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Engaging with the Past: Essays on History, Value, and Practical Reason

by

Erich Henry Matthes

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Niko Kolodny, Co-Chair
Professor R. Jay Wallace, Co-Chair
Professor Kinch Hoekstra

Spring 2013

Engaging with the Past: Essays on History, Value, and Practical Reason

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Erich Henry Matthes

Abstract

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Professor Niko Kolodny, Co-Chair

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We value many things for their historical significance—for instance, the Parthenon, Gettysburg, the redwood forests, and the tea ceremony. While they may also be beautiful, educational, or useful, we often value them simply in virtue of their historical properties. This mode of valuation carries with it a suite of common assumptions: what we value for its history is irreplaceable, it demands preservation, and we should value it only if we have a personal stake in its history. My dissertation interrogates these seemingly intuitive commitments, and explores the moral, evaluative, and political consequences of rethinking them. I develop an account of the norms governing our interactions with historically valuable objects and places, yielding an improved understanding of the values latent in such diverse examples as heirlooms, relationships, artworks, artifacts, and historic sites. It also, I argue, sheds light on other important sources of value, including persons and the natural environment.

It is often thought that things worth valuing for their historical properties are necessarily irreplaceable, and that this fact makes a defining contribution to their distinctive value. For example, no candidate substitute can be valuable in the same way as my father's ring. Against this widespread view, I argue that a plausible understanding of historical significance entails that many things we value for their histories are not irreplaceable after all. What makes historically significant things worth valuing is not their irreplaceability, but rather the *connection* with the past that they afford.

This raises the difficult question of how we can best realize a connection with the past. I argue that historical value, like value in general, fundamentally involves reasons to *engage* appropriately with valuable things: that is, to respond to them in a manner sensitive to the specific *ways* in which they are valuable, for instance, by viewing a painting, playing a sport, or savoring a fine meal. This contrasts with the views of many philosophers, who believe that the value of objects fundamentally involves reasons to *preserve* them. As I argue, reasons for preservation are subordinate to and explained by reasons for engagement—there is no reason to preserve even the *Mona Lisa* if no one can have the opportunity to engage with it. Recognizing the centrality of engagement in

evaluative theory and practice has extensive implications, both in historical cases and beyond.

Consider the distinction between personal and impersonal value. It is natural to think that some objects (such as family heirlooms) have merely personal value, whereas others (such as the pyramids or the Grand Canyon) have value for anyone. But how exactly are we to understand this distinction? Traditional accounts suggest that things are impersonally valuable if they would be valued from a suitably “detached” perspective. But I show that this criterion does not reliably identify things of impersonal value. On the alternative framework I propose, an object’s value is impersonal if and only if it is appropriate (and therefore evaluatively permissible) for *anyone* to engage with it. Only a few people have reason to engage with a family heirloom, whereas the pyramids are candidates for universal engagement. Moreover, this account leaves open the possibility that the reasons that each individual has to value the pyramids can vary with that individual’s particular history, interests, and capacities, unlike the shapeless “agent-neutral” reasons of the traditional view.

Finally, I argue that the historical mode of valuation is often properly understood as a kind of *aesthetic* valuing. While many twentieth century philosophers have acknowledged the importance of art historical properties to aesthetic evaluation, I distinguish between art historical properties and the more general historically significant properties that are found both within and beyond the artworld. I then argue that these historical properties can be accommodated on a number of influential accounts of aesthetic value, and indeed, that they comprise an important dimension in aesthetic experience. This helps cement the extension of aesthetic inquiry beyond the artworld, and articulates a familiar yet surprising way in which we engage with the past.

*For my Father,
Richard William Matthes
(1944-2012)*

Engaging with the Past: Essays on History, Value, and Practical Reason

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL VALUE AND PRACTICAL REASON	1
1. History, Value, and Significance.....	1
2. The State of the Literature	3
3. The Motivation for the Project	5
4. The Plan of Attack.....	11
5. Conclusion	12
CHAPTER 2: HISTORY, VALUE, AND IRREPLACEABILITY	13
1. The Assumption of Irreplaceability.....	13
2. Cohen’s Theory of “Particular Value”	17
2a. <i>Intrinsic Value and Particular Value</i>	19
2b. <i>Intrinsic Value and Irreplaceability</i>	20
2c. <i>Extrinsic Value and Irreplaceability</i>	21
3. Valuing An Object For What It Is.	22
4. Historical Significance and Irreplaceability	25
5. The Value of History	34
6. Conclusion	37
CHAPTER 3: WHAT’S THE POINT OF PRESERVATION?	38
1. Preservation vs. Engagement.....	38
2. Engagement Explains Preservation.....	41
3. Why Think Preservation Needs to Have a Point?.....	43
4. Further Objections	45
5. Values, Valuers, and Anthropocentrism	48
6. Further Practical Implications	51
6a. <i>Historical Significance</i>	53
6b. <i>Persons</i>	56
CHAPTER 4: IMPERSONAL VALUE AND THE PERMISSIBILITY OF VALUING	58
1. Impersonal and Personal Value	58
2. Required Engagement and Required Recognition.....	60
3. Permissible Engagement.....	67
4. The Appropriateness of Valuing History	71
5. Conclusion	79
CHAPTER 5: THE AESTHETIC VALUE OF HISTORY	81
1. Historical Properties and Art Historical Properties.....	81
2. Aesthetic Experience	83
3. History in Aesthetic Experience.....	87
4. The Aesthetic Value of History	91
5. Conclusion	94
REFERENCES:	96

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My dissertation Co-Chairs, Niko Kolodny and Jay Wallace, were paragons of dissertation advising. They were always engaged and supportive, and provided extensive comments on many, many drafts of my work. Without their time and attention, this dissertation would have been far worse. I am also grateful to Kinch Hoekstra, the outside member on my committee, who provided detailed comments and advice throughout the dissertation process, and to Lara Buchak, who has been a friend, supporter, and informal adviser, particularly during the time leading up to the job market. I cannot forget Dave Lynaugh and Janet Groome in the department office, without whom navigating the ins and outs of the Berkeley bureaucracy would have been far more arduous, and who were reliable purveyors of candy and baked goods.

The beginning of my dissertation coincided roughly with the beginning of my relationship with Jackie Hatala, my best friend, and in a few weeks, my wife. She has been an unflagging supporter throughout the dissertation process, and has made life as a graduate student imminently more enjoyable. I cannot adequately express how excited I am for our future life together.

Finally, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my family: in particular, my brilliant and loving mother and sister, Elisa and Sarah Matthes, and especially my father, Richard Matthes, to whom I dedicate this dissertation. I cannot imagine a more supportive and enthusiastic champion of my academic pursuits. Even while ill, he audited philosophy courses at Princeton so that he could better understand what I was working on. His life-long advice was to find what makes me happy, and to try to make that my job. When the economy tanked, I think he began to worry that this advice might leave me destitute. I wish he could have lived to see me accept a faculty position at Wellesley, precisely the kind of institution the two of us had hoped I might someday join. His warmth, humor, and character have always been an inspiration to me, and will continue to be so as long as I live.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Historical Value and Practical Reason

1. History, Value, and Significance

It is natural to think that certain objects, or persons, or events can be historically significant. Intuitively, we think that the Parthenon, and Confucius, and the Battle of the Milvian Bridge are significant, and not just because they were important at a particular time in the past. They are significant now, and this may be true even if they were not significant then: their significance is based on certain past-dependent facts and features, and in virtue of these features, we say that these things are *historically significant*.

Historical significance is an evaluative concept, and things can be historically significant in diverse ways and for diverse reasons depending on the context of assessment. The disciplines of history, anthropology, and archaeology, for instance, are all concerned with kinds of historical significance. This is the kind of significance that E. H. Carr invokes when he discusses the task of the historian as picking out the historical facts from the past facts¹, or that Arthur Danto discusses when he mentions the ever-changing significance of history in light of what we take to matter at a given time.² The study of this kind of significance is concerned primarily with *meaning and explanation*, with understanding the role of historical events in relation to each other, the causal interactions among them, their impact on the trajectory of world events, etc.: in general, with what we ought to *believe* about the past. Philosophical inquiry *about* this kind of significance and its determination is often referred to as the *philosophy of history*, which R. G. Collingwood characterizes as the study of “the philosophical problems created by the existence of organized and systematized historical research.”³

The academic stature of this “big picture” breed of historical significance should not, however, lead us to neglect more intimate forms of historical significance. Mementos, heirlooms, keepsakes, favorite places, perhaps personal relationships are all historically significant as well; that is, significant relative to a more personal context of assessment, but still in virtue of their historical properties.

Though dependent on assessments of historical significance, my focus in this dissertation will be elsewhere. My aim will be to clarify the relationship between historical *value* and practical reason. What does the fact that an object is historically valuable imply about what we should do or how we should feel in relation to it? In what ways are our common views about the proper responses to historical value correct or mistaken? What consequences does an investigation of historical value and practical

¹ E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (Palgrave, 2001), 8-10.

² Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge University Press, 1965).

³ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 6. Though this conception of the philosophy of history, what Arthur Danto calls “analytic philosophy of history,” is a fairly recent phenomenon. Earlier works in the philosophy of history, like those of Marx and Hegel (what Danto calls “substantive philosophy of history”), were concerned with theorizing about the general purpose of the *whole* of human history (both past and future), which Danto rightly criticizes.

reason have for broader questions of moral, evaluative, and political concern? This dissertation will endeavor to frame a response to these very questions.

What is the difference between historical significance and historical value? Primarily, whereas value is understood to have a *positive* valence, significance need not have, and indeed often lacks, a positive valence.⁴ Many historically significant events had and have a substantial *disvalue* for those associated with them, and in some cases, for humanity as a whole: to refer to the Holocaust as valuable would offend against taste and accuracy, but it was certainly a significant event. My focus then, will be on the way in which we *positively* value things *for* their historical significance, and the reasons for attitudes and actions that relate to this mode of valuation. We can, at times, still positively value an object that has a negative historical significance; for instance, when we value a remnant of an historical atrocity as a reminder of what occurred, and as a warning not to stray down the same path. And, of course, the *disvalue* of historically significant events can also issue in reasons for action and attitudes; for instance, in obligations to redress historical injustices. Understanding how we ought to respond to historical disvalue is an important question, and a promising avenue for future research. But for the most part, I will focus here on the positive valuation of objects in virtue of their historically significant properties, what I will refer to as the *historical mode of valuation*. One of course need not always value an object with historically significant properties in this way. I will use the expression *historical value* to refer to objects that warrant the historical mode of valuation. As should now be clear, according to the terminology I employ, not all historically significant objects are historically valuable.

In this introductory essay, I will motivate the importance of the project and clear some of the conceptual ground for the path ahead. I will go on in the rest of the dissertation to consider and interrogate some of the most common intuitions about historical value held by philosophers and the folk alike, namely:

- 1) That historically valuable objects are irreplaceable.
- 2) That historically valuable objects demand preservation.
- 3) That the appropriateness of valuing historically significant objects depends on having a personal stake in the relevant history.

These are only some of the common claims one finds about our actions and attitudes as they relate to historical value. I have chosen them because they are both broad in their application and commonly held. As will emerge throughout the dissertation, there are many other specific claims that are made about our reasons as they relate to historical value: some are members of the more general sets of reasons I will consider in the following chapters, while others may fall, in whole or in part, beyond their scope.

⁴ Cf. Jack W. Meiland, "Originals, Copies, and Aesthetic Value," in *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Denis Dutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 128. For a similar claim about the distinction between valuing and caring see, Samuel Scheffler, "Valuing," in *Equality and Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 25.

2. *The State of the Literature*

Sam Scheffler has recently written: “Our attitudes toward the past and the future are complex, puzzling, and poorly understood.”⁵ Perhaps most puzzling, and most neglected in contemporary philosophy, is the relationship between the value of the past and practical reason. Philosophical interest in this topic is, however, on the rise. Avishai Margalit’s *The Ethics of Memory* and Jeffrey Blustein’s *The Moral Demands of Memory*, represent recent forays by philosophers into this area of inquiry.⁶ As the titles of these books indicate, they approach the questions of historical significance from the specific angle of memory, and are concerned primarily with its moral implications (specifically with respect to moral atrocities), an interesting and helpful focus within the larger subject area. The late G.A. Cohen’s essay “Rescuing Conservatism” is a fascinating examination of the past as embodied in valued objects and how such objects should be treated, and similar appeals to the significance of the past and its place in valuing are made by Raz in his *Value, Respect, and Attachment*.⁷ Niko Kolodny and Tom Hurka both make arguments about the relationship between a shared history and certain reasons for partiality⁸, and David Velleman’s unique contributions exploring the link between history and personal identity should not be forgotten either.⁹

But while many of these texts display a concern with historical value, for some the relation between that value and what we have reason to do remains shrouded in mystery. For instance, David Velleman writes: “I claim that a life estranged from its ancestry is already truncated...This claim is no less than universal common sense—though it is also no more, I readily admit. I cannot derive it from moral principles.”¹⁰ Or consider the words of Joseph Raz, who claims: “To deny our past is to be false to ourselves. This is justification enough for our dependence on our past.”¹¹ And Stuart Hampshire writes:

Persons who conspicuously enjoy and excel in reasoning, but who have no interest in any kind of story-telling or in recalling and recording their past, tend to be considered monsters of rationality, and be called inhuman. The truth is that one half of their humanity is missing, and that is the half

⁵ Scheffler, “The Normativity of Tradition.”

⁶ Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Jeffrey Blustein, *The Moral Demands of Memory* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁷ G. A. Cohen, “Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of Existing Value,” in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁸ Niko Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” *Philosophical Review* 112, no. 2 (2003): 135-89; Thomas Hurka, “The Justification of National Partiality,” in *The Morality of Nationalism*, ed. Jeff McMahan and Robert McKim (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁹ In particular, J. David Velleman, “Persons in Prospect,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 36, no. 3 (2008): 221-88. and; J. David Velleman, “Family History,” *Philosophical Papers* 34, no. 3 (2005): 357-78.

¹⁰ Velleman, “Persons in Prospect,” 255. Though Velleman is most directly concerned here with the *biological* ties of ancestry. More on this in Chapter 4.

¹¹ Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 34.

which is least likely to be duplicated, or effectively simulated, by any machine, by any imagined non-corporeal being, or by any animal.¹²

So while these philosophers acknowledge an important relationship between historical value and practical reason, it is often regarded as fundamental, perhaps not even admitting of further explanation. It is some of the supposedly fundamental reasons we have for responding to historical value, those that assume irreplaceability, demands for preservation, and specific historical grounds for the appropriateness of valuing, that I aim to question in this dissertation.

Most of these philosophical works have been composed during the past decade or so, many quite recently. Interestingly, the same period of time has borne witness to an increased interest in the field of archeological ethics (or heritage ethics), focusing on similar questions from a different disciplinary perspective, and resulting in a slew of anthologies on the ethics of archaeology.¹³ The essays in these volumes provide first-hand knowledge of applied problems that practicing archaeologists and anthropologists confront in the field, but they tend to be short on analysis of the higher-order conceptual issues of which the specific problems are instances.¹⁴ Chris and Geoffrey Scarre critically note in the introduction to their collection (one of the few that includes both an editor and contributors from the philosophical discipline) a remark from the introduction to Karen Vitelli's 1996 *Archaeological Ethics*: "One need not be trained in philosophy, and expert in cultural property law, or even have followed closely the fast-growing body of literature on the subject, to be qualified to teach a course on archaeological ethics." Scarre and Scarre, on the other hand, emphasize that one of the primary goals of their own book "is to show how important moral questions such as these [the ones posed by archaeological research] can be approached in a more appropriate analytical manner than they sometimes have been."¹⁵ There is much of value in the Scarre collection, yet it remains primarily geared toward practicing

¹² Stuart Hampshire, *Innocence and Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 44.

¹³ These collections include, but are not limited to, Karen D. Vitelli and Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, eds., *Archaeological Ethics*, Second ed. (AltaMira Press, 2006); Larry J. Zimmerman, Karen D. Vitelli, and Julie Hollowell-Zimmer, eds., *Ethical Issues in Archaeology* (AltaMira Press 2003); Lynn Meskell and Peter Pels, eds., *Embedding Ethics* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2005); Chris Scarre and Geoffrey Scarre, eds., *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archeological Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Kate Fitz Gibbon, ed. *Who Owns the Past?*, Rutgers Series on the Public Life of the Arts (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

¹⁴ One result of this approach that emerges from the archeological ethics literature is the idea that the "ethical" response to dilemmas pertaining to the possession, sale, and treatment of cultural artifacts is simply a matter of taking account of all perspectives and attempting to find a common ground. This is oddly akin to arguments that support the teaching of both creationism and evolution in science classes because they are both "equally valid belief systems" that students should be able to decide between. The fact that there are divergent or incompatible claims about an issue does not imply that each perspective should be given equal credence. Now granted, resolving the dilemmas in archeological ethics is often not so straight-forward a process as in the science education conflict, but the principle is the same: we need to consider the relative justifications of the claims to ownership or treatment of artifacts, not merely the fact that there are competing claims. This is a domain in which disciplinary divisions between anthropology and philosophy could have substantive implications for how dilemmas are addressed: there is generally a stronger presumption in favor of relativism in anthropology than there is in philosophy.

¹⁵ Scarre and Scarre, eds., *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archeological Practice*, 2.

archaeologists and focuses on specific applied problems. Though I will use specific examples in the following chapters, my interest in these questions is philosophical, and consequently, much of the discussion will take place at a greater degree of conceptual remove from applied problems than is common in the archaeological ethics collections. This is not to say that the following pages will not be applicable to these problems: rather, I hope that applying analytic tools and relevant philosophical literature from moral philosophy and value theory to the relationship between historical value and practical reason will provide helpful arguments and conceptual resource for those wishing to tackle the applied problems of archaeology. But the importance of the past creates practical dilemmas for all people, even outside the domain of archaeology, and thus I see this inquiry as having relevance both across the academy and beyond it.

3. The Motivation for the Project

How does historical value bear on the practical situation of typical agents? As indicated by the three kinds of reasons for responding to the past that I introduced earlier and will address in subsequent chapters, examples are not hard to come by. Who hasn't wondered whether Aunt Shirley's bureau is really irreplaceable, whether it is really worth saving an heirloom that is languishing in the attic, or whether you have reason to care about the correspondence or traditions of relatives that you never knew? Or if these personal questions have never been broached, each has broader societal correlates: questions about the purported uniqueness or priceless status of historical artifacts, about the role of museums and universities as "stewards" of the past, about whether the value of certain historical objects or practices is universal. Questions about how we ought to respond to historical value come in many forms, of which these are only examples. Practical concern with the value of the past can indeed, as some of the philosophers mentioned above suggest, seem like a fundamental aspect of the human experience.

The unavoidable nature of these concerns seems to stem from the fact that there are certain capacities, intimately related to the passage of time, that are essential to the possibility of personhood and its concomitant satisfactions and misfortunes. Nietzsche contrasts the lives of persons with the lives of cattle, the latter living "unhistorically," capable of neither expectation nor memory: "they do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, and so from morn till night and from day to day, fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure, and thus neither melancholy nor bored."¹⁶ Velleman, likewise, emphasizes how the inability to conceive of oneself through time precludes the possibility of caring about the ordering of events in one's life: "I assume that a cow cannot conceive of itself as a persisting individual and consequently cannot conceive of itself as enjoying different benefits at different moments during its life. What the cow cannot conceive, it

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 60. Nietzsche, characteristically, asserts that there is a certain happiness that man desires, and moreover needs, in the unhistoricity of the cow in order to live and to act. I won't pursue that claim here, but the "happiness" of the cow does not seem easily recognizable as such.

cannot care about.”¹⁷ (Cows get a raw deal from these two). A being lacking the capacities to conceive of its own passage through time is incapable of caring about living a life: surely, it can suffer or experience pleasure in the moment, but it can neither look forward to future pleasures, nor dwell on past pains. It is not that such a being lacks a life worth living, but rather, though it is alive, it does not *lead a life* in the relevant sense at all.¹⁸

These capacities, though essential to personhood, do not on their own capture the sense of *historical* value that we wish to explain. It is still open to the skeptic to insist on the importance of the future while disregarding the events of the past: However human it may be, why should one dwell on past pains? This is to resign oneself to suffering twice.¹⁹ Or why memorialize or honor the past? Even if most animals don't have the mental capacities to conceive of future goods in the way that we do, we can at least see primitive correlates of future-directed concern in the survival instincts of animals that, due to biological hardwiring, “prepare” themselves for future benefits.²⁰ But in contrast, though many animals rely on primitive memory faculties, a correlate of concern with the past, of responding to the significance of the past in the ways that humans do, is much harder to identify.²¹

Independent of the substantive questions of whether regret specifically is rational or beneficial, or whether the past ought to be memorialized, there are familiar reasons for thinking that a sense of the past plays an essential role in making possible certain distinctive goods. At the most basic level, personal history is what makes possible future-directed attitudes and projects, and according to Alasdair MacIntyre, the very possibility of intention. He argues that “the notion of a history is as fundamental a notion as the notion of an action.”²² The intelligibility of actions is only made possible in the context of varying shorter- and longer-term descriptions of the action: independent of such a context, action would be inscrutable.

¹⁷ J. David Velleman, “Well-Being and Time,” in *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2000), 81-84. The rest of this chapter offers a compelling case for why the goodness of a life is not merely a sum of the goodness of moments in a life.

¹⁸ The moral importance of being a “subject of a life” in this way is, interestingly, accepted by Peter Singer, though he takes a more cautious approach to ruling out certain animals (like cows) from this category. See Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), Chapter 5.

¹⁹ Rudiger Bittner, “Is It Reasonable to Regret Things One Did?,” *Journal of Philosophy* 89, no. 5 (1992): 262-73. Or see Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*: “What's gone and what's past help / Should be past grief” (III, ii, 223-224), or *Richard II*, “Things past redress are now with me past care” (I, iii). Work on the moral emotions is perhaps the portion of the philosophical literature that has most consistently dealt with attitudes toward the past, though regret, shame, guilt, remorse, and blame are all concerned with past wrong-doing or transgression of norms, as opposed to the broader sense of historical significance I am addressing here.

²⁰ Cf. Sharon Street, “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value,” *Philosophical Studies* 127, no. 1 (2006): 109-66.: “We may view many of our evaluative judgments as conscious, reflective endorsements of more basic evaluative tendencies that we share with other animals.”

²¹ Though there is at least some recent evidence that elephants appear to honor their dead; but also that elephants are on the higher end in the spectrum of animal intelligence. See for instance Christen E. Merte, Katie F. Gough, and Bruce A. Schulte, “Investigation of a Fresh African Elephant Carcass by Conspecifics,” *Pachyderm*, no. 45 (2009): 124-26.

²² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, vol. 1985 (London: Duckworth, 1981), 214.

Consider... [a] trivial example of a set of compatibly correct answers to the question 'What is he doing?' 'Writing a sentence'; 'Finishing his book'; 'Contributing to the debate on the theory of action'; 'Trying to get tenure'. Here the intentions can be ordered in terms of the stretch of time to which reference is made. Each of the shorter-term intentions is, and can only be made, intelligible by reference to some longer-term intentions; and the characterization of the behavior in terms of the longer-term intentions can only be correct if some of the characterization in terms of shorter-term intentions are also correct. Hence the behavior is only characterized adequately when we know what the longer and longest-term intentions invoked are and how the shorter-term intentions are related to the longer. Once again we are involved in writing a narrative history.²³

Even if this is not true as a general proposition, there would still be goods associated with certain intentional actions, such as the completion of a plan, or achievement of a goal, which are necessarily linked with the past. After all, a goal must have been set in order to eventually be met, and it's having been set thus bears importantly on its future achievement. Moreover, beyond the fact that this is true as matter of the internal structure of achieving a goal, it seems that the relevant *satisfaction* associated with such achievement, if it is to be felt, is predicated upon the assessment that the goal's having been set provides certain reasons for attempting to achieve it.

Events in one's personal history are likewise important insofar as they bear on the significance of one's present and future actions, and the character assessments associated with them. If one gives up on a deeply important plan in the face of adversity, one is accurately described as buckling under pressure, or selling out, or giving up, and is thus, in this respect at least, pusillanimous or weak of will; on the other hand, one who overcomes challenges perseveres and demonstrates commitment, and is in this respect passionate and diligent.²⁴ This is largely a matter of semantics²⁵, but this does not undermine the necessity of one's personal history to the appropriate application of the different predicates. Insofar as the former character traits are scorned and the latter praised, it underlines the existence of reasons, of at least a goal-directed form, for responding to the past in certain ways.²⁶ As Elizabeth Anderson puts it: "The

²³ Ibid., 208. I will return to the specific matter of narrative later on in the essay.

²⁴ For a similar claim about past-dependent emotions, see J. David Velleman, "Narrative Explanation," *The Philosophical Review* 112, no. 1 (2003): 1-25.

²⁵ This is an instance of a more general phenomenon, namely, that the appropriateness of certain predicates is contingent upon certain kinds of causal history, i.e. it's not a murder or a wound unless it's caused in a certain way. Cf. Fred Dretske, "Norms, History, and the Constitution of the Mental," in *Perception, Knowledge, and Belief: Selected Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Cf. Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 23-34, 34.; Ross Poole, "Memory, History and the Claims of the Past," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 149-66.; Hampshire, *Innocence and Experience*, 134. Other past-dependent virtues include fidelity and loyalty: one must, for instance, treat the making of a promise as a reason for certain actions if one is to display these virtues. MacIntyre makes the stronger claim that in order to be considered a virtue, the relevant traits and dispositions must be applicable to diverse situations across a life. On this understanding, then, the possibility of achieving any virtue is conceptually linked with one's past: "...[T]he unity of a virtue in someone's life is intelligible only as a characteristic of a unitary life, a life that can be conceived and evaluated as a whole" (205).

past sets a context that confers expressive meaning on present choices. Had the past been different, the same present act could have a different meaning and therefore a different appropriateness."²⁷

Anderson thinks that the idea that the past sets a context of meaning and appropriateness for future choices, and can thus play a central role in shaping the reasons one has for acting, follows from a requirement of "narrative unity." She claims that, in making sense of one's actions, there is "a diachronic norm [that] tells a person to act in such a way that over time her actions can be fit into a coherent narrative."²⁸ Because this narrative approach to understanding how the past bears on practical reason has received increased attention in recent years, it is worth pausing here to consider the prospects for the role of narrative (not unique to Anderson's account) in explaining the relationship between historical value and practical reason. In the next few paragraphs, I will outline some challenges for the narrative approach, and explain why I do not pursue it further in the body of the dissertation.

The idea that reasons for responding to the past in certain ways stem from a requirement of narrative unity might serve as a formal parameter on the relationship between historical value and practical reason: it would at least serve to establish a connection between present choices and relevant facts about the past. But there is reason to doubt whether a single over-arching norm such as narrative coherence could play the correct role in this regard. From the deliberative perspective, it isn't clear that I do or should think of my actions in terms of the construction of a coherent narrative, though it may be a consequence of rational action that my behavior appears this way from a third-person perspective.²⁹ And even if there were such a norm for agents with respect to their own lives, it is even less clear how the construction of a coherent narrative for a society, or of humankind even, would factor into the deliberative concerns of an agent. The relevance of such a norm in either context is called into doubt if narrative, as some have argued, is nothing more than a mode of presentation for causal explanations.³⁰ For how could the desire for an overall causal explanation of events influence the practical reasons of any given agent? The mere act of reflecting on the past and making a choice will involve a causal connection, but that fact won't dictate *what* an agent's reasons are. Of course if narrative is something more than causal explanation, perhaps there is yet room to be made for such a norm. Velleman, for instance argues that what's distinctive about narrative is that it provides an emotional cadence for a sequence of events, a sense of understandable emotional closure. If this is true, then one might think that one satisfies a requirement of narrative unity when one has appropriate feelings toward the past, and the notion of narrative unity thus influences one's reasons for having certain attitudes toward the past. But this could have problematic consequences in the context of history. As Velleman himself puts it:

²⁷ Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics*, 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 24. See also Charles Taylor, "The Self in Moral Space," in *Sources of the Self* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1989). He discusses the role of the narrative *quest* in self-understanding. MacIntyre talks about a narrative *quest* as well (219).

²⁹ Compare Niko Kolodny, "Why Be Rational?," *Mind* 114, no. 455 (2005): 509-63.

³⁰ For an example of this view, see Noel Carroll, "Interpretation, History, and Narrative," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Insofar as historical discourse conveys understanding by organizing the past into stories, what it conveys is not an objective understanding of how historical events came about but a subjective understanding of how to feel about them... Having sorted out its feelings toward events, the audience mistakenly feels that it has sorted out the events themselves: it mistakes emotional closure for intellectual closure.³¹

But thinking that one has reason to have certain attitudes toward the past because they would provide emotional closure is precisely the source of many disputes regarding the how we ought to respond to the value of the past. This is not to discount the importance of feelings toward the past, but to emphasize that such feelings will only be relevant to practical reason when they are appropriate to their objects. A requirement of narrative unity that subordinates an objective understanding of the past to emotional cadence will be liable to frequent error: emotions are central to the way in which people respond to history, but in order to be appropriate, these emotions must avoid indulgence in fictions.

Consider the controversial case of Kennewick Man, a 9,300 year old skeleton discovered in 1996 along the Columbia river in Washington. Archeological examinations indicated that the remains were of a Caucasian male, but local Native American tribes sued for possession of the skeleton under the 1990 NAGPRA legislation (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act). Regarding the ancestry of the remains, an Umatilla religious leader said: "If this individual is truly over 9,000 years old, that only substantiates our belief that he is Native American. From our oral histories, we know that our people have been part of this land since the beginning of time..."³² The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in 2004 that the remains were not "Native American," and anthropologists retained possession of the skeleton.³³ Independent of the true ancestry of the remains, what should be clear is that the attribution of Native American ancestry to the skeleton on the basis of the emotional closure it would provide in the context of the Umatilla tribal narrative would be inappropriate. Without making any judgments about the difficult questions of the legitimacy of NAGPRA or the position of Native American communities vis-à-vis anthropological studies, surely in the context of discoverable scientific facts our reasons for attributing proper ancestry to human remains should not be hijacked by a norm of narrative unity. Feeling emotional attachment and seeking repatriation of true Native American remains may well be a legitimate endeavor for local tribes, whereas attributing ancestry on the basis of what will create an emotional cadence cannot. Because of these various concerns about the narrative approach, I will leave it aside for the remainder of the dissertation. However, in future work I hope to spell out in greater detail why the concern with narrative unity does not, as Anderson and others believe, issue in norms of practical reason aimed at securing that unity.

³¹ Velleman, "Narrative Explanation," 20.

³² Scarre and Scarre, eds., *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archeological Practice*, 62-63.

³³ Fitz Gibbon, ed. *Who Owns the Past?* , 37-38.

Given the centrality of the past to the multiple aspects of practical agency surveyed above, it should not be surprising that history would pose special questions for the investigation of practical reason. As we have seen, these questions range beyond those specific concerns with the relationship between historical value and practical reason that I will focus on in this dissertation, but their depth and diversity helps to emphasize the importance of the project, not only in its own right, but as a component of the broader inquiry into the relationship between practical reason and the past even more broadly construed.

From these brief observations, coupled with the considerations below, I believe we can draw three general lessons about the relation between historical value and practical reason that will continue to be borne out in the chapters that follow. First, the relationship of reasons to historical value is content-specific. Substantive reasons for actions and attitudes will hold not simply in virtue of the *fact* that something is historically significant, but in virtue of a person, event, or object being historically significant in a certain *way*. As I will explain in Chapter 3, *engaging* with value (that is, responding to valuable things with respect to the specific ways in which they are valuable), is an essential component of any mode of valuation, and it often takes priority over the mere *recognition* of value.

A second lesson pertains to the vast expanse of time that we encounter in investigating historical significance. Because the farther back in time we cast our thinking the less sure we are about what actually happened, some have made the dubious move of assuming that there is no fact of the matter about what happened: the past, rather, is socially constructed. However, as Ross Poole notes: “this is no more plausible for the past of many thousands of years ago than it is for the past of five minutes ago.”³⁴ This point reflects a methodological position that I propose to adopt for the course of this investigation: namely that, as with the case of truth, there should be some common core to our understanding of historical significance regarding the events of thousands of years ago, and the events of five minutes ago. It is easy in a discussion of historical significance to focus on the distant past to the complete exclusion of the recent past. But insofar as it is the significance of *the past* that we’re investigating, and not some specific period of time therein, there is no principled reason why there should not be a continuity in our understanding of the significance of the recent and distant past and the reasons for action and historical valuation that such significance grounds (or at the very least, such a difference would need to be argued for). In order to remain sensitive to this continuity, I will throughout the dissertation consider examples of historically valuable objects whose historical significance derives from both recent and distant events.

Third, we must be sensitive to the scope of individuals for whom the reasons related to historical value are relevant. This is a topic I address in detail in Chapter 4, but for starters, we should note that because we are focused here on the relationship of historical value to reasons for actions and attitudes, it will be imperative to understand *to whom* the relevant reasons apply.

³⁴ Poole, “Memory, History and the Claims of the Past,” 157.

4. The Plan of Attack

The remaining chapters will proceed as follows.

In Chapter 2, I consider the commonly held view that historically valuable objects are *irreplaceable*, and that the historical mode of valuation is itself responsive to the fact that such objects are irreplaceable. According to this view, one of the distinctive features of the historical mode of valuation is that we value historically significant objects *as* irreplaceable, i.e. their irreplaceability is an important reason why we value them the way that we do. Contrary to this position, I argue that there is no necessary connection between historical value and irreplaceability. Neither are historically valuable objects therefore irreplaceable, nor is irreplaceability a necessary criterion of historical value in the first place. I proceed by focusing on the concept of irreplaceability itself. By clarifying the conditions that secure *evaluative* irreplaceability (as well as weaker forms of resistance to replacement), I show that the necessary and sufficient conditions for irreplaceability involve historically significant features only contingently. I offer a brief account of why we were led to believe in the necessary connection between historical value and irreplaceability by distinguishing between replaceability and fabrication, and ultimately suggest that the distinctive feature of the historical mode of valuation is an otherwise impossible *connection* with significant aspects of the past.

This raises the difficult question of how we can best realize a connection with the past. How should we respond to and interact with historically valuable objects? This is part of a larger question about what we should do in relation to valuable things in general. Folk and philosophers alike often assume that the mere fact that something is valuable gives us reason to preserve it. This assumption is the focus of Chapter 3.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that there is more daylight between value and preservation than most assume. I argue that reasons for preservation are both derivative and contingent by defending the thesis that preservation is called for only if and because we have opportunities to engage with objects of value. Absent such opportunities, there is no reason to preserve things at all. *A fortiori*, there is no reason to preserve *historically* valuable objects independent of available opportunities to engage with their value. This approach to the relationship between value and practical reason reorients our thinking about historical value, and value in general, toward how we interact with valuable things, and renders their mere existence only derivatively important.

Chapter 4 returns to an important question that was bracketed in Chapter 3. In that chapter, I argued that there is reason to preserve a valuable object only if and because it will be possible to engage with its value. But possible *for whom*? In this chapter, I explore the *scope* of value claims and their concomitant reasons, and apply the results of this investigation to the historical context, specifically with respect to the question “for whom can historically significant things be valuable?” There is an intuitive difference between objects of *personal* value and objects of *impersonal* value, where the latter are, in some sense, universal values. But on which side do historically valuable objects fall? In order to address this question, I challenge two possible interpretations of the universal scope of impersonal value, and offer an alternative

analysis on which impersonal values are those it would be *appropriate* for *anyone* to value. Importantly, the reasons that render valuing appropriate can be secured in two ways (monistically or pluralistically) that provide more nuanced resources for understanding the varied scope of diverse values. I use this analysis to argue that the value of cultural heritage has a wider scope than some think, and that the appropriateness of valuing it is often not restricted to “local” ties of ancestry or ethnicity.

In the fifth and final chapter, I pick up the suggestion set aside at the end of Chapter 2: that the historical mode of valuation is a kind of *aesthetic* valuing. In this chapter, I explore three influential understandings of aesthetic experience and argue that historically significant properties have a place in each of them. Not only are *art historical* features like genre and relational features across the development of art relevant to aesthetic experience, but so are non-artistic historically significant features. This cements a common role for historical significance to play across the aesthetic experience of art objects and non-art objects alike, which in turn establishes a broader purview for aesthetic experience beyond the artworld.

5. Conclusion

Objects that we value for their historical significance are ubiquitous in human experience. We confront them in the museum, in the street, in the woods, and in the attic. Perhaps because they are such an integral part of our lives, we often take for granted that we understand their evaluative features, and that we know how to properly respond to their value. If any of the following reflections and arguments is on the mark, then they suggest our thinking about historical value has been too quick. I hope that this dissertation will lead the reader to continue to question our understanding of historical value and its consequences for practical reason, and will provide the foundation for future work on this complex topic.

Chapter 2: History, Value, and Irreplaceability

1. *The Assumption of Irreplaceability*

The past has a curious power: it plays a distinctive role in shaping our evaluative and practical relationships with persons, places, objects, and practices. On its own, a cracked shard from a clay pot may seem worthless—unearthed from Machu Picchu, it becomes a landmark on the map of a people's past. This transformation can occur in even the most personal of contexts. G. A. Cohen writes of an eraser that he carried with him for the entirety of his academic career; to you or me, it would be a worn piece of rubber, but to him it was a cherished memento.¹

One of the most prominent features of this historical mode of valuation is the sense that objects valued for their histories do not admit of replacement.² Cohen writes:

I would hate to lose this eraser. I would hate that even if I knew that it could be readily replaced, not only, if I so wished, by a pristine cubical one, but even by one of precisely the same off-round shape and the same dingy colour that my eraser has now acquired. There is no feature that stands apart from its history that makes me want to keep this eraser. I want *my* eraser, with *its* history. What could be more human than that?³

Or, in the words of John Martin:

Keepsakes, souvenirs, relics, heirlooms, and objects of historical importance, like the original manuscript of the Declaration of Independence or the Crown of St. Stephen, are irreplaceable, like art objects, in part because of their history.⁴

Contrary to the commonly assumed relationship between historical value and irreplaceability, in this essay I will argue that there is no necessary connection between them. This is a surprising conclusion given the prevalence of cases in which irreplaceability is thought to be necessary to historical value, either because historically valuable things are assumed to therefore be irreplaceable, or because irreplaceability is regarded as an essential criterion of historical value in the first place. For instance, consider how we commonly understand the value of personal relationships. Why

¹ G. A. Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of Existing Value," in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 221.

² **A reminder about terminology:** I use "historical significance" in discussing objects that have significant (for whatever reason) historical properties. Such significance need not have, and indeed often lacks, a positive valence. I use "historical mode of valuation" to refer to the way in which one might value an object *for* its historically significant properties. One of course need not always value an object with historically significant properties in this way. I use "historical value" to refer to objects which warrant the historical mode of valuation.

³ Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 221.

⁴ John N. Martin, "The Concept of the Irreplaceable," *Environmental Ethics* 1, no. 1 (1979): 31-48.

doesn't the love you bear for your partner transfer to a clone, or to another person who "better" instantiates his or her qualities? It is at least in part because that other person lacks the unique historical relationship that you share with your partner.⁵ Or take our evaluative attitudes toward artistic forgeries, for instance, Van Meegeren's forged Vermeers. Because Van Meegeren's paintings lack the right kind of history (namely, having been painted by Vermeer) they are considered inauthentic, and are thus not valuable in the same way as a true Vermeer—a true Vermeer is irreplaceable. Similar considerations can even emerge in the context of the natural environment. What might be thought to make a certain environment count as "natural" is that it has a unique history that cannot be replaced: "It is the fact of their embodying a particular history that blocks the substitutability of natural objects by human equivalents, rather than, for example, the inability to replicate their function... natural objects have value for what they are, and specifically for the particular history that they embody."⁶

These otherwise diverse cases are alike in suggesting that objects worth valuing for their histories are necessarily irreplaceable.⁷ Moreover, because the precise relationship between historical value and irreplaceability has been vague in the literature, for the sake of clarity it behooves us to consider the possibility that irreplaceability might be sufficient for securing historical value as well. In either case, the examples considered so far make clear that irreplaceability is supposed to be a central feature of *why* we value historically significant objects in the distinctive way that we do. However (and this is a point we will return to), it is worth valuing an object *as* irreplaceable only if that object is in fact irreplaceable in a meaningful way.⁸ What objects are irreplaceably valuable, and why? This will be one of our central questions. But for starters, it cannot merely be the fact that an object has a particular history that blocks its substitutability: after all, *everything* has a particular history. There is consequently some sense in which all things are irreplaceable, but it is not obvious that there is anything significant about that.⁹ It seems false to our experience that we value *everything* (or even most things) *as* irreplaceable, and this is because most things are not *meaningfully* irreplaceable, and hence do not warrant such evaluative attitudes. Often, we are happy to accept replacements. If my umbrella is stolen, a replacement is precisely what I want, and inconveniences aside, I feel no regret about this. Obviously a replacement wouldn't be *just the same*, but the question is whether a replacement would be *just as good*, and specifically good *in the same way*. Joseph Raz makes a similar

⁵ Cf. Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 112, no. 2 (2003): 135-89.

⁶ John O'Neill, Alan Holland, and Andrew Light, *Environmental Values* (New York and Canada: Routledge, 2008), 162. See also Martin, "The Concept of the Irreplaceable."

⁷ I use "object" and "thing" here and throughout as general terms for any direct object of our evaluative attitudes, not simply physical objects. As mentioned, these can include persons, places, practices, and even other things that don't start with the letter "p."

⁸ Thus we are considering a *way* of valuing things that is warranted by objects whose value is in fact irreplaceable. One need not value an irreplaceable object in this way, but it would be inappropriate to value as irreplaceable an object whose value was in fact instantiated in other things. Because of this close relationship between the value of objects and the way that we value them, it is important to consider these matters in concert.

⁹ Cf. Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 28, fn 15.

comment in discussing the role the uniqueness of objects can play in personal attachments:

...there is (or was) something about the object which lends it value of a special kind, such that while some feasible replacements may be as good or even better, they will not be quite the same—not quite the same in what makes them good or valuable, and in the precise way they are or were good or valuable. It is this sense which is relevant to the understanding of why (logical) uniqueness is sometimes important in attachments.¹⁰

Or compare O'Neill, Holland, and Light:

I may value this particular hammer even with its frustratingly loose head, because this hammer was passed on to me by my father who was given it by his grandfather, who used it to make this table I sit by now, which I also value for similar reasons and despite its annoying tendency to wobble. I attach a particular significance to these objects, and that significance is a matter of their history. For that reason, things like this are said to be irreplaceable, and their loss matters in a way that the loss of other functional objects does not.¹¹

These reflections indicate the intuitive truth of the following principle:

Irreplaceability (IR): an object is meaningfully irreplaceable if and only if *all* candidate substitutes would fail to be valuable in the same way as the original.

A candidate substitute should be understood as something that might plausibly be valuable in the same *way* as the original. Thus this principle poses a qualitative question about value, and should be distinguished from a related quantitative question about whether it would be bad or regrettable *as such* for a valuable object to be destroyed. For instance, if we assume that two Warhol silk-screens from the same series are valuable in precisely the same way, then, other things being equal, it would follow that you ought to accept one as a substitute for the other, and neither is strictly speaking irreplaceable. But this is compatible with its being a very bad thing if one of the Warhols were thrown on the bonfire.

That being said, the qualitative nature of irreplaceability need not trump any and all quantitative concerns. Indeed, questions about irreplaceability are distinct from questions about incommensurability and incomparability.¹² For instance, the fact that a given artwork is irreplaceable does not imply that one would never have reason to sell it, nor does the fact that one might accept money in exchange for an artwork imply that art and money are valuable in the same way: two values may be radically different qualitatively, yet still be commensurable on the same scale.¹³ IR may provide a *pro tanto*

¹⁰ Ibid., 25-26.

¹¹ O'Neill, Holland, and Light, *Environmental Values*, 148.

¹² For discussion see Ruth Chang, ed. *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹³ Cf. Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 217-18.

reason not to accept a candidate substitute provided that an agent has a special interest in the original (or some other reason to value an object that is valuable in *that* particular way), but other considerations might provide countervailing reasons.¹⁴ Moreover, if two objects are understood to be incomparable when one is neither better, nor worse, nor equally good as the other, then this matter too is distinct from questions of irreplaceability—we can discuss whether two objects are valuable in the same *way* without adopting any commitments about which is better.¹⁵

So in cases where an object that is valued for its history appears irreplaceable, it seems that the history of the object makes it irreplaceable by granting it a value that is qualitatively different from a potential substitute. But as we have noted, a simple appeal to an object's having a particular history is insufficient to satisfy IR: a successful account needs to avoid what we can call "the proliferation problem," the unacceptable implication that everything is meaningfully irreplaceable.

In order to explain the phenomenon at hand, we need a better understanding of the relationship between irreplaceability and the historical mode of valuation, one that will accommodate the diverse things that we value for their histories, including (but not limited to) family heirlooms, mementos, personal relationships, ancient artifacts, artworks, childhood haunts, historic sites, and natural environments. My argument will proceed as follows. I first consider a recent attempt by Cohen to explain the role of irreplaceability in valuing, and I critique the approach he employs. Next, I consider an important truth in Cohen's essay, namely, that objects that seem irreplaceable are valued for what they *are*, but I explain how this fact has led a number of philosophers astray in their discussion of this topic. I emphasize the important point that historical features only acquire significance in specific evaluative respects, and thus the relevant values must first be articulated before the significance of their constituent historical features is clear: it is only then that certain historical properties can succeed in satisfying IR. The mere facts that an object is individuated or has a distinct history are alone insufficient to this task—in the absence of such a justification, we merely harbor an unwarranted bias in favor of certain things. Finally, reflecting on a plausible account of how historical significance can satisfy IR reveals that a focus on the phenomenon of irreplaceability as a defining feature of the historical mode of valuation was a false start. There are non-historical ways that an object can satisfy IR without acquiring the special character of objects that we value for their histories, and historically significant objects do not always satisfy IR in the way we might expect them to: hence irreplaceability can be neither necessary nor sufficient for securing historical value. In the end, I suggest that it is not incidental securing of irreplaceability, but rather, an otherwise impossible

¹⁴ One might think that the mere fact that an object is irreplaceable gives one *pro tanto* reason to prefer it to a candidate substitute that is not valuable in the same way. But absent some antecedent reason for valuing the original, this implication does not follow. After all, it is not contrary to reason to have an object that is irreplaceably valuable, but to in fact prefer another object that is valuable in a different way, as when, for instance, one has an irreplaceably valuable painting, but would in fact prefer a different one. Thanks to Sarah Buss for making this point clear to me.

¹⁵ Cf. Frank Sibley, "Originality and Value," in *Approach to Aesthetics*, ed. John Benson, Berry Redfern, and Jeremy Roxbee Cox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 122-23. Thanks to Nick Riggall for turning me on to Sibley's work.

connection with significant aspects of the past that is truly distinctive of the historical mode of valuation.

2. Cohen's Theory of "Particular Value"

Cohen's reflections on his eraser appear in a recent essay in which he defends an account of value that offers an explanation of the irreplaceability sometimes exhibited by valued objects. He casts his approach in contrast with utilitarianism, maximizing consequentialism, or any other theory of value according to which "*the bearers of value, as opposed to the value they bear, do not count as such, but matter only because of the value that they bear, and are therefore, in a deep sense, dispensable.*"¹⁶ Cohen argues that such theories lack the conceptual resources to make sense of the way a valued object can be irreplaceable: according to such theories, any Y that is the bearer of equal or greater value properties as some X must necessarily be just as good or better. Thus, not only would it be rational to replace one with the other, but moreover, there could be no reason for regretting the destruction or loss of X if it could be replaced by Y.

To block this implication, Cohen argues that there are:

two ways of valuing something other than as a pure function of the *amount* or *type* of value that resides in it. In the first way of valuing that I have in mind, a person values something because of the special relation of the thing to that person. In the second way, a person values something *as the particular* valuable thing that it is, and not merely for the value that resides in it, but not, in this second case, because of her own special relationship to the thing in question.¹⁷

Cohen's eraser is an example of the first type, what he calls "personal valuing." In this case, Cohen values the eraser just for its history and his relation to it. In contrast, the second type of valuing, "particular valuing," does not take into account relational features of the object, such as its history, but pertains only to its being an existing bearer of intrinsic value.¹⁸ Being the bearer of intrinsic value properties is thus the criterion in virtue of which an object of particular valuing is supposed to satisfy IR. If Cohen's account of what makes an object irreplaceable succeeds (despite being partially ahistorical), it may play a role in explaining some of the apparently historical cases I am concerned with in this essay. After all, the things that we value for their histories also exist, and thus Cohen's account would include all of these valued things, even if the explanation of their satisfying IR does not make reference to their historical features. Moreover, Cohen's account of particular value would *need* to explain those apparently historical cases where the phenomenon of irreplaceability is not necessarily a function of one's *own* relationship to the valued object (and hence where his account of personal valuing would not apply), such as artworks, artifacts, historic sites, and natural environments.

¹⁶ Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 212.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁸ For emphasis, see footnote 24: "To be sure, a thing's being especially valuable because it is *old* is not the same as its being especially valuable because it *exists.*" *ibid.*

On Cohen's account, value as a particular is understood as the value something has *qua* bearer of value, which is distinguished from the general value instantiated in a particular thing. If we imagine an object as being a vessel for value, then in addition to the general value properties that the vessel contains, the vessel *itself* is valuable insofar as it contains those general value properties.¹⁹ According to the "conservatism" that Cohen argues for, we should adopt a justified bias in favor of this value that particular things have *qua* bearers of value. He writes:

Conservatism is an expensive taste, because conservatives sacrifice value in order not to sacrifice things that have value. We keep the existing *particular* valuable things at the expense of not making things in *general* as valuable as they could be made to be. Value, one might provocatively say, is not the only thing that is valuable: so are particular valuable things. And the two desiderata sometimes need to be traded off against each other.²⁰

The value of particulars that Cohen posits is meant to explain the irreplaceability of valuable objects. By attributing value to the particular bearers of value, a value that is not itself understood as a further value property, we strictly speaking render particular valuable things irreplaceable. The value that X has as the particular bearer of value cannot so much as be replaced or reinstated by the value of Y as a particular bearer of value. Even if X and Y share the same general value properties, they will be, insofar as they are distinct objects, distinctly valuable *qua* bearers of value, and thus will satisfy IR.

It is important to understand the extent of this thesis. Cohen writes: "the special claim that I have defended is of the value that exists, regardless of how long it's been around. Even if the picture was painted only five minutes ago, there's a reason not to destroy it in order to use its pigment to produce a better one."²¹ While this strikes me as a controversial claim, we should also be careful not to overstate Cohen's thesis. He is not saying that it would be *wrong* to salvage the pigments from a five-minute-old painting, or even that it shouldn't be done: the claim is merely that there is *a reason* not to do so, and this reason is tied to the five-minute-old painting's particular value *as* a bearer of intrinsic value properties. The presence of this reason allows us to explain why we might be rationally resistant to destroying or replacing it, and why we might

¹⁹ Cf. Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 121., who uses this analogy as well. Tim Chappell, despite making an argument friendly to Cohen's, criticizes this kind of picture in Tim Chappell, "Absolutes and Particulars," in *Modern Moral Philosophy*, ed. Anthony O'Hear (Cambridge University Press, 2004). I hope that this essay helps explain why a number of the claims Chappell makes in his essay are mistaken.

²⁰ Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 212. I think Cohen's elusive language here belies a lack of clarity regarding what precisely "particular value" is supposed to be, if not a further value property. As one anonymous reviewer notes: "I suppose Cohen wants to say 'p itself,' but surely the particular 'p' is distinct from its particular value." I agree that this is a further difficulty for Cohen's view. I imagine that Cohen would claim that we are in the grip of a certain metaphysical picture, and that he is trying to challenge the very notion that value must always be a general value property (hence the provocative claim that value is not the only thing that is valuable). However, even if we entertain this possibility, the view is still faced with the objections enumerated in the remainder of this section.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 213.

regret the loss of the five-minute-old painting, even if it would allow us to produce an equally good or better one. The character of the commitment to the value of particulars is captured well in Cohen's discussion of destroying a building in order to produce a better one: "A conservative can believe that what rises from the ashes is the greatest building ever and that it was right to build it, yet still feel distraught that the old building was destroyed."²²

We can thus characterize Cohen's argument as *positing* the value of the particular bearers of value, as distinct from the value properties that they bear, *in order to explain* the phenomena of irreplaceability and regrettable loss that we experience with respect to certain valued things. In evaluating the strength of this account, we should therefore be sensitive to whether positing the value of particulars explains all and only the intuitively reasonable instances of the phenomena to be explained (supplemented, of course, by his account of personal valuing). If the account fails to fully explain the phenomena, or attributes irreplaceability or regrettable loss to things that intuitively lack it, these would be bases for critiquing the account and considering alternative explanations.

2a. Intrinsic Value and Particular Value

First, in inquiring whether one X is good in the same way as some Y, we need to know in what respect it is just as good. The reason my umbrella is so easily replaceable is that the relevant value is merely instrumental: I will take any substitute that gets the job done equally well. Attributing value to the particular bearers of intrinsic value properties is supposed to block this kind of simple substitution. If Y has particular value *qua* bearer of intrinsic value properties, it is necessarily a different value from the particular value that X has *qua* bearer of intrinsic value properties. Instances of particular value are, by stipulation, distinct in roughly the same way that particular objects are distinct.

Why, then, is it only the bearers of *intrinsic* value properties that have particular value? Surely, just as we can individuate one umbrella from another, we can individuate *this* bearer of instrumental value and *that* bearer of instrumental value. If we can identify two distinct bearers of value properties, why should the kind of value properties that they instantiate be relevant to whether they have value as the particular bearers of those value properties? The reason seems to be that objects of merely instrumental value, as noted, are not intuitively irreplaceable. But that would be an *ad hoc* basis for limiting the scope of particular value, given that it is irreplaceability that particular value is supposed to explain. There does not appear to be a principled reason to think that something having value as the particular bearer of value properties should be limited to bearers of intrinsic value beyond the fact that such an account fits the data. But that should lead us to question whether positing particular value explains the data, or if it rather just begs the question. Cohen's theory of particular value takes the class of things that are intuitively irreplaceable and attributes to them an additional kind of value that by definition satisfies IR. The worry is that if we lack a theoretical basis for limiting this value to only the cases that exhibit the phenomenon to be explained, we

²² Ibid.

will have simply reaffirmed which are the intuitive cases of irreplaceability, and not explained that evaluative feature at all.

2b. Intrinsic Value and Irreplaceability

As we move beyond concerns about the explanatory role of particular value, we should be sensitive to whether the account succeeds in picking out the correct cases. It is often easy to assume that objects of intrinsic value are *ipso facto* special in a way that explains the appearance of irreplaceability. However, it is not clear that this assumption is warranted. Consider coming across a field full of beautiful flowers. You would like to take some home for your special someone. But does it matter which flowers you take? If the flowers are indistinguishable in their beauty, it seems that any handful of flowers will be as good as any other.²³ Assuming that natural beauty is an intrinsic property of flowers, the fact that each flower is the bearer of intrinsic value properties does not, intuitively, render it irreplaceable or subject to regrettable loss. If you picked a bouquet of flowers and a mischievous child stole them, it does not appear that you would have any reason to regret the loss (worries about kids these days aside). You would just reach down and pick another handful of flowers, the second handful being valuable in the same way as the first. While many intrinsically valuable things are intuitively irreplaceable, it is a mistake to assume that this is a feature of all intrinsically valuable things, a conclusion that would follow from the theory of particular value that Cohen espouses.

Because IR is satisfied on Cohen's account just in virtue of an object's being the bearer of intrinsic value properties, the notion of particular value moreover guarantees that every distinct object that has such intrinsic value properties will be irreplaceable. Hence on Cohen's account, two objects that share every conceivable property besides occupying the same space at the same time will still satisfy IR. For example, the Warhol silk-screens mentioned earlier would not only be irreplaceable one for the other, but more importantly, it would be *impossible* for them *not* to be irreplaceable in this way. While there is surely a discussion to be had about whether two such objects are in fact valuable in the same way, Cohen's account precludes even the possibility of this assessment. It thus leads directly to an instance of the proliferation problem—*every* bearer of intrinsic value properties necessarily satisfies IR.

As mentioned earlier, Cohen often speaks interchangeably about the substitutability of one object for another, and the destruction of one object in order to create another. This is another case where we can see that these two issues come apart. The fact that you would readily accept one handful of flowers as a replacement for another does not imply anything about whether it would be a bad thing for some of the flowers to be destroyed. Irreplaceability *per se* pertains only to whether X is valuable in the same way as Y, and what this entails about the justification of our evaluative behavior: the answers to these questions can be determined independently of whether or not there is reason not to destroy X to bring about Y.²⁴ Moreover, assuming that it is a

²³ Note that unlike Raz's discussion of indistinguishable flowers in "The Little Prince," none of these flowers are "tamed": you have no special relationship with any of them. Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, Ch. 1.

²⁴ I discuss issues of destruction and preservation at greater length in Chapter 3.

bad thing for some beautiful flowers to be destroyed, it is not clear that this depends on their value being intrinsic. It is not obvious that it would be any less bad for some umbrellas to be destroyed, though I imagine both cases are rather trivial. However, we know that umbrellas, absent extraordinary circumstances, are not irreplaceable. If it is nevertheless a bad thing (however minor) for umbrellas to be destroyed, this serves to emphasize the conceptual independence of questions about destruction from questions about irreplaceability.

2c. Extrinsic Value and Irreplaceability

It may be helpful here to follow an influential thread in the value theory literature and note that an object need not be intrinsically valuable in order to be valued for its own sake or have “final value.”²⁵ Indeed, insofar as it is the special value of particular things we are trying to explain, it would be no surprise if these were all things that were valued for *their own sakes*.²⁶ However, even something that is extrinsically valuable can be valued for its own sake. Consider Anderson’s example of Sharon’s ugly bracelet, which is only valued because it was given to her by a friend. Its value is extrinsic, but she does not value it instrumentally.²⁷ Or more generally, consider that objects we value for their histories have extrinsic value: the significance of historical properties is inherently relational. Nevertheless, we certainly seem to value historically significant objects, from heirlooms to artifacts, for their own sakes. However, these objects are not assimilable to Cohen’s theory of particular value, as they need not be the bearers of intrinsic value properties. Of course, Cohen can claim that the case of the bracelet or the heirloom, like the case of his eraser, is captured by his account of personal value. However, this appeal would not succeed for historically significant objects that are not valued for their relation to one’s own history, such as antiquities or fine artworks. Moreover, if valuing for its own sake is a better candidate for explaining irreplaceability than intrinsic value, the distinction between particular valuing and personal valuing begins to seem artificial: it appears that the irreplaceability of both intrinsically and non-intrinsically valuable things have the potential to be captured by a unified account.

These are, then, at least three reasons to question the explanatory power of Cohen’s account of particular value, as well as its accuracy in picking out the correct cases. To review: A) The relationship between intrinsic value and particular value is stipulative, and thus explanatorily weak; B) Not all intrinsically valuable things are irreplaceable, and; C) Extrinsically valuable things can be irreplaceable, and indeed, some are paradigms of irreplaceability. Given these problems for the proposal, we can,

²⁵ For discussion, see, among others, Christine M. Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” *Philosophical Review* 92, no. 2 (1983): 169-95; Rae Langton, “Objective and Unconditioned Value,” *Philosophical Review* 116, no. 2 (2007): 157-85; Shelly Kagan, “Rethinking Intrinsic Value,” *The Journal of Ethics* 2, no. 4 (1998): 277-97; Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Ronnow-Rasmussen, “A Distinction in Value: Intrinsic and for Its Own Sake,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (2005): 115-29.

²⁶ For further discussion of this point see Christopher Grau, “Irreplaceability and Unique Value,” *Philosophical Topics* 32, no. 1/2 (2004): 111-29.

²⁷ Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 21-22. Admittedly, it is not clear whether Anderson would claim the bracelet is valued for its own sake, as I would.

bearing them in mind, return to exploring irreplaceability in historical terms to see if we can arrive at an account that fares better. The failure of Cohen's ahistorical account of particular value is at least an initial piece of evidence that irreplaceability is, consonant with the diverse examples surveyed at the outset and contrary to my thesis, indeed a distinctive feature of objects that we value for their histories.

3. *Valuing An Object For What It Is.*

A helpful notion that emerges from Cohen's thoughts on particular value is the sense in which irreplaceability is largely concerned with what a particular valuable object *is*. He writes:

Just as you may love somebody because of who and what they are, rather than just for the value of what they produce and for the value of what they instantiate, so you may love a loveable institution because it is the institution that it is and it possesses the character that it has. So if you seek to set the agenda for an institution, you must ask not only what its goals are and should be, and how it may best achieve them, but also what it, the institution, *is*.

This idea presents a perennial problem in the theory of love: do we love or value persons just for their properties or qualities, or can we make sense of loving persons as the particular individuals they are, apart from the qualities they have?²⁸ A familiar concern with the latter attempt is that it seems to place love outside the realm of reasons, in conflict with our intuitive sense that love can be responsive to normative considerations.²⁹ As Kolodny puts it: "The beloved's bare identity, however, cannot serve as a reason for loving her. To say 'She is Jane' is simply to identify a particular with itself. It is to say nothing about that particular that might explain why a specific response to it is called for."³⁰ Kolodny notes that he is relying on an assumption here, namely, "that giving a reason to respond to some particular in a distinctive way necessarily involves predicating some general feature of that particular."³¹ While it is possible to question this assumption, an alternative account would be contrary to prevailing views about the way reasons work. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that any alternative view would have a difficult time explaining why a given thing's being the particular one that it is makes *it* irreplaceable, as opposed to some other

²⁸ This problem is discussed in, for instance, Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship."; J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (1999): 338-74; Kenneth Henley, "The Value of Individuals," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 37, no. 3 (1977): 345-52; Grau, "Irreplaceability and Unique Value."; Christopher Grau, "Love and History," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48, no. 3 (2010): 246-71; Chappell, "Absolutes and Particulars."; Richard Kraut, "Love De Re," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (1987): 413-30; A. O. Rorty, "The Historicity of Psychological Attitudes: Love Is Not Love Which Alters Not When It Alteration Finds," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* X, no. 1 (1987): 399-412.

²⁹ As Henley puts it "characteristics which necessarily individuate also necessarily offer us no grounds for valuing." Henley, "The Value of Individuals," 345.

³⁰ Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 142.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 185, fn 14. This assumption seems to be shared by those who favor an account of love that goes beyond properties or qualities, though they generally find the implication of love lacking justification in terms of reasons unproblematic.

particular thing. Because the alternative view rejects the requirement that reasons generalize, it need not accept the implication that *any* object's being the particular one that it is makes it irreplaceable, and thus need not lead to the proliferation problem. However, this demonstrates just how radical this view is: its proponent can consistently claim that one object's being the particular thing that it is provides reason to value it as irreplaceable without claiming this is true of *any other object*. This is a substantial explanatory weakness.³²

Moreover, the proponent of the standard view that reasons necessarily generalize has a ready diagnosis of the problem with the alternative kind of account. The mistake here seems to be conflating the fact that a particular object is valued *for* some set of properties with the notion that it is therefore those properties that are valued, and not the particular object itself. As many have noted in the literature on love, a distinction can be made between the object or focus of valuation, and the basis for valuing it so.³³ The fact that certain properties provide the basis for valuing a particular object does not entail that that object is not the focus of valuation.³⁴ *A fortiori*, whether or not the characteristics that provide the basis for valuing an object are instantiated in one object or many should not have any effect on the focus of valuation.

Consider that there is no puzzle about individuating the objects of valuation when they are simply instantiating value of a general type. For instance, say I'm about to head out into the rain, and I value this umbrella here for keeping the rain off my head. The reasons I have for valuing the umbrella are perfectly general instrumental ones: there are lots of other objects that could serve the same function. But that doesn't make it puzzling that I value *this* umbrella for that general reason. Surely, I don't value it "as a particular" in any honorific sense: it is certainly not irreplaceable. However, the fact that the umbrella is just instrumentally valuable does not make it the case that this umbrella is not the focus of valuation. I am valuing *this* instantiation of a certain

³² Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for helping me clarify this point. However, as explained above, this *is* a problem for Cohen's specific view, as he does make the general claim that *any* bearer of intrinsic value properties has particular value *qua* bearer of those properties. It seems that any view that attempted to make a general claim of this type would also lead to the proliferation problem.

³³ See Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 154; Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," 368; Grau, "Love and History," 260. Also, see Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics*, 19.

³⁴ Here are a few examples of a refusal to grant this distinction. Chappell writes of a "Lockean" finding himself in the following dilemma: "Either I love you for some reason, or I love you for no reason. If I love you for no reason, then obviously my love is unreasonable. If I love you for some reason, then my reason for loving you must cite some property that you have. But then what I love is not you, but that property. It follows that loving a person 'for himself' is either impossible or unreasonable." Chappell, "Absolutes and Particulars," 97. Kraut, anticipating the object/basis distinction writes: "Emotions with the same intentional focus can surely be based upon quite different reasons. For example, Walter's reason for loving Sandra is that she has remarkable musical ability, whereas Karl's reason for loving Sandra is that she is a superb conversationalist. Aren't their attitude nonetheless directed toward the same object"? But Kraut immediately rejects this analysis: "On some course-grained level of description, this is obviously right. But strictly speaking, Walter's attitude is directed toward Sandra's musicianship; Karl's attitude is directed toward her conversational skills. These are distinct objects indeed." He goes on to claim that "the sense in which their attitudes are directed 'toward the same object' is a loose and popular sense. A more rigorous, fine-grained characterization of the intentional object of the love discloses a genuine disparity of content, generated by the disparity in reasons. The reasons for the love constitute the intentional focus of the love." Kraut, "Love De Re," 417-18.

instrumental value; if we were to swap umbrellas, then I would value *that* instantiation of the same value. Those philosophers dissatisfied with the idea of valuing a particular thing in virtue of its general features are seduced by the expectation that the properties that individuate the object must also explain the way in which it is valued. However, this is manifestly not the case, as is clear when we consider examples of instrumental value: being valued “as the object that it is” is really just a redundant assertion of the focus of valuation.³⁵ This umbrella is valued as the object that it is, namely, an object that has instrumental value (how else would you value it, as an object that it’s not?). If this is the case, then understanding the value of an object “as the object that it is” is not a matter of the features that necessarily individuate the object of valuation being the basis for valuing it, but rather, concerns distinguishing the *basis* for valuing one object from the *basis* for valuing another. I have a room full of umbrellas, they are all individuated objects, but the basis for valuing each object is the same: each one is valuable in the same way as the other. What would make one of those umbrellas irreplaceable would be features that provided a basis for valuing it in a different way from the other umbrellas (or anything else), such that nothing would be good in the same way—only then would it satisfy IR.

Thus we need a way of identifying the evaluative significance of what an object *is*, without employing the empty move of identifying it with itself. A common way to achieve this is by appealing to the origin or history of the object. So for instance, O’Neil, Holland, and Light write: “...we distinguished between goods that we value in virtue of their displaying a particular cluster of properties, such as functional goods, and goods that we value not merely as displaying a cluster of properties but as particular individuals individuated by a temporal history and spatial location... There is no substitute for these [latter] goods since their value resides in their particular history.”³⁶ At first, they seem to be making the same claim as Cohen and others: that some things are valued not for their properties, but as the individuals that they are. However, they then specify that their value as individuals “resides in their particular history.” But, claims to the contrary notwithstanding, historical properties are still properties, and thus this proposal is an important shift away from Cohen’s claim that individuals themselves have some sort of special value as the bearer of value properties. All the same, we need to do more than simply appeal to the fact that a given thing *has* a distinct history if we are to avoid the same problems with empty identity statements and proliferation of irreplaceability discussed above. What we need to consider is the evaluative significance of historical properties. If the evaluative significance of historical properties can account for the intuitive cases of irreplaceability without positing a distinct and problematic “value of particulars,” then we will succeed in both justifying many of the intuitive cases and avoiding the proliferation problem.

³⁵ Notice that this is still the case if we say “because it is the object that it is,” or “for the reason that it is the object that it is.” The point is that “being the object that it is” is just a claim about the focus of valuation that does not yet say anything about what makes that object valuable.

³⁶ O’Neill, Holland, and Light, *Environmental Values*, 198-99.

4. Historical Significance and Irreplaceability

The historical origin of an object is what Denis Dutton calls, in the context of artworks, the object's *nominal authenticity* (this is contrasted with *expressive authenticity*, the "object's character as a true expression of an individual's or a society's values and beliefs.")³⁷ As Dutton notes, however, whether or not something is authentic in the nominal sense depends on the respect in which it is being assessed: while a Van Meegeren is not an authentic Vermeer, it is, of course, an authentic Van Meegeren.³⁸ Thus the concept of nominal authenticity links up with the need to articulate a relevant respect or aspect of evaluative assessment when determining whether a given X is irreplaceable. As Raz puts it: "Irreplaceability is of course, aspect dependent. Every thing is irreplaceable in some respects and replaceable in others."³⁹ In order to know whether matters of nominal authenticity have evaluative relevance, we first need to establish the relevant evaluative respect. The fact that a given Van Meegeren is an inauthentic Vermeer only has evaluative relevance if we are assessing the value of the painting *qua* Vermeer. Absent this evaluative parameter, noting that the Van Meegeren is an inauthentic Vermeer is akin to noting that a painted horse is an inauthentic zebra: it is true that they are different animals, but independent of a specified evaluative respect, it is unclear why this fact should matter.

So, it is only once we know the evaluative respect in which we are assessing the object that the question of what it *is* becomes evaluatively relevant, and only then that we can assess whether it is different from others or unique in an evaluatively relevant way. The historical properties that can serve to establish what an object is or to differentiate it from another do not, on their own, have evaluative or normative implications. This should remind us of Arthur Danto's claim that "a particular thing or occurrence acquires historical *significance* in virtue of its relations to some other thing or occurrence in which we happen to have some special interest, or to which we attach some importance, for whatever reason."⁴⁰ It is a given context of evaluative assessment that renders certain historical features *significant*, and this is no less true when considering the historical features of an object that supposedly render it unique. Along these lines in the context of artwork, Jack Meiland writes: "Far from originality adding to the aesthetic value of a work (as distinct from adding to the *total* value of the work), the originality value depends upon that work first being valuable in other ways. No one cares about an original work of art that is a very bad work. Its originality matters only when it is very good."⁴¹ Or on this same theme, Shelly Kagan writes: "...one need not hold that anything at all becomes intrinsically valuable as it becomes rare or unique. It might be, for example, that only objects that are independently intrinsically valuable are such as to have their value enhanced by uniqueness."⁴² That one thing is unlike another

³⁷ Denis Dutton, "Authenticity in Art," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 25.

⁴⁰ Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge University Press, 1965), 167.

⁴¹ Jack W. Meiland, "Originals, Copies, and Aesthetic Value," in *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Denis Dutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 123.

⁴² Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," 283. See also Sibley, "Originality and Value."

is only evaluatively significant when it is unlike another in a valuable way—likewise, that one thing has a different history from another is only evaluatively relevant if the historical difference is a significant one.

It should not be surprising, then, that different evaluative respects will select for the significance of historical features in different ways, but in each case, it is establishing the nature of the value in question that determines the relevance and significance of its historical features. In the context of artworks, for instance, few affirm that the nominal authenticity of a work is irrelevant to *all* evaluative assessments; rather, discussion revolves around whether or not historical features are specifically relevant to the *aesthetic* value of the artwork.⁴³ Thus those who endorse an “appearance-based” view of aesthetics, or a thorough-going formalist understanding, will naturally deny the relevance of nominal authenticity to aesthetic value: after all, you cannot *see* the historical features of a painting. In response, critics can, for instance, either offer a more capacious aesthetic theory, or argue that authenticity is in fact relevant to how we look at artworks, even if there are at the moment no readily discernible differences between originals and forgeries.⁴⁴ Indeed, purely formalist aestheticians are hard to find these days. This is no place for an inquiry into the nature of aesthetic value: the point is simply that this is the task required for an assessment of the evaluative relevance of historical features to works of art and other objects of aesthetic inquiry.

For a different kind of case, one involving reference to one’s own history, consider personal relationships. Take Kolodny’s relationship-based account of love. Why is a history of shared activity and concern identified as a reason for the psychological state of love? We first identify the *kind* of case that is paradigmatic of the evaluative class we have in mind, and it is as a result of determining the relevant value that historical features are deemed significant. Consider in this light the following claim by Kolodny:

What, in normal cases, causally sustains this concern [constitutive of love] is a good guide to the normative reasons for it. In general, the contents of the beliefs that normally sustain an emotion also serve as normative reasons for it. The history of an established relationship with a person, and the fact that she continues to reciprocate one’s feelings, in turn constitute a normative reason for one’s present emotional vulnerability.⁴⁵

⁴³ See, for instance Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968), Section III “Art and Authenticity”; Meiland, “Originals, Copies, and Aesthetic Value.”; William Bossart, “Authenticity and Aesthetic Value in the Visual Arts,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 1, no. 3 (1961): 144-59; Mark Sagoff, “On Restoring and Reproducing Art,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 75, no. 9 (1978): 453-70; Mark Sagoff, “The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35, no. 2 (1976): 169-80; Mark Sagoff, “Historical Authenticity,” *Erkenntnis* (1978): 83-93.

⁴⁴ See work by Sagoff and Goodman, respectively. For an expansive approach similar to Goodman’s see Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, Second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). For further reflections on this puzzle, and a critique of Goodman’s analysis, see respectively Robert Hopkins, “Painting, History, and Experience,” *Philosophical Studies* 127(2006): 19-35; Robert Hopkins, “Aesthetics, Experience, and Discrimination,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63, no. 2 (2005): 119-33.

⁴⁵ Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 162.

What we find, then, is that historical features are not merely relevant to the uninformative claim that some X is the particular X that it is, but importantly, historical features can be relevant to some X qualifying as an instance of a valuable type: having a certain history of interactions with another person is constitutive of a certain valuable relationship, but we first need to identify this evaluative class before we can assess the relevance of some set of historical features to it. We have yet to explain, however, the specific role that historical features play on this account in making a given X that *is* a member of a valuable type satisfy IR.

What is interesting about historical features is that when they have evaluative relevance, they can play a role in picking out particular valuable things akin to the role that they play in picking out particular objects in non-evaluative contexts. Value that is partially constituted by a certain history can only be instantiated in an object that has the relevant history. If being a Vermeer has aesthetic value that is constituted in part by its having been painted by Vermeer, then it is immediately clear why paintings that are *not* nominally authentic Vermeers fail to have the same kind of aesthetic value that the Vermeer has. Likewise a family heirloom, the value of which is constituted by its history, has a value that cannot be shared by a qualitative duplicate that lacks the right historical features. Because of the natural uniqueness of historical properties, they are well suited to satisfying IR in cases where a given set of historical properties is uniquely constitutive of the value in question. This is the feature of historical properties that John Martin appeals to when he writes of things we value for their histories: "...their historical properties are so specific that they admit of no substitutes."⁴⁶ However, this need not be the case *evaluatively* speaking. If distinctions in value are recognized to be coarser-grained than distinctions in objects—and distinctions in historical significance likewise coarser-grained than distinctions in historical properties—we will not consequently end up with a problematic proliferation of uniquely valuable things.

We can imagine a person who suffers from a failure to see this difference.⁴⁷ Consider a person who believes that every object with which he has interacted acquires a special historical significance that renders it worthy of being cherished. It is not enough for him to save a representative memento, but every associated item becomes a relic. Surely, we would take this behavior to rest on an evaluative mistake. If there's *anything* valuable about the bulk of the things that this character saves, they are no doubt all valuable in the same way. He mistakes distinctions among objects for distinctions in value.

Once we recognize the danger of this mistake, it is easier to see how various objects might have the same historical significance despite not sharing identical historical properties. If the value of some family heirlooms consists in their having belonged to your great-grandmother, for instance, then it may be that all of those heirlooms will have the same historical significance in virtue of sharing that historical

⁴⁶ Martin, "The Concept of the Irreplaceable," 42.

⁴⁷ The reader will no doubt notice a resemblance between the example I construct here and a person engaged in hoarding behavior. This is originally what I had in mind, but an anonymous reviewer helpfully reminded me that hoarding is a real pathology. I do not pretend to be offering an etiology of that illness, but I imagine a person committing the evaluative mistake I consider here would be engaged in similar behavior.

feature, although there are many other such features that they do not share. Likewise, similar artifacts from similar sites and times might all be historically significant in the same way. And objects produced in serial (coins, etchings, woodcuts, etc.) are all plausible candidates for sharing the same historical significance despite differences in other historical properties. Even organisms belonging to the same species or other taxon, whose value might consist partially in instantiating a swath of evolutionary history, could be said to be valuable in the same way (at least with respect to their historical significance).⁴⁸ But if various objects are historically significant in the same way, then they do not satisfy IR, and are not, as it turns out, irreplaceable. However, the fact that an ancient coin, or a prehistoric artifact, or a family heirloom fails to satisfy IR (because there are in fact other objects that are valuable in the same way) does not alter their status as paradigms of objects we value for their histories. Irreplaceability, then, does not seem to be a necessary condition of historical value.

One might reply that although there are historically significant objects that do not strictly speaking satisfy IR, many objects that are not meaningfully *irreplaceable* still can be said to *resist* replacement. In order to evaluate this proposal, and to help clarify the nature of replaceability, consider the following principle:

Resistance to Replacement (RR): an object rationally resists replacement if and only if there is a candidate substitute that would fail to be valuable in the same way as the original.

RR is much weaker than IR. An object satisfies IR when *all* candidate substitutes would fail to be valuable in the same way as the original. In contrast, an object satisfies RR when merely *some* candidate substitute would not be valuable in the same way as the original. Recall that candidate substitutes are those that might *plausibly* be valuable in the same way as the original: this prevents RR from being unhelpfully weak.⁴⁹ A hawk is not a candidate substitute for a handsaw, and so the fact that they are not valuable in

⁴⁸ Applying these thoughts on irreplaceability to the value of organisms considered with respect to their evolutionary history could have interesting implications for conservation biology that tell against exclusive reliance on the species concept. For instance, there might be a scenario in which species A has a long-branch monophyletic lineage, whereas species B through K have short-branch lineages that share a common ancestor, and we are faced with saving either A, or B through E, but not both. An approach to conservation biology focused on maximizing the preservation of species would favor saving B through E. However, because of its long-branch lineage, there is a strong sense in which species A is more unique than any of species B through E, which all have a similar evolutionary history shared with each other as well as with species F through K. This might ground an evaluative judgment that would favor preserving species A over preserving species B through E. Instead of maximizing the number of preserved species, we would be maximizing the number of distinctive lineages. Thanks to Brent Mishler for discussion of this topic. For further discussion, see B. D. Mishler, "Plant Systematics and Conservation: Science and Society," *Madroño* 42(1995): 103-13., in particular Fig. 2; B. D. Mishler, "Species Are Not Uniquely Real Biological Entities," in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Biology*, ed. F. Ayala and R. Arp (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁴⁹ It should also be noted that a viable candidate substitute might not exist yet, but come into existence later. In such a case, the degree to which an object resists replacement might vary over time depending on the existence of candidate substitutes and the ease and predictability with which substitutes can be brought into existence. This also highlights a complex role played by the *availability* of substitutes. It may be that there is a perfect evaluative substitute for a given object, but you don't know about it, and moreover it's buried in the Himalayas. In this case, the object might not technically satisfy IR, but the conditions might be such that valuing the object as irreplaceable is pragmatically warranted.

the same way hardly warrants mention. However, the evaluative respect in which we are assessing an object will affect what other objects qualify as plausible substitutes, and hence the size of the set of candidates with which the original might resist replacement. This allows us to employ RR to explain how objects can be more or less resistant to replacement, depending on the pool of acceptable substitutes. Additionally, we could ask *how* evaluatively different a candidate substitute is from the original, providing another dimension along which we could assess the extent of an object's resistance to replacement.

Consider in this light an example of Kraut's:

Linus appears to love his security blanket—the particular one he always clutches...So we ask: Is his love for the blanket historical? First ask whether the blanket is replaceable. Take it away and watch the results. Linus mourns and laments and accepts no substitutes—in fact, he is repulsed by any available successor blanket. It looks as though the particular blanket we removed was indeed irreplaceable, was itself the object of his love. But time heals all wounds and complicates the situation: after two days he calms down; after three days he is more receptive to alternatives; after four days he is bonded to a new blanket. It now looks as though the first blanket was *not* irreplaceable after all.⁵⁰

Whether or not the blanket, or any object, counts as irreplaceable will depend, as Kraut notes, on two general parameters: the substitution class, and the criteria for replaceability.⁵¹ We can think of criteria for replaceability as specifications of ways of being valuable, and a substitution class as an ostensive evaluative category defined relative to such a specification. So, for instance, if the relevant criterion of replaceability for a blanket is a certain degree of softness, then the correlative substitution class will consist of all the blankets that satisfy this criterion. This need not imply that all the blankets in that substitution class are generally interchangeable, but only that they are interchangeable *qua* blankets of a certain softness. Thus whether or not one has reason to accept a replacement will, as I have already claimed, depend on arguing for a specific individuation in ways of being valuable. An object will satisfy IR and qualify as meaningfully irreplaceable if the fully specified criteria of replaceability are in fact such that *no* other object is or could be valuable in the same way—in other words, the object is the sole member of its substitution class. But, even if Linus' blanket fails to satisfy IR, and is hence not meaningfully irreplaceable, it can still satisfy RR. If there are few acceptable substitutes for the original blanket, or the candidate substitutes are quite evaluatively distinct from the original, we can say that despite not being irreplaceable, it is significantly resistant to replacement.

As noted, we should be careful not to mistake the attribution of an evaluative category for an implication that all of the objects in it are necessarily interchangeable. For instance, the fact that we might discuss aesthetic value, or gustatory value, or instrumental value does not imply that all paintings, or meals, or tools are valuable in

⁵⁰ Kraut, "Love De Re," 428. Though it should be noted that my definitions of these useful terms diverge somewhat from Kraut's.

⁵¹ Ibid.

the same way as the other objects in their general evaluative class. A person who believed that all art objects were valuable in the same way would be a particularly undiscerning valuer. However, there are many cases in which the objects within an evaluative class *are* interchangeable, and we value a given object merely as an instance of that broader class. For example, a desire for authentic crafts (of at least a general expressive kind of authenticity, if not a nominal one) is currently driving home furnishing markets. But if the relevant evaluative class is too broad, for instance of simply being “a quirky apparently hand-made craft,” it is easy to see why such items would not be irreplaceable. A malaise associated with this fact is captured in a recent *New York Times* article, “All That Authenticity May Be Getting Old.” As the author writes: “How much authenticity is too much? It’s an oddly philosophical question, given the subject matter, but one that might occur to anyone confronted with the deluge of vintage and artisanal products now available online and through mass-market retailers.”⁵² The reason all that authenticity is getting old is because the relevant evaluative class is such that the objects in it are evaluatively interchangeable.

Moreover, we should not allow the Linus case to mislead us into thinking that satisfying the stricter requirement of IR is a matter of adopting a particularly implacable attitude towards certain valuable objects. We should thus be mindful of when the attitudes involved in deeming an object irreplaceable are taken to troubling extremes. For instance, Sir Harold Nicholson writes:

I should assuredly be prepared to be shot against a wall if I were certain that by such a sacrifice I could preserve the Giotto frescoes; nor should I hesitate for an instant (where such a decision ever open to me) to save St. Mark’s even if I were aware that by so doing I should bring death to my sons... My attitude would be governed by a principle which is surely incontrovertible. The irreplaceable is more important than the replaceable, and the loss of even the most valued human life is ultimately less disastrous than the loss of something which in no circumstances can ever be created again.⁵³

It is difficult to decide what is more distasteful about this statement: the cavalier assertion of the commensurability of his sons’ lives with the value of St. Mark’s, or the more general implication that human lives are “replaceable.” It should in any event be a cautionary tale about the attitudes that are possible where questions of irreplaceability are concerned. Indeed, because our attitudes can vary in this way, we should be sensitive to how these attitudes respond to the relevant loss. Do our attitudes appropriately track the strength of the reasons we have for believing that an object is irreplaceable? This is part of the task of reflecting on and justifying the distinctiveness of the valued things in question. In a fascinating and disturbing paper, Dan Moller details how, despite our antecedent commitments to the irreplaceability of our life-partners, we are shockingly resilient to their loss, and tend to remarry quickly.⁵⁴ This

⁵² Emily Weinstein, “All That Authenticity May Be Getting Old,” *The New York Times*, October 26 2011.

⁵³ Sir Harold Nicholson, “Marginal Comments” in *Spectator*, Feb. 5th 1944 as quoted in John Henry Merryman, “Two Ways of Thinking About Cultural Property,” *The American Journal of International Law* 80, no. 4 (1986): 831-53.

⁵⁴ Dan Moller, “Love and Death,” *Journal of Philosophy* 104, no. 6 (2007): 301-16.

data demands that we consider whether our attitudes have become corrupted and are insufficiently responsive to the strength of the reasons we have for resisting the replacement of our loved ones, or whether our life-partners are not in fact as irreplaceable as they seemed.⁵⁵

This is not to assume that irreplaceability consists solely in what a person is willing or unwilling to accept as a substitute: after all, one might obstinately fail to accept substitutes for anything, and the rake who treats romantic partners as interchangeable is a familiar enough character. Rather, what we want to assess is whether someone has *reason* to accept a replacement. It is natural to think that valuing something as irreplaceable is evidence that it is indeed distinctive in this way, but this is only true if the object actually warrants such evaluative attitudes. The fact that we *regard* a given thing as irreplaceable requires that we demonstrate that it is *worth* regarding this way: otherwise, we merely harbor an unjustified bias.

Now, while RR grants us the resources to explain how an object can resist replacement even when it is not irreplaceable, it should be clear from the examples employed so far that RR does not bear any interesting relationship to historical value. Once we specify an evaluative respect in which we are assessing an object, we create criteria for replaceability and a substitution class that can be used to determine resistance to replacement, and these criteria can be completely ahistorical, as when we assess a blanket with respect to its softness. So RR cannot be sufficient to secure historical value, and it is only necessary to the extent that it is a necessary feature of evaluation generally, not because it picks out a distinctive feature of historical value.

It is natural, however, to think that RR still provides useful guidance for the question at hand provided the evaluative properties we are assessing are suitably restricted. Our concern in the historical cases seems to be with the maximally differentiable evaluative features of an object: not the attribution of criteria for replaceability that define a broad evaluative class, but the most specific features that provide a basis for differentiating its value from that of other objects. Hence what we need is a narrower construal of resistance to replacement, such as:

Maximal Resistance to Replacement (MR): an object rationally resists replacement to a maximal extent when there is a candidate substitute that would fail to be valuable in the same *maximally differentiable way* as the original.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ This issue is particularly complicated due to the divergence between our attitudes before and after the deaths of loved ones. See *ibid.* I believe that a person can have good reason to develop a new relationship after the death of a loved one without that implying that the deceased has been “replaced,” but the topic is effective in raising the question at hand. Moreover, you might think there is a *sense* in which we accept a new partner “as a replacement,” just as Linus eventually accepts a new blanket “as a replacement,” but this would not be a replacement in the technical sense of an evaluative duplicate.

⁵⁶ It should be noted that there might be cases in which friction arises between differences in ways of being valuable that are *discernable*, and those that are in fact discerned by a given individual. For instance, there may be important distinctions in ways of being valuable that are discernable by a practiced art critic, but which are indiscernible to me. It may thus be justifiable for me to accept a de la Tour in replacement for a Caravaggio, much to the chagrin of the art critic, if, as far as I am concerned, they are valuable in the same way. I may be missing something about the comparative qualities of their value, but my decision would at least make sense given my own evaluative abilities. Of course, we

MR would allow us to exclude the more general forms of resistance to replacement exhibited by membership in broad evaluative classes from the narrower phenomenon that we seem to experience with respect to objects that we value for their histories. So for instance, *qua* painting, a Caravaggio would resist replacement (RR) with a Bernini sculpture (though not *qua* artwork), but not with paintings by Seurat or Van Eyck. But once we employ MR, we no longer assess the Caravaggio *qua* painting, and hence as interchangeable with other members of the substitution class of paintings, but *qua* maximally differentiable way of being valuable, which will ostensibly make reference to the artist and the specific achievements of the work in question. We could then plausibly say that it resists replacement with most other paintings, perhaps even all of them. If all, then in this case satisfaction of MR would entail satisfaction of IR.

However, it is important to observe that satisfaction of MR does not necessarily entail satisfaction of IR. Take an example of Christopher Grau's: "Consider the set of guitars owned by Jimi Hendrix. One *might* care about a particular guitar (the one played at Woodstock, for example) but then again *one might not*. One might instead value the entire set of guitars he played, and freely accept a substitute of one guitar for another. (This is a case where *history* matters, but several objects share the relevant history.)"⁵⁷ If the maximally differentiable value that can be justified in this context is "a guitar played by Hendrix," then one would have no reason to refuse a substitute of one guitar for another among the set of guitars that Hendrix played—a Hendrix guitar would resist replacement with other non-Hendrix guitars, but it would not satisfy IR. If, on the other hand, the maximally differentiable value that can be justified is "a guitar played by Hendrix at Woodstock," and moreover (let's assume) there is only one such guitar, then in this case satisfaction of MR would entail satisfaction of IR. The guitar would occupy a substitution class unto itself.

We now have fairly subtle resources (IR, MR, RR) for explaining the degree to which a given object might resist replacement, even to the extent of being irreplaceable. But these resources should make it easier to see that *no* form of resistance to replacement tracks the historical mode of valuation. We have already seen that RR can be satisfied by any evaluative assessment—indeed, it is in the nature of evaluation to make distinctions that will trigger RR, and hence it cannot be unique to historical cases. Thus satisfying RR may be a necessary condition for historical value, but only insofar as it is a necessary feature of evaluative predications generally: RR is certainly not

should be wary of individuals claiming expertise in the discernment of evaluative qualities if they are incapable of explaining what the difference consists in: I am philosophically optimistic in believing that it should be possible to articulate what makes something valuable. If not, the prospects for much of evaluative inquiry appear bleak. Moreover, though, it need not be the case that evaluative differences need to be discernible, strictly speaking. For discussion, see Hopkins, "Aesthetics, Experience, and Discrimination."

⁵⁷ Grau, "Irreplaceability and Unique Value," 125. Andy Warhol provides an amusing and perceptive anecdote that illustrates this concept: "What's great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you can know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good," Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1975), 100-01.

sufficient for historical value. MR provides an intermediate principle between RR and IR that we might hope would be characteristic of historical cases. However, the output of MR will simply vary with the case, rather than certain cases characteristically triggering MR. For instance, umbrellas *qua* tools would be replaceable (RR) with other tools, but umbrellas can trigger MR as well: the maximally differentiable value of an umbrella just is the instrumental value of keeping rain off one's head. Thus MR allows us to specify the finest-grained distinction in ways of being valuable that can be made in a given case, but we can employ it in any evaluative context, even in the case of umbrellas. It may be that application of MR in historical cases will tend to result in smaller substitution classes, or even in satisfaction of IR, but this need not be the case, nor would such a phenomenon be unique to historical cases. Thus it is likewise not sufficient for historical value.

To press the issue further, imagine a possible world in which medium-sized physical objects spontaneously undergo mitosis. You're admiring a family heirloom, and suddenly you're holding two of your grandfather's ring instead of one. These aren't just qualitative duplicates—they're historical duplicates as well. You have no possible basis for differentiating their values, and they are therefore substitutable for each other—they don't satisfy MR with respect to each other. Now imagine the rings continuing to multiply. We can artificially expand the substitution class as much as we like: the number of available substitutes doesn't seem to track the way in which we value the ring for its history.

We can see further evidence for this conclusion if we vary the substitution class and criteria for replaceability of objects that we manifestly do *not* value for their histories. Return to our trusty, instrumentally valuable umbrella. If there were only one umbrella left in the world and no more could be produced, that umbrella would be an exemplar of irreplaceability: it would be the only thing valuable in precisely the same instrumental way that umbrellas are. It satisfies MR, assuming that the instrumental value of the umbrella is indeed our maximally differentiable assessment of its value, and because no suitable substitute can exist, it would also satisfy IR. However, provided we don't view that umbrella as some kind of memorial to umbrellas past, the fact that it satisfies MR and IR doesn't seem to change the way we would value it, and it doesn't seem to render it similar to the way that we value objects because of their histories. It's still just a tool, albeit the last tool of its kind. Its overall value might be enhanced by its rarity, but the value in virtue of which its rarity would matter (if it would) would be instrumental. For another example, consider a key. Being unique is just what the instrumental value of a key consists in. It's certainly a good thing about keys that they can be unique, but even if we had a key that could not be copied, its satisfying IR would not intuitively make it valuable in the manner of the Hendrix guitars, or the mitotic rings, or any other object that we value for its history, irrespective of the number of replacements that object might admit of. This is admittedly an appeal to intuition, but just consider the difference between the unique key to a lockbox, and the key (now to nothing) passed down from your great-grandmother, or the ring of keys to a medieval dungeon. I submit that the way we value the key in the first case is different from the way we value the keys in the latter two, independent of the possibility of replacements and despite the fact that, of course, they all *have* histories. Below, I hope to make some headway in explaining the nature of this difference.

It seems, then, that the fact that historically significant features of an object are well suited to satisfy IR led us to believe that irreplaceability has an important role to play in our understanding of the historical mode of valuation. But this appearance is illusory. Whether or not you would have good reason to accept a replacement for a valued object is irrelevant to explaining the specific character of objects we value for their histories.

5. *The Value of History*

Having rejected claims to the effect that irreplaceability, or even some more tempered form of resistance to replacement, might be a necessary or sufficient condition for warranting the historical mode of valuation, we are left to wonder what made this picture compelling in the first place, and whether there is in fact some common feature that unites the otherwise diverse cases of things we value for their histories. With regard to the first question, it seems that there is a further feature of historical properties lurking behind attributions of irreplaceability that explains why that phenomenon has seemed a central aspect of the historical mode of valuation. Cohen refers to it as *the given*. The historical features of an object come as they are—we cannot change them, remove them, or replicate them (though we can of course add to them, and time may alter their significance). The fact that these historical properties cannot be replicated or fabricated or engineered can lead to the stronger conclusion that objects valued for their histories are irreplaceable. But as we have seen, this is manifestly not the case.

Cohen claims that we need to *accept* the given, that it is a mistake to seek “mastery” over everything, to shape everything to our “aims and requirements.”⁵⁸ This position underlies a strong preservationist bent in Cohen’s essay with which I disagree.⁵⁹ And while appeal to the given offers a kind of error theory for the common concern with irreplaceability, it does not yet get to the heart of the historical mode of valuation. We don’t value historically significant objects for their bare “givenness.” What is given need not have a significant past. The fact that historical features are given and cannot be replicated is what makes possible their distinctive value, but that value does not lie primarily in a divorce from human intention and control.

L. P. Hartley famously wrote: “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” As revealing as this metaphor can be, there is a crucial dimension of our relationship to the past that it fails to capture. While we might visit a foreign country, we cannot, at least not in the same way, visit the past.⁶⁰ But the past can visit us.

The historical properties of objects offer us a genuine *connection* to the past. Though we cannot go back in time, the objects and places that were present in the past

⁵⁸ Cohen, “Rescuing Conservatism,” 207.

⁵⁹ I discuss this further Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ Compare with the discussion of our “homelessness in time” and the role of personal routines and traditions in Samuel Scheffler, “The Normativity of Tradition,” in *Equality and Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 296-98.

travel forward in time with us. The enthusiast who exclaims, “this is where Jefferson sat as he drafted the Declaration of Independence!” is not mistaken in her excitement: she values a connection to the past that has an immediacy that is otherwise completely impossible. While she cannot visit 18th century America, the desk already has. It was there, and no desk that was not in fact there can be made to have this feature *post hoc*. The fact that such historical features cannot be engineered invites the conclusion that objects valued for their histories have no substitutes or are irreplaceable. But the fact that historical features cannot be fabricated does not imply that there are not multiple objects that share the same historically significant features. The possibility of multiple objects being historically significant in the same way does not alter the distinctive value they possess in providing a connection to the past. It should now be clear that irreplaceability is only contingently relevant to the valuing of objects for their histories, and we can thus see why, for instance, an historical artifact and a unique key are so evaluatively different, despite surface similarities pertaining to replacements. If we could somehow cast objects, or ourselves, back into the past, then the connection afforded by the historical properties of objects would not be so distinctive. But this is of course a fantasy.⁶¹ The fact that historical features cannot be fabricated is what secures the distinctiveness of their value, but the value accentuated is the connection with the past. By analogy, consider a place that still exists, though we could no longer visit it—perhaps the moon if we permanently lost our limited knowledge of space travel. Holding a moon rock would be a way of making a connection with a place that is now inaccessible to us, in the same way we can make a connection with the past through objects of historical value.

This analogy also highlights why connections with the past are valuable, and why it makes sense for us to seek them out in the way we often do. Connecting with the past by engaging with historically significant objects is a way of regaining what has been lost to the passage of time. Mementos assist in recalling important moments in our lives, but they also offer a visceral connection that exceeds mere reminiscence, a kind of embodied memory. Recall the example of Cohen’s eraser. Cohen writes: “There is no feature that stands apart from its history that makes me want to keep this eraser.” The historical properties of a memento or heirloom allow you to hold the past in your hand. This phenomenon is all the more remarkable when it pushes beyond the boundaries of our own lives, and allows us to connect with persons and events from the distant past. Just like the moon rock, from a place few have ever been to and to which few may ever go, historical artifacts expand our access to times from which we are otherwise isolated. This kind of connection can facilitate learning, understanding, and discovery, to consider some instrumental goods, but it can also offer a sense of unity with the significant moments that have shaped both the earth and ourselves.

In this vein, connecting with the past through historically significant objects tends to have emotional resonance, as in the difference between my father’s ring and a perceptually identical ring that belonged to a stranger; only the ring with the correct historical properties will ground an appropriate disposition toward an emotional reaction. Thus historically significant objects can be the source of distinctive affective experiences. In addition to these kinds of personal sentimental connection, engagement

⁶¹ Indeed, in such a fantasy, our conception of past, present, and future might be so distorted as to make the concept of an historical mode of valuation unintelligible.

with historically significant objects of a more impersonal nature (such as Stonehenge or the Declaration of Independence or the Grand Canyon) also can involve characteristic phenomenological components, sometimes akin to the experience of awe or respect, other times wonder or even revulsion (as in objects significant for their connection with a history of oppression and violence).⁶² I am inclined to believe that valuing objects for their histories in the way we have been discussing is a kind of aesthetic valuing, broadly conceived, that unites the seemingly disparate kinds of cases we have considered in this essay. But I will not pursue that suggestion here.

For these reasons, it is not any old connection to any old past that is worth valuing. Although age may sometimes be sufficient to secure value when an object is incredibly old, typically we are concerned not with mere age value, but rather, historical significance.⁶³ Thus the value of the connection to the past is premised on standard attributions of historical significance of the type discussed in attempting to justify claims about irreplaceability. This is why a justified articulation of historical significance remains a central aspect of the historical mode of valuation. We value objects that have visited historically significant times, but moreover, that have done so in historically significant *ways*. This piece of lint may have escaped the fire of London, but no one rightly gives a hoot about that.

It may be questioned whether historically significant objects are worth valuing in the manner I have suggested. What, it might be asked, does the connection with the past afforded by historically significant objects achieve that is lacked by merely reflecting upon the significance of the past? Are not such objects like totems to which we attribute power as a matter of cultural practice, but which are merely props or prompts for the mental activity that truly bears the relevant value?

However, I do not find this line of thought particularly compelling. The intuition that began this investigation, that historically significant objects are irreplaceable, already adopted the position that the objects themselves (and not merely historical reflection) were the bearers of value, and so the importance of connecting with the past via such objects already has common opinion on its side. Moreover, though, why think that merely mental reflection upon significant moments in time is a complete form of engagement with their value, anymore so than merely mental reflection upon the significance of place? Surely contemplating a significant place (whether beautiful or unique or politically charged) can be a valuable activity, but it would be strange to doubt that visiting such a place would afford a valuable connection that is lacking in mere reflection. So, too, for historically significant objects. As I have explained, such objects afford as close of a connection to the past as our natural laws allow, and thus a connection with time analogous to the connection with place. Indeed, we value many places precisely because of their historical significance. Think of visiting the Gettysburg battlefields. Standing at the site of Pickett's Charge, one can be overwhelmed with the

⁶² Though I argue in Chapter 4 that "sentimental value" can accrue to objects that are traditionally regarded as "impersonally valuable." In this I diverge from Guy Fletcher, "Sentimental Value," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 43 (2009): 55-65; Anthony Hatzimoysis, "Sentimental Value," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53, no. 212 (2003).

⁶³ For some further thoughts about age value vs. historical value, see Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Aesthetic Deception: On Encounters with the Past," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66, no. 2 (2008): 117-27.

weight of the bloody and momentous events that transpired there. It was once common to attribute this force to ghosts, but I have suggested that this connection to the past is a phenomenon we rightly value and can be emotionally disposed toward in a related manner. Moreover, the character of the historical mode of valuation naturally varies in relation to the kind of historical significance with which one makes contact. Gettysburg tends to conjure quite different evaluative attitudes and emotions compared with a childhood haunt or the great redwood forests. But in each case, the common core is a significant connection with a significant past.

6. Conclusion

While it initially appeared that objects we value for their histories are irreplaceable, and that this irreplaceability was a defining aspect of the historical mode of valuation, we have seen that this is not the case. The extent to which an object resists replacement must be justified through demonstrating that it is valuable in a way that differs from potential substitutes. But even the maximally differentiable value of a given historically significant object may be insufficient to secure its irreplaceability. Multiple historically significant objects can be valuable in the same way. We were prompted to believe in the irreplaceability of such objects by the fact that historical properties are given, and hence cannot be fabricated. However, the inability to fabricate a property is not equivalent to the inability to replace it with another object that is valuable in the same way. The fact that historical properties cannot be fabricated plays an important role in making the historical mode of valuation distinctive, but it is the connection to the past afforded by historical properties that makes their bearers valuable.

We often remark on the impossibility of time travel, but of course it is only travel backwards in time to which we refer. Everything travels forward in time, and in that journey we can encounter objects that have traversed times that are beyond our own direct access. We rightly value the historical connection these objects provide, the opportunity to come as close as we can to visiting the past.

Chapter 3: What's the Point of Preservation?

1. *Preservation vs. Engagement*

In the last chapter, I argued that a preoccupation with the irreplaceability of things we value for their histories is ultimately unfounded. While it is true that historically significant objects often have few replacements, the truly distinctive feature of historical value is the connection with the past that historically significant objects afford. This emphasis on connecting with the past focuses our attention on the manner in which we interact with historically significant objects. We need not look far to see what the dominant trend is when it comes to such interaction. Museums, galleries, universities, historical societies, private collectors: all of the institutions and practices that we associate most closely with historically significant objects view *preservation* as a paramount concern, sometimes to the exclusion of all others. The same kind of behavior can be observed in the way many people safeguard keepsakes and family heirlooms. But does the mere preservation of historical significant objects conduce to the appropriate kind of connection with the past, the kind that can make our interactions with them so uniquely valuable? What, if anything, is the justification for these preservationist attitudes?

It turns out that folk and philosophers alike have strong preservationist attitudes not only toward historically valuable objects, but to value *per se*. As Sam Scheffler puts it: “[I]t is difficult to understand how human beings could have values at all if they did not have conservative impulses. What would it mean to value things, but in general, to see no reason of any kind to sustain them or retain them or preserve them or extend them into the future?” In G.A. Cohen’s words: “The conservative propensity that I defend...is to preserve particular intrinsically valuable things, as such...[I] think this disposition of mine is not an eccentric one: I think that everyone who is sane has *something* of this disposition.” T. M. Scanlon writes: “When we speak of recognizing the value of some objects, such as the Grand Canyon, or Picasso’s *Guernica*, or the great whales, what we seem to have in mind is that there is reason to preserve and protect these things...” And Donald Regan prescribes: “If something is intrinsically valuable, then any moral agent has a moral reason to try to bring it into existence or to preserve it if it already exists.”¹

These comments lend support to a seemingly intuitive principle about the relationship between preservation and value, namely that *Preservation is Necessary*:²

¹ Samuel Scheffler, “Immigration and the Significance of Culture,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2007): 93-125; G. A. Cohen, “Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of Existing Value,” in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 210, 04; T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Belknap Press, 1998), 169; Donald H. Regan, “Duties of Preservation,” in *The Preservation of Species*, ed. Bryan Norton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

² It is important to note that not all of the aforementioned quotations by themselves actually *entail* this view (hence why I consider both \forall PN and PN below), though as I note, some suggest it, and they all reinforce the intuition that there is an essential link between value and preservation. For instance, Scheffler’s question refers to reasons “of any kind” to preserve, and these could be the subordinate reasons of preservation that I argue for. However, Scheffler also writes “If there is a conceptual gap between valuing and the impulse to conserve, it is not a very large one.” Scheffler, “Immigration and the

(\forall PN): For all X, if X is valuable, then there is reason to preserve X based on this fact alone, no matter what else may be true of X and our relation to it.

Some might think \forall PN is too strong—although there is an important relationship between value and preservation, they might prefer a more qualified claim to the effect that only *some* valuable things require preservation, resulting in an even more intuitive principle:

(PN): For some X, X is valuable and there is reason to preserve X based on this fact alone, no matter what else may be true of X and our relation to it.³

My aim in this essay is to cast doubt on even this very weak and seemingly intuitive link between value and preservation. In my view, reasons for preservation are explained by reasons for *engagement*. Thus, first, reasons for preservation, when they obtain, are *derivative*: roughly, there is reason to preserve only when and because this serves engagement. And, second, because it is a contingent matter whether preservation serves engagement, reasons to preserve are *contingent* as well. Call this view *Engagement Explains Preservation*:

(EP): For all X, if X is valuable, then there is reason to preserve X *only if* and *because* it is (or will be) possible to engage with X.⁴

According to EP, in the absence of the opportunity for engagement there is no reason to preserve a valuable object at all, and hence PN must be false—value on its own is never sufficient to warrant preservation.⁵ *A fortiori*, there is also no reason to preserve

Significance of Culture,” 107. In contrast, my position is that the gap between valuing and preservation is indeed a significant one.

³ An alternative weaker formulation of \forall PN (that is not quite as weak as PN) might be: For all X, if X is *intrinsically* valuable, then there is reason to preserve X based on this fact alone, no matter what else may be true of X and our relation to it. This would be in the spirit of some of the suggestions made in the quotations above. However, as I will go on to discuss, people often have strong preservationist intuitions about historically significant objects, and historical significance is a kind of extrinsic value. Moreover, some might think that only *certain* intrinsically valuable things, for instance persons, require preservation simply in virtue of the fact that they are valuable. Finally, it is instructive to see that, if I am correct, then even the weakest possible formulation of PN is false.

⁴ (1) This view is also suggested briefly by Raz: “this reason [to preserve] gives way to the reasons there are for engaging in the value, or for using it in appropriate ways.” Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 162, fn 43. However, puzzlingly, he also writes that reasons of respect are “more basic and categorical” than reasons of engagement, and that they “explain the limits of partiality.” As I will argue, though reasons of respect have a wider scope than reasons of engagement, respect itself is dependent on and explained by engagement. (2) To whom these various reasons apply is a question I explore further in another chapter. For now, suffice it to say that *someone’s* having the opportunity to engage appropriately with a valuable object is necessary for *anyone* else to have reason to preserve it. I suspect that someone’s having the opportunity to engage appropriately with a valuable object is also sufficient to give everyone else reason of the most minimal kind to preserve that object (namely, through non-interference), but I won’t pursue that idea here.

⁵ I use “object” here as a general term for any direct object of our evaluative attitudes, not simply physical objects. Unless otherwise noted, I focus on the qualified PN, since if it is false, then so is the universal version.

historically valuable objects where engagement with their value is precluded. Some people also believe that we sometimes have *moral* reason to preserve things, for instance, persons, or perhaps outstanding artworks. I agree that reasons for preservation can often have a moral character, and indeed, realizing that reasons for preservations are contingent upon reasons for engagement helps explain why this is so. Failure to preserve valuable things that might otherwise be fruitfully engaged with will likely have a negative impact on the wellbeing and opportunities for valuable experiences of beings for whom such engagement is precluded. This plausibly places us within the realm morality, and depending on the agents in question, could very well render reasons for preservation reasons of a moral kind. But to be clear, according to EP it is *not* the case that we have moral reason to preserve valuable things *independently* of there being opportunities for engagement with them. According to EP there are *no* such reasons, so again, *a fortiori*, there can be no independent *moral* reasons to preserve things either.

This position might seem to jettison much of what is indispensably intuitive about the relationship between preservation and value. On the contrary, I will argue that acknowledging the priority of engaging with valuable objects (EP) makes room for the intuition at the core of the common thesis about value preservation (PN) while offering a clear explanatory advantage. EP does not obviate the importance of preservation, but rather reorients our thinking about preservation toward providing opportunities for appropriate engagement. Thus the implications of this paper extend beyond matters of preservation to the heart of how we think about and interact with objects of value.

The importance of this issue is two-fold. First, it sharpens our theoretical understanding of the relationship between values and reasons. As I will explain, reasons for engagement turn out to underlie reasons for respect more generally, and recognizing their priority has important implications for understanding the relationship between values and valuers.⁶ Second, EP has implications across multiple areas of practical concern. Topics in environmental ethics, bioethics, heritage ethics, and aesthetics are all significantly affected by an accurate understanding of the relationship between value and reasons for preservation.⁷ For the purposes of this paper, I will

⁶ (1) In this paper, I focus on these two theoretical implications. However, the priority of engagement is also significant for thinking about the relative priority of valuing and believing valuable, as well as the distinction between impersonal and personal value. I discuss the latter in the next chapter. (2) Value theory buffs might wonder about the relationship between my topic here and the debate about the so-called “buck-passing” account of value. The question of the relative priority of the normative and the evaluative is independent of the question of priority among reasons addressed here, and indeed the preservation/engagement question persists no matter where one comes down on the normative/evaluative question.

⁷ For just a few relevant discussions from these various fields, see the following: Sahotra Sarkar, *Biodiversity and Environmental Philosophy: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); John O'Neill, Alan Holland, and Andrew Light, *Environmental Values* (New York and Canada: Routledge, 2008); Bryan G. Norton, “Conservation and Preservation: A Conceptual Rehabilitation,” *Environmental Ethics* 8, no. 3 (1986): 195-220; Matthew Humphrey, *Preservation Versus the People?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Lynn Meskell and Peter Pels, eds., *Embedding Ethics* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2005); Chris Scarre and Geoffrey Scarre, eds., *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archeological Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Mark Sagoff, “On Restoring and Reproducing Art,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 75, no. 9 (1978): 453-70.

highlight the practical implications for thinking about the preservation of natural environments and historically significant objects, as well as briefly consider a case from bioethics: the justification of suicide and euthanasia. In sections 2 through 4, I develop my theoretical claim that reasons for preservation depend on opportunities for engagement. In section 5, I consider some practical consequences of this claim, focusing on cases that might initially appear to pose problems for EP.

2. Engagement Explains Preservation

I anticipated above a distinction between reasons for preserving a valuable object and reasons for engaging with it.⁸ To explain it more fully: Reasons for preservation are among the more general class of reasons for respect—these include reasons to give a valuable object appropriate psychological acknowledgement, to protect it, and to preserve it. Respecting and preserving an object are typically thought to be the required response to the mere *fact* that an object is valuable—even if you yourself don’t value something, you ought to respect it and refrain from interfering with it just in virtue of its being valuable.⁹ Engagement, on the other hand, accompanies a more intimate relationship with a valuable object that is often characterized as *valuing*: a complex of interests, attitudes, and dispositions of which reasons to engage are part and parcel. The content of these reasons will be highly specific to the particular objects in question, but will include, for instance, reasons to study and view a painting, reasons to spend time with a friend, reasons to hone your slap shot, etc.¹⁰ Indeed, reasons of engagement must be specifically tailored to the *way* in which an object is valuable, and hence responsive to the features *in virtue of which* it is valuable. While engagement might involve tasting ice cream or playing the piano, you would not taste a piano or play ice cream (whatever that would mean).

As a consequence of this directed attention and interaction, engagement is the process by which value is appropriated.¹¹ Ice cream and piano playing are good, and engagement is how we make them good *for us*. This is why engagement must be responsive to the specific features in virtue of which something is valuable. In order for ice cream to be good for me in the *way* that ice cream is good, I need to taste it, as opposed to, say, sticking it in my ear. Notice, in contrast, that while respect is a way of acknowledging the *fact* that something is valuable, and hence that it can be good for *someone*, it is not a way of partaking in its value. Even if I hate playing the piano, I can respect the fact that piano playing is good, even though it isn’t good *for me*, and indeed, respecting its value does not make it good for me. Granted, piano playing might be

⁸ In this I draw on language used by, among others, Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*; and Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁹ Cf. Samuel Scheffler, “Valuing,” in *Equality and Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*; R. Jay Wallace, “The Publicity of Reasons,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 23 (2009).

¹⁰ Cf. Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 165.

¹¹ This is similar to, and indebted to, Raz’s claims that personal attachments appropriate value: *ibid.*, 19. However, though engagement is constitutive of valuing and personal attachment, engagement can be independent of and precede these more intimate evaluative relations. I can engage with piano playing and appropriate its value before I value it or have a personal attachment to it. Think of a child who slogs through lessons but only comes around to valuing the activity later in life. In this vein, see the following note.

good for me, even if I hate it, in the sense that I would benefit from playing nonetheless. But even so, the good of piano playing cannot accrue to me unless I play.

It should be noted that respect and engagement do not represent a strict dichotomy. Rather, we can imagine a maximally distant form of respect, a maximally involved form of engagement, and all manner of reasons for respect and engagement in between. However, the fact that the relevant reasons lie on a spectrum does not undermine the contrast between the two poles. While what qualifies as respect or engagement may be a matter for debate in intermediate cases, we will still see that it is the reasons on the engagement end of the spectrum that explain the reasons on the side of respect and preservation.

Though there is intuitive appeal to the thought that reasons for preservation follow directly from the fact that something is valuable, upon reflection this link appears unmotivated. Consider an example of something people value, for instance, Picasso's paintings. PN says that because Picasso's paintings are valuable, we therefore have reason to preserve them. Because PN treats facts about value as sufficient for preservation, it implies that there is something about value itself that inherently calls for this response. However, if value lacks such an inherent feature, then the notion that reasons for preservation follow *just because* something is valuable would be merely stipulative, and we should only be prepared to make such stipulations in the absence of a more satisfying explanation. PN does not explain *why* valuable objects ought to be preserved, and I will demonstrate that simply assuming value itself calls for preservation has unintuitive consequences. In contrast, EP avoids these consequences, while offering a compelling explanation for preservation that captures the initial appeal of PN.

We only find reasons for preservation to be such an intuitive aspect of value because we have reason to *engage* with valuable things. There is a clear explanatory advantage in saying that we have reason to preserve and respect Picasso's paintings *because* we have reason to engage with their value (to view them, study them, discuss them, etc.) as opposed to merely stipulating that we have reason to preserve them and that this is a basic fact about things that are valuable. To see the importance of this explanation, reconsider whether there are reasons to preserve Picasso's paintings independent of reasons for engaging with them. If no one had reason to view, study, and discuss the paintings, why think we would have reason to preserve them? Moreover, if there were no possibility of acting on these reasons—of actually engaging with Picasso's paintings—what would be the point of preserving them? Preservation is by its very nature future-oriented, and thus we must be attentive to the relevant features of that future in assessing whether preservation is warranted. Absent the opportunity for engagement, preserving the paintings looks like a pointless task—if engagement is the process through which the paintings become good *for* someone, then if engagement is universally precluded, the paintings are good for nothing.¹² Notice, however, that the converse is not true. If we imagine not having reason to preserve Picasso's paintings, or not being able to preserve them, this in no way interferes with

¹² Cf. J. David Velleman, "A Right of Self-Termination?," *Ethics* 109, no. 3 (1999): 606-28. As we will see in the next section, the kind of being that a valuable object can be good for depends on the kind of value it has.

our reasons to engage with them now: the features that make *Guernica* worth studying and viewing and discussing provide reasons to engage with the painting independent of whether there is reason to preserve it or whether we can be successful in doing so. It would be strange to think we lack reason to engage with a valuable object today simply because we are unable to preserve the object until tomorrow; in contrast, it is difficult to see what reason we would have to preserve a valuable object if it could not be engaged with in the future. Consequently, it looks like reasons to preserve are *for the sake of* engagement. Thus by appealing to opportunities for engagement, EP explains why preservation is often the correct response to an object's value without unintuitively implying that we have reason to preserve objects that cannot be engaged with. This explanation therefore decouples reasons to preserve from facts about value. Because opportunities for engagement are contingent, according to EP, reasons for preservation are contingent as well.

I used the example of Picasso's paintings here because they are a paradigm of objects that have *non-instrumental* value. Our intuitions about the importance of preservation are strongest in relation to non-instrumental value and hence most likely to drive us toward accepting PN; therefore, if I can show that EP does a better job of explaining our preservationist intuitions in such cases, all the better for my argument. Nevertheless, it is important to bear the following in mind. If we were to focus on \forall PN and EP, then we could not disregard the case of *instrumental* value, as these are both claims about value *generally*. Indeed, when we consider objects that have merely instrumental value, \forall PN can seem downright mysterious. Is there any reason to preserve an umbrella, or a refrigerator, or a tire iron that is not a function of opportunities to engage with its value? \forall PN is a deeply implausible principle when considered in the context of instrumental values. In contrast, EP can clearly accommodate cases of instrumental and non-instrumental value alike. Now, because the existentially quantified PN is more plausible than \forall PN, it is that principle that has been and will remain our focus. However, note that when we shift to PN, which allows us to avoid the unintuitive consequence that objects of merely instrumental value require preservation, we are presented with a new problem. A proponent of PN should be able to explain *which* valuable things require preservation, and hence why objects of instrumental value, for instance, ought to be excluded.¹³ This is a new explanatory burden that EP does not face, as its account of preservation is the same for all values. Thus EP's power to offer a unified account of the general relationship between reasons and value, irrespective of the *kind* of value in question, is another mark in its favor.

3. Why Think Preservation Needs to Have a Point?

A natural question, however, is whether we even need the explanation that I claim reasons and opportunities for engagement would provide. I have argued that engagement explains the point of reasons for preservation. But why think preservation needs a point? Why not think that preservation is in itself an expression of respect for a

¹³ One natural approach is to claim that instrumentally valuable objects are *replaceable*, whereas non-instrumentally valuable objects are not. This is the focus of the chapter on History, Value, and Irreplaceability.

valuable object that has no further point, on the model of expressions of emotion?¹⁴ If preservation is by its very nature an appropriate expression of respect, then, though it may not be undertaken to promote any goal, it is not irrational, but rather akin to jumping for joy or stomping your foot in anger.

This is a compelling thought. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that it is correct. Even so, it raises a question of its own: In virtue of what is a given response, such as preservation, an appropriate expression of respect? The most plausible answer, I believe, ultimately appeals to reasons of engagement. So, by another route, we arrive at the same conclusion: that reasons of engagement explain reasons of preservation.

To see this, consider the most general relation between value and reason. If the fact that something is valuable has any implications for practical reason, one would think, it is that valuable things are *worth valuing*—indeed, according to some philosophers, this is just what it means for something to be valuable.¹⁵ Hence if respect is to be a response to the fact that something is valuable, it must be responsive to the fact that it is worth *valuing*. If valuing constitutively involves reasons to engage with the object of value, then appropriate respect must be sensitive to these reasons. As Raz provocatively puts it: “The idea is that the point of values is realized when it is possible to appreciate them, and when it is possible to relate to objects of value in ways appropriate to their value. Absent that possibility, the objects may exist, and they may be of value, but there is not much point to that.”¹⁶ Value only has practical significance if it can be value *for* something or someone, and engagement is the process (constitutive of valuing) through which value is appropriated. Therefore, whether an act of preservation constitutes an appropriate expression of respect will depend on whether that act is responsive to both the content of reasons for engagement and opportunities to act on them. To continue with the analogy to expressions of emotion, consider that it would generally not be appropriate or intelligible to kiss a baby in anger (as opposed to stomping your foot). This is because the content of angry emotions (for example, perceived wrongdoing) fixes the range of actions that constitute appropriate expressions thereof. Likewise, reasons for engagement fix the content of appropriate expressions of respect.

Consider an individual who, in an effort to preserve the *Mona Lisa*, locked it in a lightless vault three miles underground, never to be seen again. This action is intuitively an inappropriate expression of respect for the painting; inappropriate, I believe, because it is insensitive to the fact that the *Mona Lisa* is worth *valuing*, and thus to the concomitant reasons we have to engage with it through viewing, study, etc. (we will consider further examples along these lines in section 6). Surely, the painting is still *worth valuing* while in the lightless vault, shuttered away from any engagement with its

¹⁴ See Rosalind Hursthouse, “Arational Actions,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 88, no. 2 (1991): 57-68. Expressions of emotion are in some ways disanalogous to expressions of respect, as the kind of respect in question here is not (or is not merely) an emotional state. However, the comparison is still instructive.

¹⁵ For instance, see Christine Korsgaard’s contribution to Joseph Raz et al., *The Practice of Value*, The Berkeley Tanner Lectures (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, 2005); Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); J. David Velleman, “A Theory of Value,” *Ethics* 118(2008): 410-36.

¹⁶ Raz et al., *The Practice of Value*, 27-28.

value—I am not claiming that it ceases to be valuable under such conditions. Moreover, because it still has this status, we ought to regard the painting respectfully. But if preserving the painting in a lightless vault precludes all opportunities for engagement, then that act of preservation fails to constitute an *expression* of our respect, and indeed casts doubt on whether we truly respect the value of the painting at all. How can we claim to respect the painting as *worth valuing* while simultaneously acting so as to *prevent* the possibility of engaging with it? This is like a father who claims to respect his daughter’s autonomy and intellect while forbidding her to attend college. Talk of respect is cheap—it is how we express our respect in action that matters most. We can even imagine the *Mona Lisa* being cared for and preserved in a manner that is superficially sensitive to the fact that it is worth valuing—the lighting and humidity conditions are kept just so, the colors are painstakingly restored, it is prepared for optimal viewing and study—except that this task is performed in the underground vault (perhaps by robots), and it is ensured that no one will ever be able to see it. Though the methods of preservation employed might indeed be responsive to the specific features in virtue of which the painting is valuable, and thus might feign expressions of respect, the fact that those methods preclude *opportunities* for engagement renders them intuitively insufficient as expressions of respect for the painting’s value. Indeed, in contrast with respecting the painting’s value, such methods of preservation take an object that is potentially good for most anyone and ensure that it is good for no one.

So even on an expressive understanding of preservation, the possibility of engagement still plays an explanatorily fundamental role. Moreover, by following the tradition of viewing reasons to preserve as members of the class of reasons for respect, we have discovered that it is a mistake to view reasons of respect generally as independent from or prior to reasons of engagement. What are typically thought to be expressions of respect for an object only qualify as respectful insofar as they are sensitive to the manner in which the object is worth engaging with, and to the opportunities for such engagement to occur. The appropriateness of these responses is contingent on facts that go beyond the mere value of their objects.

4. Further Objections

Before moving on, I want to consider a few further objections to the view that I have been arguing for. The first concerns the evaluative status of engagement itself. I have claimed that engagement is the process by which value is appropriated. But isn’t engagement *itself* valuable?¹⁷ This might seem to imply that engagement is a potential X that would render PN true: namely, that it is valuable and we therefore have reason to preserve it based on this fact alone. For what else can we say? Deny PN and claim that we only have reason to preserve engagement if we can engage with it? We seem to be flirting with either incoherence or a problematic regress.

But I think what this point reveals is not a problem specific to engagement, but an important existential difference between objects, on the one hand, and activities and practices on the other. In the case of objects, it is fairly easy to see what it would mean for some object (let’s say a book) to be valuable without anyone engaging with its value.

¹⁷ Thanks to Eugene Chislenko for raising this point.

There is the book, sitting on the shelf. It's valuable, even though no one is engaging with it at the moment. However, activities and practices have a different metaphysical status from physical objects. Their existence *depends* on their being engaged with. For instance, consider a dance; let's say the tango. Now, there may be documentation of the tango being danced, and knowledge of how to dance it, but in the absence of its *being danced*, there is a sense in which *the activity* of dancing the tango doesn't exist. This is the sense in which dance is often referred to as an *ephemeral* art. Books persist when we're not reading them, but there's no dance when it's not being danced. So there is a sense in which the distinction between preservation and engagement is elided in the case of activities and practices, because engagement with them is constitutive of their existence: they *must* be engaged with in order to even *be* preserved, whereas we could easily preserve books without allowing them to be read. Thus, although they present some peculiarities for the grammar of the principles I've been discussing, activities and practices are ultimately grist for my mill. Engagement is not only the point of preserving them, preserving them is not so much as *possible* without engaging with them. Of course, one might equally well say that engaging in a practice is not so much as possible without preserving it: this must follow if indeed the existence of a practice and engagement with it are one and the same thing. However, the priority of engagement over preservation in cases where a distinction between the two is possible, as in the case of physical objects, suggests at least a parallel *evaluative* priority in the case of activities and practices, if not a metaphysical one.

Moreover, despite the close relationship between the value of activities and practices and our engagement with them, there is still some room to distinguish the two in the manner that we do with physical objects. This is the case when we observe *others* engaging in valuable activities. I see a couple dancing the tango and I regard it as a valuable activity. Nevertheless, the value of dancing the tango cannot accrue to me until I dance it myself, just as the value of the book cannot accrue to me until I read it. So we can imagine a dance that is preserved in secret, and engagement with it is only made available to a select few. This would in essence be a way of preserving the activity while in general precluding the possibility of engagement with it, which would, according to my argument, largely undermine the point of its preservation.

To return to the original concern then, engagement, of course, is itself an activity, though the phrase "engagement with value" that we have been discussing is in fact a label for a diverse array of activities that are specifically tailored to different kinds of value. Reading a book, dancing the tango, bird watching, practicing the piano, and cooking a meal are all ways of engaging with value. It is no coincidence that we commonly talk about *engaging* in these activities. These activities are valuable, and that value accrues to us through the very process of acting them out. So it is really not the case that engagement with value is something we have reason to preserve just because it is valuable. Rather, reflection on the value of engagement reaffirms its priority in the relationship between value and practical reason.

This very priority might lead to another objection. Namely, if *engagement* with valuable things is where we're supposed to put all of the evaluative and practical emphasis, does it really make sense to talk about the value of objects *themselves*? Does it not suggest that objects themselves are dispensable, and only the experience of them

matters?¹⁸ I don't believe so. Although engagement with value is indeed experiential, the grammar of the verb (engagement *with*) implies the existence of an object or practice with which one engages. So engagement in the absence of the relevant object would only be an attenuated form of engagement. A similar point has been made in response to the claim that only the experience of art objects matters, and the objects of experience are themselves dispensable. Even if one could perfectly simulate the phenomenology of an experience, it would then be an experience *as of* an object, as opposed to an experience *of* an object. The experience would thus, however accurate a simulation, be non-veridical.¹⁹

However, someone who adopts a view of "organic unities" akin to that of Moore in *Principia Ethica* might claim that this does not entail that the object one engages with is *itself* valuable.²⁰ Moore argued that while the existence of beauty is a necessary condition of the admiring contemplation of beauty (which is intrinsically good), this does not imply that beauty is *itself* intrinsically good: the whole valuable complex can be greater than the value of the sum of its parts, and indeed, those parts might lack value on their own. So it may be that the objects one engages with are themselves non-valuable necessary conditions on the relevant valuable form of engagement. There is not space here for a discussion of Moore's view, but suffice it to say that its truth would not pose a problem for the spirit of my argument in this essay. Even if the objects of engagement were not themselves valuable (which would require some reformulation of the various principles we've been discussing), it would nevertheless be the case that the point of preserving those objects, whether or not they are themselves the bearer of value properties, would be the valuable engagement with them. Moore himself appears to acknowledge as much:

And yet we are justified in asserting that it is far more desirable that a certain thing should exist under some circumstances than under others; namely when other things will exist in such relations to it as to form a more valuable whole. *It* will not have more intrinsic value under this circumstances than under others; *it* will not necessarily even be a means to the existence of things having more intrinsic value: but it will, like a means, be a necessary condition for the existence of that which *has* greater intrinsic value, although, unlike a means, it will itself form a part of this more valuable existent.²¹

A final concern to consider is that some valuable objects don't seem to call for engagement, but rather, the opposite. This is often the case in the context of religious reverence, or in the treatment of the deceased across many cultures. Consider that one must not enter the Holy of Holies, and that various Native American communities have petitioned under NAGPRA legislation for the reburial of remains currently housed in museums and laboratories. But what is important to note about these cases is that they

¹⁸ Thanks to Jeff Kaplan for raising this objection.

¹⁹ Cf. Robert Hopkins, "Aesthetics, Experience, and Discrimination," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63, no. 2 (2005): 119-33.

²⁰ Thanks to Tom Hurka for pressing me on this issue.

²¹ G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 81.

are *not* concerned with the mere preservation of what is valuable. Rather, they involve a specific form of engagement that is *negatively* defined. Because of the colloquial connotation that engagement involves a form of physical interaction, it is natural to think that these ways of stepping back from, or leaving undisturbed, are counterexamples to the engagement model. But engagement here is a term of art used to denote the appropriate form that interaction with a valuable object should take, and there is no reason that this form cannot be defined negatively as *refraining* from interaction when this is dictated by the social or religious practices regarding a given object of value.

5. Values, Valuers, and Anthropocentrism

The truth of EP has substantive implications for our understanding of the relationship between values and valuers. On the one hand are those such as Tom Nagel, who writes: "The problem is to account for external values in a way which avoids the implausible consequences that they retain their practical importance even if no one will ever be able to respond to them. (So that if all sentient life is destroyed, it will still be a good thing if the Frick Collection survives)."²² In contrast, there are those such as G. A. Cohen, who writes:

Someone might protest: if [something] has value independently of its contribution to our experience, doesn't it follow that it would be good to preserve a work of art even if it were no longer to be perceived, and even in a perceiverless world? And aren't those consequences absurd? In order to address that pair of questions, let us distinguish between the case of a world of blind people and the case of a world of no people, or other relevant perceivers. In the first case I think the blind people could value the fact that their world contained such beauty, even though no one could appreciate it. So it might indeed follow from my position that it is good that unperceived aesthetic value exists. But I do not find that embarrassing. And if it also follows from my position that something could have aesthetic value even in a wholly perceiverless and conceiverless world, then some will no doubt want to get off the bus there, but I would ride on even then.²³

Cohen's view helps us see how a theory that claims reasons to preserve are entailed by facts about value, irrespective of opportunities for engagement, is insensitive to both whether or not there continue to *be* valuers and what kind of valuers there *are*. Cohen's story about the value of artworks in a world absent beings like us is consonant with PN. If valuable objects required preservation, then we would have reason to preserve them even if we knew that tomorrow all beings capable of engaging with them would cease to exist. EP offers an explanation of why PN seems to dictate unintuitive behavior in such a case (*pace* Cohen's intuitions). Preserving valuable objects in the face of the known absence of beings capable of engaging with values seems strange precisely because preservation is for the sake of engagement.

²² Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1986), 153.

²³ Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 19-20.

Now, while EP seems to provide the right answer in these cases with respect to valuable objects like artworks, we might worry that it will give the wrong answer with respect to other kinds of value, such as the value of the natural environment. If preservation is for the sake of engagement, then EP might seem to imply that in so-called “Last Person” cases, we would have no reason to preserve the earth if we knew that tomorrow all beings like us would cease to exist.²⁴ EP makes all reasons to preserve *contingent*, and seemingly, contingent upon *us*.²⁵

However, these objections only have bite if we assume that the engagement required by EP for preservation to be justified is engagement *by* humans, or other beings like us. But there is no reason that EP must assume this kind of anthropocentrism about values.²⁶ While engagement with many values will only be possible for beings like us, I do not want to preclude the possibility that other non-human animals might have capacities that would be sufficient for engaging with *natural* values.²⁷ Thus in asking questions about the relationship between values and valuers, we must pay attention to the relationship between *ways* of being valuable and the relevant evaluative *capacities* of beings for which things can be valuable. It is this relationship that allows us to explain why we might have reason to preserve the earth in the anticipated absence of beings like us even though we wouldn’t have reason to preserve a copy of *Ulysses* in the same circumstances, or why human engagement might have a more important place in discussion of art preservation than biodiversity preservation. In order to make a valuable object good *for* something, engagement only requires responsiveness to the features in virtue of which the object is valuable, and thus engagement can be possible even in the absence of beings that can *recognize* value. Some kinds of engagement do not require any higher conceptual capacities. Consider a beaver’s interaction with the dam that it builds. Clearly the dam has instrumental value for the beaver, and the beaver engages with that value through its natural construction and use of the dam—in this way it makes the dam good *for* itself, its inability to

²⁴ This kind of case was first formulated in Richard Routley, “Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?,” *Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy* 1(1973).

²⁵ Cf. Eric Katz, “Utilitarianism and Preservation,” *Environmental Ethics* 1, no. 4 (1979): 357-64; John N. Martin, “The Concept of the Irreplaceable,” *Environmental Ethics* 1, no. 1 (1979): 31-48.

²⁶ Some have emphasized that we should simply base environmental preservation efforts on the aspects of the environment that we (humans) happen to value, for instance Marc Ereshefsky, “Where the Wild Things Are: Environmental Preservation and Human Nature,” *Biology & Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (2006): 57-72. Indeed, there is substantial pragmatic value in anthropocentric arguments in favor of environmental preservation, as most people tend to be anthropocentrists. See Sarkar, *Biodiversity and Environmental Philosophy: An Introduction*; Norton, “Conservation and Preservation: A Conceptual Rehabilitation.” For my part, I believe it is advisable to pursue both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric arguments in favor of environmental preservation, as theories that have the most pragmatic utility to convince are not necessarily those that are true.

²⁷ If I’m ready to credence the possibility of non-human animals engaging with value, one might wonder where I want to draw the line? What kinds of non-human animals? Only sentient ones? Since I appeal to what is good for animals in considering how they engage with value, sentience might seem like an arbitrary cutoff. There are things that are good for non-sentient animals: indeed, there are things that are good for all living things. So perhaps all living things can engage with value to a certain extent. I won’t pursue this line of thought here, but it raises an interesting question about how we regard and prioritize the value of life itself. For an excellent discussion of this fascinating question, see Nicholas Agar, “Biocentrism and the Concept of Life,” *Ethics* 108, no. 1 (1997): 147-68.

recognize the *fact* that the dam is valuable notwithstanding.²⁸ Though we may be hesitant about calling the beaver's behavior *valuing* behavior (on the assumption that valuing involves some sense of the appropriateness of one's attitudes and actions), we need not saddle *engagement* in general with this normative baggage. For comparison, consider that we often judge children to be engaged in valuable activities in their play and exploration, even though they themselves may not yet be capable of recognizing facts about value. To be sure, this broad understanding of engagement will lead to many conflicts as we attempt to sort out what to preserve in the face of incompatible modes of engagement. But this is a challenge that any approach to preservation faces on the basis of reasonable assumptions about value pluralism. EP does not make questions about preservation *simple*, but it does provide us with more ample conceptual resources for addressing them and for approaching them in the right way.

Wherever one comes down, however, on the range of value theories between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric, the element of contingency that EP introduces into discussion of preservation remains.²⁹ The question is whether this poses a problem. I don't believe it does.³⁰ On the contrary, I think the contingency of reasons to preserve entailed by EP is a virtue of the theory. It presents preservation as a question, as opposed to a foregone conclusion. And given the difficult and ubiquitous questions about preservation that we face in practice, a contingent theory of preservation presents the topic in the proper light. We already know that we cannot preserve everything. EP tells us that we ought not preserve everything, and moreover, that the reasons we do have to preserve things depend on matters beyond the mere fact that they are valuable. In doing so, EP offers a further explanatory advantage over PN. EP better explains *why* it might matter that we preserve certain valuable things, but moreover, it explains *which* valuable things it would be worth preserving (some, perhaps, even in the absence of beings like us). Thus the priority of engagement in our

²⁸ My discussion of the beaver shifts into talk of what is *good for* it that is explicitly concerned with the beaver's well-being. This may lead the reader to be concerned that my account in the case of persons is predicated on assuming a person-affecting view of value, in the sense that engagement with all good things must increase the well-being of persons. But this is not the case. What I am claiming is that the practical significance of values depends on their being open to engagement by beings of the relevant kind. Even people who explicitly reject person-affecting views will want to accept this. For example, non-instrumentalists about equality believe that there is something valuable about social arrangements that are more equal, even when they don't increase any individual person's well-being. But nevertheless, they believe that equality is valuable *for persons*. It's not as if non-instrumentalists about value believe that equal amounts of water in the Pacific and the Atlantic would be good. It may be that in the case of most organisms, anything that is good for them will increase their well-being. But even so, we need not maintain this is true for beings like us.

²⁹ Even if one insists on an anthropocentric value theory, this does not present any special problems for EP that are not faced by any anthropocentric theory. Some worry that such a theory would not only make preservation contingent, but moreover, that contingency on the engagement of humans alone entails (problematically) that all non-human things are merely instrumentally valuable. For instance, see J. Baird Callicott, "Non-Anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1984): 299-309. But this assumption is unwarranted. After all, there are many things that we think of as having non-instrumental value on an anthropocentric account (e.g. relationships, art, culture, etc.), and this list can include things such as wilderness or biodiversity.

³⁰ Humphrey argues that the contingency of a given preservationist theory is non-problematic because contingency is ineliminable in all theories. I'm not sure I buy this claim, but it's a point worth considering. See Humphrey, *Preservation Versus the People?*, 185.

account of preservation provides more nuanced resources for understanding the relationship among values and valuers of different kinds than any blanket proposal in favor of preservation.

6. Further Practical Implications

Beyond the theoretical advantages described so far, I think that the practical stakes in adopting the right picture are high. Most everything of value in the world is subject in one way or another to the erosion of time. Cathedrals crumble, manuscripts tatter, customs are lost, languages are forgotten, species go extinct, memories fade, and people die. To assume that the value of these things demands their preservation is natural, but the assumption on its own is over-simplified, and the reason is that it is under-explained. The assumption treats preservation as if it were a single action, like a bodily motion—if you itch, scratch it: if it's valuable, preserve it. But the behaviors required to preserve valuable objects, places, practices, and persons are as complex and diverse as the ways in which things are valuable, which is part of the reason that so many debates over preservation have arisen in the diverse areas of applied inquiry mentioned at the beginning of this essay. A “common-sense pluralism”³¹ about value requires careful and nuanced modes of preservation. Understanding that reasons for preservation are geared toward reasons for engagement provides a framework for determining how a valued object is to be preserved that is sensitive to the diversity of valuable things. Just as there is no general formula for engaging with value, there is no general formula for preserving it. Thoughtful value preservation requires careful study of the thing to be preserved, maintaining and nurturing it in a manner that is conducive to the modes of engagement that are appropriate to it.

Thus there are two practical truths captured by the priority of engagement over preservation that reflect the two theoretical features of EP. First, because engagement explains preservation, the modes of engagement specific to the value of a given object will dictate the *manner* in which it ought to be preserved. Second, methods of preservation that preclude engagement must be rejected. This entails that sometimes there will not be reason to preserve valuable objects: namely, when (but only when) there would be no point to preserving them because further engagement with them would not be possible. Thus the correct theoretical picture does not dismiss the importance of preservation, but rather reorients it toward appropriate application. Giving up on the theoretical necessity of reasons for preservation and recognizing that preservation is for the sake of engagement *better* serve the intuition that valuable objects often call for preservation.

In order to demonstrate the truth of these claims in practice, it is useful to examine cases where appropriate engagement with value does in fact preclude preservation. Perhaps it would be most effective to begin with the limit case illustrated by food. Think of cooking a delicious meal. We experience the value of food through gustatory and olfactory modes of engagement. If someone demanded that you refrain from eating a meal in order to preserve its value (and we're not talking about pickling

³¹ Cf. Samuel Scheffler, “Projects, Relationships, and Reasons,” in *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, et al. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

here!), you would think that person was nuts.³² This is more than just another example of the incompatibility of preservation and engagement. What this example helps to emphasize is that a person who demanded the preservation of a meal would be *missing* what is valuable about delicious food—preservation of the meal would be insensitive to the features that make it valuable, and the modes of engagement appropriate to that value. Rather than suggesting an odd exception, gustatory examples provide a paradigm of the priority of engagement over preservation. It would be *absurd* to preserve, for the sake of its taste, a meal that no one could ever eat, and the supposed necessity of preservation is just as absurd when examined with reference to other kinds of value that are consequently precluded from being engaged with in an appropriate way.

Consider again the appropriate way to engage with objects of artistic or aesthetic value. If the objects in question are paintings, sculptures, murals, etc., it is reasonable to think that engaging with such value is largely a *visual* enterprise. Hence art museums are particularly well suited, as Raz notes, to balancing appropriate engagement with the value of their objects with a preservationist attitude: if properly engaging with visual art primarily involves looking, we can orchestrate the environs such that wear and tear on artworks is minimized.

Of course, even engaging with artwork visually will eventually lead to its destruction; strictly speaking, engaging with artwork is not in the long term consistent with its preservation. Yet sequestering artwork in lightless rooms where no one can see it should seem absurd—a facility that prioritized preservation of artwork to an extent that precluded opportunities for engagement would be like a tomb for the living. However, we're not just talking about the fictional case of sticking the *Mona Lisa* in an underground vault. Rather, the actual practices of major art museums should strike us as problematic. Over 90% of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's holdings are in storage (that's over 1,800,000 artworks)³³—in this, it is more mausoleum than museum. Surely the curators would claim that these works are being preserved so that they might be engaged with in the future, but the sheer quantities involved should make us skeptical of this response. Indeed, we might think that such massive holdings by a single institution will necessarily prevent an appropriate balance between engagement and preservation, the way an excess of toys is wasted on a single spoiled child.

But even the relative ease of achieving preservationist goals in the case of visual art masks a deeper problem that is revealed when we consider other types of value, and other types of objects. The problem becomes particularly acute when we consider cases in which engaging with the relevant forms of value is far more destructive than merely looking, and hence where museum environs do not even afford the appropriate opportunities for engagement. There are, for instance, pieces of functional art whose value lies largely in physical interaction. Mies van der Rohe's "Barcelona chair" is visually appealing, but a significant aspect of its achievement lies in its function as a chair. Innovation in the use of architectural space is inextricably linked with the movements and activities of people within it. To merely look at such artworks would be

³² Cf. Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 162, fn. 43.

³³ Holland Cotter, "Opportunity on Madison," *The New York Times*, July 29th, 2011.

to miss what makes them valuable, and thus to fail to engage with them in an appropriate way. Engaging with them, however, will necessarily be destructive. This is even more obvious when considering conceptions of aesthetic value such as the Japanese *wabi* aesthetic, based on change and impermanence—indeed, it is worth reflecting in general on the relative lack of emphasis placed on preservation as an aspect of valuation in cultures that favor a Buddhist worldview in which impermanence is accepted as a necessary mark of existence.³⁴ For example, the teacup in the Zen Buddhist tea ceremony is not complete absent the color of the tea and signs of wear from frequent use. But the appropriate modes of engagement are obviously precluded in museum settings. Moreover, consider artworks the value of which is constitutively tied to their transient nature, such as a sand mandala that is ritually destroyed. Surely, preservation would not be an appropriate response to the value of the mandala, and this is precisely because it would preclude the appropriate mode of engagement. Consistent with these cases, it follows from EP that where appropriately engaging with the value of an object is inconsistent with its preservation, engagement must take precedence over the object remaining in existence: the *prima facie* demand for preservation of a valuable object falls away where it is incompatible with proper engagement with that value. Even in practical cases, preservation is not so fundamental to the nature of value after all.

We have now seen that both theoretical analysis and consideration of practical cases provide evidence for the claim that reasons for preservation do not follow simply from the fact that something is valuable, but rather are geared toward appropriate engagement. However, this might be cause for concern. Surely, some might say, there are *some* kinds of value that fundamentally demand preservation. In conclusion, I want to look briefly at two classes of cases that might seem to challenge the view I have been developing about the priority of engagement: the value of historically significant objects and the value of persons.

6a. Historical Significance

The American Constitution, the Pyramids at Giza, the Terra Cotta Army: many believe these artifacts must be preserved, that they are among the special cases that render PN true. We thus might be worried that in rejecting PN we have undercut the most promising theoretical argument in favor of the preservation of historically significant objects. On the contrary, however, the arguments that I have offered so far do not obviate the importance of preserving historically significant objects, but rather, as I have been claiming, reorient our thinking about preservation toward opportunities for appropriate engagement. These theoretical considerations provide a useful framework for thinking about how and why we should preserve historically significant objects, and challenge a prevalent ideal of stewardship that views preservation as its loftiest goal.³⁵

³⁴ See Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2007), chapter 4.

³⁵ For instance, the historian David Lowenthal has noted critically that “preservation has become our principal mode of appreciating the past.” David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), xxiv.

To see this, we must consider how it is appropriate to engage with objects of historical significance. Now, because there is such a diversity of ways in which something can be historically significant, attempting to dictate modes of engagement that would cover the whole range of potential cases would be imprudent (for a stark contrast, just think about the difference between the historical significance of *Principia Mathematica* and pieces of Nazi paraphernalia).³⁶ Indeed, one of the features of historical significance that leads to the “antiquarian” conclusion that we should prioritize preservation of historically significant objects is the very *absence* of a distinct mode of valuation that is obviously appropriate to this distinct kind of value (in contrast with viewing a painting or tasting a meal, etc.).³⁷ Guided by my previous reflections on engagement, I will briefly mention some reasons to doubt that the antiquarian approach to preservation conduces to appropriately engaging with historically significant objects.

The most common antiquarian impulse is to think that the physical integrity of historically significant objects must be preserved at all costs: hence the glass cases and velvet ropes of the museum environs. But such precautions preclude a whole range of ways in which one might interact with an object. Why think that engaging with historical significance will be a purely visual experience? Just as we would be missing what matters about an apple or a functional piece of art, if we only look at it, we might be *missing* what matters about historically significant objects and places, if we only look at them. For instance, Ralph Waldo Emerson and R. G. Collingwood each suggest versions of the idea that understanding history requires integration with present experience, possibly through a form of reenactment.³⁸ Pickett’s Charge takes on new shades of meaning once you’ve huffed and puffed across the battlefields at Gettysburg. You don’t need to sign up for a full-scale reenactment, but the experiential insights that can be gained through this form of engagement have the potential to more effectively connect you with the significance of the past than what is afforded by merely looking-on from a distance. Just as we would be loath to cordon off historically significant sites like Gettysburg, we should question any unreflective decisions to cloister historically significant objects.³⁹

One might think that *memory* is a natural candidate for a distinctively historical mode of engagement.⁴⁰ Because it is necessarily directed at the past, memory might

³⁶ Indeed, this example brings out the importance of the term *significance*. The features of an object that make it historically significant need not be good-making. Indeed, many historically significant objects had extreme disvalue at one time or the other. But we may still value such objects for their historical significance: for the role they played in the development of history and for the lessons they can teach us.

³⁷ The antiquarian label is drawn from Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “History,” in *Nature and Selected Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 1841/1982); R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). Though on Collingwood’s account, this is a primarily mental exercise.

³⁹ That being said, many historic sites do face serious problems as a result of tourism, particularly those whose profile has been raised by inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Preservation remains an important consideration for the management of such sites. As I have emphasized, my argument does not deny the importance of preservation, but rather articulates the goal that preservationist efforts should aim to achieve: namely, continued engagement of the appropriate kind.

⁴⁰ There is much interesting work on memory and collective memory that there is insufficient space to address here. For two recent discussions see Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard

allow for engagement with the specifically *historical* features of an object that standard sensory modalities are on their own insensitive to. Moreover, because we often think of memory as a way of *preserving* the past, it might be thought that memory as mode of engagement with the past is consonant with preservationist intuitions. However, this is a complicated proposal. For one thing, most of what we take to be historically significant occurred before we were born, and hence it is beyond the bounds of conventional memory. But even if such problems can be solved, it is not clear that memory as a form of engagement with the past lends support to antiquarian attitudes. For example, Sue Campbell questions our ability to realize the value of memory if it is treated only as an archival snapshot and not integrated through our present experience: “Neither reproductive fidelity nor the truth of declarative memory seem adequate to how successful remembering often tries to capture the *significance* of the past” (emphasis added).⁴¹ If it is to be construed as a mode of engagement with historical *significance*, active remembering might itself be inconsistent with antiquarianism.

Once we recognize the fundamentality of reasons for engagement, we can see that engagement with the historical significance of an object may well be independent of any antiquarian concern with the physical integrity of the object *qua* object—indeed, the concern to preserve opportunities for engagement with an object’s historical significance can come apart from a concern for preserving the physical integrity of the object. Consider in this regard the infamous case of the Elgin Marbles, plucked from the Parthenon and spirited away to the British Museum, purportedly for the sake of their preservation. Yet it is not implausible to think that the historical significance of these sculptures is largely lost outside of the appropriate context—it becomes harder to see how the reclining goddesses are integrated with the shape of the pediment, not to mention the jarring difference between the context of a museum and the social, religious, and geographical context of the Acropolis. Consider in this light the following comment on the Parthenon by John Dewey:

By common consent, the Parthenon is a great work of art. Yet it has aesthetic standing only as the work becomes an experience for a human being. And, if one is to go beyond personal enjoyment into the formation of a theory about that large republic of art of which the building is one member, one has to be willing at some point in his reflections to turn from it to the bustling, arguing, acutely sensitive Athenian citizens, with civic sense identified with a civic religion, of whose experience the temple was an expression, and who built it not as a work of art but as a civic commemoration.⁴²

The museum may indeed be a better place for preserving the long-term integrity of the sculptures, but if this compromises our ability to engage with their historical significance, then the purpose of their preservation is undercut.

University Press, 2002); Jeffrey Blustein, *The Moral Demands of Memory* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴¹ Sue Campbell, “Our Faithfulness to the Past: Reconstructing Memory Value,” *Philosophical Psychology* 19, no. 3 (2006): 361-80.

⁴² John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934), 4.

6b. Persons

Even if one is moved by these considerations and persuaded to believe that preservation is not fundamental to the value of historically significant objects, there is a further case that one might think will do the trick in showing that preservation *must*, at least in some cases, follow directly from facts about value. This is the case of persons. After all, persons are valuable: am I also claiming that there is no fundamental reason to preserve persons? This might be thought to pose an insurmountable objection to the application of my theoretical framework, and be sufficient to secure the truth of, at least, PN.

However, I do not believe that this objection succeeds. As with other objects of value, I think that preserving persons will usually be required, but only as an appropriate response to the kind of value that they have. If we assume that persons are specifically valuable *qua* rational agents or valuers, then engagement with that value will require opportunities for the kind of rational thought and evaluative behavior that is appropriate to it.⁴³ Thus persons are in the special situation of being able to realize their own value.⁴⁴ My value *qua* rational agent is compromised if I can no longer engage in rational activity. Absent such opportunities for engagement, reasons to preserve persons disappear because their value cannot be realized.

David Velleman suggests a possible argument for euthanasia that is consistent with EP and the implication just described, even though he argues against the general permissibility of suicide. Drawing on a Kantian understanding of the dignity of persons, Velleman specifically denies that we can coherently balance interest-relative goods against the interest-independent value of persons. Hence Velleman denies that suicide can be justified for the sake of benefits (or the avoidance of harms). However, he acknowledges:

...respecting these people is not necessarily a matter of keeping them in existence; it is rather a matter of treating them in the way that is required by their personhood—whatever way that is...dignity can require not only the preservation of what possess it but also the destruction of what is losing it, if the loss would be irretrievable...Respect for an object of dignity can sometimes require its destruction.⁴⁵

So, for instance, if a debilitating illness compromises a person's dignity *qua* rational agent by rendering him incapable of engaging in rational thought and evaluative behavior, the typical reasons for preserving that person might be undermined. Moreover, there may even be reason to hasten death as an appropriate response to that compromised dignity. As Elizabeth Anderson writes: "It may make

⁴³ The term "engagement" might seem a bit strange in this reflexive context, but I maintain this is a merely linguistic effect. One engages with one's value *qua* rational agent through attentive rational activity, just as one engages with the value of music through attentive listening.

⁴⁴ Some might think this is a circumstance *unique* to rational agents, though I am inclined to believe that it is true of any being that is the subject of experiences, and hence can be thought to have a good for its own sake.

⁴⁵ Velleman, "A Right of Self-Termination?," 616-17.

sense for me to love a person, but this does not imply that I must want that person to continue living. If he is gravely ill, it may be the best expression of my love for him to wish that he die quickly and mercifully."⁴⁶ Along these same lines, Jeff McMahan contrasts the notion of the dignity or worth of life with the religious notion of sanctity. He writes:

The claim that an individual's life has sanctity does seem to imply that there is necessarily a reason to preserve the life, though the reason may be outweighed by competing considerations. But worth is different. Just as the claim that persons have worth does not imply that it would be better to create more persons, so it does not imply that it would always be better to preserve the lives of existing persons. All it implies is that persons matter in a special way, a way that demands our respect. This leaves it open what counts as respect for a person's worth. And one possibility, explicitly noted by Velleman, is that "respect for an object may sometimes require its destruction."⁴⁷

Although their specific views are otherwise quite different, all three philosophers agree, in effect, that reasons to preserve persons do not follow directly from the fact that persons are valuable. As McMahan notes, there is an opposing view that holds that we necessarily have reason to preserve persons, even though this reason can be overridden. The opposing view derives its apparent plausibility from the assumption latent in PN, that value in general entails reasons for preservation. But we have called this assumption into question, arguing that reasons for preservation always derive from reasons for engagement. With this general conclusion in place, it no longer seems so surprising that the value even of persons might not imply reasons (overridden or otherwise) to preserve them. Consequently, not even the case of persons offers a plausible basis for accepting PN. As I have argued, the point of preservation is appropriate engagement, and absent that possibility, there is no reason to preserve at all.

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics*, 26.

⁴⁷ Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2003), 478. For further discussion of Velleman's view, see 473-485.

Chapter 4: Impersonal Value and the Permissibility of Valuing

1. Impersonal and Personal Value

In the last chapter, I argued for a view of the relationship between value and practical reason that gave the concept of *engagement* pride of place. Engagement is the process or activity by which we make valuable things valuable *for* ourselves. But, plausibly, not all valuable things can be valuable for everyone. Indeed, we typically think that the value of some things is universal, while the value of others is very local and particular. There is an intuitive difference, for instance, between the value of Niagara Falls, or the pyramids at Giza, or the reduction of suffering in the world, and the value of my grandfather's ring. It is common for philosophers to make this distinction in terms of *impersonal* and *personal* value. Whereas objects of natural splendor, exemplars of human ingenuity, and acts of moral significance are typically thought of as having impersonal value, the value of objects that are highly specific to one's own circumstances and interests are thought of as personal in nature.¹ The intuition in its most general form is that objects of impersonal value are in some sense valuable *for everyone*, no matter their particular interests and circumstances, whereas objects of personal value are in some sense peculiar to specific individuals. It would be unremarkable for anyone to value the Niagara Falls precisely because of its awe-inspiring impact, whereas if you valued my grandfather's ring precisely because it was my grandfather's I might consider calling the police.

As intuitive as the distinction may initially seem, if it is to be more than just a gut assumption about the scope of different values, we need a more precise account of what makes impersonal values relevant to everyone. People often disagree about what things are, or could be, impersonally valuable, and such theoretical disagreements are the source of conflicts with broad practical implications. After all, to claim that a given value is, in some sense, a value for everyone is to make a universal claim about the role it is appropriate for that value to play in everyone's lives. So, for instance, how and whether we ought to factor the natural environment into our practical decision-making will be affected by whether the natural environment is impersonally valuable—because everyone has reason to value them, impersonal values might have claims on our attention that are lacked by merely personal values. Or consider evaluative claims about history. Some argue that the past is the common heritage of all humanity. Others argue that the past is the heritage of the specific geographical, national, or ethnic groups with which it is most intimately connected.² Is historical significance, and in particular the value of objects that embody it, personal or impersonal in nature? The answer will have significant moral consequences, and will play a central role in determining who has the

¹ G. A. Cohen provides a paradigm example of an eraser that he has had for his whole academic career, which makes it valuable to him but, not, plausibly, to anyone else. G. A. Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of Existing Value," in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

² These two approaches are described in the influential paper by John Henry Merryman, "Two Ways of Thinking About Cultural Property," *The American Journal of International Law* 80, no. 4 (1986): 831-53.

right to possess, control, and profit from historically significant things.³ To invoke a recent example, consider the battle over repatriation of artifacts from Machu Picchu that were discovered, excavated, and brought to Yale University's Peabody Museum 100 years ago. Are Incan pottery shards objects of impersonal value that warrant the care and concern of all persons, and thus legitimize stewardship and study by preeminent archeologists and anthropologists? Or is this fetishistic robbery, more on a par with a stranger coveting my grandfather's ring?

In this essay, I critique two influential analyses of impersonal value. The first, which I associate with Thomas Nagel, understands the concept of impersonal value in terms of *required engagement*.⁴ I argue that this view is generally acceptable in the context of moral values (like the reduction of suffering), but provides insufficient resources to account for the intuitive category of non-moral impersonal values (which ostensibly includes such things as Niagara Falls, the pyramids at Giza, works of art, and perhaps historical artifacts). But more importantly, its appeal to a detached perspective in characterizing impersonal value is overly restrictive—engagement with values that can be endorsed from a detached perspective may be sufficient for impersonal value, but it is not necessary. The second analysis, which I associate with Joseph Raz (and to some extent Samuel Scheffler), understands impersonal value in terms of *required recognition*.⁵ I am sympathetic to the idea that all impersonally valuable objects warrant recognition of their value. The problem with this analysis is that it fails to capture anything *distinctive* about impersonal value. As I will argue, it is plausible to believe that *all* instances of appropriate valuing *require* this kind of recognition, even where the value in question is a paradigm of *personal* value. Hence it is not that this analysis is mistaken as a general claim about our relationship to valuable things, but rather that it fails to capture the distinctive category of impersonal values that are in some sense values for everyone.

Contrary to these two analyses, I argue that the concept of impersonal value is best understood in terms of *permissible engagement*. Permission to engage with objects of value is secured by the reasons that would render actively valuing some X among one's appropriate and intelligible evaluative options. Hence the kind of permissibility I have in mind here is an *evaluative* permissibility, as opposed to a moral one. According to this view, impersonal values are such as to permit, but not require, anyone to engage with them, because it would be appropriate for anyone to do so. For the purposes of this argument, engagement should always be read as a success term. That is, permissible engagement implies that the object one engages with is in fact valuable, and that one

³ These concerns are often captured with the provocative question "Who owns the past?" See, for instance, Kate Fitz Gibbon, ed. *Who Owns the Past?*, Rutgers Series on the Public Life of the Arts (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005). As the language of the question suggests, some approaches to answering it will be primarily legal or political in nature, focusing on issues of international law and sovereignty. I put those approaches aside here in order to focus on the relationship between persons and the non-instrumental value of the objects in question, though I do briefly address issues of property and stewardship as they relate to value in the fourth section of the paper.

⁴ Specifically with Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1986). The engagement terminology is not Nagel's: I discuss it at greater length in the Chapter 3.

⁵ In particular, Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Samuel Scheffler, "Valuing," in *Equality and Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

engages with it in a manner that is properly responsive to its value. So while counting blades of grass on the asylum lawn may in some sense be morally permissible, it does not qualify as an evaluatively permissible form of engagement because counting blades of grass is not a valuable activity.

By reflecting on the conditions that render valuing appropriate and thus permit engagement with it, I develop an analysis of impersonal value that not only accounts for both moral and non-moral values, but accounts for the full range of reasons that persons can have for valuing a given thing. Importantly, I acknowledge that impersonal value can be either *monistic* or *pluralistic*. In the first case, it is appropriate for anyone to value the same thing for the same universal reason. In the second case, it is appropriate for everyone to value the same thing, but for two or more of a set of overlapping reasons. To the extent that these pluralistic reasons fail to overlap in a manner that covers all persons, we can chart the extent to which the appropriateness, and hence the permissibility, of valuing X falls away from strict universality. This analysis provides conceptual resources that offer the potential for resolving disputes about objects of value caught between an insufficiently nuanced personal/impersonal dichotomy. I go on to show how this analysis sheds light on the debate over who has the right to value the past, and argue that sentimental value, a key mode of valuing the past, is not as closely tied to personal value as one might think. The result will be a theory that attempts to reorient our thinking about historically significant things, and values generally, towards a more plausible understanding of who has reason to value them.

2. Required Engagement and Required Recognition

It would be convenient if there were a received view of impersonal value, but a common understanding is difficult to identify. Some treat impersonal value as similar to intrinsic value.⁶ Others regard the impersonal good as what is good independent of for whom it is good (but assuming it is still good for persons).⁷ Some go further and deny this individualism, holding that impersonal value is not reducible to the goods of individuals.⁸ With the exception of this last possibility, accounts of impersonal value all tend to be concerned with an understanding of value that is value *for everyone*.⁹ One influential analysis that captures this feature is Thomas Nagel's account of impersonal

⁶ For example, Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, "Analysing Personal Value," *The Journal of Ethics* 11, no. 4 (2007): 405-35. "Certain things we value are best described as carrying impersonal value, i.e., they are valued with no eye to anything but to the thing itself."

⁷ Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁸ Thomas Hurka, "The Justification of National Partiality," in *The Morality of Nationalism*, ed. Jeff McMahan and Robert McKim (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 156-57. This position can be a bit puzzling. Hurka seems to be saying that a good is impersonal, in his sense, if it is good despite not making individuals' lives *better*, and it is this sense in which he denies Parfit's individualism. But there is a significant difference between holding that impersonal goods need not make any individual's life better, and holding that impersonal goods need not be good *for* any individual. To borrow his example, Quebeckers need not think that their grandchildren will live *better* lives if French culture survives, but, I believe, they still ought to think that French culture will be good *for* their grandchildren, in the sense that their grandchildren will be able to appreciate it, engage with it, and even be the beneficiary of it (though not in the sense that it would be better than English culture, from which they might also benefit).

⁹ Indeed, on Hurka's account of impersonal value, it can be very *partial* (in his terms).

value (canonical if any is) as value that can be recognized independent of any particular perspective:

“...once the objective step is taken, the possibility is also open for the recognition of values and reasons that are independent of one’s personal perspective and have force for anyone who can view the world *impersonally*, as a place that contains him. If objectivity means anything here, it will mean that when we detach from our individual perspective and the values and reasons that seem acceptable from within it, we can sometimes arrive at a new conception which may endorse some of the original reasons but will reject some as false subjective appearances and add others.”¹⁰

The independence from particular perspectives entails that impersonal values will involve everyone, or at least everyone who can reflect from the objective perspective.¹¹ Because the universality of impersonal values is secured on this account via detachment from particular perspectives, impersonal values *necessarily* have purchase with everyone—we abstract away from the individual interests or circumstances that might normally affect whether a given value is in fact a value for *oneself*. Thus on this account, to say that some things are impersonally valuable is to say that they ought to be *valued* by everyone. Call this the *Required Engagement* analysis of impersonal value.

RE: An object, project, (etc.) X has impersonal value just in case X is valuable independent of any particular perspective, and therefore (other things being equal) for all persons Y, Y ought to value X (i.e. everyone has compelling reason to value X).¹²

This analysis is characteristic of Nagel’s view. Nagel thinks that impersonal values are those that generate agent-neutral reasons: these are reasons that apply to anyone, independent of his or her particular perspective. He writes: “... If impersonal value is going to be admitted at all, it will naturally attach to liberty, general opportunities, and the basic resources of life, as well as to pleasure and the absence of suffering.”¹³ These values are impersonal, according to Nagel, because they generate compelling reasons for anyone to act, no matter *whose* liberty or pain is in question, whether it is yours or a stranger’s: the mere fact that *there is pain* generates a reason for

¹⁰ Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 140 (emphasis added). This is in line with Scanlon’s understanding of “on *impersonal* grounds—that is to say, for reasons that are not tied to the well-being, claims, or status of individuals in any particular position,” T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Belknap Press, 1998), 219.

¹¹ As Mark Schroeder puts it, Nagel posits impersonal (or agent-neutral) value based on “the uncontroversial distinction...between reasons that are reasons for everyone and reasons that are reasons for only some people.” Mark Schroeder, “Teleology, Agent-Relative Value, and ‘Good,’” *Ethics* 117 (2007): 265-95. Schroeder then goes on to question whether this distinction in reasons correlates with an equally simple distinction in values, though for different reasons than those I pursue here.

¹² Throughout, I will use “engagement” as a term for the activity constitutive of valuing (following Raz). “Ought” here is understood in the sense of a requirement.

¹³ Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 171-72.

anyone to alleviate it. It is no surprise, then, that Nagel denies the impersonal value of personal projects:

There is nothing incoherent in wanting to be able to climb Kilimanjaro or play all the Beethoven piano sonatas, while thinking that impersonally it doesn't matter whether one can do this. In fact one would have to be dotty to think it did matter impersonally...If an interest is developed by the agent himself through his choices and actions, then the objective reasons it provides are primarily relative... what there is not, I believe, is a completely general impersonal value of the satisfaction of desires and preferences.¹⁴

This is not to say, of course, that others cannot recognize the value of these projects for the persons who have an interest in them. However, the objective recognition of value is not, on Nagel's account, reason-generating: "each person has reasons stemming from the perspective of his own life which, though they can be publicly recognized, do not in general provide reasons for others and do not correspond to reasons that the interests of others provide for him."¹⁵ This should help us see the difference between the reasons involved in actively valuing (engaging with value), and the reasons associated with merely recognizing value. Though the distinction is not a stark one, the point is that *valuing* involves more than merely *recognizing* that something is valuable.¹⁶ I can recognize that learning to play all the Beethoven piano sonatas is a valuable project without valuing that project myself, without seeing myself as having reason to learn to play the sonatas, or to promote their being played, etc. This is not to say that there are *no* reasons that stem from the recognition of value (as we will discuss below), but just that engagement with value involves further reasons beyond those associated with mere recognition.

It is no wonder, then, that on Nagel's view all of the impersonal values are intuitively *moral* values. On the RE analysis of impersonal value, not only are the reasons associated with impersonal value reasons of engagement, but they are also compelling reasons, ones that carry significant weight in practical reasoning. Putting aside the specter of moral relativism, it has seemed to many that justice, equality, autonomy, the absence of suffering, etc. are values that are impersonal in this very sense: other things being equal, they require engagement in the manner described by RE (i.e. we ought to promote and prize them, and ensure that they play a substantive role in our evaluative and practical lives by being attentive to the reasons they give us). Indeed, the idea that moral values are those that everyone has compelling reason to engage with provides a plausible account of the *force* that moral values are typically thought to have.

However, there are two sources of concern with this account. The first, briefly, is that while the move to the impersonal perspective may be *sufficient* to secure the universal scope of a given value, it is not *necessary*. By claiming that values *only* achieve universality when they can be endorsed from the impersonal perspective, we neglect

¹⁴ Ibid., 170.

¹⁵ Ibid., 172.

¹⁶ Cf. For instance, Scheffler, "Valuing."; Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*.

other ways in which values can secure universality. While the impersonal perspective might secure the necessary universality that is distinctive of moral values, this necessity may be uncalled for or inapt in the case of non-moral impersonal values (I return to this point in greater detail in section 3). This leads to the second problem, which is that a number of philosophers have recognized a domain of *non-moral* values that have an impersonal character (insofar as they seem to generate some universal reasons), but do not *require* the engagement distinctive of the RE approach: these projects, activities, and objects intuitively generate some reasons for everyone, but they are not the reasons of engagement involved in actively *valuing* something. This has led some philosophers to adopt an account of impersonal value that includes certain compelling reasons, but ones that are oriented around the *recognition* of value as opposed to engagement with value. Such an account will thus involve some minimal compelling reasons for thought and action that do not include the additional kinds of reasons one has in virtue of actively valuing something. Joseph Raz is a clear adherent of this view:

...[O]bviously no one has reason to engage with all valuable objects. We need not read all novels, listen to all music, climb all the mountains, go to all the parties, dance in all the dances that are worthwhile...Not everyone has much time for Picasso's paintings, and there is nothing wrong in not caring for them...But no one should destroy them or treat them in ways inconsistent with the fact that they are aesthetically valuable.¹⁷

In a similar vein, Samuel Scheffler writes:

...[I]t is not only possible but commonplace to believe that something is valuable without valuing it oneself. There are, for example, many activities that I regard as valuable but which I myself do not value, including, say, folk dancing, bird-watching, and studying Bulgarian history. Indeed, I value only a tiny fraction of the activities that I take to be valuable.¹⁸

So, if the pyramids at Giza and Niagra Falls are impersonally valuable, then not everyone need be interested in them, promote them, learn about them, etc., but everyone ought, at least, to recognize their value, and think about and act toward them in whatever minimal ways are required by their status as impersonally valuable, e.g. by respecting them, preserving them, not interfering with them etc.¹⁹ Let's call this the *Required Recognition* analysis of impersonal value:

RR: An object, project, (etc.) *X* has impersonal value just in case (other things being equal) for all persons *Y*, *Y* ought to recognize that *X* is

¹⁷ Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 164.

¹⁸ Scheffler, "Valuing," 21. At 31, Scheffler criticizes T. M. Scanlon for (at least implicitly) not acknowledging this.

¹⁹ With regard to non-interference in particular, see R. Jay Wallace, "The Publicity of Reasons," *Philosophical Perspectives* 23 (2009).

valuable and the minimal reasons associated with this value. (i.e. everyone has compelling reason to recognize the value of X).²⁰

I am sympathetic to the idea that all impersonally valuable objects warrant recognition of their value. The problem with this analysis is that it fails to capture anything *distinctive* about impersonal value. As I will argue, it is plausible to believe that *all* instances of appropriate valuing, valuing for good reasons, require this kind of recognition. Hence it is not that the RR analysis is mistaken as a general claim about our relationship to valuable things, but rather that it fails to capture a distinctive category of value that is *for everyone*. Recall that this essay began with an intuitive distinction between impersonal value (Niagara, the pyramids, relief of suffering) and personal value (my grandfather's ring). If the RR analysis proves unrelated to our intuitive understanding of this distinction, then we will have good reason to look for an alternative.

RR states that value is impersonal just in case everyone ought to recognize that it is valuable. In order to understand precisely what this amounts to, we need to understand what is implied by the recognition of value. Whatever else is true of valuable things, it at least seems to follow that valuable things are *worth valuing*.²¹ So recognition of value must also be recognition of the appropriateness of valuing. The question is: the appropriateness of valuing *for whom*? Ostensibly, if impersonal values are to have the desired universality, *impersonal values will be appropriate for anyone to value*. We can thus adopt this as an essential *desideratum* for any plausible account of impersonal value: indeed, the universal appropriateness of valuing is entailed by the RE account, as well as the account that I will introduce below. However, the problem for the RR analysis is that the universal recognition of value does *not* entail the universal appropriateness of valuing.

Consider some of the examples introduced by Raz and Scheffler of values that ought to be recognized by everyone. I do not dispute that the value of these things should indeed be universally *recognized*. But in contrast, how universal is the *appropriateness of valuing* fine piano playing, or, to borrow Scheffler's example, the appropriateness of valuing bird watching? Scheffler uses bird watching as an example of an activity that one ought to recognize as valuable, but that many people do not themselves value. Surely of the set of individuals who recognize the value of bird watching without valuing it, there are some for whom it would nevertheless be

²⁰ The RR analysis is very similar to one that emerges from Scheffler's discussion of the relationship between believing valuable and valuing, on which the claim that X is valuable "might be understood as the claim that X has properties in virtue of which (1) all people have reasons for behaving in certain (minimum) ways with regard to X, and (2) some people have reasons for additional actions with regard to X and for being emotionally vulnerable to it... valuable things give everyone, and not merely those who value them, certain minimal reasons for action, such as reasons not to destroy or denigrate those things." Scheffler, "Valuing," 36. Scheffler does not explicitly refer to the category of value that he is writing about as "impersonal," though he does distinguish it from both instrumental and personal value.

²¹ Some think that this is the whole story about value. For instance, see Christine Korsgaard's contribution to Joseph Raz et al., *The Practice of Value*, The Berkeley Tanner Lectures (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, 2005); Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); J. David Velleman, "A Theory of Value," *Ethics* 118(2008): 410-36. This position is also typical of the buck-passing account of value usually associated with Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*.

appropriate to value bird watching, even if they happen not to. But equally clear, I believe, is that there are many members of this set of individuals for whom bird watching *would not even be appropriate to value*: people who dislike the outdoors, who are impatient, who disdain quiet and stillness, etc. On what plausible basis might we say that such individuals would appropriately value bird watching? On the contrary, the fact that these people have reason to recognize that bird watching is a valuable activity does not imply that it would be appropriate for them to value it. Thus RR claims the mantle of impersonal value for things it would not be universally appropriate to value.

The importance of this point is emphasized when we consider paradigm examples of *personal* value that, counterintuitively, qualify as impersonally valuable according to RR. My grandfather's ring has value for me, but not for you. Indeed, it wouldn't be appropriate for you to value it. But as long as I value the ring for good reasons, it seems that you and everyone else ought to recognize that the ring is valuable, even if it's only appropriate for me to value it. However, according to RR, universal recognition is necessary and sufficient for impersonal value. Thus the RR analysis falsely implies that paradigm examples of personal value, like my grandfather's ring, are in fact impersonally valuable, because everyone ought to recognize their value. The fact is, that whether we are considering bird watching, the Grand Canyon, or my grandfather's ring, it is plausible to think that just insofar as these things are valued for good reason, then everyone ought to recognize that they are valuable. This follows from the publicity of reasons and our ability as rational agents to recognize the reasons of others.²² However, it is *not* true of all these things that it would therefore be appropriate for anyone to value them. Raz seems to suggest that *all* legitimate values have an impersonal element, and that personal value is just a way of describing those impersonally valuable things we happen to have an interest in. As he puts it: "The personal meaning of objects, causes, and pursuits depends on their impersonal value, and is conditional on it."²³ But as we have seen, this view precludes the possibility of personal values understood as those that it would decidedly *not* be appropriate for everyone to value.

Now, it sometimes seems that what Raz really means when he says that personal value is conditional on impersonal value is that it is conditional on something's having *independent value*: independent, that is, of my merely having an interest in it. This is suggested when he writes (just prior to the previous quotation): "In general, an attachment [i.e. personal value] must have a worthy object to be valuable."²⁴ Or

²² Cf. Wallace, "The Publicity of Reasons." Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*.

²³ Cf. Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 20. Elsewhere, in discussing non-instrumental values, he writes: "I will proceed on the assumption that (some exceptions that need not concern us aside) their value is a reason (which we call "non-instrumental") for everyone to engage with and to respect what is of value, provided only that doing so is not deeply impossible." Joseph Raz, "The Myth of Instrumental Rationality," *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2005). Scheffler, on the other hand, seems aware that a UR analysis will not entail that it would be appropriate for anyone to value an impersonally valuable X, but he does not provide a principled account of the relationship between impersonal value and the appropriateness of valuing. Thus I need not be disagreeing with Scheffler here, though I believe I provide reason for him to favor my account over RR. For more, see the discussion of positional valuing, below.

²⁴ Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 19.

elsewhere: “Their impersonal value [that of specific attachments]... is their value to one were they to be one’s attachments, which is independent of the fact that they were embraced by one as one’s attachments.”²⁵ This is a plausible and familiar claim (see footnote 27). Certainly my grandfather’s ring, for instance, is independently valuable in the sense that it is *worth* valuing for me independent of whether I have an interest in it. But this is not, of course, independent of my specific *relation* to it—its value is not independent of facts about me. So its having independent value (in the sense of being worth valuing *for me* independent of my interest in it) does not make it worth valuing for *everyone*. Thus the notions of independent value and impersonal (or universal) value cannot be conflated if we are to maintain the intuitive proviso that distinctively impersonal values are those it would indeed be appropriate for everyone to value.

Another possible reading of Raz’s position is that he is claiming that all of the particular valuable goals, activities, objects, etc. that we value derive their value from more abstract and universal values. He writes:

Given that everyone is partial to something which is genuinely of value, the universality of value is respected. Legitimate diversity results not from the fact that some things are of value to some but not to others, but from the fact that we are differentially attracted to the same values, or to people and goals which are attractive because they possess the same values. Legitimate differential attraction tends to lead to speciation of values aided by the emergence of variant practices exemplifying but at the time modifying the more abstract values which bred them.²⁶

In this light, the claim would not be that my grandfather’s ring has universal value, but that mementos do (or perhaps a value of even greater abstraction), and values of this more abstract kind are appropriate for anyone to value, though the appropriateness of valuing their many diverse instantiations will vary. While I agree that these more abstract values will more commonly secure universality, and they may play a role in the universal *recognition* of value, this approach offers no help in identifying the extent to which the non-abstract values (i.e. the specific valuable goals, activities, objects, etc.) that we engage with are universal, and this skirts the difficult cases that I am concerned with in this essay. In many practical contexts, it is the value of specific things that we want to know the scope of—just think of the examples with which we began. And insofar as there *is* an intuitive difference between the value of my grandfather’s ring and the value of Niagara, this appeal to the universality of all values fails to track that distinction. So this interpretation of Raz continues to demonstrate the failure of RR to countenance a distinctive category of impersonal value.

Thus RR retreats too far from RE. According to RE, everyone has compelling reason to engage with impersonal values, which correctly entails that such engagement is universally appropriate; however, RE implausibly elevates all impersonal values to the status of moral values by *requiring* engagement with them. RR attempts to make room for the universal value of non-moral impersonal values, but its account,

²⁵ Ibid., 17, fn 5.

²⁶ Ibid., 3.

structured around the recognition of value, jettisons the universal appropriateness of valuing—indeed, RR states a truth about the relation between value and reason that applies to *all* values, personal and impersonal alike, and does not describe a feature that is distinctive of the subset of specifically impersonal values. Hence we need a middle ground: an account of impersonal value that succeeds in capturing the universal appropriateness of valuing without attributing to all impersonal values the compelling status of moral values.

3. *Permissible Engagement*

In order to construct such an account, we first must consider in greater detail the conditions that render valuing appropriate. There appears to be a diversity of ways in which reasons to value some X can be generated. One way arises in the case of bird watching considered above. Given some independently valuable X, whether or not a particular individual will have reason to value X might depend on that person's other interests and values.²⁷ If I am in fact a nature-lover with a penchant for patient classification, then I may well have reason to value bird watching. Of course, I'm not required to value it, but it seems I have good reason to.²⁸

Another way in which reasons to value some X can be generated arises in the context of what Scheffler calls "positional valuing." For instance, Scheffler describes an example in which

...I have just heard a glowing account of the friendship between two people whom I have never met and with whom I have no connection. I might think, on the basis of this account, that their friendship sounds like a valuable one. It would be bizarre, however, for me to say that I value their friendship...I cannot value the friendship in the same way that the participants can; it cannot play the same role in my emotional life and practical deliberations.²⁹

Scheffler describes such cases as ones in which the following two conditions are true: "(1) that only those who occupy the right position in relation to the thing are capable of valuing it, or of valuing it in a certain way, and (2) that not everyone is capable of occupying the right position in relation to that thing."³⁰

²⁷ The claim that what matters in life, what makes one's life go well, etc. involves being engaged with independently valuable things is very familiar in the literature. In addition to the works by Scheffler, Raz, Nagel, Parfit, and Wallace mentioned so far, see Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).

²⁸ It should be noted that in cases like this, one's reasons to value bird watching might overlap substantially with the reasons one has to engage in bird watching in virtue of (or that constitute) valuing it. But they can come apart. For instance, I might have some additional reasons, say to purchase special supplies, attend conventions, etc. in virtue of actively valuing bird watching (and having a prolonged commitment to it), that I might not have as someone who has reason to go bird watching, but doesn't, as it happens, value bird watching. This starts to bleed over into the ways in which a historical relation to some X can affect one's reasons for valuing it.

²⁹ Scheffler, "Valuing," 37.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Positional valuing can come in multiple forms. In its most literal manifestation, you may have or lack reason to value something based on your geographical location. There may be practices or activities that are suited to particular climes, but would be utterly alien in others (for instance, ice fishing or snorkeling). You may have or lack reason to value something based on your knowledge: a specialist in music, art, mathematics, or a specific trade may have special reasons to value objects or practices that are inaccessible in the absence of the relevant understanding. And I don't want to rule out the possibility of positional valuing based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion. What is important to bear in mind about these types of positional valuing is that the relevant positional features may only be *sufficient*, not necessary, for generating reasons to value some X. Moreover, even where they are necessary conditions, they may only be necessary to certain *kinds* of reasons to value, and thus only necessary for having a reason to value some X in a certain way (i.e. while having a certain kind of relation to an object may be necessary for the appropriateness of my valuing it sentimentally, other reasons may be sufficient for the appropriateness of my valuing the same object in other ways, for instance, morally or aesthetically). Determining how various conditions relate to the appropriateness of valuing will no doubt be highly specific to the particular valuable X in question.

A final kind of positional valuing, perhaps deserving of its own category, is valuing that is based on one's *historical* position. The valuable relationship that Scheffler describes would best be understood in these terms. In order to have reason to value a relationship, you need to have the kind of history of interactions with something or someone that constitute a relationship in the first place: a relationship is itself an historical relation.³¹ An historical position is also what gives me, but not you, a reason to value my grandfather's ring: it is the history of interaction between myself and my grandfather that gives me a reason to value the ring, that makes valuing it in the way that I do appropriate. We will pick up this discussion of positional valuing in section 4: for now, suffice it to say that there are multiple positional conditions that can generate reasons for valuing.

A third way reasons to value some X may be generated is with respect to the mere fact that one is human, or a rational agent. According to various theorists, this is what grounds a range of moral values and requirements, and indeed, one's perspective *qua* human or rational agent just is the impersonal perspective described by Nagel and accounted for in RE.³² However, features like rationality or being human may provide reasons to value things in non-moral contexts as well. For instance, it may be that simply being human provides one with a reason to value the prehistoric places and artifacts that shed light on, or are associated with, our development as a species. Or maybe such features are part of what gives us reason to value instances of great beauty, however such aesthetic values are understood. Such features would of course not be positional with respect to subsets of humans or rational agents, but would include everyone within the relevant class.

³¹ Cf. Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 112, no. 2 (2003): 135-89.

³² Or in the constructivist tradition, consider that moral requirements on Christine Korsgaard's account are grounded in reflection from one's practical identity as a human. See Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Bearing in mind the diversity of ways in which one might have reason to value something, and hence the diversity of ways in which valuing can be rendered appropriate, we can introduce a new analysis of impersonal value, *Permissible Engagement*:

PE: An object, project, (etc.) *X* has impersonal value just in case (other things being equal) for all persons *Y*, *Y* valuing *X* is evaluatively permissible (i.e. *everyone* has a reason, though not necessarily a compelling one, to value *X*).

I believe this analysis offers a number of considerations in its favor. We should first be careful to distinguish PE from the RE analysis with which we began. According to RE, impersonal values are those that everyone ought to value, where ought is understood in the sense of a requirement stemming from the presence of compelling reasons. This is why, as we noted, the RE analysis seems plausible for moral values, but because of reasonable assumptions about value pluralism, problematic for non-moral values. In contrast, according to PE it would not be a requirement for everyone to value an impersonally valuable object, but merely permissible to do so. Note that this still secures the important desideratum of universal appropriateness. Both RE and PE entail that impersonal values are appropriate for anyone to value, but PE tempers the practical upshot of that appropriateness by rendering engagement with value permissible as opposed to required. We thus have the resources for distinguishing the universality of moral values from the universality of some non-moral values, and we avoid the counter-intuitive implications that stem from collapsing them into a single category.

Second, this analysis gives the recognition of value its properly broad scope. It implies that all rational agents with the relevant information ought to recognize that *X* is valuable (and the minimal reasons that accompany this recognition) simply in virtue of its being *valuable for Y*, and not contingently upon that *X* being impersonally valuable. This affirms the public nature of reasons, and the plausible claim that good reasons should be recognizable by any rational agent in the right epistemic situation, even if they are completely beyond the pale of reasons that could apply to oneself.

Finally, and most importantly, this analysis can accommodate two different ways in which everyone might have reason, and therefore evaluative permission, to value *X*. The first we can call “monistic” universal appropriateness. This is the case when everyone has a reason to value *X*, and everyone has the *same* reason to value *X*. So, as considered above, features such as shared humanity, or rational agency, that generate reasons to value *X* will be monistic: everyone will have the same reason to value *X*. Thus when philosophers such as Scanlon refer to valuing “on *impersonal* grounds—that is to say, for reasons that are not tied to the well-being, claims, or status of individuals *in any particular position*,”³³ they are referring to impersonal value in the monistic sense. However, this need not involve the abstraction to the impersonal, detached perspective advocated by Nagel. Recall that according to RE, a key feature that makes impersonal values have the compelling force characteristic of moral values is the very fact that these are the *only* values that generate agent-neutral reasons that can be endorsed from the detached perspective. If impersonal values hold independently of one’s individual interests and circumstances, then one’s personal particularities will have no bearing on

³³ Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, 219. (second emphasis is mine).

whether impersonal values qualify as values for any given person, and thus whether the relevant agent-neutral reasons apply to them. But we can distinguish between reasons and values that apply simply because one is human *independent* of one's particular interests and circumstances, and those that apply simply because one is human *among* one's other particular interests and circumstances. In the former case, the independence from the particularities of individuals ensures the compelling force of the relevant reasons, and hence the requirement to engage with them. In the latter case, everyone might share the same reason in virtue of their shared humanity, but it is a reason the force of which is mitigated by one's own particularities. So for instance, simply being human may be sufficient to make valuing the history of our species, or natural wonders, appropriate, and hence evaluatively permissible, without giving us compelling reason to do so—we may have other interests and circumstances that render this value unimportant to us, despite its being appropriate for us to value it. So unlike RE, PE makes room for values that are a function of a common reason but do not have the compelling force of moral values. Though it is appropriate for anyone to engage with these values, it is not required.

The second way in which everyone can have reason to value a given X we can call “pluralistic” universal appropriateness. This is the case when everyone has a reason to value X, but there is no single reason to value X that everyone shares in common. Rather, various relevant considerations generate *different* reasons for everyone to value the same X. This might be the case where, for instance, various forms of positional valuing overlap.³⁴ As we will see in the next section, it is a virtue of my analysis of impersonal value that it has these two different ways of achieving universal appropriateness.

These considerations also suggest that philosophers have expected too much from the category of impersonal value. Knowing which values are universal is important, but only as a component of the more general task, essential to moral and evaluative inquiry, of determining *for whom* it would be appropriate to value something. It is the reasons that render valuing appropriate that are most intimately connected with what it makes sense for someone to care about, and thus with practical reason. If, as Raz has said, “...[T]he point of values is realized when it is possible to appreciate them, and when it is possible to relate to objects of value in ways appropriate to their value,”³⁵ then it is essential that we examine for whom such engagement would be appropriate. But moreover, as in the moral realm, we need the resources for distinguishing required engagement from permissible engagement. Because the engagement required by RE follows from the fact that universal appropriateness, on that view, can only be secured by the independence of particular perspectives, we are left with an all-or-nothing understanding of impersonal value. If a value can be endorsed from a detached perspective, then it is universal and engagement with it is

³⁴ This is similar to Wallace's claim that there is a “diversity of ways in which a common value can provide agents who are differently situated with different kinds of reasons.” Wallace, “The Publicity of Reasons,” 482. The difference is that Wallace's claim is about how a single value can provide different reasons for different people, whereas my claim here is that people can have different reasons *to value* the same thing (i.e. there are different reasons that can make such valuing appropriate). I believe that both claims are true.

³⁵ Raz et al., *The Practice of Value*, 27-28.

required. If not, then RE has nothing to say about it. In contrast, by focusing on the diversity of reasons that render valuing appropriate, PE has the resources not only to account for those values that are universal in ways that do not require engagement, but also to guide productive inquiry into the more limited scope of other values.

What we have seen so far is that the range of ways in which we might relate to some valuable X goes far beyond the simple dichotomies that the RE and the RR analyses provide. There can be universal requirements to value X, as in the case of moral values. There can be universal requirements to recognize the value of X (and the minimal reasons associated with this recognition) in virtue of any given person having a reason to value it. And there can be universal permission to value X, either because everyone shares the same reason (monistic) or because everyone has one of a number of reasons (pluralistic) to value X. To the extent that these pluralistic reasons fail to overlap in a manner that covers all persons, we can chart the extent to which the appropriateness and evaluative permissibility of valuing X fall away from strict universality.

4. *The Appropriateness of Valuing History*

Once we recognize that the extent to which values are personal or impersonal is best analyzed in terms of appropriateness secured in diverse ways, we have the resources for clarifying the terms of disputes over the scope of contested values. Instead of a stark contrast between the impersonal and the personal divided on the basis of which values can be endorsed from a “detached” perspective, we have the single metric of appropriateness with which to analyze competing claims regarding the scope of different values. As noted above, the PE approach also allows us to chart the extent to which values fall away from universality, in contrast with the all-or-nothing approach of traditional accounts. In this section, I will focus on the implications of PE for the valuing of history and cultural heritage. While it may still be difficult in certain cases to assess for whom such valuing is appropriate, and hence permissible, the conditions surveyed above that can plausibly be deemed *sufficient* for the appropriateness of valuing should allow us to make some headway in tackling these cases.

The Hague Convention of 1954 seems to codify the view that everyone appropriately values historically and culturally significant objects:

Being convinced that damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world;

Considering that the preservation of the cultural heritage is of great importance for all peoples of the world and that it is important that this heritage should receive international protection...³⁶

The convention states that the cultural property of any people is constitutive of the cultural heritage of all humankind; thus any person may reasonably be said to have

³⁶ Hague Convention of 1954, as quoted in Merryman, “Two Ways of Thinking About Cultural Property,” 837.

an interest in it, just in virtue of being human. John Merryman calls this approach “cultural internationalism.” This is contrasted with “cultural nationalism,” an approach that finds its own codification in the UNESCO 1970 Convention: “Considering that cultural property constitutes one of the basic elements of civilization and national culture, ... its true value can be appreciated only in relation to the fullest possible information regarding its origin, history, and traditional setting.”

Whereas Hague 1954 was written in response to the loss of cultural heritage in war, UNESCO 1970 was written in response to the illicit trade in cultural property. This on its own goes some way toward explaining the difference in the approaches, but for our purposes they are merely examples of two theoretical views about the scope of the value of cultural heritage. What should be clear is that the question these views revolve around is *for whom* it is appropriate and permissible to value cultural heritage. In order to avoid the political connotations of the (inter)nationalist language, I will refer to the positions as universalist and particularist. The universalist claims that cultural heritage is appropriately valued by everyone³⁷; the particularist claims that cultural heritage can only be appropriately valued within a specific localized context.

The savvy reader may note a reading of these two positions that renders them compatible. Why not say, with the universalist, that all people appropriately value cultural heritage, but add, with the particularist, that this valuing can only take place within the relevant local context? According to this understanding of the two positions, they are simply referring to different things: the universalist is concerned with the scope of individuals who appropriately value cultural heritage, and the particularist is concerned with the manner and context within which it can be appropriately valued. Indeed, in the conclusion I consider a resolution to a recent dispute that operates along these lines. However, such a compatibilist reading of the positions may not always be possible. For instance, some particularists will claim that part of the necessary context is possessed by persons themselves (in the form of ancestry, ethnicity, or nationality), and thus goes beyond the context of specific objects. This is particularly common in the context of “intangible heritage” (such as dances or rituals) that are not spatially located in the manner of artifacts. Moreover, the universalist may take the position that because cultural heritage is appropriately valued by everyone, no particular persons have a special claim to control or profit from heritage on the basis of ancestry, ethnicity, or nationality alone (this is an historically common view among anthropologists and

³⁷ Consider another UNESCO publication after the 1970 Convention, which offers an articulation of the view that the value of cultural heritage should be viewed as having universal reach, seemingly independent of how that value is understood: “their value cannot be confined to one nation or to one people, but is there to be shared by every man, woman and child of the globe.” UNESCO 1982, as cited in Atle Omland, “The Ethics of the World Heritage Concept,” in *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archeological Practice*, ed. Chris Scarre and Geoffrey Scarre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 247. This helps distinguish the universalist claim from another kind of universalism with which it might be confused. For instance, one might claim that cultural heritage is universally valuable in the sense that everyone should value the heritage of his or her *own* culture. This is akin to the claim that relationships have universal value, but everyone should value his or her *own* relationships. As the UNESCO 1982 quote brings out, though, this is *not* the sense of universal value the universalist has in mind. Rather, it is the claim that the cultural heritage of any particular group is appropriately valued by anyone.

archaeologists). Thus despite the potential for compatible readings of universalism and particularism, there are still significant tensions between the two to be resolved.

It should be no surprise that the older things get, the more likely one is to find universalist claims made about their value. As one bioanthropologist put it: "Ancient skeletons belong to everyone...[they are] the remnants of unduplicable evolutionary events which all living and future peoples have the right to know about and understand."³⁸ There is something to this claim: the knowledge that study of an ancient skeleton might yield seems to have a value independent of any specific culture, and is thus a likely candidate for being potentially significant to anyone, or appropriate for anyone to value. This would be a form of monistic universal appropriateness. Even those who express a general skepticism about the universal value of cultural heritage acknowledge this possibility. Henry Cleere writes:

Viewed against the entire spectrum of human culture, it is difficult to conceive of any cultural property as possessing true universality, as implied by this generally accepted definition, with the possible exception of major human palaeontological sites (e.g. the Peking Man site in China) or Palaeolithic rock-art sites (Altamira, Spain; Tassili n' Ajjer, Algeria), which represent a remote period before human society and culture became excessively diversified.³⁹

This is consistent with an approach to archeological research that, according to Alison Wylie "was being institutionalized in North American museums and universities at the beginning of the twentieth century [and] was distinguished, above all else, by a commitment to approaching archaeological material as a record of the cultural past whose significance lay in its informational content (as evidence), not its aesthetic or sentimental or commercial value."⁴⁰ Wylie goes on to critique this understanding of the significance of cultural heritage, which treats scientific truth as constituting a universal value over and above values of the other kinds mentioned. She notes that this persists as a potential problem for "stewardship" models of archaeology, even though they get away from the concept of property altogether: "The impulse inherent in the concept of stewardship is to seek some reference point, some foundation that transcends local, individual interests on which to base its claims," which in the context of archeology, tends to evince itself in appeal to a "panhuman interest in a particular kind of knowledge about the cultural past."⁴¹ To avoid this problem, Wylie contends that stewardship "must be construed not as a matter of wise management on behalf of an abstract higher interest (that of science and, by extension, society or humanity) but as a matter of collaborative, negotiated co-management among divergent interests

³⁸ Reported in David Hearst Thomas (2000) as quoted in Alison Wylie, "The Promise and Perils of an Ethic of Stewardship," in *Embedding Ethics*, ed. Lynn Meskell and Peter Pels (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2005), 47-48.

³⁹ Henry Cleere, "The Concept of 'Outstanding Universal Value' in the World Heritage Convention," *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 1(1996): 227-33; Cf. Omland, "The Ethics of the World Heritage Concept," 249.

⁴⁰ Wylie, "The Promise and Perils of an Ethic of Stewardship," 55-56.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

(including archeological interests) none of which can be presumed, at the outset, to take precedence over the others."⁴²

These considerations should remind us that historical significance is dependent upon a non-historical context of significance. As Arthur Danto writes: "a particular thing or occurrence acquires historical *significance* in virtue of its relations to some other thing or occurrence in which we happen to have some special interest, or to which we attach some importance, for whatever reason."⁴³ The archeological concern with extracting knowledge from historical artifacts is justified by a range of human interests, including the importance to us of explanation and understanding. But these concerns are of a largely different kind from the sentimental attachments associated with the historical significance of family heirlooms and frequented locales. One does not typically aim to *learn* anything about the past from a family heirloom, as its significance is understood in a non-informational context: that's simply not what we are interested in when we value an object in this way. Thus the difficulty that faces us in thinking about cultural heritage consists in its varied *modes* of historical significance, grounded in both a concern with knowledge and a concern with personal attachment.⁴⁴

As one might expect, the sentimental valuing⁴⁵ of cultural heritage, the mode of valuation pertaining to personal attachment, tends to be associated with a particularist analysis that is more specific to certain groups.⁴⁶ Consider again the paradigm case of personal value provided by my grandfather's ring: this is also a paradigm of sentimental value. It is worth pausing to focus on the kind of experience that this mode of valuation involves. It is not for nothing that we call the objects to which we have

⁴² Ibid., 65.

⁴³ Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge University Press, 1965), 167; Cf. Arash Abizadeh, "Historical Truth, National Myths and Liberal Democracy: On the Coherence of Liberal Nationalism," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (2004): 291-313.

⁴⁴ In addition to sentimental value, Wylie also mentions aesthetic and commercial value. Commercial value is instrumental, and aesthetic value strikes me as intuitively universal. I focus here on sentimental value as offering the most plausible rallying point for the particularist. There is no doubt more to be said about the role of political sovereignty in this debate as well, but there is insufficient space to address it here.

⁴⁵ I have a more capacious understanding of sentimental value than that articulated by Guy Fletcher, "Sentimental Value," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 43(2009): 55-65. Fletcher identifies sentimental value as just one value type within a class of extrinsic final values, including those associated with "public monuments, war memorials, and historical documents and artifacts." However, this differentiation neglects the fact that sentimental value itself seems to have an essential historical element that makes paring off the historical cases that Fletcher mentions less plausible. Consistent with the arguments in this essay, I prefer to distinguish these different cases based on the scope of the reasons for valuing them rather than based on the value type.

⁴⁶ Coningham, Cooper, and Pollard, for instance, follow others in distinguishing among use value, option value, and existence value, and criticize the identification of "World Heritage" sites (as part of UNESCO 1972), which they claim must necessarily select and prioritize a single value type as important to "the whole world." Robin Coningham, Rachel Cooper, and Mark Pollard, "What Value a Unicorn's Horn? A Study of Archaeological Uniqueness and Value," in *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archeological Practice*, ed. Chris Scarre and Geoffrey Scarre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 267-68. It is perhaps no surprise, and serves to undermine the purported universality of the values used in the selection process, that almost 50% of UNESCO World Heritage sites are in Europe. See Cleere, "The Concept of 'Outstanding Universal Value' in the World Heritage Convention," 229.

particular attachments objects of *sentimental* value: the emotions figure in this mode of valuation in a central way. As Scheffler notes, valuing in general seems to involve (among other things) being susceptible to a range of emotions, which will vary depending on the thing that is valued.⁴⁷ In the case of sentimental value, these might include pride, nostalgia, fondness, or just being *verklemt*. Scheffler, as is common, associates sentimental value with personal value, understood as something “being valuable only to him or herself.”⁴⁸ However, the character of the experience of sentimental value suggests a mode of valuation that can transcend the circumstances of a single individual. Indeed, it seems perfectly natural for a group at a reunion to be sentimental about their school, for disparate individuals to be sentimental about their hometown, perhaps even for co-nationals to be sentimental about their constitution, where these emotions are understood as an appropriate response to the value of the object in question. Consider Emerson’s remark: “We sympathize in the great moments of history, in the great discoveries, the great resistances, the great prosperities of men;—because there law was enacted, the sea was searched, the land was found, or the blow was struck *for us*, as we ourselves in that place would have done or applauded.”⁴⁹ It is true that personal value often takes the form of sentimental value, but sentimental value is not, I think, relegated to only the personal context.⁵⁰

The emotions associated with sentimental value might be described as involving a general feeling of *belonging*.⁵¹ Objects of sentimental value tend to feel like *ours* even if we don’t technically own them: there is a sense in which we feel they *belong* to us. Think of former students returning to high school to hang out on *their* bench, or a softball team that likes to go to *their* bar after the game. Even long after the bar is gone, they might walk by and say “this is where our bar used to be.” Moreover, we often feel like we *belong in* places of sentimental value. This is part and parcel of the sense in which they belong to us. What makes the bar feel like theirs is that they feel at home there. It is no wonder, then, that sentimental value is essentially historical in nature: we don’t get

⁴⁷ Scheffler, “Valuing.”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 26, fn. 24; Cf. Cohen, “Rescuing Conservatism.”

⁴⁹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “History,” in *Nature and Selected Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 1841/1982), 151.

⁵⁰ I thus diverge from the personal analysis of sentimental value suggested by Anthony Hatzimoysis, “Sentimental Value,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53, no. 212 (2003). Hatzimoysis argues “sentimental value is personal because it is not impersonal, since it is part of a phenomenon that involves a point of view of the world.” I disagree with this characterization: as Scheffler has noted, it is mistake to think that “values that fall on the impersonal side of the divide are values that can be appreciated only from a detached, ‘impersonal’ standpoint.” However, I think Hatzimoysis is right to note that “an object is sentimentally valuable to an agent for certain reasons, which, by the very fact of being reasons, are in principle intelligible by everyone else,” though, as I have suggested above, wrong to conclude with “even though they are not applicable to anyone else.” These reasons can indeed be applicable to others who stand in the relevant relations to the valued objects: these are cases of positional valuing described in the previous section.

⁵¹ Cf. Cohen, “Rescuing Conservatism,” 223.

sentimental about new things or places because they don't yet belong to us, or us to them. It takes time to develop that kind of relationship.⁵²

I think this fundamental aspect of sentimental value might help explain the extent of the tensions over possession of cultural heritage. Although the sense of belonging at the heart of sentimental value is in one way weaker than the legal sense because it lacks the rights and privileges that we associate with legal ownership, it is in another sense stronger: the deed to a house may be taken away, or a car repossessed, but these alterations in legal status do nothing to affect the historical sense in which it is still *his* house, or *her* car. Indeed, the strength of "historical ownership," in contrast with the legal variety, can be the primary impetus for one's desire to reestablish legal ownership: one retains the strong sense in which the object is still one's possession, and one wants to regain the rights and privileges afforded by legal ownership, as well as the public recognition that attends such status.

Recall that our question is "for whom is it appropriate to value cultural heritage," with the universalists saying everyone and the particularist saying only specific, local groups. But notice that the universalists don't have to be right for the particularists to be wrong. It may be that there are few, if any, non-moral values that are appropriate for everyone to value. However, all it takes to defeat the particularist claim is for it to be true that the appropriateness of valuing cultural heritage does *not* depend in a necessary way on the kind of local context that they claim it does (i.e. ancestry, birth-place, upbringing, cultural knowledge, etc.). And I think that in most cases it does not.

Once we recognize that emotions play an essential role in sentimental valuation, the question of when such valuation will be appropriate can be illuminated by consideration of when the concomitant emotions would be appropriate. Though some might be skeptical of the rational assessment of emotions, there is a significant literature arguing that emotions are indeed subject, one way or another, to standards of appropriateness, responsiveness to reason, and other forms of rational criticism.⁵³ I think that the assessment of the appropriateness of emotions pushes in the direction of understanding the relevant reasons as closely related to the notion of intelligibility. While I am not prepared to assert that one of these concepts is more explanatorily fundamental than the other,⁵⁴ I do believe that when we ask whether an emotion is appropriate, one way of getting at an answer is to ask whether that emotion makes sense, and in virtue of what it makes sense.

⁵² Cf. Scheffler, "The Normativity of Tradition." about carving out a space in time. Also Raz: "Meaning comes through a common history, and through work." Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 20.

⁵³ For example, see Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1987); Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); J. D'Arms and D. Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotion," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61(2000): 65-90.

⁵⁴ Velleman makes such a claim in Velleman, "A Theory of Value." It is elusive to me whether we have reasons in virtue of the intelligibility of our actions and attitudes, or whether our actions and attitudes are intelligible when we have reasons for them.

What makes it the case that valuing my grandfather's ring is appropriate for me, but not for you? The obvious answer is that the historical features of the ring that make it significant (having belonged to my grandfather) simply are not relevant to you: it would make no sense if you valued it for that reason. Indeed, as far as you're concerned, the ring shouldn't seem significant at all, at least no more than any other piece of jewelry. We understand the phenomenon of people being attached to histories with which they are involved, but it can be difficult to see how a stranger is involved in the history I shared with my grandfather.

An adamant universalist might argue, in line with a strong reading of the principle advocated in Hague 1954, that at least insofar as the ring is part of my heritage, it makes its own tiny contribution to the heritage of all humankind. It might be objected that this is *too* strong a reading of the principle: after all, the ring isn't part of my *cultural* heritage, properly speaking; it's just a family heirloom. But this move relies on an arbitrary distinction. Recall the case of Incan pottery shards from Machu Picchu. Surely pottery shards are even more quotidian items than a family heirloom, yet they are counted as paradigm cases of material cultural heritage. My grandfather's ring is simply part of my cultural heritage at the family level. There is nothing incoherent about speaking of a family culture, and indeed, there are many places, both in the past and present, in which the family has constituted the basic cultural unit.⁵⁵ The point is simply this: the fact that the ring is part of my heritage, and thus makes a contribution to the sum total of heritage, does not, intuitively, justify your valuing it for that reason. Perhaps this is because the contribution that the ring makes to world heritage is infinitesimally small: that is certainly a possibility, though how one would even begin to quantify contributions to world heritage remains elusive. But insofar as the universalist claim of Hague 1954 seems to rest on the mere constitutive relationship between local heritage and world heritage, the example calls into question whether such a relationship actually alters the landscape of reasons for valuing in the sentimental mode.

Interestingly, though, it seems that the particularist may have an equally difficult time capitalizing on the paradigm case of personal value provided by a family heirloom. It is natural to expect that because the particularist wants to deny that objects of cultural heritage are equally significant for everyone she will appeal to the shared history between the object and a people, much as one would in the case of my grandfather's ring. However, this move is not so easily achieved. Many citizens of a national group (or a religious or ethnic one, for that matter) cannot actually claim a common history with a land or nation: globalization has seen to that. Literally sharing a common ancestry with the original owners of cultural objects with which nations tend to identify is even less likely. This thinking may, surprisingly, tell in favor of a universalist understanding of the significance of cultural heritage, at least beginning at a certain point in history: a universalist might claim that everyone has a justified interest in historical artifacts that date back to the most recent common ancestor of all

⁵⁵ These considerations are also a reminder of how difficult it is to individuate cultures. See Samuel Scheffler, "Immigration and the Significance of Culture," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2007): 93-125.

living humans, which scientists estimate to have lived between 5,000 and 2,000 years ago.⁵⁶

However, these considerations (both excluding people from the set of appropriate valuers on the basis of ancestry and including everyone on the basis of the most recent common ancestor) might equally well be thought to call into question the relevance of ancestry to the appropriate valuing of cultural heritage. While appeal to ancestry is understandable as a basis for analyzing the relevance of cultural heritage (after all, it is a fairly objective way of charting humanity's course back through time) the more one focuses on the difficulties of an account of heritage based on actual ancestry, the more arbitrary ancestry seems as a criterion for the appropriateness of valuing. It certainly isn't a necessary condition of the appropriateness of my valuing my grandfather's ring: it would still be appropriate if I had been adopted, or been a close friend. All that seems to matter is that my grandfather was an appropriately valued part of my life, and thus I appropriately value his ring in virtue of the historical feature of having belonged to him. This is not to say that ancestry could not still serve as a sufficient condition for the appropriateness of valuing cultural heritage, but sufficient conditions are not what we're looking for here. The particularist position is based on the claim that there are at least some modes of valuation that are *only* appropriate for certain people. For the reasons stated, I am skeptical that ancestry might be a necessary condition with such a consequence.

I think there is some truth to the idea that the farther back in time we go, the more universal the value of heritage becomes. As we saw, there is a point in time at which there is no distinction to be made between cultural history and human history, and we thus all share the relevant feature (being human) that makes us part of that history, and thus grounds valuing it in both informational and even sentimental ways (if you've been to Stonehenge and didn't feel sentimental about it, then it's likely you missed something). This is the monistic form of universal appropriateness. It might be thought of, in this regard, as similar to the value of the natural world: "For the natural world, just as much as human culture, has a particular history that is part of our history and part of our context, both explaining and giving significance to our lives. Thus what it is that we value about an ancient human habitation has much more in common with what it is that we value about the natural world."⁵⁷ But moreover, even as we move beyond the point of common ancestry, our links with the past remain broad and far-reaching. Ancestry, geography, citizenship, study, and commitment may all be sufficient (though not individually necessary) conditions for the appropriateness of valuing heritage, and there are few expanses of time that we cannot relate to in one of these ways. Thus we can make sense of the impersonal value of cultural heritage even when the appropriateness of everyone valuing it is achieved through an overlapping plurality of reasons. This is the pluralistic universalism that can secure a range of reasons that make valuing appropriate for everyone, even when those reasons vary from person to person. It is only when heritage becomes very local, in both time and place, that most others lack a reason for valuing it, and thus where an exclusive claim to

⁵⁶ Douglas L.T. Rohde, Steve Olson, and Joseph T. Chang, "Modelling the Recent Common Ancestry of All Living Humans," *Nature* (2004).

⁵⁷ John O'Neill, Alan Holland, and Andrew Light, *Environmental Values* (New York and Canada: Routledge, 2008), 162.

appropriateness from locals might be asserted. It is truly the case that only a few people appropriately value my grandfather's ring, but most significant aspects of history simply are not like that: they have a much further reach than their temporally and geographically local communities.

5. Conclusion

As important as I believe these considerations are to understanding the range of persons who may appropriately value cultural heritage, they do not obviate the claims that nations or other groups might have to the ownership or possession of such heritage: in addition to legal or political bases for those claims (which there is not sufficient space to consider here), there is a value-based claim for keeping heritage objects in their appropriate local context. While I have argued that local conditions such as nationality and ancestry are not necessary conditions for *persons* to be the appropriate valuers of heritage objects, there may well be an important sense in which local *context* is essential for appreciating and understanding the historical significance of such objects, as I suggested in section 5 of Chapter 3. This is true not just for archeological scientists, but also for those who engage in non-informational modes of valuation. Just as being in the desert may preclude appropriate engagement with the value of an umbrella, removal from its context may preclude appropriate engagement with objects of historical significance as well. The recent resolution of the ownership of the artifacts from Machu Picchu, a case with which we began our discussion, provides a fitting example of how local possession can be balanced with recognition of the broad appropriateness of valuing. Yale has recently decided to repatriate the Incan artifacts to Peru, where, in partnership with the Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abade del Cusco, they have opened a new UNSAAC-Yale International Center for the Study of Machu Picchu.⁵⁸ This provides the local context necessary for engaging with the value of the Incan artifacts, while taking steps to increase access in recognition of the fact that the appropriateness of valuing such artifacts extends beyond the borders of Peru or of the descendants of Incan peoples.⁵⁹ Thus my argument provides theoretical justification for this partnership, which could serve as a model for the repatriation of other historically significant artifacts.

In conclusion, I hope in this section to have put pressure on the popular view that the value of cultural heritage, in particular the sentimental value associated with particularist attachments, is necessarily specific to local interest groups. I have noted that there may well be reasons why local groups should maintain possession of local heritage objects (including histories of injustice that there has not been space to explore here⁶⁰), but I have argued this is not because locals are the only ones for whom valuing them is appropriate and permissible.

⁵⁸ <http://news.yale.edu/2011/10/06/peru-yale-center-study-machu-picchu-and-inca-culture-opens>

⁵⁹ Of course, one might ask, if the artifacts are in a museum, why should it matter where the museum is located? How does this provide local context? The answers to these questions depend on how the museum is constructed, and the specific programs developed there to take advantage of that context. Surely, at least on the value-based approach I've been discussing, there are ways that a museum might be constructed and managed so as to obviate the potential benefits of local context.

⁶⁰ Indeed, I hope to explore the moral permissibility of markets in cultural heritage in the near future.

In a larger context, I hope to have shown that traditional accounts of impersonal value have been in need of revision. I have argued that the evaluative permissibility of engagement is a central concept in our best understanding of values and valuing that allows for a more nuanced approach to the scope of different values. My hope is that further attention to this dimension of our evaluative lives will yield fruitful results, not just in the study of our relationship to the past, but also in many of the applied areas of moral and political inquiry that philosophy examines.

Chapter 5: The Aesthetic Value of History

1. *Historical Properties and Art Historical Properties*

In Chapter 2, I argued that a connection with the past is an essential aspect of the distinctively historical mode of valuation. In doing so, I suggested that valuing objects for their histories is a kind of aesthetic valuing, and that this aesthetic dimension constitutes a common core to the seemingly disparate set of things we value for their histories, which includes mementos, heirlooms, artworks, artifacts, and places. My aim in this chapter is to make good on that suggestion.

It is relatively uncontroversial to claim that historical features have an important role to play in aesthetic theory. Unless one is a thoroughgoing formalist there is little reason to exclude consideration of history in our understanding of aesthetics, and much to gain by taking history into account. History can, among its many virtues, help to secure the notion of an artworld and its traditions (and hence a potential definition of art), elucidate the particular historically situated problems that artworks have endeavored to solve, and vindicate the intuitive difference between authentic artworks and forgeries.¹

Yet none of these influential accounts of the role of history in aesthetic theory is sufficient to capture the special relationship that exists between history and aesthetic experience. Rather, I will argue in this essay that the historical properties of objects are not only relevant to aesthetic assessment in providing *art historical* context, but can play a more intimate role in shaping aesthetic experience within and beyond the art world. This position helps to strengthen the aesthetic importance of history in some of the accounts already mentioned, as well as offering resources that contribute to a unified account of the role that history plays in aesthetic value across diverse cases. It is no mistake that the examples that I have mentioned so far pertain specifically to artworks—indeed, these are the cases where consideration of historical features has been most at home. However, the equation of the artistic and the aesthetic is unduly restrictive, leaving out a host of ubiquitous aesthetic experiences found in non-artistic contexts that range from the forest to the attic. The aesthetic experience of historical properties spans artistic and non-artistic cases alike.

For those who think that aesthetics should be the sole purview of art, the implications of my argument may seem unwelcome. For instance, Alan Goldman writes: “If there is such an animal as aesthetic value, it should be a value that all fine artworks share qua artworks.”² However, I believe a number of points support a broader conception of aesthetic value and aesthetic experience. For one, recognition of

¹ For example, see, respectively, Arthur C. Danto, “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 33, no. 2 (1974); Kendall Walton, “Categories of Art,” *The Philosophical Review* 79, no. 3 (1970); Noël Carroll, “History and the Philosophy of Art,” *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 5(2011); Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, Second ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1980); Mark Sagoff, “The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35, no. 2 (1976).

² Alan H. Goldman, “The Experiential Account of Aesthetic Value,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 3 (2006): 333.

the everyday occurrence of aesthetic experience cements the importance of aesthetic value to the distinctively human life. Although many note that the pursuit of aesthetic experience in the form of art has been a marker of every human civilization, this fact fails to capture the even more impressive omnipresence of non-artistic aesthetic experiences available beyond the museum, as seen in contexts that range from the home, to the marketplace, to a walk in the woods. Moreover, the recognition of non-artistic aesthetic experience does not preclude the possibility that fine artworks provide the most fully realized and valuable aesthetic instances.³ In fact, recognizing the ubiquity of aesthetic experience provides a compelling explanation of why the arts have the importance that they do—they might offer, when successful, the pinnacle of a variety of experience that we value in our daily lives.⁴

In order to argue that historical properties can play a central role in aesthetic experience (and its value), we need to have a grip on what aesthetic experience consists in, and what it means for something to have aesthetic value. Unfortunately, this is a vexed question in the literature, so in order to proceed with my argument I will need to say something about the merits of the dominant positions. Focusing on a taxonomy provided by Noël Carroll, I will first discuss some prominent accounts of aesthetic experience and attempt to clarify their advantages and disadvantages. Second, I will argue that historical properties can be accommodated on *any* of the accounts of aesthetic experience considered, and although historical properties are themselves non-perceptual, they can nevertheless factor prominently in aesthetic experience. Finally, I will argue that historical properties *should* be included in our understanding of aesthetic experience and its value, whether one favors one of three approaches discussed, or some combination thereof.

I should be clear that the historical properties that I believe can factor in aesthetic experience are historically *significant* ones. After all, as we have noted in previous chapters, *everything* has a history, and so without this qualification we risk the unacceptable proliferation of opportunities for aesthetic experience. While I believe such opportunities are fairly ubiquitous, and certainly extend well beyond the artworld, we still want to avoid the problematic conclusion that literally everything affords opportunities for aesthetic experience. However, historical significance can come in many forms, and should not be assumed to refer only to the kind of significance about which historians write. As mentioned above, things like mementos, heirlooms, and childhood haunts can have historical significance for oneself, and I believe it is a virtue of my account that it explains how such things can factor in aesthetic experience independent of other aesthetic properties that they might bear or lack. On the view that I am articulating, an otherwise hideous family heirloom can be valued aesthetically because of its historical significance. Even though the influential views surveyed above provide an important role for art historical features in aesthetic experience, they of course lack the resources to explain the aesthetic relevance of historical properties in these more personal cases, as well as in the aesthetic experience of nature, since these are often not art objects. It should be noted that there is a more recent view of

³ I don't share this view, but there is room for someone committed to the paradigmatic aesthetic status of artworks to hold it.

⁴ For a wide-ranging discussion of aesthetics beyond the fine arts, see Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

environmental aesthetics called “scientific cognitivism” according to which there is a central role for ecological and geological (etc.) history in the aesthetic appreciation of nature that works in parallel to the importance of art historical knowledge to the aesthetic experience of artworks. I believe there is much to commend in this view, though as we will see, the approach that I argue for focuses on the historical properties of objects themselves. While all sorts of historical knowledge can be useful in interpreting and responding to these historical properties, facts about ecological history are not necessarily properties *of* the objects of aesthetic experience.

2. *Aesthetic Experience*

What makes an experience count as aesthetic? Noël Carroll distinguishes three approaches to understanding aesthetic experience: the affect-oriented approach, the axiological-oriented approach, and the content-oriented approach.⁵ Because there is significant controversy surrounding which of these approaches should be adopted, I am disinclined to marry my comments on the aesthetic experience of history to any one position—indeed, I believe there is room to account for the aesthetic experience of history on any of these views.⁶ Thus my aim in this section will be to chart out and clarify the criteria for aesthetic experience adopted in these approaches—adding where appropriate to existing critiques and defending different approaches against certain objections—and in the next section to argue that there is a place for the aesthetic experience of history in each.

The affect-oriented approach derives its plausibility from reflection on our typical responses to works of art. Because viewing a painting or listening to a symphony tends to move us emotionally, it is natural to think that some such affective response plays an important role, perhaps even a necessary one, in picking out aesthetic experience. In considering the plausibility of affect-oriented approaches to aesthetic experiences, Carroll focuses on traditionally favored candidates such as pleasure, disinterested pleasure, and the more specific disinterested release from the concerns of everyday life. I won’t rehearse familiar objections here (which predictably involve experiences that are intuitively aesthetic, though also unpleasurable), but it is worth pausing to consider one of Carroll’s primary objections to the pleasure-based account. He notes that experiences of failed artworks are often decidedly unpleasurable, but that they are surely aesthetic experiences. In diagnosing the problem, he writes: “In short, the trouble with this approach is that it treats the notion of aesthetic experience as essentially commendatory, whereas it is presumably descriptive.” He compares this to “treating a defective engine as no engine at all.”⁷ However, as much as the pleasure-based account might err on the side of commendatory evaluation, Carroll’s response seems to err on the side of pure description (which is no surprise, given the content-based account that he ultimately favors). Perhaps the issue with both approaches is that the line between evaluation and description in such contexts is not as clear as either approach takes it to be. In considering the vexed matter of the is-ought gap, Stuart Hampshire has noted, in contrast with Carroll’s engine example, that a waltz, for

⁵ Noël Carroll, “Aesthetic Experience Revisited,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42, no. 2 (2002).

⁶ Moreover, as Carroll notes, these approaches are often combined into more complex theories. *Ibid.*, 146.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

instance, can be performed so poorly that it is no longer a waltz at all.⁸ The implication is the broadly Aristotelian point that our descriptive identification of a waltz or an engine is inextricably linked with our evaluative identification of a good waltz or a good engine. An intended work of art might fail so miserably that it would not qualify as art at all, and it is not clear that our ability to make this demarcation would be a purely descriptive enterprise.⁹ So as much as a specifically pleasure-based account of aesthetic experience may be lacking, there may be more room for evaluation in our account of aesthetic experience than a critic of this approach such as Carroll is willing to credence.

A potential role for evaluation in aesthetic experience opens the door to axiological-oriented accounts, which take as a necessary condition of aesthetic experience that it be valued for its own sake. Carroll raises an immediate objection to this account, namely that it confuses aesthetic experience with aesthetic judgment. He writes: “having experiences of the form and expressive dimensions of an art work that are relevant to aesthetic evaluations of both the art work and experiences thereof would appear to be logically prior to and distinguishable from judging them aesthetically.”¹⁰ This is a compelling point: even though I have argued that there is room for some evaluative language in our theory of aesthetic experience, that the experience itself must necessarily *be valued* is a much heavier burden for any account to bear. There is a difference between the affect constitutive of aesthetic experience *having* an evaluative dimension and an evaluative assessment *of* that experience itself. However, there is also a sense in which Carroll begs the question here in favor of the content-oriented approach: while it is true that there must be some experience logically prior to our evaluation thereof, it need not be the case that that experience counts as *aesthetic* prior to evaluation. Indeed, this is the very point of the axiological-approach—that it is *in* valuing the experience for its own sake that it is rendered aesthetic.

Carroll places substantial emphasis on a further objection to axiological-oriented approaches, which he criticizes not just for their requiring evaluation (thus supposedly confusing judgment and experience), but evaluation *for its own sake*. Take, for example, Robert Stecker’s account of aesthetic experience, according to which it is “the experience of attending in a discriminating manner to forms, qualities or meaningful features of things, attending to these for their own sake or for the sake of this very experience.”¹¹ Carroll questions whether the “for its own sake” proviso can be a necessary condition of aesthetic experience by appeal to evolutionary accounts of aesthetic experience that champion its instrumental value. He tells the story of Charles and Jerome, each of whom view the same painting and attend to it with the same care, though Charles (an

⁸ Stuart Hampshire, *Innocence and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁹ It is worth noting that there are some cases where the “such a bad X that it isn’t an X at all” evaluative-cum-descriptive claim might seem problematic. For instance, while it would make sense for a food critic to write, “this is such a bad béchamel that it isn’t a béchamel at all” it would be odd for her to say, “this is such a bad taste that it isn’t a taste at all.” Ostensibly this is because our understanding of what counts as a taste is in fact descriptive in a way that is distinct from the evaluative-cum-descriptive assessment of engines, and waltzes, and béchamel. I imagine this distinction may be based on a contrast between natural and non-natural kinds.

¹⁰ Carroll, “Aesthetic Experience Revisited,” 155.

¹¹ Robert Stecker, “Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Value,” *Philosophy Compass* 1, no. 1 (2006).

evolutionary psychologist) values the experience purely instrumentally because it “enhances his discriminatory powers, his facility for pattern detection, his ability to scope out conspecifics and so on,”¹² whereas Jerome values the experience for its own sake. Carroll’s contention is that it would be absurd to claim that Jerome is having an aesthetic experience and Charles is not. However, as Stecker notes, if an experience is truly valued in a purely instrumental way, then the means of achieving the valued product cannot be of significance to the value—anything that achieves the valued product will do just as well. So if Charles could achieve the same cognitive enhancements through non-aesthetic means, he should be just as well disposed to such methods of attaining them. His experience of the painting is a contingent convenience on the road to adaptive success. Moreover, Stecker rightly replies that it is a mistake to assume that an experience’s being valued for its own sake is incompatible with its also being valued instrumentally.¹³

In light of this response, it is curious that in later work Carroll refers to Stecker’s defense of the “for its own sake” proviso as “a wheel disconnected from the rest of the mechanism” and as “an explanatory dead end.” He writes: “From the explanatory point of view, the hypothesis that aesthetic experience is valuable for its own sake leaves us literally speechless, since it appears divorced from our best frameworks for understanding human nature.”¹⁴ On the contrary, however, it seems that the “for its own sake” proviso plays a rather important explanatory role—it explains why aesthetic experiences and the objects that cause them are not dispensable tools for achieving evolutionary gains. Without the proviso, Charles must be inclined to go in for the lab-induced enhancements: he has no reason to prefer contemplation of the painting. In contrast, Jerome has reason to prefer the painting, and the proviso explains why: in addition to its instrumental benefits, aesthetic experience is also valuable for its own sake. Put another way, it *follows* from the non-substitutability of aesthetic experiences for lab-induced enhancements that aesthetic experiences have a value that is not purely instrumental.

The general bent of Carroll’s argument, which contrasts what he takes to be a scientific world-view informed by evolutionary thinking with the mysticism of value for its own sake, appears to cut beyond the aesthetic domain and pose a challenge to any evaluative talk that is non-instrumental. But this move is implausible. Instrumental value and value for its own sake, as we have noted, are not mutually exclusive, and indeed they can work together. Carroll and Stecker both tend to conflate the categories of intrinsic value and value for its own sake, but, as a number of value theorists have

¹² Noël Carroll, “Art and the Domain of the Aesthetic,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40, no. 2 (2000): 205.

¹³ Carroll raises the evolutionary objection in *ibid.* Stecker’s replies may be found in Robert Stecker, “Only Jerome: A Reply to Noël Carroll,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 41, no. 1 (2001); Stecker, “Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Value.” Stecker’s point is also familiar more generally in the value theory literature. See, for example Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Ronnow-Rasmussen, “A Distinction in Value: Intrinsic and for Its Own Sake,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (2005); Christine M. Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” *Philosophical Review* 92, no. 2 (1983); Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Harvard University Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Carroll, “Aesthetic Experience Revisited,” 158-59. There is a parallel debate in the environmental ethics literature. For a useful summary, see Katie McShane, “Why Environmental Ethicists Shouldn’t Give up on Intrinsic Value,” *Environmental Ethics* 29, no. 43 (2007).

noted, the latter is a *way* of valuing that need not depend on whether the good-making features of an object are intrinsic or extrinsic. Something that has extrinsic value can be valued for its own sake, where this way of valuing is even made possible by considerations of instrumental value. Consider Harry Frankfurt's example:

Let us concede that making bridles is an activity without inherent value, which would be entirely pointless if bridles were not worth having. Still we cannot presume that the importance to a person of making bridles is wholly coincident with the importance to him of having bridles...[people] do not desire useful work only because they desire its products. In fact, useful work is among their final ends. They desire it for its own sake, since without it life is empty and vain.¹⁵

Just as the instrumental value of bridle making is what makes the valuing for its own sake of bridle making possible (without itself fully explaining that value), the instrumental value of aesthetic experience may be what makes the valuing for its own sake of aesthetic experience possible (without itself fully explaining that value).

The problem we now encounter, however, is that Stecker's conception of aesthetic experience, as well as other like-minded axiological accounts, might be too open-ended. Recall that Stecker's account requires attending to meaningful features of things for their own sake. This would seem to imply, following on Frankfurt's example, that bridle making is an aesthetic experience (assuming the axiological account is meant to state both necessary and sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience).¹⁶ I don't want to deny that bridle making *could* be an aesthetic experience, but one might plausibly question whether it *must* be just in virtue of its being valuable for its own sake. The concern, then, is that an axiological approach like Stecker's casts the net of aesthetic experience too wide, and will not have the resources to explain why only some experiences, and not others, that are valuable for their own sakes are to count as aesthetic ones.

One solution to this problem is to derive one's conception of aesthetic experience from the experience of certain kinds of properties. We have now arrived at the content-oriented view that Carroll favors. Because, he claims, there are paradigmatic aesthetic experiences that may lack affect or evaluative judgment, we should look to certain contents characteristic of aesthetic experiences in developing the optimal account. Carroll offers a disjunctive list of such properties, the experience of which is supposed to suffice for aesthetic experience: "we may hypothesize that, if attention is directed with understanding to the form of the art work or to its expressive or aesthetic properties or to the interaction between these features, then the experience is aesthetic."¹⁷

¹⁵ Harry Frankfurt, "On the Usefulness of Final Ends," in *Necessity, Volition, and Love* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Carroll, noting this difficulty, makes the charitable assumption that this approach must only mean to state a necessary condition. See Carroll, "Aesthetic Experience Revisited," 154.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

The primary concern with this approach is that it is too stipulative, and though it endeavors to build an account of aesthetic experience based on the paradigmatic properties of artwork, it has potentially unintuitive implications. Take the example that Carroll cites as an aesthetic experience that lacks affect or evaluation: noting that a poem has an A/B/A/B rhyme scheme. Because in noting the rhyme scheme I am attending to the formal features of the poem, according to Carroll's account I am having an aesthetic experience. But it is far from obvious that simply noting the rhyme scheme of the poem *should* count as an aesthetic experience: Carroll simply stipulates that it should because it involves attention to formal properties. Moreover, as Stecker notes, if such formal properties *can* be noted without having an aesthetic experience, then attending to the properties outlined in the content-oriented approach cannot be sufficient for aesthetic experience as Carroll claims.¹⁸

Thus we have seen that affective-, axiological-, and content-oriented approaches to aesthetic experience each have marks in their favor, and yet there are objections that call into question whether any approach alone could be sufficient for securing our understanding of aesthetic experience. The next step, then, is to explain how historical properties might be accounted for in each of these approaches, and may thus be directly relevant to aesthetic experience regardless of which approach we think is best.

3. *History in Aesthetic Experience*

At first glance, it may seem that the content-oriented approach will be the most accommodating of historical properties. Since this approach involves a disjunctive list of properties that are sufficient for aesthetic experience, we simply need to motivate the notion that historical properties deserve a spot on the list. Indeed, Carroll is sensitive to the importance of historical features, but relegates them to the supervenience-base of properly aesthetic properties. He writes: "These [aesthetic] properties supervene on the primary and secondary properties of objects of attention, as well as upon certain relational properties, including art-historical ones, such as genre or category membership. Aesthetic properties emerge from these lower order properties."¹⁹ In this, Carroll follows in the tradition of attributing important contextual relevance to art historical properties, but denies historical properties more broadly conceived any direct role in aesthetic experience. As noted in the introduction, many philosophers of art have argued that historical knowledge is relevant to the assessment of an artwork, as when Wollheim discusses the historical knowledge required in understanding a certain architectural innovation as solving a persistent problem, or when Walton explains the relevance of historical context to the categorization of artworks.²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. Stecker, "Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Value," 6-7; Jerrold Levinson, "Toward a Non-Minimalist Conception of Aesthetic Experience," in *Aesthetic Pursuits* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

¹⁹ Carroll, "Aesthetic Experience Revisited," 166.

²⁰ Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*; Walton, "Categories of Art." Other examples abound, but include Danto, "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace"; Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968); Alan H. Goldman, "Art Historical Value," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 33, no. 1 (1993); Carroll, "History and the Philosophy of Art"; Robert Hopkins, "Painting, History, and Experience," *Philosophical Studies* 127(2006).

However, historical properties may be part and parcel of aesthetic experience even where they do not contribute significantly to the background information relevant to assessment of the work, as when one knows that the painting is a Caravaggio, say, but that basically sums up one's historical knowledge. Indeed this is the situation in which most consumers of art find themselves. The viewer of a Caravaggio may not know enough to recognize the innovation of cellar light, or even to place the painting within the relevant Baroque category. But that doesn't entail that the painting's status as the bearer of historically significant properties cannot factor in one's aesthetic experience. Rather, I want to claim that a significant connection to a significant past itself can feature in aesthetic experience.

In order to help motivate this claim, I will incorporate discussion of the affect- and axiology-oriented approaches surveyed above. But first, it must be noted that in order for historically significant properties to contribute to aesthetic experience in this way, it needs to be possible for non-phenomenal properties to be aesthetically relevant. After all, we cannot see, hear, or touch historical properties. If one takes a purely formalist or "appearance-based" approach to aesthetics, the aesthetic experience of such properties will be ruled out. Luckily, proponents of such views are scarce these days, and many have argued for the relevance of non-phenomenal properties to aesthetic experience (though largely, as I have noted, on the basis of contextual and art historical claims).²¹

One may be concerned about including non-phenomenal properties in an account of aesthetic experience for fear that such a view will jettison the importance of directly experiencing the object that bears these properties. If some of the relevant properties are non-phenomenal, isn't it sufficient that we merely contemplate those properties in the abstract in order to achieve the related aesthetic experience? However, this concern is unwarranted. It does not follow from the fact that properties are non-perceptual that it will be possible to have the relevant aesthetic experience independent of acquaintance with the object.²² While this might be possible in some cases, (as Carroll suggests, in John Cage's 4'33"), the divorce from direct perception of properties relevant to aesthetic experience does not guarantee that acquaintance with objects that bear these properties is no longer necessary. As Robert Hopkins writes: "A feature figures in experience of an object if the thought that the object has that feature leads one to experience the object in a way phenomenologically distinct from the experience one would otherwise have had."²³ Along these lines, one might have identical experiences of originals and forgeries, but one of those experiences will be *veridical*, as it will in fact involve experience of the bearer of features that elicit a distinctive phenomenological response. As Goldman puts it: "...two equally subjectively satisfying experiences can differ in value for a subject when one is illusory and the other veridical, even though

²¹ See, for instance, Alan H. Goldman, "Aesthetic Qualities and Aesthetic Value," *Journal of Philosophy* 87, no. 1 (1990); Mark Sagoff, "On Restoring and Reproducing Art," *The Journal of Philosophy* 75, no. 9 (1978); Sagoff, "The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries.,"; Mark Sagoff, "Historical Authenticity," *Erkenntnis* (1978).

²² Cf. James Shelley, "The Problem of Non-Perceptual Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43, no. 3 (2003); Noël Carroll, "Non-Perceptual Aesthetic Properties: Comments for James Shelley," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 44, no. 4 (2004).

²³ Robert Hopkins, "Aesthetics, Experience, and Discrimination," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63, no. 2 (2005): 127.

there may be no further effects of the experiences on the subject and the difference in value is not based on the independent value of the objects."²⁴ Or compare Carolyn Korsmeyer who argues "that 'genuine' names a presumptive property of objects that legitimately affects experience whether or not it is perceptually discernible."²⁵

The affective response to historical properties can help motivate the suggestion that they should be included in a content-oriented list of aesthetic properties. Though they range significantly in character, we often have emotional responses to the historically significant features of objects and places. We feel sentimental about objects whose history we share, or that belong to our patrimony or heritage; we are amazed in the awesome presence of ancient ruins and ancient redwoods; we may feel revulsion, terror, or dread at the site of a gruesome battlefield or a sacrificial altar. These are affective responses to the contemplation of, and confrontation with, the bearers of significant historical properties. Importantly, we can identify such responses to paradigmatic artworks independent of the contextual role traditionally attributed to art historical properties. For example, in viewing a Caravaggio I can feel amazement, pleasure, and wonder at being in the presence of work produced by the brush of such a distinguished painter, even if the only historical information I have is that Caravaggio *was* an historically significant painter. Indeed, appeal to historical significance of this kind, which involves insufficient knowledge for the traditional role attributed to historical properties, can help explain why we might be moved by a painting that we *know* to be historically significant even when its other perceptual aesthetic properties leave us cold.²⁶

In criticizing the affect-oriented approach, Carroll focuses on responses related to pleasure, and given the tradition there is good reason for doing so. But notice that just as Carroll's content-oriented list of aesthetic properties is an open-ended disjunction, so too can a list of affective responses constitutive of aesthetic experience be diverse and subject to addition. Recognizing a broader role for the emotions beyond mere pleasure-responses undercuts a number of the objections we have seen levied against the affect-oriented approach to aesthetic experience. But it does not, admittedly, eliminate the specter of affect-less aesthetic experience, the possibility of which stands in the way of attributing necessity to the role of affect in aesthetic experience. I have already raised some doubts about the possibility of such experience, but my goal here is not to vindicate the affect-oriented approach. Rather, by reflecting on the many ways in which we might have an affective response to historical features, we help motivate the claim that such features could belong on a content-oriented list of aesthetic properties (if that is the approach one favors), whether affect itself is necessary to aesthetic experience or not.

²⁴ Goldman, "The Experiential Account of Aesthetic Value," 341.

²⁵ Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Aesthetic Deception: On Encounters with the Past," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66, no. 2 (2008).

²⁶ Of course, it is open to the critic of my position to point out that, while we may have such responses to artworks, this does not entail that such responses are *aesthetic*. Carroll, for instance, notes that one might have a moral response to an artwork, but that does not mean that such a response is part of aesthetic experience Carroll, "Aesthetic Experience Revisited," 167.

So I've hoped to provide some reasons why advocates of the content-oriented approach should include historically significant properties in their list of aesthetic properties. However, I myself am disinclined to put much weight on this approach. Just as it seems a stretch to claim that experience of a rhyme scheme is an aesthetic experience no matter the manner in which one is attending to it, it would be odd to hold that experience of historically significant properties is sufficient for aesthetic experience no matter the manner in which one is attending to them. This would imply that I'm having an aesthetic experience every time I take notice of my father's ring on my finger or walk past the local Battlefield Memorial. But this is a problem endemic to the content-oriented view, not one unique to the inclusion of historical properties. Problems of this kind, however, invite further reflection on accounts of aesthetic experience that attribute a central role to the attitude or manner in which one regards an object.²⁷ Such an approach can avoid the questionable conclusion that the experience of any aesthetic property (as in the content-oriented approach) is sufficient for an aesthetic experience.

Recall that the axiological-oriented approach requires that an experience be valued for its own sake in order to count as aesthetic. Is historical significance something that we value for its own sake? I believe it is. While historically significant things can surely have instrumental value as well (for instance, educational value), it is a commonplace of humanistic inquiry that history occupies a fundamental and sui generis position in our evaluative lives, and philosophers have been no exception in noting this fact. For instance, David Velleman writes: "I claim that a life estranged from its ancestry is already truncated...This claim is no less than universal common sense—though it is also no more, I readily admit. I cannot derive it from moral principles."²⁸ Or Joseph Raz: "To deny our past is to be false to ourselves. This is justification enough for our dependence on our past."²⁹ And Stuart Hampshire:

Persons who conspicuously enjoy and excel in reasoning, but who have no interest in any kind of story-telling or in recalling and recording their past, tend to be considered monsters of rationality, and be called inhuman. The truth is that one half of their humanity is missing, and that is the half which is least likely to be duplicated, or effectively simulated, by any machine, by any imagined non-corporeal being, or by any animal.³⁰

But even granting that we value historically significant things for their own sake, one might still wonder what makes the experience of historical significance and its subsequent valuing *aesthetic*: after all, we have already acknowledged as a potential concern with the axiological-approach that it has a difficult time distinguishing between value for its own sake that counts as aesthetic and value for its own sake (such as bridle

²⁷ For the sake of concision, I focus on the axiological-oriented approach already introduced in this essay. However, one might think the relevant attitude is more like a disposition to approach things in a certain way, where this is antecedent to the experience as opposed to an evaluation of it. See the beginning of Levinson, "Toward a Non-Minimalist Conception of Aesthetic Experience."

²⁸ J. David Velleman, "Persons in Prospect," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 36, no. 3 (2008): 255. Though Velleman is most directly concerned here with the *biological* ties of ancestry, and he makes further inferences about reproductive ethics with which I disagree.

²⁹ Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge Univ Press, 2001), 34.

³⁰ Hampshire, *Innocence and Experience*, 44.

making) that may not. One might think the fact that we also value historically significant things for their own sakes just shows how deep a problem this is. In the next section, I will continue motivating the view that the way in which we value the experience of historical significance indeed deserves to be called aesthetic.

4. *The Aesthetic Value of History*

So far, we have seen that sensitivity to the historically significant features of objects can be accommodated on affective-, axiological-, and content-oriented approaches to aesthetic experience. But now we need to see why they *should* be included in whichever account that one favors.

Alan Goldman writes: "...as should be obvious, the experience of art is not just a series of visual or auditory sensations, but is imbued with thought, imagination, and emotion."³¹ This is true of aesthetic experience generally, and historical features can be particularly potent in their contribution to the thought, imagination, and emotion with which one confronts an object. But in addition to the power of historical features to affect aesthetic experience in the indirect manners surveyed at the outset of this essay (e.g. by indicating the artistic problem that a work endeavors to solve, or locating it in a particular artistic category), historical features can have a direct effect on aesthetic experience by focusing attention on the very historicity of the object or place in question.

In order to isolate the phenomenon, consider a maximally personal case of valuing something for its history, where the history of the object (and one's relation to it) is the only evaluatively relevant consideration. For instance, recall from Chapter 2 G.A. Cohen's comments about his trusty eraser:

I would hate to lose this eraser. I would hate that even if I knew that it could be readily replaced, not only, if I so wished, by a pristine cubical one, but even by one of precisely the same off-round shape and the same dingy colour that my eraser has now acquired. There is no feature that stands apart from its history that makes me want to keep this eraser. I want *my* eraser, with *its* history. What could be more human than that?³²

Clearly, Cohen values the eraser for its history, and its history alone. Now, unsurprisingly, this mode of valuation is also concerned with the perceptual properties of the object, but these perceptual properties themselves are not *sufficient* to secure the kind of value that the eraser has for Cohen (hence his resistance to a perceptually identical duplicate). This indicates a difference between the evaluative role of historical features exemplified by Cohen's story, and a similar account of the aesthetic relevance of historical properties presented by Yuriko Saito. She writes:

³¹ Goldman, "The Experiential Account of Aesthetic Value," 337.

³² G. A. Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of Existing Value," in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 221.

...[in] my aesthetic appreciation of aged objects...the associated ideas get triggered by the sensuous appearance of the object: a crack in the pot, wear and tear on a fabric, the faded colors of a painting, and the weather-beaten façade of a building. The locus of our experience is the object's appearance, and the mode of association is the "contrast" between the present condition and the earlier condition.³³

While this is certainly among the ways that we can appreciate aged objects in an aesthetic manner, note that this account does not capture the specific character of Cohen's valuing of the eraser. If the aesthetic appreciation of aged objects were based on the triggering of ideas about the past by the object's aged surface, then a perceptual duplicate of Cohen's eraser with the same "off-round shape" and "dingy colour" would be sufficient for securing that eraser's aesthetic value *qua* aged object. But as Cohen makes clear by his refusal to accept a perceptual duplicate for the eraser, and as corroborated by widespread intuitions about the evaluative difference between originals and forgeries, such an associationist understanding of the aesthetic value of an aged object is insufficient to capture the historical significance of specific objects themselves.

Carolyn Korsmeyer, who approvingly cites the art historian Alois Riegl's distinction between "age value" and "historical value", is likewise concerned with the aesthetic value of aged objects. Consonant with Saito's discussion, she tells us "age value is to be found in objects that embody the passage of time and that show the marks of their antiquity." While she is adamant about the aesthetic dimension of age value, which she says is "always inseparable from the sensible and affective impact that an object has on the viewer," she is more tentative about the aesthetic merit of historical value. She writes: "To the degree that historical value is connected to science and research and the accumulation of knowledge of the past, and to the degree that it calls such investigative sensibilities into play, it may conceivably reside outside the aesthetic frame." This may be in part because of the narrowness of her definition of historical value, which she says "attaches to objects insofar as they represent a stage of cultural creativity."³⁴ This is a specifically art historical breed of historical value, and insofar as we have already acknowledged the reach of aesthetic inquiry beyond the art-world, there is no need to limit our understanding of historical value in this way. I don't want to deny the aesthetic relevance of age value as Saito and Korsmeyer understand it, but I do want to put pressure on the idea that it is a concept sufficient for capturing all the dimensions of our aesthetic valuing of the past. We have already seen one shortcoming of this picture, that it cannot accurately account for how Cohen values his eraser. Contrary to Korsmeyer's suggestion, there is an important place in aesthetic experience for historical properties that are neither art historical nor the surface properties of "age value."

One of the major disadvantages of age value in contrast with historical value is that it fails to take into account the sense of a *significant* past that is constitutive of

³³ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 182.

³⁴ All quotes in this paragraph from Korsmeyer, "Aesthetic Deception: On Encounters with the Past," 122. It is somewhat curious that she makes this concession about historical value, given how adamant she is that aesthetic properties need not factor in experience: for example, genuineness.

historical value. While everything has a past, and thus many things can bear the marks of age value provided they persist for long enough, fewer things have the historical significance that makes them the appropriate object of a specifically historical mode of valuation. Not only does historical value thus have a more limited scope than age value, but the character of its value can also be distinguished. While age value focuses our attention on abstract concepts such as temporality and transience, historical value is concerned with the *specific* evaluative dimensions of past events. So not only might an object with age value be worthless in historical terms, but it would hold our attention in a different way.

Consider this remark by Arthur Danto in his essay on the battlefield at Gettysburg:

It is always moving to visit a battlefield when the traces of war itself have been erased by nature or transfigured by art, and to stand amid memorial weapons, which grow inevitably quaint and ornamental with the evolution of armamentary technology, mellowing under patinas and used, now, to punctuate the fading thematizations of strife.³⁵

While this experience is marked by the passage of time, clearly its significance cannot adequately be captured by the notion of age value—it does not appear that the battlefield even shows signs of age value given that “the traces of war itself have been erased by nature or transfigured by art.” Moreover, since the battlefield itself is not an art object, it is not clear what role art historical properties could play in contributing to our aesthetic experience. Rather, it is the knowledge of the broader historically significant features of the site that transforms it in our eyes and makes possible such diverse experiences as those described by Danto.

In Chapter 3, I suggested that part of the reason we might default to preservationist behavior when responding to objects of historical value is the very absence of a distinct mode of valuation that is obviously appropriate to this distinct kind of value (in contrast with viewing a painting or tasting a meal, etc.). Consequently, in thinking about the kind of value that historically significant objects afford, I argued in Chapter 2 that the historically significant features of objects and places offer us a connection to the past that is otherwise impossible. This connection suggests a special role for touch or physical presence in the valuing of historical significance, a possibility that has also been mentioned by Korsmeyer, despite the differences in our views discussed above. In describing messages in the “Silesian House” in Krakow, scratched on the walls by prisoners suspected of anti-Nazi sympathies, she writes:

These messages are historical records, personal laments, and – now – memorials. That the wall-inscriptions are the exact marks made by prisoners is part of their impact. Stepping close to the wall, close to those scratches, the visitor is moved to retrace the marks with her own fingers – to touch that which was first inscribed under circumstances one painfully struggles to imagine. (And in this particular case, there is no prohibition on doing so.) There is a sense of continuity in touching what others have

³⁵ Arthur C. Danto, “Gettysburg,” *Grand Street* 6, no. 3 (1987).

touched. Touch provides – or seems to provide – an intimate contact that is closer and more direct than vision.³⁶

This scene describes one of the most literal ways in which one can make contact with the past, and the direct sensory interaction, made vivid for the reader by Korsmeyer's thoughtful description, renders that form of engagement intuitively aesthetic. (And it is worth noting again how the concept of age value alone is completely insufficient for capturing the complexity of this experience). But once we are willing to grant that encounters with the past that involve literal touch are rightly judged aesthetic experiences, it is difficult to see why we would deny such status to encounters that involve what we might call (borrowing some language of Korsmeyer's) "implicit touch"—being in the presence of objects or places and attending to their historically significant features, whether or not actual tactile sensations are involved.

Consider again Robert Hopkins's claim about what it takes for a feature to contribute to the aesthetic experience of an object: "A feature figures in experience of an object if the thought that the object has that feature leads one to experience the object in a way phenomenologically distinct from the experience one would otherwise have had."³⁷ This is precisely the transformative influence on experience that historical features can have. If Cohen's eraser were not a memento, it would be a dirty piece of rubber. But the historical features of the eraser *transform* his experience of it: he views the shape and hue of the eraser positively, even affectionately, as opposed to negatively or indifferently. Being the bearer of historically significant properties can "color," so to speak, one's entire experience of an object, engaging the emotions and imagination in ways that alter the phenomenology of experience across and beyond sensory modalities. To deny this important role for historical properties in aesthetic theory is to deprive ourselves of essential resources for understanding our experience of the world around us.

5. Conclusion

We often speak of the ability of art, whether paintings, music, or theater, to *transport* the viewer to another time or place. This task is often achieved by the connection with the past afforded by historically significant properties. The historical properties of an object can prompt imagination in much the same way that other aesthetic features of artworks can, and moreover, they can do so in non-artistic contexts. They pose questions about differences in perceptions and feelings across time (How would it have felt to swing this axe? How would it have looked or smelled sitting beneath this tree?) that invite reflection on various aesthetic dimensions of an object. Cognizance of historical features alters the way we *look* at an object, as well as how we *think* and *feel* about it. I hope that the considerations raised in this brief look at the role of historical properties in aesthetic experience indicate that it is not only art historical properties that influence such experiences, but also the historically significant properties of non-artistic objects of aesthetic attention. Moreover, even in the case of

³⁶ Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Staying in Touch," in *Ethical Criticism and the Arts*, ed. Garry Hagberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 196.

³⁷ Robert Hopkins, "Aesthetics, Experience, and Discrimination," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63, no. 2 (2005): 127.

artworks, it is not only art historical knowledge that can affect aesthetic experience, but also historical features that are irrelevant to categorization and artistic puzzles, those that provide the imaginative and emotional foundation for achieving a connection with the past.

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