

Planning and Its Function in Our Lives

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ABSTRACT *Our capacity for planning agency is a core capacity that underlies interrelated forms of mind-shaped practical organization: cross-temporal organization of individual agency, shared agency, social rules, and rule-guided organized institutions. A function of our capacity for planning agency is the support of these forms of practical organization. I highlight Peter Godfrey-Smith's contrast between the 'Wright function' of something as 'the effect it has which explains why it is there' and 'Cummins functions' that 'are capacities or effects of components of systems, which are salient in the explanation of capacities of the larger system'. Drawing on Paul Grice's strategy of 'creature construction', I articulate a sequence of nested constructions: from temporally extended planning agency to shared agency to shared policies to social rules to rule-guided organized institutions. We see our capacity for planning agency as part of an explanation of how we achieve such practical organization, and as having nested Cummins functions of supporting those forms of organization. This sheds light on related ideas in H.L.A. Hart's theory of law, a challenge from J. David Velleman, the centrality of such forms of organization to the philosophy of action, and the moral and political significance of our capacity for planning agency.*

Our human capacity for planning agency is, for us, a core capacity, one that underlies multiple, interrelated forms of mind-shaped practical organization that play fundamental roles in our lives. These forms of organization include the cross-temporal organization of individual temporally extended agency, the small-scale social organization of shared intentional activity, the social rules that structure much of our sociality, and large-scale rule-guided organized institutions. Given the core role of our planning capacities in these multiple and interrelated forms of human practical organization, these planning capacities should be treated as central within an illuminating, philosophically sensitive understanding of our human agency, individual and social.

Or so I have argued in earlier work.¹ Not all agents are planning agents; but it is a deep feature of our human agency that it is a distinctive kind of planning agency. The conjecture, subject to empirical study, is that our human temporally extended, social and institutionally shaped practical lives significantly involve such planning agency and that our capacity for such planning agency significantly underlies our capacities for these forms of practical organization. This is the *core capacity thesis*.

This points to the idea that a central *function* of our capacity for planning agency is the support of these interrelated forms of human practical organization. And that sets a main task for this article: clarifying the connection between the core capacity thesis and relevant phenomena of function.

This will involve drawing on my earlier discussions.² But my main aim here is not to restate but to deepen our understanding of the planning theory of human agency and its significance by locating it within different approaches to phenomena of function and by

articulating a kind of function that is specifically at work. This will set the stage for reflection on related ideas in H.L.A Hart's theory of law and on a challenge from J. David Velleman. It will help us see the importance of going beyond the Anscombe–Davidson-shaped framework that has guided research in the philosophy of action since the 1960s. And it will put us in a position to deepen our appreciation of the moral and political significance of our capacity for planning agency.

So, let us begin by asking about the very idea of function. A first step is to note that one idea of function is directly built into the functionalist approach to the psychological that is at the bottom of the planning theory. We understand intention, planning, evaluation, desire, belief, acceptance, and associated forms of thinking as interrelated elements in an overall causal system that involves associated forms of rational guidance. Our characterization of this overall system begins with our commonsense psychology but is potentially adjusted, modified, explicated, and systematized in the light of various theoretical and empirical considerations. This gives us an underlying theory of characteristic causal, rational functioning. We understand relevant psychological concepts as implicitly defined by this theory.³ In particular, we understand the relevant concept of intention as the concept of a plan state – a state of this system that plays the associated web of roles specified by this underlying theory of the functioning characteristic of human planning agency. Intentions are plan states; and plan states are functionally specified states of this psychological system.

With this broadly functionalist picture in the background, we can turn to further ideas of function that are in the neighborhood. Here we can learn from Peter Godfrey-Smith's distinction between 'Wright functions' and 'Cummins functions'.⁴ The Wright function 'of something is the effect it has which explains why it is there'.⁵ In contrast, Cummins functions 'are capacities or effects of components of systems, which are salient in the explanation of capacities of the larger system'.⁶ What is primarily to be explained by appeal to a Wright function of X is why X is there. What is primarily to be explained by appeal to a Cummins function of X is a capacity of a larger system within which X is embedded.

Circulating blood is a Wright function of the human heart insofar as the fact that the heart does this 'explains why' the heart 'is there' – where the envisaged explanation is selectionist. Circulating blood is a Cummins function of the human heart insofar as the heart's doing this plays a role in the explanation of a relevant capacity of a relevant, larger system – in this case, the capacity of a human to stay alive. Appeal to such a Cummins function is appeal to a causal-functional property and is in that way in the spirit of our background functionalist understanding of the psychological. But appeal to a Cummins function is, further, appeal to a specific kind of causal-functional property, one specifically tied to explanation of a capacity of a larger system.

Consider now an effect of the heart's workings that neither helps explain why a heart is there, nor contributes to the capacity of a human to stay alive. For example: the heart makes thumping sounds.⁷ Though this effect does not contribute to the capacity of the body to stay alive, we might see it as contributing to the capacity of the body to make a cacophony of biologically grounded sounds. So, we might say that making thumping sounds is a Cummins function of the heart with respect to a larger system of biologically grounded sounds.

As this illustrates, Cummins functions are relativized to a specification of a larger system and of what that larger system is doing. In cases of central theoretical interest,

however, our interest is not simply in anything that some larger system is doing. When we single out a Cummins function we are, I will take it, presupposing that the workings of the larger system to which this function is relativized are in some way – practically, theoretically, or both – important. So, I will here understand a claim of a Cummins function of X with respect to a larger system Y to presuppose that Y and its workings are either explanatorily important or of value (and in that way practically important) or both.⁸ So, while a claim of a Cummins function tracks certain causal-functional properties, it goes beyond the functionalist deep structure of psychology (as understood here) in two ways: it specifically appeals to an explanatory role with respect to a capacity of a larger system; and it presupposes a claim about the value and/or explanatory importance of that larger system and its workings.⁹

Return to the core capacity thesis. According to this thesis, our capacity for planning agency plays basic roles in multiple, interrelated systems of human, mind-shaped practical organization, individual and social. In the absence of these interrelated forms of practical organization, our lives would be fundamentally different. The core capacity thesis sees our capacity for planning agency as part of the explanation of how we achieve these multiple and fundamental forms of practical organization. It thereby sees our capacity for planning agency as having the Cummins function of supporting that organization.

This involves a claim about the explanatory importance of these forms of practical organization within our human lives. In many cases it is also true that what these forms of practical organization help make possible and explain is of significant value. There can, however, be cases in which what they help make possible and explain is morally awful – consider the practical organization involved in a large-scale system of slavery.¹⁰

This is an account of what our capacity for planning agency does – in many cases, what good it does. It is not, however, a claim that this is the unique way in which relevant forms of practical organization might be supported. It is a claim of sufficiency, not necessity. In this way, these claims about such Cummins functions of our capacity for planning agency are in the spirit of what I have called a strategy of sufficiency.¹¹

This account of what our planning capacity does is not primarily an explanation of why that capacity has come to be there. This proposed Cummins function does involve the idea that the multiple forms of practical organization supported by our planning capacity are explanatorily important, and in many cases of significant value. But it does not follow that this support of important practical organization directly provides a selectionist explanation of why that planning capacity is there. So, it does not directly follow from the core capacity thesis that our capacity for planning agency has the Wright function of supporting that organization.

A complexity is that even absent such a direct, selectionist explanation of why this planning capacity has come to be in place, it might still be true that once that capacity is in place its support of these forms of practical organization helps explain why it remains.¹² So, it might be true that in this extended sense our planning capacity has the Wright function of supporting this practical organization, since this support of practical organization helps explain why this planning capacity remains on the scene once it is there.¹³

In contrast with a focus on how our planning capacities came to be or remain in place, my focus is on multiple aspects of what our planning capacities do. Can we say more about how our planning capacities do all this?

I think we can make progress here by drawing from Paul Grice's strategy of 'creature construction'.¹⁴ In previous work¹⁵ I describe a series of constructions that begins with

our planning agency and proceeds to our capacities for shared agency, social rules, and rule-guided organized institutions. This series of constructions elucidates the sequential contributions of our capacity for planning agency to these forms of organization.¹⁶ I proceed to sketch this sequence of constructions, bracketing complexities and qualifications that I address elsewhere.

We begin with our capacity for individual, temporally extended planning agency.¹⁷ Prior partial plans settle matters about future action in a way that comports with our resource-limits and helps explain how we achieve important forms of cross-temporal organization of our thought and action. These prior partial plans – for example, my plan to travel to London next month – provide a background framework for further practical thinking between now and then. Given its partiality, this framework poses problems about how to fill it in; and given needs for coordination within one’s web of plans, this framework constrains potential solutions to those problems. This functioning of this framework of prior, partial plans is shaped by norms of plan rationality – norms of means-end coherence, consistency, and stability.

These cross-temporally organizing planning structures then provide resources for a construction of shared intention and shared intentional agency – for example, our shared intention to take a walk together¹⁸ or to play a quartet together or to have a conversation together. We see a basic case of our shared intention in favor of our joint activity – in contrast with a case of solely strategic interpersonal interaction – as consisting in a public web of interlocking and interdependent intentions of each in favor of our joint activity by way of mutual responsiveness and mesh in sub-plans. Each publicly and interdependently intends that we so act by way of the intentions of each, meshing sub-plans, and mutual responsiveness.¹⁹ And the key is to show that when the interrelated elements in this construction function properly, in accord with norms of individual plan rationality, the ensuing overall functioning will be of a sort that is characteristic of shared intention – or anyway, an important kind of shared intention. For example, within this construction each is set to play their own role, to refrain from blocking the role of the others, and to help others if needed. And each is set to be responsive to the others – perhaps by way of bargaining or shared deliberation – in pursuit of and support of mesh in sub-plans. We then extend this construction to shared general policies – for example, our shared policy of meeting weekly, or of giving weight to environmental concerns in our building houses together.

This then provides resources for a construction of social rules that help shape and constitute our social lives, social rules of the sort highlighted by H.L.A. Hart.²⁰ I will later say more about such social rules. Here let me just point in a preliminary way to the phenomenon and its place in our sequence of constructions. Examples include a social rule of wearing masks in public in a pandemic, or of wearing a yarmulke in a synagogue, or of not interrupting a speaker in a certain kind of public presentation, or a social rule concerning gender roles, or a social rule to resolve certain kinds of conflict by way of certain voting procedures. According to our construction, a basic case of such a social rule of ours involves a shared policy in favor of our so acting.²¹ And the key, again, is to explain why it is true that when the interrelated elements in this construction function properly, in accord with norms of individual plan rationality, the ensuing overall functioning will be of a sort that is characteristic of Hart-type social rules. For example, participants in such a shared policy will be set to conform and to support the conformity of others; and

they will be set to criticize divergence from the policy by a participant in the shared policy in part because such divergence would be a breakdown in plan rationality.

We then highlight social rules that concern procedures for solving problems that arise as we move from smaller-scale to larger-scale groups – for example, a voting procedure, or a rule in favor of giving weight to certain considerations in resolving certain problems. These are social rules of procedure.²² Further, in certain central cases there are social rules of procedure that accord certain participants, or the occupants of certain roles or offices, forms of *de facto* authority within the group. These are authority-according social procedural rules. An example is a social rule that accords a certain sub-committee authority to make certain decisions for the larger group. The conjecture is that such authority-according procedural social rules are a main resource for a construction of an important kind of rule-governed organized institution – for example, a non-profit organization concerned with distributing medical supplies.²³ We seek to show that when the interrelated elements in this construction function properly, in accord with norms of individual plan rationality,²⁴ the ensuing overall functioning will be of a sort that is characteristic of a rule-guided organized institution. And an important implication of the plan-theoretic construction on offer is that the proper functioning of such social rules of procedure can issue in outputs that function in ways characteristic of intentions of the institution – as when the institution, as we say, decides and so intends to send medical supplies to a certain city.²⁵

We thereby have a sequence of constructions, and constructions of constructions: from individual planning agency to shared agency to shared policies to Hart-type social rules²⁶ to rule-guided organized institutions. Each step involves what Cummins calls a ‘compositional’ ‘analysis of S that explains S’s possession of P by appeal to properties of S’s components and their mode of organization’²⁷ – where, within our theory, the ground-level ‘components’ are individual planning agents, and a key ‘mode of organization’ is provided by the interplay of norms of individual plan rationality with the contents, interrelations, and contexts characteristic of shared intentionality.²⁸ At each step – beginning with individual temporally extended planning agency and then proceeding sequentially to each of the further constructions along the way – the constructed social psychological structure at that step has a Cummins function of supporting the practical organization highlighted in the next steps of the sequence. This is a system of *nested Cummins functions*.²⁹

In articulating this series of constructions and nested Cummins functions, we are not directly telling a story of how the elements in this series have emerged or could have emerged. We are not directly claiming to show that these impacts on practical organization explain how it came to be that we are creatures whose agency involves such planning, shared intention, social rules, and rule-guided organizations – though these empirical questions of etiology are of course deep and important. So, we are not directly claiming that these impacts on practical organization are a Wright function of our planning capacities. We are also not primarily trying to provide what Philip Pettit calls a ‘conjectural genealogy’³⁰ or what Bernard Williams – to some extent following Edward Craig – calls an ‘imaginary genealogy’.³¹ We are instead providing a model of how this system of nested structures, once it is there, works to support interrelated forms of human mind-shaped practical organization. And we are highlighting the importance of these forms of practical organization in our human lives.³²

Grice’s project of creature construction may allow for different interpretations or developments concerning this contrast between Cummins-friendly constructions and a

‘conjectural genealogy’. Pettit tends to develop these Gricean ideas along the latter, genealogical lines.³³ I am working with an approach along the former, Cummins-friendly lines.³⁴ Granted, once this proposal about Cummins functions of our capacity for planning agency is on the table, we might then turn to something like Pettit’s project of a conjectural genealogy. But that would be a further step, distinct from the proposal of nested Cummins functions and not a step that would be essential to the core capacity thesis.³⁵

Versions of these ideas of conjectural genealogy and Cummins functions are intermingled within Hart’s ground-breaking theory of law.³⁶ Hart begins with a social world of primary social rules about how (not) to act in certain circumstances. These social rules are not merely patterns of behavior but also involve, on the part of individual participants, an ‘internal aspect’.³⁷ This internal aspect involves seeing these patterns as a ‘common standard’,³⁸ being set to conform to that standard and being set to criticize deviations from and demand conformity to that standard.³⁹ This internal perspective on the part of individual participants is the key to the difference, in Hart’s examples, between the behavioral pattern of folks having tea at breakfast and the social rule of taking off one’s hat in church.⁴⁰

Hart then highlights⁴¹ three basic problems that will tend to arise in a social world of solely primary rules: uncertainty about what the rules are, absence of a procedure for changing the rules, and ‘inefficiency of the diffuse social pressures by which the rules are maintained’.⁴² He argues that a specific trio of secondary social rules – social rules about rules – would help solve these basic problems. These are secondary social rules of recognition, of change, and of adjudication. Law, as understood by Hart, is a ‘union’⁴³ of such primary and secondary rules, a union that could have emerged as a social solution to the cited problems (though with risks of creating other problems).

We can distinguish three ideas that are at work here. First, there is a Pettit-friendly ‘conjectural genealogy’ of the emergence of law as a solution to the cited problems. Second, there is the idea that insofar as law, once in place, helps solve this trio of basic problems, there is associated social pressure in support of the continued presence (as Pettit would say, the ‘resilience’)⁴⁴ of this union of primary and secondary rules. Third, there is a construction of a legal system and its workings, given that a legal system is in place – a construction whose basic elements are primary and secondary social rules.⁴⁵ This is Hart’s ‘analysis of the distinctive structure of a municipal legal system’.⁴⁶

These first two ideas ground the claim that Hart’s secondary social rules have the Wright function of supporting a kind of social organization that is characteristic of legality and that solves the cited trio of problems for a world of solely primary social rules. The claim is that the contribution of secondary social rules to this solution helps explain why such secondary social rules are – and/or continue to be – in place. The third idea, in contrast, grounds the claim that this construction of primary and secondary rules provides an illuminating model of the workings of law once law is in place – where these are workings of great explanatory importance (and in many cases workings of great value) in our lives. So, this union of primary and secondary rules has the Cummins function of supporting those workings.

Hart’s theory of law involves a merger of these ideas. There is, on the one hand, a Wright-friendly, conjectural genealogy of law. And there is, on the other hand, a corresponding Cummins-friendly construction of how law works, of what is ‘salient’⁴⁷ in its social functioning, and thereby of what law is, given that it is in place. Hart’s theory involves a model of what law is that closely corresponds to his conjectural genealogy. This

model of law as it highlights central roles of relevant secondary social rules in solving the cited trio of problems. It thereby highlights problem-solving roles that the genealogy sees as helping to explain the emergence and stability of these structures.

A caveat is that a Hart-inspired genealogical story of law – along the lines of the first two ideas – may not yet by itself fully tell us what law is, given that it is in place. As Godfrey-Smith emphasizes, even given an account of why some capacity has come to be in place ‘we can also ask what else [it] is good for, what other contributions it makes’.⁴⁸ This may involve expanding and/or re-shaping its Cummins functions. There can be divergence between the genealogical story and the resulting structures as those structures continue to develop over time; and this divergence may induce change in the Cummins functions of those structures.⁴⁹ So, we need to be alive to the possibility that the overall contours of the system as it is in place may stand in complex relations to our explanation of its emergence.

The core capacity thesis follows many of the contours of Hart’s work. Like Hart, it highlights the role of social rules in the step from individual agency and small-scale sociality to larger-scale forms of organized sociality. Like Hart, it seeks a broadly individualistic understanding of such social rules by way of highlighting aspects of the psychologies of individual participants (Hart’s ‘internal aspect’; the planning theory’s relevant shared policies).⁵⁰ The core capacity thesis follows the broad contours of Hart’s approach to sociality and law in emphasizing the fundamental importance to our human lives of multiple forms of social organization. Like Hart, the core capacity thesis highlights the idea of *rule-guided* institutions.⁵¹ And each theory highlights social rules with distinctive contents (Hart’s secondary social rules; the planning theory’s authority according social rules of procedure) in nesting its constructions of social rules within constructions of larger-scale institutions (Hart’s model of law; the planning theory’s model of a rule-guided organized institution).

Nevertheless, and despite these wide-ranging agreements, the core capacity thesis does not incorporate a Hart-friendly merger of Wright-type and Cummins-type functions. The primary focus of the core capacity thesis is directly on the idea that our capacity for planning agency has the Cummins function of supporting interrelated forms of mind-shaped practical organization that are fundamental to our human lives. The argument that our planning agency supports these multiple forms of practical organization involves a planning model of shared intentionality and then shared policy models of what social rules and rule-guided organized institutions are, once they are in place. This is not primarily offered as a Wright-friendly conjectural genealogy of the emergence of our planning capacities. The core capacity thesis primarily seeks to tell us what our planning capacities do, not why they came to be in place. We might go on to the further conjecture that the fact that our planning capacities support such important forms of practical organization figures in an explanation of why these capacities remain – why they are a stable feature of our human lives. But such an explanation of the stability of these capacities is not entailed by our basic conjecture about what these capacities do.

Let us now look more closely at our construction of the Hart-type social rules that pervade our lives. According to our planning approach, a central element of such a social rule is an associated shared policy. In this sense, in our social rules we are together organizing how we live together. For example, a central element in a social rule of our wearing masks in public during a pandemic is a shared policy in favor of our so acting. A defense of this proposal will focus on the claim that if such a shared policy is in place, it normally will

rationally and reasonably support forms of individual and social thought and action – including forms of conformity, criticism, and demand – that are characteristic of a Hart-type social rule. This will then ground the claim that such a shared policy construction is a social rule, functionally speaking.⁵²

The main thought is not that the fact that such shared policies have explanatorily important, organizational impacts that are characteristic of social rules explains why those shared policies, and so social rules, came to be there. The focus is instead on the idea that the downstream functioning of relevant shared policies is of a sort that is characteristic of a Hart-type social rule, together with the idea that such Hart-type social rules pervade and structure our social world.⁵³ The primary idea is that such shared policies have the Cummins function of helping to constitute social rules, and thereby the Cummins function of supporting important forms of social organization. We then go on to argue that these forms of social organization include, further, forms of organization characteristic of large-scale rule-guided organized institutions. We thereby have a Cummins-friendly, constructivist explanation of the workings of these fundamental, rule-involving aspects of our human social lives, an explanation grounded, in significant part, in our capacity for planning agency.

A by-now-familiar point is that the fact that such shared policies have these Cummins functions may also help to explain the stability of the presence of such structures of shared policies. So, in this extended sense such shared policies may have a Wright function of supporting such social organization insofar as that support helps explain why such shared policies remain on the scene. But such a Wright-friendly conjecture does not follow from our appeal to the cited nested Cummins functions and their role in the core capacity thesis and would require further empirical investigation.

This focus on what our plan-theoretic construction of social rules does once it is in place shapes our approach to understanding why participants conform to and support these social rules. Our model of social rules focuses on reasons and rational support for action in conformity with and supportive of a social rule, given that the social rule – and so, associated shared policies – is in place.⁵⁴ Our concern is not primarily with an explanation of how social rules emerged but with the rational and reasonable impact of a social rule given that it is in place. So, for example, it might be that a primary mechanism that explains how a certain social rule comes to be in place is along the lines of what Pettit calls a ‘reputational motor’.⁵⁵ But it would not follow (nor, I take it, would Pettit suppose that it follows) that concerns with reputation are a uniquely important source of support for conforming and supportive action on the part of participants in the up-and-running social rule.

What then is that source of support? Well, given that our shared policy – of, say, not interrupting the speaker in certain contexts – is in place, those of us who continue to participate in that shared policy are each rationally constrained both to conform and to support conformity on the part of other participants.⁵⁶ This follows from the role of norms of plan rationality in intention, and the application of these norms to elements of shared intentionality: ‘we’-contents and forms of interlocking, interdependence, mutual responsiveness, and intended mesh. Further, on many occasions various substantive reasons will also support this conformity and interpersonal support – though in each case we need to defend an appeal to such substantive reasons in further normative theorizing. These further substantive reasons may include reputational reasons. They may also include reasons of specification⁵⁷ if the social rule is a good solution to a social problem that it is good to solve. Yet further, these reasons may be grounded in moral obligations that are induced

by patterns of assurance and induced reliance that are commonly in the neighborhood of shared intention.⁵⁸ The key throughout is that our question concerns the rational and reasons-based support for conformity with and support of the social rule *given that the social rule is in place*. This rational and reasons-based support can bear a complex relation to what is cited in a Wright-friendly explanation of how the social rule came to be in place; and it can appeal to considerations of rationality and reasons, including moral reasons, that may not be available to such a genealogy.

This focus on what our plan-theoretic construction of social rules does once it is in place shapes our understanding of forms of criticism and demand characteristic of Hart-type social rules.⁵⁹ If you continue to participate in the shared policy associated with a social rule that is in place, and yet fail to conform or to support the conformity of other participants, you are subject to a criticism that you are failing to live up to relevant standards of rationality and a demand that you do so. In the institutionally important case of an authority-according social rule, participants will be subject to a rational demand to accede to relevant designated authority. And insofar as the social rule that is in place induces associated substantive reasons or obligations – for example, reasons of specification or of assurance-based obligations – these reasons/obligations can ground corresponding criticisms and demands.

I turn now to a challenge from J. David Velleman. While Velleman is skeptical about ‘creation myths’ concerning our planning capacities, he thinks that such myths are built into ‘the functionalist moral psychology’ at work in the planning theory.⁶⁰ And he thinks that insofar as we pursue such a functionalist psychology, we should be skeptical that our planning capacity has a Wright function of supporting useful practical organization. Instead, within this framework, he offers a genealogy of our planning capacities that traces instead to our cognitive concern with self-understanding. The contribution of our planning capacity to instrumentally effective practical organization is, from the point of view of this alternative genealogy and in the sense highlighted by Gould and Lewontin,⁶¹ a spandrel.

This challenge assumes that the functionalism of the planning theory draws on Wright-type claims about etiology. Velleman writes:

My justification for entertaining creation myths about the will is that such myths are implicit in the functionalist moral psychology that Bratman practices. Bratman seeks to characterize the attitude of intention in terms of the function that the attitude typically serves and the rational standards for serving that function. In this effort to identify the function of intention, he is guided by the assumption that it is a function, not merely in the value-neutral, philosophical sense that it is a causal role, but in the evolutionary sense that it confers some benefit on intention-forming creatures.⁶²

Now, I have argued in other work that the cognitivist picture of intention, to which Velleman’s alternative ‘creation myth’ leads, faces important difficulties.⁶³ But the key point for present purposes is that even were we to suppose that support of practical organization is not ‘in the evolutionary sense’ a Wright function of our planning capacities, we could still highlight the basic roles of our planning capacities within our actual, overall system of human mind-shaped practical organization; and we could still highlight the fundamental importance of these forms of practical organization within our lives. We could still highlight that this is how we in fact achieve these important forms of mind-shaped

practical organization.⁶⁴ So, we could still claim that our planning capacities have Cummins functions with respect to this overall organizational system. Even if these practical-organizational roles of our planning capacities were a spandrel ‘in the evolutionary sense’, it would be a spandrel that is fundamental to our lives. And it is this role in our lives that I am highlighting here in defending the core capacity thesis.

This involves rejecting Velleman’s transition, in his interpretation of my ‘functionalist moral psychology’, from:

- (i) supporting such practical organization is a function of intention ‘not merely in the value-neutral, philosophical sense that it is a causal role’,

to:

- (ii) supporting such practical organization is a function of intention in ‘the evolutionary sense’.

My thought is indeed that supporting such practical organization is a function of intention in a sense that coheres with Velleman’s (i). After all, in claiming that supporting such practical organization is a Cummins function of intention, we are presupposing that that practical organization has a relevant value and/or explanatory importance. But this is not an ‘evolutionary’ claim, as in (ii), about why our capacity for intention has emerged. Our Cummins-friendly idea of function is instead in the space between (i) and (ii). And it is these Cummins functions that are central to the core capacity thesis.

My view, then, is that our capacity for planning agency supports basic forms of practical organization by being at the ground level of a sequence of constructions each of which has the nested Cummins function of supporting the practical organization highlighted in the next steps of the sequence. This involves planning models of what shared intentions, shared policies, social rules, and rule-guided organized institutions are, once they are there. It might also suggest a ‘conjectural genealogy’ of the emergence of our planning capacities and of our capacities for forms of shared intentionality, given their roles in these important forms of practical organization. But the core capacity thesis is not itself such a conjectural genealogy. It is instead the thesis that basic planning capacities are, to return to Godfrey-Smith, ‘salient in the explanation of capacities of the larger system’ of human mind-shaped practical organization. It is a thesis about what these planning capacities do in support of fundamentally important forms of human practical organization, individual and social.

This supports the further conclusion that, given these fundamental organizational roles in our lives, our planning capacities should be front and center in an illuminating, philosophically informed theory of human agency, individual and social. Our theory of human agency needs to focus on the central roles of planning and on the importance and, in many cases, value of associated, supported forms of mind-shaped practical organization – temporally extended, social, and institutional. In this way our theory of human agency needs to go beyond the twin focus, at the heart of the Anscombe–Davidson tradition in the philosophy of action, on acting for a reason and (insofar as we follow Anscombe) forms of practical knowledge.⁶⁵ To these concerns with acting for a reason and practical knowledge, our theory needs to add, at the ground level, a focus on the multiple, interrelated forms of mind-shaped practical organization characteristic of our

agency. Our theory needs to emphasize the question: how do we do this? How do we achieve these important forms of mind-shaped practical organization? This involves a significant shift in the defining concerns of our philosophy of action. Our plan-theoretic account of nested Cummins functions responds to this shift.

This leads to an insight concerning the moral and political significance of our planning capacities. It is an important fact about our modern human world that it involves the interrelated forms of practical organization highlighted here: diachronic, small-scale social, social rule shaped, and rule-guided institutional. Significant incapacities of an individual to participate in these interrelated forms of practical organization would normally diminish the quality of life available to that individual within our modern human world.

The conjecture of the core capacity thesis is that our capacity for planning agency plays basic interrelated roles throughout these forms of organization. This supports the claim that significant deficiencies in a person's planning capacities will tend substantially to diminish that person's capacity to be a full participant in these basic aspects of our modern human lives.⁶⁶ And, as noted, such a substantial weakening of the capacity to participate in these basic organizational aspects of our modern human lives would tend to diminish the quality of life available to that person within our modern human world. So, it will matter a great deal whether certain social/educational structures tend significantly to support or to undermine the development of fundamental planning capacities. Examples of social structures that tend to some extent to baffle the development of these planning capacities might include certain forms of poverty, pervasive unpredictability and unreliability within the social environment, and/or certain kinds of failures within educational systems. To know whether this is true about certain social/educational structures, we would need to do further empirical research. But what we already have reason to say – given our planning theory of how we achieve these forms of mind-shaped practical organization – is that insofar as certain social/educational structures tend to baffle the development of our planning capacities, these structures will for that reason be potentially subject to significant moral criticism and moral/political pressures for change.⁶⁷

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to Facundo Alonso, Daniel Friedman, Luca Ferrero, Jennifer Morton, Sarah Paul, Scott Shapiro, David Velleman, and Gideon Yaffe.

NOTES

1 Bratman, "Shared Intention, Organized Institutions"; Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*.

2 Especially Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*.

3 Lewis, "Psychophysical."

4 Godfrey-Smith, *Complexity*; Wright, "Functions"; Cummins, "Functional Analysis."

5 Godfrey-Smith, *Complexity*, 15.

6 *Ibid.*, 16.

7 *Ibid.*, 17.

- 8 This is in the spirit of Godfrey-Smith's focus on those cases in which 'a Cummins function is a contribution made to a capacity or property of a system which is valued for some reason, often a property valued by the system itself'; *ibid.*, 17. Note, however, that, on the approach I am taking, the workings of a larger system can be, because of its explanatory roles, theoretically important in a way that is relevant to a Cummins function of its elements even if those workings are morally abhorrent.
- 9 John Searle (*Construction*, 14–15) sees an attribution of function as going beyond appeal to certain causal facts in 'situating these facts relative to a system of values that we hold'. He thereby in effect focuses on one kind of Cummins function. Searle thinks that a Wright-inspired approach to function is a mistake; *ibid.*, 16–18. In contrast, I think we do well to make room for both Wright and Cummins functions in our theorizing about human agency and sociality. In this respect I agree with the spirit of Godfrey-Smith's discussion. However, I will be to some extent agreeing with the spirit of Searle's discussion in highlighting the role of certain Cummins functions within our understanding of our agency and sociality.
- 10 This allows that there might be some forms of plan-shaped practical organization – perhaps certain forms of plan-shaped diachronic coherence within a life – that are of intrinsic value. I leave this issue open here, but see Bratman, "Intention, Practical Rationality," esp. sect. XII.
- 11 Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, 18–20.
- 12 Why it is, as Philip Pettit would say, 'resilient'; Pettit, "Functional Explanation," 295.
- 13 This would be to include within the idea of a Wright function of X in an extended sense either or both (i) role in origination of the existence of X and/or (ii) role in maintaining that existence of X. And these roles can be inter-related, since (ii) may be part of a feedback process involved in (i).
- 14 Grice, "Method."
- 15 Bratman, "Shared Intention, Organized Institutions"; Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*. See also Bratman, "Valuing."
- 16 And the project of articulating these constructions is in the spirit of Fred Dretske's thought that 'if you can't make one, you don't know how it works'; Dretske, "If You Can't."
- 17 Bratman, *Intention, Plans*. See also Harman, "Practical Reasoning."
- 18 Gilbert, "Walking."
- 19 Bratman, *Shared Agency*.
- 20 Hart, *Concept*.
- 21 Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, chaps. 3–4. An important complexity – bracketed here – is the need to appeal to a structure in which shared policies are a kernel element of the social rule but there are also penumbral participants in the social rule who are set to do their part in response to extending reasons (e.g. strategic reasons) induced by the kernel, but are not full-blown participants in a kernel shared policy. See *ibid.*, chap. 4; Shapiro, "Massively Shared."
- 22 Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, chap. 5. See also French, "Integrity."
- 23 Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, chap. 6.
- 24 And, if relevant, extending reasons induced by the kernel of participants in the underlying shared policy.
- 25 Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, chap. 7. This depends on the idea that the relevant social rules of procedure include social subrules of follow-through with respect to relevant outputs. Such institutional intentions need not involve corresponding shared intentions on the part of all participants. Further, while institutional intentions are intentions, functionally speaking, they are not in general embedded in the kind of dense holism of the mental that, according to Donald Davidson, is characteristic of the intentions of individuals (Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, chaps. 8–9). In *ibid.*, chap. 10, I explain how, together with ideas from Harry Frankfurt concerning agential standpoints, this account of institutional intention can help support a non-eliminative model of a kind of institutional intentional agency.
- 26 Our construction of social rules aims at a phenomenon that will then be central to our construction of rule-guided institutions: it aims to understand social rules that are in this sense institutionally apt. This leaves room for other kinds of social rule.
- 27 Cummins, *Nature*, 15.
- 28 As Daniel Friedman has emphasized (in correspondence), the compositional analysis at work at each step of our sequence of constructions fits with Cummins's earlier, more detailed remarks that 'the explanatory interest of an analytical account is roughly proportional to (i) the extent to which the analyzing capacities are less sophisticated than the analyzed capacities, (ii) the extent to which the analyzing capacities are different in type from the analyzed capacities, and (iii) the relative sophistication of the program appealed to, i.e. the relative complexity of the organization of component parts/processes that is attributed to the system'; Cummins, "Functional Analysis," 764.

- 29 The idea is not just that rule-guided institutional organization involves both temporally extended individual planning agency and shared intentional activity. Talk of ‘nesting’ aims to highlight that the construction of shared intentional activity builds on the model of temporally extended individual planning agency; and then, in sequence, the constructions of social rules, and then of rule-guided institutional organizations, build sequentially on that of shared intentionality.
- 30 Pettit, “Social Norms,” 3.
- 31 Williams, *Truth*, 32; Craig, *Knowledge*.
- 32 This includes both the explanatory importance of these forms of practical organization and, in many cases, the value of what these forms of practical organization make possible. But it also allows that some cases of such explanatorily important social organization can be morally abhorrent.
- 33 Pettit (“Corporate Agency,” 251) interprets Gricean creature construction as concerned with what ‘could in principle have emerged’. However, matters are a bit more complex in Pettit, *Birth*. While Pettit says that he is looking ‘back at a possible process of construction in the past’ (*Birth*, 55), he indicates that this is not quite Grice’s idea of creature construction. But he goes on to say that ‘these differences are not of deep significance. The methods of creature-construction and [Pettit’s own] reconstructive analysis are alike in exploring a possible generative process in order to make sense of the nature of an actual phenomenon’ (*ibid.*, 56).
- 34 Grice (“Method,” 37) says that he aims ‘to construct (in imagination, of course) according to certain principles of construction, a type of creature, or rather a sequence of types of creature, to serve as a model (or models) for actual creatures’. Calling these creatures ‘pirots’, Grice says that ‘the general idea is to develop sequentially the psychological theory for different kinds of pirot’ (*ibid.*, 37) where this coheres with the ‘supposition that the psychological theory for a given type is an extension of, and includes, the psychological theory of its predecessor-type’ (*ibid.*, 38–39). These characterizations of ‘creature construction’ seem to me to fit more naturally within an effort to articulate Cummins-friendly constructions rather than Wright-friendly conjectural genealogies about, as Pettit says, ‘a possible generative process’. See also Bratman, *Shared Agency*, 25–26, 30–33.
- 35 For a trenchant discussion of methodological issues that would come with this step, see Vargas, “Counterfactual,” focusing on Pettit, *Birth*.
- 36 Hart, *Concept*.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 57.
- 39 Hart also suggests that in seeing the behavioral pattern as a ‘common standard’, one is set to ‘strive to teach or intend to maintain’ the behavioral pattern; *ibid.*, 56.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 92–93.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 93.
- 43 *Ibid.*, chap. V.
- 44 Pettit, “Functional Explanation,” 295.
- 45 And valid primary rules that are not themselves social rules.
- 46 Hart, *Concept*, 17.
- 47 Godfrey-Smith, *Complexity*, 16.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 49 One example is what Vargas (“Counterfactual”) calls ‘predicative drift’. Williams (*Truth*, 34–35) highlights related remarks from Robert Brandom about language. Brandom writes that language is not ‘a means to secure some other end specifiable in advance of engaging in linguistic practice – not adaptation to the environment, survival, reproduction, nor co-operation – though it may serve to promote those ends. Even if in a causal, evolutionary sense, those functions explain why we came to have language, once we did have it, our transformation into discursive creatures swept all such considerations aside. For discursive practice is a mighty engine for the envisaging and engendering of *new* ends...’ (Brandom, “Facts,” 363). In the terms of our discussion, we can interpret Brandom’s remarks as a rejection of an overly tight connection between Wright functions (in a ‘causal, evolutionary sense’) and downstream functioning of linguistic practice. There can be divergence between such a Wright-friendly genealogical story and the resulting structures, as those structures continue to develop over time. A further issue specific to Brandom’s concerns – one which we need not address here – is whether in the case of linguistic practice we can go on to see those resulting structures as inducing Cummins functions of linguistic practice. Whatever we say about this further issue, we can agree with the spirit of Brandom’s remark about potential limits on an appeal to Wright functions (in a ‘causal, evolutionary sense’) in our understanding of an overall structure that has come to be in place; but we can continue to ask whether that structure has relevant Cummins functions.

- 50 This contrasts with Margaret Gilbert's appeal to a non-reducible, obligation-involving normative *relation of 'joint commitment'* between participants (Gilbert, *Joint Commitment*).
- 51 This was a main aspect of Hart's progress in departing from the 19th-century Austin in his understanding of law.
- 52 Here I continue to bracket complexities introduced by the possibility of social rules that have a kernel-penumbra structure. See note 21.
- 53 Though this allows that there can be pernicious social rules.
- 54 Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, chaps. 3–4.
- 55 Pettit, "Social Norms," 28.
- 56 Being set to support this conformity on the part of others can involve being set to 'strive to teach or intend to maintain' the behavioral pattern (Hart, *Concept*, 56). See note 39.
- 57 Richardson, *Practical Reasoning*; Bratman, "Reflections."
- 58 Alonso, "Shared Intention."
- 59 If we agreed with Margaret Gilbert that shared intentions (and so, shared policies) constitutively involve corresponding obligations of each to each (Gilbert, *Joint Commitment*), we could appeal to these obligations to help explain relevant criticisms and demands. But as I see it (Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, 28–32), there are reasons to reject this claim of Gilbert's.
- 60 Velleman, "What Good," 97.
- 61 Gould and Lewontin, "Spandrels." They understand a spandrel in a general sense as involving 'current utility as an epiphenomenon of' structures that were not selected for this; *ibid.*, 147.
- 62 Velleman, "What Good," 97.
- 63 Bratman, "Intention, Belief."
- 64 This requires a response to Velleman's concern ("What Good," 93–97) that, as he sees it, this approach to our planning agency does not adequately explain the basic norms of plan rationality to which it appeals. My response is in Bratman, *Planning, Time*.
- 65 Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency*, chap. 11.
- 66 I say only 'tend' to diminish since my strategy of sufficiency does not deductively support an inference to the idea that these planning capacities are strictly necessary for such participation. The inference from diminished planning capacities to diminished participation in these forms of individual and social organization is instead grounded in a non-deductive, defeasible inference to the best explanation of these forms of human organization. And this inference involves seeing our planning capacities as having the cited Cummins functions.
- 67 This is in the spirit of Jennifer Morton's 'Agential Context Theory of Poverty' (Morton, "Redefining"). See also the discussion of 'planning blight' in Wolf and de-Shalit, *Disadvantage*, 69.

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