

Artifactual Normativity^{*}

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Abstract: A central tension shaping metaethical inquiry is that normativity appears to be *subjective yet real*, where it's difficult to reconcile these aspects. On the one hand, normativity pertains to our actions and attitudes. On the other, normativity appears to be real in a way that precludes it from being a mere figment of those actions and attitudes. In this paper, I argue that normativity is indeed both *subjective* and *real*. I do so by way of treating it as a special sort of *artifact*, where artifacts are *mind-dependent* yet nevertheless can *carve at the joints of reality*. In particular, I argue that the properties of *being a reason* and *being valuable for* are *grounded* in attitudes yet are still *absolutely structural*.

Many aspects of normativity appear to be both *subjective* and *real*. Consider the fact that pleasure is valuable for Sneezy. This seems to be subjective in that pleasure being valuable for Sneezy has something to do with Sneezy. If the dwarf didn't care at all about pleasure, then it wouldn't be valuable for him. Yet despite this apparent subjectivity, normativity also seems to be robustly real. Pleasure appears to be, well, *really* good for Sneezy. It's not merely good *to* Sneezy in the sense that he *thinks* it's good for him, but pleasure makes Sneezy's life go better *in reality*.

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Many metaethicists find a tension between **subjectivism** and **realism**. Normativity appears to be subjective in that it has to do with our actions and attitudes, yet this appears to cut against its robust reality. In response to this tension, some attempt to capture subjectivism at the cost of realism – as do certain reasons internalists (Williams 1979) and moral relativists (Harman 1975). Others attempt to secure realism by jettisoning subjectivity – as do a new wave of non-naturalists (Shafer-Landau 2003; Enoch 2011; Parfit 2011; Scanlon 2014).

In this paper, I argue that normativity is both subjective and real. I do not argue against relativists and subjectivists, nor against non-naturalists. Rather, I develop a positive proposal according to which personal value and reasons depend on attitudes while still being as real as can be. I argue that the properties of *being valuable for* and *being a reason for* are special sorts of **artifacts**, where artifacts are *grounded* in the attitudes of agents yet nevertheless can *carve at the joints of reality*.

In Section 1, I formulate *subjectivism* in terms of being *grounded* in the attitudes of agents, and I formulate *realism* in terms of being *absolutely structural*. In Section 2, I argue that ordinary artifactual properties are *subjective* yet some are also *real*. In Section 3, I argue that the same holds for socially constructed properties. In Section 4, I put all this to work by arguing that personal value and reasons follow the model of ordinary and social artifactual properties. Both *being a reason for* and *being valuable for* are grounded in the attitudes of agents, but they also carve at the joints. Thus, *being a reason for* and *being valuable for* are subjective yet real.

1. Subjectivism and Realism

To argue that some aspects of normativity are both subjective and real requires clarifying the appropriate senses of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘reality’. That’s the task for this section.

Subjectivism

There are many senses of ‘subjectivism’. The one at issue in this paper is that normative features are created by normative attitudes of taking things to have those features. A strong sign of subjectivism in the targeted sense is the plausibility of theses like motivational internalism, according to which normativity requires the agent be or be able to be motivated in some manner. The most famous version is the doctrine of motivational internalism about reasons (Harman 1975; Williams 1979; Brandt 1979; Darwall 1983; Smith 1994; Joyce 2001). Many are inclined to think that an agent only has reason to do or think something if, broadly speaking, they can be motivated in certain circumstances to do or think it. While I’m inclined to reject such a straightforward connection between attitudes and normativity (see Sobel 2001), something in the vicinity of internalism is right. A consideration can be a reason only if it is appropriately connected to the potential concerns of the subject.

Similarly, personal value must *resonate* with the subject (Railton 1986/2003; Anderson 1993: ch. 2; Rosati 1996; Darwall 2002: ch. 2; Street 2012; Dorsey 2017). Roughly put, something is good or bad for someone only if they can care about it in certain conditions. As Peter Railton says, “It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone’s good to

imagine that it might fail in any such way to engage him” (1986/2003: 9).

If reasons and personal value are *dependent* on the attitudes of agents, then that would help to explain why there are reasons or personal value only given an appropriate connection to potential cares or concerns. In terms of reasons, there can only be reasons for someone who can take a “practical point of view” (Street 2010: 366). In terms of personal value, there is no good or bad *for* someone without there being someone *to* whom things are good or bad (Railton 1986: 47; Velleman 1998: 89). The normativity of reasons and personal value is ‘subjective’, therefore, insofar as it is *mind-dependent* in the sense that their existence and nature turns on the content of the attitudes that create them.

We can capture the relevant notion of mind-dependence using **grounding**, which is non-causal metaphysical dependence such that what’s *grounded* holds ‘in virtue’ of what grounds it (Fine 2012; Rosen 2010; Schaffer 2009). Distinguish between **partial** and **full** grounding. For something to *partially* ground something else is for the first to help determine the second. For something to be *fully* grounded in something else is for the first to completely determine the second. In addition, distinguish between **grounds** and **connections**. Grounds are what generate the grounded. Connections are what link the grounds to the grounded. They are what make it the case that those grounds indeed generate the grounded. I discuss this distinction in more detail later, but for now just notice that these are both **ground-relevant** dependence relations.

Appealing to grounding, and focusing on attitudes, we should hold that personal value

and reasons, then, depend in ground-relevant sense on the attitudes of agents:

Normative Grounding: Facts about what reasons someone has or what is valuable for them are partially grounded or partially connected in facts about their normative attitudes of taking considerations to provide reasons and treating things as valuable for them.

This secures the relevant sense of subjectivism. Reasons for an agent are connected to their motivations, because the attitude of taking something to be a reason generally has motivational effects, and taking something to be a reason creates reasons. Something that is valuable must resonate with a subject, because it must in some way stem from what they take to be valuable.

In this paper, I'm officially neutral as to whether there are constraints that go beyond actually having a certain normative attitude. One version of free-wheeling subjectivism without external constraints would be a simple Humeanism that holds that all and only actual desires generate reasons – modulo his denial that the weight of reasons is proportional to strength of desire, Mark Schroeder (2007) holds such a view. One type of subjectivist view with externalist constraints would be an ideal-adviser view, where reasons (Smith 1994) or value (Railton 1986/2003) come from facts about the attitudes of idealized agents. The former sort of view holds that normative facts are *fully* grounded in actual attitudes. The latter sort of view holds that they are only *partially* grounded in those attitudes, where the rest of the grounds pertain to non-

attitudinal constraints about the proper kind of idealization.²

In order to be neutral on this particular debate, *Normative Grounding* is formulated in terms of partial, not full grounding and connecting. It's enough to make a normative fact subjective in the relevant sense that it at least partially depends on the attitude of taking something to be normative. And because full grounding entails partial grounding, and full connecting entails partial connecting, then a fact's being fully grounded in or connected by normative attitudes would entail that fact's being partially grounded in or connected by them. Thus, it would be subjective in the sense of *Normative Grounding*.

Realism

Even though personal value and reasons are subjective they also appear to be *real* in some weighty sense. We treat personal value and reasons with a seriousness that we don't accord to mere fictions. Yet, clearly, given that personal value and reasons are mind-*dependent* they can't be 'real' if that's taken to mean mind-*independent*. Therefore, a subjectivist view of normativity cannot accommodate 'normative realism' in the standard sense of the term, such as how it's used by most self-styled 'realist non-naturalists' (Shafer-Landau 2003; Enoch 2011; Parfit 2011; Scanlon 2014). David Enoch offers a representative characterization of what he calls 'Robust Realism' as the view that "normative truths do not constitutively depend on our responses or attitudes or desires" (2011: 5). We can read such formulations as pointing to a grounding claim:

² Though, for a wrinkle, see Rosati (1996).

normative facts are not even partially grounded in or connect by attitudes. And so ‘realism’, in Enoch’s hands, amounts to the denial of subjectivism in that it requires mind-independent normative facts.

While, certainly, the debate over subjectivist and mind-independent views of normativity is a worthy one to have, we should not be misled into thinking that this is the same debate as whether normativity is a genuine aspect of the world. Mind-independence is not the mark of robust reality. Attitudes themselves are real, yet they are mind-dependent.¹ Thus, instead of mind-independence, there is another sense of ‘reality’ that captures the notion of being a genuine aspect of the world.

Setting aside identifying reality with mind-independence, many claim that normativity – or at least *morality* – is robustly real in a manner incompatible with subjectivism because it’s *universal* or *impartial*. In this vein, Russ Shafer-Landau holds that morality is ‘impartial’ in a manner that requires denying the kind of tight connection to motivation posited by subjectivism (2003: chs. 7-8). And Enoch claims that a major reason for holding that normativity requires mind-independence is that mind-dependence goes against the ‘impartial’ nature of morality (2011: ch. 2).

In response, many subjectivists aim to make normativity appropriately universal. Michael Smith (1994) holds that what we have reason to do is what our ideal counterpart would desire that we do, where all our ideal counterparts converge in these desires. Christine Korsgaard

¹ Therefore, I depart from Michael Devitt’s conception of realism (1984), where he understands realism about x as holding that x exists and x is mind-independent. Certainly pain is real.

(1996) holds that for humans to value anything they must value humanity in itself, and, therefore, that all practical reasoners share some of the same ultimate ends. However, if something about subjectivity is supposed to be incompatible with realism, then universalizing this subjectivism just widens the circle of problematic subjectivity – the dependence on *subjects* remains.

Yet relativism is not properly contrasted with realism anyway, because universality is not the same as reality. Imagine a universal egoism: it's a brute normative law that each person only has reason to maximize their own pleasure, and that there are no other normative laws. This is as realist as it gets, yet in this case there are only agent-relative reasons. Perhaps there is no 'morality' without universality, but there is still *normativity* – and this shows that the reality of normativity doesn't require that it be universal.

Reality is not universality, and it's not mind-independence – so what is it? Metaphysicians have already told us: what's real in the weighty sense is what *carves reality at its joints*. David Armstrong (1978) gets at this with his notion of 'sparse' universals, David Lewis (1983) gets at it with his notion of 'natural' properties, and Ted Sider (2011) gets at it with his notion of 'structure'. Following them, I hold that certain properties are **absolutely structural**. *Absolutely structural properties* are “an élite minority of special properties” (Lewis: 1983: 346) that get at the “structure of reality” (Sider: 2011: 1). Among other things, properties that are absolutely structural feature in best *explanations* (Sider 2011: 22-23; Lewis 1983: 367) as well as make for genuine *similarity* between things that share them (Lewis 1983: 227; Armstrong: 1978a: xiii).

I do not claim that absolute structure is what people always mean by ‘reality’ – as I said, the label ‘normative realism’ tends to go with mind-independence. What I’m claiming instead is that absolute structure is the proper sense of reality for getting at whether normativity forms a genuine part of reality. Insofar as the worry about subjectivism is that it makes normativity a mere projection – which is one of the major worries about subjectivism – then the relevant sense of ‘reality’ at issue is that of absolute structure. The question is whether its subjectivity can still allow that some of normativity is absolutely structural.

Therefore, we should hold that ‘realism’ in the sense at issue is **absolute structure realism**:

Absolute Structure Realism: If a fact consists in the instantiation of an absolutely structural property, then that fact is *absolutely structurally real*.

Thus, normativity is real in the ‘absolute structure’ sense insofar as some normative properties carve at the joints of reality. Focusing on *being a reason for* and *being valuable for*, this amounts to:

Absolutely Structural Normative Properties: *Being a reason for* and *being valuable for* are absolutely structural properties.

Given *Absolute Structure Realism* and *Absolutely Structural Normative Properties*, we have:

Absolute Structure Normative Realism: Facts that consist in the instantiation of *being a reason for or being valuable for* are absolutely structurally real.

I argue that certain absolutely structural properties are dependent beings, so – contrary to what Lewis (1986: 60), Armstrong (1978a: ch. 12), and Sider (2011: ch. 13) claim – being real in the sense of being absolutely structural does not require lying at the ‘bottom level’ of reality. Kit Fine (2013) points to simple examples of logically structured facts, such as if facts *A* and *B* are absolutely structural, then their conjunction *A&B* is also absolutely structural. Yet, conjunctions are grounded in their conjuncts. We can modify this example to pertain to conjunctive properties whose conjunct properties are absolutely structural.²

But even beyond logically complex properties of absolutely structural properties – which some restrictive proponents of structure allow (Armstrong 1978b: ch. 15; Sider 2011: ch. 112-114; 2013: 738-741) – there are further cases of non-basic but structural properties. One comes from considering the laws of nature. It is often thought that if a property features in the basic laws of nature then it is absolutely structural (Lewis 1983: 367; Sider 2011: 21-23). Yet some properties that feature in the basic laws are grounded (Hicks & Schaffer 2017). Consider a world that obeys the classical Newtonian framework, including having absolute spacetime and the Newtonian laws

² I thank a reviewer for pointing out the example from Fine.

of mechanics. Then, the physical laws in this world include $force = mass \times acceleration$. So *acceleration* would be absolutely structural, but *acceleration* is grounded in *position* – at least in the classical Newtonian framework.

More relevant to the purposes of this paper is that certain special science properties are absolutely structural – as I’ve argued elsewhere (Frugé forthcoming a; see Schaffer 2004). Consider mental properties, like *being in pain*. On a broadly Putnamian (1975) and Fodorian (1974) view, such higher-level mental properties are both multiply realizable and explanatorily autonomous. The instantiation of *being in pain* is possibly grounded in a huge variety of different physical grounds, and so it is dependent. But such properties are also explanatorily autonomous. As Putnam (1975) points out, you have a better explanation of why a square peg doesn’t fit into a round hole in terms of high-level geometric facts than you do in terms of microphysics. Likewise, you have a better explanation for avoidance behavior and the presence of a desire to flee in terms of *being in pain* than in terms of microphysical properties. In addition, such high-level mental states make for genuine similarity between those that share them. Any two creatures in pain are similar in virtue of being in pain, even if they are wildly different in their most basic features – one may be built from carbon, the other from silicon. Therefore, not all of the best explanations concern themselves with the most basic aspects of reality, nor do only the most basic aspects of reality make for similarity.³

Given the role they play in making for genuine similarity and underwriting explanations,

³ I thank a reviewer for pressing me to say more on how grounded properties can be absolutely structural.

certain grounded properties are absolutely structural. Hence, there is no general prohibition against mind-dependent normative properties carving at the joints. In Section 4, I argue that the properties of *being a reason for* and *being valuable for* are in fact both grounded in attitudes yet still absolutely structural. I do so by way of treating them as special sorts of artifacts.

2. Ordinary Artifacts

In this section, I argue that ordinary artifactual properties, like *being a piano*, are grounded in attitudes but are nevertheless absolutely structural.

Subjectivity of Ordinary Artifactual Properties

Artifactual properties are mind-dependent. In particular, they are dependent on intentions to make artifacts. Before agents first ever started thinking about and making pianos, there was no such thing as *pianoness*. Thus, at least for the *first ever* intention to make a piano, it grounds the artifactual property of *being a piano*.

Two clarifications. First clarification, one might think that this is a case of causation, and not grounding, in that it would appear that the intention to make a piano brings about the property of *being a piano* at a later time – where grounding occurs synchronically at a time, and causation occurs diachronically across time. However, I suggest that this is not so. The first intention to make a piano synchronically grounds the property *being a piano*, and, if successful,

it diachronically causes that property to be instantiated by causing a piano to be made over time. When it comes to the very first intention to make a piano, the property *itself* is synchronically grounded, and if it is instantiated due to that intention, then its *instantiation* is caused by that intention.⁴ Second clarification, I specify the very first intention, because I'm not trying to decide on tricky issues of property identity – whether or not subsequent intentions by the same or different subjects with similar contents make new artifactual properties or not – and persistence – how long the artifactual properties last once created. Thus, in what follows, understand the discussion as restricted to the first ever intention with that kind of artifactual property as part of its content.

To get clear on how intentions create artifactual properties, first distinguish artifactual properties from artifact-relevant features. For something to have the property of *being a piano* it must also have the piano-relevant features of *having keys, having dampers, playing tones*, and so on (cf. Thomasson 2003, 2007; Hilpinen 1992a, 1992b). Artifactual properties are numerically distinct from the complex property of having all the artifact-relevant features because they have different instantiation conditions. An agent makes an artifact of a particular sort by *intending* to impose the artifact-relevant features onto something, or by *intending* that features already had by something be artifact-relevant. As an example, for something to be a piano, there must be an agent who intended to make a piano. Either they intended to make a piano by making something that has keys and dampers, plays tones, and so on. Or they intended to use something that

⁴ I thank a reviewer for posing the question as to whether intentions cause but don't ground artifactual properties. I get into these issues in more detail in my (manuscript a).

already has certain features as a piano – such as if an intrinsic duplicate of a piano growing on a tree happened to be played by a pianist, where this duplicate is not a piano prior to the intention to be used as one.⁵

Second, distinguish artifactual properties from the intentions that bring them about. *Being a piano* is numerically distinct from the property of *being intended to be a piano*. This is because there can be *unsuccessful* intentions. An agent can intend to make something be a piano but fail – as collapsed pianos attest.

Thus, artifactual properties are *numerically distinct* from both the artifact-relevant features and the intentions to make them. Instead, artifactual properties are *grounded* in them. The details of how exactly they're grounded aren't essential for the project of this paper, but, still, it's worth spelling out a proposal for the sake of definiteness. In my preferred approach (Frugé forthcoming b; Frugé manuscript b), I hold that grounding requires not just *grounds* but also *connections* linking the *grounds* to the *grounded*.⁶ Thus, for example, the classic case of the set of {Socrates} being grounded in Socrates (Fine 2012: 47) requires the set-builder operation to act as *connection*. However, creation through grounding is not limited to objects, such as sets, but also to properties in that we can create new properties through our attitudes and activities.

⁵ An artifact is only successfully created when the agent's intention imposes or utilizes the artifact-relevant features in the 'right sort of way'. This condition rules out deviant causation, such as someone's forming an intention to make a statue that thereby causes them to be distracted and accidentally knock a mold of a statue onto a lump of clay. I don't have a great account of this 'right sort of way', but no one does. For discussion of non-deviant causation about intention in relation to action, see Donald Davidson (1973: 79).

⁶ For views in this vicinity, see Tobias Wilsch (2015), Martin Glazier (2016), Jonathan Schaffer (2017), and Karen Bennett (forthcoming). However, against Bennett and with Schaffer, I assume that *connections* play a role in every case of metaphysical grounding. Yet, against Schaffer and with Bennett, I don't require that these connections be fundamental.

In terms of artifactual properties, the *grounded* would be the artifactual property, the *grounds* would be the artifact-relevant features, and the *connection* would be something relevant to the intention.

At this point, one may worry that my view requires that artifactual properties are created only if their instances are successfully produced, which seems to rule out the existence of artifactual properties such that someone intends to produce those sorts of artifacts but fails to do so. However, I do *not* hold that properties must be instantiated in order to exist, consequently I hold that an artifactual property can be created even if it is never instantiated.⁷ Consider cases where properties are created with explicit conditions for being instantiated that are never met. To draw on a social case that I develop elsewhere (Frugé manuscript a), say that the government collectively agrees to create the Office of the Climate Change Czar, and that they go on to agree to appoint a czar if and only if the average global temperature rises above 3° Fahrenheit. And let's assume, fancifully, that the temperature never rises this high, so no czar is ever appointed. Then, I claim that the property *being the climate change czar* exists and is created by the collective agreement but is never instantiated. I discuss such social artifactual properties in more detail in the next section.

Also consider cases of *unsuccessful* intentions that nevertheless create new properties. Take S.J. Leslie's (2008) example of the OrangeCrusher 2000 – a device intended to be manufactured to crush oranges but that was never produced (14-15). Presumably, the property

⁷ I thank a reviewer for raising this question and suggesting the example from Leslie below.

of *being an OrangeCrusher 2000* exists, and was created by the designers of the device, even though none ever existed. In this case, the designer's intention to create a line of OrangeCrushers were *unsuccessful*, but they still created the property of *being an OrangeCrusher 2000*. The intention is unsuccessful in that it was an intention to create something having that property – not to create that property per se. Thus, artifactual properties needn't be grounded in the creation of their instances.

When I get to normative properties I develop this general proposal – including the 'something relevant' bit – in more detail. But already it's clear that artifactual properties are grounded in some way in intentional aspects of reality. Thus, ordinary artifactual properties satisfy *subjectivism*.

Reality of Ordinary Artifactual Properties

We have *subjectivism* – what about *realism*? To start, consider not the intention to make a piano, but the intention-formed-while-sneezing to make a piano. If the intention to make a piano creates *being a piano*, then, maybe, the intention-formed-while-sneezing to make a piano creates *being a sneezyish piano*. And consider not just intentions, but *schmintentions*, where these are intentions minus a few components – perhaps they don't filter out deliberative options. Insofar as the intention to make a piano creates *being a piano*, maybe the *schmintention* to create a piano makes *being a schmpiano*. And so on for infinitely many other gerrymandered intentions and properties.

Most of these artifact-like properties don't carve reality at the joints, because their corresponding intention-like attitudes don't. Intentions are more structural than their gerrymandered cousins: schmintentions and intentions-while-sneezing. Indeed, certain intentions are even absolutely structural. Some enter into the best explanations of deliberation and action, and any two agents who intend the same things are genuinely similar in that respect. Even though an intention is grounded that doesn't prevent the property of having that intention from being absolutely structural given that, as I remarked earlier, some absolutely structural properties are grounded.

Crucially, some of these absolutely structural intentions are to make artifacts. In light of Putnam and Fodor's arguments for the explanatory autonomy of the mental, many of the best explanations for our productive activities invoke the properties of having certain intentions to make artifacts. Moreover, any two agents who intend to make the same sort of thing are often genuinely similar.

It would then seem that some of the artifactual properties grounded via these absolutely structural intentions are themselves absolutely structural. The joint of reality that intention carves has to do with the reality of *productive agency*, but if *production* is part of the underlying structure of reality, then – as I discuss in more detail later – at least some of what it *produces* should be able to be part of the underlying structure of reality as well. Assuming that the intention to make a piano is absolutely structural, then the property *being a piano* can be absolutely structural as well, so long as it serves in some of the best explanations and makes for similarity. And it does. The property *being a piano* enters into many of the best explanations of

our music practices. Explaining the playing of a piano in a concert by way of the microphysical substrates of the performance misses out on important aspects of our music practice – in the same way that explaining how a square peg doesn't fit into a round hole in terms of microphysics misses out on important elements of good explanation. Moreover, any two pianos are genuinely similar in respect of being a piano, yet they needn't be similar microphysically – one may be made out of wood, and the other might be made out of granite. Thus, the grounded property *being a piano* is able to enter into good explanations and underwrite similarity.

3. Social Artifacts

So far I have argued that ordinary artifactual properties are created by people and yet some of them can be absolutely structural. Yet, it might seem like a leap to move from pianos to reasons. Pianos are material objects, whereas reasons are abstract. Thus, I want to offer a further analogy between normative properties and *socially* constructed properties, where these are treated as special sorts of artifacts. Social properties serve as a sort of halfway house between pianos and reasons. Indeed, social artifacts suggest an avenue for treating *collective* normative properties, such as *moral* reasons, as socially created via *collective* intentionality – though getting clear on this is a task for another time.

In this section, I argue that socially constructed properties are, quite literally, special sorts of artifacts. Teams, dollars, and genders are much the same sort of thing as pianos, spoons,

and hot tubs – they are things built into the world by our intentional attitudes and activities. Like before, I set aside issues of identity and persistence conditions, so I focus on socially constructed properties created by the *very first* intention with those artifactual features as part of their content.

Subjectivity of Social Artifactual Properties

Ordinary material artifacts don't exhaust the creations we make through our intentional activities. We can make events, such as the 2019 NBA Playoffs. And we can also make facts, such as, unfortunately, the Golden State Warriors being the 2019 NBA Western Conference Champions. These *socially constructed* entities are often analogized to artifacts. So Sally Haslanger says that “at least initially it is useful to think of social constructions on the model of artifacts” (2012a: 85). And Brian Epstein tells us that “at least as crucial” to the modern world as making ordinary artifacts is that “we design and set up groups of people” (2019: 1).

Yet beyond these social objects and events, socially constructed properties are genuinely new properties that depend on our collectively intentional activities. Governments involve new ways of being that are quite different than anything non-political that came before. Having a gender is a new way of being that is radically different from having a biological sex (Haslanger 2012b). Dollars exemplify a new way of being of having monetary value not before had by paper and shells (Searle 1995).

Just as ordinary artifactual properties are different than artifact-relevant features, social

artifactual properties are different from their non-social grounds. To pick a toy example, imagine a community who for the very first time in the world jointly intends that a river is their border. Given the resulting creation of *being a border*, the properties of *being a river* and *being a border* are different. The most salient reason why this is so is that they have different temporal and modal instantiation conditions. The river existed prior to serving as a border, and it can exist even when it doesn't serve as a border. Additionally, *being a border* is multiply realizable – things other than rivers can be borders.

Moreover, parallel to how ordinary artifactual properties are different than the properties of being intended to have artifact-relevant features, so too are social artifactual properties different than being the object of the relevant collective intention. A simple reason is that there can be unsuccessful collective agreements. There can be a collective agreement that the river is a border but the agreed upon conditions for the border are not met. Say that people agree that the river needs to be visible along a long stretch of land but it in fact quickly disappears underground. In this case, there's no border, but there's still the attitude of agreeing that the river is the border, at least given certain conditions.

Social artifactual properties are distinct from but dependent on collective intentions. In particular, they are grounded in some manner in collective intentions to make social artifacts. We can model the grounding of social artifacts on that of ordinary artifacts: when we collectively agree that the river is a border, something relevant to the joint intention serves as connection in the border being grounded in the river. Again, I discuss this proposal in more detail with respect to normative properties.

Reality of Social Artifactual Properties

As with ordinary artifacts, for each social property made by a collective intention, there are a host of nearby socialish properties made by collective attitudes. *Being a border* is generated by the collective agreement to make a border, but, maybe, *being a sneezyish border* is generated by the collective-agreement-but-someone-sneezed to make a border. And, maybe, *being a schmorder* is generated by the *schmollective schmagreement* to make a border – where a *schmollective schmagreement* is just like collective agreement except, say, it lacks the commitment of individuals to coordinate. These merely socialish properties don't carve reality at the joints, because their corresponding collective attitudes don't.

Yet, certain collective intentional attitudes are in fact absolutely structural, so this opens the door for some of the social artifactual properties they create to be absolutely structural as well. Some joint intentions make for the best explanations of collective deliberation and action as well as underwrite genuine similarity between distinct groups. And some of these collective intentions set out to create social artifacts. These collective intentions carve at the joints of *collectively productive* reality, so – as I discuss in more detail later – at least some of their *products* should be able to be joints of reality as well. If the agreement to make a border carves at the joints of reality, then the property *being a border* that it seeks to create would also be a joint, at least insofar as it enters into some of the best explanations and makes for genuine similarity. But this is indeed so. *Being a border* enters into some of the best social scientific explanations, and any

two communities with borders are politically similar in that respect.

4. Normative Artifacts

Artifactual properties are subjective in being grounded via attitudes as connections, yet some of them are nevertheless real given that the attitudes that serve as their connections are absolutely structural. We can use this account as a model for normative properties. In particular, I argue in this section that *being a reason for* and *being valuable for* are artifactual properties that are both subjective and real. As before, I set aside issues of the persistence and identity conditions for these properties, so I focus on the *very first* time such properties are created.

Subjectivism and Realism about Reasons

In much the same way that we create artifactual and socially constructed properties, we create *being a reason for* through our attitude of taking something to provide a reason – the nuances of the attitude don't matter for the purposes of this paper.⁸ If we treat *being a reason*

⁸ As I discuss in more detail in (Frugé forthcoming b), I hold that the attitude of valuing is a distinctive mental state that orients the person toward the world such that things are presented in a prudentially valuable way (see Scanlon 1998; Street 2008). Personally valuing is an affective state that orients one toward the world such that there are good-for-me-seemings and bad-for-me-seemings. I take the attitude of taking something to be a reason to be a similarly distinctive mental state that orients one toward the world such that there are reason-for-me-seemings. Thus, I deny, for instance, that it is simply the same as the attitude of desire.

for as an artifact, then it's numerically distinct from both the considerations that are taken to be reasons as well as the attitude of taking them to be reasons. As for the considerations, say that someone takes the fact that something causes pain to be a reason to avoid touching it, then *causing pain* is numerically distinct from *being a reason for*. The former is a relation between a thing and a subject, and the latter is a relation between that thing, the subject, and an action or attitude. As for the attitude, the property of *being a reason for* is distinct from the property of *takes something to provide a reason for*. We can take some consideration to provide a reason without that consideration occurring, and hence without it having the chance to generate a reason.

Now is the much-anticipated time for more details about how normative properties are grounded.⁹ As I discuss elsewhere (Frugé manuscript b), I hold that grounding occurs first and foremost between properties – where we can treat grounding facts as higher-order properties of properties. Roughly put, the idea is that for a property *P* to ground a property *Q* is for an individual being *P* to automatically bring with it that an individual is *Q*. And for a property *P* to ground a grounding fact *Q grounds W* is for *P* to ground the higher-order relation *Q-grounds-W*, where this means that an individual being *P* automatically brings with that there are two properties *Q* and *W* such that *Q* grounds *W*. In the first instance, grounding occurs between properties themselves, and grounding between individuals having properties is just a ‘reflection’ of the prior grounding between properties. Grounding facts are just ‘reflections’ of grounding

⁹ I thank an anonymous reviewer for pushing me to say more about this.

relations between properties.¹⁰

I also discuss the metaphysics of creating properties elsewhere (Frugé manuscript a), but two points are crucial here. First, mental properties can serve as *connections* in the grounding of created properties. Second, connecting amounts to *grounding* grounding facts. To clarify, assume for simplicity that ground and connection both respectively consist in a single property. And let *A* be an artifactual property, *P* be its ground property, and *M* be the mental connection property. Then, schematically:

Creating Properties: *M* grounds that *P* grounds *A*.

Setting aside any other grounding structures generating *A*, the basic idea is that prior to any individual coming to be *M*, then it's not the case that *P* grounds *A*. Only when an individual comes to be *M* does it bring with it that *P* grounds *A*. When this happens, then *A* comes to exist because it's related by grounding to *P*.

The creation of *being a reason for* fits into this picture. Reasons to engage in a certain action or attitude are grounded in specific considerations, where this grounding is connected by the attitude of taking those considerations to provide reason for that action or attitude. Let

¹⁰ This goes against a variety of views as to what grounds the grounding facts. It rejects Karen Bennett (2013) and Louis deRosset's (2013) view that what grounds the grounding facts just are the grounds. Moreover, it rejects Shamik Dasgupta (2014) and Gideon Rosen's (2010) appeal to essences of the constituents of the grounded facts. Finally, it rejects the appeal to metaphysical laws of Tobias Wilsch (2015), Martin Glazier (2016), and Jonathan Schaffer (2017).

C be the property of being those considerations. Let T be the property of x takes consideration Cz to provide a reason for x to y . And let R be the property z is a reason for x to y . Let us say that consideration C does in fact provide reasons given that a person takes them to do so, then $Txzy$ grounds that Cz grounds $Rzxy$. If individuals a , b , and c were to come to be related as $Tabc$, then it would come to be the case that Cc grounds $Rcab$ – in the sense that were c to possess C then $Rcab$ would hold in virtue of that fact. Yet even before any individuals come to possess the considerations taken to provide reasons, it's still the case that the property of z is a reason for x to y comes to be created when the first individuals come to be related by the attitude of taking something to be a reason – because $Rzxy$ still exists in order to enter into the fact that Cz grounds $Rzxy$.

A concern someone may have at this point is that the account illicitly entails that all normative attitudes automatically succeed in creating normative facts, no matter how irrelevant or inappropriate the considerations taken to provide reasons or the elements taken to be valuable. However, this is not so. The account as developed so far is officially neutral as to whether it's the case that whatever someone takes to be a reason is thereby a reason. If it is indeed the case, then the first attitude of taking something to be a reason creates the property of being a reason. If it isn't the case, then the account holds that at least some attitude of taking certain considerations to be a reason does in fact create genuine reasons, in which case the first attitude of this kind would generate the property of being a reason. The difference simply amounts to which attitudes of the same shape as $T - x$ takes consideration Cz to provide a reason for x to y – with different

properties in place of 'C' do in fact ground the reason grounding facts. A permissive view allows practically any substitution for 'C'. A more restrictive one imposes constraints on the allowable substitutions. I'm inclined myself to go for the latter route – sometimes our attitudes of taking things to be reasons don't create genuine reasons. But defending this is a task for another time.¹¹ Either way, when individuals first come to be related by the right sort of attitude of taking something to be a reason, then this grounds a grounding fact featuring the reason relation, thereby bringing it into existence.

Therefore, we have an account of how the property of *being a reason for* is created by the attitude property of *takes to provide a reason*. This secures subjectivism about *being a reason for*, and thereby secures subjectivism about facts involving reasons, given that grounding of facts about reasons reflects the prior grounding of *being a reason for*. Of course, hard questions remain about the creation of *being a reason for*, including issues about persistence and identity of reason properties. But these must be addressed another time.

So much for subjectivism – what about realism? A concern at this point may be that normative properties cannot be absolutely structural given that they are grounded via attitudes as connections, because what's grounded can never be absolutely structural. As intimated in my discussion of ordinary and social artifactual properties, my response is simple:

¹¹ I thank a reviewer for pressing me on this point. I hope in later work to develop a conception of how a broadly subjectivist view can still have constraints on which attitudes correspond to genuine normative facts.

Connection to Ground Absolute Structure: If the connection is absolutely structural, then what's grounded can be absolutely structural.

Absolutely structural connections suffice to allow for what's grounded to be absolutely structural. If something is a connection, then part of its role in reality is to produce outputs. If these connections carve at the joints of reality in doing so, then it seems that what they produce would at least sometimes carve at the joints as well.

Crucially, I deny that the grounds must be actually structural. It might very well be the role of joint carving connections to produce new joints from non-jointy aspects of the world. Recall that in classical Newtonian worlds *position* grounds *acceleration*, where *acceleration* is absolutely structural in that it appears in the laws of physics while *position* is not absolutely structural in that it doesn't. Whatever connects *position* to *acceleration* would seem to be absolutely structural in that it facilitates the creation of an absolutely structural property.

Given *Connection to Ground Absolute Structure*, if the property of *takes something to provide a reason* is absolutely structural, then this opens the door for *being a reason for* to be absolutely structural as well. And *takes to provide a reason* does in fact have all the hallmarks of being absolutely structural. Just as with individual and collective intentions, *takes to provide a reason* makes for genuine similarity in that any two people who take things to be reasons are similar in that respect – and are even more similar if they take the same considerations to

provide the same reasons. Moreover, *takes to provide a reason* also underwrites important psychological explanations, such as those explaining intentional action.

In carving at the joints, *takes to provide a reason* allows *being a reason* to carve at the joints as well – insofar as *being a reason* features in some of the best explanations and makes for genuine similarity. And it does. As for explanation, *being a reason* features in the explanation of how a substantively rational will generally behave in accordance with the reasons. And it also helps to explain other normative features, like all-things-considered prudential oughts. As for similarity, any two agents who share the same reasons are genuinely similar in that respect. Thus, *being a reason for* is *subjective* but *real* nevertheless.

Subjectivism and Realism about Personal Value

Personal value works the same way. As an artifact, *being valuable for* is numerically distinct from both what is valued as well as the attitude of personally valuing. In terms of what's valued, given that someone values pleasure, then pleasure is good for them. But *being pleasurable* is not identical to the relation *being valuable for* – rather, what's pleasurable bears the *being valuable for* relation to the subject. In terms of valuing, the relation of personal value is distinct from *being personally valued by* – here pick your favorite self-regarding evaluative attitude. The value and attitude properties are distinct for the same sort of reason that *being a piano* is distinct from *being intended to be a piano* and *being a border* is distinct from *being collectively agreed to be a border*. We can value pleasure without experiencing any pleasure, so we can have the attitude

without the relation.

The grounding story is also the same. Let Gzx be the property of z is *valuable for* x . Let Fz be whatever features the subject values. And let Vxz be the property of x *values* Fz . Then, on a permissive view that allows for practically any substitution for ' F ' to be valuable, then Vxz grounds that Fz grounds Gzx – in the sense that *were* z to be F then it would generate Gzx . On a more restrictive view where there are constraints on what can be valuable, then it's still the case that at least some substitution for ' F ' would make it such that Vxz grounds that Fz grounds Gzx . Either way, individuals coming to be related by V would bring about the grounding fact featuring G , which is the property of personal value, and so the property of personal value would exist.

Setting aside other potential grounding structures for *being valuable for*, then valuing creates *being valuable for* in that prior to any subject coming to have a valuing attitude that property doesn't exist. But once a subject comes to value something, then they bear the valuing relation to it, which makes it the case that the valued feature grounds *being valuable for* – thereby bringing the property into existence. This secures subjectivism about the property of *being valuable for*, so also secures subjectivism for facts about value, since, on my view, grounding between individuals having properties just reflects the prior grounding between properties themselves. Once again, the account is officially neutral as to whether these valuing attitudes automatically create the actual value facts or not – though I am inclined to think that they don't.

The story about the reality of personal value is also the same as before. If the property of having the personally valuing attitude is absolutely structural, then by *Connection to Ground*

Absolute Structure this allows for the property of personal value to be absolutely structural as well, because valuing serves as the connection for value. And personally valuing attitudes are indeed absolutely structural. Just as with individual and collective intentions, the attitude of personally valuing enters into some of the best explanations and makes for genuine similarity. Part of the explanation for why I'm an effective agent when I dip into the hot tub is that in doing so I purposefully get so much of the pleasure I value. And any two members of the Tubbin'-Hedonists society are genuinely similar in both valuing pleasure.

In carving at the joints, personally valuing allows personal value to carve at the joints as well – at least given that personal value features in good explanations and makes for genuine similarity. And it does. As for explanation, *being valuable for* helps to explain why someone who substantively obeys the dictates of prudence will seek to bring about what is good for them and avoid what is bad for them. And *being valuable for* also helps explain other aspects of normativity, such as lifetime wellbeing. In terms of similarity, if something is good for two different agents, then this makes them similar, likewise for something being bad for two different agents. Thus, *being valuable for* is *subjective yet real*.

Mind-Dependent Structure

My argument, in a nutshell, is that certain attitudes create properties, and when these attitudes are absolutely structural, then the properties they create can be absolutely structural as well. As with all philosophical theories, my account will face objections. Let me confine myself

to responding to just one particularly illuminating worry:

Consider the psychological property of *being afraid of grueness*. Now consider two philosophers who, after reading too much about naturalness, have a significant fear of the property *being grue*. What is the best explanation of these philosophers' behavior?

Presumably it will appeal to a bit of folk psychology according to which *they are afraid of grueness*. Suppose we are to arrange a support group for these philosophers. They find each other and are enormously relieved: they share the same fear of grue! It thus makes sense to put them in the same group, to try to treat them in some of the same ways, and so on. In virtue of this, they certainly *seem* to objectively resemble each other. This argument would seem to generalize. This suggests that it is *very easy* to carve reality at the joints with our attitudes: every fear we have—even a fear of a strange disjunction—is absolutely structural. And the same will presumably hold of all propositional attitudes.¹²

Many attitudes directed toward gerrymandered facets of reality seem to underwrite explanations and make for genuine similarity. If these attitudes are absolutely structural, and if they create properties, which are thereby absolutely structural, then my account seems to over-generate structure.

¹² This quote is from an anonymous reviewer. I thank them for the objection.

In response, I want to draw out a few aspects of my view that allow it to avoid over-generating structure. First, my account does not hold that *every* propositional attitude creates properties. All my account is committed to is that properties are created by certain individual and collective intentions as well as valuing and taking things to provide reasons. Therefore, propositional attitudes like fear need not create properties.

Second, there is an important disanalogy between ordinary and social artifactual properties and normative properties that turn on the nature of the attitudes that create them. When it comes to ordinary and social artifactual properties, these are created by intentions with certain *contents*, where the properties created correspond to these contents. Thus, the intention to make a statue creates *statueness*, and the collective intention to make a border creates *being a border*. In the normative case, the created properties correspond to the attitudes *as such*, irrespective of their contents. Thus, valuing pleasure or taking it to provide a reason create *being valuable for* and *being a reason for*, respectively. *Being pleasurable* is not created by these attitudes. Rather, the content of the normative attitudes dictate which pre-existing features are ground instances of *being valuable for* and *being a reason for*.

The difference comes from the respective roles of the attitudes. Intentions are intentions to *make* something, so the created property corresponds to the content intended to be made. Normative attitudes take pre-existing features to be grounds for a normative feature, so what's made is the normative feature attaching to the pre-existing feature. So *grueness* can only be an artifactual property if it's created by an intention, because it can't be created by normative attitudes even if it's part of their content. But it also can't be created by an intention,

because any intention to make *grueness* would necessarily be unsuccessful. It's not the sort of property that can be an artifact.

Third, even with those attitudes that do generate properties, *Connection to Ground Absolute Structure* does not entail that absolutely structural attitudes as connections are sufficient *by themselves* to create absolutely structural properties. The created properties still need to be explanatory and underwrite similarity. Therefore, an absolutely structural attitude may create a property without that property being absolutely structural. Say someone has an absolutely structural intention to make a gruesome artifact called a 'Tuesday-chair', which they implement by buying an office chair from a store and considering it to be a chair on Tuesdays but every other day of the week a table that they sit on while working. Then, even though intentions are absolutely structural attitudes, then *being a Tuesday chair* does not seem absolutely structural, because *being a chair* still is the best explanation of their behavior surrounding the object.

Fourth, attitudes with apparently gerrymandered contents may in fact turn out to produce absolutely structural properties. Maybe an artist has an absolutely structurally intention to make a sturnip – something that is a statue before 2500 A.D. but becomes a turnip thereafter. Does my account incorrectly treat *being a sturnip* as absolutely structural? Well, does it enter into some of the best explanations and make for genuine similarity? If so, then my account does treat *being a sturnip* as absolutely structural. But this seems the right result! If *being a sturnip* really made for some of the best explanations – say it helped to explain some of our artistic practices – and if it really made for genuine similarity – say the artist made a unified

series of statue-to-turnip artworks – then *being a sturnip* would seem to be absolutely structural after all. The artist would have to create artwork that that transforms from a statue into a turnip after 2500 AD. But this would be a pretty awesome piece of art, so it seems to be an absolutely structural piece of reality.

What's real is what's genuinely unified and explanatory. Some artifactual properties are created by absolutely structural attitudes, so even though they are created by minds they are still genuine unities backing good explanations. Therefore, *certain joints of reality are mind-dependent*. Something made by our minds can still make for genuine similarity, precisely because it can unify agents with respect to sharing that created feature. Something made by our minds can still enter into the best explanations, because what is being explained is something intimately connected to mental reality. This is no less true for normative properties, like *being valuable for* and *being a reason for*. We have *subjectivism* but also *realism* about artifactual normative properties.

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