This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume following peer review. The version of record is or soon will be available online at: https://academic.oup.com/aristoteliansupp.

Attitudes and the Normativity of Fittingness

Conor McHugh

University of Southampton, Avenue Campus, SO17 1BF

C.McHugh@soton.ac.uk

Abstract

What is the structure of normative reality? According to X First, normativity has a monistic foundationalist structure: there is a unique normatively basic property in terms of which all the other normative properties are analysed. The main aim of this paper is to defend the view that fittingness — the property that an attitude has when it gets things right with respect to its object, as when you admire the admirable or desire the desirable — is first, or perhaps joint first. I will focus in particular on the questions whether and why fittingness is normative.

I

Introduction: X First. According to many philosophers, what you ought to do is determined by the balance of (normative) reasons bearing on your options. Why is it so determined? Because, plausibly, for it to be the case that you ought to do something just *is*, or *consists* in, the balance of reasons supporting it (Schroeder 2021). There is nothing more to the property of being what you ought to do than being supported by the balance of reasons.

This claim analyses or defines one normative property in terms of another.[1] It is thus a claim about the structure of normative reality. Other claims of this sort include the claim that rationality consists in responding to reasons, the claim that to be a reason is to be a premise of good reasoning, and the claim that for something to be valuable is for it to be fitting to value that thing.[2]

Are there some normative properties that cannot be analysed in terms of others — that is, the possession of which does not consist in the possession of any other normative properties? If so, these

[1] I use talk of constitution, analysis, and definition interchangeably; I will also sometimes talk of some properties being reduced to others.

[2] For the claim about rationality see Kiesewetter 2017, Lord 2018. For the claim about reasons see Setiya 2014, Asarnow 2017, McHugh and Way 2022. The claim about value is famously made by Brentano (1889/2009) and Ewing (1939). As this last example indicates, I am understanding 'normative' broadly, to include the evaluative. However, I am not understanding it so broadly as to include 'merely formal' (or 'generic') normativity – mere assessability against some standard or rule, such as rules of etiquette or gender norms. By 'normativity' I mean authoritative, genuine, or robust, normativity. For discussion of the distinction between merely formal and authoritative normativity see McPherson 2018, Wodak 2019.

properties are *normatively basic*. They need not be *primitive*, since they might be analysable in terms of non-normative (natural or descriptive) properties.

X First is the claim that there is a unique normatively basic property, X, and all other normative properties are analysed in terms of it. Here, 'analysed in terms of' is transitive: some of the analyses might have several steps, but their normative terminus is always X.

X First says that normative reality has a monistic foundationalist structure. This is a highly unobvious claim (Wodak 2020). There are many other possibilities. There could be several normatively basic properties, and a pluralist foundationalist structure. Or it could be that all of the interesting normative properties are normatively basic. Normative reality could have a holistic structure in which all normative properties depend on each other.[3] Or normative reality could comprise independent 'pockets' which differ in their internal structure.

Nonetheless, I think there is some attraction to X First. First, note that some specific analyses of normative properties in terms of others are both prima facie plausible and explanatorily promising. This is true, in my view, of all of the examples I gave above. Second, there are reasons to think that analysis cannot go in a circle. Analysis is transitive, and it is plausibly also irreflexive and asymmetric (Rosen 2015), ruling out circularity. This suggests that, unless analysis continues ad infinitum without exhausting the normative properties, some normative properties are normatively basic.

Third, if there are indeed some normatively basic properties, it is natural to suppose that they have something in common and are not a mere ragbag. This might be some higher-order property they share. It might be that they are related to each other by objective similiarity (Wodak 2020). Or it might be that there is just one normatively basic property. Without some principled argument for one or other of these possibilities, it seems reasonable to develop some accounts of each sort and see how plausible and explanatorily fruitful they are. If one or more X First account proves promising, as some have argued, that will provide support for X First.[4]

That is an argument for taking X First seriously.[5] Of course, developing analyses of *all* other normative properties in terms of a unique normatively basic one would be an immense task. More realistically, we might get as far making plausible that some X is first in some significant portion of normative reality. In what follows, I focus on that portion of normative reality to which the property of being a

[3] Dependence is weaker than analysis. Two properties may be interdependent, but it is doubtful that two properties can be analysed in terms of each other. Thus, on a holistic view, the normative properties might all be normatively basic even though interdependent.

[4] See e.g. Schroeder 2021 in defence of Reasons First and McHugh and Way 2022 in defence of Fittingness First.

[5] Cp. Lord and Snedegar's (forthcoming) 'contribution argument' for Reasons First.

reason is central. My aim is is to defend the view that fittingness — the property that an attitude has when it gets things right with respect to its object, as when you admire the admirable or desire the desirable — is first, or perhaps joint first, for that portion (hereafter I omit the latter qualification). I will first offer some motivation for Fittingness First by showing how it emerges naturally as an alternative to the popular and prima facie attractive Reasons First, in light of some challenges faced by the latter. I will then turn to the doubts raised by Lord about whether fittingness is a normative property at all, arguing that it is normative and that the doubts are misplaced. Towards the end I will briefly address the question *why* fittingness is normative.

II

Reasons First? As noted above, two central normative notions, those of ought and rationality, lend themselves to analysis in terms of reasons. Moreover, value has famously been claimed to consist in reasons for valuing (Scanlon 1998, Parfit 2011), and some argue that fittingness, like ought, is a matter of the balance of reasons (Schroeder 2021). It is tempting to generalise to the conclusion that all other normative properties can be analysed in terms of reasons: Reasons First (Lord and Snedegar forthcoming).

However, Reasons First faces challenges. I will mention three. First, and notoriously, its analysis of value faces the Wrong Kind of Reason problem. Incentives for valuing worthless objects seem to many to be reasons to value them, but they do not make them valuable.[6] Second, while it is plausible that what you ought to do is determined by the balance of reasons, it is difficult to elucidate the notion of *balance* without appealing to anything normative besides reasons.[7]

The third challenge is particularly acute for Reasons Firsters who are also primitivists about reasons. Reasons seem to be subject to certain conditions that require explanation. For instance, only rational agents can have reasons, and, according to many philosophers (e.g. Scanlon 1998, Portmore 2019), they can only have them to do things that can be done for reasons: you cannot have reasons to be taller or to win a fair lottery. It is natural to think that this 'response condition' holds because of what it is to be a reason. But if reasons are primitive then we cannot explain what it is to be a reason in other terms (McHugh and Way 2022, ch. 1).

There is much that Reasons Firsters can say about these challenges. My point here is just that all of them give some support to the idea of analysing reasons in other terms. As many have pointed out,

[6] Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004; for discussion and further references see Gertken and Kiesewetter 2017.

[7] For attempts to do so see e.g. Schroeder 2007, 2021; Horty 2012. For criticism see McHugh and Way 2022, ch. 5.

the Wrong Kind of Reason problem invites an appeal to fittingness: incentives might count in favour of valuing the worthless, but they do not make such valuing fitting (Danielsson and Olson 2007, Howard 2019). Thus, the reasons we have to value valuable things can plausibly be explained in terms of the fittingness of valuing them. McHugh and Way (2022) argue that the other two problems can also be addressed by appealing to fittingness. On their account, to be a reason is to be a premise of good reasoning. Facts about the balance of reasons can then be understood in terms of good reasoning: roughly, the balance of reasons supports a response when good reasoning from those reasons leads to that response rather than any alternative. As for the response condition, this holds because, if reasons are premises of good reasoning, there can only be reasons for responses that are possible conclusions of good reasoning. But good reasoning, in turn, is understood in terms of fittingness. A good pattern of reasoning is one that preserves fittingness: it is such that, if it starts from fitting responses, it will, at least other things equal, conclude with a fitting response. Thus reasons are ultimately analysed in terms of fittingness.

Lord, in his contribution to this symposium, agrees that reasons should be analysed in terms of fittingness.[8] However, he maintains that this is compatible with Reasons First, because fittingness is not normative. Thus, reasons are still normatively basic — it's just that they are analysable in non-normative terms. More precisely, *normative* reasons are normatively basic. Reasons as such are not normatively basic, since reasons as such are not normative. Normative reasons, he suggests, are just those derived from the fittingess of responses constitutive of agency.

Why does Lord think fittingness is not normative? Because he thinks fittingness is just *constitutive correctness*: correctness relative to a standard that is constitutive of something. For example, it is constitutive of the foxtrot that certain steps are correct and others incorrect (Gertken and Kiesewetter 2017). This standard makes the foxtrot the dance it is. Similarly, the thought goes, it is constitutive of admiration that it is correct just when its object is admirable, constitutive of fear that it is correct just when its object is fearsome, and so on. And the fittingness of these responses is just a matter of meeting their constitutive correctness standards.

However, constitutive correctness as such is not normative. There needn't be anything wrong with making incorrect foxtrot steps. You need not, for instance, have any normative reason not to. You might have no normative reason to be dancing the foxtrot in the first place, or to be dancing it correctly.

[8] Rather than appealing first to good reasoning, Lord analyses reasons directly as explanations of fittingness. This difference doesn't matter for present purposes.

More generally, constitutive correctness standards come cheap. We can create them by stipulation: we can write a dance or musical score, or create a game or practice with whatever arbitrary rules we want. Normativity does not come so cheap.[9]

As Lord points out, his account implies that you have reasons to do whatever would satisfy any arbitrary correctness standard. This includes not only making correct foxtrot steps, but also moving chess pieces in certain ways, moving those same pieces in incompatible ways (correct according to anti-chess), not stepping on the cracks (correct according to that game), and slaughtering innocents (correct according to the standards of terrorism). These implications are jarring. On the face of it, the claims that you have reasons to do those things sound false. The claims that you have *no* reasons to do them sound true.

Perhaps this is so only because, and in so far as, we naturally hear 'reason' in such contexts as meaning normative reason. This is compatible with there being genuine *non-normative* reasons to do these things, as Lord's account implies. Thus you have genuine reasons, but no normative reasons, to do them. However, first, this claim is scarcely less jarring than those above. Indeed it seems of doubtful intelligibility: is there really a notion of a reason *to* do something — a reason *for* doing it — that is not a normative reason?[10] Second, if there is such a notion, why is it so difficult to hear 'reason', unqualified, as expressing it?

As stated these problems are hardly decisive but they do, I think, place a burden on the defender of these non-normative reasons.[11] In my view we would do better to revisit the identification of fittingness with constitutive correctness. In the next section I will argue against such an identification and begin to elaborate an alternative picture.

III

The Normativity of Fittingness. In this section I argue that fittingness is normative. And, in particular, fittingness is not mere constitutive correctness.

[9] Authoritative normativity, that is. See n. 2.

[10] Several authors besides Lord seem to think so, including Joyce (2001), Mantel (2019), and, using different terminology, Maguire and Woods (2020). However, as Wodak (2019) and Kiesewetter (2022) argue, it is unclear that the non-normative notion these authors are getting at can be understood except in terms of normative reasons – e.g. as what is regarded as a normative reason, or would be a normative reason under certain conditions. By contrast, on Lord's account normative reasons are understood in terms of the more general category of not-necessarily-normative reasons, which therefore cannot itself be understood in terms of normative reasons.

[11] Lord could instead revise his account to claim that reasons are explanations of the fittingness of responses constitutive of agency. This might avoid a commitment to non-normative reasons, but not to what I will argue is a mistaken underlying view of fittingness.

Here is a simple argument that fittingness is normative. Facts about what is, for instance, admirable, desirable, credible, shameful, and blameworthy are facts about fittingness: they are facts about when admiration, desire, credence, shame, and blame are fitting.[12] But such facts seem clearly normative. If so, I take it, something must *make* them normative. What? The obvious answer is that it is fittingness, the property, that does so, by virtue of itself being normative.[13] If fittingness wasn't normative, it's not clear why the fact that it is fitting to, say, admire a certain person — the fact that they are admirable — would be.[14]

Here it is important to distinguish a fact's being normative from its being merely normatively significant. Consider the fact that Jamal is admirable. And suppose that what makes Jamal admirable is his resilience in adversity. Then, the fact that Jamal is resilient in adversity is normatively significant: it makes him admirable. The fact that Jamal is admirable is importantly different. It is itself a normative fact. The relation between these two facts is analogous to that between the fact that an action causes pain and the fact that you ought not to perform that action. The first fact is normatively significant because it makes the second, normative fact obtain.

This seems enough to establish a presumption in favour of the normativity of fittingness. Since the sorts of properties it appeals to — admirability, desirability and so on — are central to many discussions of fittingness, it is no wonder that many authors with otherwise diverse views about fittingness agree, implicitly or explicitly, that it is normative.[15]

Of course, if constitutive correctness suffices for fittingness, then, despite appearances and consensus, fittingness can't be normative. However, it seems to me that constitutive correctness does not suffice for fittingness. My argument for this is that there are many types of action that have constitutive correctness conditions but cannot be fitting — or, if they can, their fittingness conditions are not their constitutive correctness conditions.

---

[12] See Berker 2022, McHugh and Way 2022.

[13] I assume that if the property of being *F* is normative then the fact that *a* is *F* is thereby a normative fact.

[14] Might it be because admiration is constitutive of agency and, as Lord suggests, the fittingness of what is constitutive of agency makes for normativity? It is far from obvious that admiration is constitutive of agency, far less that all attitudes whose fittingness is a normative matter are so; for discussion see Lord and Sylvan 2019.

Another suggestion is that the fact that someone is admirable is normative in virtue of admiration being normative (see below) rather than in virtue of fittingness being so. However, even if admiration is normative, the fact that someone is admirable seems normative in a way that goes beyond the way that just any old fact about admiration – the fact that Jan admires Jamal, for example – is.

[15] Including Brentano (1889/2009), Ewing (1948), Chisholm (1986), D'Arms and Jacobson (2000a, 2000b), Chappell (2012), Svavarsdóttir (2014), Schroeder (2021), and Berker (2022). In a survey on the topic, Howard (2018, 2) describes fittingness as 'paradigmatically normative'. For further historical discussion of fittingness and very many more references see McHugh and Way 2022, ch. 3, and, especially, Howard and Rowland 2022.

As we saw earlier, plausible examples of actions with constitutive correctness conditions include dancing the foxtrot and making a chess (or anti-chess) move; others include playing Mozart's c major sonata (Rosen 2001), and tying a knot (Schroeder 2010). These are all things you can do correctly or incorrectly as such. But these types of action cannot be fitting. Fittingness is a relation between a response and an object, that obtains when the object merits, is worthy of, or is an appropriate object of, that response.[16] Fitting responses must therefore be directed on objects — they must be intentional in this sense. The action-types just mentioned are not so. Your dancing is not directed on the foxtrot, your 'making' on the chess (or anti-chess) move, your playing on the sonata, nor your tying on the knot — not in the sense in which, when you admire Jamal and desire coffee, your admiration and desire are directed on Jamal and coffee respectively. Thus these actions lack the right structure to be fitting.[17]

My claim is not that no actions can be fitting. Some actions are directed on objects and thus might be candidates for being fitting. Consider applauding a performance, thanking a benefactor, or apologising for a slight. The objects here might merit or be worthy of these responses. But many actions do not have this object-directed structure and so are not candidates for being fitting.[18]

Moreover, suppose that I am wrong and the foxtrot, chess move, sonata, and knot, are intentional objects of the dancing, making, playing, and tying, respectively. Even then, it is not the case that these actions are correctly performed when their objects merit or are worthy of them. To correctly play Mozart's c major sonata is just to play the right notes in the right order. This is not for the sonata to merit being played. Unfortunately, many works that do not merit being played are played correctly, and many that do merit it are played incorrectly. Similarly a foxtrot step, chess move, or knot, might be correct but not merit being made or tied. Thus, even if these types of action can be fitting, their fittingness is not a matter of satisfying their constitutive correctness conditions.

In sum, many types of action can be constitutively correct but do not seem to be candidates for being fitting, and if they can be fitting then the conditions for their being so are not their constitutive correctness conditions. Constitutive correctness is thus not sufficient for fittingness. A fortiori it is not

[16] This sort of gloss on fittingness is standard. For recent versions see Howard 2018, Howard and Rowland 2022.

[17] If this isn't intuitively clear, note that one marker of intentional response-types, or at least many paradigmatic ones, is the possibility of their being directed on non-existent objects. You can't dance a non-existent dance; likewise for the other examples.

[18] It is sometimes suggested that an action is fitting when it is called for by a situation. Any type of action can meet this condition. I deny that this amounts to fittingness, but in any case it does not support the identification of fittingness with constitutive correctness since an action can be constitutively correct but not called for (Howard and Leary 2022, 228).

identical to it. And so, from the fact that constitutive correctness is not normative, it does not follow that fittingness is not normative.

In response it might be said that, even if fittingness is not identical to constitutive correctness, nonetheless it is a ***type*** of constitutive correctness. In particular, it might be said that fittingness is constitutive correctness ***of attitudes*** (or of intentional responses generally). That is, for a response to be fitting is for it to be an attitude that satisfies its constitutive standard of correctness. And this might seem no more normative than constitutive correctness in other cases. Lord's examples of schadenfreude and kenopsia might seem to support this. Schadenfreude is pleasure at others' misfortune. Kenopsia is a feeling of eerieness at a normally bustling place that is now quiet. But these standards — being another's misfortune, being a normally bustling place but now quiet — do not seem normatively significant in the right way. Others' misfortune, for instance, doesn't give you normative reasons for pleasure. Lord takes these to be cases of non-normative fittingness.

I disagree. Schadenfreude and kenopsia are subtypes of more general attitude-types — pleasure and the feeling of eerieness — and inherit their fittingness conditions from those more general types. They are distinguished by their particular types of object, not by their fittingess conditions. Schadenfreude is fitting just when another's misfortune merits pleasure (i.e. perhaps never), not just when directed, as it always is, on another's misfortune. Likewise for kenopsia: it is fitting when its object merits the attitude-type it involves, not simply when that attitude-type is directed on that sort of object. If it were the latter then kenopsia would always be fitting.[19]

Giving a name to a type of attitude when directed at a certain type of object doesn't establish a fittingness condition. Of course we could coin a name for an attitude that is *fittingly* directed at a certain type of object: let 'schadenfreude-F', say, refer to fitting pleasure directed at another's misfortune. But this wouldn't show anything about fittingness. It would be a normative question when, if ever, anyone is engaged in schadenfreude-F.

These considerations point towards an important difference between, on the one hand, the fittingness conditions of attitudes, and, on the other hand, the correctness standards constitutive of games and practices. The latter come cheap in a way that is incompatible with their being normative. Fittingness conditions do not come cheap in this way. You cannot create a fittingness-condition by saying 'let *A*-ing be an attitude that is fitting just when directed at even numbers, water, or the novels of Chinua Achebe'. This does not determine what attitude, if any, *A*-ing is. It does not, for instance, tell us when

[19] Similar points are made by Howard and Leary (2022, 224)

an attitude that is not directed on any of these objects counts as an (unfitting) instance of *A*-ing, rather than an instance of some other attitude.

This suggests both that attitudes are not constituted by correctness conditions of the sort that we can just stipulate, as we can stipulate a musical score or the rules of a game, and also that fittingness conditions are not such constitutive correctness conditions.

But if fittingness is not constitutive correctness, does this undermine the fittingness-based solution to the Wrong Kind of Reason problem, as Lord suggests (sec. 3.1)? I don't think so. What seems clear is that fittingness conditions are intimately connected to the nature of the response-types they apply to, in a way that mere incentives are not. But this does not require fittingness conditions to *constitute* the response-types they govern in the way that standards of correctness can constitute a game or practice. In the next section I will suggest an alternative view of the relation between response-types and their fittingness conditions.

IV

Fittingness Conditions as Essential but not Constitutive. Suitably general normative facts, such as the facts that suffering is bad and you have reason not to cause it, seem to be necessary. But facts about fittingness conditions and the reasons they (as I claim) give rise to seem to be more than merely necessary. The fact that it is fitting to believe only what is true and the fact that resilience in adversity is a reason to admire someone seem to be tied to the nature of belief and admiration respectively, in a way that facts about how incentives might favour believing and admiring are not. But how exactly are they so tied? It seems that fittingness conditions are more than necessary, but less than constitutive.

I suggest that fittingness conditions are essential to the attitudes they govern, but not strictly constitutive of them — that is, they do not make them the attitudes they are. Thanks mainly to Fine (1994), the point that a property can be essential without being constitutive is widely acccepted.[20] Perhaps being either human or amphibian is essential to Socrates, but it is not part of what makes him Socrates; rather, what makes him Socrates (including, perhaps, his humanity) makes him either human or amphibian (Rosen 2015). Similarly, I suggest at least as a first pass, fittingness conditions depend

[20] For Fine, essence includes only what is logically entailed by the constitutive. Rosen (2015) characterises 'consequential essence' as *grounded* in constitutive essence. This is closer to what I have in mind. A view of attitudes along these lines is defended by Zangwill (2005).

on what is constitutive of attitudes, rather than themselves being constitutive of them.[21] The attitudes determine the fittingness-conditions rather than the other way around.

The possibility of norms being essential but not constitutive is not always acknowledged. In an important discussion of whether belief is normative, Rosen (2001) considers two possible views: the view that 'belief facts are constituted by … normative facts', and the view that '[t]he doxastic facts are constituted entirely from non-normative materials… [b]ut once in place, they engage with an independent body of cognitive norms' (617). Many seem to assume that these two views are exhaustive. But a third possibility is that the norms are neither constitutive of nor independent of the doxastic facts, but depend on them. Similarly, my suggestion is that it is essential to belief that a belief is fitting only if true, but being subject to this standard is not what makes an attitude a belief. Rather, something else makes it a belief and in doing so guarantees that it is subject to this standard.

The same picture is available for other attitudes. Admiration has a fittingness condition — possessing remarkable virtue, say. But having this fittingness condition is not what makes an attitude count as admiration. Rather, what makes it admiration also makes it the case that it is subject to this fittingess condition. It is because of what admiration is that, for example, Jamal's resilience in adversity makes him admirable. It is not because this attitude towards Jamal is made fitting by his resilience in adversity that it counts as admiration.[22]

This picture supports the fittingness-based solution to the Wrong Kind of Reason problem. An incentive to value some worthless object speaks in favour, in some sense, of valuing it. But it is not because of the nature of valuing that it does so. Rather, it does so because an incentive for doing anything speaks in favour of doing it. By contrast, the fact that resilience in adversity makes a person fitting to admire obtains simply because of what admiration is. It is part of the essence of admiration, even if not part of what *makes* it admiration.

I am suggesting that the fundamental natures of attitudes do not include fittingess conditions but rather determine them. But what are those fundamental natures like, and how do they determine fittingness conditions? While I cannot offer anything like a full and compelling answer to this question, I will try to say something about it.

[21] That is, the fact that an attitude has the fittingness condition it has depends on, rather than being part of, what is constitutive of the attitude (the condition itself – being true, being dangerous, or whatever – need not depend on the attitude). Authors who defend views like this include D'Arms (2022) and Singh (2022).

[22] Earlier I allowed that certain types of action – applauding a performance, thanking a benefactor, apologising for a slight – might be assessable as fitting or unfitting. Since these are actions, it might seem that fittingness conditions cannot in general depend on attitudes. However, these types of action are plausibly understood as expressions of attitudes – of appreciation, gratitude, and guilt respectively. I thus suggest that what is fundamentally assessable as fitting in these cases is the attitudes expressed, and the actions are fitting derivatively, qua expressions thereof.

An attitude is a persisting intentional psychological state. In my view it is plausible that, fundamentally, attitudes are complex dispositions: dispositions to behave, cognize, reason, feel, direct attention, and so on, in certain ways with respect to their objects.[23] Attitude-types are individuated by the dispositions that constitute them, and different sorts of disposition (e.g. dispositions to cognize vs. to feel) might be more or less central to different attitudes. For example, as functionalists have long observed, believing that *p* and desiring that *p* involve different dispositions with respect to the proposition that *p* — belief involves the disposition to deploy <*p*> as a premise in reasoning, while desire involves the disposition to intend actions you believe will bring it about that *p*. Similarly, admiring Jamal and fearing Jamal involve different dispositions with respect to Jamal — admiration might involve, for instance, dispositions to enjoy thoughts about Jamal and be motivated to emulate him, while fear might involve disliking such thoughts and being motivated to avoid him.[24]

Crucially, not just any disposition with respect to an object counts as an attitude towards it. Suppose you are disposed to emulate Jamal, to dislike thoughts about him, and to reason from beliefs about Jamal to beliefs about the weather and intentions to drink tea. What attitude towards Jamal do you have? The answer seems to be that this cluster of dispositions does not amount to any particular attitude towards Jamal — neither an attitude we are already familiar with nor a new attitude that we have hereby discovered. It is either some gerrymandered fusion of aspects of different attitudes towards Jamal, or just a bizarre psychological condition.

I suggest that, in order to count as an attitude, a disposition must have a certain coherence such that it constitutes (your having) an intelligible orientation towards, or 'take' on, its object. And it is this feature of attitudes, I suggest, that makes them assessable as fitting or unfitting. In having such an orientation you can be getting things right or wrong.

In what sense does an attitude constitute an orientation towards or take on its object, while the bizarre disposition just described does not? This is a difficult question, but we can make some progress with it by drawing on recent work of D'Arms (2022; see also D'Arms and Jacobson 2023) on the 'natural emotions'. These plausibly include anger, fear, shame, envy, and amusement. D'Arms regards them as complex states with characteristic elicitation and 'satisfaction' conditions (e.g. fear is elicited by perceived threat and satisfied by avoidance of the threat), as well as behavioural, cognitive, and phenomenal manifestations. As such they invite intepretation as 'appraisals' of their objects — as states that treat their objects as mattering in distinctive ways. The distinctive characteristics of fear,

[23] Dispositional accounts of some or all attitudes are defended by e.g. Wedgwood (2007), Glüer and Wikforss (2013), Nolfi (2015), D'Arms and Jacobson (2023).

[24] The dispositions constitutive of some attitude-types are likely to include dispositions to have or reason towards other attitudes. Thus I make no commitment to attitudes being reducible to the non-attitudinal.

for example, make apt an interpretation of fear as a state that treats its object as a threat to be avoided. Or, to use D'Arms's main example, the distinctive characteristics of shame make apt an interpretion of it as an appraisal of its object as reflecting badly on oneself. In constituting such appraisals, these emotions also determine conditions under which they are fitting: they are fitting when their objects matter in the ways the emotions treat them as mattering.

Thus, in virtue of being intelligible, or interpretable, as treating their objects as mattering in distinctive ways, the natural emotions are assessable as fitting or not — as getting things right or wrong in how they treat their objects. By contrast, the bizarre disposition mentioned earlier is not interpretable as treating its object as mattering in any particular way and so does not get things right or wrong in doing so.

While D'Arms's account specifically concerns the natural emotions, I suggest that the general approach generalises to other attitudes. Perhaps admiration is not a natural emotion, but it is easy to see in broad terms how admiration might be interpreted as an appraisal of its object as possessing remarkable virtue. Belief, on the other hand, does not treat its object as *mattering* in any particular way, but it clearly involves treating a proposition as *being* a certain way, namely being *true*. It is, for example, elicited by perceived indicators of truth and extinguished by indicators of falsity, and it features in reasoning in ways whose success depends on the proposition's truth (McHugh and Way 2018). In this way admiration and belief, in virtue of the distinctive dispositions that make them the attitudes they are, determine their distinctive fittingness conditions.

So much for my sketchy account of how attitudes determine fittingness conditions. Even if it has promise, though, it faces an important challenge, to which I briefly turn in the next section.

V

Why is Fittingness Normative? If attitudes determine standards for when they count as getting things right, why are these standards, as I claim, normative? How do the standards supposedly generated by fear, admiration, and belief, come to be normative, while the standards we generate by writing musical scores or stipulating the rules of games do not?

What would count as an answer to this question depends on what, in general, makes a property count as normative, a highly controversial question in itself. Rather than straying into this difficult and arcane territory, perhaps we can frame the question why fittingness as I have characterised it is normative thus: why *care* about fittingness conditions, if the account that I have sketched of them is right? Why

care about whether your or anyone else's attitudes satisfy the standards that they set for themselves? Why be moved to satisfy these standards, instead of just ignoring them?

A tempting (if suggestive and partial) answer is that having attitudes at all — and thus being meaningfully and intelligibly orientated towards the world — leaves no room for not caring about whether your attitudes are fitting. Having attitudes at all ensures being moved to get things right. For instance, believers and admirers must be moved in their reasoning towards and away from those attitudes by considerations conducive by their lights to having them towards only what is true and what possesses remarkable virtue. Without these dispositions, the attitudes would not be intelligible. They would not amount to treating their objects in any particular way we could make sense of.

Does this imply that fittingness conditions are constitutive of attitudes after all? Not necessarily. The idea is not that what fundamentally makes an attitude count as belief, say, is its being fitting only if true. Rather, what fundamentally makes it count as belief is the dispositions constitutive of it. These dispositions both amount to a concern for truth and determine truth as the fittingness condition of the attitude they constitute. Thus you can't be a believer and not care about satisfying belief's fittingness condition, but there is an answer to the question why truth is this fittingness condition which appeals to more fundamental facts about belief. In this latter respect belief contrasts with, for instance, the foxtrot: there are no more fundamental facts about the nature of the foxtrot that explain why certain steps and not others are correct, even if there are, say, historical facts that explain how we came to have a dance with those steps.

But why have attitudes at all? If what I have been arguing is along the right lines, then this amounts to the question, why have an intelligible orientation towards the world? And this, unlike the question why dance certain dances or play certain games, does not seem like a pressing question. If we must be moved by certain standards in order to be intelligibly orientated towards the world, then it's not clear what further justification they need or why it would matter that they might lack authority for very different sorts of creatures.[25]

A comparison may help. Consider the claim that value is a matter of the fittingness of certain attitudes, such as desire, gladness, admiration, awe, amusement, and so on. Someone might ask: if that's what value is, what's the big deal? Why care about what makes those attitudes, and just those, fitting? A

[25] I think my claims here avoid at least the most straightforward version of Enoch's (2006) 'schmagency' objection to certain forms of constitutivism (nor am I defending the sort of full-blown constitutivism about normativity that Enoch is concerned with). A schmagent is supposed to be much like an agent but to lack the aim or commitment alleged to be constitutive of genuine agency. The objection is roughly that, unless there is something to be said for being an agent rather than a schmagent, what is constitutive of agency cannot be a source of normativity. My claim, however, is that there is nothing that is at all like having attitudes but that involves indifference to fittingness: there are no such things as schmattitudes.

satisfying answer to this question would talk about the nature of the valuing attitudes, what unites them despite their diversity and distinguishes them from other attitudes, and their role in our lives. In doing so it would explain why we have a concept for what merits those attitudes — for that in valuing which we are getting things right — and it would illuminate the character of that concept. And it would thereby make clear why it makes sense for us, and is unavoidable given the creatures we are — valuing creatures — to care in a distinctive way about what answers to that concept. Perhaps creatures with a radically different repertoire of attitudes, if that were possible, would have no use for such a concept and no interest in what it picks out. They might find it incomprehensible what the importance of a concept with that extension, which might appear to them wildly heterogenous, could possibly be. But that does not undermine the normativity, intelligibility, or unity of value for us.

What goes for value, I suggest, goes mutatis mutandis for fittingness in general.

VI

Conclusion: Attitudes First? There's a prima facie case for Fittingness First. I have mainly been defending this view against the worry that fittingness is not normative. In doing so I have argued, in particular, that the fittingness conditions for the various attitudes are determined by the natures of those attitudes, and are essential to but not constitutive of them. I sketched a rough account of how a response, in virtue of counting as an attitude and as the particular type of attitude it is, comes to have a particular fittingness condition, and gestured towards an even rougher account of why such conditions are normative.

It might seem that, in claiming that fittingness facts depend on facts about attitudes, I have ultimately been defending Attitudes First: the view that the property of being an attitude is normatively first (or that the attitude-types are jointly first). However, that is not so, for several reasons. First, to claim that the facts about what is fitting depend on the natures of attitudes is not yet to claim that fittingness itself, the property, is analysed in terms of attitudes — that to be fitting just is to be an attitude that satisfies a certain condition (specifiable without reference to fittingness). It might be that the attitudes determine the fittingness facts without constituting the nature of fittingness.[26]

Second, I have left open whether the property of being an attitude (of a certain type) is itself normative or not. The rough account of attitudes that I gave does not clearly settle this. Perhaps the dispositions

[26] That might mean that the attitudes determine the fittingness facts only in conjunction with something independent, namely the nature of fittingness. Would that mean that fittingness conditions are not essential to attitudes after all, since neither constitutive of nor *fully* dependent on them? Perhaps not: perhaps fittingness conditions fully depend on attitudes, but do so only because of the nature of fittingness. That is, the fact that the fittingness conditions fully depend on the attitudes itself depends on the nature of fittingness.

that I have suggested are constitutive of attitudes can be fully specified in non-normative terms.[27] If so then the view I have defended might be developed to amount, like Lord's, to a naturalistic reduction of normativity: fittingness is first but is reducible to the natural property of being an attitude.

That said, it is unclear that the nature of attitudes can be fully spelled out in dispositional terms without appealing to anything normative.[28] Some of my formulations lend support to this point. I talked of attitudes as dispositions that constitute an *intelligible* orientation towards something, and that are *apt* to be interpreted as *treating* their objects as having certain properties. This language sounds normative at several points. Perhaps the normativity can ultimately be paraphrased or reduced away, but it is not obvious that it can.

However, and third, if the property of being an attitude is itself normative, this normativity might itself be a matter of fittingness. Perhaps we cannot understand what it is for a disposition to amount to an intelligible orientation towards something, apt to be interpreted as treating an object as having certain properties, except by appeal to the notion of being fitting just when the object has those properties – or, perhaps, to the fittingness of regarding the attitude as treating the object in that way.[29]

If the property of being an attitude is not independent of fittingness, then fittingness is not analysed in terms of it. But suppose now that fittingness is not independent of the property of being an attitude. In that case they are interdependent.[30] Neither fittingness nor attitudes is analysable in terms of the other, and neither is uniquely normatively basic. Instead, perhaps, they come as an interdependent normatively basic package. Thus, we have Fittingness and Attitudes Jointly First. This would be departure from X First: it would be a modestly pluralist foundationalist view, on which the foundations are interdependent.

While the question which of these views is most promising — Fittingness, Attitudes, or Both Jointly First — is an interesting one, we should not lose sight of the bigger picture. We are not curious about what is first merely for its own sake, as we might be curious to find out who won some race. Rather,

[27] This would keep the account close in spirit to D'Arms's (2022; D'Arms and Jacobson 2023) avowedly naturalistic account of the natural emotions.

[28] For arguments that they can't see Zangwill 2005, Wedgwood 2007, Nolfi 2015.

[29] This might again seem to suggest that fittingness conditions are constitutive of attitudes after all. But it need not. On the suggested view, being an attitude depends on being assessable for fittingness. But the fittingness condition of any given attitude-type might still depend on more fundamental facts about it, such as dispositional facts relating it to that condition and the fact that it is assessable for fittingness, and hence counts as an attitude, at all.
That said, a possible alternative view is that attitude-types are constituted by clusters of interdependent facts, including facts about fittingness conditions and dispositional facts. Thus fittingness conditions are constitutive of attitudes but nonetheless depend on further constitutive facts about them. I lack the space here to explore that view and how it relates to the one I have been sketching.

[30] Cp. Wedgwood's (2007) claim that normativity and intentionality are interdependent.

by addressing this question we hope to be able to shed light on the various normative properties, their interrelations, their significance and range of application, and, perhaps, what normativity itself amounts to. We can, I hope, shed such light even if we don't end up in agreement about what exactly, if anything, is first.[31]

References

Asarnow, Samuel 2017: 'The Reasoning View and Defeasible Practical Reasoning'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* 95 (3), pp. 614-36.

Berker, Selim 2022: 'The Deontic, the Evaluative, and the Fitting'. In Christopher Howard and R.A. Rowland (eds.), *Fittingness: Essays in the Philosophy of Normativity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brentano, Franz 1889/2009: *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, trans. R.M. Chisholm and E.H. Schneewind. Oxford: Routledge.

Chappell, Richard Yetter 2012: 'Fittingness: The Sole Normative Primitive'. *Philosophical Quarterly,* 62 (249), pp. 684-704.

Chisholm, Roderick M. 1986: *Brentano and Intrinsic Value.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

D'Arms, Justin 2022: 'Fitting Emotions'. In Christopher Howard and R.A. Rowland (eds.), *Fittingness: Essays in the Philosophy of Normativity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

D'Arms, Justin, and Daniel Jacobson 2000a: 'The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* 61 (1), pp. 65-90.

-------- 2000b: 'Sentiment and Value'. *Ethics,* 110 (4), pp. 722-48. D'Arms, Justin, and Daniel Jacobson

-------- 2023: *Rational Sentimentalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Danielsson, Sven, and Jonas Olson 2007: 'Brentano and the Buck-Passers'. *Mind,* 116 (463), pp. 511-22.

Enoch, David 2006: 'Agency, Shmagency: Why Normativity Won't Come from What Is Constitutive of Action'. *Philosophical Review,* 115 (2), pp. 169-98.

Ewing, A. C. 1939: 'A Suggested Non-naturalistic Analysis of Good'. *Mind,* 48 (189), pp. 1-22.

Ewing, A.C. 1948: *The Definition of Good.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Fine, Kit 1994: 'Essence and Modality'. *Philosophical Perspectives,* 8, pp. 1-16.

Gertken, Jan, and Benjamin Kiesewetter 2017: 'The Right and the Wrong Kind of Reasons'. *Philosophy Compass,* 12 (5), e12412.

Glüer, Kathrin, and Åsa Wikforss 2013: 'Against Belief Normativity'. In Timothy Chan (ed.), *The Aim of Belief.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Horty, John F. 2012: *Reasons as Defaults.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Howard, Christopher 2018: 'Fittingness'. *Philosophy Compass,* 13 (11), e12542.

--------- 2019: 'The Fundamentality of Fit'. *Oxford Studies in Metaethics,* 14, pp. 216-236.

Howard, Christopher, and R.A. Rowland 2022: 'Fittingness: A User's Guide'. In Christopher Howard and R.A. Rowland (eds.), *Fittingness: Essays in the Philosophy of Normativity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Howard, Christopher, and Stephanie Leary 2022: 'In Defence of the Right Kind of Reason'. In Christopher Howard and R.A. Rowland (eds.), *Fittingness: Essays in the Philosophy of Normativity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Joyce, Richard 2001: *The Myth of Morality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kiesewetter, Benjamin 2017: *The Normativity of Rationality.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

--------- 2022, 'Are Epistemic Reasons Normative?'. *Noûs,* 56 (3), pp. 670-95.

[31] Many thanks to Alex Gregory, Guy Longworth, Errol Lord, Jonathan Way, and Daniel Whiting for feedback on earlier drafts.

Lord, Errol 2018: *The Importance of Being Rational.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Lord, Errol, and Justin Snedegar forthcoming: 'Reasons First'. In David Copp and Connie Rosati (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Lord, Errol, and Kurt Sylvan 2019: 'Reasons: Wrong, Right, Normative, Fundamental'. *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy,* 15 (1), pp. 43-74.
Maguire, Barry, and Jack Woods 2020: 'The Game of Belief'. *Philosophical Review,* 129 (2), pp. 211-49.
Mantel, Susanne 2019: 'Do Epistemic Reasons Bear on the Ought Simpliciter?'. *Philosophical Issues,* 29 (1), pp. 214-27.
McHugh, Conor, and Jonathan Way 2018: 'What is Reasoning?'. *Mind,* 127 (505), pp. 167-96.
-------- 2022: *Getting Things Right: Fittingness, Reasons, and Value.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
McPherson, Tristram 2018: 'Authoritatively Normative Concepts'. In Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics 13*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Nolfi, Kate 2015: 'How to be a Normativist about the Nature of Belief'. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly,* 96 (2), pp. 181-204.
Parfit, Derek 2011: *On What Matters.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Portmore, Douglas W. 2019: *Opting for the Best: Oughts and Options*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Rabinowicz, Wlodek, and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004: 'The Strike of the Demon: On Fitting Pro-attitudes and Value'. *Ethics,* 114 (3), pp. 391-423.
Rosen, Gideon 2001: 'Brandom on Modality, Normativity, and Intentionality'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* 63 (3), pp. 611-23.
-------- 2015: 'Real Definition'. *Analytic Philosophy,* 56 (3), pp. 189-209.
Scanlon, Thomas 1998: *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
Schroeder, Mark 2007: *Slaves of the Passions.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
-------- 2010: 'Value and the Right Kind of Reason'. *Oxford Studies in Metaethics,* 5, pp. 25-55.
-------- 2021: *Reasons First.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Setiya, Kieran 2014: 'What is a Reason to Act?'. *Philosophical Studies,* 167 (2), pp. 221-35.
Singh, Keshav 2022: 'What's in an Aim?'. *Oxford Studies in Metaethics,* 17, pp. 138-65.
Svavarsdóttir, Sigrún 2014: 'Having Value and Being Worth Valuing'> *Journal of Philosophy,* 111 (2), pp. 84-109.
Wedgwood, Ralph 2007: *The Nature of Normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Wodak, Daniel 2019: 'Mere Formalities: Normative Fictions and Normative Authority'. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy,* 49 (6), pp. 828-50.
-------- 2020, 'Who's On First?'. *Oxford Studies in Metaethics,* 15, pp. 49-71.
Zangwill, Nick 2005: 'The Normativity of the Mental'. *Philosophical Explorations,* 8 (1), pp. 1-19.