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Cultural Values and their Reception
Exploring the Case of Cultural Heritage

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In the debates of value-theory, it is often assumed that the problem of relativism is to be addressed in a general way, taking moral values as archetype of values. The aim of this paper is to contribute to a differentiation of this debate by facing the problem of relativism in terms of a specific kind of values, namely that of cultural values ascribed to heritage. It shall be shown that by involving both cultural and value-dimensions, the case of cultural heritage does require an approach more open to historical change and cultural differences. After elaborating the various aspects of cultural heritage, some features of cultural values and their experience are to be described. Discussing the problems of radical absolutist and relativist approaches, I will defend a 'middle way' that is able to articulate the historicity and cultural diversity of our reception of heritage and its values without giving up the idea of an irreducibility of value-phenomena: Such a view has to recognise the culturally produced character of objects of heritage, the culturally mediated nature of our experience of its values and finally the specific feature of cultural values, whose realisation is interwoven with cultural acts of recognition and collective identification.

Keywords: cultural heritage, axiology, value-theory, relativity, artefact, reception, historicity, phenomenology, philosophy of culture

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Introduction

In the current philosophical debates on values, most scholars would claim that relativism is a central – if not the most important – challenge for any axiology or value-theory: If there were any values, shouldn't they be universal and absolute, being the same for everybody, everywhere and at any time? And isn't the idea of any "relativity" of values – might it concern historical change or cultural differences – some sort of death-sentence for axiological reasoning? Regarding *moral* values, these assumptions seem to be quite plausible: Since ethical judgements and justifications request consistency, a given conduct can hardly be considered as good and bad at the same time.[1] Thus, if such a (radical) relativism about values was true, it would be necessary to find other ways of moral justification.

There is, though, a quite remarkable detail that is seldom made explicit: The 'threat' of value-relativism is often discussed in general terms, referring just to 'the' values. At a closer look, however, it becomes clear that most of the views involved have actually *moral* values in mind.[2] Since it is uncontroversial to maintain that there are different kinds of values (or at least candidates)[3], such as social values, aesthetic values, religious values or maybe even vital values, the general character of the discussion and the (implicit) emphasis on moral values raise two questions: Why on earth should the problem of relativism apply to all kinds of values in the same way, as the reference to 'the' values implies? And even if there was some sort of representative or archetype-kind of values, why should it be that of *moral* values? Of course, philosophy has always been particularly interested in moral phenomena such as the good, but, on the other hand, it is quite clear that

[1] For an exemplary discussion in the analytical tradition see Gilbert Harmann and Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997). For a recent phenomenological work see Roberta De Monticelli, *Towards a Phenomenological Axiology. Discovering What Matters* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021): 193–257.

[2] See for instance Ronald Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

[3] For some canonical or recent positions that do all distinguish different kinds or classes of values see Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values. A New Attempt toward the Foun-dation of an Ethical Personalism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 85–110; Nicolai Hartmann, *Ethics* (London and New York: Allen, Unwin and Macmillan, 1932); Jospeh Raz, *The Practice of Value* (Oxford: Claredon, 2008).

moral values are one narrow and very specific chapter in the book of value-phenomena, concerning especially persons, their attitudes and actions towards each other.[4]

If we take for granted that there are different kinds, classes or types of values, the question of relativism (and the possibility of pluralism) may be associated to very different phenomena, being also more or less problematic. In this paper, I want to contribute to such a discussion by analysing the value-dimension of *cultural heritage*. In fact, cultural heritage seems to exhibit the whole problem of the relation of value and historical change or cultural differences *in nuce*: On one site, it is very plausible to ascribe certain values to cultural heritage. Due to the lack of a clearer expression, I shall call them *cultural values* – having in mind the "significance" or "importance" we ascribe to many cultural entities or practices without considering them to be necessarily aesthetically valuable. On the other site, it is clear that cultural heritage cannot exist apart from cultural patterns and practices: it is brought into being by cultural activities and then receipted over time in history, which can also go along with different value-ascriptions or the negation of value at all. I intend to show that the cultural dimension of heritage and its value-dimension may be brought much closer together than it is assumed by the standard discussion on value-relativism.

In the first two sections, I will discuss various dimensions of cultural heritage and make a first attempt to sketch its value-dimension. This will require some space, but an adequate understanding of the phenomenon and the associated values is necessary to be able to address the problem of relativism. In the following step, I will discuss two opposing views that I find problematic. Whereas the first of them takes values to be eternal and completely separated from mere 'positive

[4] At this point we see indeed some sort of 'primacy' of moral-philosophy within practical philosophy and axiology. For a discussion of this problem, see: Martin Hoffmann, Reinold Schmücker and Héctor Wittwer, *Vorrang der Moral? Eine metaethische Kontroverse* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2017). One quite attractive feature of the phenomenological approach to moral values is that its various characteristics have been described and confronted with other kinds. See for instance Nicolai Hartmann, "Vom Wesen sittlicher Forderungen," in: *Das Wertproblem und die Philosophie der Gegenwart. Aufsätze zu Wert und Sinn* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2024), 61–108; Aurel Kolnai, "Morality and Practice I: The Ambiguity of the Good," in: *Ethics, Value and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2017), 63–122.

culture', the second one tries to reduce cultural values to mere practice. Afterwards, I shall present three possibilities to bring value and culture closer together: the distinction of values and goods, the insight that value-experience is culturally mediated and finally the idea that being object of certain relations of identification and recognition might be specific feature of cultural values – a part of their nature, so to speak.

Cultural Heritage – Artefact or Objectified Spirit?

Before approaching to cultural heritage, it should be remembered that this is obviously no genuinely philosophical topic: Many debates focused on heritage take place in various disciplines more or less closely associated to what is called *cultural studies* – for instance archaeology, museology, cultural history, and the more specific heritage studies. Nevertheless, several philosophical disciplines and traditions have something to say about it, although philosophical research might be interested in other aspects of these phenomena.

How is cultural heritage to be understood and what entities may be considered to be heritage? Some of the most common candidates are artwork, monuments, buildings and architectural sites.[5] All these things have in common that there are material entities, but – unlike stones and trees – they are *artificial*, brought into being by different cultural practices.[6] It is no wonder, however, that this material aspect or dimension of heritage is very attractive for philosophical approaches because of its strong connection to ontology. According to many views (especially in the analytical debate), objects of cultural heritage could count as "artefacts", i.e. as entities that do differ from mere physical objects by having certain "functions" or "causal powers".[7] These features, that are constituted by acts

[5] Orvar Löfgren and Ewa Klekot, "Culture and Heritage," *Ethnologie française* 42, no. 2 (2012): 391–394; Rodney Harrison et al., "For ever, for everyone," in: *Heritage Futures. Comparative Approaches to Cultural and Natural Heritage Practices* (London: UCL Press, 2020), 1–19.

[6] In my discussion, I will leave out the notion of "immaterial heritage" which represents practices like German beer-brewing and so forth.

[7] Lynne Baker, *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life. An Essay in Practical Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 49–59.

of collective intentionality, define the role that artefacts play in our lifeworld, allowing or demanding specific actions.[8]

Another aspect of heritage becomes very clear by comparing this expression to other terms. It is somehow fascinating that apart from rather neutral concepts like "artefact", there are various expressions and concepts referring to the same (or very similar) phenomena, while yet focusing on different aspects. Whereas concepts like "cultural property" or "cultural asset" have a certain economic implication, the German term of "Kulturgut" or the Italian "Bene Culturale" are rather associated to an evaluative dimension.[9] "Heritage", however, like "relict" or "vestiges of the past", does imply that something has come to us from history.[10] Yet, if we compare these expressions, heritage seems to be unique in regard of the way it is related to persons and collectives: A "relict" may be found or not, may be sold or destroyed, a "vestige of the past" may be treasured or ignored, but talking about "heritage" strongly suggests that something historical has been laid in our hands, imposing the burden of deciding how to go on with it. Thus, more than the other terms, "heritage" stresses the dimension of individual and collective action, of decision and responsibility.

In the various disciplines of cultural studies mentioned above, the discussion is strongly focused on this connection of history, present and future. It is argued that heritage is not only something that is kept in some archive or storage but is part of our dynamic cultural practice in the present.[11] Taking this insight seriously, we see also two sites of its historical givenness. On one site, our heritage was there before ourselves, and it is beyond our power to modify it or to choose something else. Even if we try to ignore it, this will not make it disappear. On the other side, though, the role that it plays in our collective life is not defined by its production, which means that we have to constantly find new relations, interpretations and repositions.

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[8] John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin, 1996), 79–126; Baker, *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life*, 98–99.

[9] Janna Thompson, "Cultural Property, Restitution and Value," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 20, no. 3 (2003), 251–262.

[10] Orvar Löfgren and Ewa Klekot, "Culture and Heritage": 391.

[11] Rodney Harrison et al., "For ever, for everyone." A quite different view is presented by David Roberts, who criticises the close relation of heritage, spectacle and commercialised tourism. See David Roberts, *History of the Present* (London: Routledge, 2022), 47–60.

Let us consider an example: If we visit the Julian Alps, we will find there many forms of heritage of World War I, or "The Great War", as it is called there: war-cemeteries, former fortifications, trenches and so forth. In our collective life, we could relate to this heritage in very different and even conflicting ways: We might glorify the deeds of the fallen soldiers, we could remember how even the most remote and majestic parts of the world may be shaped and destroyed by war, or we could find ourselves connected with people of other nations (including the former enemies) in sorrow and pity considering all these lost lives. The point is that our relation to these forms of heritage is not defined by its production in the past. Even the excessive and tendentious language of some monuments or tombstones, meant to glorify the battles and soldiers, may on the contrary increase our grief and critical stance.

All these insights are important when we return to the philosophical discussion: Many artefact-theorists like Searle or Baker assume that the causal roles and functions of an artefact are simply defined by the collective acts of their constitution.[12] Although such views may be sufficient to reconstruct how artefacts are brought into being, they have difficulties to understand how the factual historical change of our reception of artefacts and heritage is possible. These difficulties, however, are grounded in the stereotype that an ontological analysis of cultural phenomena could limit itself to substantial matters like "primary kinds" and mere material and causal relations (like those of "constitution")[13], excluding any historical dynamics beyond causal relations. This is no minor problem: Since most of the artefacts in our lifeworld are *not* produced by ourselves, but already made by past generations and being now the object of our reception, it becomes quite obvious that a philosophical analysis should be able to say something about this.[14]

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[12] Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, 31–58, 113–116; Baker, *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life*, 51–66.

[13] Baker, *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life*, 60–66.

[14] Recently, Amrei Bahr and Reinold Schmücker made two attempts to include cultural change and historical differences by applying a specific notion of "artefact-function". See Amrei Bahr, "What the Mona Lisa and a Screwdriver Have in Common," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 96, no. 1 (2019): 81–104; Reinold Schmücker, "On Judging Art," in: *Aesthetics Today*, ed. by Stefan Majetschak and Anja Weiberg (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 87–94. Unfortunately, I will not be able to discuss these approaches here. As a more general point, I have some terminological worries about such a use of the term "function" (or also: causation), that does easily suggest a disputable continuity between natural and artificial objects.

One remarkable, yet seldom mentioned alternative was elaborated by Nicolai Hartmann in the 1930s: In his ontologically grounded philosophy of culture, Hartmann distinguishes three parts of spiritual being: the personal spirit, objective spirit and objectified spirit.[15] Whereas the personal spirit consists in the spiritual being that is realised in the individual persons, the objective spirit is understood as a mediating sphere, connecting the various persons by providing a common ground (for instance in the sense of language, morality, customs, science, or aesthetic taste).[16] The objectified spirit, however, includes all artefacts, like books, houses, artwork etc., what makes it as the crucial category for an understanding of heritage.[17]

According to Hartmann, the mediating sphere of the objective spirit is important for both the production and the reception of artefacts (objectified spirit). When a person produces artwork, a book or something else, their work does not only objectify a personal intention, but also the 'spirit' of the time, the current taste and aesthetic ideals.[18] The objective spirit of a time that has influenced a product or artefact may be explicitly experienced by later generations or also by other cultures: Reading the Sherlock Holmes-novels, for instance, we do not only follow a certain (fictional) plot, but we also get an impression of the Victorian Era of the British Empire, the typical conduct of different parts of the society of London, their value-orientations and personal relations. At the same time, though, it is important to note that any reception of the objectified spirit does take place on the ground provided by the *current* objective spirit – i. e. the taste, the ideals, the morality of the latest generations.[19] Artefacts and artwork of the past will become only a part of the contemporary 'canon', if they resonate somehow with the problems, conflicts and ideals of our time.[20] Since this aspect of reception is widely independent from the personal and objective spirit that was once objectified within the artefact, it is historically open and undetermined.

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[15] Nicolai Hartmann, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins. Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der Geschichtsphilosophie und der Geisteswissenschaften* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962), 66–74.

[16] Ibid., 175–256.

[17] Ibid., 406–456.

[18] Ibid., 197, 464–466. See also Moritz von Kalckreuth, "Alltägliche Lebenswirklichkeit und ontologische Theorie," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 68, no. 2 (2020): 275–287.

[19] Hartmann, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*, 270–272, 473–498.

[20] Ibid., 298, 473–498.

With all these simple, but insightful points, Hartmann's theory of culture succeeds surprisingly well in grasping the case of heritage. Especially his notion of a reception of objectified spirit offers a framework to articulate the historical change of our stance towards different sites, monument etc.: Since we always approach heritage on the ground of a perspective corresponding to the objective spirit of our time, we experience different facets as significant or important, while others are ignored and rejected. Finally, if we consider that the various parts of our objective spirit (our aesthetic taste, our ideals, our morality etc.) are also strongly influenced by our historical experiences – for instance crises or wars, but also times of wealth and optimism – we see that such collective experiences do also shape our relation and recognition of our own (and foreign) heritage. Such experiences may be important to understand the specific significance of the entities of heritage we face every day in local circumstances, like the already mentioned war-cemeteries in the Julian Alps or proudly preserved monuments in smaller towns or villages.

Having said something about the material dimension of cultural heritage, its production and reception, I shall briefly add something about the notion of *world* heritage. Since world heritage – according to UNESCO – includes monuments, groups of buildings, sites etc., it is quite unproblematic to say that both notions refer to similar objects.[21] Nevertheless, it is important to note that the consideration of a given cultural heritage as *world heritage* is a political act of recognition, that goes along with access to funding, specific rights, duties and other consequences.

Cultural Heritage and its Value-Dimension

Until this point, I have discussed two features of heritage: first its materiality and second its relation to cultural practice and pattern – which concerns not only its production, but also its reception (which is, strictly speaking, more relevant to our everyday practice, simply because many entities of heritage are already

[21] "*Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*," UNESCO, 1972,
https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf (accessed: 11.05.2024).

brought into being). This discussion was insofar important as it helps us to understand what might be meant by cultural or historical 'relativity'. Now it is time to move on to the *value-dimension* of heritage. There are two questions to address: Is there any value-dimension that can be made plausible referring to convincing evidence? And: How can these values be further described?

Let us begin with a phenomenological point: According to many value-theories, a promising sign for a value-dimension is the occurrence of certain emotions or acts, but also the fact that we simply *care* for things, experiencing them to be important for our lives and their meaning.[22] For instance, we experience beloved people and their happiness as being important for our life and joy, we respect their dignity and conceive their lives worth preserving and protection. What about cultural heritage? Regarding emotions and experiences, one first and interesting observation is that there is at least no distinct kind of experience that corresponds exclusively to heritage: Whereas we describe our reception of aesthetic or religious values referring to aesthetic and religious experiences, there is no kind of experience clearly corresponding to cultural heritage. However, we may consider that there are different, rather unspecific feelings and emotions like being moved, impressed or even overwhelmed by monuments and sites. Such phenomena might indeed indicate the presence of values, although their unspecified character makes it difficult to draw profound conclusions. Especially when heritage does also realise aesthetic values, such emotional responses are difficult to categorise.

Then, there are also some more complex phenomena that may include an emotional orientation towards heritage (even if they are probably not to be reduced to such cases), like 'falling in love' with a historical city, or 'having an impression of belonging'.[23] Although the first expression is clearly e metaphor, both

[22] See for instance Nicolai Hartmann, "Sinngebung und Sinnerfüllung," in: *Das Wertproblem und die Philosophie der Gegenwart* (Hamburg: Meiner 2024), 191–196; Raz, *Value, Respect and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For a broad account of attachment with cultural objects in terms of an everyday aesthetics see also Rita Felski, *Hooked: Art and Attachment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 2020).

[23] For the debate on "belonging" that marks an interesting intersection of philosophy of culture and phenomenology of affects or emotions see for instance Matthew Ratcliffe, "Belonging to the World Through the Feeling Body," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 16, no. 2 (2009): 205–211; Annette Hilt, "Ein Zuhause, das mehr als Heimat ist," *Zeitschrift für Kulturphilosophie* 2021, no. 2/2021: 84–95.

phenomena imply that there is something so valuable that it requires establishing a constant connection by becoming part of the collective life, instead of being just a distanced observer. The metaphor of love and the phenomenon of belonging do both underline the great significance of something for the meaning in our lives, indicating value-attachments that go along with certain atmospheric experiences.[24] Furthermore, these phenomena seem to be different from mere aesthetic value-experience by addressing us not only as enjoying subjects, but as potential parts of a cultural life-form related to a given objectified spirit (using Hartmann's term).

Even more important is the fact that cultural heritage is the object of *care* and *engagement*: Local heritage is often preserved by volunteers who spend a lot of time keeping museums, churches and other buildings open, showing visitors around, organising fundraising-events and so forth. It is quite obvious that these people experience the task of preserving and protecting 'their' heritage as meaningful and one important source of self-fulfilment. According to thinkers like Hartmann or Joseph Raz, experiences of meaning and personal engagement do express value-attachments, thus their occurrence may contribute to a justification of the assumption of values.[25] Furthermore, the case of caring and engagement does also support the suggestion that, concerning heritage, there are other relevant values than aesthetic ones: Many sites, monuments etc. are the object of engagement and care despite their rather ordinary aesthetic value, and most of the people who are committed to their heritage would certainly not be interested in exchanging it for something more beautiful.

Finally, a possible value-dimension is also implied by our *normative demands* with regard to cultural heritage: On a local level, the destruction of heritage (or the mere intention) is often considered as scandalous, leading to the formation

[24] This atmospheric relation may be also described referring to Hartmut Rosa's notion of resonance. Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021). Another account has been presented by Dylan Trigg, who explores how we experience traumatic parts of our history at specific places like ruins. Dylan Trigg, "The place of trauma: Memory, hauntings, and the temporality of ruins," *Memory Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 87–101.

[25] See Hartmann, *Ethics*; idem, "Sinngebung und Sinnerfüllung"; Raz, *Value, Respect and Attachment*.

of citizens' initiatives and protest. Even in cases in which heritage may be sacrificed in favour of something else, we expect a sufficient justification. On the level of national or even world heritage, the careless risking or even wilful destruction (like that of heritage-sites in Palmyra by the IS in the year 2015) is considered to be bad and severely criticised, if not condemned.[26]

Until this point, it should have become clear that the assumption of a value-dimension of cultural heritage is supported by various evidence like our emotional experiences and attachment (in a broad sense), our engagement and the application of normative demands. But if cultural heritage does always carry or realise values, how are these values to be described? One first, very important point was already mentioned several times: If there is a kind of value corresponding to heritage, it cannot be that of aesthetic values. Firstly, we have already seen that the experience of cultural heritage is not an aesthetic one, but rather that of resonating to a city, a place or a monument, for instance in the case of belonging. Secondly, it had been shown that people commit to 'their' heritage and care about it – even though they *do not* take it to be beautiful or otherwise outstanding in aesthetic terms. When we think about war-cemeteries or memorials, it would be even inappropriate to claim that their point was to be beautiful.

But if the values of heritage are not aesthetic ones, what are they? Of course, I will not be able to develop and defend a completely satisfying category here, thus I shall rather collect some promising thoughts. One first, helpful description is presented by Max Scheler: In his famous *Formalismus*, he does not only describe the main classes of values (like vital, spiritual, religious values), but he does also mention more specific kinds. One of them are "symbolic values", for which he gives the example of the flag of a regiment.[27] These values are intrinsic values of an object, but nevertheless bound to a symbolic relation. Since heritage does also have such a symbolic dimension, it is a suitable candidate for such values. Thus, following Scheler, the values of some forms of cultural heritage seem to be related to its feature of symbolising the past (like crucial moments, decisions in history), moments of triumph or sorrow. Although this idea may already lead in a very promising direction, there is still more to say about it: Both in the case of the soldiers of a regiment and in that of citizens caring for cultural heritage, we may ask

[26] See Constantine Sandis, ed., *Cultural Heritage Ethics. Between Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2014).

[27] Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 104.

how the engagement might be motivated. A hint was already given by talking of people and 'their' heritage. In both cases, the ascription of value goes along with the identification of persons with objects, connecting them in a symbolic way with the own collective identity. Or to put it bluntly: The cultural value of our cultural heritage consists in its significance for our collective life and self-understanding.

Finally, there is one rather general, but yet important addition to make: As other entities, cultural heritage may carry or realise various values. Thus, it is possible that a local chapel realises a cultural value (as cultural heritage) and a religious value (as a sacred place), while a site or a monument can be both culturally valuable *and* beautiful or aesthetically sublime. But, analogue to religious values that have to be realised for qualifying something as a religious object, or aesthetic values that have to be realised for qualifying something as artwork, cultural heritage requires necessarily the realisation of cultural values (and not aesthetic or religious ones).

"Axiological Truth" or "Mere Practice": The Failure of two Approaches

The aim of the previous sections was to elaborate a first understanding of heritage and its value-dimension. This understanding, though probably not entirely satisfying, was nevertheless required for any discussion of relativism, for it allows us to conclude if the different approaches are able to reflect the various dimensions of heritage. In this section, we will continue by discussing two opposing standard-approaches.

According to a first approach, our cultural heritage does bear or realise universal values. For instance, Hermann Parzinger argues that there was a universal "canon" of values, that becomes visible in cultural heritage.[28] Such views are closely related to the theoretical framework behind the UNESCO Convention of 1972, which defines world heritage referring to "outstanding universal value".[29]

[28] Hermann Parzinger, "Gedanken zum Kulturerbe in einer sich verändernden Welt," *Jahrbuch für Kulturpolitik* 2017/18 (2018): 125–126. Some positions try to avoid the difficulties of dealing with a set of abstract values like freedom, beauty, referring to more concrete ones, i. e. the aesthetic quality of a distinct monument etc. See Erich Hatala Matthes, "Impersonal Value, Universal Value, and the Scope of Cultural Heritage," *Ethics* 125, no. 4 (2015): 999–1027.

[29] "*Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.*"

This goes along with the idea that the value of a monument, site etc. is *universal* or *absolute* in the sense that its occurrence is an axiological truth, depending on axiological laws that are independent from empirical or historical coincidences.[30] Thus, a philosophical analysis of cultural heritage and its value is concerned with such axiological or conceptual matters, leaving the entire discussion of historical and cultural patterns to the disciplines from cultural studies.[31]

What could be wrong with such a view? Let us first begin with a positive point: By referring to values, it takes our lifeworld-experience of the meaning and value of cultural heritage seriously. But, on the other hand, it separates the value-dimension from the other dimensions of cultural heritage, assuming that it was systematically independent. This is a step often performed in philosophical axiology, and it might be quite suitable for certain kinds of values: When we ascribe moral values, for instance, we expect the ascription and its justifications to be independent from cultural patterns, conventions and historical self-understandings. But is this convincing in regard of the cultural values of heritage? In the last section, it has been pointed out that our stances towards monuments, sites etc. may change, and that the way we interpret them does not have much to do with the original scope of their production. When, for instance, we interpret a World War I monument today in a specific way, it seems plausible that this includes also the experience and ascription of different values or value-qualities. Here lies the main problem of strong absolutist and universalist views concerning cultural values: In

[30] De Monticelli, "Cultural Anthropology: An Axiological Approach," in: *Philosophical Anthropology as an Interdisciplinary Practice*, ed. Erik Dzwiza-Ohlsen, Erik Speer, and Andreas Speer (Paderborn: Brill Mentis, 2021), 215–225; Erich Hatala Matthes, "History, Value, and Irreplaceability," *Ethics* 124, no. 1 (2013): 35–64. It is important to note that Charles Taylor has elaborated a far more modest and subtle view on abstract values by arguing that abstract values are to be culturally and historically articulated. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25–109. Despite its importance, Taylor's view is seldom discussed in the debates of axiology or value-theory. Though I find it quite convincing in general terms, I am rather sceptical concerning its usefulness for the present argument, simply because the cultural values I have in mind (like significance, importance etc.) seem to be quite another league than 'thick concepts' like freedom, justice and the good.

[31] De Monticelli, "Cultural Anthropology: An Axiological Approach," 215–225.

our lifeworld, there are obvious historical and cultural differences, and a philosophical view should be able to say something about them, instead of suggesting that they were some kind of postmodern chimera.[32]

Furthermore, the separation of the value-dimension and the cultural reception of heritage is also systematically problematic: As described above, the occurrence of cultural values and the form of their experience are somehow interwoven with symbolic relations, cultural practices and identities. Such relations are not a mere product of arbitrariness, but rely on certain principles that could be dealt with in a philosophical framework. These connections are ignored and put aside assuming that cultural heritage just did rely on axiological truths with which a philosophical approach could deal in an isolated way. Then, of course, there is a certain suspicion that 'universal' in a global context may eventually turn out to mean 'western'.[33]

A second, opposing approach does begin with some worries about strong absolutist and universalist assertions regarding heritage and values: As Johan Josefsson and Inga Aronsson put it, "the value of heritage has the ability to be modified, negotiated, interpreted, reinterpreted and rejected."[34] In other words: Since we constantly change our stance towards cultural heritage and its value in history (not to mention different perspectives at the same time), cultural heritage cannot be defined by one absolute or universal value. This conclusion may lead to an approach that is often labelled "cultural relativism" or "constructivism". According to such a view, values are no independent matter at all, but only the consequences of cultural practice. Thus, the production and reception of cultural heritage and the various roles it plays in our cultural patterns in terms of recognition, care etc. would include or lead to the performance of ascribing value.[35] From this point of view, theorising about values in a philosophical way would be some sort of non-justified essentialisation, following rather our existential need of constant normative categories than any plausible scientific program.

[32] See Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs*, 141.

[33] De Monticelli, "Cultural Anthropology: An Axiological Approach," 217.

[34] Johan Josefsson and Inga-Lill Aronsson, "Heritage as life-values: a study of the cultural heritage concept," *Current Science* 110, no. 11 (2016): 2094.

[35] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006).

How is this approach to be considered? Even if we take a critical stance, there is a positive aspect that should be honoured: The presented views take the historical change of our reception of cultural heritage and our value-ascriptions seriously – though it is certainly disputable if such a complete negation of value-categories is necessary and plausible. At the same time, though, such views have several problems, of which at least some shall be mentioned: Firstly, by reducing the value-dimension to nothing but a result of cultural practice, the entire category of value and its features or properties would become completely obsolete. This does not seem to be supported by our lifeworld-experience, in which we experience values, their relations to entities and ascriptions as to exhibit some regularities. This phenomenological point might be formulated in an even more fundamental way: If the category of value itself is part of our lifeworld-experience, we should have very good reasons to deny it or to reduce it to other phenomena. Finally, there is also a normative point: As we have seen, the ascription of value may also justify a normative critique of the destruction, the endangerment etc. of cultural heritage.[36] Apparently, even some radical relativists would stress such a normative stance, but could justify it only by referring to different forms of cultural practices and patterns – which might not be very promising.

After all, we can learn two important lessons. The first: by defending a certain independence of values (universalism and absolutism) or the historicity of value-experiences (relativism), both opposing views are grounded on plausible insights, while ignoring important counter-intuitions. Universalist and absolutist views deny the role of historical change, whereas relativist approaches deny the occurrence and irreducibility of value-phenomena. The second, more important lesson to learn: both objections depend on very strong assumptions. While the radical universalist or absolutist assumes that *any* thought on historicity could provoke a fall in the depths of radical relativism, the relativist assumes that *any* acceptance of somehow independent value-phenomena would lead into a speculative value-metaphysics, or, even worse, a value-based pseudo-religion. Both assumptions,

[36] Apart from criticising destruction or leaving something to decay, me might also stress the value-dimension criticizing extreme forms of commercialization, for instance an overgrowing tourism that does not allow anymore to 'resonate' with heritage. Regarding the critical description of such phenomena, I do completely agree with Approaches like those of Roberts and Smith. However, I dissent insofar as I do not consider value-ascriptions a part of the problem, but rather a possible perspective for a solution.

though, seem to be prejudices and do not reflect all possible philosophical approaches to the relevant phenomena.

Bringing Value-Theory and Cultural Relativity Closer Together

As outlined in the last section, both alternatives are not entirely satisfying – what raises the question if there might be a middle way, i.e. a way to combine the historical and culturally relative dimension of heritage with its value-dimension. Although I think that some tendency towards such a middle way has already been indicated in the course of the first sections, I shall now discuss three possible steps more explicitly. In general, we may summarise the idea behind it as a combination of value-theory and philosophy of culture.

The first step concerns the 'ontological' character of heritage: As outlined in the first sections, monuments, sites etc. are not only material entities, but part of cultural patterns and objects of cultural practices (what does influence not only their production, but also their reception by persons and collectives). Here it is important to note that by realising these dimensions, there is always a connection between historicity (or cultural diversity) and value. This idea is also supported by Max Scheler's conception of "goods": According to Scheler, a good is an entity that is material (like artwork) or immaterial (like friendship) and part of cultural structures, while bearing necessarily values.[37] Although it may be disputed if 'good' was a very lucky term for heritage simply because of its various implications, it is quite clear that for Scheler, heritage would be a perfect example for that category. However, he seems to go even a step further by saying that in our life-world-experience, the values of goods are not experienced separately, but as part of them, being interwoven with their other aspects.[38]

There is still another lesson to learn from Scheler's theory: Goods can bear different values, of which not all are experienced at the same time. In fact, we do experience certain value-qualities of a given good more clearly than others, and

[37] Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 12–29.

[38] Finally, we should not forget that the realisation and reception of cultural values presupposes certain cultural phenomena in a rather ordinary, technical way: In regard of aesthetic values, Joseph Raz argues that an opera can only carry certain values if we satisfy the sufficient conditions for composing, singing and listening to it. Raz, *The Practice of Value*: 21.

some remain even out of our sight. If there is a manifold of values realised at the same good, however, it is plausible that different generations or cultures recognise or prefer different value-aspects. In other words, the possible co-existence of various value-qualities at the same object of heritage may allow different generations or groups to experience different values.

The second step concerns our *experience* of cultural heritage and its values. During the previous discussion of the reception of cultural heritage, it was shown that such a reception does always take place on the ground of the contemporary "objective spirit", i.e. a pattern of aesthetic, conventional, moral and other lifeforms. This insight applies also to the value of heritage. In the contemporary philosophical debates, the experience of values is often understood in analogy to sensual perception or in terms of intentional emotions.[39] Both alternatives rely on the same paradigm of an individual mind representing the world. When it comes to discuss *cultural* values, though, we need to recognise that our individual experience of values is embedded in and mediated by a cultural sphere.[40] Our aesthetic taste, our worldview, our collective conventional and moral principles are of great importance regarding our abilities to experience and to recognise the values carried by heritage. If two persons belonging to different generations, worldviews or cultures stand before the same monument, their value-experiences and -ascriptions might be rather different, too. Furthermore, the different parts of our cultural sphere do not stand still, but are the object of historical change.

The importance of the cultural sphere or frame is also supported by the phenomena associated to an experience of cultural values: Though there is no 'cultural experience' analogue to religious or aesthetic experiences, it has been carefully pointed out that our attachment to cultural values might correlate to experiences of belonging or the metaphor of 'falling in love with a city'. In these cases, we do not only identify ourselves with a monument or an historic city centre in

[39] Íngrid Vendrell Ferran, "Feeling as Consciousness of Value," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 25 (2022): 71–88.

[40] At this point it is important to add that, according to Hartmann and Scheler, *any* value-experience is culturally mediated. In that way, the ascription of moral values is strongly influenced by the morality of a generation and a society, whereas the experience of aesthetic values is influenced by aesthetic ideals, taste etc. In the case of cultural values, however, it is even more difficult to deny the importance of such cultural sphere or frame.

the sense of material objects, but especially with the collective 'spirit' and 'atmosphere' that is realised by the interactions of heritage and collective life. In fact, this observation is supported by a feature of the objective spirit that is described by Hartmann: According to him, the objective spirit and all associated phenomena (like: the own morality, the own taste) are normally taken for granted and thus not explicitly experienced.[41] On the other hand, someone who does not share them will notice them in a far more explicit way, what is often experienced as resistance or even as a normalising power.[42] However, there might be also positive phenomena: If a foreign person comes to a place and does realise to belong there, this might be a positive experience of congruence (or as Rosa says: resonance), not only with some cultural entity and the realised values, but also with an explicitly noticed part of objective spirit.

I suppose that the previous points were quite easy to accept for value-theorists. The last step, however, concerns the nature and realisation of that what I have called 'cultural values', being a little more disputable. In his short essay on aesthetic values, Nicolai Hartmann writes: "The aesthetic value of a thing, on the other hand, does not exist independently […], but only for the observing subject. It is the value of a merely 'objectivated being'."[43]

Although concerning aesthetic values, Hartmann's argument is promising because it opens a way between subjectivism and objectivism: According to him, aesthetic values are independent from us (objectivism), but one central part of their objective nature is that they are realised in relations of appearance to a subject (subjectivism). This idea could help us to develop a more accurate understanding of the cultural values carried by cultural heritage. In the second section, it was pointed out that these values cannot be reduced to aesthetic ones, but nevertheless there was some difficulty to further describe and articulate them. For that reason, I had to use rather unspecified terms like "significant" or "meaningful". However, one important aspect was their close relation to collective identification: Experiencing heritage as "our" heritage seems to go along with an identification

[41] Hartmann, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*, 177, 279.

[42] Ibid., 272–275.

[43] "Der ästhetische Wert einer Sache dagegen besteht nicht unabhängig […], sondern nur für das schauende Subjekt. Er ist eben Wert eines bloß 'objektiven' Seins." Nicolai Hartmann, "Über die Stellung der ästhetischen Werte im Reich der Werte überhaupt," in: *Das Wertproblem in der Philosophie der Gegenwart* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2024), 111.

in the sense that we feel its significance for our collective identity. From this point of view, we might say that it is part of the nature of the cultural values carried by heritage to be realised in relations of collective identification and recognition. Analogue to the case of aesthetic values described by Hartmann, this would allow to accept the importance of these acts for the ascription of value while at the same time reflecting their axiological independence.

Of course, one possible objection might be that this notion of cultural values goes too far, making the occurrence of value-phenomena dependent from us and our acts. On the other hand, it is rather obvious that the occurrence of cultural value presupposes the existence of culture, i.e. collectives and their activities. Furthermore, it is important to note that the acts of collective identification are no matter of, so to speak, arbitrary opinions or decisions, but embedded in the objective spirit of the time and its past.

Conclusion

It is now appropriate to return to the problem of relativism. In the beginning, I have criticised that the problem of value-relativism is normally addressed in a general way, referring only to 'the' values or to moral values as some kind of archetype. From a methodological standpoint, this corresponds to the idea of firstly elaborating and defending a general framework which is than applied on different phenomena, i.e. the different kinds of values. I do not deny that such a method works out beautifully in many philosophical debates, but in terms of values it does not seem very promising, simply because the 'realm of values' consists in so many different kinds and phenomena. Under these specific conditions, the assumption of universally valid categories and solutions is rather speculative.

As an alternative program, I have proposed to start by addressing the systematic problems (in this paper: relativism) on the level of one specific kind of values, i.e. the cultural values of heritage. Understanding cultural heritage and its value-dimension forces us to make some steps in the direction towards relativism, accepting the culturally produced character of heritage, the cultural mediatedness and historicity of our value-experience and the close relation of value-ascription (or even realisation) and cultural reception. Nevertheless, I have argued that ac-

cepting these insights does not necessarily lead to abandoning the idea of conceptual and axiological principles: In fact, there are many principles, relations etc. that do not only concern values, but also the different phenomena associated to the cultural sphere, its historical change, its relation to objectified spirit or artefacts etc. All these topics and relations have to be elaborated in a philosophical framework, thus there is no need to worry about being substituted by cultural studies.[44]

In the end, one might ask how the categories and descriptions presented in this paper are supposed to fit into the general systematic of axiology, which is still very focused on moral values. As indicated above, I would answer that a philosophical systematic should do justice to the phenomenon, not vice versa. Following Hartmann, we should rather understand our general axiological systematics as something that has to follow from and be justified by the categories and frameworks that are necessary to describe specific phenomena.

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[44] On the contrary, it has been indicated that the debates and studies of disciplines like heritage studies do provide very attractive suggestions.

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Streszczenie

Wartości kulturowe i ich recepcja. Analiza przypadku dziedzictwa kulturowego

W debatach na temat teorii wartości powszechne stało się podejmowanie problemów takich jak relatywizm na poziomie ogólnym, przy czym wartości są często rozumiane w oparciu o wartości moralne. Niniejszy tekst analizuje, jak kwestia relatywizmu przedstawia się w odniesieniu do zjawisk dziedzictwa kulturowego i jego wartości kulturowych. Pokazuje, że filozoficzne podejście do dziedzictwa kulturowego i wartości kulturowych może być przekonujące tylko wtedy, gdy uda mu się wyartykułować historyczność i kulturowe zapośredniczenie naszych doświadczeń wartości. W pierwszym kroku przedstawiono różne istotne aspekty dziedzictwa kulturowego. Na tej podstawie analizowane są radykalnie absolutystyczne i radykalnie relatywistyczne próby zrozumienia relacji między wartościami a zjawiskami kulturowymi. Następnie podjęto próbę nakreślenia alternatywy, która pozwala na wgląd w historyczność i kulturowe uwarunkowania naszego doświadczenia wartości kulturowych, nie rezygnując z nieredukowalności zjawisk wartości. Kluczowe znaczenie ma tu kulturowa kreacja dziedzictwa kulturowego, jego kulturowo zapośredniczone doświadczanie i wreszcie specyfika samych wartości

kulturowych, których realizacja jest aksjologicznie powiązana z kulturowymi aktami uznania i identyfikacji.

Słowa kluczowe: dziedzictwo kulturowe, aksjologia, teoria wartości, względność, artefakt, recepcja, historyczność, fenomenologia, filozofia kultury

Zusammenfassung

Kulturwerte und ihre Rezeption. Den Spezialfall von Kulturerbe erkunden

In den werttheoretischen Debatten ist es üblich geworden, Probleme wie den Relativismus auf einer allgemeinen Ebene zu thematisieren, wobei Werte oftmals nach dem Vorbild moralischer Werte verstanden werden. Der vorliegende Text untersucht, wie sich die Thematik des Relativismus mit Blick auf den Phänomenbereich kulturellen Erbes und seiner kulturellen Werte darstellt. Dabei wird gezeigt, dass ein philosophischer Ansatz zu Kulturerbe und Kulturwerten nur dann überzeugen kann, wenn es gelingt, die Geschichtlichkeit und kulturelle Vermittlung unserer Werterfahrungen zu artikulieren. In einem ersten Schritt werden verschiedene relevante Aspekte von Kulturerbe dargestellt. Auf dieser Grundlage erfolgt eine Auseinandersetzung mit radikal absolutistischen und radikal relativistischen Versuchen, das Verhältnis von Werten und Kulturphänomenen zu verstehen. Im Anschluss wird versucht, eine Alternative zu skizzieren, die der Einsicht in die Geschichtlichkeit und kulturelle Bedingtheit unserer Erfahrung von Kulturwerten gerecht wird, ohne die Irreduzibilität von Wertphänomenen aufzugeben. Von zentraler Bedeutung sind dabei die kulturelle Hervorbringung von Kulturerbe, seine kulturell vermittelte Erfahrung und schließlich die Spezifik von Kulturwerten selbst, deren Realisierung axiologisch mit kulturellen Akten der Anerkennung und Identifikation verwoben ist.

Schlüsselworte: Kulturerbe, Axiologie, Werttheorie, Relativität, Artefakt, Rezeption, Geschichtlichkeit, Phänomenologie, Kulturphilosophie

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