uckelman—and two anonymous reviewers for the *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*. Research in this paper has been conducted within the European Research Council (ERC) project "The Normative and Moral Foundations of Group Agency" at the University of Vienna, which in turn was funded by the ERC under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 740922). Much like I thanked the EU for the Erasmus+ scheme that funded part of the research behind those older pieces, I want to thank the EU for this too.

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