

# How Lipman’s “caring thinking” theory for human thought may encourage the safeguarding of industrial and technological heritage

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## Como a teoria *caring thinking* de Lipman para o pensamento humano pode incentivar a preservação do património industrial e tecnológico

### Abstract

This paper describes the potential for “caring thinking” of Matthew Lipman’s philosophy to be applied from education to museological practice to enhance new decision-making models for conservation. “Caring thinking” is crucial when applied from education to heritage conservation, as it does not only concern the treatment of the deteriorated parts of any industrial object but the truth, the museological content that lies beyond the aesthetic or historical values that have to be thoroughly examined. The Lipman theory articulates complex modes of thought that include: a) valuational, b) affective, c) active, d) normative and e) the empathy of man for human ingenuity, effort and expectations. This effort, reflects the need for the industrial and technological heritage conservator not only to extend the life-span of the collections but to strive to retain their intangible value and enhance the viewer’s museological engagement with them.

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### KEYWORDS

Lipman  
Caring thinking  
Decision making  
Empathy  
Ethics

### Resumo

Este artigo descreve o potencial da filosofia *caring thinking* de Matthew Lipman quando aplicado desde a educação até à prática museológica, para melhorar os novos modelos de tomada de decisão para a conservação. O *caring thinking* é crucial quando usado desde a educação à conservação do património, uma vez que não diz respeito apenas ao tratamento das partes deterioradas de qualquer objeto industrial, mas também à verdade, ao conteúdo museológico que se encontra para além dos valores estéticos ou históricos que têm de ser cuidadosamente examinados. A teoria de Lipman articula modos complexos de pensamento que incluem: a) o valorativo, b) o afetivo, c) o ativo, d) o normativo e e) a empatia pelo engenho, esforço e expectativas humanas. Este empenho reflete a necessidade do conservador do património industrial e tecnológico em prolongar o tempo de vida das coleções, em manter os seus valores intangíveis, e melhorar o envolvimento museológico do espectador com elas.

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### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Lipman  
*Caring thinking*  
Tomada de decisões  
Empatia  
Ética

## Introduction

Matthew Lipman was an American educationalist and philosopher who became the founding father of the worldwide educational movement “Philosophy to school children” all over the world. Cam called him a “meliorist by temperament” as his philosophy was inspired by the writings of John Dewey which he read during the World War II. The shift from a conventional academic career to his work for children started in the social and political ferment in the late 60s, grounded in his beginning to think about the need for educational change in teaching the Vietnam war generation of undergraduates, caring for his own children or seeking ways to improve the growing need for social change through education [1].

Lipman’s applied epistemology utilizes the terms of critical thinking, creative thinking and moral reasoning in order to articulate discourse about human thought at the level of human consciousness. He argued that, while critical thinking is important and extremely valuable, it is not enough to make decisions or solve problems. He pointed out the need for young children to also develop their creative and loving side of thinking [1]. In 1995, in the context of human coexistence and contribution, he articulated the “caring thinking” philosophy, a condition of higher level of thinking [2].

Caring thinking is analyzed in this paper with an emphasis on a thought, a process that safeguards collections and especially curates and restores the industrial heritage. As Lipman’s theory is encouraging the development of children’s thinking for problem solving, its extension to adults will help to analyze caring thinking practices in the field of human care and culture. Translating this to the profession of the conservator, however, is a challenge for two reasons. Firstly, because in contrast to ethnographic, religious or archaeological collections, industrial heritage is mainly treated as “a big stuff collection” that is difficult to care for, conserve, handle, restore or display (indoors or outdoors) by following ethical approaches or established conservation theories for works of art. Secondly, because in 1800 with the advent of industrialization, due to experimentation by artists and the development of unconventional materials, machines progressively integrated themselves from human activity into artistic creation. Therefore, preventing deterioration, making assessments, and restoring the immaterial aspects behind the industrial revolution object or contemporary artwork seems difficult to approach.

### Lipman’s theory for caring-thinking

According to Lipman, “caring thinking” is governed by feeling and inner meditation and consists of the following types:

- 1) Valuatinal thinking: this type of thinking refers to meaning that is structured by the facts (or objects) themselves. According to Lipman, it is a mode of thought he admires because it makes people feel important, shows interest, and prioritizes and values people and objects (with different criteria or taste).
- 2) Affective thinking: this compassionate way of thinking is an affective response to the need to do justice by establishing what is right and just, what is wrong, what is judged immoral or unethical and what should last.
- 3) Active thinking: this is a type of care giving ability. It tackles a problem with passion, examining its cause. It utilizes language and communicating codes , initiates a proposal, constructs a proposed plan of care and relates to sustainability, conservation and development (environmental, cultural, etc.).
- 4) Normative thinking: this refers to structuring meanings, thinking through of rules for actions that can be applied into local or global contexts and frameworks. Students or sort of persons usually defend their values by mentioning laws “for the common good” which Lipman describes as a caring conduct, expressing what has or ought to be done:

it is expressed through solidarity, moral treatment of events and by avoiding personal self-centeredness.

- 5) Empathic thinking: according to Lipman, the concept of "feeling, experiencing, thinking and behaving" as if you have experienced the problem yourself feeds the thought to immediate action. In this way, care is provided through empathy by substituting for the 'weak', speaking for someone who is not able to take care of him or herself. This last issue does not only concern teachers who take care of their students in education but also doctors and nurses, and even conservators, who preserve the lives of patients (or industrial collections through caring thinking theories and practices).

Bornstein, referring to Lipman's philosophy claimed that it is consistent with Heidegger's twentieth century phenomenological contributions to hermeneutics and existentialism [3]. Heidegger expressed his belief by using the term of "Dasein" being-in-the-world existence [4]. This is a "pre-ontological" understanding that shapes our lives through actions and ontology. For example we care for things or people, foresee and prevent ourselves from doing bad things, always trying to prove who we are, and how our actions define our identity. Caring thinking can only be explained by analyzing the partnership of man with his environment through time in terms of the present, the past and the future. As Petrou comments, in Heidegger's and Lipman's philosophy the terms of "caring with" or "caring for" (things and people) contain multiple forms of human relations such as prevention, help, defense, upbringing, counseling, co-existing [5]. Conversely, thinking that care for people instead of museum collections (as in the case of humane nursing) concerns patients who have a self-care deficit as they need to become independent in order to recover their health. In terms of treatment, it aims to help them "acquire and adopt their cognitive and cultural attitudes, techniques and procedures that will empower them to promote and even maintain a healthy lifestyle". In this way, the issue particularly pointed out by Held concerns not only a thought that cares as a virtue but as an act that presupposes motivations of offering or self-disposition [6]. In fact, we do see that caring relationships between a teacher and a student require a response to the student's need, partial intimacy between the two, sensitivity, empathy and trust. For Caruana et al. sustainability principles help those engaged in art education to promote ethics of care and awareness of broad social needs and goals [7].

Taking all the aforementioned into consideration, caring can be understood as "our behavior towards people or things which are judged or evaluated to be important and useful, as long as it helps us to obtain something, to achieve our goals relatively to world, environment and people" [5, pp. 159-160, 165]. I believe that conservators appear to confirm Lipman's theory that caring-thinking is valuational when they classify data and value information (deterioration history, pathology and conditions of the preservation state of the work of art, technological assessment of past restoration interventions, etc.) with an emphasis on the safeguarding, prevention of damage and planning of actions in order to prevent further deterioration of the objects. Furthermore, caring for the intangible heritage means valuation of artifacts, traditional crafts, customs, narrations and cultural spaces associated therewith (Figure 1).

In the field of contemporary art in particular, Dominguez-Rubio says that all works of art are subject to processes of biological-physicochemical decay phenomena, but some are more "manageable or docile" since they respond more directly to the actions of the conservator at the moment when the objects fail to heal themselves [8].





**Figure 1.** View of equipment from the 1850's olive-oil soap making "Patounis" company in Corfu, whose technique was inscribed in 2017 on the National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece (2022).

### **Caring and social commitment in the aftermath of modernity**

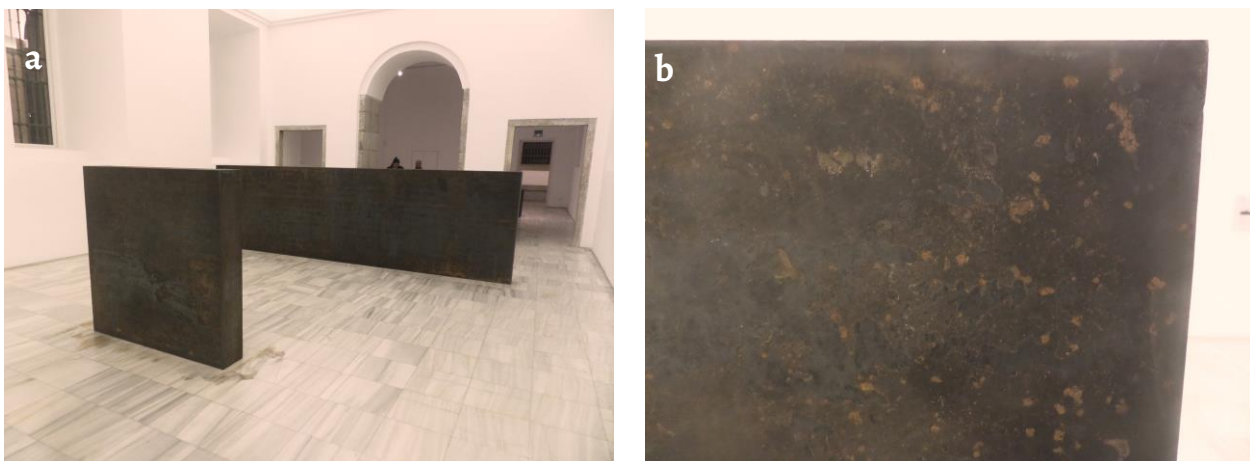
The contribution of conservation (in the context of collection care, safeguarding and cultural management) seems to be consistent with the social mission of museum professionals who make decisions, collect, investigate and also preserve ethically in a sustainable way, the evidence of human culture. Muñoz Viñas in the "new theory for conservation" by using the term "oxymoron" characterizes the nature of conservation as working against the biological process of aging in museums. Today, there is a modern art challenge where the "performativity" or the "intangibility" of the material objects convey meanings or messages, that are considered, thought or viewed differently to the classical notion of art conservation [9].

In nursing, Willis et al. similarly consider "an oxymoron" action to be the practice of the "art of caring" through a work intensification schedule which is missed care in a constantly controlled environment in hospitals due to lack of time [10]. Such negative or positive incentives prompted Lipman to explain that caring "with" or "for" is not due to an emotional incentive but is a "genuine cognitive value". He relates caring thinking for people to caring thinking for culture in order to examine the conditions of circumstances. The concept of caring for patients or for culture deals with the institutional framework within which curators of galleries care for works of art, doctors care for health and curates care for souls [2, p. 9]. In other words, only when we see things in specific contexts, do we experience them logically and value them. This declaration of estimating and valuating things, bodies or personalities

explains our tendency to set priorities, discover differences or similarities and provide patients with medical treatment (through nursing) or objects (through conservation).

However, it seems that caring thinking in the cases of cultural or nursing theories lies in the roots of schooling, in terms of the teaching of ethical issues. Caruana et al. argue that caring relies on the development of a cooperative existence based on the principles of social justice and an awareness of the consequences of present actions and decisions. This means that students should not be encouraged to care about future impacts of present actions, but "learn how to care, respect for diversity, compassion and the wellbeing of a community" [7, p.240]. Instead, Lipman's theory seems to be primarily concerned with the development of students' critical thinking and awareness by encouraging them to go further than an established, imprecise and uncreative way of thinking as he suggests that "thinking be considered an experiential connecting". In the case of healing art, the etymology of the word "curatorship" (from the Latin *curare*: *cura* = treatment), suggests the "treatment of the disease" entails feeling that promotes actions carried out from a humanitarian motive. For Hölling, Bewer and Ammann critical thinking treats the work of art as a "battery of time" [11]. More specifically, the authors adopt the statement of the art historian D. Joselit that the objects are "carriers of time" which hold an infinite potential for staging meanings or actions, while their valuation depends on the complex system of material relations or constructs in which they exist. On the one hand our attitude and thinking towards objects is expressed through the actions of collecting, exhibiting, and caring for them due to their transience or alterations over time. On the other hand, objects become batteries-witnesses of past interventions of man (creatively or destructively) which proves their impact on humans and vice-versa. This interaction is expressed through restoration, signifying a means of "healing or restoring health or renewing something old or lost", while conservation was meant "to keep intact, preserve and guard". However, when conservation problems arise in "this day and age" in contemporary objects, restoration looks like an oxymoron because the restored objects lack timeliness [11, p.5].

Even the reasoning of the postmodern conservator (about the conservation of matter, material or the symbolic meaning of the artwork or of a mechanical gadget or used tool) seems to be consistent with Lipman's philosophy: the active thinking of care assesses and initiates the effectiveness of conservation before it is even implemented, as conservation is a response to the question "what world would we like to live in?". In the modern period in the epistemology of conservation, conservators face the historical and technical primary question of how do we as conservators assess the "patina", a term that may be perceived "not as an indication of physical or chemical aging of the object but as a criterion of historicity, which conservation must preserve" [12, p. 373]. After all, the huge dimensions of an industrial or contemporary collection, with its deterioration process that encourages fruitful thinking, is an outstanding stimulus for decision-making, caring and exhibiting (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The "Equal-Parallel: Guernica-Bengasi" sculpture by Richard Serra made of metal blocks in Reina Sofia Museum: a) general view; b) detail from the patina of the hot-rolled Corten steel (2018).

In the postmodern era, caring thinking philosophers and stakeholders expressed their opinion that ephemeral collections, site specific monuments and art installations require alternative conservation treatments [13]. The effort to provide care, and struggle with active thinking dilemmas, has prompted conservators to consider how realistic their expectations are, and how they will negotiate with living artists so as to fulfill their expectations without compromising the values and art stories that need to emerge after conservation [14-16].

### **Ethical dilemmas that emerge during the evaluation of the state of preservation of industrial-contemporary collections**

In relation to Lipman's caring-thinking in education, it may be tentatively considered that conservation-caring presupposes the "evaluation of a problem" by the conservator and the finding of a solution by opening up to human emotion. This trial of safeguarding culture, preventing damage and restoring is part of a creative way of thinking.

Hiiop states that the care of classical forms of art is based on a conduct of ethics that focuses on theoretical, philosophical and technical judgments, but that for contemporary art revisions are required [17]. She declares that the "oxymoron of caring thinking" for objects is the moment when museum professionals find it difficult to accept biological aging. According to her, conservation in the postmodern era is an "anachronistic concept, the care of static collections" that are treated as sacred relics at a time when visual creativity is indifferent to time and its impact (wear and tear, decay).

Regarding the institution of museums, Goodman [18] asks when an object is a work of art, and answers that it becomes one when it functions as a symbol; a stone becomes a work of art not when it is on the street but in the museum, where it performs a symbolic function, with its texture, color, and form representing a sample of a certain period of origin or composition. A useful object can function as art and a work of art can function as a utilitarian object [19, p. 27]. Thus, one problem in contemporary art is due to the use of recycled tools and re-used materials in artworks, where the poor state of preservation symbolizes conceptual deconstruction of man's attitude, and therefore the re-used items should not be restored (Figure 3).

A typical example of caring used for the safeguarding of industrial heritage is the case study of the Industrial Gas Museum in Athens. In order to highlight the industrial heritage in parallel with the preparation and implementation of the museological study, the caring-thinking framework of the working group considered the restoration of the old factory buildings as urban venues and the conservation of the associated mechanical equipment that was in need of special protection. The conservation interventions were discreet and concerned specific machines such as chillers, steam engines or locomotives that were cleaned or put into operation via generators or manually, so that the visitor has an experience of their operation. This is a museological proposal, which regardless of conservation, will safeguard the collection so that the visitor may obtain a complete view of the lighting process produced by the gas [20].

Lipman's philosophy of caring thinking can be matched to conservation approaches as shown in Table 1.

My personal opinion is that the deep relationship that the conservator develops with the objects-collections is similar to the loving dimension of the nurture-child caring (or care of the educator for his students, or parental caring for children according to Lipman). For the conservator's way of nurturing through art caring seems to bring emotions of satisfaction. Furthermore, it provides happiness, optimism and achievement through the success of the completion of the conservator's conservation/restoration tasks, dexterities and skills (Figure 4).





**Figure 3.** An old scratched and corroded press used in the *Compressed Cotton* (1961) sculpture of N. Kessanlis. The deterioration and patina of its metals, the stains on the cloth and the wood are parts of its degradation meaning (2020).

**Table 1.** Potential examples of a conservator's caring thinking theory

Modes of thought according to Lipman's model	Examples of ethical dilemmas faced by a conservator of industrial collections
Valuative thinking	"What are the weaknesses of this conservation project and how may I face them?" "This battery is in poor condition". "How will I preserve the industrial collection or its meaning in the 'best possible' way?" "How will I be evaluated morally by my colleagues and society?" "By what kinds of conservation standards and opportunities?" "I think that this object is attributed to this company..."
Affective thinking	"I have to respond to..." Defending the inventor's intentions before/after conservation. Justifying the collection when it is exposed in public in an exhibition.
Active thinking	Preliminary examination of the object, physic-chemical analysis, technical studies of its construction method, causes of deterioration. Proposed conservation working plan and risk-assessment. "This enamel needs varnishing..."
Normative thinking	"How will I apply basic ethical principles in their validity and legal status?"(e.g. the Greek Law 3028/2000 based on the protection of Antiquities and cultural heritage in general or the Professional Code of Conduct for Conservators, 2000) [21-22].
Empathy	a) Care for the (functional) object at the moment when its industrial inventor/factory worker/user "fails": initial expectations, conditions, challenges. b)Empathy for the industrial object's inventor in relation to the museological interpretation and meaning-making that may enhance the experience of the visitor. "How can I make people discover the value of a machine, it's use or technological impact."



**Figure 4.** A detached paper sketch: *a)* before and *b)* after conservation; the conservator's way of caring thinking revolved around the problem of restoring the health of this "fragile" artwork-being sensitive like a child (2018).

Even though Lipman does not consider the factor of emotion exclusively in the activation of caring thinking, Tomkins and Bristow argue that the theory of caring is based on indications of the effectiveness of emotion. They also consider that the foundations of care are the administration of justice, the assurance of moral laws and peace in the world [23, pp.3, 5, 12]. The safeguarding of any civilization or (industrial/technological) heritage is important because it is fair for people to have the right to discover their own roots, identity, and traditions (Figure 5). Clavir [24] mentions that in contrast to established Western museum conservation practice, First Nations people present alternative viewpoints (not only intellectually but also emotionally). The question concerns thinking of the deep connections either between people and objects or for the impact of museums in society due to their nature. For example, indigenous people such as the Maori in New Zealand have used objects in their traditions and rituals as an intrinsic element of maintaining their lifeways, language, art, narrations and cultural identity [25]. For this reason, many museums' preservation policies have changed from being focused purely on the preservation of material culture, keepers to embrace people-based approaches that permit interactive museological or educational use of objects and conservation of their intangible values. As Wijesuriya and Court explain, in the case of Asian cultures, the key issue for sustainability is dialogue through the development of global programmes on people-centered approaches to conservation, embracing the importance of Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS) of local communities in safeguarding heritage [26]. These systems may be seen today as the outcome of a community connection with living heritage, as community members are respected as "knowledge holders" who gain access, rediscover cultural or agricultural landscapes, architectural and engineering solutions or practice their skills. In the context of built heritage conservation, Wijesuriya [27] suggests that "de-secularisation" – the removal of the Western sense of separation between materiality and spirituality of urban and rural sites – is vital to promote more holistic approach to caring for heritage.





**Figure 5.** View of a historical lithographic press at the engraving studios of the Athens School of Fine Arts. Such industrial objects are important to new artists allowing them to use and even restore them (2022).

## Conclusions

Regardless of the scientific background of the conservator profession, or the theoretical or practical specialization of the conservator in a specific category of collections, care is a cognitive act based on philosophical, ethical issues [28, p. 17]. In Lipman's philosophy care is a conscious act which entails several modes of thinking [29]. The rationale of care in culture can be related to "curation", "collection management", or "preservation or conservation" – loving or emotional actions demonstrating the moral commitment of museum professionals (as they oppose the decay caused by nature itself). A caring thinking philosophy that comes from the creation-genealogy of the tangible object, which is otherwise doomed to oblivion if it is not, conserved [14]. Caring thinking examines and evaluates events, conditions and facts. It preserves the intangible – what is behind the "icon" and "aesthetics" of the objects, reaching the intent or aim of creation, the transmission of memories, functions, human disciplines, lifestyles, artistic or scientific techniques, creating dexterities, etc. This is important not only to the museums of today but in the long-term in the context of extending the life-span of (industrial) objects, and their role in society.

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