Published in the *Journal of Value Inquiry* (online first, May 2018)

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10790-018-9636-y

# Scheffler, Tradition and Value

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## 1. Introduction

In the essay "The Normativity of Tradition," Samuel Scheffler provides reasons why people might de facto choose to act on purely traditional grounds. I raise the question of whether these reasons can justify the claim that it is rational de jure to value tradition for its own sake. I argue that Scheffler's de facto reasons must be supplemented if they are to be seen as all-things-considered judgments (or de jure grounds) for valuing tradition for its own sake. Articulating de jure reasons for valuing tradition is one possible way of addressing the question of whether a philosophically defensible theory of moderate cosmopolitanism—which is opposed to both mere traditionalism and extreme versions of cosmopolitanism—could be formulated.

Scheffler takes it that, in the last few decades, globalization in economic, political, and technological matters has coincided with a trend toward communalism, nationalism, and multiculturalism, and that this circumstance has engendered two different approaches in ethical and political philosophy. Traditionalists think that loyalty to our own nation, tradition, or community is prior to any responsibility we might have to human beings in general, while liberals hold that such loyalties undermine the values of autonomy and equality. In this context, Scheffler aims to "develop a framework within liberal theory" that can reconcile the values of autonomy and equality with the special claims of historically contingent social ties, including

traditional relations.[1] The discourse of moral cosmopolitanism is part of this larger debate, and concerns the question of what we owe to our own family, nation, community, or tradition, and what our duties are as world citizens.[2] Within this discourse, the question of tradition is raised in two ways: whether tradition can generate any special responsibilities in the modern, globalized world, and if adherence to one's tradition is necessary for human flourishing. One sort of cosmopolitanism, which Scheffler calls "extreme" or "freewheeling," answers both of these questions negatively. Any allegiance to one's own culture, tradition, or even family must be justified in terms of the "ideal of world citizenship."[3] Human flourishing also does not require that we locate ourselves in a stable and cohesive tradition, because (a) traditions are never stable and cohesive, and (b) it is advantageous to be able to draw on many traditions in forming our identities, which can happen only if we are not restricted to a single tradition.[4]

In his early work, Scheffler rejects extreme cosmopolitanism by offering a positive assessment of tradition. First, if the freewheeling cosmopolitan does not restrict herself to a single tradition, she would be unable to make use of the valuable institutional and psychological resources it offers. Second, in being too concerned with how new values can emerge if we refuse to restrict ourselves to one tradition, the freewheeling cosmopolitan ignores how "oldness leaves the world," i.e., she fails to understand the traditionalists' legitimate concern that losing a tradition also means losing a valuable form of life.[5] Third, Scheffler sketches a "moderate cosmopolitanism" with the aim of reconciling traditionalism and the extreme cosmopolitan version of individual freedom. This partial cosmopolitanism—which Scheffler also describes as "traditionalism with a cosmopolitan inflection"[6]—consists in valuing personal/traditional relationships, but only if they do not infringe upon the interests of humanity in general. So

Scheffler rejects the "hybrid lifestyle" which the extreme cosmopolitan finds most appropriate.[7] At the same time, he accepts the extreme cosmopolitan claim that we are free to move beyond the traditions of our birth and socialization, which precludes both the traditionalist's claim that human well-being necessarily requires adherence to one's own tradition, and that of the cultural nationalist concerned with maintaining cultural purity.[8] However, tradition also gets its due. People who believe that their flourishing depends on following tradition incur no blame even if they give up their autonomy in favor of tradition,[9] and such people can expect to have "special responsibilities to other members of their communities."[10]

While Scheffler endorses a modulated traditionalism in his moderate cosmopolitanism even in his earlier work, it is only in his innovative 2010 essay "The Normativity of Tradition" that he explores what the advantages of following tradition might be, or why people take tradition as a "source of normative authority—that is, of reasons to act in certain ways."[11] Scheffler takes his aim to be fairly narrow in this essay, i.e., to articulate reasons why people de facto act in accordance with tradition, and he explicitly excludes the questions of whether "traditional reasons can ever be binding or obligatory," and how we must relate to tradition "in order for the tradition to be reason-giving for [us]."[12] Drawing a distinction between valuing something for its own sake on rational grounds (= noninstrumentally), and valuing something as a means to another end for x reasons (= instrumentally), Scheffler argues that people value tradition noninstrumentally because it is accumulated experience; because it plays a unique role in the formation of personal integrity, in structuring our temporal lives, and in giving us a sense of belonging; and sometimes simply out of loyalty towards a significant other who takes tradition as norm-giving.

In this essay, I argue that the reasons which Scheffler provides for why some people de facto value tradition noninstrumentally cannot support the conclusion that it is rational per se to value tradition noninstrumentally. This claim is significant for the following reason. If we are unable to justify why we must rationally value tradition noninstrumentally, then it is unclear what justifies the "ism" in Scheffler's "traditionalism with a cosmopolitan inflection." After all, why value tradition for its own sake if it is rational to value it merely on instrumental grounds? If Scheffler's traditionalism remains unjustified, then it remains uncertain if his moderate cosmopolitanism, or "traditionalism with a cosmopolitan inflection," can be defended, and, more broadly, whether his stated aim of accommodating tradition in liberal theory can be accomplished.

Now, if we accept that Scheffler's traditionalism requires justification, then one way of achieving such a justification would involve showing that tradition can be taken to be valuable noninstrumentally on the basis of all-things-considered-judgment. Such a justification would help legitimize the "ism" in Scheffler's "traditionalism with a cosmopolitan inflection," in that it would compel us to value tradition noninstrumentally if we accept the authority of our best philosophical reasoning. The present work is a preliminary step in this direction. It delineates the ways in which Scheffler's de facto reasons for valuing tradition noninstrumentally must be supplemented before they can be considered de jure reasons for the same. Such a supplementation would entail a rejection of extreme cosmopolitanism, and open up the possibility of articulating a coherent theory of moderate cosmopolitanism. While Scheffler himself explicitly brackets the de jure question regarding tradition, he is nevertheless aware of its

importance. In "The Normativity of Tradition," he says that his account of tradition "leaves many questions unanswered."[13] This includes the question of "whether traditional reasons can ever be binding or obligatory," which is equivalent to the de jure question that I have raised in this essay, and which Scheffler considers to be an "important question…deserv[ing] careful investigation."[14]

In §2, I explicate key concepts that underwrite Scheffler's account of why people might value tradition noninstrumentally—value, moral partiality, and tradition. Then, in §3, I examine Scheffler's grounds for why tradition might be noninstrumentally valued.

Before I begin, some methodological considerations. (a) My emphasis on Scheffler's view of tradition in this essay can be explained as follows. Philosophical writing on the notion of tradition has tended to emphasize the question of the nature of tradition, and its relationship to rationality, modernity and ideology.[15] In contrast, Scheffler can be viewed as discussing tradition in relation to the notion of moral partiality and the discourse of cosmopolitanism. I take myself to be contributing to the larger general question of whether tradition can be reconciled with the cosmopolitan ideal. Therefore, for my purposes, Scheffler's analysis of tradition seems to be a natural point of departure. (b) It may seem that I am merely offering a negative critique of Scheffler here, but the following reasons could be offered for why this is not the case. First, I am concerned with the question of whether tradition can be valued noninstrumentally on de jure grounds. Scheffler, as I have indicated, explicitly excludes this question (while granting its importance). Consequently, the present essay should not be taken as a direct criticism of Scheffler. Second, my argument that Scheffler's de facto reasons for valuing tradition

noninstrumentally cannot support his moderate cosmopolitanism might be taken as a criticism of Scheffler. But such a reading would also be problematic. Scheffler does not provide an in-depth account of moderate cosmopolitanism, and does not relate it to his discussion of how tradition is valued. It would be unfair, therefore, to criticize Scheffler for something he is not even attempting to do, that is, providing a fully fleshed out account of the relationship between tradition and moderate cosmopolitanism. Consequently, it might be best to view this lacuna in Scheffler's work as one point of departure that might help resolve the question of whether tradition and cosmopolitanism can in general be reconciled—which is the approach I have taken here.

## 2. Value, Partiality and Tradition

Scheffler argues that we have "special responsibilities," or "associative duties," towards those with whom we share a "close personal relationship" (family, friends, community members). Associative duties are over and above the duties we may have to humanity in general.[16] They result from birth and/or socialization, and cannot be reduced, as liberalism would have it, to contractual duties, because people consider the relationships giving rise to these duties as valuable in themselves, even if they did not voluntarily choose these relationships.[17] Therefore, we value close personal relationships because of the nature of the "relationships themselves rather than particular interaction between participants [in the relationship],"[18] and this is why we assume special responsibilities attendant upon them. Such relationships and group memberships, Scheffler says, are valued "noninstrumentally" if they are valued in themselves, which, on Scheffler's view, differs from instrumental valuing as follows. If I value a relationship noninstrumentally, then I must "regard the person with whom I have the relationship [say X] as

capable of making additional claims on me, beyond those that people in general make."[19] This in turn requires that we possess the "disposition" to view X's needs, desires, and interests as "in themselves providing me with presumptively decisive reasons for action, reasons that I would not have had in the absence of the relationship."[20] These reasons could of course be rejected, but if we never view X's needs, interests, and desires as reasons for action, i.e., as reasons for the "differential treatment" of X, we cannot be said to value our relationship to X noninstrumentally.[21] In contrast to noninstrumental valuing, something is valued instrumentally if we "value it solely as a means to some independently specified end."[22] Further, noninstrumental valuing is a "fusion of reason and emotion,"[23] and can be distinguished from other sorts of valuing as follows:

(a) If we value X noninstrumentally, then we must believe that X is worth valuing.

(b) We are susceptible to experiencing a range of "context-dependent emotions" regarding X—the type of emotion depends on whether X is a rational person or a thing.

(c) We have the "disposition" to view these emotions as "merited or appropriate," e.g., one expects the emotion of love in relation to one's family members.

(d) We have the "disposition to treat certain kinds of X-related considerations as reasons for action in relevant deliberative contexts."[24]

To these may be added:

(e) We have the impulse to preserve X, because of what Scheffler calls our "deep human impulse to preserve what is valued."[25]

(f) If A and B noninstrumentally value their relationship to each other, they would have the reasonable expectation that, in certain contexts, both of them will act on each other's behalf. So if A sometimes has reasons to take B's needs, interests, or desires into consideration in decision-making, then B has "complementary reason" to expect that A will do so too. This, says Scheffler, is "simply the normative upshot of valuable human relationships."[26]

From (a)-(f), we have a set of criteria shared by all noninstrumentally valued projects, relationships, and group memberships. Prioritizing these projects/relationships/group memberships is what Scheffler terms moral or "reasonable" partiality,[27] which is a "preference or fondness for a particular person," and different from bias or prejudice.

Scheffler takes partiality to one's own tradition as a case of reasonable partiality. He characterizes tradition as a "set of beliefs, customs, teachings, values, practices, and procedures that is transmitted from generation to generation."[28] It is intrinsically collective, and consists of participants who view themselves as "collaborators in a shared enterprise," and whose "mutual recognition" is cemented when they participate in "various public, collective routines," i.e., "in public rites, rituals, ceremonies, celebrations, and observances."[29] In "The Normativity of Tradition," Scheffler asks why people value tradition such that the "fact that the tradition calls

for some act to be performed may well be seen as reason for performing it."[30] This orientation toward tradition makes it a normative notion for Scheffler, and the variety of traditions a "species of normative diversity."[31] Since relationships and group memberships producing moral partiality are noninstrumentally valued, Scheffler can be viewed as seeking out what makes tradition valued for its own sake such that people de facto take it as reason for action, sometimes at the cost of their own individual autonomy. This is clearly an important task. However, as I will now argue, the de facto reasons which Scheffler offers for why people take tradition as normatively authoritative are not de jure defensible.

### 3. Is Tradition Valued Noninstrumentally?

In "The Normativity of Tradition," Scheffler incisively articulates what he calls a "reductive dilemma" relating to action based on reasons of tradition.[32] He says that, on the one hand, we could choose to act in a particular way in the present moment because people have acted in this way in the past, i.e., for traditional reasons. But this is problematic, because the fact that people have acted in some way in the past is no reason to act that way in the present, or we would have to repeat in the present every act that has ever been performed in the past, which Scheffler rightly takes to be absurd. On the other hand, traditions embody certain values, principles, or ideals. If we choose to act in a certain way because we accept these values, principles, or ideals, then our reasons for acting would be grounded not in the fact that they belong to the past or to tradition, but in the values, principles, or ideals themselves. But then this would make any reference to tradition superfluous, since someone unacquainted with the tradition could still act on the basis of these values, principles, or ideals. Therefore, Scheffler concludes, either we act solely on the basis of tradition, which is not rational at all; or we follow tradition on rational grounds because

it embodies particular values, principles, or ideals, in which case all appeal to tradition becomes superfluous.[33]

Scheffler responds to this dilemma by providing reasons for why tradition might be noninstrumentally valued such that it is neither an irrational attachment to the past nor reducible to the moral/philosophical/religious values it embodies. I now show, in §§3.1-3.7, that these reasons are not enough to justify de jure the noninstrumental valuation of tradition, although some people may de facto offer such reasons for taking tradition as normative.

**3.1**

Traditions are taken as normatively authoritative, because they help "establish and entrench social conventions."[34] If we should all observe a day of rest (e.g., the Sabbath), and if the whole community benefits from observing the same day of rest, then we defer to the "normative force of tradition" by accepting this day of rest.[35] So social conventions are geared to collective advantage. Further, if we also participate in the "collective habits" which traditions engender, we can acquire a "deliberative efficiency by relying relatively unreflectively on successful past practice as a defeasible guide to future conduct."[36] For instance, by going to the beach on July 4th on traditional grounds, one can "reap the benefits of the deliberative efficiencies of [this] habit."[37]

The most obvious problem here is that if tradition is valued because it is advantageous, then it would appear that it is valued for the sake of something else like happiness (instrumentally), rather than for its own sake (noninstrumentally). Scheffler however resists this conclusion. He

admits that tradition offers "eudaimonistic" benefits to its followers, but rejects the idea that "the values and principles that a tradition embodies are themselves reducible to values or principles of self-interest, or that adherents who subscribe to those values and principles are moved by the eudaimonistic advantages they offer."[38] In other words, in following tradition, people are not thinking of their own happiness or self-interest. However, even if this were true, Scheffler's claim that traditions are noninstrumentally valued because they engender social conventions and collective habits would still require further justification if it is to be rationally defensible. If social conventions and collective habits are advantageous since they provide collective benefits and deliberative efficiencies respectively, and if the advantage/efficiency calculus involves instrumental means-ends reasoning, then instrumental reasoning must be involved in valuing tradition construed as social convention and collective habit. Since, for Scheffler, tradition as convention/habit is to be valued noninstrumentally, it must therefore be shown how something that is grounded in instrumental reasoning could be valued noninstrumentally. To accomplish this, one must either show that social conventions could be valued noninstrumentally even if their very raison d'etre has its basis in instrumental reasoning, i.e., the collective and deliberative cost-benefit calculus; or argue for why these collective and deliberative benefits must be construed noninstrumentally.

In response to this claim, one might argue, from Scheffler's standpoint, that we can value something noninstrumentally if we can believe it is worth valuing (§2), even if our valuation of its worth requires instrumental reasoning. Again, even if we accept this claim, it is unclear how it should be accommodated within Scheffler's framework for the following reason. Suppose that human flourishing P contains the elements $P_1 \ldots P_n$. Each element of P is valued for its own sake.

Achieving P requires the means M ($M_1 \ldots M_n$). If noninstrumental valuing means "valuing something for its own sake for x reasons," and instrumental valuing implies "valuing something as a means to some other end for x reasons," then two possibilities emerge: (a) The collective and deliberative advantages connected to social conventions and collective habits respectively themselves form part of P, since they are believed to be worth valuing. Consequently, keeping to these conventions/habits ipso facto brings forth the sort of satisfaction that goes with $P_1 \ldots P_n$. (b) Social conventions and collective habits belong to M, because they are the means necessary for the fulfillment of more foundational satisfactions constituting P, like satisfaction in relationships, peace of mind, etc.[39] Of these possibilities, Scheffler might want to argue (a), but I have argued that he is not entitled to (a), because he has not excluded (b).[40] In addition, even if we bracket (b), Scheffler must still justify the claim that believing something to be worth valuing can entail valuing it noninstrumentally, especially if this belief has its basis in instrumental reasoning.

A similar difficulty occurs when Scheffler speaks of tradition as a "repository of experience" consisting of an "accumulation of history, experience, judgment, and perspective that outstrips what any single individual can reasonably aspire to achieve in the course of a lifetime," and says that "someone who adheres to tradition may gain the advantages of that accumulated experience and judgment."[41] Here again one needs to show why the repository aspect of tradition may be viewed as part of P, and not M. One way of doing so would be to say that even if tradition in the form of social convention and collective habit forms part of M, tradition as repository can justifiably be part of P. For the very accumulation of experience could be noninstrumentally valuable, because it undergirds social conventions and collective habits, and its absence would mean that we either have no access to the past or have merely fragmentary access to it. In this

way, it could be said that the value of tradition is so great that it could be considered part of P rather than M. But this argument is also problematic, because it ignores the fact that human existence is in constant flux, so that situations in the present and future often have no counterpart in the past, i.e., they have not been encountered before. It follows that the past can be advantageous only if it helps us tackle the newness emerging in the present. But if this is true, then accumulated experience, or the repository aspect of tradition, would appear to be a means, M, to another end, P—here, good judgment in the present.

Against this argument, one could take both present judgment and accumulated experience as part of P. This would of course jeopardize the P-M distinction as already suggested,[42] but it could be argued that the P/M distinction would not apply to the relationship between present judgment and the repository aspect of tradition. Since we find both sides of this relationship equally valuable, we can value them both noninstrumentally—so both belong to P. However, this argumentative strategy also creates difficulties. Not all accumulation is good. Consider, for instance, the cumulative effect of crime. Therefore, we need a criterion for good accumulation. If good judgment based on more basic pleasures, pains, and desires like peace of mind, fulfillment of potentialities, etc., is taken to be the criterion for good accumulation, and if the accumulation of experience aids good judgment which in turn serves the interests of the more basic human impulses, then tradition as accumulation of experience seems to belong to M, because it is ultimately marshalled in the service of basic human impulses. This is especially the case since the present may not be like the past, and so good judgment in the present would require that the past be approached critically, which further implies that the mere accumulation of past experience must be of little value. With regard to this argument, one could appeal to Mill's

argument that accumulating money can sometimes become an end in itself, and so come to be valued noninstrumentally, even though it was initially desired instrumentally, i.e., as means to the fulfillment of more primitive pleasures and pains.[43] In analogous fashion, from Scheffler's point of view, it could be said that one may begin by valuing the repository aspect of tradition instrumentally, but may eventually come to value it noninstrumentally. But even if this could be considered Scheffler's (or a Schefflarian) argument, and assuming the validity of Mill's psychological argument, one would still need to justify the analogy between money and tradition.

**3.2**

In Scheffler's view, tradition can be noninstrumentally valued over and above the religious, moral, or philosophical values it embodies. First, these values are abstract and not "self-interpreting."[44] So tradition usually "incorporate[s] a well-developed body of advice and instruction about how to interpret those values and how to best apply them to the concrete circumstances of daily life."[45] Second, the application of these abstract values is often left "open-ended," and this "indeterminacy [can be] burdensome."[46] Traditions remove this burden by "establish[ing] customs and conventions regarding the time and manner in which we fulfill these imperfect duties and ideals"—Scheffler gives the example of the timing of charitable giving.[47] These conventions are forged over time, and "reflect a long history of experience in trying to develop effective ways of encouraging compliance with the relevant principles and ideals."[48] Thus, traditions possess resources to help with the application of values in concrete situations, and thereby reduce the dissonance in our lives.

Here again, as in §3.1, it seems more natural to view these resources instrumentally rather than noninstrumentally if they are employed for the sake of dispelling dissonance. Further, if the abstract moral/religious/philosophical values are, as it so often happens, entirely rejected by a culture at some point, then the traditional resources aiding their interpretation and application would lose significance, which shows that these values associated with tradition are not valuable in themselves. They could naturally remain part of the communal archive, but mere archival presence is not what Scheffler has in mind here. Thus, tradition might help us interpret and apply values, but this is not reason enough to value tradition noninstrumentally.

**3.3**

Scheffler says that we value tradition noninstrumentally like we value libraries, cathedrals, or museums, because we view them as repositories of "human knowledge, experience, creativity, and achievement."[49] However, a rational justification of this claim would require further elaboration. First, libraries are seen as valuable in themselves because they contain knowledge that is positively or negatively useful for all time. In contrast, unlike libraries or museums, tradition as repository is unconcerned with knowledge for its own sake. Instead, repositorial tradition seems more like a record of practical negotiations that a people make in contingent circumstances. Since one can reasonably presume that this contingency impregnates all its negotiations, tradition cannot be seen unambiguously as a record of the most rational outcomes—e.g., political power can play a major role in instituting ways of thinking/doing. Now, if tradition were a record of all rational outcomes in a particular history, then perhaps it would have been rational to value it noninstrumentally. However, as I have suggested, this is not the case. Thus, tradition seems at best to be a record of past events that can be a useful tool in the

present if applied with care. Second, even if the tradition/library analogy were justified, one would still have to establish why libraries themselves should be valued noninstrumentally. Here it could be argued that the mere existence of libraries or traditions makes them noninstrumentally valuable. But if we were to value some things simply because they exist, then we would value libraries and traditions even if we could never avail of the resources they make available to us. So the library becomes valuable only in the use we make of it, which in turn depends on our purposes, etc. Therefore, showing that libraries (and traditions) are noninstrumentally valuable would require explicating the nature of their availability, and why this sort of availability should be valuable in itself.

**3.4**

Scheffler says that some people act on the basis of tradition to "express loyalty to others who adhered to the tradition and to whom such adherence was important."[50] Further, traditions are "self-reinforcing" in upholding loyalty to tradition as a value. This means that adherents of a tradition have "reasons of loyalty for acting in accordance with reasons of loyalty."[51] While many people may actually make such arguments from loyalty, they do not suffice to establish the rationality of noninstrumentally valuing tradition. After all, we may value tradition for its own sake out of loyalty to someone close to us. But this does not obviously show that it is reasonable to value tradition noninstrumentally, because the noninstrumentality may result from the close association rather than anything intrinsic to tradition. Similarly, regarding the self-reinforcing character of tradition, one must ask at the outset why the traditional value of loyalty to tradition should be taken as a good reason for valuing tradition noninstrumentally.

**3.5**

In Scheffler's view, people value tradition noninstrumentally if it forms part of their personal integrity. Traditions, he maintains, are not simply "intergenerational claims of replicated behavior," but "normally stand for something [values, principles, ideals]."[52] Someone socialized in a tradition may "internalize" the values of her tradition such that she "may come to feel that what tradition stands for is also what…she stands for."[53] Such a person, even if she knows that adhering to traditional values is not "mandatory," might still feel that "she would be unrecognizable to herself without them."[54] Therefore, acting in accordance with tradition may be a matter not only of responding to the "intrinsic normative force of the values," but also of being true to oneself, which shows that tradition can be a "requirement of personal identity."[55]

The relationship between tradition and personal integrity cannot rationally ground the noninstrumental valuation of tradition without further justification. First, one can reasonably say that even a rabid traditionalist would not identify with all aspects of tradition. So it would be plausible, even normal, to say that a person can have a general allegiance to a tradition, but take only a subset of the values it embodies (say, religious values) as central to her self-conception. Consequently, personal integrity need not be taken to relate to tradition construed abstractly, but only to a subset of its values. If this is the case, and even if tradition is noninstrumentally valued, it would be the content of this subset of values that would be noninstrumentally valued, and not tradition in general. But then this would mean impaling oneself on one horn of the above-mentioned dilemma regarding tradition. If tradition is reducible to the content of its values, then it loses all significance as an independent category. Second, the tight relationship which Scheffler draws between personal integrity, tradition, and noninstrumental valuing requires

further support. Our self-conception must constantly adapt to changing circumstances, and any change in our self-conception must also mean an altered relationship to tradition. If we accept this claim, then the relationship between individual experience, self-conception, and tradition must be explained such that we can continue to value our own tradition noninstrumentally even if our self-conception has changed. Here it could be objected that such an account is unnecessary. Since we value our personal integrity noninstrumentally, and given that self-conception must always involve some relationship to tradition whatever its actual content, we must value tradition noninstrumentally. But this is problematic to the extent Scheffler argues that people noninstrumentally value a single tradition for reasons of personal integrity. This is because a freewheeling cosmopolitan could grant a minimal connection between self-conception and tradition, and yet deny that one needs to value a single tradition noninstrumentally. Thus, any vaguely articulated relationship between personal integrity and tradition would be scarce foundation for rationally valuing tradition noninstrumentally.[56]

**3.6**

Tradition may be valued noninstrumentally, says Scheffler, because it helps form "broader attitudes toward the past and the future."[57] It helps compensate for our lack of temporal mobility, domesticates time, assures us of our own reality as temporally extended creatures, and incorporates us in a "custodial chain" that helps preserve things that a tradition values, and in this way helps "enhance the perceived significance of our lives, and diminish the perceived significance of our death."[58] While tradition may actually be valued for all these reasons, I argue that they are insufficient to warrant our valuing tradition noninstrumentally on rational grounds.

Scheffler believes that personal routines can help reveal the normativity of tradition, since they "provide clues about the attitude towards time that help to account for their significance."[59] First, we experience the fact that we can only move through time uni-directionally as a constraint. Personal routines give us a "quasi-mobility" in time.[60] A personal routine like ordering the same thing at the same time at the same café can function as a "highly imperfect" surrogate for not being able to travel back into the past or forward into the future by "effac[ing] the temporal specificity of any particular café visit."[61] This brings together different stages of our life, and keeps our life from becoming "fractured and disjointed."[62] Second, personal routines help us "domesticate a slice of time," and establish a "kind of temporal corridor, which passes through the succession of days, and which 'belongs' to me."[63] So we can return to something all our own when each day we go to the café and order the same thing at a particular time, just the way we return to our spatial home construed as a bulwark against our awareness of the "vastness and impersonality of the universe," and our sense of the "precariousness and insignificance of our place in it."[64] Third, the repetitious nature of personal routines allows us to "mark the world with continuities expressive of [ourselves],"[65] and gives us a "stable sense of self." First of all, if the café/world were to change every day so that we had to adjust constantly to it anew, no stable sense of self could develop. Next, when others "recognize or enter" our routines, we are reassured that we are persisting selves. So if the barista knows what we order each day, then this "testifies to our success in making manifest, through willful repetitive doing, our own reality as temporally extended beings."[66]

Traditions, for Scheffler, fulfill the same need in us as personal routines, except for the following differences. First, unlike personal routines, traditions help us transcend the boundaries of our

individual lives, because in valuing tradition we value our awareness that the way we are acting now is the way people acted in the past, and will act in the future when we are dead.[67] Second, as opposed to personal routines, great traditions establish temporal rhythms and routines, organize and segment time, and mark time's passage by instituting calendars, rites, rituals, commemorations, etc. on a "public, collective level." Many find the "social dimension" implicit in this temporal structure to be "comforting and enriching, just as many people prefer to live with others than live alone."[68] Third, in contrast to personal routines, people in the same tradition view each other as "collaborators in the same enterprise," because they participate jointly in "public rites, rituals, ceremonies, celebrations, observances."[69] This collaborative aspect is built into the constitutive structure of tradition itself.[70]

In sum, adherence to tradition permits us to locate ourselves within a collective temporal trajectory, which brings us in continuity with the past and the future, and thus gives us a sense of home in time. Traditions also structure time, and participating in this structure provides us with a stable sense of self and world, and the possibility of collaboration with other members of the tradition. These reasons, however, do not demonstrate why it is rational to value tradition noninstrumentally. To accomplish this, one must specify what in tradition contributes to our sense of temporal mobility, and why this sort of mobility cannot be gained by, say, making ourselves aware that we share genetic material with both our forefathers and our progeny. For if mere continuity over time is sufficient for feeling a sense of temporal mobility, then the awareness of genetic continuity could potentially do as well as any other kind of continuity. One could object to this argument by saying that genetic continuity cannot be the relevant sort of continuity here, because participation in a continuing tradition is a unique mental need for

humans. It follows that tradition can be valued noninstrumentally on rational grounds, since the continuity it provides fulfills a primitive need in us. But this clearly requires more justification. What makes tradition, or the multi-generational transmission of thoughts and practices, fulfill this primitive mental need in a way that goes beyond any other group belonging, like family?[71] After all, families can also provide their members with temporal mobility, and a sense of home in time.

Scheffler can be seen as tackling this question when he says that belonging to a multi-generational collective tradition fulfills our desire to belong to something larger than ourselves, and his account of what makes people identify with tradition in particular rests on two presuppositions. First, we flourish only if we limit our egoism, and are concerned with things other than ourselves. Second, we tend to preserve what we value, because if something we value survives our death, this would "diminish the significance of our own mortality."[72] From these presuppositions, Scheffler concludes that traditions are "collaborative, multigenerational enterprises devised by human beings precisely to satisfy the deep human impulse to preserve what is valued."[73] Participating in a tradition makes us a "part of a custodial chain, a chain of people stretching through time who have undertaken to preserve and extend these values."[74] Scheffler thinks that this custodial chain is in itself valuable, because the past may be an "eternal void" for us if we could not have such a "value based relation[ship]" to it.[75]

Scheffler's argument here is particularly ingenious. However, if the task is to show why it is rational to value tradition noninstrumentally, then: (a) More needs to be said about why the custodial chain of tradition can provide us with a sense of belonging that goes beyond both the

custodial chain of physical nature or that of family. One response to this question could be that preserving tradition demands active doing, while being part of physical nature is not willfully accomplished; and that this doing alters the nature of the belonging. But this would not be correct: physical reproduction may be instinctual, but still requires concerted individual effort in several ways (finding a mate, etc.). (b) It could be said that the custodial chain of family could serve just as well as the custodial chain of tradition in limiting our ego, and in our quest to enhance the value of our life, and reduce the value of our death. Naturally, one could counter this claim by saying that the custodianship of tradition, and not that of family, is the genuine custodianship, because traditions include many more people than even an extended family. But this would simply lead to the question of why numbers should be significant in the present context. (c) Even if only tradition can offer us the right sense of belonging, there is no reason to think that the custodial chain of a freewheeling cosmopolitan—which would include people from a variety of cultures, e.g., foreign writers and artists who may have influenced us, but also relatives and friends in other nations—should be rejected in favor of Scheffler's traditionalist adhering to a single tradition. Against this view, it could be said that the freewheeling cosmopolitan would never use the language of "custodial chain" in Scheffler's sense. However, it is unclear why this must be so. The freewheeling cosmopolitan would certainly reject the idea of restricting herself to a single custodial chain, i.e., a single tradition. Yet this need not necessarily prevent her from thinking of herself as part of an inter-generational custodial chain, though in this case the chain must extend to the whole of humanity. For instance, an artist may, as it often happens, find her literary or philosophical forebears in a tradition that is different from the tradition of her birth or socialization. In such cases, the content of the custodial chain may be an artistic style or a philosophical idea, and so on.

### 3.7

Scheffler takes it that noninstrumental valuing involves emotional susceptibility that is perceived as merited (§2). He points to two ways in which we are emotionally susceptible to tradition, but neither of these can establish the legitimacy of the noninstrumental valuation of tradition. First, if we sever ties with our native tradition, we would still remain different from those who were not native to this tradition.[76] This may be true, but without a specification of this difference, it remains unclear how this claim can (rationally) justify valuing tradition noninstrumentally. A freewheeling cosmopolitan could, for instance, deny that the emotions associated with belonging to a tradition must necessarily entail valuing it noninstrumentally. Second, in forsaking our native tradition, we feel a sense of loss.[77] This would prove that it is rational to value tradition in itself only if it could be shown that this sense of loss relates solely to multi-generational collective tradition, and not to any other sort of group membership like family or friendship. For instance, one would certainly feel a sense of loss if one could not celebrate a traditional festival like Christmas, but it is less clear if this sense of loss relates to the inability to celebrate this festival per se, or not being able to celebrate it with friends and family.

## 4. Conclusion

One major attraction of Scheffler's moderate cosmopolitanism is its attempt to avoid the excesses of both traditionalism and freewheeling cosmopolitanism. However, as I have argued, the reasons which Scheffler provides for why people might de facto value tradition noninstrumentally cannot alone establish the claim that it is rational de jure to value tradition noninstrumentally. I have raised a set of concerns that would require our attention if these de

facto reasons could be viewed as philosophically defensible grounds for valuing tradition noninstrumentally. Following up on these concerns is one potential way of providing a defense of moderate cosmopolitanism. This is because if a philosophical engagement with these concerns could support the claim that there are de jure grounds to value tradition noninstrumentally, then this would, at the very least, preclude on rational grounds any cosmopolitanism that might deny a role to tradition. Further, if we explore the various questions relating to the way in which the de facto reasons for valuing tradition noninstrumentally could be turned into de jure reasons, then we would have a set of directions for research that would help lay the groundwork for developing a philosophically defensible account of how tradition might be accommodated within the cosmopolitan ideal.[78]

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**Notes**

1. Samuel Scheffler, *Boundaries and Allegiances* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 2, 9, 80.
2. See Pauline Kleingeld and Eric Brown, "Cosmopolitanism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), 2014 https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/cosmopolitanism/ (accessed July 19, 2017).
3. Scheffler, *Boundaries and Allegiances*, op. cit., p. 113. Nussbaum once argued, for instance, that we are permitted to be partial to our own children only because we can do the most good in relation to them; see Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in Garrett W. Brown and David Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitanism*

*Reader* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010), 155-62, p. 16; article first published in 1994.

4. Ibid., pp. 111-13.

5. Ibid., pp. 124-25.

6. Ibid., p. 128. This is broadly similar to Appiah's "rooted cosmopolitanism" in which we should take ourselves as having "thin" relations to others to the extent we are all human and concerned with social, economic and political governance; but we must also admit that we have "thick" ties with others belonging to our community, and therefore must assume special responsibilities toward them. See K. Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 230-32, and K. Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in the World of Strangers* (New York: Norton & Co., 2006), pp. xvi-xvii.

7. Ibid., p. 116.

8. Ibid., pp. 114, 116.

9. Ibid., p. 127. Politically, the state would remain neutral on whether or not people embrace their inherited traditional affiliations (ibid., pp. 126-27).

10. Ibid., p. 115.

11. Samuel Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 308.

12. Ibid.

13. Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., p. 308.

14. Ibid. Despite the fact that Scheffler himself accepts the importance of the de jure question, it may be objected that asking for de jure justification in the case of tradition is

problematic on philosophical grounds. First, it could be said that demanding de jure reasons for valuing tradition noninstrumentally may be setting the bar too high. Consequently, if we would like reasons to value tradition for its own sake, then Scheffler's de facto reasons are all we can ever have. However, this view seems to me to prejudge the issue, because it presupposes, without justification, that our best philosophical reasoning may be intrinsically incapable of adjudicating on the value of tradition. Second, one could argue that asking for de jure grounds for valuing tradition rests on a far too abstract construal of tradition, since people value particular traditions, and not some abstract notion of tradition. But in my view, such a criticism would also miss the mark. The point here is not to deny that individuals value particular traditions rather than some conception of tradition in the abstract—I make the particular/abstract distinction in §3.5 below. Instead, it is to determine whether our best reason could justify our valuing these particular aspects of tradition in a noninstrumental fashion. This is hardly an odd project given that, historically speaking, many of our traditional valuations have faltered upon closer philosophical scrutiny. Consider, for instance, our histories of racial discrimination and gender violence. Third, the extent to which a tradition can be analyzed in the abstract remains an abiding and difficult question. James Alexander points to the paradox that the more abstractly one conceives of tradition, the more it appears to lack what makes a tradition a tradition, which is its actual existence. According to Alexander, thinkers like Michael Oakeshott write much more abstractly about tradition than Hannah Arendt or Alasdair MacIntyre who concern themselves with a particular tradition. See James Alexander, "Three Rival Views of Tradition (Arendt, Oakeshott, and MacIntyre)," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 6 (2012): 20-43, p. 31;

also see pp. 39, 26-27, 42. In "Normativity of Tradition," Scheffler seems ingeniously to include both the abstract and particular aspects of tradition in his analysis. He writes of tradition in the abstract to the extent he is not writing about a particular tradition. Yet in providing de facto reasons for valuing tradition noninstrumentally, Scheffler offers a set of particular reasons that people do actually offer for valuing tradition for its own sake. Whether Scheffler's approach is viable or not is beyond the scope of this essay. What is relevant here is that Scheffler's general stance—or that of any of the other philosophers of tradition mentioned above—on where to place tradition on the abstract-particular axis need not preclude an investigation of the de jure reasons for valuing tradition noninstrumentally.

15. For a general survey of the philosophical literature on tradition including key figures like Hans-Georg Gadamer, Michael Oakeshott, Charles Taylor, and Alasdair MacIntyre, see Alexander, "Three Rival Views of Tradition," op. cit., and Yaacov Yadgar, "Tradition," *Human Studies* 36, no. 4 (2013): 451-70. A detailed discussion of these views is beyond the scope of this paper.

16. Scheffler, *Boundaries and Allegiances*, op. cit., pp. 2, 3.

17. Ibid., pp. 97-100.

18. Ibid., p. 99.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., pp. 99-100.

21. Ibid., pp. 120-21.

22. Ibid., p. 99.

23. Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., p. 29.

24. For criteria (a)-(d), see Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., p. 29.

25. Ibid., p. 305.

26. Ibid., p. 54.

27. Ibid., p. 57.

28. Ibid., p. 290.

29. Ibid., p. 302.

30. Ibid., pp. 293-94.

31. Ibid., p. 9. For Scheffler, cultural values are reducible to moral, philosophical, or religious values, and are therefore not normative (*Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., pp. 282, 288, 310n).

32. Ibid., p. 288.

33. Ibid., pp. 287-88.

34. Ibid., p. 291.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., p. 292.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., p. 308.

39. This disjuncture between (a) and (b) is legitimate, because a convention or habit cannot be both P and M at the same time. E.g., if one values beach-going in itself, then it makes little sense to view it also as a means to the value gained from going to the beach. Also see §3.2.

40. It could be asserted that tradition must be considered noninstrumentally valuable if it could be shown, as Scheffler does, that it is a social good. Based on this claim, one could

question my contention that Scheffler must exclude (b) to argue for (a). However, the claim that tradition must be noninstrumentally valuable if it forms a social good requires justification. In addition, this claim also seems to be begging the question with regard to my concern here, which is to examine the extent to which tradition as a social good can be viewed as noninstrumentally rather than instrumentally valuable.

41. Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., p. 292.

42. See note 39.

43. See John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), p. 37.

44. Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., p. 292.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., p. 293.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., p. 294.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. In some cases, personal integrity may depend on an emotivist attachment to tradition. I bracket this possibility, because I am concerned here with Scheffler's *reasons* for valuing tradition noninstrumentally.

57. Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., p. 306.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., p. 295.

60. Ibid., p. 296.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., p. 297

64. Ibid., pp. 296-97.

65. Ibid., p. 299.

66. Ibid., p. 300.

67. Ibid., p. 301.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., p. 302.

71. Scheffler explicitly excludes the "looser" sense of tradition which may not extend over generations, e.g., family tradition (*Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., p. 290). I refer to family for argumentative reasons here.

72. Ibid., p. 304.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., p. 305.

75. Ibid.

76. See Scheffler, *Boundaries and Allegiances*, op. cit., p. 63.

77. Ibid., pp. 105-06; Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition*, op. cit., p. 50.

78. I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers of the *Journal of Value Inquiry* for very helpful comments on this article.