

VALUE, RESPECT,
AND ATTACHMENT

JOSEPH RAZ



PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia

Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2001

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Minion 11/15 pt. *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [TB]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Raz, Joseph.

Value, respect, and attachment / Joseph Raz.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 80180 x – ISBN 0 521 00022 x (pb. : alk. paper)

1. Ethics. 2. Values. I. Title.

BJ1012 .R35 2001

170'.42 – dc21 2001025690

ISBN 0 521 80180 x hardback

ISBN 0 521 00022 x paperback

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Attachment and uniqueness

The crucial issue is not whether sentiments and attitudes are seen as important . . . , but whether – and to what extent – these sentiments and attitudes can be influenced and cultivated through reasoning.¹

Having left the *morally* worst century of human history² we may on occasion seek solace by reflecting on aspects of the recent past which can count as moral advances, as pointers to a more decent future for our species. When my mind turns to such thoughts perhaps one feature stands out. I will call it the legitimization of difference. I have in mind a change in sensibility, a change in what people find obvious and what appears to them to require justification and explanation. Such changes are never universal. This one may not have gone very far yet. But I think, and hope, that there has been such a shift in the moral sensibility of many people in the West, a shift towards taking difference – in culture and religion, in gender, sexual orientation or in race – for granted, acknowledging its unquestioned legitimacy, and seeking justification only when hostility to

¹ A. Sen, 'East and West: The Reach of Reason' *New York Review of Books*, vol. 47, No. 12, 20/7/2000.

² Cf. Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).

difference is manifested, or where advantage is given to one side of such divides.³

Is it evidence of that shift, or is it proof of the vitality of the Seeley lectures, that all previous lecturers devoted so much attention to diversity and disagreement and the proper response to them? For surely such shifts in sensibility breed, as well as being nourished by, shifts in theoretical reflection. The questions I wish to explore in these lectures have acquired greater importance and topicality because of their implications for the theoretical reflections accompanying the legitimization of difference. The views that many take on the matters I will discuss are motivated by their response to the legitimization of difference. However, I feel that we do best when we keep the inquiry within its proper theoretical boundaries and will, therefore, refrain for the most part from drawing any 'practical' implications from the reflections that follow.

Accepting the legitimacy of difference is theoretically problematic. The acceptance is more than a matter of acknowledging facts. It consists in endorsing certain evaluative attitudes to normative practices. Difference is multifaceted and so is the reaction to it. It is hard to generalise without distorting. But roughly it means endorsing affirming, approving attitudes to normative practices which often appear inconsistent, or even

³ My optimism on that score is accompanied by growing anxiety at the increase in self-righteous intolerance which seems to be gaining ground in the USA and in Britain, manifesting itself in pride in zero-tolerance policies, and vindictive hostility towards anyone who fails to conform to the prevailing view of the day. Could it be that while we gain in moral sensibility on some fronts we lose on others?

positively hostile to each other. The diversity of religious beliefs is an obvious example. But so are the divergent lifestyles associated with many cultural and other differences. These apparent inconsistencies give rise to acute practical problems. And I will keep my promise not to discuss them here. They also give rise to theoretical puzzles. How can we consistently believe in the legitimacy of difference? Some think that it must lead to embracing subjectivist, or emotivist, or projectivist understandings of morality. Others are drawn to one or another form of ethical or value relativism as the reconciling view. This relativistic response often includes the rejection of any belief in the universality of values. For many the rejection of the universality of values is the very essence of relativism. My topic in the next chapter will be an exploration of the boundaries of coherent relativism.

In this chapter I wish to examine a different challenge to the thesis that values are universal. The challenge is that the universality thesis fails to explain our deepest attachments, the attachments of love and friendship, for example, or of the relations between parents and children, or people and their countries, attachments without which life does not have meaning. In resisting this challenge I will rely for assistance on *The Little Prince*.

1 Loss of innocence: destruction of meaning or liberation?

I want to start at a moment of crisis. Here is how it is described:

All roads lead to the abodes of men. ‘Good morning,’ he said. He was standing before a garden all a-bloom with

roses. 'Good morning,' said the roses. The little prince looked at them. They all looked like his flower. 'Who are you?' he demanded, thunderstruck. 'We are roses,' said the roses. And he was overcome with sadness . . . 'I thought [the little prince reflected] that I was rich, with a flower that was unique in all the world; and all I had was a common rose . . . That does not make me a very great prince.' And he lay down . . . and cried.⁴

It is a sweet story of a universal experience. We become aware of the world, if we are lucky, in the bosom of strong attachments. They are formative of our capacity to sustain attachments, personal and others, which are, for each of us, *unique* and understood to be so. Gradually the world opens in front of us, and the objects of our attachments lose their uniqueness. It is a moment of crisis. To survive and prosper we need to be able to reconcile deep identity-defining attachments, with the realisation that the objects of these attachments may not be all that unique. Neither Saint-Exupéry nor I have anything to say about the psychology of this adjustment. But, while sometimes using psychological idiom in a metaphorical way, I will strive to follow the Little Prince with some remarks about the nature of the resolution.

Am I not making too much of the so-called crisis which the Little Prince faces? Is it not a simple case of growing up? This is how a familiar story goes: both individually and as a species we mature by transcending the particular and moving towards the universal; as we, individually, and as a species, grow up our

⁴ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, tr. by Katherine Woods (London: Mammoth, 1931), pp. 60–2.

horizons broaden, we come to understand more aspects of the world, and to understand better our situation in the world. Just like the Little Prince we transcend the confines of our birth, and the attachments of our infancy and childhood. We realise that there are other people like our parents, others like ourselves.

We come to recognise and to submit to the inescapable power of reason. Its judgement is harsh. It is a hard but necessary lesson to learn that we are not entitled to anything just because we are we, and our loved ones are not special just because they are ours. But reason also liberates us from the narrow confines of our birth. It opens up the world, enabling us to move within it, free citizens of the universe, whose rights of passage are recognised by all those likewise possessed of reason.

This is not the way the Little Prince resolves his crisis, but it is a familiar enough story, and a very powerful one. Can it be denied that just as individuals become moral agents worthy of respect only when they grow to acknowledge that they are each just one among many, all entitled to consideration, so we, as a species, advanced morally by overcoming arbitrary boundaries and allegiances, by recognising that people generally, that animals generally, deserve consideration and their interests should not be ignored? Has not the use of political power improved by being governed by rational universal principles, by having transcended tribal allegiances and various other kinds of personal and group favouritism?

I think that the Little Prince will not be able to deny that there is much truth in all that, but these facts will not help him overcome his crisis. He believes in the importance of uniqueness. He believes that uniqueness is of the nature of love, which is for him the paradigm of all special attachments to

people and to objects. He believes that both meaning and understanding, misery and happiness, arise out of one's special, particular, non-universal, attachments. In the words he later learns from the Fox: 'one only understands the things that one tames' – taming being the Fox's way of conceptualising special particularised attachments to people or other objects. The Fox has a whole theory of attachments. His applies primarily to loving personal relations, but can be extended *mutatis mutandis* to relations to objects, causes, institutions, countries, cultures, works of art, one's profession or anything else:

'My life is monotonous', he said, 'I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all men are just alike . . . I am a little bored. But if you tame me it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others . . . Yours will call me, like music . . . And then look: you see the grain fields . . . You have hair . . . the colour of gold. Think now how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me. The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you and I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat.' (pp. 64–5)

What a naïve optimist, you may say. Doesn't he know that love can flounder and is the source of misery as well as of happiness? But the Fox is no wide-eyed dreamer. His romanticism embraces all facets of life. There is value in sadness and disappointment. They have value because they too can be meaningful elements in one's life. But even when failure and sadness are purely negative elements in a life, their existence is a by-product of the possibility of positive meaning: there is no possibility of success without a possibility of failure, no

possibility of positive personal meaning without the possibility of negative value.

Meaning is invested in the world by our attachments to it: meaning rests primarily in the objects of our attachments, and by association in other things. There may be an exaggeration here, but surely there is truth too. The view the Fox's observations suggest is one according to which attachments to objects, all attachments, confer value on their objects, and on others associated with them, whatever these objects may be. There are three exaggerations here. First, not all attachments can confer value on their objects, only valuable attachments do so. Second, the Fox exaggerates, because not all value, and that is part of what we have in mind in 'meaning', can derive from attachments. Third, the Fox intimates a general connection between attachments and uniqueness whereas only some attachments involve uniqueness. This last point may be my exaggeration, rather than the Fox's. He is not explicit on how far one can generalise his account of 'taming'. I will consider this point in section 3 below. The first two exaggerations are closely interconnected. Because not all value derives from attachment, some attachments can lack value, that is they can be worthless to the person whose attachments they are. To be of value to the people whose attachments they are attachments must be valuable in themselves.⁵ Let me explain.

⁵ In the text of the chapter I use 'attachments' to refer both to particular attachments of particular individuals, and to kinds or types of attachments, relying on context to clarify the meaning. The claim made in the text above is that the value of attachments of a certain kind does not depend exclusively on the fact that those whose attachments they are embrace them willingly or with approval. This is consistent with the fact

We cannot form attachments, and we cannot sustain those we have, except where *we think* that doing so is worthwhile, that is, in the belief that there is value in having the attachments or in forming them. In part this is merely a clarification of the sense in which the term is used here: it refers only to ties of which we are conscious, and it excludes those we find ourselves burdened with against our will, those we would rather be without but from which we cannot, at least not without much effort, shake ourselves free. Our attachments are endorsed by us, and that means that they are seen as valuable.⁶ We may, of course, be wrong, and this or that attachment may be devoid of value.

that the value of attachments of that kind depends in part, at least normally, on the attitude of people who are so attached. Their impersonal value, referred to in the text, is their value to one were they to be one's attachments, which is independent of the fact that they were embraced by one as one's attachments.

The 'personal value' of an attachment is a value of a concrete attachment to the person who has it. That its value depends on the person's attitude to the object or objective of the attachment is part, but only a part, of the case for my claim that personal attachments give meaning to people's lives. People derive a sense of purpose and of value in their life from their engagements with pursuits and relationships that they regard, implicitly or explicitly, as worthwhile, that is, from their attachments.

⁶ This claim should be read as being compatible with some irrational, and even pathological, and self-destructive attachments. Sometimes people form or maintain attachments against their better judgement, and keep them alive even when they cause them much suffering. But much of the time this is done because of the overpowering attraction of some good aspect of the relationship, say, sexual attraction, or the comfort of familiarity and security (which can persist even in the presence of physical or mental abuse), etc. Though obviously some pathologies do not conform to this pattern, and some attachments are maintained purely out of fear.

But much of the time our mistakes are contingent. We have no reason to think that these beliefs *must* be wrong, that it is never good to have attachments, or that we can never know when it is.

It is possible for people to form an attachment thinking that it will be valuable just because they formed it, or that they formed it in certain circumstances, quite independent of the nature and value of its object. Perhaps some attachments are valuable for such reasons. But these are highly unusual cases. For the most part we form and maintain attachments believing in the suitability of their objects. We do not fall in love because we have reason to fall in love with this person and with no other, but we believe that the people we love are suitable objects of our love. Otherwise the love is demeaning to us, is an obsession we cannot rid ourselves of, a weakness we fail to struggle against, or an expression of some other pathology. This also shows that we generally believe that the value of our attachments depends on the suitability of their objects, and that attachments to unsuitable objects can be valueless.⁷ Here

⁷ That is, without any value at all (rather than that on balance their down side is greater than their value). I have seen this suggestion doubted on the ground that it is inconsistent with the spontaneity and the autonomy of our emotions. It is as if one said that one's love is worthwhile only if the person one loves is the most suitable person one can love, or as if one has to deserve to be loved. But that is not the meaning of my claim. It does not imply anything about what makes one a suitable object of an attachment. It may be that one is capable of reciprocating, and nothing more, that one would not abuse it, or any other test. It all depends on the nature of the attachment and of its object. But clearly one can be a suitable object of love, even if the love is not successful, or even if there are others such that had one loved them instead one would have fared better, etc.

again there is nothing awry with our beliefs. They express the structure of our concepts, and establish the first exaggeration in the Fox's implied position. In general, an attachment must have a worthy object to be valuable.

But while the Fox is wrong about value and meaning in general, he is right if *personal meaning* is what he has in mind, that is, the meaning which is personal to each of us, and which can make our life worth living. Personal meaning does indeed depend on attachments: we live for our relations with people we love, for the goals we pursue, be they professional, political, social, or other, and for those aspects of the world which have come to have special meaning for us, those we have 'tamed'. If you doubt that, try and revive the spirits of a depressed or suicidal person by pointing out how much of value there is in the world: mention the beauty of nature, treasures of supreme art filling the museums, the wealth of sublime music, the great number of lovers, etc. One is more likely to drive such a person further into gloom. Their problem is not the absence of value in the world but the absence of meaning in their life. Personal meaning, as the Fox says, derives from attachments.

How then does the personal meaning of attachments and their objects relate to their (impersonal) value? Simply: our attachments appropriate (impersonal) value, and make it meaningful for us. They go well beyond the recognition of the value of their objects, and of the attachments themselves. They endow it with a role in our lives, make it relevant to the success or failure of our life. I may recognise the merits of my city, and the value of engaging in civic activities, but only my actual embracing that good by caring about and becoming actively involved in the civic life of my city makes the life of my city,

and my engagement with it, important for the success of my own life. The personal meaning of objects, causes, and pursuits depends on their impersonal value, and is conditional on it. But things of value have to be appropriated by us to endow our lives with meaning, meaning which is a precondition for life being either a success or a failure. Attachments are the name I give here to these appropriations; they are the results of the taming the Fox explains to his new friend.

2 Taming: desire or common history

Corrupted by utilitarians and by some economists we may think that our desires invest what we desire with personal meaning. The Little Prince, having learnt his lesson, knows better. Addressing the roses in the rose garden he says:

You are not at all like my rose. As yet you are nothing. No one has tamed you, and you have tamed no one . . . You are beautiful, but you are empty . . . One could not die for you . . . [My rose] is more important than all the hundreds of you . . . because it is she that I have watered; because it is she that I have sheltered . . . because it is for her that I have killed the caterpillars . . . because it is she that I have listened to, when she grumbled, or boasted, or even sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is *my* rose. (p. 68)

Meaning comes through a common history, and through work. They make the object of one's attachment unique. You will not be surprised that meaning comes with responsibility and through responsibility. By assuming duties

we create attachments. Duties and special responsibilities, not rights, are the key to a meaningful life, and are inseparable from it. In denying our duties we deny the meaning of our life.

Of course not all duties are like that. Not all of them arise out of our attachments, out of our partiality for some things. Some duties are independent of such attachments. Some, as we will see when we get to discuss respect for people in chapter 4, are based on the impersonal value of things, and are a precondition for our capacity to form attachments. But personal meaning depends on attachments which are constituted in part by the duties we incur in the course of our life, as a result of the way our life unfolds.

Why duties rather than rights? Because duties involve responsibilities and, therefore, engage our lives in a way which rights do not.⁸ We are passive regarding our rights, we are recipients so far as they are concerned. We may benefit from them even while we are totally unaware of them. We may of course conform with our duties without being aware of them either. But this normally only means that we do not refer to them in deliberation. I do not consider my duty to care for my child when I care for my child. I do not consider the duty not to murder before I say hello to a person without murdering him. It does not follow that the duty to care for my child or that the prohibition on murder does not shape my actions. Duties are reasons for action. They can shape our view of our options even when we do not deliberate, or do not refer to them in our deliberations. For most of us, our duty not to murder

⁸ Cf. my 'Liberating Duties' in J. Raz, *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

makes the thought of murder inconceivable. Our duties rule out many options – exclude them from our mental horizon. This is a way of guiding our life, perhaps the deepest and most profound way.

Rights too can have such an aspect. Some rights determine status: establish that one is a citizen, or just a member of a society, and so on. Consciousness of them may be important to our sense of who we are. Yet, unless the status brings with it duties, and therefore responsibilities, rights are less intimately engaged with our life. Our duties define our identities more profoundly than do our rights. They are among the primary constituents of our attachments, among the fundamental contributors to meaning in our life.

3 What kind of uniqueness, when, and why?

The Little Prince's spirits revive. His rose is not perceptually unique, but unique she is, made unique by the history of their love.

At this point I should confess some unease with the way the Little Prince solves his crisis. He has what is to me, personally, an unappetising taste for an ethereal, disembodied, aesthetic. Many value people and objects for being perceptually unique, that is, reliably identifiable by sight (normally) or by sound or another sense. The Little Prince resolves his crisis by rejecting the importance of unique perceptual identifiability, and, one suspects, downgrading the importance of all perceptual and sensual properties. From now on it matters not to him that his rose is visually indistinguishable from others.

Their shared history makes it unique and that is good enough. All I can say is, this may be fine for him, but need not be fine for everyone.

He loved his rose for her looks, and having discovered that she is not unique in her looks he now realises that he was mistaken and that his love was based on their common history. This kind of transmutation of love, its survival even as its self-understanding changes, is common, and, far from being objectionable, may be necessary in the conditions of our lives. Lasting relationships are, typically, not those which remain unchanged for many years, but rather those which do change, where the relationship acquires new meanings with time, to replace the value which faded away, as well as those which, though founded on misperceptions and plain mistakes about oneself or the other, retain their vitality once the mistakes come to light, through a better understanding of what they really mean to oneself or the other. My personal reservations with the Little Prince's new understanding of his love have to do with the suggestion that loving the rose for her looks is shallow, or even that it is a self-defeating foundation for love, liable to lead to its death upon the discovery that others are just as beautiful.

The life of many people is enriched by their loving attachments to people or other objects based on their looks, or on other of their perceived characteristics. We know that many deep friendships and many loving relations are cemented by attraction to the looks, smell, or feel to the touch of the other. In some circles this is sniffed at. But it should not be. People's looks, as well as all aspects of their sensuality, are among their

most important characteristics, to be valued by them, and by others.⁹

But is not the Little Prince right that people's perceptual characteristics are not unique to them, and thus cannot form the foundation for an attachment, since attachments presuppose uniqueness? Perceptual and sensual qualities can be *de facto* unique, or unique for all practical purposes, that is, extremely unlikely to be replicated in the experience of the people concerned.¹⁰ Such *de facto* uniqueness is often of crucial importance to people, and for good reasons.¹¹ It is true, however, that logical uniqueness may be important as well, and a common history is the only practical way to ensure it.

⁹ The anti-sensual tendency in some parts of contemporary culture combines with the belief that people's looks, and their other sensual properties, are less worthwhile, and their possession is no merit in their possessors because they are an accident of nature, not a result of the will or decision of their possessors (though oddly many sniff even more at those who spend much effort to improve their looks). The fallacy that merit or desert arises only out of choice or effort of will is one of the great vices of much intellectual work in ethics and political philosophy today. But that is a story for another occasion.

¹⁰ Where our capacity to discern differences under so-called normal conditions determines the degree of similarity which will defeat a claim to uniqueness.

¹¹ Typically the reasons combine the fact that most people rely on perceived properties for recognition with the fact that in the culture we inhabit recognition has to be fairly instantaneous or it will evoke loss of confidence in the attachment on both sides (that these points are subject to exceptions regarding people with perceptual or recognitional disabilities does not show that they do not apply to those who do not have those disabilities). This is combined with the special value that perceived properties may have in the relationship.

The most abstract and basic reason for the importance of (logical) uniqueness is that attachments, attachments of the kind we are considering,¹² are to a particular individual, who is irreplaceable. Of course, this does not mean that one cannot have more than one attachment, only that they are different, and not fungible. As when, having lost a child, one has another, or as one falls in love again after an earlier relationship with a lover went sour, one attachment may come to fill a gap left by the demise of another, but it will not be quite the same, even if it is no less good, or even if it is better overall, than the other.

Irreplaceability is, of course, aspect dependent. Every thing is irreplaceable in some respects, and replaceable in others. In many contexts assertions of irreplaceability refer to the value of the allegedly irreplaceable object. But they do not mean that the object is irreplaceable because its value is greater than that of any possible replacement (most commonly this will be asserted by saying that the object is ‘incomparable’). They may mean that *in some aspect* it is better than any possible replacement. But often they mean something rather different, namely that there is (or was) something about the object which lends

¹² Earlier I suggested that the Fox’s account of taming, of appropriating universal value and creating personal meaning, can be generalised well beyond loving relationships to all attachments. I believe this to be so, but uniqueness does not play a role in all of them. It is typically important when the attachment is to an object or a person. In such cases the value of the attachment often presupposes the uniqueness of its object, i.e., the value of the attachment is predicated on a unique relationship of the subject to that particular object. The same is not typical of attachments to causes, or types of activities. Sometimes their unique role or place in the life of the subject is part of their value. But often it is not.

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

Think of parents' attachment to their child. Assume that it is reasonably successful, and is of a fairly common kind. The parents regard the child as irreplaceable. They need not deny that if the child died they would have another, and that for all they know their relation with the new child would be as successful and rewarding. Acknowledging this they still regard the child as irreplaceable. Nor is this feeling simply an expression of their desire to be spared the pain and anguish of experiencing the death of their child and their anxiety before their new one is born and their relationship with him or her proves successful. Suppose all this happens, and now, happy with their new child, they look back. They still think of their relationship with the first child as unique and think that the child was irreplaceable. There was something special in their relationship with their dead child which makes it different, and different in the way it was good, from their relationship with their new child.

All this is compatible with the relationship with the dead child having been unique only *de facto*. It was made of many factors, all of them in principle reproducible, but in fact extremely unlikely to be repeated. It is possible that such *de facto* uniqueness is all that the parents value. But not atypically this is not the case. We cannot test this with realistic scenarios, but we will not be surprised that faced with an imaginary scenario

of replacing their child with another such that all the valuable aspects of the child and their relations with him are replicated they will reject the option, on the ground that their attachment to their current child is unique and irreplaceable. If the replacement takes place anyway they will regret the loss of their first child, in spite of the arrival of an equally good replacement.¹³ Given the artificiality of this scenario we may not wish to place much weight on it. Even if such reactions are not uncommon they may be confused, or otherwise unwarranted.

Indeed, it is not my claim that all relationships with people, or that all attachments to objects, must be unique to be valuable. But that they often are can be seen in the fact that features which make them (logically) unique in the life of the people whose attachments they are, are part of their value. The first child was the parents' first, and that makes the attachment special, gives it a flavour no other can have for them. Not that relations with a first child are always good. They can be bad, and the child being the first one may make things worse. But when the relationship with the child is good, that it was their first child may be part of what makes the relationship special for the parents (and for the child) and gives it special flavour, a special value which for them is unrepeatable, a value which cannot be exhaustively described in terms of properties which are in principle repeatable in their life.

The object of an attachment is unique if one of its properties, essential to the value it in fact has, and which is

¹³ I am not imagining two qualitatively identical children. This will raise other questions, not relevant here. In the example under discussion the replacement child is simply identical in the in-principle-repeatable (in the life of the parents) good-making characteristics.

responsible for at least part of the value of the attachment to it, is such that it can only be instantiated once.¹⁴ This is the conceptual explanation why the object is unique.¹⁵ What we are more interested in is a psychological explanation of whether, and if so why, attachments of this kind are so central to the meaning of our life, as I suspect they are. Unfortunately, I do not have anything illuminating to say about that.

¹⁴ Notice that it is the object we are attached to, not the features which make the attachment valuable. But that fact does not solve the problem of uniqueness. Of course, the object has a particular, not a general property. But, as we see it, we are attached to it for some reason or other. The attachment is not a fact we discover about ourselves, it is an attitude we endorse. (Though, as mentioned above, we can be obsessively or addictively attached against our will, or without understanding what it is that keeps us attached to an object.) The problem of uniqueness arises out of the fact that we have reasons for the attachments we are talking about, and that reasons are universal (see more in chapter 2 below).

That does not mean that the uniqueness of the object is what is valuable or valued about it. Were this so then the object, and the attachment to it, would have been replaceable, since there are other objects which are unique. If what was of value was having an attachment to a unique object then others would have done just as well. Rather the uniqueness of the valuable properties of the attachment makes it irreplaceable whether or not one values its uniqueness.

The way of understanding the unique value of certain personal attachments I offer here, i.e., via the value of historical properties, can capture the sense in which what is uniquely valuable is the object – it is the object under that historical description: my first child, i.e., my child *qua* a first child, etc.

¹⁵ It also explains why the requirement of uniqueness is not empty. To be sure, everything is unique in some ways, but the ways which count are those which make for the value of the attachment and not everything is unique in such ways.

Cases where the perceptual features of a person or object are at the core of the attachment represent a special case. Two elements mark them. First, it is normally¹⁶ important to people to be able perceptually to identify those they are attached to. Second, perceptual properties are not unique. Different people may look the same, etc. The combination of the two means that some attachments persist and thrive because as a matter of fact the object of the attachment is unique in the experience of the person who is attached to it. Such attachments will be shattered or transformed if a perceptually indistinguishable object appears. Discovering that the object of one's affection has a perceptually indistinguishable identical twin, can put a great strain on a relationship. The discovery that one's favourite painting is visually indistinguishable from a replica can also have an unsettling effect.

In such cases *de facto* perceptual uniqueness may also be a condition for the existence and success of the attachment. But this requirement of *de facto* perceptual uniqueness, that is, of being able perceptually to identify the object of one's attachment among objects within one's experience, is distinct from the basic requirement of logical uniqueness mentioned before, and is due to the specific nature of these attachments. It is consistent with the fact that strict and not merely *de facto* uniqueness defines this type of attachment, provided that the object of the attachment possesses additional valuable properties which are unique and which contribute to the value of the attachment.

¹⁶ There are exceptions to this generalisation: a blind person may be in love with another because of their good looks, even if he or she cannot see them for themselves, just as they can be attached to a painting because of its appearance, though they cannot see it.