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# Impersonal Value, Universal Value, and the Scope of Cultural Heritage

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## **Impersonal Value, Universal Value, and the Scope of Cultural Heritage\***

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Abstract: Philosophers have used the terms ‘impersonal’ and ‘personal value’ to refer to, among other things, whether something’s value is universal or particular to an individual. In this paper, I propose an account of impersonal value that, I argue, better captures the intuitive distinction than potential alternatives, while providing conceptual resources for moving beyond the traditional stark dichotomy. I illustrate the practical importance of my theoretical account with reference to debate over the evaluative scope of cultural heritage.

### *1. Impersonal and Personal Value*

Not everything that is valuable can be valuable for everyone. Indeed, we typically think that the value of some things is universal, while the value of others is quite local and particular. There is an intuitive difference between, on the one hand, the value of Niagara Falls, or the pyramids at Giza, or the reduction of suffering in the world, and on the other, the value of my grandfather’s ring, or your childhood birthplace. It is common for philosophers to make this distinction in terms of *impersonal* and *personal* value. Whereas objects of natural splendor, exemplars of human ingenuity, and acts of moral significance are often thought of as having impersonal value, the value of objects that are highly specific to one’s own circumstances and interests is thought of as personal in nature.<sup>1</sup> The intuition in its most general form is that things

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<sup>1</sup> G. A. Cohen provides a paradigm example of an eraser that he has had for his whole academic career, which makes it valuable to him but, not, plausibly, to anyone else. G. A. Cohen, “Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of

with impersonal value are in some sense valuable *for everyone*, no matter their particular interests and circumstances, whereas things with personal value are in some sense peculiar to specific individuals. It would be unremarkable for anyone to value Niagara Falls precisely because of its awe-inspiring impact, whereas if just anyone valued my grandfather's ring precisely because it was my grandfather's, that might be cause for concern.

As intuitive as the distinction may initially seem, if it is to be more than just a gut assumption about the evaluative scope of different things, we need a more precise account of what makes impersonally valuable things relevant to everyone. People often disagree about what things are, or could be, impersonally valuable, and these theoretical disagreements are the source of conflicts with broad practical implications. After all, to claim that a given thing is, in some sense, valuable for everyone is to make a universal claim about the role that it should play in everyone's lives.<sup>2</sup> So, for instance, how and whether we ought to factor the natural environment into our practical decision making may be affected by whether the natural environment is impersonally valuable. If everyone has reason to value things that have impersonal value, then such things will make claims on our attention that those with merely personal value lack. Or consider evaluative claims about history and heritage. Some argue that the past should be valued as the common heritage of all humanity. Others argue that the value of cultural heritage is specific to the geographical, national, or ethnic groups with which it is most intimately connected.<sup>3</sup> Is the value of cultural heritage personal or impersonal? The answer will have substantial practical and moral consequences based on the role that such arguments play in

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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). I use 'objects' and 'things' here in the broad sense of any direct objects of our evaluative attitudes, not merely physical objects.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Tom Hurka: "If something is good period it makes a claim on all moral agents, and should figure in all their deliberations." Thomas Hurka, "'Good' and 'Good For,'" *Mind* 96, no. 381 (1987): 71.

<sup>3</sup> These two approaches are described in the influential paper by John Henry Merryman, "Two Ways of Thinking About Cultural Property," *The American Journal of International Law* 80, no. 4 (1986): 831-53.

conflicts over who has the right to possess, control, and profit from historically significant things.<sup>4</sup> To invoke a recent example, consider the battle over repatriation of artifacts from Machu Picchu that were discovered, excavated, and brought to Yale University's Peabody Museum of Natural History over 100 years ago. Are Incan pottery shards objects of impersonal value that warrant the care and concern of all persons, and thus legitimize stewardship and study by preeminent archeologists and anthropologists, or even ownership by foreign entities? Or is this fetishistic robbery, more on a par with a stranger coveting my grandfather's ring?

The uncertainty stems from the fact that "valuable for everyone" is ambiguous among multiple interpretations. Are things with impersonal value valuable for everyone in the sense that everyone ought to value them? In the sense that everyone ought to at least respect such things, even if one does not value them oneself?<sup>5</sup> What kind of universality is at play here, and in what ways can valuable things secure it? My aim in this essay is to offer answers to these questions that will expand our theoretical resources for thinking about the scope of value and provide a better understanding of its importance to practical philosophy.

Part of my enterprise will be negative: I aim to raise doubts about the adequacy of certain analyses of impersonal value that might be thought to capture the intuitive universality canvassed at the outset. However, much of this essay will be devoted to painting a picture of what a more

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<sup>4</sup> These concerns are often captured with the provocative question "Who owns the past?" See, for instance, Kate Fitz Gibbon, ed. *Who Owns the Past?*, Rutgers Series on the Public Life of the Arts (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005). As the language of the question suggests, some approaches to answering it will be primarily legal or political in nature, focusing on issues of international law and sovereignty. I put those approaches aside here in order to focus on the relationship between persons and value of the objects in question, though I do briefly address issues of property and stewardship as they relate to value in the fourth section of the paper.

<sup>5</sup> Moreover, who is "everyone?" Like many others writing on the topic of value, I assume that the scope of values ranges over the domain of valuers. So, something that is valuable "for everyone" is valuable for all valuers. However, as a reviewer helpfully noted, one might define the domain of valuers in different ways. Does it include all valuers that ever exist, or only those existing now? Does it include "marginal cases," or only full-blown rational agents? My sense of the literature is that valuers are often assumed to be rational agents who are sufficiently like "us," but this need not be the case. In fact, by stipulating different domains, one can investigate the different domain-specific scopes a valuable thing might have, and the approach that I argue for here can accommodate such stipulations. For the purposes of my discussion, however, I adopt the standard assumption.

comprehensive account of impersonal value might look like. That positive account will, however, have one further negative consequence: I aim to question the practical and theoretical importance of the traditional distinction between impersonal and personal value. Between my negative and positive accounts, I hope to show that the traditional distinction is at best inadequate, and at worst misleading, when it comes to our thinking about the scope of value.

I will first consider the view, which emerges from the work of Thomas Nagel, that the universality of impersonal value is secured by the fact that such value can be recognized from an *impersonal perspective*.<sup>6</sup> I suggest that the independence from particular perspectives is what makes impersonal value especially *compelling* on this account, calling for everyone to actively value things that possess it, which in turn makes this a plausible account of impersonal *moral* value (such as the importance of reducing suffering). However, both the independence from particular perspectives and the compelling force of impersonal value render this account inapt to capture the intuitive category of non-moral impersonal value (which is ostensibly possessed by such things as Niagara Falls, great works of art, and perhaps historical artifacts), which does not have the compelling force of moral value and whose importance is often best characterized from *within* particular perspectives.

I will next consider the prospects for thinking about impersonally valuable things as those that everyone ought to respect, though everyone need not value. This second account, inspired by the work of Joseph Raz, thus understands impersonal value in terms of *required respect*.<sup>7</sup> I am sympathetic to the idea that all impersonally valuable things deserve respect. The shortcoming of this analysis is that it fails to capture anything distinctive about impersonal value. As I will argue, it is plausible to believe that *all* valuable things require this kind of respect, even where

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<sup>6</sup> Specifically with Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> In particular, Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

their value is a paradigm of *personal* value. Hence it is not that this account is mistaken as a general claim about our relationship to valuable things, but rather, that it fails to capture the desired category of impersonally valuable things that are valuable for everyone in the distinctive sense evoked by the examples with which we began.

Given the inadequacy of these two approaches for understanding the range of ways in which values can achieve universality, we have good reason to seek a more comprehensive account. I argue that impersonal value is best understood in terms of everyone's having good (though not necessarily compelling) reason to value objects that possess it. For the purposes of this argument, I will assume that the objects under consideration are in fact valuable, and that the reasons to value them are the "right reasons," responsive to their particular value (as opposed to the threats of evil demons).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, having reason to value something should be distinguished from notions of permissibility. So while counting blades of grass on the lawn may in some sense be permissible, one does not have a relevant reason to do so, on the assumption that counting blades of grass is not a valuable activity.

By reflecting on the conditions that ground reasons to value, I develop an account of impersonal value that not only captures the difference between things with moral and non-moral value, but also accounts for the full range of reasons that persons can have for valuing a given thing. Importantly, I acknowledge that the achievement of impersonal value can be either *monistic* or *pluralistic*. In the first case, everyone has the same universal reason to value the same thing. In the second case, everyone is justified in valuing the same thing, but for two or more of a set of overlapping reasons. To the extent that these pluralistic reasons fail to overlap in a manner that covers all persons, we can chart the extent to which the evaluative scope of a given thing

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, see Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, "The Strike of the Demon: On Fitting Pro-Attitudes and Value," *Ethics* (2004): 391-423.

falls away from strict universality. This analysis provides conceptual resources that offer the potential for resolving disputes about objects of value caught between the traditional categories of personal and impersonal value, which forms an insufficiently nuanced dichotomy. Rather, the scope of value can be highly variable depending on both the extent of individuals who have reason to value something, and the kinds of reasons they have, calling into question the aptness of the traditional distinction between impersonal and personal value. Thus, though I take the traditional distinction as my starting point given its prominence in the literature, and offer an account of impersonal value that can capture that distinction, my ultimate aim is to demonstrate that the distinction obscures a far more important and diverse phenomenon: the variable scope of value. I go on to show how the more nuanced analysis that I defend might shed light on debate over the universal value of cultural heritage, and argue that sentimental valuing, a key mode of valuing the past, is not as closely tied to personal value as one might think. The result will be a theory that attempts to reorient our thinking about all valuable things towards a broader understanding of who has reason to value them and why.

## *2. Impersonal Perspective and Required Respect*

For most philosophers, impersonal value is understood in terms of its contrast with personal value. That is, whether things with impersonal value are positively construed as independently valuable, or intrinsically valuable, or impartially valuable, they are typically understood as those whose value is, as T. M. Scanlon puts it, “not tied to the well-being, claims, or status of individuals in any particular position.”<sup>9</sup> Consequently, accounts of impersonal value

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<sup>9</sup> T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Belknap Press, 1998), 219. Strictly speaking, Scanlon’s claim is about reasons, but it is clear in context that this is directly tied to the notion of impersonal value. The impartial sense of impersonal value is discussed, though not endorsed, in Thomas Hurka, “The Justification of National Partiality,” in *The Morality of Nationalism*, ed. Jeff McMahan and Robert McKim (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). The intrinsic or independent sense emerges in, for instance, Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, “Analysing Personal Value,”

all tend to have an essential universal element. For example, Tom Hurka writes: “In the first place, the claim that something is good impersonally means that it is good from all points of view, or good from the point of view of all moral agents.”<sup>10</sup> Given that it is this universal element of our intuitive understanding of impersonal value that I wish to explore, I will focus in this paper on two different ways of accounting for how a value might be universal, and thus potentially impersonal in the relevant sense. I take as my first point of departure Thomas Nagel’s account of impersonal value as value that can be recognized independently of any particular perspective:

“...once the objective step is taken, the possibility is also open for the recognition of values and reasons that are independent of one’s personal perspective and have force for anyone who can view the world *impersonally*, as a place that contains him. If objectivity means anything here, it will mean that when we detach from our individual perspective and the values and reasons that seem acceptable from within it, we can sometimes arrive at a new conception which may endorse some of the original reasons but will reject some as false subjective appearances and add others.”<sup>11</sup>

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*The Journal of Ethics* 11, no. 4 (2007): 405. “Certain things we value are best described as carrying impersonal value, i.e., they are valued with no eye to anything but to the thing itself.”

<sup>10</sup> Hurka, “Good' and 'Good For',” 71. Hurka distinguishes between the matter of for whom something is good (in the sense of benefiting them, among other senses) and the matter of value that is impersonal in the sense described in the quotation. However, I am not prepared to follow Hurka in foreclosing on use of the expression “good for” or “value for,” despite potential ambiguities in its meaning, given the range of options for analyzing impersonal value that are not exhausted by Hurka’s perspectival definition. For relevant discussion, see E. J. Bond, “‘Good' and 'Good For': A Reply to Hurka,” *Mind* 97, no. 386 (1988): 279-80. I trust that the reader will understand my meaning based on the context and the analysis under discussion.

<sup>11</sup> Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 140 (emphasis added).

The independence from particular perspectives entails that things with impersonal value will involve everyone,<sup>12</sup> or at least everyone who can reflect from the objective perspective, resulting in the following analysis:

*Impersonal Perspective:* An object, project, (etc.) *X* has impersonal value just in case the value of *X* can be recognized independently of any particular perspective.

Importantly, because the universality of impersonal value is secured on this account via detachment from particular perspectives, things with impersonal value necessarily have purchase with everyone—we abstract away from the individual interests or circumstances that might normally affect whether a given thing is in fact valuable for oneself.<sup>13</sup> Put another way, to say that some things are impersonally valuable on this account is to say that everyone has compelling reason, other things being equal, to *value* them.<sup>14</sup>

This analysis is characteristic of Nagel's view. Nagel thinks that impersonal value generates agent-neutral reasons: these are reasons that apply to anyone, independent of his or her particular perspective. He writes: "... If impersonal value is going to be admitted at all, it will

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<sup>12</sup> As Mark Schroeder puts it, Nagel posits impersonal (or agent-neutral) value based on "the uncontroversial distinction... between reasons that are reasons for everyone and reasons that are reasons for only some people." Mark Schroeder, "Teleology, Agent-Relative Value, and 'Good'," *Ethics* 117 (2007): 265-95. Schroeder then goes on to question whether this distinction in reasons correlates with an equally simple distinction in values, though for different reasons than those I pursue here.

<sup>13</sup> One might press on precisely what the relationship is supposed to be between (1) the fact that such value can be recognized from a detached perspective and (2) the further claim that it therefore has the motivating or compelling force that Nagel attributes to it. My interpretation is that, because we are reflecting from the impersonal perspective, there are no partial preferences or desires that might mitigate the force of this impersonal value and the reasons that relate to it (I discuss this interpretation further in section 3). For instance, later on in the same text, Nagel writes: "The actual acceptance of a general normative judgment will have motivational implications, for it will commit you under some circumstances to the acceptance of reasons to want and do things yourself. This is most clear when the objective judgment is that something has agent-neutral or impersonal value. That means anyone has reason to want it to happen—and that includes someone considering the world in detachment from the perspective of any particular person within it. Such a judgment has motivational content even before it is brought back down to the particular perspective of the individual who has accepted it objectively" (154-155). However, even if the relationship between (1) and (2) is shaky on Nagel's account, it suffices for my purposes here that Nagel holds both of these views. Even if he did not, the difference in compelling force between moral and non-moral impersonal value requires attention. Thanks to William FitzPatrick for encouraging me to clarify this relationship.

<sup>14</sup> I understand having "compelling reason, other things being equal," as equivalent to a defeasible "requirement," and will sometimes refer to it as such, though Nagel does not use the language of requirement. I will sometimes use "ought" to express the same idea.

naturally attach to liberty, general opportunities, and the basic resources of life, as well as to pleasure and the absence of suffering.”<sup>15</sup> These things have impersonal value, according to Nagel, because they generate compelling reasons for anyone to act, no matter *whose* liberty or pain is in question, whether it is yours or a stranger’s: the mere fact that *there is pain* generates a reason for anyone to alleviate it. It is no surprise, then, that Nagel denies the impersonal value of personal projects:

There is nothing incoherent in wanting to be able to climb Kilimanjaro or play all the Beethoven piano sonatas, while thinking that impersonally it doesn’t matter whether one can do this. In fact one would have to be dotty to think it did matter impersonally... If an interest is developed by the agent himself through his choices and actions, then the objective reasons it provides are primarily relative... what there is not, I believe, is a completely general impersonal value of the satisfaction of desires and preferences.<sup>16</sup>

This is not to say, of course, that others cannot recognize the value of these projects for the persons who have an interest in them. However, the public recognition of value is not, on Nagel’s account, reason-generating: “each person has reasons stemming from the perspective of his own life which, though they can be publicly recognized, do not in general provide reasons for others and do not correspond to reasons that the interests of others provide for him.”<sup>17</sup> This should help us see the difference between the reasons involved in actively valuing and the reasons associated with merely recognizing value. Though the distinction is not a stark one, the

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<sup>15</sup> Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 171-72.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

point is that *valuing* involves more than merely recognizing and respecting valuable things.<sup>18</sup> For instance, as Scheffler details, valuing involves dispositions to action and emotional response that do not attend the mere recognition of value. I can respect the project of learning to play all the Beethoven piano sonatas without valuing that project myself, without seeing myself as having reason to learn to play the sonatas, or to be frustrated by my incompetence at playing them, or even to promote their being played, etc. This is not to say that there are *no* reasons for action that are implicated in respect for valuable things, but just that valuing involves further reasons beyond those associated with mere respect. Following philosophers such as Raz and Susan Wolf, we might call these reasons to *engage* with objects of value.<sup>19</sup> For example, a reason stemming from mere respect for value might be a reason not to interfere with someone else's valuable activity, say, bird watching, as we will discuss below. But non-interference hardly seems a way of engaging with bird watching: none of the purported goods of bird watching can be realized through non-interference alone in the way that they can through engagement with it (such as, for instance, participating in the activity of bird watching). Moving forward, I will thus sometimes use the term "engagement" to refer to the activities and attitudes distinctive of active valuing.

It is no wonder, then, that on Nagel's view, all things with impersonal value are intuitively those with *moral* value. On this account of impersonal value, not only are the reasons associated with impersonal value reasons of engagement, but they are also compelling reasons, ones that carry significant weight in practical reasoning. Putting aside the specter of moral relativism, it has seemed to many that justice, equality, autonomy, the absence of suffering, etc. have value that is impersonal in this very sense: other things being equal, everyone ought to

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<sup>18</sup> Compare, for instance, Samuel Scheffler, "Valuing," in *Equality and Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010); Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*.

value them in the manner described in the Impersonal Perspective analysis (i.e. we ought to promote and prize them, and ensure that they play a substantive role in our evaluative and practical lives by being attentive to the reasons they give us). Indeed, the idea that things with moral value are those that everyone has compelling reason to value and engage with provides a plausible account of the *force* that moral value is typically thought to have.

However, there are two sources of concern with this account. First, while the impersonal perspective might secure the universal compelling engagement that is distinctive of moral value, this requirement may be uncalled for or inapt in the case of *non-moral* impersonal value.

Whatever may be universal about the value of Niagara Falls or the pyramids at Giza, it does not seem to compel us to value them in the way we are required to engage with objects of moral value.<sup>20</sup> While I may have good reason to value Niagara Falls, my failure to do so does not seem like a mistake in the way that it is a mistake not to value autonomy; insofar as it is a mistake not to value Niagara Falls, it is not the mistake of failing to meet a requirement. Thus the Impersonal Perspective account appears to misconstrue the strength of the reasons to engage with things that have non-moral impersonal value.

Second, even if one does not see compelling force as following from the impersonal perspective (see footnote 13), or if one does think that everyone has compelling reason to value Niagara Falls, the Impersonal Perspective account faces a further problem. There is an important difference between things whose value is universal because that value can be recognized independently of any particular perspective, and things whose value is universal because reasons for engaging with them can be found *within* any particular perspective. Artistic masterworks, for instance, are often thought of as having universal value, but plausibly this is not always because

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<sup>20</sup> This is not to ignore the fact that moral value need not always issue in requirements (as in the case of the supererogatory), nor that non-moral value can sometimes have a great deal of compelling force. The distinction is a general one that admits of various exceptions.

their value can be recognized by abstracting away from all individual perspectives and adopting a “view from nowhere”.<sup>21</sup> Rather, at least some artworks of universal value seem to possess the power to speak to each of us, not by riding roughshod over our individual differences, but by appealing to a multiplicity of particular perspectives. Beyond artistic examples, there are modes of valuing that make essential appeal to the personal perspective, such as sentimental valuing, that cannot be captured from the impersonal perspective. This had led some philosophers to believe that sentimental value must be a kind of personal value.<sup>22</sup> Because sentimental valuing is a key mode of historical valuing, the linking of sentimental value and personal value has had misleading implications for how we think about the evaluative scope of cultural heritage, and the debate over its universal value. I return to this issue in more detail in the final section. For now, it suffices to note that the Impersonal Perspective analysis does not account for the possibility of universal value that in fact requires appeal to the personal perspective.<sup>23</sup> Impersonal value, in its universal sense, need not be impersonal in the perspectival sense.

With reference to the first concern, a number of philosophers have recognized a domain of things that possess non-moral value with an impersonal character (insofar as they seem to generate some universal reasons), but that do not *require* the engagement distinctive of the Impersonal Perspective approach: while these projects, activities, and objects intuitively generate

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<sup>21</sup> This objection is in line with many objections to understanding artistic value as being essentially “disinterested” in the manner championed by philosophers of art such as Clive Bell and Monroe Beardsley. For discussion, see Noel Carroll, “Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory,” in *Beyond Aesthetics* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Hatzimoysis, “Sentimental Value,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53, no. 212 (2003); Scheffler, “Valuing,” 26.

<sup>23</sup> Scheffler has noted that it is mistake to think that “values that fall on the impersonal side of the divide are values that can be appreciated only from a detached, ‘impersonal’ standpoint, and are not values that we ourselves recognize or accept.” “Projects, Relationships, and Reasons,” in *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, et al. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 250. He means, I take it, that we ourselves, from our own perspectives, endorse how things seem from the impersonal standpoint. I grant this point, but note that this is distinct from the matter of values that are themselves generated from within the personal perspective, without appeal to the impersonal standpoint.

some reasons for everyone, they are not the reasons of engagement involved in actively *valuing* something. For example, consider the following remarks from Joseph Raz:

...[O]bviously no one has reason to engage with all valuable objects. We need not read all novels, listen to all music, climb all the mountains, go to all the parties, dance in all the dances that are worthwhile...Not everyone has much time for Picasso's paintings, and there is nothing wrong in not caring for them...But no one should destroy them or treat them in ways inconsistent with the fact that they are aesthetically valuable...Regarding what is of value, be it instrumental or intrinsic, *there is a universal reason for everyone to respect it*, which is the minimal form of engagement with value. It is the right reaction to what is of value even when you do not value it, you do not personally care for it.<sup>24</sup>

In a similar vein, Scheffler writes:

...[I]t is not only possible but commonplace to believe that something is valuable without valuing it oneself. There are, for example, many activities that I regard as valuable but which I myself do not value, including, say, folk dancing, bird-watching, and studying Bulgarian history. Indeed, I value only a tiny fraction of the activities that I take to be valuable.<sup>25</sup>

This understanding of the way in which something's value might be universal provides the materials for an alternative account of impersonal value. On this account, if the pyramids at Giza or Niagara Falls are impersonally valuable, then not everyone need be interested in them,

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<sup>24</sup> Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 164. (emphasis added). Raz distinguishes between two broad (overlapping) categories of reason: reasons of respect and reasons of engagement. See also *Engaging Reason* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). As Raz puts it, he is "appropriating the notion of respect to designate the general reasons one has to recognize the value of all that is of value even when one does not personally value it all." *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 169.

<sup>25</sup> Scheffler, "Valuing," 21. At 31, Scheffler criticizes T. M. Scanlon for (at least implicitly) not acknowledging this.

promote them, learn about them, etc., but everyone ought, at least, to respect them, and thus think about and act toward them in ways that are consistent with their evaluative status, e.g. by preserving them, not interfering with them etc.<sup>26</sup> This account of impersonal value will thus involve some minimal compelling reasons for thought and action that do not include the additional kinds of reasons one has in virtue of actively valuing something. Such a view accounts for the essential element of our intuitive understanding of impersonal value; namely, it explains the particular way in which these values might be “for everyone,” no matter who you are. Moreover, though, it does so without appeal to an impersonal perspective, and thus promises to avoid the problems discussed above. We might describe this analysis as follows:

*Required Respect:* An object, project, (etc.) *X* has impersonal value just in case (other things being equal) for all persons *Y*, *Y* has compelling reason to respect *X*.<sup>27</sup>

The idea that all impersonally valuable things deserve respect is appealing. The problem with this analysis is that it fails to capture anything *distinctive* about impersonal value. As I argue below, it is plausible to believe that *all* things that are valued for good reasons require respect, even when such things have merely personal value. Hence the Required Respect analysis is not mistaken as a general claim about our relationship to valuable things, but it fails to capture a distinctive category of impersonal value. If all valuable things ought to be respected in the way

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<sup>26</sup> With regard to non-interference in particular, see R. Jay Wallace, “The Publicity of Reasons,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 23 (2009): 471-97.

<sup>27</sup> The Required Respect analysis is very similar to one that Scheffler considers in his discussion of the relationship between believing valuable and valuing, on which the claim that *X* is valuable “might be understood as the claim that *X* has properties in virtue of which (1) all people have reasons for behaving in certain (minimum) ways with regard to *X*, and (2) some people have reasons for additional actions with regard to *X* and for being emotionally vulnerable to it... valuable things give everyone, and not merely those who value them, certain minimal reasons for action, such as reasons not to destroy or denigrate those things.” Scheffler, “Valuing,” 36. Scheffler does not explicitly identify these general remarks about value as being about “impersonal value” per se, though he does distinguish his subject from both instrumental and personal value. The important idea for our purposes here is that Scheffler is identifying a kind of value such that it is in a particular sense a value for everyone.

that Required Respect appeals to, then we will still need an alternative account of what makes value count as impersonal. What might this be? Whatever else is true of valuable things, it at least seems to follow that valuable things are *worth valuing*.<sup>28</sup> As David Velleman succinctly puts it: “Value is what something has when it is valuable, and being valuable is just being appropriate to value.”<sup>29</sup> I will thus assume that some X is valuable if and only if there is reason to value it, though I remain neutral about any explanatory priority between the two.<sup>30</sup> Plausibly, then, impersonally valuable things may be those that everyone has reason to value, though not necessarily compelling reason, as we saw in discussion of Impersonal Perspective. Examining the shortcomings of Required Respect will help us see why this kind of universal, non-required reason to value things best captures the distinctive idea of impersonal value, and will thus set the stage for the account that I present in the following section.

Required Respect’s inability to capture a distinctive category of impersonal value is clearly illustrated when we consider paradigm cases of things with *personal* value, such as my grandfather’s ring, that counter-intuitively qualify as impersonally valuable on this account. I value my grandfather’s ring, but you do not. Indeed, you don’t have reason to value it. But as long as I value the ring for good reasons, it seems that you and everyone else have reason to respect the ring (by, for instance, not destroying it), even if only I have reason to value it. This is true by extension of the same considerations that motivate the Required Respect analysis in the

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<sup>28</sup> For instance, see Christine Korsgaard’s contribution to Joseph Raz et al., *The Practice of Value*, The Berkeley Tanner Lectures (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, 2005), 410-36; Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); J. David Velleman, “A Theory of Value,” *Ethics* 118 (2008). This position is also typical of the buck-passing account of value usually associated with Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*.

<sup>29</sup> Velleman, “A Theory of Value,” 410.

<sup>30</sup> There are of course important questions about the reasons one has for valuing some X and whether they might not be “the wrong kind of reasons,” but this question at least assumes that the right kind of reasons are out there to be had. For the purposes of this paper, I am confining discussion to valuing for the right kind of reasons. For recent discussion, see the symposium on Mark Schroeder’s “The Ubiquity of State-Given Reasons,” in *Ethics*, Vol. 124, No. 1, October 2013.

first place. Whether or not I ought to respect bird watching or Niagara Falls, for instance, does not depend on whether *I* value them, but only on whether they are valuable. If whether you ought to respect some X depends only on whether it is valuable, then whether or not you have reason to value X should likewise be irrelevant to whether or not you ought to respect it. All that matters is that X is valuable, even if its value is highly personal, and thus only few have reason to value it. Thus, the breed of universality captured by Required Respect applies equally well to paradigm cases of things with personal value. In this light, it seems that what makes things like my grandfather's ring intuitively fail to have impersonal value is the very fact that *not* everyone has reason to value them, even if everyone has reason to respect them.

The importance of this observation extends beyond paradigm cases of things with personal value. Consider some of Scheffler and Raz's examples of valuable things that ought to be respected by everyone. I do not dispute that these things should indeed be universally respected. But in contrast, how universal is it to have reason to value fine piano playing, or to have reason to value bird watching? If it is a commonplace feature of our evaluative lives to say "I respect X, but I myself don't value it" I suggest that we should find it equally natural to ask the further question "would I even *have* reason to value X? Would it even make sense?" Just as what we in fact value is a combination of the independent value of some X and the interest that we take in it, what we have reason to value is a combination of the independent value of some X and the conditions that warrant our taking an interest in it.<sup>31</sup> When we respect some valuable X but do not value it ourselves, the conditions that give us reason to value X might hold or they might

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<sup>31</sup> Compare Korsgaard's contribution to Raz et al., *The Practice of Value*. As R. Jay Wallace nicely summarizes her view in the introduction to that volume: "the standards that determine when and in what ways it would be appropriate to value a given object are specified not by social practices, but by the nature both of the object to be valued and of the person engaged in the activity of evaluative reflection" (8). I am less inclined to reject the relevance of social practices, but, as indicated above, I agree with the comprehensive approach (including both the subject and the object) to determining the standards that make valuing appropriate.

not. Surely, of the set of individuals who respect bird watching without valuing it, there are some who nevertheless have reason to value bird watching, even if they happen not to. But equally clear, I believe, is that there may be many members of this set of individuals who *lack* reason to value bird watching: perhaps people who dislike the outdoors, who are impatient, who disdain quiet and stillness, etc. On what plausible basis might we say that such individuals have reason to value bird watching? On the contrary, the fact that these people have reason to respect bird watching as a valuable activity does not imply that they have reason to value it. Thus Required Respect claims the mantle of impersonal value for things that there is not universal reason to value. Of course, things like bird watching and piano playing do not seem quite like our paradigm cases of things with personal value either, and so the accounts we have considered so far appear to leave them in limbo. We thus begin to see that the traditional stark distinction between personal and impersonal value is inadequate: it cannot properly capture the evaluative scope of things whose value is neither particular nor universal, a problem that I will address in the following sections.

The fact is that whether we are considering bird watching, Niagara Falls, or my grandfather's ring, it is plausible to think that just insofar as these things are valued for good reason, then everyone ought to respect them. This follows from the publicity of reasons and our ability as rational agents to recognize the reasons of others.<sup>32</sup> However, it is not necessarily true of all these things that anyone has reason to value them. Raz, for one, sometimes seems to suggest that *all* legitimately valuable things have an impersonal element, such that anyone might reasonably value them, and that 'personal value' is just a way of describing those impersonally valuable things we happen to have an interest in. As he puts it: "How then does the personal

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<sup>32</sup> Compare Wallace, "The Publicity of Reasons." Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*. For a different approach to explaining the universal relevance of personal values, see Rønnow-Rasmussen, "Analysing Personal Value."

meaning of attachments and their objects relate to their (impersonal) value? Simply: our attachments appropriate (impersonal) value, and make it meaningful for us. They go well beyond the recognition of the value of their objects... The personal meaning of objects, causes, and pursuits depends on their impersonal value, and is conditional on it.”<sup>33</sup> But as we have seen, this view precludes the possibility of valuable things, personally valuable or otherwise, that *not* everyone has reason to value.

Now, it sometimes seems that what Raz means when he says that personal value is conditional on impersonal value is that it is conditional on something’s having *intrinsic* or *independent value*: independent, that is, of my merely having an interest in it. This is suggested when he writes (just prior to the previous quotation): “In general, an attachment [i.e. his term for personal value] must have a worthy object to be valuable.”<sup>34</sup> Or elsewhere: “Their impersonal value [that of specific attachments]... is their value to one were they to be one’s attachments, which is independent of the fact that they were embraced by one as one’s attachments.”<sup>35</sup> This is a plausible and familiar claim (see footnote 36). Certainly my grandfather’s ring, for instance, is independently valuable in the sense that it is *worth* valuing for me independent of whether I value it. If I happened to not value the ring, my sister could provide me with reasons for why I perhaps should. But this is not, of course, independent of my specific *relation* to the ring and its history—its value is not independent of facts about me. So its having independent value (in the sense of being worth valuing *for me* independent of whether I value it) does not make it worth valuing for *everyone*. Thus, the notions of independent value and impersonal value cannot be

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<sup>33</sup> Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 19-20. To be clear, those parenthetical “impersonal” references are in the original text.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 19. Compare Scanlon, who described “judgments of impersonal value” as “the judgment that these objects are worth seeing and should be admired.” *What We Owe to Each Other*, 220.

<sup>35</sup> *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 17, fn 5.

conflated if we are to maintain the intuitive proviso that distinctively impersonal values are those that everyone indeed has reason to value.

Ultimately, Required Respect retreats too far from Impersonal Perspective. According to Impersonal Perspective, everyone has compelling reason to value impersonally valuable things, which correctly entails the weaker claim that everyone has a reason to value them; however, this account implausibly elevates all impersonally valuable things to the status of being morally valuable by requiring that everyone value them and that they be recognizable from the impersonal perspective. Required Respect attempts to make room for the universal value of things with non-moral impersonal value, but it jettisons the proviso that impersonally valuable things are those that everyone has reason to value—indeed, Required Respect states a truth about the relation between value and reason that applies to *all* valuable things, personal and impersonal alike, and does not describe a feature that is distinctive of the subset of things whose value is distinctively impersonal. Hence, we need a middle ground: an account of impersonally valuable things that succeeds in capturing the fact that there is universal reason to value them without hitching them to the impersonal perspective or attributing to them the compelling status of being morally valuable.

### *3. Reason to Value*

In order to construct such an account, we first must consider in greater detail the conditions that ground reasons for valuing things. The conditions canvassed here are meant to be a sketch; I don't assume that I have definitively established any list of necessary or sufficient conditions for having reason to value any given thing. My goal is to continue to motivate the idea that a wide variety of such conditions exist. Specifically, for the purposes of this paper, I desire only to show that understanding these conditions is essential to understanding the scope of value,

which is in turn an indispensable aspect of understanding the practical significance of valuable things. If this is true, then it constitutes a clarion call for further research into the conditions that ground reasons to value.

There appears to be a diversity of ways in which reasons to value some X can be generated. One way arises in the case of bird watching considered above. Given some independently valuable X, whether or not a particular individual will have reason to value X might depend on that person's other interests and values.<sup>36</sup> If I am in fact a nature-lover with a penchant for patient classification, then I may well have reason to value bird watching. Of course, I'm not required to value it, but it seems I have good reason to.<sup>37</sup>

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

...I have just heard a glowing account of the friendship between two people whom I have never met and with whom I have no connection. I might think, on the basis of this account, that their friendship sounds like a valuable one. It would be bizarre, however, for me to say that I value their friendship...I cannot value the friendship in the same way that the participants can; it cannot play the same role in my emotional life and practical deliberations.<sup>38</sup>

Scheffler describes such cases as ones in which the following two conditions are true: "(1) that only those who occupy the right position in relation to the thing are capable of valuing it, or of

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<sup>36</sup> The claim that what matters in life, what makes one's life go well, etc. involves being engaged with independently valuable things is very familiar in the literature. For examples, see the works of Scheffler, Raz, Nagel, Wolf and Wallace mentioned so far.

<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that in cases like this, one's reasons to value bird watching might overlap substantially with the reasons one has to engage in bird watching in virtue of (or that constitute) valuing it. But they can come apart. For instance, I might have some additional reasons, say to purchase special supplies, attend conventions, etc. in virtue of actively valuing bird watching (and having a prolonged commitment to it) that I might not have as someone who has reason to go bird watching, but doesn't, as it happens, value bird watching. This starts to bleed over into the ways in which a historical relation to some X can affect one's reasons for valuing it.

<sup>38</sup> Scheffler, "Valuing," 37.

valuing it in a certain way, and (2) that not everyone is capable of occupying the right position in relation to that thing.”<sup>39</sup>

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

A final kind of positional valuing, perhaps deserving of its own category, is valuing that is based on one’s *historical* position. The valuable relationship that Scheffler describes would best be understood in these terms. In order to have reason to value a relationship, you need to have the kind of history of interactions with something or someone that constitute a relationship in the first place: a relationship is itself an historical relation.<sup>40</sup> An historical position is also what

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Compare Niko Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” *Philosophical Review* 112, no. 2 (2003): 135-89.

gives me, but not you, a reason to value my grandfather's ring. As we will see in the following section, the relevance of different kinds of historical relations is essential to understanding the dispute over the evaluative scope of cultural heritage, but is glossed over by the foregoing accounts of impersonal value. For now, suffice it to say that there are multiple positional conditions that can generate reasons for valuing.

A third way reasons to value some X may be generated is with respect to the mere fact that one is human, or a rational agent. According to various theorists, this is what grounds a range of moral values and requirements, and indeed, one's perspective *qua* human or rational agent just is the impersonal perspective described by Nagel that anchors the Impersonal Perspective account.<sup>41</sup> However, features like rationality or being human may provide reasons to value things in non-moral contexts as well. For instance, it may be that simply being human provides one with a reason to value the prehistoric places and artifacts that shed light on, or are associated with, our development as a species. Or maybe such features can be part of what gives us reason to value instances of great beauty, however such aesthetic values are understood. Such features would of course not be positional with respect to subsets of humans or rational agents, but would include everyone within the relevant class.

Bearing in mind the diversity of ways in which one might have reason to value something, we can introduce a new analysis of impersonal value:

*Reason to Value:* An object, project, (etc.) X has impersonal value just in case (other things being equal) for all persons Y, Y has a reason (though not necessarily a compelling one) to value X.

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<sup>41</sup> Or in the constructivist tradition, consider that moral requirements on Christine Korsgaard's account are grounded in reflection from one's practical identity as a person. See Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

I believe this analysis offers a number of considerations in its favor. We should first be careful to distinguish this account from the Impersonal Perspective analysis with which we began. As we observed, it seems to follow from the Impersonal Perspective account that things with impersonal value are those that everyone ought to value, where ought is understood in the sense of a requirement stemming from the presence of compelling reasons. This is why, as we noted, this analysis seems plausible for things with moral value, but because of reasonable assumptions about value pluralism, is problematic for things with non-moral value. In contrast, according to Reason to Value, it would not be a requirement for everyone to value an impersonally valuable thing; one would merely have reason to do so. We thus have the resources for distinguishing the universality of moral value from the universality of non-moral value, and we avoid the counter-intuitive implications that stem from collapsing them into a single category.

Second, this analysis gives respect for valuable things its properly broad scope. It allows that all rational agents ought to respect X simply in virtue of there being reason for some Y to value it, and not contingently upon X's being impersonally valuable. This affirms the public nature of reasons, and the plausible claim that any rational agent in the right epistemic situation should respect good reasons, even if they are completely beyond the pale of reasons that could apply to oneself.

Finally, and most importantly, this analysis can accommodate two different ways in which everyone might have reason to value X. The first we can call "monistic" universal reason. This is the case when everyone has a reason to value X, and everyone has the *same* reason to value X. So, as considered above, features such as shared humanity, or rational agency, that generate reasons to value X will be monistic: everyone will have the same reason to value X. However, this need not involve the abstraction to the impersonal, detached perspective advocated

by Nagel. Recall that according to Impersonal Perspective, a key feature that makes impersonal value have the compelling force characteristic of moral value is the very fact that this is the *only* kind of value that generates agent-neutral reasons that can be endorsed from the detached perspective. If impersonal value holds independently of one's individual interests and circumstances, then these features of one's personal perspective can have no bearing on whether impersonally valuable things qualify as relevant for oneself, and thus whether the relevant agent-neutral reasons apply. But, picking up the objection to Impersonal Perspective from Section 2 concerning universally valuable things that must be recognized from *within* one's personal perspective, we can distinguish between reasons and values that apply simply because one is human *independently* of one's particular interests and circumstances, and those that apply simply because one is human *among* one's other particular interests and circumstances. In the former case, the independence from particular perspectives ensures the compelling force of the relevant reasons, and hence the requirement to engage with things that possess this kind of value. In the latter case, everyone might share the same reason in virtue of their shared humanity, but it is a reason the force of which is mitigated by the other features of one's personal perspective. So for instance, simply being human may be sufficient to ground reasons for valuing the history of our species or natural wonders, without giving us compelling reason to do so—we may have other interests and circumstances that render these things unimportant to us, despite our having reason to value them. So unlike Impersonal Perspective, Reason to Value makes room for valuable things that are a function of a common reason but do not have the compelling force of moral value. Though anyone may have reason to engage with these valuable things, it is not required.

We can call the second way in which everyone can have reason to value a given X “pluralistic” universal reason. This is the case when everyone has a reason to value X, but there

is no single reason to value X that everyone shares in common. Rather, various relevant considerations generate *different* reasons for everyone to value the same X. This might be the case where, for instance, various forms of positional valuing overlap.<sup>42</sup> As we will see in the next section, the possibility of impersonal value that is a function of pluralistic universal reasons is key to removing the impasse created by the traditional distinction between impersonal and personal value.

Indeed, these considerations suggest that philosophers have expected too much from the category of impersonal value. Knowing which values are universal is important, but only as a component of the more general task, essential to moral and evaluative inquiry, of determining *who has reason* to value something. It is our reasons for valuing that are most intimately connected with what it makes sense for us to care about, and thus with practical reason. If, as Raz has said, "...[T]he point of values is realized when it is possible to appreciate them, and when it is possible to relate to objects of value in ways appropriate to their value,"<sup>43</sup> then it is essential that we examine the different ways in which different individuals have reason to relate to valuable things. By focusing on the diversity of reasons for valuing, Reason to Value has the resources not only to account for those things whose value is universal, but also to guide productive inquiry into the more limited evaluative scope of other things whose value may not intuitively be understood as personal, but is not strictly universal either.

What we have seen so far is that the range of ways in which we might relate to some valuable X goes far beyond the simple dichotomy provided by the Impersonal Perspective and

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<sup>42</sup> This is similar to Wallace's claim that there is a "diversity of ways in which a common value can provide agents who are differently situated with different kinds of reasons." Wallace, "The Publicity of Reasons," 482. The difference is that Wallace's claim is about how a single shared value can provide different reasons for different people, whereas my claim here is that people can have different reasons *to value* the same thing. I believe that both claims are true.

<sup>43</sup> Raz et al., *The Practice of Value*, 27-28.

Required Respect analyses. The Reason to Value analysis both captures our intuitive sense of impersonal value and provides us with the conceptual resources to leave behind the emphasis on the sharp distinction between impersonal and personal value. There can be universal requirements to value X, as in the case of moral values. There can be universal requirements to respect X in virtue of some person having a good reason to value it. And there can be universal reason to value X where such valuing is not required, either because everyone shares the same reason (monistic) or because everyone has one of a number of reasons (pluralistic) to value X. To the extent that these pluralistic reasons fail to overlap in a manner that covers all persons, we can chart the extent to which the value of X falls away from strict universality.

#### *4. Reasons to Value History and the Scope of Cultural Heritage*

Once we recognize that the extent to which value is personal or impersonal is best analyzed in terms of diverse reasons to value, we have new resources for clarifying the terms of disputes over object whose evaluative scope is contested. Instead of a stark contrast between the impersonal and the personal divided on the basis of which valuable things can be recognized from a detached perspective or which command respect, we have the diverse array of reasons to value (and to whom and how they apply) with which to analyze competing claims regarding the scope of different valuable things. As noted above, the Reason to Value approach also allows us to account for the widely varied evaluative scope of different things whose values is not universal, in contrast with the all-or-nothing approach of traditional accounts. In this section, I will briefly explore the practical implications of this account for determining the evaluative scope of history and cultural heritage. While it will no doubt still be difficult in certain cases to assess who has reason to value such things, the conditions surveyed in the previous section that can plausibly be deemed sufficient for grounding such reasons should allow us to make some

headway in tackling these cases. I do not claim to resolve this difficult issue here, but simply to demonstrate the advantages of approaching it with the more comprehensive accounts of impersonal value and evaluative scope that I have presented.

Consider two opposing views about the evaluative scope of cultural heritage. The *Universalist* claims that cultural heritage has impersonal value in the sense that everyone has reason to value it. The *Particularist* claims that the value of cultural heritage is particular to specific groups, and is thus more like personal value.<sup>44</sup> The impersonal perspective is ill suited to capture the value of situated histories, and surely we have reason to respect other people's heritage even if the particularist account is correct. However, if we adopt the Reason to Value account and examine the reasons that one might have to value cultural heritage, we can begin to adjudicate between these two conflicting approaches.

It should be no surprise that the older things get, the more likely one is to find universalist claims made about their value. As one bioanthropologist puts it: "Ancient skeletons belong to everyone...[they are] the remnants of unduplicable evolutionary events which all

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<sup>44</sup> These views are based on the internationalist and nationalist positions described in Merryman, "Two Ways of Thinking About Cultural Property." This has become a common way to frame the debate. See, for example, Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Whose Culture Is It, Anyway?," in *Cosmopolitanism* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006). I have excised the political language they use in order to focus on the evaluative issue. The universalist position is based, as Merryman describes, on the Hague Convention of 1954, whereas the particularist position is based on the UNESCO convention of 1970. With regard to the universalist position, consider also this quote from the UNESCO convention of 1982: "their value cannot be confined to one nation or to one people, but is there to be shared by every man, woman and child of the globe," as cited in Atle Omland, "The Ethics of the World Heritage Concept," in *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archeological Practice*, ed. Chris Scarre and Geoffrey Scarre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 247. This helps distinguish the universalist claim from another kind of universalism with which it might be confused. For instance, one might claim that cultural heritage is universally valuable in the sense that everyone should value the heritage of his or her *own* culture. This is akin to the claim that relationships have universal value, but everyone should value his or her *own* relationships. As the UNESCO 1982 quote brings out, though, this is *not* the sense of universal value the universalist has in mind. Rather, it is the claim that anyone has reason to value the cultural heritage of any particular group.

living and future peoples have the right to know about and understand.”<sup>45</sup> There is something to this claim: the knowledge that study of an ancient skeleton might yield seems to have a value independent of any specific culture, and is thus a likely candidate for being significant to anyone, such that anyone may have a reason to value it. This would be a form of monistic universal reason. Even those who express a general skepticism about the universal value of cultural heritage acknowledge this possibility. Henry Cleere writes:

Viewed against the entire spectrum of human culture, it is difficult to conceive of any cultural property as possessing true universality, as implied by this generally accepted definition, with the possible exception of major human palaeontological sites (e.g. the Peking Man site in China) or Palaeolithic rock-art sites (Altamira, Spain; Tassili n' Ajjer, Algeria), which represent a remote period before human society and culture became excessively diversified.<sup>46</sup>

This is consistent with an approach to archeological research that, according to Alison Wylie “was being institutionalized in North American museums and universities at the beginning of the twentieth century [and] was distinguished, above all else, by a commitment to approaching archaeological material as a record of the cultural past whose significance lay in its informational content (as evidence), not its aesthetic or sentimental or commercial value.”<sup>47</sup> Wylie goes on to critique this understanding of the significance of cultural heritage, which treats scientific truth as constituting a universal value over and above values of the other kinds mentioned. She notes that

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<sup>45</sup> Reported in David Hurst Thomas’s *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (Basic Books, 2000) as quoted in Alison Wylie, “The Promise and Perils of an Ethic of Stewardship,” in *Embedding Ethics*, ed. Lynn Meskell and Peter Pels (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2005), 47-48.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Cleere, “The Concept of ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ in the World Heritage Convention,” *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 1 (1996): 228; Cf. Omland, “The Ethics of the World Heritage Concept,” 249.

<sup>47</sup> Wylie, “The Promise and Perils of an Ethic of Stewardship,” 55-56.

this persists as a potential problem for “stewardship” models of archaeology, even though they get away from the concept of property altogether: “The impulse inherent in the concept of stewardship is to seek some reference point, some foundation that transcends local, individual interests on which to base its claims,” which in the context of archeology, tends to evince itself in appeal to a “panhuman interest in a particular kind of knowledge about the cultural past.”<sup>48</sup> To avoid this problem, Wylie contends that stewardship “must be construed not as a matter of wise management on behalf of an abstract higher interest (that of science and, by extension, society or humanity) but as a matter of collaborative, negotiated co-management among divergent interests (including archeological interests) none of which can be presumed, at the outset, to take precedence over the others.”<sup>49</sup>

These considerations should remind us that historical significance is dependent upon a broad, non-historical context of interests and concerns. As Arthur Danto writes: “a particular thing or occurrence acquires historical *significance* in virtue of its relations to some other thing or occurrence in which we happen to have some special interest, or to which we attach some importance, for whatever reason.”<sup>50</sup> The archeological concern with extracting knowledge from historical artifacts is certainly justified by a range of human interests, including the importance to us of explanation and understanding. But these concerns are of a largely different kind from the sentimental attachments associated with the historical significance of, for example, family heirlooms and cherished places. One does not typically aim to *learn* anything about the past from a family heirloom, as its significance is understood in a non-informational context: knowledge is not what interests me about my grandfather’s ring. Thus one difficulty that faces us in thinking

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge University Press, 1965), 167; Compare Arash Abizadeh, “Historical Truth, National Myths and Liberal Democracy: On the Coherence of Liberal Nationalism,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (2004): 291-313.

about cultural heritage consists in its varied *modes* of historical significance, grounded in, among other things, both a concern with knowledge and a concern with personal attachment.<sup>51</sup>

As one might expect, the sentimental valuing<sup>52</sup> of cultural heritage, the mode of valuation pertaining to personal attachment, tends to be associated with a particularist analysis that is more specific to certain groups.<sup>53</sup> It is worth pausing to focus on the kind of experience that this mode of valuation involves. It is not for nothing that we call the objects to which we have particular attachments objects of *sentimental* value: the emotions figure centrally in this mode of valuation. As Scheffler notes, valuing in general seems to involve (among other things) being susceptible to a range of emotions, which will vary depending on the thing that is valued.<sup>54</sup> In the case of sentimental value, these might include pride, nostalgia, fondness, or just being *verklemt*.

Scheffler, as is common, associates sentimental value with personal value, understood as something “being valuable only to him or herself.”<sup>55</sup> However, the character of the experience of sentimental value suggests a mode of valuation that can transcend the circumstances of a single

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<sup>51</sup> In addition to sentimental value, Wylie also mentions aesthetic and commercial value. Commercial value is instrumental, and aesthetic value strikes me (perhaps idealistically) as intuitively universal. I focus here on sentimental value as offering the most plausible rallying point for the particularist. There is no doubt more to be said about the role of political sovereignty in this debate as well, but there is insufficient space to address it here. For further discussion of kinds of historical value had by archaeological objects, see James O. Young, “The Values of the Past,” in *Appropriating the Past*, ed. Geoffrey Scarre and Robin Coningham (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>52</sup> I have a more capacious understanding of sentimental value than that articulated by Guy Fletcher, “Sentimental Value,” *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 43 (2009): 55-65. Fletcher identifies sentimental value as just one value type within a class of extrinsic final values, including those associated with “public monuments, war memorials, and historical documents and artifacts.” However, this differentiation neglects the fact that sentimental value itself seems to have an essential historical element that makes paring off the historical cases that Fletcher mentions less plausible. Consistent with the arguments in this essay, I prefer to distinguish these different cases based on the scope of the reasons for valuing.

<sup>53</sup> Coningham, Cooper, and Pollard, for instance, follow others (particularly economists) in distinguishing among use value, option value, and existence value, and criticize the identification of “World Heritage” sites (as part of UNESCO 1972), which they claim must necessarily select and prioritize a single value type as important to “the whole world.” Robin Coningham, Rachel Cooper, and Mark Pollard, “What Value a Unicorn’s Horn? A Study of Archaeological Uniqueness and Value,” in *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archeological Practice*, ed. Chris Scarre and Geoffrey Scarre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 267-68. It is perhaps no surprise, and serves to undermine the purported universality of the values used in the selection process, that almost 50% of UNESCO World Heritage sites are in Europe. See Cleere, “The Concept of ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ in the World Heritage Convention,” 229.

<sup>54</sup> Scheffler, “Valuing.”

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, fn. 24; Cf. Cohen, “Rescuing Conservatism.”

individual. Indeed, it seems perfectly natural for a group at a reunion to be sentimental about their school, for disparate individuals to be sentimental about their hometown, perhaps even for co-nationals to be sentimental about their constitution, where these emotions are understood as an appropriate response to the value of the object in question. It is thus misleading to conceive of sentimental value as necessarily personal, at least with respect to its scope. It is true that personal value often takes the form of sentimental value, but sentimental value is not, I think, relegated to only the personal context.<sup>56</sup>

The emotions associated with sentimental value might be described as involving a general feeling of *belonging*.<sup>57</sup> Objects of sentimental value tend to feel like *ours* even if we don't technically own them. Think of former students returning to high school to hang out on *their* bench, or a softball team that likes to go to *their* bar after the game. Even long after the bar is gone, they might walk by and say "this is where our bar used to be." Moreover, we often feel like we *belong in* places of sentimental value. This is part and parcel of the sense in which they belong to us. What makes the bar feel like theirs is that they feel at home there. It is no wonder, then, that sentimental value is essentially historical in nature: we don't get sentimental about new things or places because they don't yet belong to us, or us to them. It takes time to develop that kind of relationship.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> I thus diverge from the personal analysis of sentimental value suggested by Hatzimoysis, "Sentimental Value." However, this is largely because Hatzimoysis seems to adopt the Impersonal Perspective account of impersonal value that I have questioned in this essay, claiming "sentimental value is personal because it is not impersonal, since it is part of a phenomenon that involves a point of view of the world." However, I think Hatzimoysis is right to note that "an object is sentimentally valuable to an agent for certain reasons, which, by the very fact of being reasons, are in principle intelligible by everyone else," though, as I have suggested above, wrong to conclude with "even though they are not applicable to anyone else." These reasons can indeed be applicable to others who stand in the relevant relations to the valued objects: these are cases of positional valuing described in the previous section.

<sup>57</sup> Compare Cohen, "Rescuing Conservatism," 223.

<sup>58</sup> Compare Scheffler's remarks about carving out a space in time in "The Normativity of Tradition." Also, see Raz: "Meaning comes through a common history, and through work." *Value, Respect, and Attachment*, 20.

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

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

However, return to our paradigm object of personal value: What makes it the case that I have reason to value my grandfather’s ring, but you do not? The obvious answer is that the historical features of the ring that make it significant (having belonged to my grandfather) simply are not relevant to you: it would make no sense if you valued the ring for that reason. Indeed, as far as you’re concerned, the ring shouldn’t seem significant at all, at least no more than any other

piece of jewelry. We understand the phenomenon of people being attached to histories with which they are involved, but it can be difficult to see how a stranger is involved in the history I shared with my grandfather. Thus, cases like family heirlooms and mementos provide a potential model for the particularist position in the case of cultural heritage: if the particularist wants to deny that objects of cultural heritage are equally significant for everyone she can appeal to the shared history between the object and a people, much as one would in the case of my grandfather's ring.

However, this move is not so easily achieved. Many citizens of a national group (or a religious or ethnic one, for that matter) cannot actually claim a recent common history with a land or nation: globalization has seen to that. Literally sharing a close common ancestry with the original owners of cultural objects with which nations tend to identify is even less likely. This model may even, surprisingly, tell in favor of a universalist understanding of the significance of cultural heritage, at least beginning at a certain point in history: a universalist might claim that everyone has a justified interest in historical artifacts that date back to the most recent common ancestor of all living humans, which scientists estimate to have lived between 5,000 and 2,000 years ago.<sup>59</sup>

However, these considerations might equally well be thought to call into question the relevance of ancestry for grounding reason to value cultural heritage. While appeal to ancestry is understandable as a basis for analyzing the relevance of cultural heritage (after all, it is a fairly objective way of charting humanity's course back through time) the more one focuses on the difficulties of an account of heritage based on actual ancestry, the more arbitrary ancestry seems

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<sup>59</sup> Douglas L.T. Rohde, Steve Olson, and Joseph T. Chang, "Modelling the Recent Common Ancestry of All Living Humans," *Nature* (2004).

as a necessary criterion for having reason to value it.<sup>60</sup> It certainly isn't a necessary condition of my having reason to value my grandfather's ring: I would still have such a reason if I had been adopted, or been a close friend. All that seems to matter is that my grandfather was a valued part of my life, and thus I have reason to value his ring in virtue of the historical feature of its having belonged to him. This is not to say that ancestry could not still serve as a sufficient condition for having a reason to value cultural heritage, but sufficient conditions are not what we're looking for here. The particularist position claims that *only* some people have reason to value cultural heritage. For the reasons stated, I am skeptical that ancestry might be a necessary condition with such a consequence.

I think there is some truth to the universalist idea that the farther back in time we go, the more universal the value of cultural heritage becomes. As we have seen, there is a point in time at which there is no distinction to be made between cultural history and human history, and we thus all share the relevant feature (being human) that makes us part of that history, and thus grounds valuing it in both informational and even sentimental ways.<sup>61</sup> This is the monistic form of universal reason. It might be thought of, in this regard, as similar to the value of the natural world: "For the natural world, just as much as human culture, has a particular history that is part of our history and part of our context, both explaining and giving significance to our lives. Thus what it is that we value about an ancient human habitation has much more in common with what it is that we value about the natural world."<sup>62</sup> But moreover, even as we move beyond the point of common ancestry, our links with the past remain broad and far-reaching. Ancestry,

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<sup>60</sup> For further discussion, see Appiah, "Whose Culture Is It, Anyway?."

<sup>61</sup> Compare the discussions of "cosmopolitan value" found in Young, "The Values of the Past."; Appiah, "Whose Culture Is It, Anyway?."

<sup>62</sup> John O'Neill, Alan Holland, and Andrew Light, *Environmental Values* (New York and Canada: Routledge, 2008), 162.

geography, citizenship, academic study, and personal identification may all be sufficient (though not individually necessary) conditions for having reason to value cultural heritage, and there are few expanses of time that we cannot relate to in one of these ways.<sup>63</sup> Thus we can potentially make sense of the impersonal value of cultural heritage even when its universality is achieved through an overlapping plurality of reasons. This is the pluralistic universalism made possible by the Reason to Value account, which can secure a range of reasons for everyone to value something, even when those reasons vary from person to person. It is only when cultural heritage becomes very local, in both time and place, that most others lack a reason for valuing it, and thus where a particularist claim regarding its value might be asserted. It is truly the case that only a few people have reason to value my grandfather's ring, but most significant aspects of history and heritage simply are not like that: they have a much further reach than their temporally and geographically local communities. Importantly, even if one disagrees with my assessments about the scope of cultural heritage here, the Reason to Value account clearly provides us with the conceptual space to productively debate what forms of cultural heritage might have universal value and why, as well as why and to what extent the value of other forms of cultural heritage might fail to achieve universality.

## *5. Conclusion*

As important as I believe these considerations are to understanding the range of persons who have reason to value cultural heritage, they do not obviate the claims that nations or other groups might have to the ownership or possession of such heritage: in addition to legal or political bases for those claims (which there is not sufficient space to consider here), there is a value-based claim for keeping heritage objects in their appropriate local context. While I have

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<sup>63</sup> For some further thoughts on the value of history and its implications, see Erich Hatala Matthes, "History, Value, and Irreplaceability," *Ethics* 124, no. 1 (2013): 35-64.

argued that local conditions such as nationality and ancestry are not necessary conditions for *persons* to have reasons to value heritage objects, there may well be an important sense in which local *context* is essential for appreciating and understanding the historical significance of such objects. This is true not just for archeological scientists, but also for those who engage in non-informational modes of valuation. The recent resolution of the ownership of the artifacts from Machu Picchu, a case with which we began our discussion, provides a fitting example of how local possession can be balanced with recognition of broad reasons for valuing cultural heritage. Yale has recently agreed to repatriate the Incan artifacts to Peru, where, in partnership with the Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abade del Cusco, they have opened a new UNSAAC-Yale International Center for the Study of Machu Picchu.<sup>64</sup> This provides the local context necessary for engaging with the value of the Incan artifacts, while taking steps to increase access in recognition of the fact that reasons for valuing such artifacts extends beyond the borders of Peru or of the descendants of Incan peoples.<sup>65</sup> Thus my argument provides theoretical justification for this partnership, which could serve as a model for the repatriation of other historically significant artifacts.<sup>66</sup>

In conclusion, I hope in this last section to have used the Reason to Value analysis to illuminate the debate over the evaluative scope of cultural heritage, as well as to put pressure on the view that the value of cultural heritage, in particular the sentimental value associated with particularist attachments, is necessarily specific to local interest groups. This has required putting

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<sup>64</sup> <http://news.yale.edu/2011/10/06/peru-yale-center-study-machu-picchu-and-inca-culture-opens>

<sup>65</sup> Of course, one might ask, if the artifacts are in a museum, why should it matter where the museum is located? How does this provide local context? The answers to these questions depend on how the museum is constructed, and the specific programs developed there to take advantage of that context. Surely, at least on the value-based approach I've been discussing, there are ways that a museum might be constructed and managed so as to take advantage of or obviate the potential benefits of local context.

<sup>66</sup> Despite my defense of the wide scope of reasons for valuing cultural heritage, I am a strong proponent of repatriation of cultural heritage objects, a matter I hope to explore in future work.

aside the stark contrast between impersonal and personal value. I have noted that there are good reasons why local groups should maintain possession of local heritage objects (including histories of injustice that there has not been space to explore here), but I have argued this is not because locals are the only ones who have reason to value them.

In a larger context, I hope to have shown that traditional accounts of impersonal value have been in need of revision. I have argued that attention to the reasons we have to value things is essential to our best understanding of value, which moreover allows for a more nuanced approach to understanding the evaluative scope of different things. My hope is that further investigation into this dimension of our evaluative lives will yield fruitful results, not just in the study of our relationship to the past, but also in the many other areas of moral and political philosophy where disputes about the scope of value, and the things that possess it, often arise.