

# Fittingness

## A User's Guide

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### 1.1 Introduction

This volume explores the nature, roles, and applications of the notion of fittingness in contemporary normative and metanormative theory. The fittingness relation can be glossed as the relation in which a response stands to a feature of the world when that feature merits, or is worthy of, that response. It is thus the relation in which each of our responses stand when I admire an admirable effort, you laud a laudable performance, Beri believes a credible proposition, and Dhitri desires a desirable outcome. Likewise, it is the relation that fear stands in when its object is fearsome, that love stands in when its object is lovable, and that blame stands in when its object is blameworthy. Across these cases, the relevant attitudes or responses are merited by, and hence fitting with respect to, their objects.<sup>1</sup>

In the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, this normative notion of fittingness occupied a prominent place in the theoretical toolkits of the period's most influential ethical theorists. Then, up until the early aughts, discussion of the relation all but disappeared from the discourse of ethical theory. Today, the notion has regained prominence, promising to enrich the theoretical resources of contemporary normative theorists and taking centre stage

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar gloss on fittingness, see Howard (2018).

in many debates in normative and metanormative philosophy. For example, the ‘fitting-attitude’ analysis of value is now perhaps the most well-known and most discussed account of value and the notorious ‘wrong kind of reason problem’ (WKR) has emerged from discussion of this analysis. And there is now also great momentum behind the ‘fittingness-first’ research programme, which tries to understand all of normativity ultimately in terms of fittingness. Still, despite its historical significance and the recent revival of interest, there has been no central discussion of the notion of fittingness to date. The present volume aims to fill this gap.

The chapters to follow cover a range of topics including the nature and epistemology of fittingness, the relation(s) between fittingness and reasons, the normativity of fittingness, fittingness and value theory, and the role of fittingness in theorizing about responsibility. This introduction surveys these issues and highlights the chapters in which they’re discussed. We conclude with a brief discussion of issues to do with fittingness that aren’t covered extensively or at all by the contributions to the volume in order to indicate avenues for further research. This highlights our view of the volume as a conversation starter rather than as a comprehensive guide to, or exhaustive analysis of, all things related to fit. This volume’s chapters collectively if tacitly support the hypothesis that the notion of fittingness has great theoretical utility in grappling with a range of normative matters. We thus think that further study and application of the relation is called for, and we hope this volume helps to motivate this.

## 1.2 The Nature and Epistemology of Fittingness

It’s sometimes supposed that the normative domain divides neatly into two broad kinds of normative categories: deontic ones (e.g. rightness, requiredness, and permissibility) and

evaluative ones (e.g. goodness, badness, and betterness). The question of which of these fittingness falls under has been a matter of debate, though it's often assumed that the relation is deontic (see, e.g. Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004). Thus, fitting-attitude analyses of value are sometimes held to involve a commitment about the relation of priority between the right and the good, taking the former to be prior to the latter. In his contribution to the volume, however, Selim Berker challenges this picture by arguing that fittingness is neither deontic nor evaluative but of its own normative kind with its own distinctive nature (Chapter 2). The result is a call to restructure historically entrenched thinking about the normative domain itself and our inquiry into it; this domain has more texture than is often thought, with fittingness occupying a *sui generis* and ineliminable place within it. An upshot, according to Berker, is that the traditional question of priority between the right and the good should be reframed as a question about the priority between the right, the good, and the fitting.

Although fittingness is often taken to be a deontic category, the idea that the relation is *sui generis* within this category, and unanalysable in other normative terms (whether deontic or evaluative), has strong historical roots. Indeed, starting with Brentano (1889/1969), there's a venerable tradition of taking fittingness not only to be unanalysable in other normative terms, but of holding that all other normative entities, whether deontic or evaluative, can be analysed in terms of it (see also Ewing 1947). Within the last decade there's been a resurgence of interest in this 'fittingness-first' approach to normativity, with several authors advancing different versions of it (Chappell 2012; McHugh and Way 2016, forthcoming b; Cullity 2018; Howard 2019). This is partly a response to the rise in the early aughts of the 'reasons-first' approach to normativity, which holds that normative reasons are the fundamental normative entities in terms of which all others can be explained (Scanlon 1998; Schroeder 2007; Skorupski 2010; Parfit 2011; Rowland 2019). Many contemporary

fittingness-firsters have argued that their view has important advantages over this rival reasons-first view, particularly given its fittingness-based account of value which, unlike a reasons-based account, seems to avoid the famous ‘WKR problem’ (more on which below; see also McHugh and Way’s Chapter 11). However, despite its seeming advantages, the fittingness-first approach isn’t without its critics. In his contribution to the volume (Chapter 3), Thomas Hurka considers and rejects recent arguments in favour of fittingness-first and develops new arguments against it. Instead, Hurka defends the view that there is no single, normatively fundamental entity in terms of which all others can be accounted for and argues for a ‘two-concept’ view, according to which rightness and goodness are equally normatively basic, unable to be explained in terms of each other or in terms of normative entities of any other kind.

Regardless of whether fittingness is normatively first or constitutes a *sui generis* normative kind, other questions about its nature are pressing. One such question concerns what kinds of things are evaluable for it, i.e. what kinds of things are assessable as fitting or unfitting. Common to the contemporary and historical literature is the idea that attitudes, or intentional mental states, are assessable for fittingness, where this includes states like beliefs, emotions, desires, and intentions. And some have held that actions, too, are assessable for fittingness (see Section 1.6 below). Oded Na’aman’s contribution to the volume, however, proposes a radically liberal conception of what’s fit-evaluable, according to which not only actions and attitudes are fit-assessable but also physiological conditions such as headaches and heart rates (Chapter 4). According to Na’aman, this view not only aligns with our actual evaluative practices but is also supported by powerful theoretical considerations.

Although the fit-evaluability of certain types of human response is up for debate, it’s generally regarded as uncontroversial that emotions, at least, can be assessed as fitting or unfitting. Equally uncontroversial is the idea that the fittingness of every fitting emotion

corresponds (extensionally) to some evaluative quality as possessed by the emotion's object. It's fitting to love someone, for instance, just in case they're *lovable*, to deplore something just in case it's *deplorable*, to condemn someone just in case they're *contemptible*, and to adore something just in case it's *adorable*.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it's widely held that the fitting intensity of an emotion is constrained by the degree of the evaluative quality to which it's a fitting response. For instance, how much adoration it's fitting to feel towards Alan is constrained by how adorable Alan is (for discussion, see esp. Maguire 2018 and Berker's Chapter 1). Thus, in terms made famous by Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson (2000), whether a token emotion is fitting (or how fitting it is) turns not only on whether it's fitting in *shape*, i.e. whether it's a response to an evaluative quality that renders emotions of its type fitting, but also on whether it's fitting in *size*, i.e. whether its intensity is proportionate to the degree of the quality in question. Various explanations of these apparently necessary connections are possible, but in his contribution to the volume, Justin D'Arms proposes that explanations of the connections between the fittingness of certain emotions and the presence of certain evaluative qualities should proceed by appeal to the natures of the relevant emotions themselves (Chapter 5). Further, D'Arms suggests that we can gain insight into certain evaluative qualities by interrogating the natures of the emotions whose fittingness those qualities correspond to. For example, we can learn what sorts of non-evaluative features make for *shamefulness*, or ground our judgements about this evaluative quality, by investigating the nature of shame.

Turning from issues to do with the nature of fit and its explanatory role within the normative domain, we might also wish to know how we can know what's fitting to what, or how we can gain knowledge of facts involving fittingness more generally. In principle, any

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<sup>2</sup> For discussion, see, e.g. Brandt (1946), Schroeder (2010), Way (2012), and Howard (2018).

moral epistemology might be applicable here, though of course some may be more plausible than others depending on our view about the metaphysics of fittingness. In his *Foundations of Ethics*, Ross suggests in several places that at least certain fittingness-involving propositions—for instance, that admiration is fitting towards what’s intrinsically good—are self-evident and that our knowledge of such a priori truths (and how we acquire it) is analogous to our knowledge of a priori truths in other domains, e.g. mathematics. In his contribution to the volume (Chapter 6), Philip Stratton-Lake explores the prospects for this epistemology of fit, applying the specific rationalist epistemology of the a priori that he defends in other work (Stratton-Lake 2016). Stratton-Lake argues that this approach to the epistemology of fittingness is at least as promising in accounting for our knowledge of facts involving fit as it is in accounting for our knowledge of other kinds of normative facts, for example, facts about oughts and values.

### 1.3 Fittingness, Reasons, Normativity

In the last several decades of normative philosophy, normative reasons have been all the rage. In *What We Owe to Each Other*, Scanlon famously suggests that the reason relation can’t be analysed or accounted for in more basic terms, but that it can only be glossed in terms of ‘favouring’ such that reasons ‘count in favour’ of what they’re reasons for. Unsurprisingly, Scanlon’s claim that facts about reasons are unanalysable resulted in many philosophers attempting to analyse them. And in recent years, several philosophers have attempted to explain facts about reasons in terms of facts about fittingness specifically (see, e.g. Danielsson and Olson 2007; Chappell 2012; Sharadin 2015; McHugh and Way 2016; Whiting 2021; and Howard 2019). One motivation for this, beyond the aspiration to analyse a philosophically interesting category, is to explain a putatively necessary connection between

fittingness and reasons, viz. that facts that contribute to the fit of a response seem also to provide pro tanto reasons for it. For example, facts that contribute to a person's admirability, and thus the fittingness of admiring them, seem also to provide reason to admire them. Likewise, facts that contribute to something's fearsomeness, and thus the fittingness of fearing it, seem also to provide reasons to fear it. The hope is that a fit-based analysis of reasons could provide an explanation of this and other interesting links between the two relations. Of course, a reasons-based analysis of fit might be similarly explanatory, and some authors have attempted precisely this (e.g. Schroeder 2010; Rowland 2019). In his contribution to the volume, however, Garrett Cullity joins the former camp, advancing a new account of reasons in terms of fit (Chapter 7). Cullity argues that his fit-based account of reasons is extensionally and explanatorily superior to existing accounts of the relationship between the two relations.

An alternative approach to explaining the connections between fittingness and reasons appeals not to an analysis of one in terms of the other, but rather to analyses of each in terms of some third factor. One version of this approach appeals specifically to facts about value, or goodness, in order to explain facts about reasons and fit. A virtue of this approach is that it stands to explain not only facts about the relationship between fittingness and reasons, but also the connections between each of these and value. And there do seem to be connections here that call for explanation. For example, something's being valuable seems both necessary and sufficient for its being fitting to value, and at least sufficient for there being reasons to value it. And value-based accounts of each of reasons and fit might explain these connections. For instance, a value-based account of fittingness might explain why something has value if and only if it's fitting to value by appeal to the hypothesis that a thing's being fitting to value consists in its being intrinsically valuable to value, plus the substantive, axiological claim that something is valuable if and only if it's intrinsically valuable to value it

(Hurka 2001). A value-based account of fittingness might thus explain the above connection between what's valuable and what's fitting to value, by explaining fittingness directly in terms of the value of valuing responses that stand in this relation. Alternatively, a value-based approach might explain facts about fittingness and reasons not in terms of facts about the value of responses that stand in these relations but rather in terms of facts about the value of the *objects* of such responses. For instance, a value-based account of reasons that explains facts about reasons to value things fully in terms of facts about the value of those things might explain why there are always reasons to value valuable things (see, e.g. Orsi 2013b).

Common to these different value-based views is a commitment to the idea that facts about reasons and fittingness can be explained *directly* in terms of facts about the value of either the responses that stand in these relations or the objects of those responses. Also common to these views is that they seem to face powerful criticisms (see, e.g. Way 2013, Howard 2018, Rowland 2019, Kiesewetter 2022, and McHugh and Way's Chapter 11). However, as R. A. Rowland argues in their contribution to the volume, a distinct, *indirect* value-based view is also in the offing (Chapter 8). On this view, both facts about reasons and fit are explained by facts about the value of being guided by certain normative standards. Rowland's chapter introduces and explores a version of this view, argues that it seems able to avoid the problems that direct value-based views face, and compares the view against competing ones that would reverse the order of explanation, explaining facts about value in terms of facts about reasons or fit (more on which in Section Three of the volume; see esp. McHugh and Way's Chapter 11).

Discussion concerning the nature of reasons, value, and fittingness, and the relationships between these normative properties, are by this point familiar in the normativity literature. And, as was indicated above, it's increasingly common today to hold that fittingness plays an important role in explaining facts about reasons and value. In his contribution to the volume,



Nicholas Southwood puts fittingness to work in a further, less explored but complementary way, arguing for a fit-based account of a property that's central to normative theorizing, viz. *feasibility* (Chapter 9). Building on recent work, Southwood develops and defends an account of feasibility in terms of fitting deliberation specifically.<sup>3</sup> On this view, what makes an action feasible, roughly, is its being a fitting subject of deliberation about what to do. In addition to providing a novel account of a theoretically and practically important property, Southwood's contribution thus demonstrates yet another way in which fittingness might be profitably appealed to in explaining properties of clear and central normative significance.

In the wake of Scanlon's reasons-based account of value—the 'buck-passing' account of value—came the notorious WKR problem (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000; Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004). On the buck-passing account, something has value if and only if there are reasons to value it. The WKR problem is the problem that, in some cases, there seem to be reasons to value things that have no value—for example, if a demon threatens to kill me unless I value a saucer of mud (Crisp 2000).<sup>4</sup> These reasons are of the 'wrong kind' to figure in the buck-passing account: they're reasons to value something that don't also make the thing valuable, and hence constitute counter-examples to the view. 'Right-kind' reasons to value something are reasons that do make the thing valuable and hence figure properly in the

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<sup>3</sup> Southwood introduces his fit-based account of feasibility in Southwood (forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> In addition to there being cases in which there seem to be reasons to value something of no value, there are also cases in which there seems to be no reason to value something that is of value (see, e.g. Bykvist 2009 and Reisner 2015). Putative counter-examples of this second sort are sometimes taken to be instances of the WKR problem, but are other times characterized as exemplifying the 'wrong kind of value' problem. For critical discussion of this latter problem, see esp. Orsi (2013a), Elliott (2017), and Rowland (2019: ch. 7).

account. This is the origin of the right-/wrong-kind reason distinction in recent normative philosophy (for more on which, see Gertken and Kiesewetter 2017).

One response to the WKR problem is to try to distinguish between reasons of the right and wrong kind in a way that doesn't make the buck-passing account circular, and to revise the account such that it references only right-kind reasons. A second response is to reject the counter-examples that constitute the problem, i.e. to deny that putative wrong-kind reasons for attitudes are genuine reasons for those attitudes. Following Jonathan Way (2012), call this latter response 'WKR skepticism'. For a time, WKR skepticism was a dominant view (Skorupski 2010; Parfit 2011; Way 2012; Rowland 2015). Wrong-kind reasons make good or beneficial the attitudes they seem to favour. But according to many philosophers, it's not sufficient for a fact's being a reason for an attitude that it makes the attitude good to have (see, e.g. the long line of skeptics about pragmatic reasons for belief). However, in recent years, many authors have come not only to reject WKR skepticism, but to defend an ethics of attitudes on which wrong-kind reasons are the only genuine, authoritative reasons for attitudes there are (see esp. Côté-Bouchard and Littlejohn 2018; Rinard 2019; and Maguire and Woods 2020). These philosophers are thus 'RKR skeptics': they deny that right-kind reasons are genuine reasons for attitudes. In their contribution to the volume, Chris Howard and Stephanie Leary argue that RKR skepticism fails to capture intuitions about which attitudes we authoritatively ought to (or may) adopt and that existing arguments that right-kind reasons aren't reasons, or that they're at best formally normative, are unsound; hence, we should accept that right-kind reason are genuine reasons for attitudes, i.e. that they can contribute to determining which attitudes we authoritatively ought to have (Chapter 10). On the popular and plausible assumption that right-kind reasons are facts that contribute to the *fittingness* of

the attitudes they favour,<sup>5</sup> it follows that fittingness itself is an authoritatively normative relation. Hence, Howard and Leary's argument doubles as an argument for the authoritative normativity of fit.

## 1.4 Fittingness and Value Theory

The plausible idea that right-kind reasons for attitudes contribute to the fittingness of the attitudes they favour suggests a promising solution to the WKR problem. Rather than explaining facts about value in terms of facts about reasons for valuing, we might instead explain the former facts in terms of facts about the fittingness of valuing. On this fit-based account of value, for something to be good or valuable is for it to be fitting to value. As noted above, this view, unlike a reasons-based account, doesn't seem to face the WKR problem. For although the fact that a demon will kill you unless you value a saucer of mud may give you a reason to value the mud, this fact doesn't make the mud fitting to value since it's not a fact in virtue of which the mud merits, or is worthy of, a valuing attitude.

Fittingness-based accounts of value thus look to have an advantage over reasons-based accounts in answering the WKR problem (cf. Rowland 2017). However, reasons-based views may seem to have an advantage over fit-based accounts when it comes to answering a different problem, viz. the problem of partiality (Ewing 1939; Bykvist 2009). Suppose there are two possible outcomes: one in which your friend is saved and a stranger dies and one in which the reverse occurs. And suppose also that, beyond this difference, all else is equal. Then assuming that being valuable or good (*simpliciter*) is an agent-neutral evaluative notion,

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<sup>5</sup> There are too many authors to cite here, but see, inter alia, Danielsson and Olson (2007), Chappell (2012), D'Arms and Jacobson (2014), Sharadin (2015), McHugh and Way (2016), and Howard (2019).

the two outcomes seem equally good. But intuitively, the balance of reasons supports your preferring the former. In addition, and crucially, it seems fitting for you to have this preference (cf. Olson 2009). This data rules out a natural reasons-based account of *betterness* on which one outcome's being better than another consists in the balance of reasons supporting just anyone's preferring it. Likewise, it rules out a fit-based view on which an outcome's being better than another consists in its being fitting for just anyone to prefer it. This is the problem of partiality.

As Conor McHugh and Jonathan Way make clear in their contribution (Chapter 11), reasons-based views have a plausible answer to this problem. Relying on the well-founded distinction between agent-neutral and agent-relative reasons, proponents of reasons-based views might restrict the reasons in terms of which they analyse facts about what's better than what to agent-neutral reasons specifically, claiming that one outcome's being better than another consists in the balance of agent-neutral reasons supporting just anyone's preferring it (Stratton-Lake and Hooker 2006; Rowland 2019). This revised view is consistent with our intuitions about cases like the above: since the outcome where your friend lives is equally as good as the outcome where the stranger does, the balance of agent-neutral reasons supports being indifferent, but the balance of *all* the reasons, including agent-relative ones, supports your preferring the former. Hence, reasons-based accounts have an elegant solution to the problem of partiality which draws on an independently motivated distinction between neutral and relative reasons; hence, such views may seem to have an advantage over fit-based views in answering this problem. However, McHugh and Way argue in their contribution that a broadly similar solution is available for fit-based views, one which relies not on distinguishing between types of fittingness—neutral and relative—but rather between types of valuing attitudes. Thus, McHugh and Way argue, insofar as their solution is equally as

plausible as that offered by proponents of reasons-based accounts, reasons-based views have no advantage over fit-based ones in answering the problem of partiality.

In addition to figuring in an attractive metaphysical account of the nature of goodness (and betterness), fittingness can also be put to work in first-order value theory, as Mauro Rossi and Christine Tappolet demonstrate in their contribution (Chapter 12). Rossi and Tappolet marshal fittingness specifically to provide a first-order account of goodness-for, or well-being, according to which what's basically good for people is fitting happiness. Rossi and Tappolet argue that this view avoids the standard objections to more traditional happiness-based theories, while maintaining the intuitive, close connection between well-being and happiness. One important feature of their proposal is a view of happiness as consisting in a complex of affective states including emotions, moods, and sensory pleasures, which, they claim, can themselves be assessed as fitting or unfitting; hence, the fit-evaluability of happiness itself. In addition to contributing to the debate about what makes lives go well, Rossi and Tappolet thus also take a meaningful stand on the issue of what kinds of states can be assessed for fit.

In addition to being profitably deployed to investigate different varieties of goodness, fittingness has also traditionally been appealed to in order to explicate more specific evaluative properties, such as that of being lovable, despicable, adorable, pitiful, delightful, and amusing. Indeed, as indicated above, and going as far back as Brandt (1946), it's been widely held that such properties are at least equivalent to, if not analysable in terms of, the fittingness of various types of human response (see Berker's Chapter 1 and D'Arms's Chapter 5). Importantly, fit-based analyses of these properties are compatible with the possibility that their analysanda are never instantiated, and hence that the responses in terms of which they're analysed are never fitting. Historically, even realists about various other evaluative properties have found this thought tempting regarding certain 'negative' evaluative

properties—in particular, that of being enviable. Indeed, it may seem that envy, no matter the circumstances, could never be a merited response. However, in her contribution to the volume (Chapter 13), Sara Protasi resists this, arguing not only that envy can be fitting—and hence that the property of being enviable can be instantiated—but that it often is. Indeed, Protasi argues, envy’s central concern—relative positioning—is connected intimately and systematically with our flourishing as human beings.

Among the specific evaluative properties that might be explicated by appeal to fit are aesthetic properties, such as that of being delicious, charming, and beautiful. Fitting attitude theories of various aesthetic properties have been suggested in recent years by philosophers including, among others, Daniel Jacobson (2011) and Keren Gorodeisky (2021). Alex King, in her contribution to the volume (Chapter 14), argues that such theories can be helpfully classified as a kind of *response-dependence theory*, where a response-dependence theory of a property *F* claims that a thing’s *F*-ness depends on its bearing a certain relationship to a certain sort of human response (see also D’Arms’s Chapter 5; cf. Berker’s Chapter 1). According to fitting attitude theories, the relevant relationship to human responses is *normative*: something has a certain aesthetic property when, and because, a certain response is merited by—or fitting with respect to—the relevant thing. But on a different kind of response-dependence theory—*dispositionalism*—the relationship in question is purely descriptive. For example, a dispositionalist theory of a certain aesthetic property might claim that something has the property when and because, as a purely descriptive matter, humans are disposed to respond to it in a certain way. Historically, response-dependence views of aesthetic properties have skewed dispositionalist (see, e.g. Hume 1740/1975 and Kant 1790/2000). However, King argues that, in fact, fitting attitude theories have several important advantages over dispositionalist views. She highlights the versions of fitting attitude theories she takes to be most promising for explaining aesthetic value, but also raises

several new and serious challenges for theories of this kind. King's contribution thus constitutes a thoroughgoing assessment of the prospects for response-dependence views of aesthetic properties.

## 1.5 Fittingness and Responsibility

Fittingness has a chequered history in the moral responsibility literature. It features prominently and helpfully in Joel Feinberg's 'Justice and Personal Desert', for example, but is characterized (only a year earlier) as a 'pitiful intellectualist trinket' by P. F. Strawson in his seminal 'Freedom and Resentment'. In the last decade, however, fittingness has assumed an increasingly visible and important role in work on moral responsibility. David Shoemaker (2017), for example, has recently defended a normative response-dependence theory of blameworthiness, according to which someone is blameworthy if and only if, and because, they're fitting to blame. This contrasts with (a possible interpretation of) Strawson's view that amounts to a dispositionalist response-dependence account, and with other normative response-dependence theories of blameworthiness which specify a distinct normative relation that blame must stand in to its object for its object to be blameworthy (see, e.g. Wallace 1994). The final chapters of this volume investigate and discuss this and other ways in which fittingness may be a theoretically useful concept in theorizing about moral responsibility.

Michael McKenna's contribution to the volume (Chapter 15) interrogates Strawson's belittling remarks about fittingness, argues that a normative interpretation of Strawson's view of responsibility is required, and that in fact Strawson ought to have appealed in his own account to the very notion of fittingness that he seems to deride. In the course of making this case, McKenna also defends a Feinberg-inspired account of desert as a species of fittingness and offers a novel account of what differentiates deserved responses from merely fitting ones,

drawing out the implications of this analysis for debates concerning free will and moral responsibility: although deserved blame might require the satisfaction of a strong freedom requirement, merely fitting blame does not. Normative response-dependence theories of blameworthiness that appeal to desert over and above mere fittingness may in this way be more metaphysically committal than those that appeal only to fit.

Beyond the task of elucidating the nature of blameworthiness, a second and similarly important project, central to discussions of moral responsibility, is to investigate the nature of blame itself. One question is whether there's anything important enough in common to blame responses to justify our theorizing about blame as such. As Rachel Achs makes clear in her contribution to the volume (Chapter 16), this question is pressing given the impressive diversity of blame responses. For example, one might blame by withdrawing care, verbally scolding, silently stewing, or via a critical subtweet. What, if anything, is distinctive of all these responses such that they're worthy of investigation as kinds of *blame*? Insofar as our theorizing about blame presupposes a single uniform subject, an answer to this question seems necessary to vindicate it. And, according to Achs, the notion of fittingness can be fruitfully appealed to here, in order to provide such an answer. On Achs's view, blame essentially involves a kind of reflexive endorsement, i.e. a commitment to its own fittingness and to its being fitting directly on the basis of the target's having done something wrong, and this is why blame, as such, is worthy of investigation as a unified phenomenon. In addition to identifying an essential feature of blame, Achs argues that this view also helps to explain certain other of blame's marks—its directedness, and the felt character of blame common to many of its varied manifestations.

Recent work in the ethics of attitudes has drawn attention to a puzzle concerning the fitting duration of attitudes (see esp. Marušić 2018, 2020; Na'aman 2021). Roughly: it seems fitting for certain attitudes to fade with time, for example, grief and regret. But it can seem



that, in many cases, the facts that make these attitudes fitting persist. But if the facts that make an attitude fitting persist, then how can it be fitting for the attitude to fade? In short: why shouldn't the attitude stay fitting forever? This is the puzzle, that of explaining how certain attitudes can fittingly fade over time. This puzzle applies widely, but seems especially pressing in the case of blame (Callard 2018; Hieronymi 2001; Na'aman 2020). According to a common view, agents are blameworthy when and because they've culpably performed a wrongful act. But if an agent culpably performs a wrongful act, then it will always be true that they did. Hence, if an agent is blameworthy in virtue of culpably performing a wrongful act, then they're blameworthy forever. Hence, if it's fitting to blame the blameworthy, blame is forever fitting. But this seems intuitively false, and so something must give. In her contribution to the volume (Chapter 17), Hannah Tierney proposes a novel solution to this puzzle, specifically as it applies to blame. Tierney rejects the view that culpable wrongdoing suffices to make agents blameworthy over time, and instead proposes a reparative view of diachronic blameworthiness, on which agents stay blameworthy, and so fitting to blame, only insofar as their reparative duties to their victims go unfulfilled. Notably, although Tierney's proposal stands to explain why fitting blame *needn't* stay fitting forever, it entails that it could, insofar as blameworthy agents fail to satisfy their reparative duties.

## 1.6 The Future of Fit

The discussion of fittingness in the twenty-first century is still in its infancy. In closing this introduction, we want to highlight several potential avenues of further research concerning the nature of fittingness and its possible applications in philosophical theorizing. Some of these issues are touched on by contributions to the volume, but have yet to be fully pursued; others are wholly uncharted.

### *1.6.1 Fittingness and Correctness*

One important question concerns the relationship between fittingness and correctness. Many contemporary authors gloss if not analyse the fittingness of an attitude as a matter of the attitude's satisfying a standard of correctness that is internal to or constitutive of it (McHugh and Way 2016; Schroeder 2010; Sharadin 2015). Some historical precedent for equating fittingness with a kind of correctness comes from Brentano (1889/1969), who uses the language of correctness in formulating his fitting attitude account of value: for something to be of value is for it to be 'correct' to love (16, 100). Brentano clarifies that '[o]ne loves or hates correctly provided that one's feelings are adequate to their object—adequate in the sense of being appropriate, suitable, or fitting' (48). And it's independently intuitive to think there's a close link between fittingness and correctness. It seems correct to admire admirable people, but incorrect to admire evil demons and deplorable dictators; and it may seem incoherent to claim, for example, that friendship is desirable but incorrect to desire.

Furthermore, for any attitude, it seems quite natural to call it 'correct' insofar as it's fitting

However, there is more work to be done in clarifying the relationship between fittingness and correctness. For one, there are several senses in which an attitude might be 'correct'. For example, an attitude's being 'correct', in one sense, amounts to its satisfying a standard or norm, but 'correct' can also mean accurate or true. And indeed, although many philosophers have suggested that fittingness amounts to correctness in the first sense, some also suggest, instead, that fittingness is correctness in the second sense (e.g. Tappolet 2011; Rossi and Tappolet, this volume). On this latter view, sometimes called 'the alethic view' (Rosen 2015), for an attitude to be fitting is for it to correctly, i.e. accurately, represent its object. But this view is rejected by many if not all those who hold that fittingness is correctness in the first sense, i.e. in the sense that amounts to norm satisfaction. One reason for this is that it's not clear that attitudes that are correct in the norm-satisfying sense always represent their objects

accurately (or at all), and so the view that fittingness is correctness in the norm-satisfying sense is at odds with the alethic view (Schroeder 2010; McHugh and Way 2016).<sup>6</sup> But even among those who reject the alethic view and hold that fittingness is correctness in the sense of norm satisfaction, there is also a debate about whether the norms in question are internal to, constitutive of, or external to, the attitudes they seem to govern (on this, see D'Arms's Chapter 5 and Howard and Leary's Chapter 10).

Considering the relationship between fittingness and correctness also leads to a further question about the nature of fit, viz. whether the relation is gradable. Goodness and badness are gradable properties—something can be more or less good or bad—and so too are the weights of reasons—a reason can be more or less weighty. According to some, fittingness is also gradable, e.g. it can be more fitting to desire one thing than to desire another (Howard 2019). But according to others, fittingness is not a gradable property and is instead an all-or-nothing status, like requirement or permission (McHugh and Way 2016, this volume; Maguire 2018). Whether fittingness is gradable has implications for how it relates to non-gradable deontic properties such as permissibility (see Berker's Chapter 2 and Hurka's Chapter 3) and may also be relevant to how we should formulate fitting attitude accounts of comparative evaluative properties, such as that of being better or worse. The possible equivalence of fittingness and correctness is relevant here since, on the face of things, correctness seems to be an all-or-nothing status rather than a gradable one: something can't be more or less correct (cf. Wedgwood 2013). So, settling how fittingness relates to correctness may also involve settling whether fit is gradable.

### *1.6.2 Fitting Action*

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<sup>6</sup> For further criticism of the alethic view, see especially Svavarsdóttir (2014) and Naar (2021).

Most discussions of fittingness in the last twenty years have focused on the fittingness of attitudes. But might actions be fit-assessable too? As Hurka's Chapter 3 and Stratton-Lake's Chapter 6 discuss, the idea that actions are fit-assessable was common among philosophers writing about fit in the mid-twentieth century: C. D. Broad (1930) claimed that we could understand Ross's prima facie duties in terms of fittingness and Ross embraced this view in his *Foundations of Ethics*. And indeed, it can seem hard to deny that actions are fit-assessable. It seems fitting to praise the praiseworthy, for instance, and to discuss what's worthy of discussion (Gertken and Kiesewetter 2017). Likewise, it seems fitting to punish those who merit punishment, and unfitting to reward them. Furthermore, one of the most influential accounts of the right-/wrong-kind reason distinction, due to Mark Schroeder (2010), holds that this distinction arises in any domain that's constitutively governed by a standard of correctness (see also Sharadin 2015). On this view, since there's a constitutively correct way to set the table for a royal dinner and to execute the Queen's Gambit, there can be right-kind reasons to set the royal table in a certain way and to move one's chess pieces. So, assuming that right-kind reasons for a response explain or indicate the response's fit, it follows that at least some types of acts can be fitting.

But what might it take for an act to be fitting? If we accept a Schroeder-style view, then our answer should differ depending on the type of act at issue, given that different types of act are constitutively governed by their own, differing standards of correctness. However, this may ultimately seem like a reason to reject the Schroeder-style analysis. For as Howard and Leary suggest in Chapter 10, it seems that an act could be correct by its own standard, but unfitting—for example, a correctly executed pirouette might be unmerited and hence unfitting in the context of a funeral.

An alternative view is that the fittingness of acts is similar to the fittingness of attitudes in the following way. The fittingness of an attitude is unaffected by facts about the good or

bad consequences of having the attitude: the good consequences of admiring an evil demon can't make the demon fit to admire since they don't make them *admirable*, or worthy of admiration. Likewise, we might think that the fittingness of an act is determined by considerations other than those to do with the good or bad consequences of performing the act. Instead, we might say that the fittingness of an action is similarly determined entirely by facts about whether the action is merited by the situation, or by certain features of it. This seems to be the view espoused by Broad (1930/1956: 221).

But this view faces some difficulties, one of which is pointed out by Ross (1939/1949: 81–2). Contrary to Broad, Ross saw no reason why the goodness of an act's outcome couldn't affect whether the act is fitting to a situation. After all, one feature of your situation might be that if you were to act in a certain way, you'd produce a good outcome. So, why couldn't this feature of your situation even in principle merit the performance of the act? On Ross's view, then, the goodness of an act's outcome is among the factors that can contribute to its fittingness. If this view is right, then there is an important difference between the fittingness of acts and attitudes: the goodness of performing an act can contribute to its fit, whereas the fittingness of an attitude is unaffected by its goodness.

One issue for the Rossian view is this. Consider acts of praise and blame. It seems fitting to praise only the praiseworthy and to blame only the blameworthy. Yet the view that the goodness of an act's consequences can affect the act's fit seems in tension with these claims. For example, if this view is right, then presumably there are possible scenarios in which it's fitting to praise someone who is not praiseworthy, viz. scenarios in which the consequences of doing so are sufficiently good. Worries like this may lead us back to a Broadian view on which the fittingness of actions is similar to the fittingness of attitudes in being unaffected by considerations to do with their good consequences. Hence, the question of what it might take

for an action to be fitting remains unsettled. And indeed, it remains open whether acts are fit-assessable at all.<sup>7</sup> This area is thus ripe for further research.

### *1.6.3 New Applications*

The chapters in the fourth part of this volume explain how fittingness can be appealed to in order elucidate properties and attitudes of central significance to the moral domain, viz. responsibility and blame. And other work on fittingness, including Alex King's contribution to the volume (Chapter 14), has explored the utility of fittingness for understanding the normativity of aesthetic properties. A further avenue for future fittingness research concerns whether fit can be productively appealed to in investigating various other domains and their normativity.

Nicholas Southwood's contribution to the volume articulates an account of feasibility in terms of fit (Chapter 9). One of the main drivers behind Southwood's project is to understand the nature and role of feasibility in politics since feasibility is an especially politically significant property. But fittingness might have other applications in political philosophy too. For example, some political theorists have suggested that political normativity is importantly distinct from moral normativity (Williams 2005; Rossi and Sleat 2014; cf. Maynard and Worsnip 2018). Since the normativity of fittingness isn't always moral, one possibility is that fit could be appealed to in elaborating this hypothesis. For instance, some suggest it can be fitting to be amused by immoral jokes insofar as they're amusing (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000); and it might be fitting to envy someone even if envying them is overall morally bad (see, e.g. Protasi's Chapter 13). Hence, given that the normativity of fit seems already to

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<sup>7</sup> For reasons to doubt that actions per se can be fitting, as opposed to intentions to perform them, see McHugh and Way (forthcoming a, forthcoming b); see also Rowland (forthcoming a).

extend beyond moral normativity, we might postulate a form of fit-related normativity that extends beyond the moral in the political realm. Indeed, some moves in this direction have already been made by political theorists attracted to related ideas. For example, Michael Walzer (1980) appeals to the ‘fit’ between a state’s government and its community to explain why, on his view, the moral benefits of humanitarian intervention inside a nation state’s territory don’t always override states’ rights to political sovereignty.

Fit might be put to use to explain concepts and properties in social philosophy, too. For instance, we might appeal to it in order to understand certain identities. People who have a gender identity at odds with the gender they were assigned at birth often explain that they experience the latter gender as not fitting them, or judge that it’s not fitting to treat them as having that gender (e.g. Serano 2016: 226; Weiss 2018). One possibility is that the notion of fit at issue here is purely descriptive—corresponding to the relation that obtains, for instance, when a puzzle piece fits into place—and is hence distinct from the notion of fit that’s the subject of this volume’s investigation, i.e. the notion that can be paraphrased in terms of merit and worthiness. But another possibility is that the sense of ‘fit’ that figures in claims like the above in fact refers to our target relation, and could thus be usefully appealed to in order to shed light on gender concepts and our judgements about them (Rowland forthcoming b).

These are just some of the avenues of future fittingness research that seem interesting and important to us. We hope this introduction, and the diverse and wide-ranging contributions to this volume, will encourage readers to think more about fittingness and its potential to shed light on various normative matters, across a variety of domains. We’re excited to see what the future of fit might hold.

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