Constitutivism and The Self-Reflection Requirement

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Constitutivism, best exemplified by the work of Christine Korsgaard (1996; 2008; 2009), David Velleman (1989; 2000a; 2000b; 2009) and, to some degree, Connie Rosati (2003),¹ is a theory about the nature of human agency. Regardless of the version of constitutivism that one favors, all versions agree that fully competent agents engage in self-reflection, thereby setting the stage for what some constitutivists, such as Korsgaard, see as constitutivism’s metaethical promise in generating a constructivist account of morally normative requirements. Roughly, the idea is that agents are the source for moral truth by virtue of their rational and agential capacities, just so long as they follow the procedures required for those capacities in the right kind of way.

On these views and for constitutivism broadly understood, the requirement for self-reflection is justified in a variety of ways. For Korsgaard (1996: Lecture 3; 2009: 25-ff, it is a necessary feature of the process of deciding which principles we want to guide our actions and to comprise part of the kinds of agents that we become. For Velleman (1989: 32; 2000a: 193), it is a product of the constitutivist aim of autonomy that we have in action.

On constitutivist views, one must engage in self-reflection to be a fully developed agent. In this regard, self-reflection is a central constitutive feature of agency and, in some cases, it may be the route to the moral reflection that underwrites some constitutivists’ constructivism. The

¹ Rosati has recently argued that she does not take her view to be constitutivist (ms).
problem, however, is that it is not clear in what such a requirement consists. Until we determine which view of self-reflection constitutivism requires, we cannot definitively conclude whether they can use it to underwrite their (constructivist or realist) claims about moral truth. The aim of this paper is to stake out a view of self-reflection that meets the basic terms of constitutivism, and then to determine whether it provides a foundation for the morally normative requirements that some constitutivists claim. To do so I will begin by determining what the object of self-reflection is—that is, whether it is an idealized conception of oneself, the principles upon which one acts, and/or one’s status as a rational agent. I will then determine the nature of the procedure of self-reflection that constitutivism must endorse, given other features of the view. I will then draw tentative conclusions regarding the possible upshots of constitutivist self-reflection, with an eye toward considering whether those upshots guarantee its moral claims. I will conclude by considering whether the most plausible view of self-reflection can underwrite the metaethical promise that constitutivism has.  

1. Constitutivism and Self-Reflection

Most views of agency claim that as long as we have the capacities necessary and sufficient for agency—whatever those capacities turn out to be—we are agents. By contrast, constitutivist views argue that we are agents just insofar as we exercise those capacities in the right kind of way and thereby constitute (or make ourselves into) agents. So I constitute myself as an agent just in case I exercise the capacities for agency in the right kind of way, and I take as my aim that I seek to be the right kind of agent.

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2 On Enoch’s view, see Ferrero (2009), Morton (2011) and Tiffany (2012).
3 This second aim is what Enoch (2006: 176) takes to be distinctive about constitutivist theories, although, as he notes, different constitutivist theories describe this aim in different terms. So, for Korsgaard, the aim is self-constitution while for Velleman it is self-knowledge (176).
What constitutes the “right kind of way” is a matter of debate among constitutivists. For the purpose of sketching what role self-reflection plays in constitutivist views, it is sufficient that the “right kind of way” simply means that agents exercise their agential capacities in a non-deformed fashion. Let’s now consider Korsgaard’s and Velleman’s respective accounts, with a special focus on the role that self-reflection plays in each of their accounts.

1.1. Korsgaard’s Constitutivism

To understand Korsgaard’s view of agency, let’s begin with her account of intentional action. Korsgaard (1996; 2008; 2009) defends a Kantian view of rational action as the only genuine kind of intentional action. An action is intentional, on this view, if and only if it is autonomous. It is autonomous if and only if it is genuinely rational and/or consistent with what Korsgaard (2008a: 123) (in her constitutivist reinterpretation of Kant) calls the unity of the will. The will is unified just in case my judgments about how I should act cohere with my understanding of myself and of the kind of person that I want to be. This means that engaging in intentional action requires much more than simply having a Davidsonian belief-desire pair. Korsgaard (2008b: 13) puts the point in the following way:

To be an agent is to be, at once, autonomous and efficacious […]. By following the categorical imperative we render ourselves autonomous and by following the principle of instrumental reason, we render ourselves efficacious. So by following these principles we constitute ourselves as agents: that is, we take control of our movements.

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4 See the previous footnote.
For Korsgaard, engaging in intentional action puts us in the position necessarily to consider the kinds of agents we will become and currently are. Since one can be more or less unified, one can engage in actions that are closer or farther away from the ideal (174).

So for an action to be an intentional on this view, it must also be a part of the self-constituting process of self-unification described above. To be part of this process in the right kind of way, actions must be autonomous, or willed under the right kinds of normative and instrumental principles. If this sounds too demanding, we might add that one always has the opportunity to consider the kinds of principles under which one is acting and the extent to which they cohere with one’s conception of the kind of agent one wants to be. Korsgaard (1996:100) makes this clear in her discussion of reflection in The Sources of Normativity:

Those who think that the human mind is internally luminous and transparent to itself think that the term ‘self-consciousness’ is appropriate because what we get in human consciousness is a direct encounter with the self. Those who think that the human mind has a reflective structure use the term too, but for a different reason. The reflective structure of the mind is a source of ‘self-consciousness’ because it forces us to have a conception of ourselves. […] From a third-person point of view, outside of the deliberative standpoint, it may look as if what happens when someone makes a choice is that the strongest of his conflicting desires wins. But that isn’t the way it is for you when you deliberate. When you deliberate, it is as if there were something over and above all of your desires, something which is you, and which chooses which desire to act on. This means that the principle or law by which you determine your actions is one that you regard as being expressive of yourself.

It is worth noting that wherever Korsgaard uses the term ‘reflection,’ I take her to mean ‘self-reflection.’ My reason for interpreting her view in this way is twofold. First, she describes what she calls reflection (e.g., in the above passage) in ways that are appropriate specifically to self-

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5 This claim is the object of David Enoch’s (2006; 2009a) shmagency objection. I briefly discuss this objection in section 3.
reflection. Second, I take there to be conceptual requirement on constitutivism that it give special place to self-reflection. One can reflect on the truth (a posteriori or a priori, respectively) of the sentences “All cows are blue” or “Triangles are five-sided figures.” This type of reflection does not require that one worry about oneself or take oneself as an object of thought. By contrast, self-reflection requires that we worry about at least two things: first, the truth of the sentences in question and the agent who believes (or does not believe) such sentences to be true.

With the idea of self-reflection in place, note that Korsgaard takes self-reflection to be a capacity that requires us to consider and to create a conception of ourselves. Here a “conception of ourselves” should be understood in Kantian terms, following Kant’s discussion of autonomy as one’s ability to give the law to oneself. Korsgaard (2009: 25) puts the point thus:

The task of self-constitution involves finding some roles and fulfilling them with integrity and dedication. It also involves integrating those roles into a single identity, a coherent life. People are more or less successful at constituting their identities as unified agents […] But since action requires agency, it follows that an action that is less successful at constituting its agent is to that extent less of an action. So on this conception, “action” is an idea that admits of degrees. An action chosen in a way that more successfully unifies and integrates its agent is more authentically, more fully, an action, than one that does not. And this in turn is where the principles of practical reason, the hypothetical and categorical imperatives, come in to the story. […] The principles of practical reason bind us because, having to act, we must constitute ourselves as unified agents.

Korsgaard (1996:90-93; 2009: 122-3) understands this evaluation to occur in broadly Kantian terms, where I ask about the kinds of principles that I, qua autonomous, rational agent, want to constitute me as such. This evaluation has, for this form of constitutivism, a distinctive moral and rational quality, where I must ask about what I should morally to do and whether the kinds of reasons in light of which I act are of the right moral or justificatory sort.
Korsgaard (1996: 97) makes the point in stronger fashion when she writes, “‘Reason’ means reflective success. So if I decide that my desire is a reason to act, I must decide that on reflection I endorse that desire.” Korsgaard notes that the fact that I reflect on an attitude does not transform the attitude into a reason for action, for if it were to do so the account would fall prey to an infinite regress about reasons (97). Nonetheless, her claim is striking: self-reflection may not provide reasons, but by engaging in self-reflection we are successfully exercising our capacity for reason.

1.2. Velleman’s Constitutivism

Let’s consider Velleman’s alternative version of constitutivism for the sake of clarifying the possible roles that self-reflection may play in different types of constitutivist views.

Velleman (2000b: 187) suggests that we should look to “paradigm” cases of action—what he calls “full-bloody action”—to understand agency, given that “agency, like any capacity, fully reveals its nature only when exercised”. Velleman argues that intentional action is, in part, constituted by what he calls a “subagential” aim (191). Conscious control of the action in question is the subagential aim that we must have for the action to be a genuine instance of intentional action. But, Velleman notes, one cannot have the aim of conscious control unless one has a second-order aim to aim at it (192-3). How does one come to have such as second-order aim? Velleman argues that the constitutive aim of action is autonomy, and it is here that we find the second-order aim that we need in order to get the subagential aim of conscious

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6 Velleman argues, rightly, that the aim must be subagential, otherwise we end up with an, at least, an uninformative and, at worst, a circular account. Namely, we want to avoid the following argument: actions are those that are directed by aims and aims are the kinds of things that agents have and agents undertake actions.
control (193). In the context of, say, writing this paper, I constitutively aim to have control over the action as my own by virtue of the fact that I generally aim at autonomy whenever I act.

Velleman argues that self-conscious control over one’s actions would seem to require knowing something about what one is doing and the reasons that one has for doing it. It is here that we see the role that self-reflection plays for Velleman’s brand of constitutivism. Reasons are not simply Davidsonian belief-desire pairs, according to Velleman (197). They are belief-desire pairs that I endorse as those that I want to be action-guiding (199). Since this recognition would seem to require rational evaluation and self-reflection, however minimal, Velleman’s account relies on self-reflection in a way comparable, but not identical, to Korsgaard’s view.

1.3. What Work Does Self-Reflection Do For Constitutivist Views?

Broadly speaking, self-reflection plays a central role in the constitutivist accounts discussed above. In general, constitutivism has what I call will a self-reflection requirement. That is, one of the features that is constitutive of, at least, full-blown agency or, at most, most paradigmatic (though not ideal) expressions of agency is the exercise of the capacity for self-reflection.

Given the discussion in the previous two sections, we can now distinguish between the two types of work that self-reflection accomplishes for, respectively, Korsgaardian (and thus probably most Kantian)\(^7\) forms of constitutivism and Vellemanian forms on constitutivism. In what follows, I intend ‘Korsgaardian’ and ‘Vellemanian’ to refer, respectively, to constitutivist views that are consistent with the views Korsgaard and Velleman each defend. Nonetheless, the

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\(^7\) Such as, to varying degrees, Paul Katsafanas’ (2014; 2011) mix of Nietzschean and Kantian accounts of the will.
work that I propose self-reflection does on each type of account should not be considered in exegetical terms.

Note that we have *not yet* determined which view of self-reflection is required for constitutivist views to accomplish their goals. This task I leave for sections 3. In what follows, I will outline only the role that the *self-reflection requirement* plays for each type of view.

Let’s begin with what I will term “Korsgaardian Constitutivism,” which would include both Korsgaard’s own view and those views that share a strong family resemblance with her view (Ferrero 2009; Katsafanas 2014; 2013). Here self-reflection ensures inner coherence and is a key constitutive step to become fully integrated agents. Self-reflection thus underwrites the normativity that the endorsed attitudinal states have and, ultimately, provides the foundation for generating a constructivist account of moral requirements.

This view is what I will call *robustly normatively oriented*. This view depends on an account of practical self-reflection to formulate how we constitute ourselves as agents, what the standards are for such constitution (in this case, internal coherence and unity), and why we normatively ought to seek to be more coherent and unified rather than less coherent and more disunified.

Let’s compare the work that self-reflection does for Korsgaardian Constitutivism with the work that it does for Vellemanian Constitutivism. On the latter view, self-reflection is the upshot of, rather than the route to, the goal of autonomy. This goal is constitutive of paradigmatic instances of intentional action and is one that, for Vellemanian Constitutivism, we aim at each time we aim to be in conscious control of what we are doing. Engaging in actions, on this view, allows me the opportunity to engage in self-reflection about why I act(ed) in certain ways in the service of striving to be autonomous. This view is what I will call *weakly normatively oriented*. 
This view has no obvious stake in the debate about metaethical constructivism. But it does have a stake in a view about authenticity and autonomy insofar as there is seemingly inescapable pressure to reflect on the kinds of motives and reasons that inform one’s actions. One is not forced to reconcile conflicts among one’s reasons or to aim to act in light of better rather than worse reasons on the Vellemanian view. Still, one is given the opportunity to aim to be autonomous and doing so requires more robust self-reflection on one’s reasons than simply surveying them. Velleman describes the opportunity as follows (2000a: 141-2):

Note that the desire to act in accordance with reasons cannot be disowned by an agent, although it can be disowned by the person in whom agency is embodied. A person can perhaps suppress his desire to act in accordance with reasons; but in doing so, he will have to execute a psychic manoeuvre quite different from suppressing his anger or his addiction to drugs or his other substantive motives for acting. [...] The only way for a person truly to suppress his concern for reasons is to stop making rational assessments of his motives, including this one, thus suspending the process of practical thought. And in suspending the process of practical thought, he will suspend the functions in virtue of which he qualifies as an agent. Thus, the sense in which an agent cannot disown his desire to act in accordance with reasons is that he cannot disown it while remaining an agent.

One has the opportunity to survey one’s possible motives and reasons, and to act in accordance with what one takes to be the best reasons or those with which one most strongly identifies. Hence, self-reflection is weakly normative insofar as it provides agents with the inescapable opportunity to evaluate their reasons for action. These reasons, however, do not have a distinctively moral character nor is there any push to consider the moral upshot of the reasons upon which one acts. Moreover, it is not clear how a Vellemanian Constitutivist view would be able to underwrite any claims to moral truth by vindicating metaethical constructivism, as is arguably the case for the Korsgaardian view.
Still, by being *robustly normatively oriented*, the Korsgaardian Constitutivist is also necessarily *weakly normatively oriented*. To be *robustly normatively oriented*, the view must also stake out a view on the kinds of opportunities for rational self-evaluation. In short, if a view is *robustly normatively oriented*, then it must also be *weakly normatively oriented*. The converse, however, does not hold. A view can be *weakly normatively oriented*—as the Vellemanian view is—and reject a *robust normative orientation*. In this regard, both views share a *weak normative orientation*, and thus any view of self-reflection that is to meet broadly constitutive goals must be indexed to this orientation. Let’s turn to consider which view of self-reflection suits these aims and, ultimately, to determine whether this same view can also meet the needs of the *robustly normatively oriented* aspects of Korsgaardian constitutivism.

2. Constitutivist Self-Reflection: A Model

The aim for the remaining sections of this paper is to understand what kind of view of self-reflection is required for both types of constitutivist views. There has been a great deal of work on the nature of self-reflection (Hussain 2009; Moran 2001), its relationship to self-knowledge (Bagnoli 2007; O’Hagan 2009), its role in securing or failing to secure autonomy (Christman 1991; Kilmister 2013; MacKenzie 2002), its relationship to our capacities as agents (Katsafanas 2011), and its ability to guarantee or fail to guarantee wise choices (Bortolotti 2011; Tiberius 2008). I will draw on a variety of accounts to answer the question about which view of self-reflection is best suited for constitutivism, but the answer on which I settle should not be taken as a stand alone account of self-reflection.

In this sense, the aims of this section are modest—given that both views of constitutivism discussed above share the *weak normative orientation*, the criteria for a view of self-reflection
that can meet constitutivism’s demands come from this shared orientation. In what follows, I will identify the view of self-reflection that meets the following criteria:

1. It is best suited for both types of constitutivist views’ *weak normative orientation*.
2. It is consistent with what I will call *the basic constitutivist thesis*, which argues that our status as agents is constituted through the exercise of the capacity for what Velleman (2000: 189) calls “full-blooded” action.
3. It could be an independently coherent, plausible account of self-reflection.

To do so, I will decompose self-reflection into the three aspects it comprises. Namely, its object, its procedure and its upshot. I will then determine whether the view of self-reflection that meets these criteria can additionally provide warrant for the *robust normative orientation* that Korsgaardian Constitutivism defends.

**2.1. What is the Object of Self-Reflection on the Constitutivist View?**

Let’s begin by considering what the object of self-reflection should be on the constitutivist view. Here one might think that the answer to this query lies in the name—namely, the self is the object or matter of concern for self-reflection. Although this may be literally true insofar as self-reflection requires that we consider ourselves as the object of rational scrutiny, this answer does not specify *which aspects* of ourselves serve as those objects.

There are three plausible objects of self-reflection on the constitutivist view:

a) A conception of oneself
b) Webs or sets of attitudinal states that are logically interconnected

c) Single attitudinal states, including desires, intentions, beliefs, among others.

The task now is to determine which of (a)-(c) should be the object(s) of self-reflection on the constitutivist view.

Although (a)-(c) are not mutually exclusive objects of self-reflection, I will proceed by considering each one in turn as possible primary objects of self-reflection on the constitutivist view. Following this evaluation, I will then consider whether some combination of (a)-(c) is the proper object of constitutivist self-reflection.

Let’s begin by considering (a), a conception of oneself. It may seem that this is a natural candidate for the object of constitutivist self-reflection. Korsgaard (1996) suggests that this is necessarily part of what we do when we reflect. To evaluate this option, we will need to clarify what a conception of oneself would be qua object of reflection. To do so, three questions must be answered. First, is it an actual or an idealized conception of oneself? Second, is the reflection forward- and/or backward-looking? Third, when one reflects on the conception of oneself, does one do so in terms of one’s status as a rational agent or in terms of one’s self-conception?

Michael Smith (1995) provides some guidance regarding an answer to the first question in his discussion of ideal adviser models of normative reasons. Korsgaard (1986: 23) presents what Smith calls an “example model” of an ideal adviser view in the context of her discussion of the “internalism requirement” about normative reasons, which she takes to explain the psychological demand that normative reasons must make on genuinely rational agents rather than underwriting normative reasons’ agent-relative status. Although Korsgaard (1986) is directly concerned with the debate about normative reasons, her account of the motivational force of
normative reasons points us in the direction of an answer to our first question. So, for
Korsgaardian constitutivism, it must be one’s idealized self. One appeals to an idealized version
of oneself to provide an example of how one should be or what one should. This would also
suggest an answer to the second question—namely, if one’s idealized self is the object of self-
reflection, then it must be forward-looking insofar as one wants oneself to become more like
one’s idealized self.

And, finally, there thus follows an answer to the third question from the answers to the
prior two questions. If one’s idealized self is the object of self-reflection and it is forward-
looking, then it follows that it must largely be one’s conception of oneself as a rational being
rather than a particular self-conception that one has.

Velleman (1988; 2001a) by contrast, does not take a view about how one ought to
constitute oneself; rather, he suggests that there is pressure to know something about ourselves as
we are, given that we aim to control our own actions. There is, naturally, some pressure to be
more rather than less autonomous. This pressure may be understood, for Vellemanian
constitutivism, in terms of the available routes to becoming more rather than less autonomous,
which may include subjecting one’s reasons to rational pressure (Velleman 2001a: 199), to
evaluate those principles in terms of what one wholeheartedly endorses (Frankfurt 1998a/1971;
1998b/1987), to ensure that one is not the subject of pernicious socialization (Christman 1991;
MacKenzie 2002). Finally, any reflection that one does on oneself would be in terms of one own
particular self-conception, which may but need not involve using the standard of oneself qua
rational agent.

In this sense, Vellemanian constitutivism (and perhaps Velleman himself) would answer
the three clarificatory questions with which I began this section in different terms than a
Korsgaardian constitutivist would. First, if the object of self-reflection were a conception of oneself, it would not be one’s idealized self but rather exclusively one’s actual self. Second, it could be either backward- or forward-looking, given that the aim of constitutive reflection on this view is self-knowledge, and thereby, autonomy (Velleman 2001a; Enoch 2006). Finally, Vellemanian constitutivism is sufficiently flexible to accommodate reflection in terms of either one’s status as a rational agent or one’s self-conception.

With the meaning of a self-conception sufficiently clear, we can now consider whether it is the primary object of self-reflection for the constitutivist view. It may seem that the natural answer is ‘yes,’ particularly given Korsgaard’s (2008) extensive discussion of the role that individual exercises of agency play in self-constitution. But while self-reflection may exert an upstream effect on one’s self-conception, this conception cannot be the direct object of reflection. Why not? Recall that self-reflection is part of individual exercises of the capacity for agency. One’s self-conception cannot be the main object of self-reflection, for one can exercise one’s capacity for agency—even in its full-blooded form—and fail to consider one’s self-conception in doing so.

Notice that if one’s self-conception is not the direct object of self-reflection on the constitutivist view, then Korsgaardian constitutivism—which seems to suggest that we cannot help but worry about the kinds of selves we make ourselves out to be through the exercise of our capacity for agency—will need to provide additional reasons as to why and how this occurs.

If (a) is not the proper object of a constitutivist self-reflection, then what about (b), sets or webs of logically interconnected attitudinal states? This may roughly approximate what Korsgaard (1996: 100) (and the Korsgaardian constitutivist) has in mind when she claims that “[t]he reflective structure of the mind is a source of ‘self-consciousness’ because it forces us to
have a *conception* of ourselves.” Here the idea would be that when, say, Sally engages in self-reflection, she reflects upon the set of attitudes that she currently holds and perhaps to what they logically commit her by entailment and closure.

Even if it were possible to engage in this kind of reflection, it is not clear why this is genuine self-reflection as required by the *basic constitutivist thesis*. Instead, this kind of evaluation looks like evaluation for the sake of internal coherence among one’s beliefs and, perhaps, non-cognitive states. Or instead it may be evaluation that proceeds from a view about what rationality might require in order to eradicate conflicts among attitudinal states, on which the debate between those who favor wide-scope or narrow-scope accounts of rational requirements is focused (Broome 2004; 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2013; Brunero 2008; Kolodny 2005; 2007). While both of these forms of evaluation may be what a genuinely rational agent does, there is no pressure from the *basic constitutivist thesis* to aim at this kind of evaluation.

But even if there were this pressure—as some aspects of Korsgaard’s (2009: 23-24) view may suggest—it is not clear that this kind of evaluation is equivalent to the self-reflection that constitutivism requires. This doubt is grounded in the thought that constitutivism is primarily concerned with practical, rather than theoretical, reason (Velleman 2001a; Korsgaard 2009: 48). That is, constitutivism explains how, through the activity of our practically rational capacities, we engage in the kind of activity that constitutes us as agents. If the object of self-reflection is simply the web of attitudes that we currently hold, then constitutivist self-reflection would be nothing more than a particular application of theoretical reason. In granting that this is the case, we would make constitutivism virtually indistinguishable from a relatively garden-variety description of our capacity as reasoning beings rather than its main object of concern—our distinctive abilities as practically rational, self-constituting agents.
Even if one were willing to bite the bullet on this implication, there are reasons to doubt that constitutivism can accommodate a view of self-reflection that takes as its object the web of attitudes that an agent currently holds. Recall that I have already established that the object of self-reflection cannot be our self-conception. It thus follows that the object of reflection also cannot be a set of attitudes that we view as our own set of attitudes and that we, qua rational beings, ought to make internally consistent.

Since (a) and (b) as possible objects of constitutivist self-reflection are untenable, let’s now consider (c)—individual attitudinal states—as the object of constitutivist self-reflection. Note that while I have shown that neither (a), a conception of oneself, nor (b), webs of attitudinal states, is the proper object of constitutivist self-reflection, this does not entail that we cannot use either or both as standards or tools for evaluating individual attitudes. I return to this possibility in section 2.2.

Let’s begin by establishing what option (c) means. (C), in principle, means that any attitudinal states—namely, propositional attitudinal states—might be the object of self-reflection. Both cognitive (e.g., beliefs) and non-cognitive (desires, hopes, etc.) states as well as intentions would be the objects of self-reflection. Let’s call this option (c₁). Naturally, further examination of (c₁) might reveal that the set of attitudinal states that are available for constitutivist self-reflection is smaller than any and all attitudinal states. For the moment, however, let’s fix option (c₁) in this way.

There is another possibility under (c). We might also think, in Kantian fashion, that it is the principles under which we act or that figure in our practical deliberations that are the proper object of constitutivist self-reflection. Call this option (c₂). Whether (c₂) is a possible object of self-reflection will depend on the type of procedure self-reflection involves, which I will discuss
in the part 2.2. For the moment, then, let’s consider whether \((c_1)\) is the proper object of constitutivist self-reflection and return to \((c_2)\) once we have settled on what the procedure should be.

In his response to Korsgaard, Thomas Nagel (1996: 201) hints at why the object of reflection might plausibly be individual attitudinal states, or option \((c_1)\):

The reflective self is in its nature more universal than the original, unreflective self, because it achieves its self-conscious awareness by detaching from the individual perspective. The reason we can no longer decide from the purely local perspective within which the original appearances or impulses are found, is that once we observe ourselves from the outside, and achieve the distance of which Korsgaard speaks, our choice becomes not just what to believe or do, but what this person should believe or do. And that has to be a decision about what any person so situated should believe or do, since the external view does not give any consideration to the fact that the person is me—it describes me in terms which would be just as available to someone else sufficiently well informed about me.

Recall that constitutivists take, by virtue of the basic constitutivist thesis, agency to come about through the exercise of the capacity for agency. Self-reflection figures in this process in two ways: first, it is a capacity that we use to evaluate those considerations and reasons on which we act; second, it provides us with the opportunity to take our agency as a matter of concern. Thus, if the object of reflection is single attitudinal states, they must be limited only to those attitudes that are practically efficacious or figure in our practical deliberations. This means that beliefs and other cognitive states are not direct objects of self-reflection since constitutivist self-reflection can concern only those states that are directly practically efficacious.

Traditionally, this claim has been defended by citing the difference between beliefs’ and desires’ respective directions of fit. Desires have a world-to-mind direction of fit, while beliefs have a mind-to-world direction of fit (Anscombe 1957; Searle 1983:7-8). The argument goes as
follows: desires play a unique (and necessary) role in motivating agents to act because their direction of fit is such that they represent a propositional attitude toward a state of affairs toward which agents are disposed but is not currently the case in the world. Beliefs, by contrast, have a mind-to-world direction of fit and thus cannot motivate. They are merely there to represent the world, not to change it.

The problem with this defense is that, for many philosophers, we might worry about relying on a metaphor—namely, direction of fit—to explain the difference between beliefs and desires (Platts 1979: 256-7; Copp and Sobel 2001; Clayton Coleman 2008). There have been other ways to retain the intuition that desires and beliefs are different kinds of propositional attitudes. One such view is Smith’s (1994: 111-16) dispositional account. On this view, beliefs are the kind of attitude that we are disposed to reject in the face of contrary evidence while desires are those that persist under the same circumstances.

Some constitutivists, such as Korsgaard (1986; 1996; 2008), will reject the Humean theory of motivation and the assumptions about desires’ necessary role in motivating us to act. But nothing about the basic constitutivist thesis requires that we reject this claim about desires. More important, we want to avoid saddling constitutivism with an additional burden of showing how cognitive states motivate, thus, for the sake of argument, let us assume that constitutivism’s account of self-reflection will not deny this claim about desires.

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8 Note that Korsgaard takes reasons internalism to make a trivially true statement about reasons’ ability to motivate. As Korsgaard (1986) notes, “[t]he force of the internalism requirement is psychological: what it does is not to refute ethical theories, but to make a psychological demand on them” (23). Understood in these broad terms, reasons internalism is trivially true. For reasons to be normative in the sense that they are taken to recommend or to require a given course of action to an agent who is in the relevant circumstances, they must be reasons of which the agent is aware or would become aware if she were genuinely rational.

9 One can remain consistent with the Humean theory of motivation while arguing that cognitive states motivate, albeit indirectly or through desires. Typically, challenges to this view about
Still, beliefs that are relevant for practical deliberation should surely figure in the process of self-reflection. So, for example, Joe’s belief that his well-being comprises satisfying any and all desires that he has is a prime candidate for constitutivist self-reflection since it figures in practical deliberation about how to act. This is one way of saying that just as constitutivist views of self-reflection need not defend the difficult-to-defend claim that cognitive states motivate, they also do not need to become—nor should they become—ardent Humeans about motivation or normative reasons more broadly. The purpose of this paper is to find an account of self-reflection that is consistent with and furthers the basic constitutivist thesis. This requires that we be ecumenical about both the nature of motivation and normative reasons. Thus, constitutivist views of the object of self-reflection can allow any beliefs or cognitive states that figure in practical deliberation to be part of the process of self-reflection.

2.2. What is the Procedure for Self-Reflection on the Constitutivist View?

With the object of self-reflection in place, we can now turn to consider what the procedure for self-reflection on the constitutivist view should be. Before describing the possible ways of understanding the procedure, the kind of procedure at issue must be further clarified. Namely, should we understand constitutive self-reflection as largely rational or affective in nature (Mackenzie 2002)? Here I think that it is clear that constitutive self-reflection must be a largely rational endeavor, given that it is a necessary feature of the process through which we constitute ourselves as agents. If the hallmark of agency is the capacity to act for reasons and motivation and to the reasons internalism with which it is often paired have argued that while desires are able to motivate, beliefs too are able to play a non-trivial role in bringing about motivation (Nagel 1970: 28-40; Darwall 1983: 92-8; Scanlon 1998: 95-100). Namely, desires are formed in light of beliefs and, thus, desires’ motivational force is a proxy for the strength of moral, rational or prudential beliefs. There are, of course, philosophers such as Jonathan Dancy (1993; 2002, 85-99, 103-107) who argue that cognitive states and only cognitive states motivate.
self-reflection is part of the process whereby we exercise the capacity for agency, then it follows that the process of self-reflection ought largely involve the use of our rational capacities. This does not mean that self-reflection cannot be spurred by affective states, such as guilt. But this will not comprise self-reflection proper.

Now that we are clear that constitutivist self-reflection must be largely rational in kind, we can now ask about how in particular we ought to engage in this rational activity. Here there are three plausible options for understanding the procedure in question:

a) As a process of evaluation that aims toward second-order endorsement

b) As a form of wide reflective equilibrium

c) As a form of pure proceduralism

Let’s now consider each of (a)-(c) in turn. What I will ultimately show is that only (c) can properly describe the procedure for constitutivist self-reflection.

To begin, let’s consider what (a) would mean as a description of the procedure of constitutivist self-reflection. The concept of a second-order endorsement is ubiquitous (Frankfurt 1998a/1971; Bratman 1984; 1999; 2007a; 2007b; Chang 2009; Wallace 2006a; 2006b; Watson 1972). We find it in our folk psychology, and we often use it to explain (at least part of) what it means to be a practically rational, self-reflective agent (Bratman 2007a: 140-2). Perhaps the most well known account of second-order endorsement is Harry Frankfurt’s (1998a/1971). He famously argues that the presence of second-order volitions—understood as a
kind of second-order endorsement of desires to intend certain courses of action—distinguish free actions from unfree ones and the actions of persons from those of non-persons\textsuperscript{10,11}

Both Korsgaard (1996: 50-1; 2009: 23) and Velleman (1989; 2002:97-8) also use the concept of second-order endorsements. Second-order endorsements play markedly different roles in Korsgaard’s and Velleman’s respective accounts, but it remains to be seen whether the account of self-reflection that they need is best understood as the process of second-order endorsement.

I think that we can begin by dismissing (a) as a description of the procedure in question. First, Velleman (2001: 92) himself provides a reason why reflection and second-order endorsement are not equivalent: “Kant would gladly join Frankfurt in saying that a person is autonomous when his behavior is determined by his essential nature. But what Kant would mean by this statement is that autonomy consists in being determined by practical reason, which places every agent under the same, universal laws.” The suggestion here is that though endorsement may play an integral role in our self-constitution (or merely our autonomy, as Frankfurt would have it), it is not merely endorsement of agent-relative or individual concerns. If it is endorsement of anything, it is endorsement that is a product of the conclusions of practical reason. It cannot stand in for the exercise of practical reason, which is what self-reflection, as a rational activity, involves.

\textsuperscript{10} Of course, Frankfurt denies that these beings are agents in the proper sense of the term.
\textsuperscript{11} While there are certainly numerous questions that one might raise about Frankfurt’s theory of volitions, of autonomy and of weakness of will, it is clear that the concept of second-order endorsements is central to his account. To name a few, consider Watson (1975), Mele (1992, esp. 290-4), Velleman (2000b), Harman (2000), Hussain (2009), Killmister (forthcoming) and Schroeter (2004, especially p. 636).
Second, (a) conflates the procedure of self-reflection with its possible upshot. Perhaps we endorse, as Velleman suggests, the conclusions of self-reflection. But this is the upshot of self-reflection, not necessarily its procedure.

Let’s now turn to (b), where the procedure for constitutive self-reflection is a form of wide reflective equilibrium. Reflective equilibrium has received a great deal of attention in philosophy since Nelson Goodman’s (1955) original discussion and John Rawls’ (1951; 1999; 2001) application of it as a decision procedure for the central questions of moral philosophy. Reflective equilibrium begins from what Rawls calls “considered principles,” whose truth we test in light of possible contrary evidence. The equilibrium arises from testing those considered judgments in light of claims and arguments to the contrary, while allowing for the possibility that the considered judgments themselves might undergo radical revision (Rawls 1999: 43).

Rawls (1999: 43) distinguishes between what is often called narrow and wide reflective equilibrium, ultimately arguing that moral philosophy ought use the latter:

There are, however, several interpretations of reflective equilibrium. For the notion varies depending upon whether one is to be presented with only those descriptions which more or less match one’s existing judgments except for minor discrepancies, or whether one is to be presented with all possible descriptions to which one might plausibly conform one’s judgments together with all relevant philosophical arguments for them.

Narrow reflective equilibrium, according to Rawls, may allow us to merely test one resolutely held principle (or, as Rawls [2001: 12] later calls them, “considered convictions”) against some potentially defeating claims, evidence or competing principles. Yet it does not guarantee that we test the resolutely held principle. By contrast, wide reflective equilibrium leaves open the

\[^12\] Cf. Campbell 2014 for a discussion of whether the pressure for revision is epistemic or moral in nature.
possibility that we may radically revise the considered judgment from which we began. Although Rawls’ description of wide reflective equilibrium is intended to provide a justification for the choice of the principles of justice and moral principles more generally, it can easily provide a model for self-reflection. The concept of reflective equilibrium has received a great deal of attention—everything from whether it actually constrains our ability to revise the principles from which we began (Brun 2014; Kelly and McGrath 2010), to its ability to provide a genuine procedure for justification for moral principles (Daniels 1996; Eggelston 2010; Scanlon 2003), to its relationship to metaethical constructivism (Rawls 1999/1980; Enoch 2009b: 327), among others. Nothing that I say here should be taken to resolve the variety of debates about it. Instead, the purpose of this discussion is to determine whether the model of wide reflective equilibrium can provide the skeleton for a procedure for constitutivist self-reflection.

Let’s consider what such a procedure would look like before examining the reasons for rejecting it as an appropriate model for constitutivist self-reflection. Recall that the basic constitutivist thesis argues that our status as agents is constituted through the exercise of the capacity for what Velleman calls “full-blooded” action. Also recall that the object of constitutivist self-reflection, per the conclusions of section 2.1, is individual attitudinal states that figure in practical deliberation. If reflective equilibrium models the procedure for constitutivist self-reflection, it would look like the following: Sonia wonders whether she should pursue a career of which her parents would approve or a career that she finds meaningful but she knows that her parents find objectionable. She judges that while she is concerned with her parents’ estimation of her, her judgment that pursuing the life that she finds most meaningful remains intact in face of her worry about her parents’ esteem.
Although this model sounds promising and it has one foot in the metaethical constructivism that many constitutivist models of agency favor, there are a number of reasons to reject this model of constitutivist self-reflection. First, it requires that we begin from our considered judgments, not just our unreflective intuitions. This means that much of our action is outside of the scope of the demand for self-reflection, given that much of our action does not begin from considered judgments. Herein lies the problem. For reflective equilibrium to provide a model of constitutivist self-reflection, it would need to provide a procedure for self-reflection about any attitudes, both considered and unconsidered, that figure in practical deliberation. If it provides a procedure that only applies to a subset of those attitudes, then it is does not meet the burden set by the basic constitutivist thesis. The burden in question is to show how we constitute ourselves as agents through the activity of exercising our capacity for full-blooded action, one part of which is to engage in self-reflection. The reflective equilibrium model cannot meet this burden.

What’s worse, it is also inconsistent with the basic constitutivist thesis. If self-reflection were simply wide reflective equilibrium, it would mean that we do not have the opportunity to engage in self-reflection each time that we exercise our capacity for full-blooded action.

But perhaps there is a way to salvage this model of the procedure for self-reflection. Now, we might think that what we use reflective equilibrium to push ourselves toward acting in light of considered judgments that pass the reflective equilibrium test. But even if we were to alter reflective equilibrium in this way to avoid the problem that it is inconsistent with the basic constitutivist thesis, we encounter another problem. Namely, this model of constitutivist reflection is inconsistent with the object of constitutivist reflection that I established in section 2.1. Recall that the object of constitutivist reflection is any individual attitudinal states that are
relevant for practical deliberation or directly figure in the formation of intentions. As noted above, this primarily includes non-cognitive states such as desires, but it also includes beliefs and other cognitive states that are relevant for deliberation. For reflective equilibrium to serve as the model of constitutivist self-reflection, it would only serve as a way to evaluate beliefs and cognitive states that are relevant for practical deliberation. Kelly and McGrath (2010: 339-40) make clear that reflective equilibrium has this limited domain of application in their discussion and comparison of reflective equilibrium and Bayesian conditionalization. To meet the demands of the basic constitutivist thesis, however, the procedure for self-reflection must be able to cover both cognitive and non-cognitive states.13

With (a) and (b) failing as models of the procedure for constitutivist self-reflection, we are left to consider (c). Before considering (c), note that showing that neither (a) nor (b) model the procedure for reflection does not entail that they cannot play a role in it. (A), endorsements, might be the upshot of reflection, as I will suggest in section 2.3. Reflective equilibrium might be one way of determining one’s particular moral obligations on the constitutivist view.

Recall that (c) models reflection in pure proceduralist terms, roughly following Rawls (1999) description of pure procedural justice. Proceduralism is the view that the process itself, given the qualities that it has, renders the outcome the good, right or correct outcome. It is pure because, as Rawls (1999: 74-5) notes, there are no criteria external to the procedure itself that we

13 There is an additional worry that, though outside the purview of this paper, deserves to be mentioned. Kelly and McGrath (2010: 353-4) argue that “in order to arrive at a defensible account, the proponent of the method [of reflective equilibrium] should opt for a normative characterization of the starting point. Of course, once that move is made, one might very well wonder whether the picture of inquiry that emerges still deserves the name “the method of reflective equilibrium”. For in that case, it is natural to think that the most interesting part of the story concerns not the pursuit of equilibrium itself, but rather what makes it the case that certain starting points are more reasonable than others, and how we manage to recognize or grasp such facts. In that sense at least, it seems that reflective is not enough.”
can use to evaluate the outcome. An example of a form of proceduralism that is not pure--which Rawls (1999: 74-5) subdivides into perfect and imperfect procedural justice—would be the fair division of a chocolate bar among four children. Each person is to get an equal part of the chocolate bar, and the procedure of dividing the bar into four equal parts is the route to this outcome. But following this procedure does not ensure that the outcome will be the best one, for one child may prefer that the other three children receive his portion. Rather, a concern for fair distribution and camaraderie among the children might be the criteria that we use for determining how to divide the chocolate bar among them. By contrast, in the case of pure proceduralism, the process itself is good-making for the outcome or goal of the process.

Here the idea is that the procedure for self-reflection on the constitutivist view cannot be anything more than the very procedure for self-reflection as it is constrained by the object of that reflection and the fact that it is a rational, practically deliberative activity that constitutes us as agents. The specificity of the procedure will be further defined by the content of the attitudinal state that one is evaluating and the specific practically deliberative question with which one is concerned. In this case, there are three possible ways that the attitudes under consideration can constrain and thus give shape to the process of rational evaluation:

1. In the case of evaluating evidence for holding or rejecting beliefs
2. In the case of moral evaluation of evaluative judgments, desires, intentions and beliefs with moral content
3. In the case of evaluating the attitudes that one considers as objects of endorsement or commitment
So, for example, Jane engages in self-reflection that approximates (2) when she evaluates whether her reason for declining to adopt a dog from her local animal shelter—in this case, that she cannot afford to care for the dog—is a good one. Here her reason—the fact that she cannot care for the dog and the desire to care properly for any animals that are under her care—determines the kind of criteria that we use for evaluating the reason.

It might strike some that perfect proceduralism, as exemplified by democratic voting procedures, or imperfect proceduralism, as exemplified by criminal trials that have the right kind of procedure but sometimes find the guilty innocent and the innocent guilty, would provide better models for self-reflection. This is because they provide independent criteria for evaluating the outcomes of the procedure in question. In the case of the procedure for constitutivist self-reflection, imperfect proceduralism would perhaps be the best model, for though the procedure is designed to be good-making it sometimes fails to bring about the proper outcome.

If we were to add any additional criteria for evaluating the outcome of self-reflection outside of those that are part of practically self-reflective agency, we would run afoul of the basic constitutivist thesis. Namely, we need the procedure for self-reflection to be defined by elements that are directly constitutive of agency and the self-reflection that is central to it. While aiming to be a particular kind of person or appealing to the method of reflective equilibrium (and thus aiming for internal consistency) may motivate us to engage in self-reflection, neither of these procedures in and of themselves are genuinely part of what it means to engage in the exercise of the capacity for full-blooded action. Thus they are not directly constitutive of agency and they cannot serve as the procedure for self-reflection, which is part of the constitution of agency.
So the procedure for constitutivist self-reflection must be a pure proceduralist model of reflection, given the *basic constitutivist thesis*. As I will argue in section 3, this model will provide the foundation for the *weak normative orientation* of both Korsgaardian and Vellemanian constitutivism, but it will not discharge the *robust normativity* for which Korsgaardian constitutivism aims.

### 2.3. Possible Upshots of Self-Reflection on the Constitutivist View

With the object and procedure of constitutivist self-reflection in place, we can now turn to consider its possible upshots. In what follows, I draw tentative conclusions about what the possible upshots of reflection might be, given the constraints set by its *object* and *procedure*. These conclusions are tentative because the extent to which we can settle this question is dependent on answering independent questions about the nature of normative reasons, motivation (both moral and non-moral), among others.

With this caveat in mind, I take there to be five plausible, potentially mutually consistent upshots of constitutivist self-reflection. As we will see, however, some of these upshots will not be guaranteed by the version of constitutivist self-reflection that I have defended in this paper. The plausible upshots are as follows:

1. Normative reasons (Moran 2001; Bagnoli 2007)
2. Endorsement or rejection of the attitude(s) under consideration (Wallace 2006a; 2006b)
3. Pressure to aim for internal coherence (Korsgaard 2009: 25)
4. Self-knowledge (Moran 2001; Velleman 1988; 2001a; 2001b)
5. Rational pressure to eliminate conflicts among attitudes (Campbell 2014; Korsgaard 2009: 25)

Given that the object of constitutivist self-reflection is single attitudinal states and the procedure is a form of pure proceduralism, the potential upshots of self-reflection are likely only to be (1) and, perhaps, (2) and (5). But whether or not it produces (1) will depend on how we understand normative reasons and whether constitutivists must be internalists about normative reasons. Since this debate is far from settled, it seems reasonable to conclude at this point only that self-reflection may provide normative reasons.

Regarding (2), it is not clear that the model of constitutivist self-reflection guarantees that we will endorse attitudes that pass the self-reflection test. It seems reasonable to think that constitutivist self-reflection guarantees that endorsements are its upshot only if we think that there is pressure to be genuinely rational agents. I think that the basic constitutivist thesis guarantees that there is this pressure, while allowing for the possibility of weakness of will.

Finally, whether (5) is the upshot of constitutivist self-reflection depends on settling two matters, neither of which the basic constitutivist thesis itself requires that we settle. We must settle, first, what the requirements of rationality are and whether their scope is wide or narrow (Broome 2005, 2007b; Kolodny 2005, 2007). We must also settle, second, the extent to which we must aim at a genuinely unified self or at any self-conception. I have shown that nothing about the basic constitutivist thesis paired with the view of self-reflection developed here requires that agents aim at unification or a concept of themselves.

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Here we see the difference between weak normative orientation and the robust normative orientation of the different forms of constitutivism. Korsgaardian constitutivism needs (1), (2), (3) and (5) to be the upshots of reflection and to be the proper outcome of rational self-reflection. This is because Korsgaardian constitutivism is robustly normatively oriented. But the minimum that constitutivism needs—that is, to be weakly normatively oriented—does not provide us with the upshots that we need to underwrite Korsgaardian constitutivism’s robust normativity. It may only provide us with (1) and perhaps (2) and (5), but settling this will depend on how we settle the aforementioned debates.

Notice that (4), self-knowledge, remains absent from the discussion above. Although Velleman (1988; 2001a) explicitly claims that the constitutive aim of action is self-knowledge, it is not clear why this is a necessary upshot of constitutivist self-reflection. Constitutivist self-reflection may produce self-knowledge, depending on how we understand what this comprises (Buss 2003; Moran 2001; O’Hagan 2009;), the extent to which it is authoritative (Bagnoli 2007; Mackenzie 2002; Moran 2001) and, if it does indeed produce self-knowledge, whether it is observational or non-observational knowledge (Anscombe 1959; Buss 2003; Moran 2001; Paul 2009; Velleman 1989: 23-5). It also may be that we hope to gain self-knowledge from constitutivist self-reflection. Unfortunately, self-knowledge is not, however, a guaranteed or even direct upshot of constitutive self-reflection as it has been described here.

3. Conclusions Regarding Constitutivist Views of Reflection and its Relationship to Metaethical Constructivism

Constitutivism is often used as a foundation for constructivist views about the nature of moral facts that aim to preserve moral objectivity without requiring the moral metaphysics that most varieties of moral realism require (Street 2010; Enoch 2009b). There is significant debate
about precisely what metaethical constructivism argues (Rawls 1951; Street 2010; Enoch 2009b). For the sake of evaluating whether the account of self-reflection provided here can underwrite constructivism that constitutivists favor, I will rely on Sharon Street’s (2010: 371) description of constructivism’s main metaethical claims:

Metaethical constructivism falls squarely on the antirealist side of this divide. As the slogan ‘no normative truth independent of the practical point of view’ makes clear, metaethical constructivism asserts a counterfactual dependence of value on the attitudes of valuing creatures; it understands reason-giving status as conferred upon things by us. According to metaethical constructivism, there are no facts about what is valuable apart from facts about a certain point of view on the world and what is entailed from within that point of view. Normative truth, according to the constructivist, does not outrun what follows from within the evaluative standpoint, but rather consists in whatever is entailed from within it.15

Street (2010: 364-5) notes that Rawlsian proceduralism is a less interesting form of constructivism, given that it makes no clear claims about the standpoint from which moral claims are made. In this sense, she sets it aside. Though I describe the procedure for self-reflection in pure proceduralist terms, the “purity” here is intended only to indicate that self-reflection itself has no defined procedure outside of the procedures determined by the object of consideration. In this regard, if constitutivism is to underwrite constructivism by way of its view of self-reflection, it will be closer to the kind of constructivism described above.

So can constitutivism do so by way of the view of self-reflection presented here? I think that the answer to this question is ‘no.’ To see why, let’s consider a related challenge to constitutivism’s attempt to underwrite metaethical constructivism. David Enoch (2006; 2009a) raises a skeptical challenge against constitutivist views of agency. He calls this challenge the

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15 Street (2010: 317) is quick to note that both Kantian and Humean constructivists agree on this claim, though they disagree about the extent to which genuine moral agents can trust their initial moral judgments.
“shmagency objection.” Enoch (2006: 171) argues that the constitutivist argument depends on the unjustified and implausible claim that we must have the aim of being the best sort of rational, moral and prudential agents—an aim that he describes, following Korsgaard, as the aim of self-constitution\textsuperscript{16}—in order to be agents in any sense of the term. It thus challenges the constitutivist attempt to, as Enoch puts it (2006: 171), build an account of morally normative requirements—such as an account of the principles that we can genuinely endorse—from whatever is constitutive of agency.\textsuperscript{17} It does so by arguing that one can be an agent without having the aim of self-constitution—that is, a “shmagent.”

This challenge has received a fair amount of attention (Ferrero 2009; Morton 2011; Tiffany 2012), and my aim here is not to evaluate it. Let’s consider an ecumenical reading of the challenge in terms of the claim that, to be fully developed agent, one must engage in self-reflection. This ecumenical challenge shows us that constitutivism appears to depend on the claim that part of what is constitutive of agency is that we aim to be self-reflective agents. Given the view about self-reflection with which I concluded, however, it is not clear that we can use this pressure for self-reflection to underwrite any rich form of constructivism.

In the previous section, I showed that the upshots that constitutivists often want to wring from self-reflection are not guaranteed outcomes of self-reflection. More important, they are not \textit{necessary features} of constitutivist self-reflection. As a result, any claim to underwrite the metaethical claims of constructivism will have to come from something other than self-reflection.

\textsuperscript{16} Note that Enoch takes Velleman and Rosati (2003) to each defend different conceptions of our constitutive aims (172-6).

\textsuperscript{17} See Morton (2011) for a discussion of two different ways of reading the constitutivist’s claim—one metaphysical, the other conceptual.
Still, self-reflection may provide the opportunity for agents to engage in moral evaluation of their actions, even if it does not require it. On the view that I have defended, self-reflection may invite moral evaluation. It is an active, rational process that is, at least for our action to be full-blooded, non-optional. Given that the procedure for self-reflection is defined by the type and content of the attitudes under consideration, it is third-personal. If this is right, constitutivist self-reflection and constitutivism more broadly does not directly involve self-constitution in the sense that Enoch seems to understand it. And yet self-reflection may provide a special opportunity for moral reflection that constitutivism needs.

All of this is to say that although constitutivist self-reflection does not necessarily involve constructivist moral evaluation, it does certainly invite it. More important, it can do so without involving or referring to the aim of self-constitution. As a result, constitutivism can agree with Enoch’s shmagency challenge without undercutting its attempts to work toward a coherent form of metaethical constructivism.

Though constitutivism has the opportunity to build an account of metaethical constructivism, nothing internal to its view of self-reflection will guarantee it. Returning to the original description of the weak normative orientation of both Korsgaardian and Vellemanian forms of constitutivism, it appears that the constitutivist view can underwrite this kind of normativity. It cannot, however, underwrite the robust normative orientation that Korsgaardian constitutivism also has in aiming to build a coherent constructivism from the features that are constitutive of agency.
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