

# Offloading and Mistakes in Artifacts and Value

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## Abstract

Creators offload the construction of their artifact in that the world helps to determine the nature of their imposition in ways that can go beyond the content of their imposing activities. Extant theories of imposition fail to account for offloading by requiring match between content and product. Therefore, I develop an externalist theory that accommodates offloading by taking the imposition of mind onto world to be objectively constrained. An important kind of imposition is normativity. Focusing on personal value, what's valuable for someone is determined by what they value as good or bad for themselves. Such a subjectivist view faces the same problem as extant theories of imposition in seeming to preclude the possibility of making mistakes about value. Applying imposition externalism, I defend an artifactual approach to subjectivism such that mistakes are captured in terms of offloading. A subject's valuing can fail to match the very value it creates.

Go back to the dawn of agriculture. We find a human settlement that decides to make the nearby river their border. The townsfolk come together and say, "That's our border". But they're a bit confused. Each simultaneously points toward the near bank with one hand and the far bank with the other. They thus incoherently agree to make two different sides of the river one and the same border. But they nevertheless succeed in making a single border located in the vicinity of the river. So an artifact can't require that the activities creating it perfectly correspond to its nature, since whatever the border's precise location it fails to fully match the community's inconsistent agreement.

Now after having made their border, the townsfolk realize that they're close enough to the river that there's risk of flooding. So they task making a magical barrier to the local warlock, who stacks stones on the bank of the river while muttering incantations to enchant the rocks with water-warding power. The warlock intends the stones to stop flooding through magical force. And the stones do help with flooding. Yet it's not through enchantments, but rather because they form what's called a 'wall'. Thus, creative activity can't always suffice to produce a perfectly corresponding artifact, because the warlock means to make magic but produces a physical wall instead.

Despite such mismatch between creative activity and creation, these artifacts are nevertheless impressed by the creators' minds onto the world. The border located in the river *reflects* the agreement with a content in the vicinity of the river. The wall *mirrors* the 'wall' aspect of the warlock's attempt to make a magical wall. They are, in short, **imposed artifacts**. Such

impositions have the unique position in the realm of agent-made products of being the result of a molding of the world in the image of creative activity. In something like the way the content of a representation reflects the world except with the direction of determination reversed, the *statueness* of a statue mirrors the intention to make that statue, since that intention determines that the statue and that very intention reflect one another. Thus, an imposed artifact is a creation that mirrors the mind that makes it.

Yet given mismatch this imposition needn't happen perfectly. What imposing activities impose can fail to have features those activities try to impress, and they can have impressed features that they don't try to impose. Therefore, artificers **offload** the construction of imposed artifacts. The world takes over in determining how exactly imposed artifacts are formed in ways that can fail to match or even cut against the creative activities that impose them. Creative activities can thus be mistaken about the very artifacts they create.

Offloading is ubiquitous in imposition. Yet extant theories of imposed artifacts require a match between activity and product, which precludes offloading. Thus, I offer a new theory. **Imposition externalism** holds that how an imposed artifact is created by imposing activities is objectively constrained in ways that can lead to a mismatch between those activities and the nature of the resulting imposition. Whether or not those creative activities are 'inside' the artificers head, the way the artifact is created through them comes from the 'outside'.

An important kind of imposed artifact is normativity (Frugé 2022a). Normative attitudes and practices are creative activities that produce normative facts as artifacts. Focusing on personal value, valuing things as good or bad for oneself makes things good or bad for oneself. But such broadly subjectivist views face the problem that people can be mistaken about what's valuable for them. Yet insofar as value is an artifact, then this is just the problem faced by imposition theories of artifacts that require match. Adopting an artifactual conception of personal value in which the imposition of value is offloaded allows subjects to be mistaken. There can be a mismatch between their valuing attitudes and the value that those attitudes create.

The philosophy of artifacts needs to account for how imposing activities can be mistaken while nevertheless successfully imposing new aspects of reality. Subjectivist approaches to normativity face the problem of needing to accommodate error in normative attitudes despite taking those attitudes to determine normativity. Imposition externalism solves the first problem. Applying it to normativity solves the second. Thus, the theory of imposition externalism I advance supports the artifactual conception of normativity I propose by enfolding it within a broader theoretical framework, while the artifactual conception of normativity I propose supports the more general theory of imposition externalism I advance by revealing its explanatory reach.

## 1. Fallible Imposers

Many artifacts are mind-dependent in relying on attitudes for their creation (Juvshik 2021). Yet such dependence doesn't undermine their reality in that they are still genuine aspects of the

world – mental creations are no less real for being produced by real minds (Baker 2004: 104–8; Thomasson 2007: sec. 6; Franssen and Kroes 2014: 78; Khalidi 2016). An important way in which minds create new aspects of world is through imposition of mind onto world. Statues mirror statue intentions. The locations of borders mirror agreements to make a border with that location. The nature of imposed artifacts reflect the nature of the activities that impose them such that this reflection is determined by those activities.

Certainly, imposed elements of reality don't exhaust what can legitimately be labeled 'artifactual'. There are mind-independent functional kinds whose reproduction is caused by human activity (Elder 2004: ch. 7), unintended byproducts of creative activity (Koslicki 2018: 219), and mind-dependent phenomena arising from social patterns that aren't meant to be created (Thomasson 2003a; Epstein 2013; Khalidi 2013: 98–99). Some may therefore worry that the term 'artifact' is so broad and multifarious that it may not have a narrow univocal meaning at all (Preston 2022; Gungör forthcoming). However, the specifically *imposed* realm forms a unified domain in that impositions are uniformly the result of molding the world to fit the mind.

This is so even though imposition comes in as many forms as imposing activities. Thus, imposed artifacts can result from individual intentions (Thomasson 2003b), as when a sculptor shapes clay into a statue. They can also be produced collectively through social recognition (Juvshik 2024), as when a sculptor thinks they have failed but the artistic community takes them to have made a work of art. They can be made through collective action, as when workers in a factory produce figurines (Paek 2023). They can even be created through collective agreement, as when the townsfolk jointly intend to make a border (Searle 1995). While each manner of imposition differs, they are unified in that they all make the world mirror the mind. Thus, when it comes to getting clear on imposition, the distinction between different types of imposed products – ranging from individually made artifacts to social institutions – doesn't matter. What matters is that there is activity, personal or social, that impresses mind, individual or collective, onto world. While imposition is not the only way that an artifact in some sense of the term can be made, it's perhaps the most direct way.

Extant views of imposition emphasize this directness by requiring match between imposing activities and the nature of the artifact imposed by them. Thus, these views tend to hold one or both of the following conditions:

**Necessary Match:** For any imposed property, there is some activity concerned to impose that property.

**Sufficient Match:** For any imposing activity concerned to impose a property, then that property is imposed given that the substrate that it's taken to be imposed upon obtains.

To be clear, these conditions are about *imposed properties*.<sup>1</sup> They aren't conditions on the substrates of imposed properties, such as shaped clay for a statue. They also aren't conditions on the existence of artifactual objects, except insofar as this involves an imposed property. Nor are they conditions on non-imposed artifactual properties, like the causal-functional properties of cars. Instead, the conditions require that insofar as a property is impressed by a mind then it must match the impressing activity of that mind. Whether there is such a match, to conclude the clarifications, does not directly bear on whether membership in artifact kinds is neat or messy in the sense of there being no non-trivial conditions for membership (Irmak forthcoming). Insofar as imposed kinds have corresponding imposed kind properties, then a match between activity and property would not entail that kindhood was neat, since the kind-imposing activity may not specify a tidy boundary but instead attempt to impose the same kind onto disparate collections of artifactually-relevant features. And the absence of such a match between imposing and imposition would not entail that kindhood was messy, since mismatch could very well involve tidying up membership conditions in ways that cut against messy activity.

Necessary Match says that if a property is imposed, then there is some imposing attitude that sets out to impose that very property. A statue has *statueness* only if someone intends to make a statue. A border has a particular location only if the community thinks of it as having that location. Sufficient Match says that insofar as a creator has an imposing attitude, and what they set out to impose it upon is around, then that property is imposed. Insofar as the sculptor shapes the clay as they intend, then *statueness* is instantiated.<sup>2</sup> Insofar as there is a river, then the community agreeing that it's a border makes it so.

Many extant theories of imposition uphold Necessary Match. Lynne Rudder Baker claims that artifacts have primary functional kinds, where an artifact's "proper function is determined by the intentions of its designer and/or producer" (2004: 102). Thus, an artifact's function requires not merely certain causal relations but the artificer intending that it have that function. Hence, for Baker, an artifact's function is partly an imposed property, and it's necessary that it match an imposing attitude. Risto Hilpinen (1992: 61) claims that artifactual objects are made only if they satisfy a "type-description" in the intention that brings the object into existence. Since satisfying a type-description involves having certain properties, then Hilpinen holds that for an artifact to exist it must have certain properties determined by the intention to make it. So Hilpinen and Baker both require that imposed features be in the content of imposing attitudes.

Many theories even posit both Necessary and Sufficient Match. John Searle holds that institutional facts comprise deontic social statuses *Y* that are made from substrates *X* by collective agreements of the form "*X* counts as *Y*" (1995: 40, 104). So Searle claims that money is made in the United States by our collectively agreeing that bills issued by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing

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<sup>1</sup> I thank two anonymous referees for each independently pushing me to clarify the nature of the mismatch and mistakes at issue.

<sup>2</sup> Following Tobias Wilsch (2016: 3300), I take material constitution to be a special case of grounding – roughly, grounding such that certain physical features like shape and mass are relevant.

count as money – and money requires some agreement along these lines. Amie Thomasson holds that an artifact is of a certain kind if and only if the artificer has a concept of the relevant features of that kind and successfully intends to make something of that kind by producing something with those features (2003b: 599), where “the metaphysical natures of artifactual kinds are *constituted by* the concepts and intentions of makers” (2007: 53). For Thomasson, it’s up to us that knives are sharp and have handles and so on, and we make a knife by intending to make one by producing something with those features. Given that kinds have corresponding properties of being that kind, then Thomasson holds that an artifact has a kind property if and only if it’s intended to have that very property by having its supporting features. In a similar vein, Simon Evnine holds that artifacts are the result of “an intention to bring into existence a thing with an essence” (2016: 72). Often this goes via a conception of the essential features of that kind of artifact, but in the absence of such a conception “the intentional component will bestow an essence on the created object not simply by containing a concept of a kind, but through more explicit specifications of the essential features of the object” (2016: 73). So, for Evnine, the essence of an artifact is determined by the intention that it have certain essential properties. Therefore, these theorists hold that for the properties they take to be imposed, the pertinent imposing attitudes are both necessary and sufficient for imposing them.

Yet, as we saw, both Necessary and Sufficient Match are false. The confused townsfolk make a mistake in imposition, since the content of their pointings – *left side* and *right side* – fail to match what they make, which is a border whose location is somewhere in the middle of the river. Necessary Match therefore fails. The warlock makes a mistake in that they intend to make a magical wall but they make a physical one instead. The resulting artifact does somewhat match their activity in that ‘magical wall’ entails ‘wall’, but they are mistaken insofar as they mean to give it genuinely magical properties. Their imposing attitude has magical content but doesn’t make magic. Sufficient Match thus fails.

Some may object that extant theories of imposition do in fact allow for mistakes and mismatch.<sup>3</sup> Thomasson requires that the artificer’s conception of the kind match that of prior makers (2003b: 599). So a potter makes a cup only if it matches prior potters’ conception of cups. Thomasson and Hilpinen also lay down a success condition in that an artifact of a certain kind must result from *successfully* making something have the features taken to be relevant to its kind (Hilpinen 1992: 61; Thomasson 2003b: 598, 2007: 59). A potter makes a cup only if the clay is not so deformed as to not be concave.

However, these sorts of mistakes are not the same as mistakes of *imposition*: mismatch between imposing activities and specifically imposed properties. The first concerns *replication*: whether what we make is the same as prior artifacts. But someone can impose a property despite mismatch with their imposing activities, whether or not that property is had by prior kinds. The confused townsfolk can impose a location on the border, whether or not there have been borders before. The warlock can make something be a wall, whether or not there have already been walls.

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<sup>3</sup> I thank two anonymous reviewers for separately raising this point.

The second type of mistake concerns *execution*: whether we make the substrate of the imposition have the properties intended to support the imposition. But this sort of mistake doesn't directly pertain to imposition. While execution is pre-condition for imposition, mistakes of imposition can occur even when there's no mistakes of execution. The warlock doesn't err in execution. All they take to be relevant for making a magical wall is stacking stones and muttering incantations, and they do all that successfully. Yet they still don't make magic. For the townsfolk, there's nothing for them to do beyond agreeing that the river's their border. The river with both its sides is already there to serve as substrate. They therefore make no mistake of execution but still make a mistake of imposition. Thus, there are constraints on imposition that go beyond replication and execution and concern imposition itself.

These constraints are genuinely objective. They don't merely go beyond the artificers in being social – such that, say, social norms on artifact creation make imposition offloaded onto society.<sup>4</sup> The entire community is mistaken about the location of the border. The entire community could also have communed together in an attempt to enchant the rocks. Social activity can fail to match the imposed artifact just as much as individual activity. Yet even with such mismatch, the mind still impresses itself onto the world. Given that imposed artifacts can be successfully created despite mismatch, then imposition is *offloaded* in going beyond the content of the imposing activities in a way that satisfies the constraints.

Hence, my argument for offloading is not an objection to imposition as such.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, some have argued against imposition playing any role in the production of artifacts, often by appealing to unintentional creation. The function of a certain type of car may partly consist in being environmentally friendly, but people who make counterfeit functional duplicates of it may simply intend to make money (Elder 2004: 144). A mereological nihilist can make a table, even though they don't intend to make any such composite object (Goodman 2020; cf. Friedell 2016; cf. Cray 2017). Yet at most these arguments show that *not all* artifactual properties are imposed, not that *none* are. As I acknowledged above, causal-functional properties – which very well may include various properties of cars and tables – would not be imposed. But there are good reasons to think other sorts of artifactual properties are impressed by the mind.

Consider art. Appealing to imposition lets us distinguish between a statue and an identically shaped piece of clay formed in a rockslide. The former has *statueness* because that's imposed by the intention of the sculptor, whereas the mountain isn't an intentional agent. Imposition also captures creation by appropriation. Driftwood can become a statue simply by treating it as such (cf. Baker 2007: 53; cf. Juvshik 2021: 9319). Duchamp prompted the art community to make the non-art artifact of a urinal into a statue by having us orient ourselves toward it in an aesthetic way (Evnine 2013; Thomasson 2014: 60). Imposition is also needed to account for abstract art, where artistic activity makes art without physically manipulating the artistic medium at all – as in musical

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<sup>4</sup> I thank an anonymous referee for floating this suggestion.

<sup>5</sup> I thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to discuss how the objection from mismatch relates to other objections in the literature.

compositions (cf. Levinson 1980) and fiction (Thomasson 1998) and much conceptual art (Irvin 2005). Yet the notion of imposition goes well beyond art. Imposition is needed to understand how mere agreement can bring a border into existence. How mere agreement about rules of behavior can make certain actions illegal (cf. Hart 1961). Insofar as there are such creations, then we must allow for some imposition of mind onto world. My objection to extant imposition views is not that there isn't imposition, but that there is imposition despite mismatch between imposing attitudes and imposed artifacts.

There can be such mismatch, I claim, because imposed artifacts are constructed via objective constraints that guide imposition in ways that can go beyond those imposing activities. It's not up to the artificers what these constraints are or whether imposition must abide by them. In this sense, imposers always offload – on pain of regress, they don't make the ultimate constraints on imposition. Three constraints are particularly important: **preservation of extant structure**, **consistency**, and **non-arbitrariness**. As to whether these are *all* the constraints on imposition I can't say. But they are enough to ensure that there can be mismatch between imposing activity and imposed product.

First: a newly imposed artifact must *preserve extant worldly structure*. Thus, the warlock's attempt to make a magical barrier is doomed to fail, because it would require magic that violates the laws of nature. So the production of their imposed artifact is guided to something that wouldn't contravene extant structure: a physical levee. This fits their activities specifying construction well enough, since they intend the stones to keep out water. And a levee preserves extant causal laws, unlike a magical barrier. Therefore, the constraint of preserving extant worldly structure guides the production of the artifact to a physical wall without magical properties. Such a constraint is not up to the artificer. The warlock did genuinely want to make magic, and they may have no intention not to wreck extant structure.

Second: imposed artifacts must be *consistent*, since reality is consistent. Therefore, a broad sufficient condition in terms of match fails, since artificers can attempt to make something inconsistent. A composer who intentionally scores that a regularly tuned viola play both low C and low C<sup>#</sup> at the same time attempts to dictate something inconsistent with the fact that such a viola can't play both, since those notes are only be playable on the same string. If it's to be a performable musical work, then the sound structure as a piece for viola can have only one of C or C<sup>#</sup> in that location. Thus, while the composer literally intends something inconsistent, the resulting piece of music is consistent in containing at most one of those notes there.

As a matter of mere consistency, though, the resulting piece could have either C or C<sup>#</sup>. So which is it? Thus, third: the imposed artifact must be *non-arbitrarily* related to the creative activities. Suppose that the composer aims to make the work be in C-major and that all the other notes they score fall under the C-scale. Then, I claim that the piece is in C-major and the note is C, since that better fits the composer's overall array of compositional intentions than the note being a rupturous C<sup>#</sup>. While it would be consistent were the note to be C<sup>#</sup>, it would also be arbitrary to privilege the singular scoring of C<sup>#</sup> over the much larger number of scoring activities going with C

and C-major. Offloading can therefore ‘subtract’ from the nature of the artifact relative to the content of the creative activities, such as by removing C<sup>#</sup>.

Some may here object that compositions aren’t created by composers but the audience – just as, the objection goes, literature is made by interpreters and not author. So despite the composers’ inconsistent intentions, the audience – such as a conductor – would interpret the piece as being in C-major and just having C. This objection may draw on the observation that for many artifacts the users’ intentions determine their nature, as opposed to what the original artificer meant that nature to be (Kornblith 2007: 145; Koslicki 2018: 227–29). But my general claims about offloading do not require privileging the ‘author’ over the ‘interpreter’. They apply to whatever creative activity does the imposing – whether that be the user or the original artificer. If user activity does the imposing, then they are in that respect the creator of the imposed property (Juvshik 2021: 9319, 9327; Eynine 2022: sec. 3). But, then, offloading applies to users as creators. An interpreter can have inconsistent aspects of their interpretation – they may interpret the composition as being for regularly tuned viola with both C and C<sup>#</sup> in the same place. An entire interpretative community can have contrarian defectors or incoherent interpretative mores, so that there aren’t any consistently held interpretative principles. Offloading, then, is needed to produce the imposition even if it’s taken to be created through interpretation or use.

Another example of non-arbitrariness comes from the law – taking laws to be artifacts created by legislative activity such as statutory texts and the intentions behind them. In the U.S., the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act requires improvements in the safety of automobiles, while the Clean Air Act requires that emissions be reduced. To crispen the case, suppose that the first act requires the *maximization* of safety given widely available technologies while the other requires the *minimization* of emissions given widely available technologies. The content of these acts would then contradict one another because many of the best ways to increase safety increase weight and thereby emissions (Lave 1984: 471). So if the two acts created perfectly corresponding legal norms, then there would be worldly contradiction in that one act would make it so that a heavy-but-safe car is legally permitted to be on the road while another would make it so that the same highly emissive car is *not* legally permitted to be on the road. So, again, a sufficiency condition in terms of match fails.

What, then, is the law? Given that the two acts propose scalar regulations, then the resulting regulation is something like enforcing a balance between increasing safety and reducing emissions. But this result is not a matter of mere consistency, because that could be gained by simply nullifying one of the acts. Instead, non-arbitrariness is relevant. Since it would be arbitrary to privilege one act over the other, the resulting regulations take the form of a balance between them. Yet the legislators themselves never specified that these acts are to be balanced. They simply left them in conflict. Hence, offloading can ‘add’ to the nature of the artifact beyond the content of the creative activities. Thus, a necessary condition in terms of match fails once more.



Given all this, some may accept these constraints but still be skeptical of the role I give them.<sup>6</sup> As for consistency and non-arbitrariness, can we not take them to be sourced ‘internally’ in comprehending the point of the artifact? In understanding the creative attempt, might we not simply need to appeal to a consistent and non-arbitrary point view – a broadly coherent perspective? As for preservation of extant structure, why would anyone deny this? Of course the external world restricts what we can make (cf. Himma 2018: 139). We can’t make a statue out of liquid water. The objection, then, is that the constraints I posit are quite weak because no one would reject them. In response, I accept that the constraints are weak. My claim is that extant views fail to account for them. That they are so weak reveals the weakness these views.

A first observation is that taking extant views as formulated they don’t actually posit any of the three constraints. Rather, they are committed to one or both of Necessary Match or Sufficient Match, which fall afoul of them. They do accept constraints on execution – so allow that liquid water can’t make a statue since the substrate of liquid water in a stable shape is not compatible with the laws of nature. However, these views do not posit any such constraint of preservation of extant structure on imposition. Thus, given that the substrate accords with the laws of nature, then there is no account of why magical properties can’t be endowed. The warlock conceives of magic being produced by stacked stones and muttered phrases – but these substrates don’t violate the laws of nature, even though imposed magic would. Nor do extant views posit constraints of consistency or non-arbitrariness on imposition. So while the conceived substrates of the border – the different banks – obtain, the border’s location isn’t imposed exactly as conceived, since the conception of it is incoherent. The theorists may want to accept these constraints, but their theories as so far developed do not.

Another observation is that it’s not enough to simply posit constraints – the constraints must be explained. It doesn’t suffice to simply assert that imposition must abide by consistency, non-arbitrariness, and preservation of extant structure. Rather, there must be some account of where these requirements come from on pain of being ad hoc and unexplanatory. The constraints, for instance, can’t be fundamental parts of reality, since they concern the production of artifacts from agential activity, both of which are highly non-fundamental. So even if extant theorists were to write in these constraints, that wouldn’t amount to an explanation of them. Therefore, we need an explanatory theory from which they fall.

Relatedly, not all ways of positing constraints will work. Consider a purely ‘internal’ view that takes the constraints to be sourced in the artificer’s endorsing them. The idea would be that consistency comes from the artificer wanting to be coherent in what they are attempting to make – likewise for not wanting to be arbitrary or run afoul of the rest of nature. But such internal approaches won’t do, because the constraints aren’t contingent on what the artificer thinks. The composer may have no intention to be consistent. They may simply score both C and C<sup>#</sup>. They may even set out to make a genuinely inconsistent work, and hence endorse inconsistency. But, still, they can’t make something incoherent. Likewise, they may have no thoughts about non-

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<sup>6</sup> I thank an anonymous referee for raising the following important concerns.

arbitrariness, and yet the non-arbitrariness constraint makes the piece have C rather than C<sup>#</sup>. The warlock may want to explicitly violate the natural laws and produce magic, but they can't. Therefore, we need an *external* approach to the constraints.

Finally, the constraints must play the right role in order to capture mismatch. A constraint that serves merely as a prohibition would simply block the production of artifacts that would violate it. So creative activities that ran afoul of the constraint would just fail to produce anything at all. But this isn't what happens. Properties can still be successfully imposed even when the imposing activity violates the constraints. That's why there can be mismatch rather than simply failure. Hence, we need a theory that does more than just explain the presence of constraints but also explains their role in guiding – as opposed to blocking – production in a constrained way. In the next section, I provide such a theory.

## 2. Constrained Imposition

Offloading arises because there are objective constraints on imposition. What's impressed is guided to something that fits with creative activities, but where this fit needn't be perfect because it's constrained by the preservation of extant structure, consistency, and non-arbitrariness. But whence these constraints?

### *2.i Determination*

To get clear on the source of the constraints, we need to get clear on how artifacts are determined. Start with **grounding**, which is the relation whereby what's **grounded** holds 'in virtue' of what **grounds** it (Schaffer 2009; Rosen 2010; Fine 2012). Some textbook examples of grounding: two parts ground their mereological whole, sets are grounded in their members, and the ball being crimson grounds its being red.

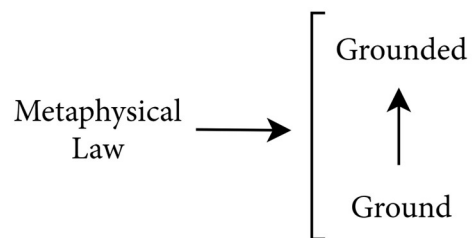
When it comes to imposed artifacts, I claim that they are grounded in their **substrates**. The border is grounded in the river. A statue is grounded in its shaped clay. And a musical work is grounded in something like a sound structure (cf. Levinson 1980; Wolterstorff 1980: 88–89; Anderson 1985). Such grounding relations are **non-factive** (Fine 2012: 48–50), meaning that *were* the grounds to obtain then the artifact would be grounded. Jaywalking is grounded in crossing the street not at the striped lines, but it may be that no one has yet crossed the street that way so no one has yet jaywalked.

What, though, grounds that impositions are grounded in certain substrates? Imposing activities. The intentions and molding activity of the sculptor ground that the shaped clay grounds the statue. The composer's intentions and scoring grounds that a certain sound structure grounds their work. Legislative activity grounds that a certain way of crossing the street grounds illegality.

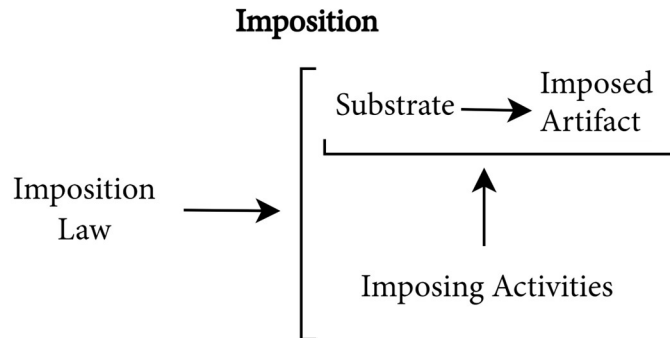
Taking creative activities to ground further relations of grounding between substrates and artifacts lets us distinguish between the substrate of the artifact and the attitudes that make something an artifact. The shaped clay plays a different role in the production of the artifact than do the statue-making activities. This difference is captured by treating the clay as the grounds of the statue and the intentions as grounding that the clay grounds the statue. More generally, the difference between substrate and attitudinal mediation that makes something a substrate is captured by treating imposing activities as producing grounding relations in which substrates ground imposed artifacts.

In addition to grounding relations, many metaphysicians think that there must be something *connecting* grounds to what they ground – something that puts such grounding relations in place (Rosen 2010: 131; Dasgupta 2014). When parts ground their whole, it seems that there must be something about mereological composition that makes it such that those parts generate that whole. When members ground their sets, it seems like there must be something about set formation that makes those members generate a set. According to the view to which I'm inclined, these connections take the form of **metaphysical laws** (Rosen 2006; Kment 2014: 167–73; Wilsch 2015, 2016; Glazier 2016; Schaffer 2017; Frugé 2023). The nitty gritty ontology doesn't matter for the task of characterizing imposition externalism. What matters is just that metaphysical laws mediate grounding analogously to how nomic laws mediate causation. In the nomic case, a billiard ball crashing into another causes it to move due to force laws, and dropping a ball causes it to fall due to the law of gravitation. In the metaphysical case, parts compose wholes due to the law of composition, members produce sets due to the set-formation law, and determinates ground the instantiation of their determinables via a determinate-to-determinable law. The basic point is that grounding requires a principle-like connection between the inputs to grounding and the outputs that are grounded. For specificity and simplicity, in what follows I treat laws as grounds of grounding, indicated in the diagrams to follow by arrows:

### Metaphysical Laws

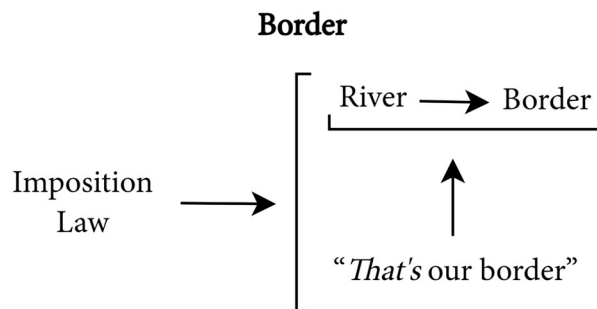


So what is the law for imposition? I call it, cleverly, the **imposition law**. This takes in imposing activities and outputs a *further grounding relation* in which substrates ground imposed artifacts:



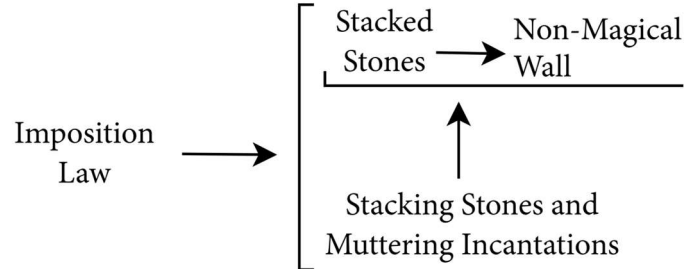
The general schema of metaphysical laws is that they ground the connection between grounds and grounded. Due to the peculiarities of imposition, what's doing the grounding are creative activities and what they ground are a further grounding relation between substrate and imposed artifact. The inputs to the law are diachronic, since creative activities take place over time. And the law is holistic in that at any given time the law takes in all relevant activities that have so far taken place and outputs an artifact grounding relation. Thus, the artifact can change over time as new creative activities take place.

Returning to the case that started us off, the imposition law takes in the community's agreement that the river be their border and outputs a grounding relation between the river and the border:



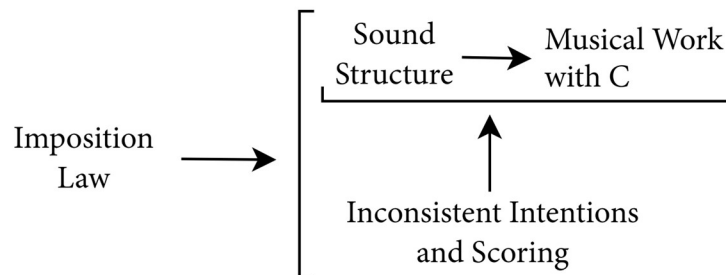
The law also takes in the warlock's activities and outputs the relation in which stacked stones ground a wall:

### The Warlock and the Wall



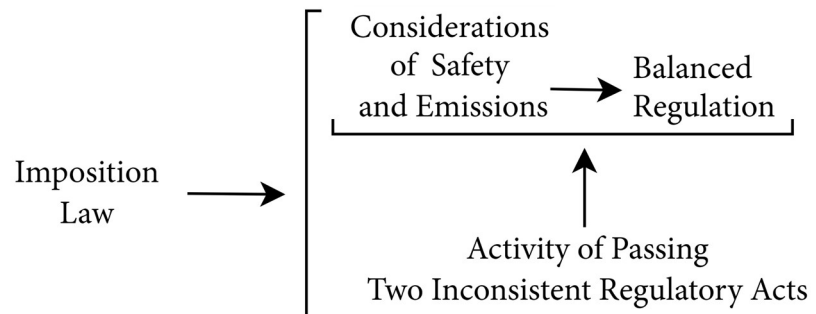
The imposition law likewise takes in the composer's intentional scoring and outputs the grounding relation between a specific sound structure and the musical work:

### Composition



When it comes to the two automobile acts, the imposition law takes in the legislative activity surrounding them and outputs a grounding relation in which a balance of regulations is grounded in considerations of safety and emissions:

### Automobile Regulations



Since this legislative activity took place over time, perhaps when the first act was passed the law was simply to maximize safety but when the second act was passed the law changed so as to produce balanced regulations.

Artificers don't make the imposition law. It's not artifact – on pain of a regress of needing a law of imposition to make a law of imposition. Rather, it's an objective connection between creative activities and artifact grounding relations. This connection abides by the constraints of the preservation of extant worldly structure and the creation of only consistent and non-arbitrary new structure. This enables offloading in that how imposed artifacts are made is objectively constrained in ways that aren't up to the artificer. I don't mean to suggest that the imposition law has to be fundamental. In fact, I think it's a non-fundamental *special law* of metaphysics. The point is that it's not up to the artificer that this is how imposed artifacts are made. Artificers may never think about and certainly can't change the metaphysical law that links creative activities to artifact grounding relations. Offloading is possible because this imposition law moving from creative activities to the artifact grounding relation and ultimately to the imposed artifact must abide by the constraints of preservation of extant structure, consistency, and non-arbitrariness. Creative activities can fall afoul of the constraints on artifact production, so mismatch can occur because the law takes in those activities and outputs the product that best fits them while nevertheless abiding by those constraints. Therefore, creative activities can *fully* ground the relation in which substrates ground imposed artifacts, even though those activities can clash with the nature of that relation and hence clash with the nature of the artifact that's made.

In its determination structure, the view I just sketched bears some formal similarities to Brian Epstein's account of social grounding, but there are crucial differences.<sup>7</sup> Epstein holds that grounding facts in which social facts are grounded are put in place via a sui generis *anchoring* relation (2015: ch. 6). Thus, while both our approaches distinguish between grounding and what puts grounding in place, my approach takes metaphysical laws to serve as these connections. As I discuss in the following section, this allows my view to explain offloading, since metaphysical laws 'carve reality at the joints' and thereby mediate grounding under the three constraints on production. Epstein, however, doesn't appeal to 'carving at the joints', nor does his view have other resources to account for external constraints on anchoring. Indeed, his view doesn't address the issue of offloading at all. While Epstein denies that all social facts are directly made by intentions (2013) – and hence he denies that all social constructs are imposed – he leaves open that some artifacts might be imposed, such as when he regiments H.L.A Hart's (1961) practice view of laws in terms of anchoring (Epstein 2015: ch. 7). But he doesn't acknowledge the issue of mismatch between imposing activities and imposed products. Thus, on Epstein's construal of Hart's view, the social treatment of something as a rule anchors that very rule underwriting the grounding of legal facts in accordance with that rule. So, given Epstein's approach, imposed artifacts may very well be anchored in exactly matching imposing activities. Therefore, Epstein's anchoring approach doesn't account for offloading, let alone countenance it. Its aims are elsewhere.

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<sup>7</sup> I thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to clarify the differences between my approach and that of Epstein.

## 2.ii Structure

Offloading occurs because the constraints on imposition are not up to the artificers. But whence these constraints? They come from the **structuralness** of the imposition law. What's *structural* is what 'carves at the joints of reality' (Lewis 1983; Sider 2011). Structural aspects of the world are *unified* and *non-arbitrary*, as opposed to *gerrymandered*. They make for genuine similarity and enter into good explanations. So properties can be structural, such as *being an electron* as opposed to *being an electron or a cow*. Relations can also be structural, such as *being more massive than* as opposed to *being more massive than unless each has an odd number of electrons*. Individuals can be structural as well, such as Sparky the electron as opposed to Bessie-the-cow-prior-to-2500-A.D.-and-Sparky-the-electron-after. Importantly, what's structural needn't be fundamental in the grounding sense. There can be high-level structural aspects of reality, such as psychological properties like *being a desire* that make for genuine similarity and enter into good explanations (Schaffer 2004; Frugé 2024).

I claim that *laws* can be structural as well. They are generic connections that stitch reality together, thereby underwriting good explanations and enabling genuine similarity. In the nomic case, the law that  $F = ma$  is structural in worlds obeying Newtonian physics. This underwrites explanations involving force, such as causal explanations about colliding billiard balls. It also enables genuine similarity between force-involving causal events. Psychological laws can be structural as well. A *ceteris paribus* law linking desires to behavior underwrites good explanations of behavior given motivations as well as makes for genuine similarity among creatures whose motivations tend to result in behavior. In the metaphysical case, the law linking determinates to their determinables is structural in unifying the realm of properties. It underwrites the explanation of why something is red due to its being crimson. It also makes for genuine similarity between all determinate to determinable grounding facts: crimson grounding red is similar to azure grounding blue. Some metaphysical laws are structural because they produce new structure from old, thereby themselves forming an integral part of reality. Assuming that there are sets, then the metaphysical law of set-building is structural in linking members to the new structure of sets. Assuming that there are mereological wholes, then the law of mereological composition is structural in producing the new structure of wholes from parts. I claim that another structure-producing law is the imposition law, which produces the new structure of imposed artifacts from the old structure of creative activities by way of the new structure of artifact grounding relations. Because it's structure-producing in this way, then the imposition law is itself structural.

While I think that creative activities are structural for the same reason that psychological and sociological properties more generally are structural, the crucial claim is that artifact grounding relations are structural. They are structure-producing connections that link substrates to the new structure of artifacts. Why think that artifacts are structural? Because artifactual properties make for genuine similarity and feature in good explanations (Frugé 2022a). Take the property *being a viola*. Any two violas are genuinely similar. And the property coalesces musical practices – such as by unifying all viola sonatas and underwriting musicological explanations about

them. Similarly, *being a border* enters into good explanations of political science and makes for genuine similarity between the boundaries of various communities. Admitting high-level artifactual properties as structural doesn't undermine the distinction between what's structural and what's not. There's still an important divide between the structural *being a viola* and the gerrymandered *being a viola before 2500 A.D. and a glass cup thereafter*, likewise for *being a border* as opposed to *being a border before 2500 A.D. and a cow thereafter*. Artifact grounding relations are therefore structural in producing structural artifacts from substrates. In tying creative activities to such grounding relations, the imposition law is itself part of reality's structure.

Metaphysical laws must in general meet certain conditions in order to be structural. These hold no less for the imposition law. Since the imposition law takes creative activities to a grounding relation between substrate and artifact, then the general constraints manifest themselves in constraining how those activities are related to those grounding relations. Thus, the particular constraints on artifact production fall out of the general conditions on a metaphysical law being structural.

First, a structural law must be *consistent*. It stitches reality together, and reality is coherent. Hence, metaphysical laws can't put in place incoherent grounding relations. The imposition law therefore can't put in place an incoherent grounding relation between creative activities and artifact grounding, which means that the artifact grounding relation can't itself be incoherent. Since incoherent artifacts would make the artifact grounding relation incoherent, then there can be no incoherent artifacts. Sorry, composer.

Second, a structural law can't wreck extant structure, because such structural connections unify the world by stitching its structure together – not by destroying it. Compare: nomic psychological laws connecting psychological properties must be compatible with the nomic connections between the physical realizers of psychological states (Fodor 1974: 109). Likewise, if there is a structural psychophysical grounding law, then its making mental states be grounded in realizer physical states can't thereby remove the physical causation between those realizers in order to secure mental causation (cf. Kim 2005: 13–22). The imposition law thus can't destroy extant structure when it moves from activities to artifact grounding relations. That's why there can be no artifacts with magical properties, try as one might, because that would violate the laws of nature. With apologies to the warlock.

Third, a structural law can't be *arbitrary*. What's structural is what corresponds to a non-arbitrary carving of reality, and an arbitrary law would enact an arbitrary carving. Compare: structural relations can't arbitrarily relate their relata, such as a correlation between the movement of the stars and the psychological states of a particular person – even though each of the relata are structural, the link between them is gerrymandered. Similarly, structural metaphysical laws can't put in place grounding relations that would arbitrarily relate ground to grounded. Even if what's linked by the law is fully structural the *link itself* can't be gerrymandered.<sup>8</sup> There are important consequences of this for offloading. First consequence: if relative to the prospective grounds it

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<sup>8</sup> Thus, I deny arbitrary grounding (Werner 2021) – at least for grounding relations put in by structural laws.



would be arbitrary to not produce the prospective grounded then the grounding relation is put in place. Thus, the set-building law can't impose grounding relations so that Tabey the table grounds {Tabey} but Chase the chair doesn't ground {Chase}. Second consequence: if relative to the prospective grounds it would be arbitrary to produce the grounded, then no such grounding relation is put in place. So it can't be that the concrete object Tabey the table grounds its singleton {Tabey} but the concrete object Chase the chair grounds the singleton {Fluffy the dog}, because it would be arbitrary to link tables to their singletons but chairs to singletons of dogs. Taken together these two consequences mean that it can be arbitrary to *not privilege* a certain output. When it's arbitrary to not ground something and it's arbitrary to ground any of its competitors, then it's arbitrary to not solely ground it. This is what happens when offloading leads to a determinate artifact despite messy creative activities.

According to imposition externalism, the imposition law takes in the whole array of creative activities and outputs the artifact grounding relation that non-arbitrarily fits those activities while abiding by the other constraints. Akin to a prohibition on members being arbitrarily related to singleton sets, the imposition law can't arbitrarily link creative activities to the grounding relations that produce artifacts. Given that non-arbitrariness can privilege a certain output, then the grounding relation put in place can lead to gains or losses in the nature of the artifact relative to what's specified by those creative activities – if it would be arbitrary to include what's specified or not to include what's not. The musical work just has C even though some of the scoring included C<sup>#</sup>, thus having a nature that 'loses' the C<sup>#</sup> activity. The balance of regulations 'loses' maximization and minimization, while 'gaining' balance. The artifact can still be made by those activities so long as it's non-arbitrarily related to them.

Since many potential artifacts can fit the same array of creative activities to *some* extent, the non-arbitrary product is the *least* arbitrary product, where we can understand comparative arbitrariness in terms of absolute arbitrariness – less arbitrary is being arbitrary not to privilege. However, there's no guarantee that there can't be ties for least arbitrary. In this case, perhaps no artifact is made or perhaps it's indeterminate which is made – an issue requiring further investigation. If *nothing* can fit well enough while abiding by the constraints, then an artifact fails to be made at all. So a legislative statute may be such gibberish that no law is enacted. The warlock may not have intended to make a 'magical barrier' but rather intended to cast a harvest spell, in which case a wall does not fit at all and so nothing is made. Yet given that there is a potential product that does fit well enough, then offloading opens the doors to artificers being mistaken about the very artifacts they create. Since the content of creative activities may fall afoul of the constraints on structure, then the imposition law can make the nature of the artifact gain or lose features relative to what's specified by creative activities. This is the key, I submit, to a fully naturalistic metaethics that accommodates subjects being mistaken about the very normativity they make.

### 3. Artifactual Value

Taking personal value as our metaethical target, then subjectivism has a lot of things going for it. For value to be *personal*, it seems, it must resonate with the cares and concerns of the subject (Railton 1986a, 1986b; Rosati 1995, 1996; Sobel 2009; Dorsey 2017). Subjectivism accounts for such resonance by holding that value depends on valuing. In thus grounding normative facts about value in psychological states about valuing attitudes subjectivism also offers the prospect of a naturalistic account of normativity (Frugé 2022b).

Yet, as with much that is good in this world, subjectivism threatens to turn rotten in the hand: a subject can be mistaken about what's valuable for them. They can think something is good when it's not, take something to be bad when it isn't. As with theories of imposition, subjectivism seems to preclude this by taking value to depend on valuing. Any 'mistaken' attitude would apparently produce a corresponding value fact and so could not be mistaken after all.

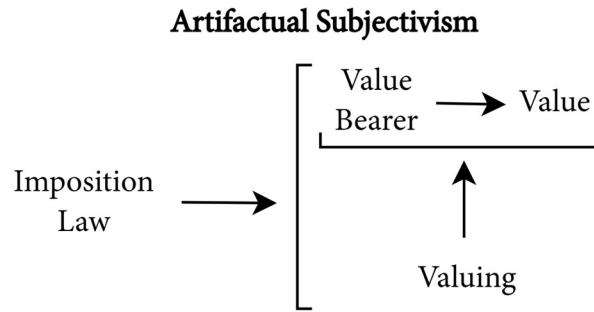
Extant subjectivisms have attempted to solve this **problem of mistakes** without, I'll argue, much success. Either they hold firm to a simple link between valuing and value, which means they can't accommodate mistakes, or they appeal to coherentized or idealized valuations, which threatens to be an ad hoc proposal that still doesn't deliver the right results. The solution, I submit, is to take value to be an imposed artifact whose creation is offloaded onto worldly structure. **Artifactual subjectivism** claims that personal value is an artifact created by the subject's valuing attitudes such that offloading makes those attitudes able to be mistaken in light of the very value they create. Even though personal value is mind-dependent, it's nevertheless a genuinely real artifact. And its dependence on the subject's mind is given via objective – though non-normative – manners of artifact creation that can make the very valuations creating it mistaken.

#### *3.i Artifactual Subjectivism*

When a subject values things – in an ontologically neutral sense of 'thing' – as good or bad for themselves, then the imposition law takes those attitudes as input and outputs a grounding relation whereby certain things become value bearers that ground certain amounts of value for the subject. So creative attitudes go beyond mere intentions and agreements to encompass other attitudes such as valuing, which seeks to 'mold' and 'shape' the world in an evaluative light.

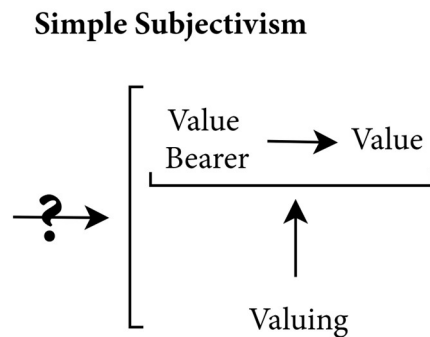
Because the grounding between substrate and artifact is non-factive, valuing leads to **candidate value** as opposed to **received value**. The value bearers may not obtain, so the subject may not *receive* any good or bad. But *were* those value bearers to come about then the subject's wellbeing would be impacted. If someone values pleasure, but hasn't yet experienced it, then that pleasure is good for them in the sense that it counts as the sort of thing to make their life go better. But it hasn't come about yet, so their wellbeing hasn't yet been impacted. In what follows, by 'value' I mean *candidate* value, which consists in non-factive grounding between value bearers and magnitudes of received value.

As brought out above, the imposition law is holistic in taking the entire array of relevant creative activities and outputting an artifact grounding relation. In terms of value, this means that the law takes in all of the subject's valuations and outputs the least arbitrary **profile** of candidate value that abides by the constraints on artifact production. This profile induces particular non-factive grounding relations between particular value bearers and particular magnitudes of received value:



The imposition law thereby accounts for the role of valuing in creating value. Valuing doesn't brutally produce value but does so via a metaphysical law. Such subjectivism is thus not an ad hoc posit, but rather enfolded within a broader theory of artifacts. By contrast, extant versions of subjectivism simply posit that a certain sort of valuing leads to value without explaining *how* this is so.<sup>9</sup>

**Simple subjectivism** (Murphy 1999; Heathwood 2005) takes a subject's actual valuations to produce value in a one-to-one manner such that that for each valuing attitude there is a perfectly corresponding magnitude of candidate value:



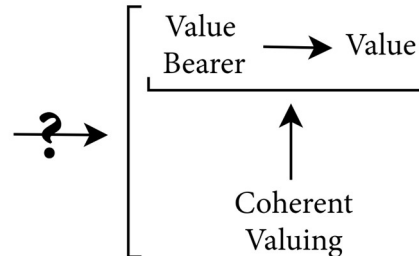
But there is no account of what makes valuing play this role. *Why* can valuing do this?

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<sup>9</sup> Artifactual subjectivism also differs from the proposal that normative properties are reference magnets since they are joint carving (Sayre-McCord 1997; van Roojen 2006; Edwards 2013; Dunaway and McPherson 2016). Granting that value is joint carving (Frugé 2022a, 2024), artifactual subjectivism holds that its instantiation conditions for a given subject depend on their valuing attitudes. So there could be two potential profiles of candidate value that would be equally joint carving, but offloading is still needed to determine which profile is instantiated.

**Constructivist subjectivism** (Street 2012) holds that what's valuable for someone is what they would value were their valuations to be made fully coherent through a process of reflective equilibrium, perhaps after having learned all the relevant information:

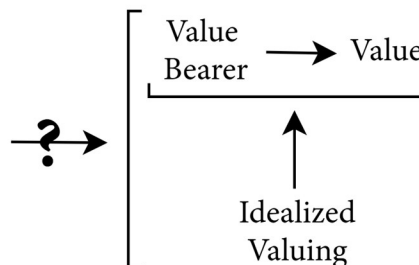
### Constructivist Subjectivism



Yet, this account is unsatisfying because it builds the coherence constraint in by hand without explaining *why* value must be constrained by it. It's not enough to simply posit constraints – they need to be explained, especially since a coherence constraint on value can't be fundamental within a naturalistic framework since it involves highly non-fundamental facts about valuations. This is especially pressing since the subject themselves may not care about these constraints. A subject may even want to be incoherent in their valuations.

**Idealized subjectivism** holds that value corresponds not to actual valuing but to suitably idealized valuing. According to the most prominent version, what's valuable for someone is what their ideal counterpart values that they would value were they in the actual person's circumstances, where their ideal counterpart has all relevant information as well as perfect instrumental rationality (Railton 1986a: 174):<sup>10</sup>

### Idealized Subjectivism



<sup>10</sup> Gentle forms of idealization that involve the subject using their actual psychological capacities in regimented ways (Brandt 1979) don't solve the problem of mistakes, since a subject's actual processes of psychological revision can inappropriately extinguish and illicitly kindle mistaken valuing attitudes (Velleman 1988; Hubin 1991, 1996).

But there's no explanation of *why* someone's idealized counterpart determines what's valuable for them. Again, it's not enough to simply posit that idealized valuing produces value, since ideal valuations are highly non-fundamental phenomenon involving modal features of a subject's psychology. The source of such a link between idealized valuation and value would need to be explained. And it can't be explained simply by appealing to what the subject cares about – as in looking at the conditions under which the subject would want to value (Rosati 1996). The agent may not care about any such conditions, and may even actively want to value in a non-ideal way.

Certainly, nothing is stopping such views from adding a metaphysical law underwriting how simple or coherent or idealized valuing grounds value. But to this point they haven't. And they would have to avoid proposing a *unique* metaphysical law just to capture the normative facts on pain of ad hoc metaphysical widget positing. Artifactual subjectivism does better in holding that value is made via the imposition law. Some may worry that this stretches the notion of 'artifact' too far in treating value as an artifact.<sup>11</sup> But while value is distinct from many sorts of artifacts – such as causal-functional kinds – it forms an importantly unified category with other *imposed* artifacts. Value mirrors valuing in the way that the statue mirrors the intention to make a statue and the border mirrors the agreement to make a border. Like these other impositions, a magnitude of value is an imposed artifact with a substrate – the value bearer – that is impressed onto the world by an imposing activity – valuing. Thus, value is genuinely similar to other imposed aspects of reality. It is the result of the mind molding the world in its image.

Folding value into a general theory of artifacts allows for a systematic and naturalistic explanation of how value determines value, where this determination isn't fundamental but rather underwritten by a general metaphysical principle of imposition. Artifactual subjectivism thereby provides a non-ad hoc explanation both of why valuing creates value and also why that value doesn't perfectly fit that valuing. Since the imposition law abides by constraints on structural connections, subjects offload the production of value. Making value requires valuing, but there is no one-to-one link between valuing and a perfectly matching amount of value. There can be value without a corresponding valuing attitude, and a valuation can fail to create a corresponding amount of value. Thus, artifactual subjectivism accommodates mistakes in valuing. I discuss four types: **inconsistent valuations**, **conflicting valuations**, **misvaluations**, and **missing valuations**.

### *3.ii Inconsistent Valuations*

*Inconsistent valuations* are those such that if value corresponded to valuing in a one-to-one manner, then there would be incoherence in the world.

Some contradictions arise when a valuer has different valuations of one and the same thing, either taking it to be both good and bad or taking it to be of the same valence but to different degrees. Suppose a certain alien is psychologically capable of simultaneously loving and hating the

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<sup>11</sup> I thank an anonymous referee for raising this concern.

same thing – such as overbearing alien parents. Then, this alien might take their relationship with their parents to be good for them but also to be bad for them. Humans may not be able to have that particular constellation of attitudes, but they can simultaneously hold other attitudes with opposed evaluative upshots. Someone may love their parents but also fear them. They thereby take their relationship with their parents to be good for them but also to be bad for them.

Another source is failing to consistently value the logical consequences of what one values. So someone may genuinely value things falling under a universal condition as good for them but value an instance as bad for them. Schopenhauer might have sincerely taken all people's welfare to be good for himself since he thought that all people were aspects of a single will. But he also simultaneously hated his noisy neighbor whom he shoved to the ground. It needn't be that Schopenhauer didn't *really* value all other people's good fortune. He could sincerely have had this attitude of universal benevolence but just also had an opposed attitude of particular malevolence. We aren't logically perfect beings.

A subtler source of inconsistency comes from paradoxical valuations. Say that someone values as good their life going badly overall (Feldman 2004: 17; Heathwood 2005: 502–3; Bradley 2009: 30–45). If they value their life going badly as good to +10 value points, and their life goes badly overall to -5 value points, then their life goes badly, so they get +10 value points. But this outweighs the -5 and so their life goes well overall. But then they don't get the +10, which means their life is bad to -5, and so their life is bad overall... In short: their life goes badly if and only if it goes well.

Such contradictory valuations are psychologically possible, but it means that value can't correspond to valuing in a one-to-one manner on pain of worldly contradiction. Therefore, simple subjectivism fails. This is so even for versions of simple subjectivism that distinguish between *genuine* and merely *superficial* valuing (Sobel 2009; Dorsey 2017; Heathwood 2019). While I think there is something to this distinction, it doesn't do away with all mistakes, since people can genuinely value in inconsistent ways. Similarly, it doesn't help to try to clarify the psychological state of valuing, since the same issues will arise on any conception. Even if valuing includes a belief component (Raibley 2013; Tiberius 2018), someone can still have inconsistent evaluative beliefs. Even if valuing involves a higher-order attitude – such as desiring to desire (Lewis 1989) – someone can have such attitudes inconsistently. Instead of appealing to the nature of valuing, some simple subjectivists have instead proposed resolving contradictions by going with the 'stronger' of the contradictory attitudes (Dorsey 2017: 204–5). But someone may hold each of the opposed attitudes equally strongly. And, more importantly, there is no such arbitration mechanism *within the confines of simple subjectivism*. Stronger attitudes just produce more extreme magnitudes of value, but contradicting weak attitudes still produce contradicting magnitudes. Another suggestion might be that conflicting attitudes aggregate to produce coherent value. While I think something along these lines is ultimately right, the simple subjectivist has no resources as it stands to metaphysically substantiate this proposal. What puts in place this aggregation procedure? Artifactual subjectivism, as I show later, provides an answer.

More complex subjectivisms also run into trouble. Constructivist subjectivism faces a dilemma based on the modal force attached to reflection – whether it’s about what’s possible to reach via reflection or about what’s reached through reflection in the nearest possible world. This dilemma arises because reflection is a psychological matter – the constructivist can’t appeal to brute normativity about the ‘proper’ way to reflect and retain naturalism. But such psychology doesn’t guarantee the determinately right results. If constructivism claims that value is given by what could be reached by reflection, then there is rampant indeterminacy, since contradictions can be resolved in multiple ways by dropping any of the contradictory items and different pathways of reflective equilibrium often lead to different results. If constructivism claims that value is given by what would be reached by reflection, then it delivers the wrong results. Say that someone values being a novelist and being a poet, while also separately rejecting the literary life entirely. Consistency imposing reflective equilibrium may lead to dropping the rejection of literary life and retaining the love of literature, but it may also lead to losing the love of literature. The same would be the case if there weren’t merely a few valuations in favor of the literary life, but a host of them. There would be some pathway of reflection that retained the rejection of the literary life in the face of everything else, such as if it began by prizing this valuation and then stubbornly holding onto it. This may very well be the way the person would reflect in the nearest possible world where the conditions for reflection are secured, in which case constructivism has to say that rejecting the literary life is what’s valuable for them. Yet when there are a host of valuations on the one side and a solitary valuation on the other, then the resolution of inconsistency should prioritize the vastly greater number.

Idealized subjectivism also faces a dilemma turning on whether someone’s ideal counterparts can be tied for similarity to their actual self. If there are ties for similarity among ideal counterparts, then there would be rampant indeterminacy because they could very well disagree about what their non-ideal counterpart should value (cf. Velleman 1988: 15). If there are no such ties, then idealized subjectivism renders the wrong verdicts. Return to the subject who’s torn on literature, rejecting it on the one hand but valuing an enormous number of different literary pursuits on the other. It could be that coming to no longer reject the literary life requires changing the subject’s non-evaluative psychology so much that any ideal agent who consistently rejects it is more similar to them than one who consistently values a life of words. The person may be caused to reject literature because of non-evaluative factors, like being fidgety and having eyes that tire quickly and being easily distracted and so on. But then their closest counterpart may share these psychological traits – they are idealized just in terms of having relevant information and being instrumentally rational – and so may very well value that their actual self rejects the literary life. So idealized subjectivism gets the wrong results by holding that in cases of conflict someone’s good may go with a much smaller number of their valuations over a vastly greater due to similarity that stems from non-evaluative psychological factors.

Artifactual subjectivism does better. The imposition law takes in the subject’s entire array of genuine valuations, which may be inconsistent, and outputs the least arbitrary profile of candidate value that abides by the constraints on imposition – meaning that the resulting profile must be consistent. So value is offloaded because at least one of the inconsistent valuations can’t

have a corresponding magnitude of value. Which exact profile is produced, and so which attitudes are mistaken and by how much, turns on the details of what minimizes arbitrariness. But the 'stronger' array of valuations gets 'chosen' in that the imposition law maximizes fit with the *overall* array of creative attitudes. Thus, for the paradox of valuing, if simply nullifying that a bad life is good would create consistency, while the other ways of ensuring coherence would require dropping a host of valuations about particular value bearers, then the single paradoxical valuation is dropped. And if Schopenhauer's daily valuations were often misanthropic – as his own mother suggests (Schopenhauer 1820) – and if his love for all humanity, though genuine, was weak due to being motivated by the frail mentor that is philosophy, then shoving his neighbor might have been good for him – not *instrumentally* good, though, since he was sued by her.

What if there are ties for fit? What if it would be arbitrary to privilege one profile over another, where there is no less arbitrary profile than either? Does artifactual subjectivism face its own problem of indeterminacy? I think not, given the scalar structure of value in combination with the anti-arbitrariness constraint. When there are two profiles of value that are tied in terms of non-arbitrariness, then I suggest that there is a third profile that is less arbitrary than either two: the average of them. If, say, it would be truly arbitrary to privilege writing a poem being +5 good over it being -4 bad, then it would be least arbitrary to have it be +1 good – setting aside all other valuations. The reasoning generalizes to any number of tied profiles and value bearers upon which they disagree.

However, insofar as our valuing attitudes are not precise in assigning determinate degrees of valence, there will still be residual indeterminacy. If we value writing a poem in the vicinity of +5 good and also value it in the vicinity of -4 bad but we don't precisely value either way to an exact degree, then, all else equal, the resulting profile will have it be in the vicinity of +1 good but without a determinate magnitude. Yet this sort of indeterminacy is genuinely part of normativity, as evinced by tough choices between options such that neither is clearly better than the other nor are they clearly equal where this is not due to any sort of incomparability. Watching basketball is fun and so is playing volleyball, but it may not be determinate which is the better way to spend Saturday afternoon nor whether they are equally good ways. This isn't because of incomparability but just because of imprecision in our values. Engaging in more valuation can resolve the dilemma and remove indeterminacy à la a Sartrean choice (Sartre 2007: 30–31) – as long as it's non-arbitrarily related the rest of one's valuations. But such further valuation is indeed further valuation, so indeterminacy remains until that point. Therefore, the artifactual account captures indeterminacy where it's truly present.

### *3.iii Conflicting Valuations*

The artifactual approach also accommodates mistakes due to attitudes that aren't in contradiction but are nevertheless in *conflict*. Say that someone has *Future Tuesday Indifference*, where they take pain to be bad for them except if it comes on a later Tuesday (Parfit 1984: 124).



While there is no logical inconsistency here, future Tuesdays are still arbitrarily carved off as exceptions relative to the large share of their concerns about pain – so their overall pattern of attitudes toward pain are in internal tension. Artifactual subjectivism accommodates such errors in that the imposition law moves from their whole constellation of valuing attitudes to a non-arbitrarily fitting profile of candidate value. Since future Tuesdays are arbitrary exceptions relative to the subject's other valuations, then the resulting value profile would make Tuesday pains count as bad.

A trickier case is that of someone taking bad to be good for them. While sometimes this can lead to logical incoherence – as in the paradox sketched above – it needn't always – as when someone simply takes an individual instance of bad to be good. If a *value masochist* takes pain to be bad for them but also takes bad to be good for them, then there is no incoherence in these two attitudes, but they are nevertheless in conflict since the two valuations pose a necessary practical dilemma given the very structure of value they posit. The value masochist can't seek to improve their life without thereby seeking to make it go worse. Thus, while not logically incoherent, these attitudes are practically incompatible. A legal parallel: a legislature decrees that walking across the street at the crosswalk is legal, but they also decree that engaging in legal pedestrian actions is illegal. There is no strict contradiction here, since crossing at the crosswalk is lawful but *legally crossing* is unlawful – the illegality attaches to the legally crossing, not to the crossing itself. But this constellation of decrees would fail because together they pose a necessary legal conflict. Someone could not cross the street without getting in legal trouble, which cuts against the purpose of the act making crossing at the crosswalk legal. Indeed, the illegality of legally crossing at the crosswalk is arbitrary relative to the act making crossing legal. So the imposition law makes at most one of these acts into law.

Practical incompatibility across attitudes means that they fail to gel with one another. But when creative attitudes fail to gel, then there can be no artifact that corresponds to any of them perfectly that fits all of them perfectly. To correspond to one requires having a feature that clashes with another, where this clash consists in having features that are arbitrary in relation to the opposed attitude. So the bad of pain being good is arbitrary relative to the attitude of taking pain to be bad, since this attitude casts pain in an unadulteratedly negative light while that negative light is then supposed to be good. When the imposition law moves from clashing attitudes, it creates an artifact that fails to perfectly fit at least one of the creative attitudes in order to make for the least arbitrary fit with the overall array. In this case, it seems that the least arbitrary profile would be one that makes pain bad and doesn't make bad good. Both attitudes fit with pain being bad – for bad to produce good requires some badness – while only one fits with bad being good. Perhaps the bad of pain is lessened by the attitude of taking that bad to be good, but that bad is not good.

Conflicts in valuations thereby lead to offloading. But extant forms of subjectivism don't account for mistakes stemming from conflicts in attitudes. Simple subjectivism must bite the bullet and deny that there's any issue, since each valuation is taken to determine a perfectly corresponding magnitude of value. Constructivism also falls short, because conflict is not inconsistency and so someone with conflicting attitudes is treated as getting things right (Street 2009). Similarly,

idealized subjectivism cannot remove such conflicts, since someone can have attitudes in tension with one another even given full information and perfect instrumental rationality. A benevolent counterpart who took bad to be good would want their non-ideal self to seek the bad.

### *3.iv Misvaluations*

Another type of mistake is that of **misvaluation**, which occurs when someone's valuing fails to correspond to what's valuable for them independently of whatever else they value. A person who orients their whole life toward counting blades of grass is mistaken, since counting grass is not good enough to warrant being devoted to its cause (cf. Rawls 1999: 65). Someone who has an overriding concern to switch on radios because they consider it to be integral to their welfare is simply getting things wrong (cf. Quinn 1994: 32–35). An ideally coherent anorexic that chooses being skinny to the point of death seems to be mistaken about the value of thinness (cf. Gibbard 1990: 171).

Simple subjectivism bites the bullet and holds that there's no such thing as misvaluation. The appearance of valuing attitudes that are mistaken in themselves is explained away by their failing in other normative terms, such as by being instrumentally imprudent (Heathwood 2005: 4, sec. 5.a; Lin 2018: sec. 3). Yet despite the power of this strategy, it nevertheless falls short because the grass counter is more than just instrumentally wrong. While simple subjectivism is right to warn us off paternalism, there still seems to be something off from the grass counter's own evaluative position. Constructivism also falls short, since there need be nothing incoherent about misvaluations. The grass counter who *solely* values counting blades of grass is already perfectly coherent. So the constructivist must say that this is as genuinely good as they take it to be. Likewise, idealized subjectivism can't capture such errors because someone may very well have perfectly informed and instrumentally rational counterparts who value them valuing in these ways. The radio switcher may have a most similar ideal counterpart who advises them to turn on radios in the most efficient way.

Artifactual subjectivism again does better. But to see how we need to take care in characterizing the creative attitude producing value. For creatures like us, I claim, personal valuing is valuing something as good or bad *for oneself*, where this involves taking something to have positive or negative valence for oneself as a whole creature. So while valuing always goes via particular attitudes, those attitudes present the world in an evaluative light according to which things make the *subject* – as opposed to that particular *attitude* – fare better or worse. Thus, the artifact that the creature attempts to make in valuing is *candidate value for themselves as a whole creature*. While this bit of speculative psychology is difficult to briefly establish in a philosophy paper, support for this claim comes from considering the way that creatures like us balance valuing attitudes against one another. We tend to seek the greater good over the lesser and choose to suffer the lesser bad instead of the greater. Sometimes we even suffer a lesser bad for a greater good. For creatures who can arbitrate between their attitudes in such ways, then their valuing must carry with it an implicit conception of value as going beyond what's good or bad relative to each attitude in

isolation. Their valuations must involve some normative orientation toward themselves as a single subject that serves as the basis for conciliation between attitudes that may pull in different directions. If this is right, then – at least for creatures like us in this respect – the imposition law takes in all valuing attitudes and produces candidate value as value for the whole subject. The produced artifact that least arbitrarily fits the subject’s valuing must respect this subject-oriented aspect contained in all their valuing.

How does this address misvaluation? Because misvaluations are arbitrary relative to the component of valuing attitudes that takes value to be value for the whole creature. If the grass counter solely valued counting those vegetal blades, then this would arbitrarily privilege the arithmetical pursuit of grass counting over others that would suit their evaluative constitution just as well, like counting flowers or doing sudoku or calculating taxes. At least, this is so if the grass counter is in most other respects like a typical human. They may not be mistaken if they were a carpenter ant alien whose evaluative capacities completely revolved around counting grass – though they’d have to willingly leave the cutting of the grass to others. But a human-like creature has a host of evaluative dispositions that go beyond grass counting – even if they’ve been masked or have yet to be triggered. Thus, insofar as valuing involves taking something to be valuable for oneself as a whole creature, then misvaluations carry with them the seeds of their own criticism, since valuations that arbitrarily privilege a certain slice of one’s evaluative nature are mistaken in light of their attempting to make value for the whole subject. Hence, the imposition law moves from such misvaluations to a profile of value that accords with the creature as a whole. So ‘substantive’ mistakes are really a form of arbitrariness, which is precluded by the imposition law.

There can certainly be a kind of legitimate ‘arbitrariness’ in that the subject can choose what to make special. But this contingency of what’s special is not the kind of arbitrariness that cuts against the structuralness of imposition, since it’s part of our evaluative nature to privilege certain things due to their special relations to ourselves. Treating a romantic partner as singular, despite there being others with similar qualities is an important aspect of human love. Someone’s partner is genuinely unique in being the one they met and bonded with, and this is part of their evaluative importance (Nozick 1974: 167–68). But such special relations are not the *whole* of value: qualitative features are also important. Duplicates of the person we love are not as valuable as the person we in fact love, but they would have *some* value for us given their qualitative overlap. Grass may have played a formative role in the grass counter’s childhood on the prairie, so counting grass may legitimately be more valuable for them than all other counting activities – but it can’t be the *only* activity that’s valuable for them. The contingency of valuing is itself special. That we happened to value *this* rather than *that* non-arbitrarily privileges the value bearer we do value.

### *3.v Missing Valuations*

In adding value bearers through rounding out candidate value profiles via non-arbitrariness, artifactual subjectivism also handles the problem of **missing valuations**: something

can be valuable for someone even if they don't value it in any way (Sobel 2009: 336). The grass counter fails to value other pursuits that are in fact valuable for them. Subjectivism seems to have trouble if it requires that value must have a corresponding valuing attitude, since it entails that if someone is lacking a valuation then there is no value they are missing.

But the imposition law moves from valuing attitudes to the least arbitrarily related profile of candidate value, and this may include value that goes beyond anything the subject actually values. The grass counter's profile includes pursuits beyond grass counting. The radio switcher's profile includes pastimes besides turning on radios. This is because it would be arbitrary to leave off relevantly similar pursuits. In offloading, valuers can determine value bearers they overlook when making them valuable. This is so, even though their actual valuations solely ground what's valuable for them.

#### 4. Getting Mistakes Right

While a subject can be severely mistaken about what's valuable for them, there is nevertheless a great amount of resonance in personal value. What the subject values completely determines what's valuable for them – it's just that this determination is constrained and guided by the imposition law. But this law moves from those valuations to the profile of value that fits those valuations in the least arbitrary way overall, which means that it may not fit some of those valuations perfectly. Therefore, the resonance of personal value is captured within a fully naturalistic framework that accommodates mistakes about value. Value is an artifact. But we're not perfect artificers. Our valuing can create value in light of which that very valuing is mistaken.

There may be those who are wary of labeling this view 'subjectivist', since it countenances objective constraints. However, artifactual subjectivism makes value as subjective as other impositions of mind onto world. Value is completely created by valuing attitudes – much as the composer's activity completely determines the musical work. It's just that this determination is mediated by a metaphysical law that must abide by objective principles – but this is no less true for art than for value. In offloading lies the key to mistakes about artifacts. And in treating normativity as an artifact lies the key to capturing the mind-dependence of normativity while nevertheless accommodating mistakes. While I focused on personal value, the basic framework of the view applies to other areas of normativity, once it's clarified which activities put which normative features in place. Thus, the theory of imposition externalism supports the artifactual approach to metaethics by offering a general metaphysical framework in which normativity is just one area in which offloading takes place. Putting offloading to use in metaethics simultaneously supports imposition externalism by revealing its explanatory reach.<sup>12</sup>

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