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Logical Constructivism and Irrationality

I. Introduction

The question at the heart of this paper is simple to state, and even simpler to answer. The question is just this: does André Kukla believe that logical constructivism leads to irrationalism? The answer is simply: yes. In fact, Kukla explicitly states that this is indeed his belief.[1] Of course, to really understand this statement, much more needs to be discussed.

That being said, the rest of this essay will be divided into four sections. In Section II, I will discuss how logical constructivism could lead to irrationality and why Kukla believes it to be the case. In Section III, I will discuss the role of rational arguments in the debate between rationalists and irrationalists as presented by Kukla.

Once Kukla's position is laid out, I will discuss my own position in Section IV. My position will be based on the issues that arise during the presentation of Kukla's position. Until that time, I will not say whether I agree or disagree with Kukla's over-all position[2]; I shall leave the possibility of the correctness of his view as the first of the two open questions in this paper. Finally, I will conclude the essay in Section V by summarizing the findings of the paper and adding suggestions for anyone who might want to hold a coherent logical constructivist view, if it is at all possible; for now, I will leave that as my second open question.

II. Logical Constructivism

To begin the discussion of Kukla's view on what he calls *logical constructivism*, we must follow his lead in defining what he means by the term *rules of logic.* He mans, "no more than

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[1] André Kukla, *Social Constructivism and the Philosophy of Science* (London: Routledge, 2000), 120.
[2] However, I may have something to say about certain particular points here and there.

that they're normative principles for making (not necessarily deductive) inferences."[3] With that out of the way, Kukla moves on to stating the overarching question in this particular discussion. Namely, "whether constructivists concede that there are any rules of inference that have independent validity – i.e., that are valid without being *rendered* valid by human activity."[4] He calls the view that there are no such rules logical constructivism.

One opposing view is that there are some independently valid rules of inference, which is held by rationalists. The other, presumably, opposing view is that there are no epistemic constraints on discourse at all, i.e., irrationalism. According to Kukla, logical constructivists are willing to admit that there are some inferential rules are independently valid. However, the possibility of holding such a view coherently is controversial. Thus, the open question at hand is whether or not logical constructivism can maintain the middle ground between rationalism and irrationalism.

The actual discussion begins with a caveat, namely, "prevalent norms of proper discourse are steeped in realist and rationalist assumptions."[5] He goes on to cite the example that we ought to "endorse and promulgate the truth as we see it."[6] Unfortunately, this loses most of its normative force once constructivism is embraced. To illustrate this fact, Kukla describes the situation wherein constructivism is the norm rather than rationalism. In such a situation, "the truth *depends* on our endorsements and promulgations," so, "to obey the principle is to make a political decision to support the status quo."[7]

At this juncture, the problem with constructivism begins to be clear. There is no reason why one ought to support the status quo – Kukla believes it to be entirely optional. While not

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[3] *Ibid*., 119.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.,* 120.
[6] *Ibid*.
[7] *Ibid.*

endorsing the epistemic norms of the community seems to be a problem in any case, it is made worse by the very tenets of constructivism, i.e., "on the constructivists' own accounts, orthodoxies relating to socially constructed facts are always correct: socially constructed facts are still *facts*, and to endorse and promulgate their negation is to embrace the *false*."[8] Any deviance from these socially constructed facts, any attempt to change the prevailing views, would be labeled illegitimate.

Obviously, the situation just described is not one that anyone would like to be in. Kukla mentions that even the constructivists want to endorse this picture. As he puts it:

> Constructivists don't want to *stop* epistemic change – they just want to account for it without realist or rationalist assumptions. In brief, everyone agrees that constructed truths are not *ipso facto* binding on our epistemic activities.[9]

Unfortunately, it seems that Kukla believes that this statement is like wanting to have your cake and eat it, too. This is the point where Kukla believes the constructivists run into their biggest problem.

The problem, according to Kukla, is that when the general point about constructed truths not being binding on our epistemic activities is coupled with logical constructivism, it leads to a collapse into irrationalism.[10] To see why this is, Kukla reminds us that in the beginning of the discussion of logical constructivism, he pointed out how logical constructivists differed from both rationalists and irrationalists. They differ from rationalists because they believe that all rules of inference are socially constructed, while they differ from irrationalists in that they believe that the currently negotiated logic is valid. How this leads to irrationalism, despite the previous assumption, is seen when one considers just *how* rules of inference are socially constructed in

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[8] *Ibid*.
[9] *Ibid*.
[10] *Ibid.* This is the point at which Kukla makes his explicit pronouncement that logical constructivism leads to irrationalism that I mentioned in the beginning of the paper.

light of the aforementioned point that constructed truths are not binding on our epistemic activities. According to Kukla, "this means that logical constructivists don't have to capitulate to an ironclad logical argument against their position."[11]

In other words, if the community accepts some rule of inference, there is no reason why a logical constructivist cannot just decide not to play by those rules anymore. If some rule negates his favorite thesis, then he can just go ahead and change the rules. Of course, to change the rules according to constructivism, he has to change the minds of everyone in the community. However, this does not seem like too much of a price to pay. It would just be a matter of negotiating a new set of (more favorable) rules.

At this point, this does not seem like a knockdown argument against logical constructivism – the same thing can be said of the rationalist position.[12] What makes this argument force the acceptance of the thesis that logical constructivism leads to irrationalism is the way in which the logical constructivists would have to negotiate their new set of inferential rules.

The problem is just this: logical constructivists are supposed to differ from irrationalists in that there are some rules. They cannot just break rules whenever they please. But, obviously, they can break certain rules; that is what was just established. So, there must be some higher-order rules saying which of the negotiated rules can and cannot be broken. However, the logical constructivists maintain that *all* logical rules are socially constructed. So, these higher-order rules must be constructed, too. So, "if all rules of logic are constructed, and if constructed truths needn't be respected, then there's no compulsion to follow the higher-order rules that tell us how

[11] *Ibid*.
[12] I will discuss this in the next section, but for now I will take this to be noncontroversial.

to break the first-order rules."[13] At this point, it seems we must agree with Kukla; an infinite regress seems to loom large. The argument for the infinite regress that Kukla gives is as follows:

> To negotiate, you need to have a logic of negotiation. But according to logical constructivism, all logics are negotiated. Therefore this logic of negotiation must itself have been negotiated. This can only have taken place in the context of a prior logic of negotiation, and so on. Every negotiation presupposes a logic, which presupposes another negotiation.[14]

Kukla admits that this is a rather innocuous argument. It, too, does not provide a knockdown reason for abandoning logical constructivism because of irrationality. Kukla provides at least one way out for logical constructivists; they might be able to say that logic and negotiation develop together. Another way for the logical constructivists to sidestep this problem, that Kukla did not address, is just to say that in the very beginning, they stipulated a small set of rules of negotiation, then just built from there.[15]

Unfortunately for the logical constructivists, Kukla has his own argument that does not rely on the Niiniluoto-Collin argument[16] as did the previous one. Kukla stated his argument in one sentence, "the logic you need to negotiate is itself negotiable, *so you can break its rules.*"[17] Now, following the infinite regress made apparent by the previous argument, it is easy to see that every point wherein a new set of higher-order rules is negotiated, the logical constructivists can break the rules of negotiation. Thus, Kukla concludes that there are no constraints on what the logical constructivists can do in these sorts of negotiations. Because of this, he says, logical constructivism reduces to irrationalism.[18]

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[13] *Ibid.,* 121.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] This stipulated set of rules need not even remain past the first negotiated logic. The process of negotiating the logic under the stipulated rules might reveal that the newly negotiated logic negates the acceptance of one or more of the stipulated rules. With the new logic in hand, a better set of negotiation rules can be developed.
[16] See *Ibid,* Chapter 10, 73-76 for a discussion of this argument.
[17] *Ibid.,* 121.
[18] *Ibid.*, 122.

This is the point where I begin to doubt Kukla's conclusion. At every other step of the way, his view seemed plausible. It might be that he has come to the right conclusion for the wrong reasons. [19]

To see why this could be, recall my solution to the Niiniluoto-Collin-style argument against negotiation in logical constructivism. At the beginning of negotiations, a base-set of rules is stipulated. Among these, presumably, will be something to the effect of, "do not break or abandon any of these rules until a new logic is negotiated; until then, all rules are binding" or perhaps, "behave as if all rules were independently valid as do rationalists and only change logics in situations wherein rationalists would as well."

Of course, it is obvious that these rules could be broken, that is Kukla's point. However, they could not be *immediately* broken. They are among a base set of rules that can be built into the logical constructivist position along with the most important, namely, "all rules of inference are socially constructed." Presumably, this latter fact is beyond reproach, so the former two might be as well – at least in the beginning.[20]

For the sake of argument, I will take Kukla's view as true. To conclude this part of the discussion, Kukla notes that all of the above was a rational argument. Supposedly, it proves that there is no intermediate ground between rationalism and irrationalism which logical constructivism can inhabit. However, this does not mean that there is a logical reason that logical constructivists cannot *say* that they inhabit such a middle ground, inasmuch as there is no logical reason that keeps them from saying anything at all that they wish to say. However, if the logical constructivists wish to convince rationalists to side with them, they cannot just say whatever they wish; they must provide a good argument, i.e., one that a rationalist could accept, in favor of

[19] Whether or not I believe it to actually be the right conclusion will be discussed in Section IV, as I stated previously.
[20] This, too, will be discussed at greater length in Section IV.

logical constructivism. This leads to the tricky subject of the role of rational arguments in the dialectic between rationalists and irrationalists. This will be the subject of the next section.

III. The Role of Rational Arguments

To begin this portion of the discussion, Kukla asks the question, "Can there be an argument for irrationalism?"[21] At first blush, this hardly seems plausible. Kukla illustrates this point by saying, "such arguments are illegitimate, because their proponents are helping themselves to resources to which they're not entitled."[22] Why must this be the case? It seems rather obvious that since irrationalists reject logic, then they should not be allowed to make logical arguments; it does strike a sort of hypocritical chord. Even if irrationalists were allowed to make such arguments, Kukla notes, they surely would have no force among the irrationalists.

This might sound comforting for a rationalist at first, but Kukla swiftly reminds his rationalist readers that, "The fact that an argument has no force for the giver doesn't entail that it has no force for the recipient."[23] Thus, Kukla makes a distinction between two sorts of dialectical victory: victory by one's own lights and victory by one's opponent's lights. Of course, it would be best to win in both lights, but this is not always possible. In the case wherein the argument is between rationalists and irrationalists the views expressed are so different, it is probably impossible to achieve such a double victory.

The problem that makes the argument between rationalists and irrationalists so difficult is that it "pits one logic against *no* logic."[24] However, since rationalists *do* accept the claims of logic, they are bound within their own rules. Therefore, if the irrationalists can come up with a

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[21] *Ibid*., 149.
[22] *Ibid*.
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] *Ibid*., 150.

good argument against rationalism, then the rationalists must accept it. In principle, "there's nothing about their dialectical situation which renders it impossible or impermissible for irrationalists to contrive a telling argument against their rationalist adversaries."[25] That being said, the question of whether or not irrationalists can actually contrive such an argument is still open.

So, to answer our question, we must consider all objections to the possibility of contriving such arguments. Kukla notes that the preliminary objection that was mentioned previously, i.e., that such arguments have no force for the irrationalists, still does not work as a substantial argument against the irrationalists' position. Similarly, the fact that the argument cuts straight at the heart of rationalist methodology is not a substantial argument against the possibility of the argument existing, either. Kukla notes that, "some methodologies leave themselves open to refutation, and some don't."[26] So then, we must wonder if rationalism contains such a methodology.

The problem at this point is in imagining what form such an argument would take. As Kukla correctly points out, it would definitely be peculiar. Already we know that the argument would have no force at all for the giver, but it would have force for the recipient. However, the peculiarity arises when we notice that once a rationalist accepts such an argument, he would have to immediately give up his status as a rationalist and embrace irrationalism. But, as a new irrationalist, the recipient of the argument no longer accepts the force of the argument that led him to his position. As Kukla puts it, "a rational refutation of rationalism would be a one-way

[25] *Ibid*., 151.
[26] *Ibid*.

ticket to a place where the validity of the ticket isn't recognized."[27] This might seem problematic until one realizes that the same situation occurs during any paradigm shift.

So, at this point, we are left with the possibility of a rational refutation of rationalism. Kukla, however, has an argument to the effect that irrationalists just cannot contrive such a refutation. According to him, "the worse thing that can happen to rationalism is that it's refuted by an argument *which relies on some particular logic L*."[28] Even in such a situation, rationalists need not lose all hope. Whenever presented with such a worst-case scenario, "rationalists always have the option of engaging in Duhemian manoeuvres (sic)."[29] In this case, the proper Duhemian maneuver is to abandon the offending logic L and to accept another logic L′ in which the argument no longer works. This leads to Kukla's conclusion that when the rules of rationality prove to be untrustworthy, rationalists can just change the rules.[30]

Given that argument, Kukla raises another possible question, "what about the possibility of a general argument to the effect that *all* logics are untrustworthy?"[31] This is rather easily dealt with. Kukla points out that any such argument must be formulated in some logic L. Thus, any such argument is just a paradox in L. Therefore, the proper response to the paradox is the same Duhemian maneuver used previously, i.e., abandon L in favor of some other logic L′. This same maneuver can be used *ad infinitum*; irrationalists can always argue against one particular logic, but never logic in general.

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[27] *Ibid*.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] *Ibid*. The Duhemian maneuver for any theory T is just this: when a proponent of T is confronted by an accusation of disconfirmation of T, the proponent of T may attribute such an *apparent* disconfirmation to faults in auxiliary hypotheses.
[30] For example, when Bertrand Russell discovered inconsistencies in set theory, a new logic-form, namely the Zermelo-Fraenkel axioms, had to be constructed to solve the problem. However, this might prove to problematic for rationalists – it certainly was for the irrationalists. I will discuss this in more detail later.
[31] *Ibid.*

Now, another question is presented to us: is the previous argument too strong? Duhemian maneuvers are available in any intellectual debate, so they do not seem to bear enough argumentative weight. If we appealed to such maneuvers whenever our favorite theses were questioned, no thesis would ever be rejected. As Kukla puts it, "this defence of rationalism leads to an across-the-board scepticism."[32]

So, now we must wonder if there is any possible way of avoiding such skepticism. Kukla's answer is to assume that "the availability of a Duhemian defence might entail that hypotheses are immune to *immediate and catastrophic* defeat."[33] So, rather than allowing the first apparent disconfirmation actually disconfirm a thesis through the use of a Duhemian maneuver, theses would lose credibility by degrees. That is to say, the more a thesis must be defended against attacks, the more probable it is that the thesis should be abandoned.

Rationalism, though, is a special case. When the thesis being attacked is rationalism in general, Kukla prescribes Duhemian maneuvers at every juncture. He asserts that there is an argument to the effect that, "engaging in a Duhemian defence is *always* rationally to be preferred over giving up on rationalism altogether."[34] In other words, if logic fails you, the best and most rational thing to do is to come up with a new logic.

So, what is this argument to which Kukla refers? Actually, it turns out that there are two arguments to be made, both of which show the inherent paradox in arguing against rationalism. The first one Kukla presents goes like this: assume that there is a rational refutation of rationalism. However, inasmuch as this is a logical argument – the only kind that counts as a rational refutation – it must have a conclusion, namely that the conclusions of logical arguments

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[32] *Ibid.*, 152
[33] *Ibid*.
[34] *Ibid.*

are untrustworthy. So, this conclusion is untrustworthy. Therefore, we can safely ignore the entire argument. And therefore, there cannot be a rational refutation of rationalism.

Conversely, if we assume that such a rational refutation is trustworthy, it follows that there is at least one rational argument that is trustworthy – this one. But, this is just what rationalism says. Therefore, rationalism is true. And finally, the rational refutation is not trustworthy.[35] In other words, once you step into the arena and play by rationalism's own rules for a minute, there is no way to win against rationalism; it is the ultimate all-star thesis.

There is more to be said about this type of argument, though. We should attempt to discover why – or if – this argument goes wrong. Kukla asserts that there are three possibilities, namely, "that [the refutation] utilizes a false premise;…it commits a misstep which our logic condemns as fallacious; or, more interestingly, we might be unable to find either false premises or missteps."[36] If we take the latter possibility to be the case, Kukla believes that we must conclude that there is a problem with our logic, and hence, it must be revised.

So, how should we go about revising our logic in such a case? Kukla has already given us the answer previously; we should engage in a Duhemian maneuver. In fact, according to Kukla, "our current logic *stipulates* that, when faced with a faultlessly executed paradox, we should always change the logic rather than abandon logic altogether."[37] From this stipulation, Kukla concludes that rationalism can never lose to irrationalism.[38]

This being said, Kukla does make the concession that this conclusion only applies to a *certain type* of rationalism. The sort of rationalism envisioned by Kukla is one in which the logical machinery of the thesis allows the preceding argument to reach its paradoxical

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[35] *Ibid*.
[36] *Ibid*.
[37] *Ibid*.
[38] That is, at least as long as we are playing by the rules of rationalism, irrationalism can never win. I will discuss this point in the next section.

conclusion. However, there are different possible rationalisms. One sort could stipulate that when a thesis is confronted with a paradoxical conclusion in a logical argument, then logic should be abandoned altogether. This sort of rationalism would obviously be vulnerable to the argument that concludes that all logical arguments are untrustworthy. But, luckily, this is not the sort of rationalism *we* endorse.[39]

So, the situation as it stands now is something like this: rationalism can never lose to a rational refutation brought into play by irrationalists. Whenever a paradoxical result is reached because of their reasoning within a certain logic, rationalists should always abandon that logic and formulate one more conducive to rational thinking. But wait, this might seem a little odd. One of the main reasons Kukla gave for his conclusion that logical constructivism collapses into irrationalism is that logical constructivists can always switch logics. So, why should rationalists be allowed to do this while logical constructivists should not?

Kukla asserts that there is a difference between the way in which rationalists switch logic and that in which logical constructivists do it. The latter may switch logics "*ad libitum*,"[40] i.e., whenever they wish. Rationalists, however, do not have the luxury of changing their minds *ad libitum*. Rationalists have certain constraints on their choice of logic. First, rationalists accept that logics can only be switched when they are presented with certain prescribed situations, e.g., the aforementioned confrontation with a perfectly executed paradox. Second, rationalists cannot just pick out any logic they want, only certain logics will do. In fact, according to Kukla, our logic might even stipulate in what ways it can be changed when confronted with such a paradox. So, since rationalists have rules that constrain their changes of logics, and irrationalists have only

[39] *Ibid.*, 153.
[40] *Ibid*.

their whims, there is an obvious difference between rationalism and irrationalism. Therefore, Kukla concludes that, "the rational refutation of rational refutations of rationalism stands."[41]

With this rational refutation of the irrationalists' efforts in hand, Kukla states the situation in the following way: this sort of refutation "isn't a criticism of irrationalism."[42] As we know from earlier, rational arguments have no force against irrationalists; there is no reason for them to accept them, because there is no reason for them to accept anything that they do not wish to accept. Therefore, both rationalists and irrationalists are immune to the attacks of the opposing view. "Rationalism and irrationalism are therefore *irreconcilable* positions: neither side possesses the resources for persuading the other side that it's wrong by its own lights."[43] Rationalists have no hope of logically persuading the irrationalists, because they just do not recognize the force of those arguments, and irrationalists have no hope of mounting a rational attack on the rationalists because the rules of the game preclude the possibility.

IV. My Position

Before I can fully state my position in this argument, I must first return to the problems I noted in earlier sections. I will be mainly concerned with two problems. First is the statement Kukla makes on the *ad libitum* rule breaking available to logical constructivists during negotiations of logics. Second, I will explore the issue that because of a stipulation in our logic we must always abandon particular logics when presented with paradoxes rather than abandon rationalism.

As I noted previously, I do not believe that Kukla was being completely fair with the logical constructivists' negotiation procedures. Kukla states that the only way they have out,

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[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Ibid.* 153-4.

namely the possibility that logic and negotiation rules develop together from proto-logic and proto-negotiation rules, only defeats the rather innocuous Niiniluoto-Collin-style argument against the rational refutation of rationalism. It seems to me that since Kukla is helping himself to various stipulations in rationalist logics, the irrationalists should be given the same chance.

Thus, as I posited earlier, it should be possible for logical constructivists to stipulate basic negotiation rules. An example of such a set of stipulated rules might look something like this: all logical facts are socially constructed; the rules of logic must be agreed upon before use; to agree upon the proper rules of logic there must first be negotiations which establish the rules as consensually valid; the initial set of negotiation rules will be exactly the same as those used normally by rationalists; only after the first set of logical rules is developed will it be permitted that the initial set of negotiation rules be held up to consensual scrutiny, at which time any or all may be discarded.

Kukla might rightly respond to this tack with a statement like the following: these are all very nice rules, but there is no reason that logical constructivists need not break them wantonly. This seems rather simplistic. There is at least one rule in this stipulated set of rules that seems to be impossible to break for logical constructivists, namely the very first one. So, if they must follow this one, and indeed they must because it is the basis of their entire position, why can it not be the case that they must follow the others ones, at least in the beginning?

At this point in the discussion, it seems that this *might* be a way out for the logical constructivists. This sort of stipulated rule-set could be the very ground they can stand on to build a middle ground between rationalism and irrationalism. However, it might be the case that this is actually shaky ground – but it is still more ground than Kukla conceded.

The proper response to the logical constructivist position, the one that reveals just how shaky the ground they stand upon is, is to attack the initial rule in the example rule-set. The argument that can be run against this position is nearly identical to the argument against the instantiation of universal relativism. The rule "all logical facts are socially constructed" must, presumably if it is indeed a fact, itself be socially constructed. This will lead to a devastating infinite regress since it will be "socially constructed all the down," so to speak.

However, for the sake of argument, let us say that there really is no infinite regress. Let us assume that there could be a possible base level. What would this level have to be like to establish the validity of logical constructivism? The only possible answer would have to be that a significant majority of people in the relevant epistemic community would have to agree to the postulate that all logical facts are socially constructed.

So, with this in hand, we can examine the actual epistemic facts of the matter. As far as I know, the idea that all logical facts are socially constructed is highly controversial. This alone leads me to believe that there is definitely not a significant majority of people who believe that such facts are socially constructed.

This might not be convincing enough, however. Luckily Kukla provides one other observation on the nature of our epistemic community that impugns the notion that we do in fact believe that all logical facts are socially constructed. He notes that, "For better of for worse, prevalent norms of proper discourse are steeped in realist and rationalist assumptions."[44] Thus, it seems safe to conclude that the logical constructivist position is a nonstarter.

The second issue I want to address is contained in the following previously quoted passage, "our current logic *stipulates* that, when faced with a faultlessly executed paradox, we

[44] *Ibid*., 120.

should always change the logic rather than abandon logic altogether."[45] Recall that from this stipulation, Kukla concludes that rationalism can never lose to irrationalism. This conclusion seems rather strong. Thus, it bears discussion.

Honestly, I do not have a knockdown argument against this position. In fact, I am actually very sympathetic to the conclusion. However, what worries me is whether or not the conclusion follows from that particular premise. It might in fact be the case that rationalism could never lose to irrationalism. The question is, if it is the case, why is it such?

All that Kukla has actually proven is that the irrationalists can never beat the rationalists at their own game. The converse is also true; the rationalists can never beat the irrationalists at their own game. This is just what it means to have irreconcilable positions.

We know that there is just no possible way for an irrationalist to contrive a rational argument against rationalism. I concede that point to Kukla. However, what he does not address is whether or not rationalists can or cannot be persuaded by irrational arguments. It might be the case that, for example, an irrationalist could write a particularly moving poem or paint a stylistically perfect painting that perfectly captures why rationalism is just not the best way to interact with the world.

In short, if irrationalists cannot beat rationalists at their own game, why should they not try to play a different game? Although ideally a rationalist would never be persuaded by anything other than a perfectly rational argument, this is certainly the way the world actually works. Most arguments begin purely with intuitions, and everyone is moved by some religion, philosophy or artistic endeavor. While the religions and philosophies both have their own logics, and are thus not irrational, the same cannot be said of intuitions and art.

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[45] *Ibid.*, 152.

Of course, as I mentioned earlier, I do not believe this to be a knockdown argument – far from it. I only raise the issue to illustrate that Kukla might be a little overzealous. He seems to bulldoze over all the fine points of his arguments. In other words, he takes it as given that his readers agree with a whole host of implicit premises. If Kukla had paid more attention to the minor details, his position would have been much stronger. Even though the preceding objection is, admittedly, somewhat weak, it is one that could be raised by an irrationalist. Unfortunately, Kukla's position as presented has no answer to the possibility that irrationalists might want to be play by their rules rather than by those of the rationalists.

So, how should we solve this problem? We could just stipulate that any refutation of rationalism must be rational – this seems to be the option Kukla implicitly endorses. Obviously, I do no think this is the proper response. Thus, an argument must be mounted against allowing this. Of course, such an argument must be directed at rationalists, because irrationalists will not recognize the normative force of the argument. Therefore, the most important question – perhaps in the entire set of questions explored in this paper – is why should rationalists pay no heed to irrational arguments?

I think the scope of that question is far wider than any one paper can really answer. It is the sort of question around which entire books can be centered. That being said, I will attempt to answer the question in broad strokes.

First, we must examine whether or not there is *ever* a reason to heed irrational arguments. To do this, we must examine in what sorts of situations irrationalism is more fruitful than rationalism. One example that springs immediately to mind is love; if everyone only ever decided to fall in love based on rational arguments, no one would ever fall in love. But, is this a

good reason to embrace wholesale irrationalism? Does the world in general work as does love in the particular? At first glance, that idea is rather dubious.

However, it might not be. If we take the Humean position that our belief in the reality of an external world is entirely non-rational, then there might be a case for at least some level of irrationalism in our beliefs. It is certainly less useful to not believe in the reality of an external world than it is to believe in one. But, if this belief is not rational, where does that leave us? It seems that it might be said that at the most basic level of our epistemic situation, we are all irrationalists.

Of course, there is a way out of this problem. As mentioned, it is much more useful to act as though the external world does indeed exist. Thus, there is at least one rational reason for believing in the external world, namely the utilitarian reason. Therefore, the reason we should embrace rationalism over irrationalism, at the most basic level, is because we could not live our lives wholly irrationally. It might be that this is a fault of human beings, but it is the epistemic situation in which we find ourselves at this moment.

Thus, I agree with Kukla's conclusion; rationalism must be embraced over irrationalism, and irrationalism could never defeat rationalism. The point at which my position differs from Kukla's is only the reasoning that leads to the conclusion. It seems to me that Kukla gets the right conclusion from the wrong premises.

V. Conclusion

Logical constructivism in Kukla's view does indeed lead to irrationalism. This alone, for Kukla, is enough to conclude that logical constructivism must be discarded. There is no argument that logical constructivists or irrationalists could make that is able to defeat rationalism

by its own lights for Kukla. As logical constructivism leads to irrationalism, irrationalism leads directly to an infinite regress from which it cannot escape.

Nothing more really needs to be said for Kukla. Once his rationalist audience accepts the facts as he has presented them, then he believes that they must also accept that any argument with logical constructivists, or irrationalists in general, is ultimately futile. There just is no way to bring them back to the view that Kukla believes is the proper one, namely rationalism.

In the end, I want to endorse Kukla's view that rationalism and realism is the best position. My only critique, really, of his presentation of the argument is that it is not as fine-tuned and attentive to details as it might have been. If he had spent just a few pages more here and there, I believe that he would have had as much of a knockdown argument as he seems to believe he already has. Moreover, some sort of positive position to replace social constructivism in the philosophy of science would have greatly improved the overall presentation of his criticisms.