

**Report on the Dissertation: *Narrative Procedure of Moral and Political Deliberation*
by Vladimir Lukić**

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Vladimir Lukić's dissertation, *Narrative Procedure of Moral and Political Deliberation*, seeks to address and reconcile some of the most pressing tensions in contemporary moral and political philosophy. These include the dichotomies between communitarianism and liberalism, the good and the right, and historicism versus formal reasoning. Central to Lukić's argument is the innovative concept of narrative constructivism, a theoretical approach that integrates the communitarian insights of social narrativity with the liberal emphasis on procedural reasoning. The dissertation argues that these two perspectives, often viewed as irreconcilable, can coexist within a unified framework that emphasizes both the narrative depth of human experience and the formal structures of reason-based deliberation. This approach is designed to illuminate how moral and political agents navigate the complexities of their social and personal worlds.

The work is divided into five chapters, each contributing a distinct yet interconnected piece to the overall argument. The introduction lays the groundwork for the discussion, introducing the concept of narrative constructivism as a response to the philosophical debates that have dominated moral and political theory. Lukić emphasizes the dual nature of his approach, which he describes as both descriptive and normative. The descriptive aspect captures how individuals form beliefs and identities through narratives embedded in social contexts, while the normative dimension addresses how these narratives can be evaluated and improved through reason-giving procedures. This dual emphasis allows Lukić to bridge gaps between otherwise conflicting traditions, drawing on the strengths of both communitarian and liberal paradigms.

The introduction nicely establishes the theoretical landscape, outlining the dual influences of communitarian and liberal philosophies and the dichotomies that narrative constructivism seeks to mediate. The approach combines narrative-based meaning with reason-giving procedures to establish a cohesive framework for moral and political deliberation.

The first chapter elaborates on the social narrativity thesis, a concept rooted in the communitarian tradition. Lukić draws heavily on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, adapting his insights into a more pluralistic framework. MacIntyre's notion that individuals are embedded in historical and cultural traditions is central to Lukić's argument, but he departs from MacIntyre's teleological commitments. Instead, Lukić

adopts a pluralistic approach, drawing on thinkers such as Isaiah Berlin and Richard Rorty to emphasize the diversity of narratives that shape human life. This chapter establishes that the social world profoundly influences our beliefs, values, and attitudes, shaping the narratives through which individuals understand their place in the world. By rejecting MacIntyre's ethical monism and embracing narrative pluralism, Lukić provides a more inclusive account of how traditions can coexist and interact in a modern, pluralistic society.

The second chapter shifts to the psychological narrativity thesis, exploring how individuals construct their self-identities through narrative processes. Lukić builds on the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between the self and the social narratives in which it is embedded. This section also serves as a critique of Galen Strawson's narratoskepticism, which denies the necessity of narrative for self-identity. Lukić argues persuasively that narrative is not only a descriptive feature of human existence but also a crucial element in moral and political deliberation. By linking the social and psychological dimensions of narrativity, Lukić offers a comprehensive account of how individuals navigate their social environments and engage in moral and political reasoning.

The third chapter applies the theoretical framework to concrete examples, illustrating the strengths and limitations of narrative constructivism. One of the most compelling case studies is the Yugoslav intelligibility crisis, which Lukić uses to demonstrate how ruptures in social narratives can lead to profound identity crises for individuals and communities. This analysis is followed by a discussion of political pluralism, where Lukić examines the normative implications of his theory. He argues that narrative constructivism provides a framework for evaluating and reconciling conflicting narratives, offering a pathway toward reasoned deliberation in deeply divided societies. However, Lukić is careful to acknowledge the limits of narrative approaches, particularly their inability to provide a fully formal account of moral progress. To address this gap, he introduces the concepts of reasonableness and liberty, which he develops more fully in the following chapter.

The fourth chapter focuses on the constructivist dimension of Lukić's argument, exploring how formal reasoning can complement and refine narrative approaches. Working within the context of John Rawls, Lukić uses a "Neurathian constructivism" that emphasizes the contextual and evolving nature of moral and political reasoning. This chapter introduces three key concepts—reasons, reason-giving procedures, and reasonableness—to provide a robust framework for deliberation. Lukić argues that reason-giving procedures are essential for transforming the substantive insights of narrativity into a coherent and justifiable moral framework. He also defends reason-giving procedures against critics who question their rationality, insisting that all actions and decisions are grounded in intelligible reasons. The notion of reasonableness, inspired by Rawls and Kant, serves as a normative principle that transcends individual

narratives, promoting fairness, mutual respect, and the liberty of others. By distinguishing between rationality and reasonableness, Lukić provides a nuanced account of how formal and narrative elements can interact in moral and political deliberation.

The final chapter brings together the various strands of the argument, presenting narrative constructivism as a unified theoretical outlook. Lukić concludes by integrating his framework with Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, emphasizing the importance of dialogue and deliberation in shaping narratives and reason-giving procedures. This chapter also reflects on the broader implications of narrative constructivism, arguing that it offers a powerful tool for addressing the challenges of pluralism and moral disagreement in contemporary societies. While acknowledging the limitations of his approach, Lukić remains optimistic about its potential to enrich philosophical debates and inform practical deliberation.

Evaluation

Lukić's dissertation is a significant contribution to moral and political philosophy, offering a novel framework that bridges the gap between communitarian and liberal traditions. However, it is not without its weaknesses. One of the most significant issues is the lack of coherence in some chapters, particularly the third and fourth. While the overall structure of the dissertation is clear, the organization within individual chapters often feels scattered. Key concepts, such as Neurathian constructivism, are introduced alongside a multitude of other ideas, making it difficult for the reader to discern their relative importance. Similarly, the discussion of emotions in the third chapter lacks a clear argumentative focus, and the inclusion of tangential material, such as the historical notes on p. 62-63 and the neuroscience discussion on p. 69, detracts from the main argument. New and new concepts are tossed into discussion without proper explanation why. Chapters 1-2 were fine in exposition and clear argumentation, chapter 3 on the other hand feels like a patchwork of different topics. What is needed is to build an argument – not to discuss each and every moment of this argument in an introductory way or in attempting to give a full account of the introduced concept – as an example see discussion of beliefs and attitudes on pp. 139-141 which ends with sentence “we have a rough idea about beliefs and attitudes”. Another example is a short introduction to metaethics at pp. 187-197 (rather uncomplete with unclear relation to the rest of the text) or the introduction to the discussion concerning reasons (though it surprisingly omits for example the discussion of internal vs external conception of reasons, although their discussion is envisaged at p. 5). Do we really need it for the sake of the argument being built? As I have said, we need argument, not a detailed introductory treatment of every step in the argument.

Particular points for the discussion during the viva:

Strengths

The dissertation is written in a highly readable and engaging style. This clarity is a significant achievement, especially given the complexity of the philosophical issues discussed. The idea to provide a summary at the end of each chapter is particularly helpful, providing a clear roadmap for the reader – though sometimes it is not clear how are these conclusions linked to the previous discussion (see below).

The integration of real-life political and social examples, such as the case of Yugoslavia, adds depth and immediacy to the theoretical discussions.

Lukić's synthesis of communitarian and liberal frameworks through the lens of narrativity is both ambitious and original. His dual emphasis on the social and psychological dimensions of narrativity enriches the discussion, offering a comprehensive view of moral and political deliberation.

Weaknesses and Possible Improvement

While the overall structure of the dissertation is well-planned, the organization within individual chapters is less coherent. For instance, key concepts like Neurathian constructivism (p. 269) are introduced alongside several other theories without sufficient explanation or prioritization. This patchwork approach makes the argument harder to follow and undermines the clarity of some sections.

Certain sections, such as the historical notes on p. 62-63 and the neuroscience discussion on p. 69, feel like side-tracks. These digressions detract from the main argument and could be omitted. Similarly, the discussion of emotions (p. 231 onwards) appears ad hoc, lacking a clear argumentative purpose or connection to the broader framework.

The patchwork problem of chapters is marked by connecting sentences like “another author who points out the complexity of reasoning is Don Locke ...” (p. 214), fine, true, but there are many other authors “pointing out” the complexity of reasoning, so what is the reason (sic) for introducing especially Locke? This is just an example, but the reason for selecting and introducing new authors and ideas in chapters 3 and 4 is not clearly explained. A further example: Why do we suddenly jump to aspects of reasonableness according to Lawlor (p. 259), what is the relation to the previous Rawlsian and Kantian discussions?

Further, to the structure of each chapter and subchapters (take this as an example), there is a chapter on reasons and reasoning (pp. 215-222) discussing all possible concepts and authors and its conclusion is based on an article introduced in

penultimate paragraph – so what is the place of the previous discussion in previous paragraphs? Similar failure concerns the conclusion on emotions on p. 240.

Several chapters end with conclusions that do not adequately synthesize the preceding material. For example, the conclusions on pp. 147 and 159 fail to reflect the diversity of ideas introduced earlier, leaving the reader uncertain about their significance.

The notion of liberty on p. 164/165 is introduced quite haphazardly without explanation how did we get there after discussing the situation of Romani people in Balkans and other examples (which, by the way, are generally quite useful). The author discussion of moral progress focuses on liberty, namely on the so-called positive liberty in the sense of real possibility of acting upon ones choice or realizing ones goal. This brings the author to the discussion of equality (or at least some sort of it). My question is whether there is any space in the discussion for the concept of justice and its role within moral development.

I am not sure it is fortunate to introduce a two-paged long discussion of *akrasia* in Aristotle (or of hedonism, pp. 227-229) based on a single publication and without discussion of Aristotle's text itself (pp. 226-227). Why Aristotle in the first place and why not a contemporary discussion on the weakness of will, which fits much better the context of authors discussion (Hare, Davidson, Mele and others).

I do not see much difference between discussion of reasonableness at p. 243 and following on the one hand and the interpretation at pp. 148-153, some ideas are clearly repeated.

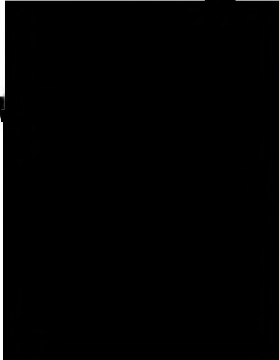
The interpretation of the universal law formula of the categorical imperative (p. 254) is simply wrong. It is not "as acting according to the standards you would impose on others". The first wording of categorical imperative does not have to do anything with others. The test, so to say, does not leave one's mind – I check the possibility of universalizability of the maxim without looking to any empirical consequences or circumstances; or to the possibility to will this universalisation.

The bibliography is problematic, with entries ordered by first name and several duplications (e.g., Scanlon 1998). This oversight complicates referencing and diminishes the professionalism of the work. Additionally, the repetitive numbering of sections makes navigation difficult.

Despite these shortcomings, Lukić's dissertation is a commendable achievement that demonstrates significant scholarly potential. By refining the structure of individual chapters, clarifying the rationale for theoretical choices, and addressing the formal issues outlined above, Lukić could transform this promising work into a highly influential contribution to moral and political philosophy. The dissertation's emphasis on narrative and reason as complementary forces in deliberation is both timely and innovative, offering valuable insights for navigating the complexities of pluralistic societies.

I recommend the dissertation for viva, which I believe it can pass.

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