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A Wrong Turn to Reasons?

Pekka Väyrynen

1. Introduction

Much of recent metaethics, and meta-normative inquiry more generally, displays a turn to reasons. In the air wafts a confidence, even if not a definite program easily attributable to particular people, that appealing to reasons – in the normative sense in which reasons are good grounds for acting, thinking, or feeling in certain ways – will better enable us to account for various normative and evaluative phenomena than appealing to value or any other notion. This paper argues that it is hard to reconcile taking reasons as fundamental in explaining various evaluative and normative phenomena with certain explanatory demands regarding reasons themselves. Its aim is to sound a skeptical note against the confidence that turning to reasons will offer special advantages in dealing with real theoretical problems when it comes to explaining various normative and evaluative phenomena.

Section 2 sets the stage: it describes why evaluative and normative phenomena typically call for explanation and what constraints apply to such explanations under a turn to reasons. Section 3 quickly delineates some different forms that such explanations might take. Sections 4–7 then argue that various explanations of each form either fail to favor turning to reasons in particular or else are inadequate with respect to the constraints that apply to them, unless perhaps a kind of reductionism about reasons, which is typically rejected by those who favor turning to reasons, is true. Their way of turning to reasons thus enjoys no special advantages over other ways of meeting comparable explanatory demands regarding normative and evaluative phenomena. Turning to reasons offers no short cut.

2. Normative explanation and reasons

It is widely agreed that nothing is brutely right or wrong, good or bad, admirable or terrifying, just or unjust. Things bear normative and evaluative properties in virtue of some other properties. The distribution of normative

and evaluative properties over these other properties seems neither accidental nor groundless; there should be some explanation of their distribution. If this piercing feeling in my neck is bad, that is no brute fact; or so I want to say. Suppose I say that the feeling is bad in virtue of being painful. This looks like an explanation: it specifies something *because of* which the feeling is bad, something that is at least part of *why* it is bad.[1]

But now I have another evaluative fact to explain. For the explanation that I gave presumes that the painfulness of the feeling makes it bad to some degree or in some way. The truth of this kind of evaluative claim isn't a brute fact either; or so I want to say.[2] When such claims are true, in virtue of what are they true?

Normative facts concerning reasons for actions or for attitudes are, on the face of it, no different: they aren't groundless and they typically call for explanation. Here I mean 'normative' reasons: units or considerations that make systematic contributions to, and thereby explain, the overall normative statuses (such as 'required,' 'permitted,' 'appropriate,' etc.) of the actions or attitudes for which they are reasons. Normative reasons can be stated by saying that some considerations are a reason, weaker or stronger, for some person in certain circumstances to do something.[3] Such statements refer to a relation that holds between a proposition or a fact P, a set of conditions C, and an activity of Φing (such as taking a course of action or adopting an attitude like belief, intention, approval, etc.), when P is a reason (of degree of strength D, at time T) for someone in C to Φ.[4] When I talk about reasons, I have in mind this type of relation. When I talk about properties or features that 'provide' reasons, I mean properties ascribed to things by the facts or propositions that slot in for 'P' in reason relations. I'll simplify by omitting degree and time references and by taking 'conditions' or 'circumstances' to include the properties of agents. (This doesn't sacrifice theoretical neutrality; normative reasons may still be held to depend on whether they bear some suitable relation to some motivational fact about the agent.[5]) Reason relations can then be expressed by a relational predicate R(P, C, Φ). Reason claims of this form entail that, when there is a reason to Φ, there must be something that is the reason, something that speaks in favor of Φing or makes Φing sensible in C. This fact or proposition P will often, if not always, be some ordinary fact or proposition about the world. It will be a further normative fact about P that P is a reason to Φ in C.[6]

Now consider some specific examples. If the only way I can save my life is to jump out of the window, the fact that jumping will save my life is a reason to jump. If I promised my mother that I would call her, the fact that calling her will fulfill a promise is a reason to call her (but, one hopes, not the only reason). The fact that there is loud music and chatter coming from across the street is, in many circumstances, a reason to believe that the neighbors are having a party. Many people would allow that the fact that parachuting is thrilling is, in many circumstances, a reason for those who desire a thrill

to go parachuting. What I want to say is that the truth of claims about what is a reason for what isn't a brute fact. So, again, we should be able to ask in virtue of what these normative claims, when true, are true.

Suppose I say that the fact that jumping will save my life is a reason to jump because prudence requires me to save my life, and that the fact that calling will fulfill a promise is a reason to call because morality requires me to fulfill my promises. These explanations presume that requirements of prudence and morality distribute in a certain way over other facts.[7] But what I want to say is that their distribution isn't a brute fact. Various facts about reasons call for explanation as much as any other normative and evaluative facts. Just as one wants not merely a list of valuable things but also an explanation of why value distributes in that way, so one wants not merely a distribution of reason relations over facts, circumstances, and actions or attitudes, but also an explanation of why that distribution is the one that holds.

It feels difficult to find a satisfactory explanation of many of these sorts of normative and evaluative facts. So I take it that there is a real problem concerning their explanation.[8] Would turning to reasons advance this enterprise? Such hope is in the air. For instance, some people find it hard to assess whether something is of intrinsic value (roughly in the sense of Moore, 1922) until they begin to consider how they have reason to act or feel towards it.[9] Such a response suggests that reasons can be invoked to analyze or explain what it is to be intrinsically valuable.[10] But, although the idea is in the air, little has been done to state it clearly. I'll articulate my target by describing different forms a turn to reasons might take.

It is common to claim that the normativity of all that is normative consists in its relation to reasons. But claims to this effect can be more or less inclusive with respect to the category of the normative.[11] If 'normative' means 'deontic,' as contrasted with 'evaluative,' such claims entail only that reasons are fundamental with respect to other deontic notions, such as *right*, *wrong*, and *ought*. This is compatible with thinking that reasons are grounded in considerations of value or explained thereby, or that neither deontic nor evaluative notions are explained by the other.[12] If 'normative' includes also the evaluative (for instance, if value is, *inter alia*, such as to generate reasons), then taking reasons as fundamental in the normative domain entails that they are fundamental with respect to other deontic and evaluative notions.[13] My interest concerns this more inclusive turn to reasons.

Irrespective of its scope, a turn to reasons can take at least three forms, depending on whether reasons are supposed to be conceptually, metaphysically, or explanatorily fundamental. A conceptual turn holds that the concept of a reason is the fundamental normative concept, in the sense that this concept is the sole normative element in any normative concept. Most of those who endorse this claim also take the concept of a reason to be primitive: it can be at most paraphrased, but not analyzed, in other terms,

normative or otherwise. A common paraphrase is that a reason to Φ is a consideration that 'counts in favor' of Φing.[14] So reasons are conceptually fundamental in the domain of normativity.

A metaphysical turn to reasons holds that the nature of normative properties of various sorts – moral rightness and wrongness, various forms of value, or whatever the normative includes – has to do with the relation to reasons for actions or for attitudes. One local instance of a metaphysical turn is the claim that moral rightness (wrongness) consists in having properties that provide reasons of certain kind and strength for (against) action. If the normative includes the evaluative, then other local instances include the kind of 'buck-passing' account of value according to which to be good or valuable is to have some other properties that provide reasons of an appropriate kind to favor their bearers,[15] and the view that such evaluative facts as that something is terrifying or that something is amusing consist in there being reasons of an appropriate kind to be terrified by it or amused by it. So reasons are metaphysically fundamental in the domain of normativity in the sense that the nature of normative properties, or at least their normativity, consists in their relations to reasons.

An explanatory turn to reasons holds that normative notions are to be accounted for in terms of reasons. One local instance of this kind of turn to reasons is the kind of 'buck-passing' view of value according to which the fact that something is valuable is explained by its having other properties that provide reasons of an appropriate kind to favor it. In general, in so far as evaluative and normative facts generally call for explanation in the way discussed above, they can be understood or explained in terms of reasons that there are, in certain circumstances, for actions or for attitudes such as beliefs, intentions, or feelings. So reasons are explanatorily fundamental in the domain of normativity.

Explanation of normative facts might not be a concern to all of these versions of the turn to reasons. A conceptual turn to reasons, for instance, might not be troubled by a demand for such explanations. It allows that when some fact is, in some circumstances, a reason to Φ, there is an explanation why, but it appears to carry no particular commitment as to what explains this. It is perfectly possible that the concept of a reason has no analysis in other terms, normative or otherwise, and yet picks out a relation that consists in some complex of independently characterizable factors, such as the promotion of value or of desire satisfaction, or the instantiation of which can be explained in some such terms.

The explanatory turn to reasons, however, is subject to the explanatory demand. It grants that various normative and evaluative facts call for explanation. Since the grounds for thinking that they do so seem to apply equally well to facts about reasons, then reasons also call for explanation. Much the same holds for the metaphysical turn to reasons in so far as it grants that normative facts to the effect that some fact P is a reason to Φ in C aren't

brute or groundless. My interest in what follows lies in an explanatory turn to reasons, understood to include this sort of a metaphysical turn. The idea of such a turn is in the air, even if no writer has fully articulated it or explicitly endorsed it in full generality.[16] How far an appeal to reasons in understanding various normative and evaluative phenomena can be pushed is also of significant interest independently of whatever actual currency the idea happens to enjoy.

One might still wonder whether it really is reasonable to hold an explanatory turn to reasons to the demand that there must typically be an explanation of why some fact P is a reason to Φ in some circumstances C (or, for short, why a reason to Φ is a reason to Φ).[17] One sort of thought is that reasons will need no explanation in so far as reason relations hold necessarily, when they hold at all, and that at least the fundamental reason relations do hold necessarily. (The particular facts that provide reasons often hold contingently, when at all, but contingent facts can stand in necessary relations.)

Many necessary truths, however, call for explanation and don't seem brute. One example is the widely accepted, if not uncontroversial, supervenience of the normative on the non-normative. Supervenience relations hold necessarily, when they hold at all, but most philosophers agree that if there can be no normative difference (and hence no difference in reasons) without a non-normative difference, this requires explanation.[18] But surely it isn't the mere number of metaphysical impossibilities in how reasons and non-normative facts may be recombined that makes supervenience require explanation. Just the same demand for explanation applies to such specific claims as that it is metaphysically impossible that the entire universe could be exactly like it actually is in all non-evaluative, non-normative respects but the fact that my mother is my mother is a reason for me to torture her (Schroeder 2007, p. 71). But now notice that we are at least very close to thinking that reason relations also typically require explanation even if they hold necessarily. Why should they be special in requiring no explanation?

Another sort of thought is that some reasons need no explanation because it strikes us as obvious that they are reasons. Suppose that the fact that a person's child has died is a reason for her to feel sad. Or suppose that, for a person in control of a car, the fact that if the steering wheel isn't turned the car will injure or perhaps kill a pedestrian, but if the wheel is turned the car will hit no one, is a reason to turn the steering wheel.[19] If these claims strike us as obviously true, then explanations of the reasons they report might be superfluous with respect to many epistemic functions which explanations typically serve.

This doesn't, however, mean that a theoretical demand for an explanation of reasons is out of place. For a fact may be obvious and yet not brute or inexplicable. Nor does it follow that there is nothing more to say about why, or in virtue of what, a fact cited as a reason to Φ is a reason to Φ. To illustrate,

suppose that value is normative in the sense that something is good (bad) only if there are reasons to favor (or disfavor) it. So far as this goes, it could be that it is the goodness of something that explains the reasons to favor it or that some third factor explains both its goodness and the reasons, rather than that the reasons to favor it explain its goodness. So there had better be something to say in explanation of these reasons which shows why explanations that don't involve turning to reasons are closed off.

These considerations suggest a constraint on explanations of reasons under an explanatory turn to reasons. If reason relations typically require explanation but they are explanatorily fundamental relative to other normative and evaluative notions, then explanations of reasons must typically satisfy a 'normative fundamentality' constraint:

> **NF constraint**: When a fact P is under conditions C a reason to Φ, explanations of this normative fact may not appeal to any evaluative or normative factors which don't themselves concern reasons.

The NF constraint is by no means trivial. It would be a substantive claim to say that every explanation of why P is a reason to Φ in C is itself a reason, even if by other name. (Clear cases of this kind, as when a derivative reason is explained by the reason whence it derives, don't exhaust explanations of reasons.[20]) But, in so far as explanations of reasons failed the NF constraint, reasons wouldn't be metaphysically or explanatorily fundamental in the normative domain. If reasons to Φ could be explained, for instance, in terms of the prospective value of Φing, then it wouldn't seem to be very plausible that what it is for Φing to be of value is for it to have other properties that provide reasons of an appropriate kind to Φ. Or, if what it is for something to be a reason to Φ were for it to play a role in explaining why one ought to Φ, then it wouldn't seem to be very plausible that reasons are explanatorily fundamental with respect to what one ought to do, since their normativity would derive from that of *ought*.

An explanatory turn to reasons can take different forms depending on what counts as an appropriate explanation of reasons. We saw that, even if some evaluative and normative facts don't call for explanation relative to some epistemic functions of explanation, a demand for some other type of explanation can still be legitimate. One type of explanations which figure in understanding a wide variety of phenomena are 'constitutive' or 'grounding' explanations. These explain phenomena by laying out the conditions in which those phenomena consist or in virtue of which they obtain. The fact that I am older than my sister consists in my age, her age, and a certain ordering between them. And something is a member of the singleton {Pinky} by being Pinky, not Pinky in virtue of being a member of {Pinky}; the fact that something is a member of {Pinky} consists in the fact that it is Pinky.[21] If reason relations aren't explanatorily brute or groundless, a demand for a

constitutive explanation of why P is a reason to Φ in circumstances C would often seem to be legitimate. Surely at least sometimes, when such a reason relation holds, there will be conditions in which the fact that P is a reason to Φ in C is grounded or consists, or in virtue of which the reason relation holds.[22]

One might doubt that a demand for a constitutive explanation of reasons is typically legitimate. Contextually variable reasons clearly call for explanation. If some facts are a reason to Φ in some circumstances but not others, then there should be some explanation as to why those facts are a reason to Φ, when they are, and why they aren't a reason to Φ, when not. But explanations in these cases might work by contrasting some cases in which those facts are a reason with other cases in which they aren't and by relating the case at hand to that contrast, or they might work by laying out the circumstances in a certain kind of way or order. Such explanations might, in other words, rest on coherence or narrative relations among various non-normative features of situations, instead of appealing to factors in virtue of whose presence or absence the facts in question are or aren't a reason to Φ.

Even here, however, it seems to be legitimate to ask why some particular contrasts or differences between circumstances, but not others, make for a difference in what certain facts are a reason to do or what it is about the particular contextual constellation of features that makes it the case that those facts are a reason to do one thing and not a reason to do something else. How else is laying out the circumstances of the context or contrasting them with others supposed to explain why some facts are a reason to Φ, if not by indicating *why* some contextual features or differences are relevant to whether those facts provide reasons? One might have thought the normative bedrock to run deeper than that.

What I take away from all this is that it remains reasonable to demand that an explanatory turn to reasons provide constitutive explanations of why a reason to Φ is a reason to Φ which satisfy the NF constraint. One way to explain reasons consistently with the NF constraint would be to show that reason relations reduce to some non-evaluative, non-normative properties or relations. (An example would be the view that the reason relation reduces to some non-evaluatively specifiable utility property, such as happiness, plus the maximizing relation.) Such a reduction base wouldn't consist in evaluative or normative factors which don't themselves concern reasons. And yet, if As are reducible to Bs, then we can use the B-phenomena in the reduction base to explain the reducible A-phenomena (Horgan, 1993). Note here that, if reasons were so reducible, other evaluative and normative notions might be reducible in a parallel way. A substantial question would remain whether those notions could also be systematically explained in terms of reasons, leaving reasons explanatorily fundamental within the normative domain.

In fact, however, most of those who are sympathetic towards turning to reasons reject reductionism about reasons. They would therefore have to

try to satisfy the NF constraint through explanations of reasons which take some different form. Much of the discussion to follow works through various possible solutions to this problem.

My focus will be specific: can an explanatory turn to reasons explain facts about reasons consistently with the NF constraint but without being pushed in the direction of reductionism? But the problem is a general one when it comes to explaining evaluative and normative facts under fundamentality constraints such as the NF constraint. Analogous constraints are thus likely to apply to other putative explanatorily fundamental factors in the normative domain. Much of the discussion to follow may thus generalize fairly directly to proposals to turn to other evaluative or normative notions. This wouldn't, however, affect the main upshot of this paper, which is that turning to reasons offers no distinctive advantage in solving hard and deep problems concerning the explanation of normative facts.

Some readers may be inclined to draw a further moral that some suitably sophisticated reductionist account of normative and evaluative properties is beginning to look like an attractive explanatory hypothesis. So long as our notion of reduction isn't Neanderthal, a reductionist account needn't involve implausible semantic claims, or eliminate the reduced property, or otherwise make it any less real. Reductionism about reasons may or may not be true, but it isn't the bogey man of normativity that it is sometimes taken to be.

3. Reasons and explanation: some distinctions

Putative explanations of reasons can be classified along at least two dimensions. One concerns what kind of facts can be reasons. That is, what kind of facts may slot in for 'P' in R(P, C, Φ)? The other concerns what kind of factors explain the (further, distinct) normative fact that some fact P is a reason to Φ in C. Distinctions under these headings can be used to generate templates for explanations of reasons.[23] One distinction under the first heading is that the facts that are reasons will be either non-evaluative, non-normative aspects of the world or else at least partly evaluative or normative in character. One distinction under the second heading is that either the factors that explain why certain facts provide the reasons they do are distinct from those facts or they aren't. Irrespective of whether these explanatory factors are distinct from reasons, they will likewise be either non-evaluative, non-normative aspects of the world or else at least partly evaluative or normative in character.

4. Intrinsicality

One tradition in moral philosophy regards acts as duties simply because of the types of acts that they are.[24] One way of trying to explain why certain

facts are reasons would be to generalize this idea and say that some facts are reasons *intrinsically* and other reasons are explained in terms of their relation to these. Something is intrinsically F if it has intrinsic properties in virtue of which it is F. For instance, the property *being square* is an intrinsic property and the property *being square or married* is an extrinsic property; but the latter is a property that all squares have intrinsically, in virtue of being squares.[25] Similarly, G.E. Moore denies that being valuable is an intrinsic property but thinks that some things are intrinsically valuable: their value is intrinsic in the sense that they have it solely in virtue of their intrinsic properties (Moore, 1922, p. 260). Since we can think of the claim that something is F in virtue of some intrinsic properties as entailing that its possession of those properties at least partly explains why it is F, this strategy might be thought to fit with an explanatory turn to reasons. If some facts were reasons intrinsically, these reasons could be explanatorily fundamental without requiring a deeper explanation in terms of some distinct further factors.

If some things are reasons intrinsically, then the intrinsic features in virtue of which they are reasons will be either non-evaluative and non-normative, or else at least partly evaluative or normative, in character. Some evaluative and normative facts would seem to be good candidates to be intrinsically reason-giving facts, in virtue of their particular evaluative or normative character. If you have a right to physical integrity, this might be a reason not to hit you, and if treating you in a certain way would be bad for you, this might be a reason not to treat you in that way. But, unless these descriptions of the facts are mere shorthand for claims about reasons, the explanations of reasons they provide violate the NF constraint. And, if they are shorthand for claims about reasons, the reasons to which they refer will require explanation. Thus an explanatory turn to reasons cannot allow reasons to be explained in terms of any evaluative or normative character that they might have intrinsically.

So might any non-evaluative, non-normative features be reasons intrinsically? If any were, pain would seem to be a good candidate. After all, nearly everyone agrees that, if something is painful, that is (at least defeasibly) a reason to avoid it or make it stop. But would it be plausible to claim that it is intrinsic to, or otherwise part of, what pain *is* that the fact that something is painful is (at least defeasibly) a reason to avoid it or make it stop?[26]

I have three distinct worries here. The first is that theories of pain tend not to support this kind of normative claim. For instance, most functionalist and other physicalist theories of pain provide no resources for defending it. The second worry concerns errors and disagreement about reasons. If someone denies that the fact that something is painful is a reason to avoid it or make it stop, it seems neither that their mistake is mere ignorance about what pain is, nor that our disagreement concerns merely the nature of pain. The third worry is that, if the fact that something is painful were intrinsically a reason to avoid it or make it stop, then painfulness would be

a normative property. This would be a surprising metaethical commitment for an explanatory turn to reasons to carry. Furthermore, appealing to the nature of pain in explaining reasons would in this case seem to violate the NF constraint after all.[27]

The general point I am making doesn't require that all of these worries be effective with respect to pain in particular, but only that they generalize well enough to make it doubtful that there would be enough intrinsically reason-giving non-normative facts to explain the rest of the reasons there are. The worries raised above make this much doubtful.

5. Evaluative facts and reasons

Next I'll discuss the role of evaluative and normative facts in explanations of reasons. Such facts might figure in such explanations in two ways. First, some evaluative and normative facts might count as reasons in virtue of their particular evaluative or normative character.[28] For instance, one reason to go shopping today might be that there are lots of good things on sale today. An explanation of this normative fact would presumably rely on the positively valuable aspects of the things on sale, other than just their low price. (Otherwise reasons would turn us to the likes of Poundland and Dollar Store much more than they actually do.) And pointing out what is valuable about friendship might be a good way to explain why the fact that someone is my friend gives me reasons to act in certain ways. Second, the factors that explain why some non-evaluative, non-normative facts provide the reasons they do might be evaluative or normative in character. For instance, it might be that what explains why the non-evaluative fact that a holiday resort is pleasant is a reason to visit it and recommend it to friends is that, if a resort is pleasant, this makes it good in certain ways or respects.

So-called 'value-based' accounts of reasons presumably take one or the other of these forms.[29] Unsurprisingly, then, each is inconsistent with an explanatory turn to reasons, unless the claims about goodness in the reason statements or explanations of reasons which they offer are mere shorthand for claims about reasons.[30] But this is unclear, to say the least.

Suppose that the following may in some contexts be an adequate explanation of what is bad or inappropriate about taking pleasure in making others suffer:

> In taking pleasure in the suffering of others one is displaying insensitivity to their suffering, and a lack of concern for it, which is particularly reprehensible if one is oneself the cause of the suffering, and could have prevented it. (Raz, 2001, p. 52)

This explanation could be taken to specify in what the badness of taking pleasure in making others suffer consists, at least proximately if not

ultimately. It appeals to factors that have evaluative flavor, so it may be subject to further explanatory demands. As I have indicated, the explanatory issues at stake are general, not specific to reasons. What isn't easy to see, however, is what further illumination would be provided by saying that the fact that taking pleasure in the suffering of others would display insensitivity to their suffering, and lack of concern for it, is a reason against doing so, and an especially strong reason if one is oneself the cause of the suffering.

What emerges here is that, if reasons are to be explanatorily fundamental in the normative domain, then neither things that are reasons nor factors which explain their status as reasons should involve evaluative or (non-reasons-based) normative aspects of our circumstances. This commitment of an explanatory turn to reasons is further confirmation that it is subject to the NF constraint. The extent of (explanations of) reasons which are most plausibly treated as evaluative in character – and with it the plausibility of a turn to reasons – depends on many controversial issues.

One way to illustrate the potentially wide sweep of this commitment is to consider how so-called 'thick' concepts and properties, such as *generous*, *courageous*, *brutal*, and *cruel*, matter to explanations of reasons. A maximally non-committal characterization of thick concepts is that they have some substantive non-evaluative content and their use is connected, in some close-knit way, with evaluation. According to a popular family of views, they are evaluative concepts whose applicability typically implies or signals the presence of reasons for action.[31] What would an explanatory turn to reasons say about such reasons?

It is a matter of dispute whether thick concepts and the properties they can be used to ascribe are evaluative in the same way as thin concepts, such as *good*, *right*, and *ought*, or evaluative at all. But suppose such facts as that something is cruel or that it is generous at least sometimes provide reasons even if they aren't evaluative facts. Those reasons would presumably require explanation. Thus, on the one hand, if thick concepts aren't evaluative but the properties they ascribe provide reasons, these reasons are among those which an explanatory turn to reasons is committed to explaining either in non-evaluative, non-normative terms or else in normative terms which only concern reasons. For otherwise it will fail the NF constraint. If, on the other hand, thick concepts and the properties they ascribe are in themselves evaluative, then their bearing on an explanatory turn to reasons depends on whether or not their evaluative and non-evaluative aspects can be divided into distinct components. For instance, if generosity can be understood as the property of being disposed to act in certain ways $F_1, \ldots, F_n$ (specifiable in wholly non-evaluative terms) towards others, and being good in a certain way for being so disposed, then it will be coherent to understand this latter, evaluative component in terms of reasons provided by the fact that something has or would manifest such a disposition. But, if thick concepts cannot be understood in this way, then it would seem that the

reasons provided by the properties they ascribe will have to be explained in evaluative terms.[32] So, if thick concepts are evaluative, they can be used to explain reasons consistently with the NF constraint only if their evaluative and non-evaluative aspects are separable. This would be a controversial substantive commitment.

A further worry about reasons associated with the applicability of thick concepts concerns their explanation under the NF constraint. Suppose generosity is a complex property divisible into two components: a disposition to act in certain ways towards others plus there being reasons to respond to people in certain favorable ways in virtue of their having or manifesting this disposition.[33] This might seem to be able to explain why the fact that someone is generous implies reasons to respond to it in certain favorable ways. For such a fact is now understood in terms of the existence of reasons to respond favorably plus a specification of what provides those reasons. But what explains why having or manifesting the disposition provides the reasons that it does? The normative element of generosity itself merely states that it does. The NF constraint requires either that the explanation be non-evaluative and non-normative or else that it appeal to some other factors concerning reasons.

In short, an explanatory turn to reasons faces exactly the same questions that arise for any account of thick concepts, and comes with controversial commitments regarding thick concepts in so far as these come with reasons. But, for all that, it seems to provide no distinctive advantage in answering these questions or explaining these reasons.

6. Non-normative explanations of reasons

We have seen that explaining reasons consistently with the NF constraint requires that the facts that are reasons be non-evaluative, non-normative facts. Thus, reasons to go to a concert will be such things as that doing so would be stimulating or fun, reasons to add a certain spice to what one is cooking will be such things as that adding it would bring out, balance, or complement such-and-such flavors of such-and-such other ingredients, and so on. And we have seen that the NF constraint doesn't allow explaining the status of such facts as reasons in non-evaluative or normative terms. I'll now discuss whether their status as reasons can be explained in non-evaluative, non-normative terms or else in normative terms concerning reasons.

The most straightforward version of the former, non-normative option is the claim that the fact that P is a reason to Φ in C consists in P, C, and Φ. No doubt reason relations are in some sense grounded in their relata. But surely merely listing their relata fails to explain them, unless something about the relata explains why they are so related. The clearest such cases are factors that have evaluative or normative content, in so far as these might be reasons intrinsically. But on the present view the reason relata are

to be described in non-evaluative, non-normative terms. So this option is unpromising for an explanatory turn to reasons.

A better way to assess the prospects for non-evaluative constitutive explanations of why P is a reason to Φ in C is to consider the properties of such explanations. Even if we don't understand exactly what it is for something to consist in some conditions or obtain in virtue of them, or how explanations that appeal to such a relation work, we know some things about what the relation isn't like. One example (an unsurprising one, given that supervenience relations often require explanation themselves) is that the supervenience of reasons on the non-normative as such isn't enough to furnish it. Even if there can be no difference in reasons without a non-normative difference, this alone determines no particular distribution of reason relations. It entails the existence of some reason relations to begin with only if reasons nihilism is false.[34] For, if there were no reasons, it would follow trivially that, if two cases differ with respect to reasons, they must also differ in some non-normative respect.

Even if we conjoin supervenience with substantive normative assumptions to the effect that some particular non-normative way things are is co-instantiated with a particular reason relation, reasons won't be explained by their supervenient character. For supervenience provides only a non-symmetric and purely modal sort of determination, whereas explanatory relations are asymmetric and not purely modal.[35] Facts can be determined, in that sense, by conditions which don't constitute or explain them. For example, given a coarse tripartite division of the space of temperature conditions, *being neither hot nor cold* determines *being warm* (Oddie, 2005, p. 153). But clearly the latter doesn't consist in the former. Thus factors $F_1, \ldots, F_n$ can well fail to explain why P is a reason to Φ in C even if this reason relation cannot fail to hold when $F_1, \ldots, F_n$ obtain. This means also that truthmakers of reason claims may not provide constitutive explanations of them. The literature on truth-making nearly uniformly assumes that, if an entity α makes a proposition P true, then α couldn't exist without P being true. Such necessitation isn't enough for explanation. But what more there might metaphysically be to the truth-making relation is rarely discussed.

Supervenience can be used to illustrate one further constraint on constitutive explanations. The supervenience base for any property can be taken as a disjunction of every possible minimally sufficient set of conditions for the instantiation of that property. But it would be a significant theoretical cost if the distribution of reason relations over non-evaluative, non-normative features of the world had only a fundamentally disjunctive explanation. For that would mean that the reasons in this distribution would have nothing distinctively in common. Moreover, the supervenience relation itself allows each disjunct to include an extremely broad set of non-evaluative features, or even, at the limit, all of the non-evaluative features of the entire possible world in question. But being forced to allow that P's being a reason to Φ in

C may consist in the entire world being a certain non-evaluative way $F_1, \ldots, F_n$ would seem to be a significant theoretical cost. For that would be to allow that constitutive explanations may fail to differentiate those aspects of the world in virtue of which P is a reason to Φ in C, those in virtue of which Q is a reason to ψ in D, and so on.

The conditions which constitutive explanations select as those in which P's being a reason to Φ in C consists must also support the modal properties of reasons. Recall from Section 2 the idea that it is metaphysically impossible that the entire universe could be like it is actually in all non-normative respects, but the fact that my mother is my mother is a reason for me to torture her (Schroeder, 2007, p. 71). Whatever reasons the fact that my mother is my mother gives me, the conditions in which these reason relations consist should support metaphysical impossibilities of this kind where they hold. And if some reason relations hold necessarily, the conditions in which their holding consists should support their necessity.

In sum, then, if reason relations have constitutive explanations in non-evaluative, non-normative terms, there are strong reasons to think that the conditions in which the various reason relations consist aren't fundamentally disjunctive and that this constitutive relationship isn't purely modal but can support or ground the sorts of modal features that reason relations may have. These constraints can be met if reason relations are reducible to non-evaluative and non-normative properties or relations, since there will be no other way for P to be a reason to Φ in C than for P, C, and Φ to have these properties or stand in these relations, and nothing else will be required for them to do so.[36] But it is hard to imagine a plausible account of constitutive explanations of reasons in non-evaluative, non-normative terms which doesn't push towards a reductionist account of reasons. Other explanatory domains don't readily suggest a model for such explanations.

An independent consideration against the plausibility of constitutive explanations of reason relations in non-evaluative, non-normative terms concerns their fit with the 'autonomy of ethics', the thesis that there is no reasonable inference, deductive or non-deductive, from purely non-evaluative, non-normative premises to evaluative or normative conclusions. Ordinary normative discourse obeys this constraint. For instance, if we see someone realize that jumping out of the window is the only way they can save their lives and infer that this fact is a good reason for them to jump, we tend not to think that they have drawn a terrible inference. We tend instead to interpret the inference charitably as implicitly relying on further evaluative or normative premises, such as that their life is worth continuing and that one has a reason to take the necessary means to worthwhile courses of action.[37]

Explanatory relations may not themselves be inferential relations. But one would still expect that, if A explained B, this would say something about

what would be reasonable or good about an inference of B from A. If P's being a reason to Φ in C consists in conditions $F_1, \ldots, F_n$, one would expect there typically to be a reasonable, even if non-monotonic, inference from $F_1, \ldots, F_n$ to R(P, C, Φ), even if such an inference were unavailable in our pragmatic situation.[38] If so, and if reason relations had constitutive explanations in non-evaluative, non-normative terms, then the possibility of reasonable inferences from such premises to evaluative or normative conclusions would seem to follow.

These considerations push naturally towards reductionism about reasons. For, if reason relations were reducible to some non-normative, non-evaluative properties and relations, then the connections that underwrite the reduction could perhaps be used to indicate, consistently with the autonomy of ethics, what would be reasonable or good about the relevant inferences. Otherwise it isn't easy to see what features of those inferences would make them so.

I conclude that I can see no plausible account of explanations of reasons in non-evaluative, non-normative terms which satisfies the NF constraint on explanations of reasons without naturally pushing in the direction of a reductionist account of reasons.

7. Explaining reasons in terms concerning reasons

My argument so far pushes an explanatory turn to reasons to the claim that the facts that are reasons are non-evaluative, non-normative facts, and their status as reasons can be explained by appeal to normative factors concerning reasons. I'll now discuss three strategies for trying to construct plausible explanations of this kind which might also satisfy the NF constraint.[39]

One sort of normative factor concerning reasons which could be used to explain reasons is the set of conditions under which something is a reason to do something. To satisfy the NF constraint, such conditions cannot be stated in some further normative terms. For instance, it would be ineligible to say that, when P is a reason to Φ in C, this is because P plays a role in explaining why one *ought* to Φ. Such conditions must also be stated in informative terms, not in terms which do little more than paraphrase reason talk. For instance, it would be either insufficiently informative or in violation of the NF constraint to say that, when P is a reason to Φ in C, this is *because* those who consider P would be motivated to Φ if they were fully informed and rational. This explanation isn't informative if talk of informed rational motivation merely paraphrases talk of reasons. But, if the notion of informed rational motivation is sufficiently independent of the notion of a reason to explain the status of some facts as reasons, then such explanations violate the NF constraint. For the fundamental explanatory work in such accounts isn't done by normative reasons. Rather, reasons will be a function of the desires of fully informed agents whose overall mental

economy satisfies various rational requirements of coherence and the like.[40] It seems doubtful that there will turn out to be further normative reasons to be rational in this sense.

Another sort of normative factor concerning reasons which could perhaps be used to explain reasons is a certain sort of substantive claims about reasons. One idea along these lines is that it is part of the notion of a reason that certain non-evaluative, non-normative facts stand in reason relations. For instance, perhaps reason relations are by their nature such that the fact that something is painful is a reason to avoid it or make it stop. But this seems too strong. One widespread feature of normative discourse is that, when a pair of speakers find out that they favor very different sorts of things, they tend not to think that they have different enough normative concepts to be talking past each other. Rather, each tends to think that the other has mistaken, or at least idiosyncratic, normative views.[41] This, I take it, is how someone who denies that something's being painful is a reason to avoid it or make it stop would usually be classified. I also don't find it convincing that such people, although they share a concept of a reason with us, would have to be classified as mistaken about what reasons are, rather than as mistaken simply about what considerations are reasons for what.

A different way of appealing to substantive claims about reasons would be to explain why particular facts are reasons by subsuming them under general principles to the effect that certain facts are a reason to Φ in C. But, even apart from the question of whether a particular normative fact can sensibly be said to consist in, or hold in virtue of, a general normative principle plus suitable particular non-normative facts, this strategy would commit an explanatory turn to reasons to a surprising range of controversial implications. It would require some sort of 'covering law' theory of explanation. It would imply that particularist accounts of reasons are false. And it would carry a commitment to some particular set of substantive principles about reasons. Most importantly, however, this strategy would only push the explanatory problem a level up. General principles that specify what is a reason for what, necessary or not, seem no more brute or groundless than particular facts about what is a reason for what. So this strategy won't help.

A third sort of factor concerning reasons which could perhaps be used to explain reasons is some metaethical account which takes reasons to be a certain kind of function of a certain kind of collection of *judgments about* reasons. This general idea can be developed in different ways. One is constructivism. On this view, the normative fact that P is a reason to Φ in C is constituted by the fact that taking P to be a reason to Φ in C would withstand scrutiny from the standpoint of all the other normative judgments endorsed by the agent.[42] Another is expressivism. On this view, to judge that P is a reason to Φ in C is to express a certain kind of psychological attitude, and such a judgment counts as correct if it belongs to a set of such attitudes that cannot be, in a certain sense, improved upon.[43]

The only point I can make here about these views is dialectical. Constructivism and expressivism apply equally to reasons and other evaluative and normative notions, and nothing in discussions of constructivism and expressivism which touch on the relevant explanatory issues seems to point to any rationale for putting reasons in particular at the center stage. So, even if these metaethical accounts succeed in explaining reasons in terms of judgments about reasons, neither supports an explanatory turn to reasons in particular.

I conclude that there seems to be no account of explanations of reasons in terms concerning reasons which would support an explanatory turn to reasons. But this conclusion requires a caveat. It can be introduced by considering (theoretical) reasons for belief.

It is plausible that theoretical and practical reasons involve normative reason relations of the same type. But it seems that the demand to explain why some fact (e.g., that there is loud music and chatter coming from across the street) is a reason for some belief (e.g., that the neighbors are having a party) might be easily met by something like the following explanatory schema: given the fact in question (plus some body of background information or facts), the proposition that is the content of the belief is likely to be true. Where such explanations are best located in this paper's framework for explanations of reasons deserves a fuller discussion than I can give here. But I suspect that truth and probability, and concepts of epistemic utility constructed out of them, aren't themselves normative notions. (They are, of course, co-opted into normative standards in epistemology.) Thus it would seem that either explanations of reasons for belief in terms of truth and probability are explanations in terms of non-normative factors or that probability-raising considerations count as reasons for belief only if, and because, false belief is in some sense bad and true belief good (at least when the truths are non-trivial and sufficiently important or interesting).

The caveat to my conclusion above is that this second option might not have to violate the NF constraint. Some philosophers think that something like the explanatory schema above follows from the very nature of belief as an attitude that has a 'constitutive aim' of truth.[44] If fact F makes proposition P likely to be true (or is otherwise indicative of the truth of P), then F is a reason to believe P, given what belief is. The status of a fact as a reason for belief could thus be explicable in terms of some norms of reason which somehow derive from the aim of truth and by which belief is constitutively regulated. True belief might then be held to be good in the sense of according with such norms of reason. This might come close enough to counting as an explanation of reasons for belief in terms concerning reasons.

Whether a general explanatory turn to reasons is a significant option here depends on the prospects for similar explanations of why certain facts are reasons for action, intention, and desire, for the various reactive and affective attitudes, and, on the theoretical side, for attitudes such as supposing

and guessing. The bet would be that actions (and so on) also have some or other 'constitutive aim'[45] and, moreover, that reasons for action (and so on) can be explained in terms of that aim. It is highly controversial that acting and a variety of attitudes for which there can be reasons each have a constitutive aim to begin with, and that, if they do, that aim is of the right sort, and sufficiently rich, to ground and explain a sufficiently wide range of reasons for action.[46] I suspect that making all this plausible will prove too tall an order. But here I can only note the caveat that this is an option for an explanatory turn to reasons which my arguments don't rule out. Its assessment must be left for future work.

8. Conclusion

For all that this paper shows, there may be constitutive explanations of reasons that satisfy the NF constraint without pushing towards reductionism about reasons. I may simply have failed to find them. But it is far from clear where to look for such explanations, save perhaps for controversial ideas about constitutive aims of action, belief, and all the other attitudes for which there are reasons. Thus it seems fair to cast my discussion as a challenge to those who find themselves sympathetic to an explanatory turn to reasons to construct such explanations. My aim has been to force such philosophers into a choice that many of them wouldn't like: either endorse reductionism about reasons or abort the turn to reasons in particular.

The concerns over explanation of evaluative and normative facts which fuel this challenge are, as I have noted, quite general. It is therefore possible that the considerations I have given can be recruited to generate parallel challenges against proposals to take some other factors than reasons as explanatorily fundamental in the normative domain. I don't particularly worry that this means that my discussion shows too much for my purposes. If everyone faces a certain problem over explaining evaluative and normative facts, that doesn't mean that no one has a problem. And, in fact, nothing I say here challenges reductionism as a general explanatory hypothesis regarding evaluative and normative facts. Whether and to what extent reductive explanations of various evaluative and normative facts or notions are plausible depends on such further issues as how well those explanations can capture the evaluative or normative character of these facts or notions.

Some people might be inclined to conclude instead that the constraints on explaining evaluative and normative facts must be weaker than the NF constraint and its analogues. That would affect the main thrust of this chapter. Although Section 2 defends the idea that evaluative and normative facts typically call for explanation, the strength and scope of such a constraint clearly deserves further discussion. For what it is worth, my own inclination is to think that the rational intelligibility of normative and evaluative distinctions and facts significantly constrains what can be regarded

as brute in the normative domain and where no further explanation is possible. And, again for what it is worth, I suspect that, if there are evaluative or normative facts that have no further explanation, they will be more concerned with whether certain aspects of our situation in the world have some or other sort of normative significance than whether the particular form that their significance takes is constitution of value, provision of reasons, or something else. Thus, the current fashion of putting reasons at center stage in moral philosophy fails to strike me as a significant innovation in the important enterprise of explaining evaluative and normative phenomena.[47]

Notes

1. So by 'explanation' I mean the content of an answer to a why-question, not the activity of giving such an answer. We may need to add that something counts as an explanation only if it also satisfies certain epistemic conditions. For example, it may be that the content of an answer to a why-question counts as an explanation only if it is (or represents) a body of information that is structured in such a way that grasping that body of information would constitute a certain kind of epistemic gain regarding what is being explained.
2. Those who agree include, for example, Raz (2001, p. 50). Parfit (2006, p. 331) thinks the bedrock lies nearer the surface.
3. This isn't the only kind of reason predicate we deploy, even when talking just about normative reasons, in contrast to 'motivational' and 'explanatory' reasons. We can also talk of 'overall' reasons to Φ, based on taking into account everything that counts for or against Φing (although how to understand such talk is controversial), as well as of 'sufficient' reasons to Φ (see, e.g., Skorupski, 2006).
4. There is controversy over which ontological category includes the considerations that provide reasons, but there is a broad consensus that they are facts or propositions. I keep the assumption disjunctive because, although reason statements often specify facts that are the case, we can also talk about whether something would be a reason if it were the case, and so statements of the form R(P, C, Φ) aren't uniformly factive with respect to P.
5. Thus these simplifications don't prejudge debates between internalist and externalist theories or Humean and anti-Humean theories of reasons. A huge literature is devoted to these debates, but see, for example, Williams (1981b), Smith (1994a), Dancy (2000a), Schroeder (2007), and, for a useful survey, Finlay and Schroeder (2008).
6. The distinction between facts that are reasons and the normative facts that they are reasons is most explicitly drawn by McNaughton and Rawling (2003). For a relevant critical discussion of some work on reasons which plays fast and loose with the distinction, see Olson (2009). We should probably make the distinction tripartite by adding another dimension: the source or ground of the normative fact that P is a reason to Φ in C.
7. They also presume that the fact that prudence requires me to do something is a reason to do it, and so is the fact that morality requires me to do something. Whether these might be brute facts is unclear.
8. The problem may be a generalization of the problem mentioned for the moral case in Pritchard (1912).

9. Note also that skepticism about intrinsic value isn't uncommon, but in the case of reasons one more commonly finds claims such as the following: 'Genuine skepticism about ... whether anything ever counts in favor of anything else in the sense typical of reasons ... would be a very difficult position to hold' (Scanlon, 1998, p. 19). Such claims often rely on the thought that any argument for skepticism about reasons for belief would be self-defeating. But it seems not at all clear that an argument for the truth of the claim that there are no reasons for belief must be committed to the existence of reasons for believing its conclusion (cf. Olson, 2009, p. 177).
10. It is common to group proposals to explain value in terms of the 'fittingness' or 'appropriateness' of a certain sort of response with a turn to reasons. I won't do this here, because fittingness or appropriateness needn't be understood as a function of reasons or vice versa. Thus the claim that a certain response to something is fitting and the claim that there is a reason to respond to it in that way may not be equivalent.
11. Claims to this effect, but of varying determinacy regarding the scope of the normative, can be found in Hampton (1998, p. 115), Scanlon (1998, p. 17), Raz (1999, p. 67), Dancy (2004a, ch. 1), and Schroeder (2007, p. 81).
12. For the first view, see, for example, Raz (1999, p. 1). The second is mentioned as an option in Dancy (2000a, pp. 29–30). It is perhaps endorsed by Crisp (2006, p. 62), but this isn't clear.
13. Or fundamental in so far as the normativity of these other notions is concerned. Some of these other notions might have non-normative elements which aren't exhausted by their relation to reasons.
14. See, for example, Scanlon (1998, p. 17) and Dancy (2004a, ch. 1), among many others.
15. See, for example, Scanlon (1998, pp. 95–100), Stratton-Lake and Hooker (2006), and Väyrynen (2006).
16. The idea comes up in conversations. Skorupski (2006, p. 26) mentions it with approval. I take the general tenor of the early chapters of Scanlon (1998) strongly to suggest it. See also Parfit (forthcoming, ch. 1).
17. Note that this kind of explanatory demand is compatible with a wide range of views about reasons. It can be reasonable not merely if the concept of a reason is primitive, but also if reasons are best explicated in terms of their role in explaining what one ought to do (Broome, 2004) or in terms of their bearing on practical questions (Hieronymi, 2005). If some fact forms part of an explanation of why one ought to Φ, or part of an answer to the question of whether to Φ, then it is presumably not a brute or arbitrary fact that it does so.
18. See, for example, the literature on the 'supervenience argument' against moral realism originated by Blackburn (1971). Many writers on necessity deny that there are unexplained necessities (see, e.g., Cameron, 2010).
19. I owe these examples to T.M. Scanlon (The John Locke Lectures, University of Oxford, 2009).
20. To a first approximation, P is a non-derivative reason to Φ if P is a reason to Φ but not (only) because some fact Q distinct from P is a reason to Φ. Instrumentalist theories of practical reasons will typically count some instrumental reasons as non-derivative in this sense, which seems to be the right result.
21. See Fine (1995, p. 271). Väyrynen (2009a) discusses several different kinds of relations which the term 'in virtue of' may be used to express.
22. No uniform terminology exists here. Such relations as *A consists in nothing more than B* and *A is nothing over and above B* are called 'grounding' (Fine, 2001, pp. 15–16)

and 'constitution' (Shafer-Landau, 2003, p. 77), among other things. These locutions are usually meant to allow that A and B may be numerically distinct.

23. It is one thing to say that something is a reason to Φ, another to say that it is part of what explains why something is a reason to Φ. It might not be the case that all explanations of reasons to Φ must themselves be reasons to Φ. But, if so, then it is possible for something to play the latter role without playing the former.
24. One example would be the notion of a basic *prima facie* duty, in the sense of Ross (1930, ch. 2).
25. For this example and a useful survey of intrinsicness and intrinsicality, see Weatherson (2008).
26. See Quinn (1993), Lance and Little (2006), and Heuer (2006) for remarks that seem sympathetic to this claim.
27. Unless, surprisingly indeed, to be painful is to have other properties that provide certain kinds of reasons.
28. See Raz (2001, pp. 165–6), Wallace (2002, p. 448), Scanlon (2002, p. 513), and Dancy (2004a, ch. 2).
29. Different forms of value-based accounts of reasons can be found, for example, in Moore (1903), Quinn (1993), Lawrence (1995), Raz (1999; 2001), Audi (2006), and Heuer (2006).
30. For instance, being a good-making feature would have to be nothing over and above providing certain kinds of reasons for actions or attitudes.
31. See Williams (1985, pp. 128–9, 140–1) and much of the literature following his discussion. Against this, Väyrynen (2009b) argues that the evaluations which may be conveyed by using predicates expressing thick concepts aren't located in their sense or semantic content.
32. This claim is developed and endorsed by Stratton-Lake and Hooker (2006, p. 152).
33. This is to understand the fact that something is generous as an existential fact that there are reasons, given by certain properties, to respond to it in certain favorable ways. According to the buck-passing account of value, the fact that something is good is a similar existential fact. Such existential facts about reasons can be derivative reasons.
34. This can be seen by considering the antecedent in the standard formulation of weak and strong property supervenience of the normative on the non-normative. Strong supervenience holds that: $\Box[(\exists x)\ (B^{*}x\ \&\ Ax) \supset \Box(\forall y)(B^{*}y \supset Ay)]$, where A is a normative property and 'B*' is the 'total' non-normative base property. Weak supervenience drops the second necessity operator ('□'). The antecedents of these supervenience claims hold only if something has the normative property A; normative nihilism denies this. Varying the modal strengths of the necessity operators generates different versions of these supervenience claims.
35. These claims aren't in dispute in the supervenience literature. See, for example, McLaughlin and Bennett (2008).
36. For a sustained defense of reductionism about reasons along these lines, see Schroeder (2007, ch. 4).
37. See Sturgeon (2002). As Sturgeon notes, similar inference barriers seem to appear in many other domains. For an extended discussion of inferring 'ought' from 'is' without such auxiliary premises, see Zimmerman (2010, ch. 5). (I am here ignoring the well-known 'cheap' counter-examples to the autonomy of ethics.)
38. At least in so far as such explanations are abductive or non-monotonic, there is no reason to suppose that they would always have to predict or retrodict the holding of particular reason relations. A perhaps related point is that explanation

of reasons is one thing (theoretical), deliberation about what to do is another (practical).

39. Another strategy, which I cannot discuss properly here, is to argue that what explains why P is occurrently a reason to Φ is that P has a *disposition* to be a reason to Φ in C and the circumstances C obtain. (For a discussion of such 'normative dispositions,' see Robinson, 2006.) But I suspect that the arguments I have given so far can be applied also against taking such normative dispositions as the fundamental units of explanations of reasons. If properties are the sorts of things that can have dispositions to begin with, it might be plausible that some evaluative and normative properties are disposed to give reasons to Φ in C in virtue of their particular evaluative or normative character; but this would violate the NF constraint. It seems much harder to motivate the idea that non-evaluative, non-normative properties are disposed to give reasons to Φ in C. That certain such properties bear such a normative disposition isn't a brute fact, in my opinion. But what in such properties would explain why they are so disposed? This question might have a satisfactory answer if normative dispositions were reducible to a non-evaluative, non-normative basis that explains why the disposition is manifested when it is. But I don't see how an appeal to normative dispositions that doesn't involve reductionism can help explain reasons consistently with the NF constraint. Still, it may well be that these doubts are too hasty and deserve further discussion.
40. For an analysis of normative reasons in such terms, see, for example, Smith (1994a, ch. 5).
41. For one recent discussion of this point and some of its implications, see Merli (2009).
42. See especially Street (2008) and the works cited therein. Constructivists of this sort don't usually think that the attitude of taking something to be a reason can be characterized in non-normative terms, but only in certain sorts of primitive normative terms (see Street, 2008, 239–42). Note also that this view wouldn't seem to furnish a transcendental argument to the effect that, if there are to be any reasons at all, there must be reasons for thinking along the lines of some procedure for determining what reasons there are for particular agents to do what.
43. See, for example, Blackburn (1988) and Gibbard (2003, pp. 188–91). Although expressivists think that what reasons one has can only be assessed against a standpoint constituted by other judgments about reasons, they also think that the attitude expressed by such judgments – the attitude of counting P as favoring Φing in C – can be described without using the concept of a reason. But this prong of expressivist accounts of reasons doesn't seem to be intended to furnish the sorts of explanations of normative reasons that are the focus of this paper.
44. The literature on the 'aim of belief' is extensive, but see, for example, Velleman (2000, ch. 11) and Wedgwood (2002).
45. The literature on the 'constitutive aim of action' is again extensive, but see, for example, Velleman (2000, ch. 6–8 and 'Introduction'), Korsgaard (2009), and, for one representative critical discussion, Enoch (2006).
46. Various specifications of such constitutive aims would be of the wrong sort to suit an explanatory turn to reasons. If the constitutive aim of action were *the good*, then explanations of reasons for action in terms of this aim would violate the NF constraint. And would it be informative and non-circular for an explana-

tory turn to reasons to exploit a constitutive aim of action if that aim were *acting in accordance with reasons*?

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