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History, Value, and Irreplaceability*

Erich Hatala Matthes

It is often assumed that there is a necessary relationship between historical value and irreplaceability, and that this is an essential feature of historical value's distinctive character. Contrary to this assumption, I argue that it is a merely contingent fact that some historically valuable things are irreplaceable, and that irreplaceability is not a distinctive feature of historical value at all. Rather, historically significant objects, from heirlooms to artifacts, offer us an otherwise impossible connection with the past, a value that persists even in the face of suitable replacements.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE ASSUMPTION

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]

* For helpful comments on earlier versions of this essay, I would like to thank Kinch Hoekstra, the wonderful graduate community at Berkeley, audience members at the Symposium on Current Questions in Authenticity convened by the Berkeley Society for Cultural Heritage, Arts, and the Law in February 2012, as well as Sarah Buss and two reviewers for this journal. Extraordinary thanks are owed to Niko Kolodny and Jay Wallace for providing outstanding feedback on many early drafts of this essay and for being paragons of dissertation advising. And special thanks to Jackie Hatala Matthes for always being there for me—something that is simple to express but difficult to do. Work on this essay was supported in part by a Sawyer Seminar Graduate Fellowship from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Finally, I owe an important debt of gratitude to G. A. Cohen for his thought-provoking essay on particular value. Though I disagree with him at some length here, Cohen's work played an essential role in prompting my thinking on this topic. I regret that I never had the chance to meet him.

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), 203–30, 221.

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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 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 embody-

2. A brief note on 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 (1979): 31–48.

5. Compare Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 112 (2003): 135–89.

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ing 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 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

6. John O'Neill, Alan Holland, and Andrew Light, *Environmental Values* (New York: 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. Compare Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 28 n. 15.

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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 it 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* 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

10. Ibid., 25–26.

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

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

13. Compare Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 217–18.

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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

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. Compare Frank Sibley, "Originality and Value," in *Approach to Aesthetics*, ed. John Benson, Berry Redfern, and Jeremy Roxbee Cox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 119–34, 122–23. Thanks to Nick Riggle for introducing me to Sibley's work.

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historical mode of valuation was a false start. There are nonhistorical 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 connection with significant aspects of the past that is truly distinctive of the historical mode of valuation.

II. 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

16. Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 212.

17. Ibid., 206.

18. For emphasis, see ibid., 206 n. 4: "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*."

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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.

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

19. Compare Peter Singer (*Practical Ethics* [Cambridge: 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 "Absolutes and Particulars," in *Modern Moral Philosophy*, ed. Anthony O'Hear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 95–118. 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 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.

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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 reinstantiated 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 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.

A

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 instru-

21. Ibid., 213.
22. Ibid.

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

B

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 flow-

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*, chap. 1).

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ers, 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 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

24. I discuss issues of destruction and preservation at greater length in my dissertation, "Engaging with the Past: Essays on History, Value, and Practical Reason" (University of California, Berkeley, 2013).

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thing (however minor) for umbrellas to be destroyed, this serves to emphasize the conceptual independence of questions about destruction from questions about irreplaceability.

C

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 Elizabeth 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 nonintrinsically valuable things has 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

25. For discussion, see, e.g., Christine M. Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *Philosophical Review* 92 (1983): 169–95; Rae Langton, "Objective and Unconditioned Value," *Philosophical Review* 116 (2007): 157–85; Shelly Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," *Journal of Ethics* 2 (1998): 277–97; Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, "A Distinction in Value: Intrinsic and for Its Own Sake," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000): 33–51.

26. For further discussion of this point, see Christopher Grau, "Irreplaceability and Unique Value," *Philosophical Topics* 32 (2004): 111–29.

27. Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: 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.

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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, 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.

III. 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*."[28]

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?[29] 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.[30] As Niko 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."[31] 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 in-

28. Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 207.

29. This problem is discussed in, e.g., Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship"; J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109 (1999): 338–74; Kenneth Henley, "The Value of Individuals," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 37 (1977): 345–52; Grau, "Irreplaceability and Unique Value"; Christopher Grau, "Love and History," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48 (2010): 246–71; Chappell, "Absolutes and Particulars"; Richard Kraut, "Love De Re," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10 (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* 10 (1987): 399–412.

30. As Henley puts it, "Characteristics which necessarily individuate also necessarily offer us no grounds for valuing" ("The Value of Individuals," 345).

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

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volves predicating some general feature of that particular."[32] 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 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.[33]

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.[34] 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.[35] A fortiori, whether or not the characteristics

32. Ibid., 185 n. 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.

33. Thanks to a 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.

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

35. 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-

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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 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.[36] 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 individuating 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.

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.

36. 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.

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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'Neill, 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."[37] 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.

IV. 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").[38] 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.[39] 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

37. O'Neill, Holland, and Light, *Environmental Values*, 198–99.

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

39. Ibid.

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and replaceable in others."[40] 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."[41] 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."[42] 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."[43] That one thing is unlike another 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.

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

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

42. 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), 115–30, 123.

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

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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.[44] Thus, those who endorse an "appearance-based" view of aesthetics, or a thoroughgoing 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.[45] 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 emo-

44. See, e.g., Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), sec. 3; Meiland, "Originals, Copies, and Aesthetic Value"; William Bossart, "Authenticity and Aesthetic Value in the Visual Arts," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 1 (1961): 144–59; Mark Sagoff, "On Restoring and Reproducing Art," *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978): 453–70, "The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35 (1976): 169–80, and "Historical Authenticity," *Erkenntnis* 12 (1978): 83–93.

45. See work by Mark Sagoff and Nelson Goodman, respectively. For an expansive approach similar to Goodman's, see Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd 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, and "Aesthetics, Experience, and Discrimination," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63 (2005): 119–33.

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tional vulnerability."[46] 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 nonevaluative 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."[47] 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.[48] 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

46. Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 162.

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

48. 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 a 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.

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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 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).[49] 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

49. 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 *E* 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, esp. fig. 2, and "Species Are Not Uniquely Real Biological Entities," in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Biology*, ed. F. Ayala and R. Arp (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 110–22.

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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.[50] A hawk is not a candidate substitute for a handsaw, and so the fact that they are not valuable in 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.[51]

50. 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.

51. Kraut, "Love De Re," 428.

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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.[52] 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's 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 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 handmade 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-

52. Ibid. Though it should be noted that my definitions of these useful terms diverge somewhat from Kraut's.

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market retailers."[53] 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 toward 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.[54]

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.[55] These data demand 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.[56]

53. Emily Weinstein, "All That Authenticity May Be Getting Old," *New York Times*, October 26, 2011.

54. Sir Harold Nicholson, "Marginal Comments," *Spectator*, February 5, 1944, as quoted in John Henry Merryman, "Two Ways of Thinking about Cultural Property," *American Journal of International Law* 80 (1986): 831–53.

55. Dan Moller, "Love and Death," *Journal of Philosophy* 104 (2007): 301–16.

56. 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

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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.[57]

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.

57. It should be noted that there might be cases in which friction arises between differences in ways of being valuable that are discernible 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 discernible by a practiced art critic but which are indiscernible to

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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.)"[58] 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

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 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 a discussion, see Hopkins, "Aesthetics, Experience, and Discrimination."

58. 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" (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* [New York: Harcourt, 1975], 100–101).

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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 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 rings 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 does not 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

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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 is 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 is 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.

V. 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 rep-

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licate 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."[59] This position underlies a strong preservationist bent in Cohen's essay with which I disagree.[60] 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."[61] 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.[62] 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 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 eighteenth-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

59. Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 207.

60. I discuss this further in "Engaging with the Past."

61. L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1953), 17.

62. 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: Oxford University Press, 2010), 287–311, 296–98.

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can thus see why, for instance, a 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.[63] 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 life 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 connections, engagement 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

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

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components, sometimes akin to the experience of awe or respect, other times wonder or even revulsion (as when confronted by objects significant for their connection with a history of oppression and violence).[64] 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 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.[65] 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, any more 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

64. Though I argue in "Engaging with the Past" that sentimental value can accrue to objects that are traditionally regarded as impersonally valuable. In this I diverge from Guy Fletcher, "Sentimental Value," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 43 (2009): 55–65; and Anthony Hatzimoysis, "Sentimental Value," *Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2003): 373–79.

65. For some further thoughts about age value vs. historical value, see Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Aesthetic Deception: On Encounters with the Past," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (2008): 117–27.

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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 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.

VI. 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 backward 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.

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