

JUKKA JOKILEHTO



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Es arquitecto y urbanista; obtuvo su doctorado en Historia y Filosofía de la conservación en la Universidad de York (Reino Unido). Comenzó a trabajar en ICCROM en 1972, como responsable del Programa de Conservación Arquitectónica. Más tarde, sus funciones se ampliaron al incluir el cargo de asistente del director general, que desempeñó hasta su jubilación, en 1998. Durante ese tiempo fue director de Programas internacionales de formación, miembro del Grupo de Dirección para la Administración y la Política, e inició y desarrolló importantes actividades de programas, como el de conservación territorial y urbana integrada (ITUC), los programas regionales para el norte de África y Oriente Próximo, países de Asia Occidental y Central, y gestión de sitios arqueológicos en Oriente Próximo y Medio, y Angkor. Ha sido asesor de Patrimonio Mundial del ICOMOS y consultor de la UNESCO. Ha impartido clases a escala internacional y realizado numerosas publicaciones. Actualmente, es asesor especial del director general de ICCROM.

Portada interior:  
**SIMA QIAN. Retrato.**  
*Imagen: Dominio público.*



# Reflections on human creativity

JUKKA JOKILEHTO

## **Abstract**

*The scope of the paper is to examine the evolution of understanding human creativity from the traditional world to modernity. The traditional world evolved gradually based on human creative capacity and as a response to the emerging needs and requirements of groups of people and communities. Culture is a product of humanity and it is relevant to all human activities, whether tangible or intangible. As part of the creative processes, human beings associate cultural significance and meanings to all types of artefacts and structures, such as monuments or memorials, traditional vernacular architecture reflecting the identity of each place and community, as well as cult images created for shrines and temples. The traditional construction of the habitat resulted in the creation of structural systems and building forms that gradually developed over centuries. The resulting settlements tended to bear a strong local identity due to the choice of available materials, as well as perceived requirements of the community. The ongoing traditions were not static, but living and capable of implying gradual creative changes in customs and values, while maintaining the underlying essence. Originally, the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. Consequently, being created for a specific ritual function, the work was replaceable and could be substituted by another that served the same function. The question of artistic creation became an argument particularly starting from the Italian Renaissance. The question of imitation of natural forms in order to perceive the original idea was an important topic in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Johann Joachim Winckelmann elevated the notion of "idea" to an "ideal", an issue in the selection of works to be preserved, concerning especially ancient sculpture. The modern philosophy related to works of art has developed particularly from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It gives particular focus on the distinction between the artistic idea, i.e., the image or form, which represents the intangible aspect, and its realization in material, i.e., the matter that is the carrier of the image. Paul Philippot remarks that art theory distinguishes itself from other historical disciplines because, rather than recounting the history of an event in the past, belonging to memory, it intends to create of history a reality that is present in the consciousness. In conclusion, human creativity represents the intangible life force that aims at the creation and diversification of cultural expressions, whether called monument, work of art or vernacular. The notion of being historic or historical can be taken as a value judgement, which also calls for respect and protection.*

**Keywords:** *creativity, tradition, monument, work of art, history.*

The distinction between the notions of "monument" and "monument historique," proposed by Françoise Choay, can be seen to symbolise the gradual detachment of the modern world from the traditional, which was already discussed by Nietzsche in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The concept of "monument" carries with it the traditional notion of memorial or reminder as indicated in its Greek roots *mnema*, *mnemeion* (memorial, remembrance, record of a person or thing), and the Latin root *monere* (to remind, admonish). It is also noted that while the Greek notion stresses remembering, the Latin is more associated with reminding of an authority, seemingly reflecting the social and political characters of the two civilisations. Choay stresses the idea that the notion of monument or memorial has actually existed in all cultures, as can be seen for example in the ancient dolmens and megalithic constructions built for social, religious or funerary purposes in various parts of the world. It can therefore be taken as

universal. Choay further notes that the idea of the “monument” can also exist in the modern world. She gives the example of rebuilding the destroyed centre of the city of Warsaw. It was inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1980 and justified as a symbol of the Polish identity and because: “The city was rebuilt as a symbol of elective authority and tolerance, where the first democratic European constitution, the Constitution of 3 May 1791, was adopted.”<sup>1</sup>

### Human creativity and tradition

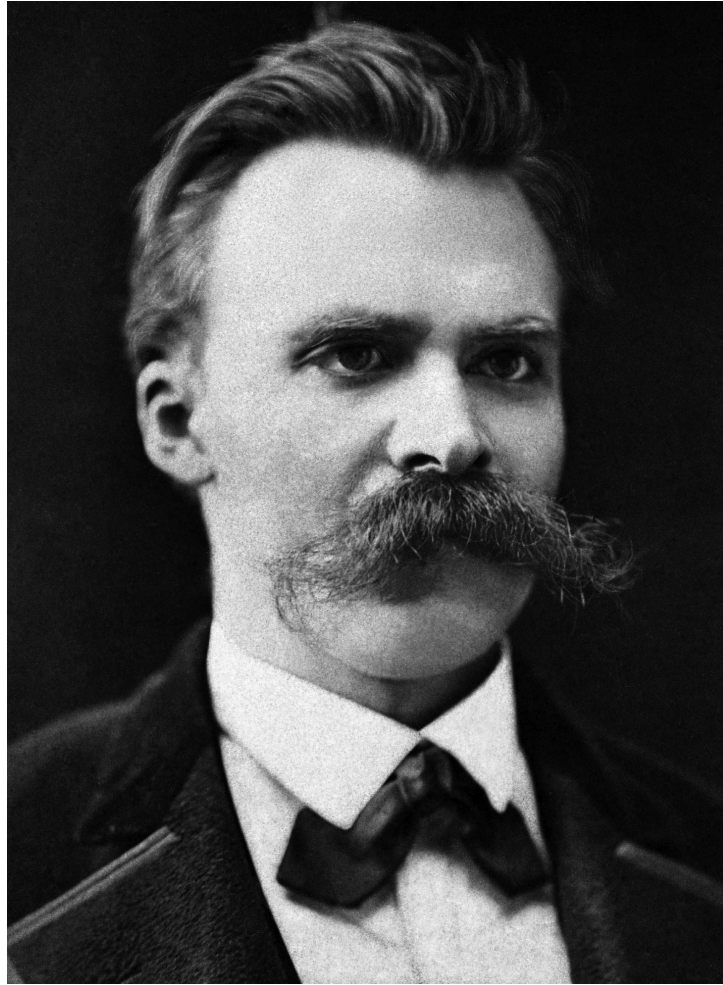
The traditional world evolved gradually based on human creative capacity and as a response to the emerging needs and requirements of groups of people and communities. In reference to such developments, Henri Bergson (1859-1941), president of the International Committee of Intellectual Cooperation, discussed the notions of creativity and duration in his *Creative evolution (L'Évolution créatrice, 1906)*. The world continues being generated by a life force or original impetus (*élan vital*) that passes from one generation to the next, creating a bridge of continuity. At the same time, this force aims at creative diversification. We can see that life has two dimensions: on the one hand it is experienced in the creative force that continues to respond to emerging challenges, and, on the other, the results of past creativity endure in matter becoming a record of. “Like the universe as a whole, like each conscious being taken separately, the organism which lives is a thing that endures. Its past, in its entirety, is prolonged into its present, and abides there, actual and acting” (Bergson, 1998: 15). Bergson also discusses the way human memory works in processes of recognition of past images. Indeed, it is through such processes that the past and present are closely linked, creating the human culture (Bergson, 1991).

In this same spirit, the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) has noted that there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture. He writes that our central nervous system grew up in interaction with culture, thus including what we are doing, as well as our ideas, our values, and our emotions. Referring to the Chartres cathedral, he notes that “the specific concepts of the relations among God, man, and architecture that, since they have governed its creation, it consequently embodies. It is no different with men: they, too, every last one of them, are cultural artefacts” (Geertz, 1993: 50-51). As a result of the human creativity and duration over time, there formed traditions, consisting of beliefs and customs passed down from generation to generation within a group or society maintaining the symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past.

The etymology of “tradition” refers to the Latin concept of “*trado*” or “*tradere*,” meaning: to hand over, give up, surrender. Indeed, traditions were normally confined to specific communities, where they were handed down from generation to generation. When continuing the tradition as a learning process, the customs and beliefs needed to be appropriated by the receiver. At the same time, the implementation of the past lessons would also imply creative action reflecting the changing needs and requirements. In fact, as already seen in the meaning of the word *tradio*, there will also be change. This change is relevant for example in the work of an artisan, who maintains the tradition while being involved in the creation of new artefacts as part of an existing settlement or rebuilding decayed or damaged structures. For example, in a traditional Buddhist country like Bhutan, the artisans would still continue using their creative capacity to reinterpret the Buddhist messages carved and integrated in the wooden elements of a monastery. Consequently, traditions continue to endure in the customs and artefacts while remaining alive and creative.

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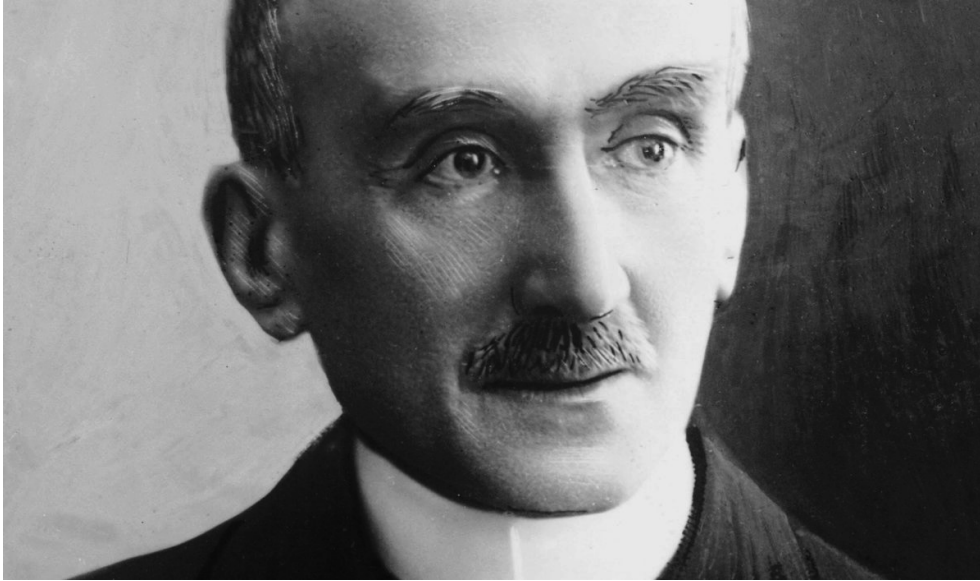
<sup>1</sup> See [<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/30>].



FRIEDRICH WILHELM NIETZSCHE. Ca. 1875. *Image: Public domain.*



WARSAW, 1945. *Image: Public domain.*



HENRI BERGSON. *Image: Public domain.*



CLIFFORD GEERTZ. Standing next to his wife, Prof. Karen Blu, at the Institute for Advanced Study May Day Celebration, on May 1, 1983. *Image: Elton Lance, Shelby White and Leon Archives Center, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, USA.*

The traditional construction of the habitat resulted in the creation of structural systems and building forms that gradually developed over centuries. The resulting settlements tended to carry a strong local identity due to the choice of available materials, as well as perceived requirements of the community. The ICOMOS *Charter on the built vernacular heritage* (1999) offers the definition of such vernacular heritage consistent with the living tradition: "Vernacular building is the traditional and natural way by which communities house themselves. It is a continuing process including necessary changes and continuous adaptation as a response to social and environmental constraints." In a similar sense, the 1992 *New Zealand Charter for the conservation of places of cultural heritage value* notes about the indigenous heritage of Maori and Moriori that it relates to family, local and tribal groups, and associations, and that "It is inseparable from identity and well-being and has particular cultural meanings." In the European context, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, German geographers such as Otto Schlüter (1872-1959) started studying the development of traditional urban settlements. These initiatives were taken over to the UK by Michael Robert Günter Conzen (1907-2000) a geographer and founder of the Anglo-German school of urban morphology. The questions of traditional typology and morphology were further studied in Italy by Saverio Muratori (1910-1973) and Gianfranco Caniggia (1933-1987), for whom typology was intimately associated with the way of building in each period, resulting from an organic growth and creative response to the needs of society (Jokilehto, 2018: 195-198).

Within such contexts, there are also requirements not only to build the habitat but also to create cult images for the use in sacred places such as shrines and temples. In 1936, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) published *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* where he notes that originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. Consequently, being created for a specific ritual function, the work was replaceable and could be substituted by another that served the same function. At the same time, it also allowed some creativity, while maintaining the relevant significance and overall form. In Japan, normally, it has been understood that, while learning the traditional crafts, the artisans were given the possibility not to copy exactly the traditional form, but to have the possibility to use such traditional techniques creatively. Choay indicates the Ise Shrine as a cult object where verification of authenticity needed to be referred to the ritual context (Choay, 1995: 105). She also recalls her discussion with an artisan who had participated in the ritual rebuilding of the Ise Shrine. Here, as an exception to the normal use of crafts, this person complained of not having been given the opportunity to use his creativity. Instead, he was obliged to make an exact copy of the previous forms. This could perhaps be seen as a partial "modernization" of the cult tradition.

### The work of art

The question of artistic creation became an argument particularly starting from the Italian Renaissance. While the artists had so far been considered as artisans, painters like Raphael and Leonardo gained great fame for their paintings and raised their social status. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Giovan Pietro Bellori (1613-1696), the Commissioner of Antiquities, referring to the 16<sup>th</sup>-century developments, noted that the painters and sculptors formed in their minds an example of superior beauty in nature that they emended "with faultless colour or line". As a result, Bellori wrote his famous sentence: "Born from nature it overcomes its origin and becomes the model of art; measured with the compass of the intellect it becomes the measure of the hand; and animated by fantasy it gives life to the image" (Bellori, 1968: 157). These developments later resulted in an actual "art theory" as discussed by Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) in his *Idea, a concept in art theory* (1968). The question of imitation of natural forms in order to perceive the original idea was an important topic in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) elevated the notion of 'idea' to an 'ideal', an issue in



SAVERIO MURATORI. Early 1970s. *Image: Published in Marina Montuori (1988) Lezioni di progettazione: 10 maestri dell'architettura italiana, Electa, Milan, p. 130.*



GIANFRANCO CANIGGIA. *Image: Public domain.*





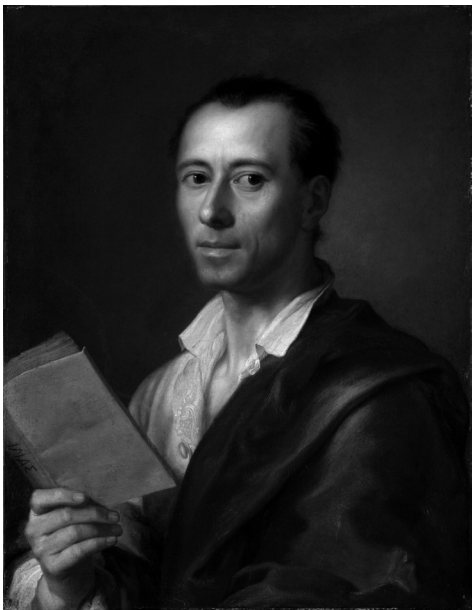
WALTER BENJAMIN. *Image: Public domain.*



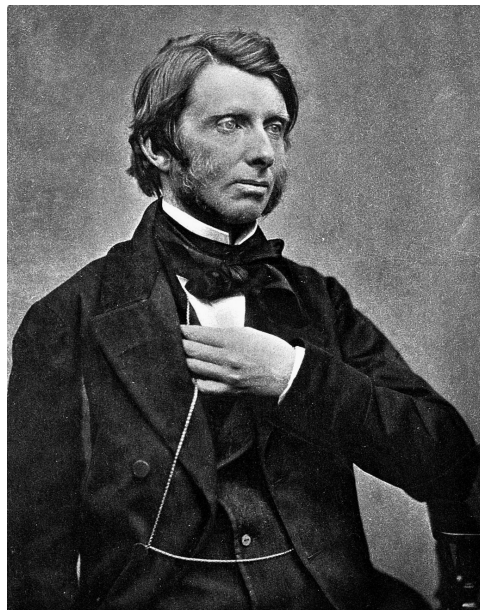
THE ISE GRAND SHRINE SANCTUARY. *Image: Public domain.*



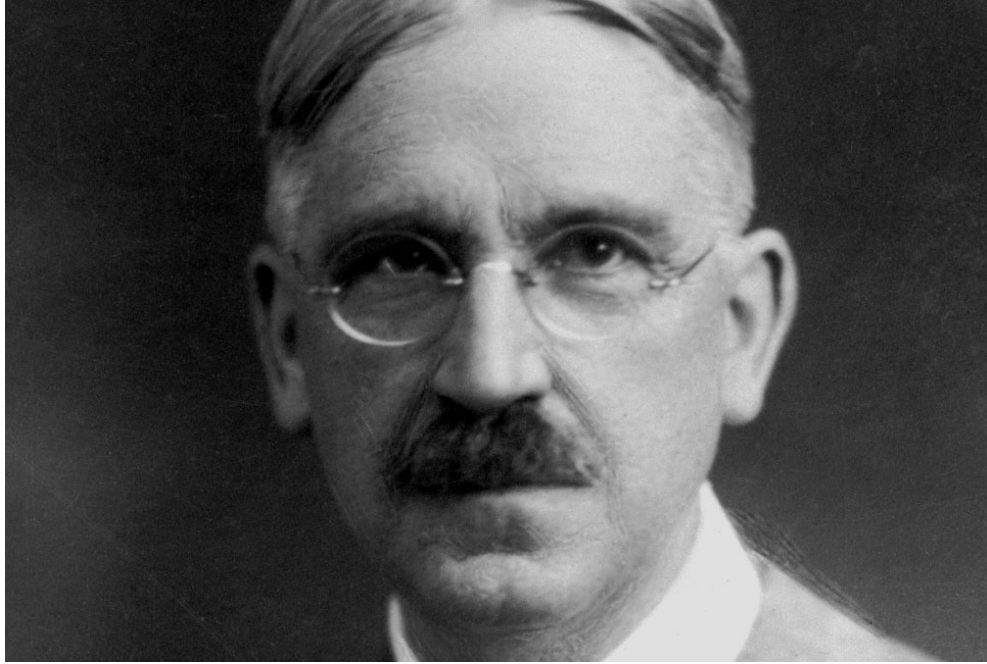
GIOVANNI PIETRO BELLORI. Portrait by Carlo Maratta. *Image: Public domain.*



JOHANN JOACHIM WINCKELMANN.  
*Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art, online collection.*



JOHN RUSKIN. *Image: Public domain.*



JOHN DEWEY. Image: Public domain.

the selection of works to be preserved, concerning especially ancient sculpture (Winckelmann, 1972). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in his *The seven lamps of architecture* (1849), John Ruskin (1819-1900) still writes that all the loveliest forms are directly taken from nature. He further remarks that “forms are not beautiful because they are copied from Nature; only it is out of the power of man to conceive beauty without her aid” (Ruskin, 1925: 190).

The modern philosophy related to works of art develops particularly from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It gives special focus on the distinction between the artistic idea, i.e., the image or form, which represents the intangible aspect, and its realisation in material, i.e., the matter that is the carrier of the image. In the 1930s, the American philosopher and psychologist John Dewey (1859-1952) writes:

*A work of art no matter how old and classic is actually, not just potentially, a work of art only when it lives in some individualized experience. As a piece of parchment, of marble, of canvas, it remains (subject to the ravages of time) self-identical throughout the ages. But as a work of art, it is recreated every time it is aesthetically experienced* (Dewey, 1934: 108).

The question of the work of art is also taken up by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) in his *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (1935/1936, *The origin of the work of art*). Here, he notes that a tool or instrument does not exist for itself, but for its utility. The work of art, instead, differs from these because the creative action aims at the object itself. Heidegger notes that the work of art becomes true and authentic through the creative process. The artistic idea sets up a world (*die Welt*) of meanings. Then it is this world of meanings that produces the matter that Heidegger calls the earth (*die Erde*). Through such creative action, truth therefore happens in the creation of the work of art, as Heidegger concludes: “Dann ist die Kunst ein Werden und Geschehen der Wahrheit” (Then is the art a becoming and happening of truth) (Heidegger, 1980: 57). The philosophy expressed by Heidegger in the mid-1930s became an important reference for the development of the modern theory of restoration.



MARTIN HEIDDEGER. *Image: Public domain.*



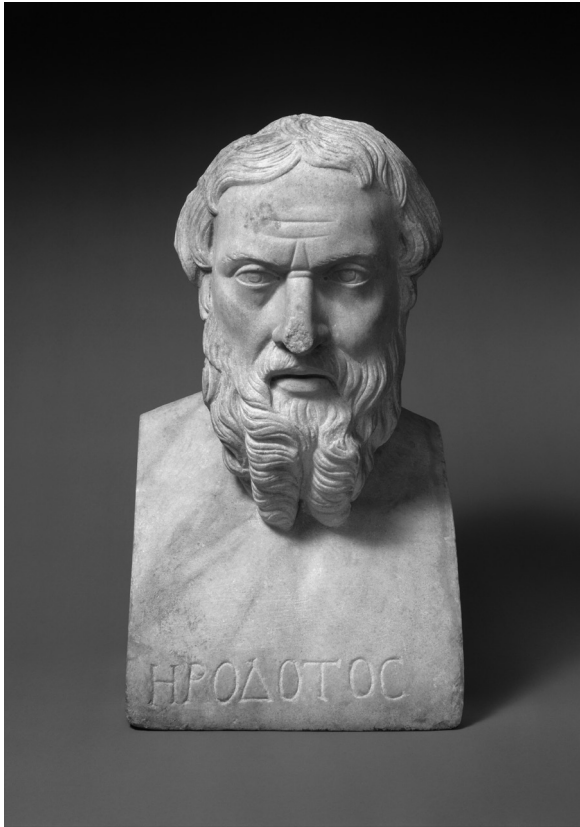
CESARE BRANDI. *Image: Public domain.*

A central figure in the development of restoration theory was certainly Cesare Brandi (1906-1988), art historian and the founding Director of the Italian Central Institute of Restoration from 1939 to 1959. Referring to the statement by Dewey, and implicitly also to Heidegger, Brandi writes in his *Teoria del restauro* (1963) that “any way of acting in relation to the work of art, including restoration treatment, depends on its being recognised as a work of art” (Brandi, 2005, 48). Consequently, “Restoration consists of the methodological moment in which the work of art is recognized in its physical being and in its dual aesthetic and historical nature, in view of its transmission to the future” (Brandi, 2005: 48). Here, we can see that the work of art has two aspects, one is the immaterial artistic concept, which is timeless and can only live when perceived by an observer; the other is the material of the work, which ages over time. Therefore, there is also a difference in the task of a humanist, who is interested in the artistic concept, and of a scientist, who would study the condition of the material support.

Paul Philippot (1925-2016), Belgian art historian, was appointed Assistant Director of ICCROM at the time of founding the organisation then called The Rome Centre. Philippot wrote an introduction to the English edition of Brandi’s *Theory of restoration* (2005). Here, he stresses the distinctiveness of the art history discourse within human sciences. Considering that, from an historical point of view, whatever period the work of art was created in, it gives itself to us in the absolute presence of perception. “It lacks a reality of its own until it is recognised by a consciousness, and this recognition is not the result of a judgment arising from an analysis, but the identification of a specificity within the perception itself and the point of departure for the historian’s study” (Philippot, 2005: 28). Thus, Philippot remarks that art theory distinguishes itself from other historical disciplines because, rather than recounting the history of an event in the past, belonging to memory, it intends to create of history a reality that is present in the consciousness. “In this sense, it is inseparable from the critique to the extent that the latter aims to characterise the nature of this particular presence” (Philippot, 2005: 28). Philippot was subsequently elected Director of ICCROM, and he was responsible for policy development from 1959 to 1977. This is also the period of the establishment of the first two training programmes, one in architectural conservation jointly with the University of Rome (La Sapienza), and the other concerning the conservation of mural paintings jointly with the Central Institute of Restoration. In both courses, the theoretical basis was in the theory that was then in making.



PAUL PHILIPPOT. 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Latinoamerican Seminar on Conservation and Restoration, November, 1973. Image: Claudio Sandoval, Fototeca CNCPC-INAH.



MARBLE BUST OF HERODOTUS.  
2nd century a.D.

Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
online collection.

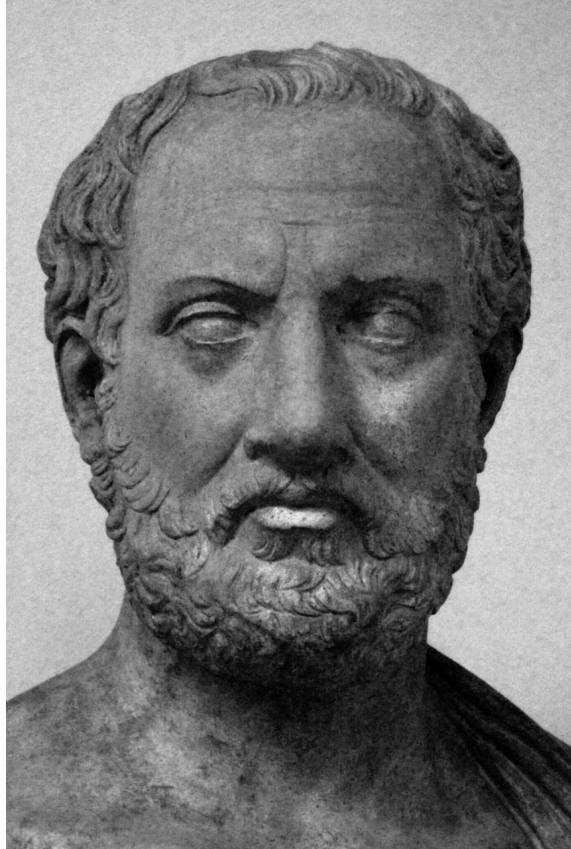
### History and cultural expressions

In the early times, history could be interpreted in mythology or in records of rulers; later it was written down. Herodotus of Halicarnassus (484- c. 425 BC) and his contemporary Thucydides (c. 460- c. 400 BC) are credited having first approached history in a systematic manner. In ancient China, the groundwork for historiography was established by the Han dynasty court historian Sima Qian (145-90 BC), who is known as the Father of Chinese historiography. Basically, history means inquiry or study of the past and knowledge acquired by investigation as has been indicated by the Arab philosopher and historian Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) in his *Al-Muqaddima* (Prolegomena, introduction), written in 1377:

*History is one of the most widespread disciplines between nations (umam) and races (ajjal). The vulgar would like to know her. Kings and rulers seek her over and over again. Ignorant people can understand it as well as educated people. Indeed, history is, in appearance, only the account of political events, dynasties (duwal) and circumstances of the distant past, presented with elegance and raised by quotes. It distracts large audiences and gives us an idea of human affairs. It shows the effects of disturbances, it shows how such and such a dynasty came to conquer such a vast piece of land, until the day when the Call sounded, when its time was over<sup>2</sup> (Ibn Khaldun, 1997: 5).*

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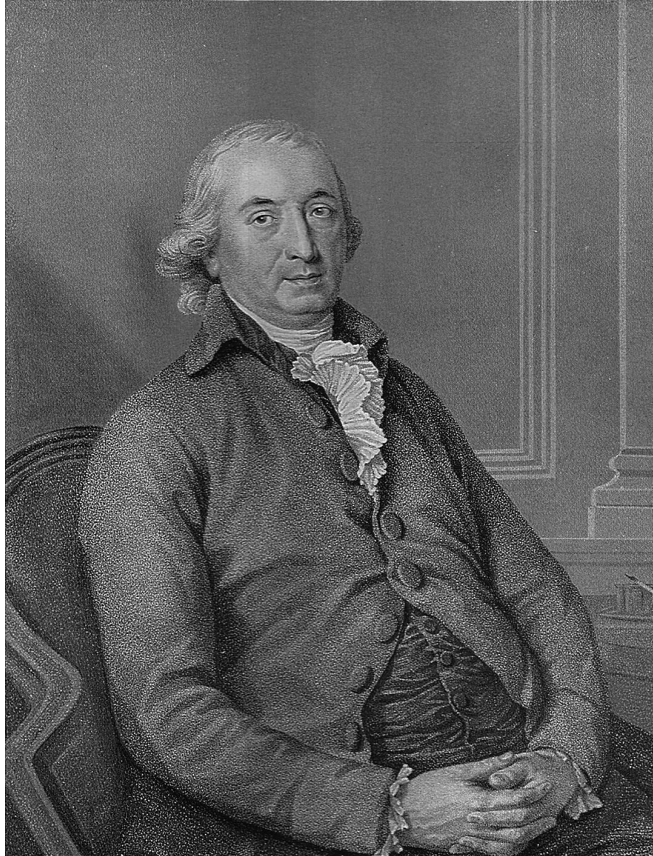
<sup>2</sup> Original quotation: "L'histoire est une discipline des plus répandues entre les nations (umam) et les races (ajjal). Le vulgaire voudrait la connaître. Les rois, les dirigeants la recherchent à l'envi. Les ignorants peuvent aussi bien la comprendre que les gens instruits. En effet, l'histoire n'est, en apparence, que le récit des événements politiques, des dynasties (duwal) et des circonstances du lointain passé, présenté avec élégance et relevé par des citations. Elle permet de distraire de vastes publics et de nous faire une idée des affaires humaines. Elle fait voir les effets des dérangements, elle montre comment telle dynastie vient conquérir tel vaste pan de terre, jusqu'au jour où retentit l'Appel, lorsque son temps fut révolu".



THUCYDIDES. Plaster cast bust, Zurab Tsereteli's gallery, Moscow.  
*Image: Public domain.*



STATUE OF PHILOSOPHER AND HISTORIAN IBN KHALDUN.  
Tunis, Tunisia. *Image: Public domain.*



JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER. *Image: Public domain.*

In the European context, the notion of history was discussed particularly from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and included the important contributions of Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744), and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). In his *Principi di scienza nuova* (1725 and 1744), Vico differentiated between “outer” and “inner” knowledge. He distinguished between three kinds of truth, i.e., *verum* – truth a priori through logical science and mathematics; *certum* – acquaintance with beliefs, matters of history and physics, knowledge of the external world; and *factum* – related to products made by oneself. Vico considered that as the natural world had been created by God, therefore only He could know it in depth. Instead, history was human making, which implied diversity in time and place. Therefore, one could not obtain a scientific *verum* type of knowledge from it. He rejected the principle that there could be some eternal or inalterable truths or rules of behaviour. Each place had to be examined in its specificity.

These developments led to cultural pluralism and the recognition of nations with different cultures and different values, not necessarily commensurate. The new concept of historicity led to consider works of art and historic buildings as unique, and worthy of conservation as an expression of a particular culture and a reflection of national identity. The new concepts of history and aesthetics became a fundamental part of the Western culture (Jokilehto, 2018: 28-f.) This was reflected also in the 1964 Venice Congress on monuments and sites. The congress was important because it followed the publication of Cesare Brandi’s *Theory of Restoration*, in 1963. There was a preparatory meeting at ICCROM in Rome together with the principal protagonists, the Director of ICCROM Harold James Plenderleith, Paul Philippot, Piero Gazzola, Raymond Lemaire, as well as Guglielmo De Angelis d’Ossat, who was Director General of Cultural Heritage in Italy and responsible for the organisation of the Venice Conference.



Considering the problematic situation following World War II, it was agreed that the conference should result in a new policy statement. During the conference, the working group for drafting the *International charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites* (the *Venice charter*) was chaired by Gazzola, while Lemaire acted as rapporteur writing down the articles, and Philippot prepared the Preface. The original French *Préface* declares “Chargées d’un message spirituel du passé, les œuvres monumentales des peuples demeurent dans la vie présente le témoignage vivant de leurs traditions séculaires.” The notion of “œuvres *monumentales*” implies that such works resulting from human creativity in the past carry important significances, as already implied in the etymology of the word “monument.” Therefore, “œuvres *monumentales*” could simply be taken as a recognition of the achievements of human creativity in the past. Referring to article 1 in the French original of the charter, the notion of historic monument (“*monument historique*”) is further defined as not intended only to isolated architectural creations but also to urban and rural sites that carry testimony of a civilisation, of significant evolution or to an historic event.<sup>3</sup>

Considering that the definition of certain concepts associated with the conservation of cultural heritage, such as authenticity, had been mainly discussed in the Western context, Japan offered to host the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the *World Heritage Convention*. This was held at Nara, Japan, from 1 to 6 November 1994. The issues concerned the meaning of authenticity considering the diversity of cultural expressions in the different regions of the world. The resulting *Nara document on authenticity* declared (article 6): “Cultural heritage diversity exists in time and space and demands respect for other cultures and all aspects of their belief systems. In cases where cultural values appear to be in conflict, respect for cultural diversity demands acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all parties.” This also implies that the value judgements continue to change over time, as was stressed by David Lowenthal, who participated in the preparatory meeting for Nara in Norway (Larsen and Marstein, 1994).

These principles discussed in Nara were later reflected in the *UNESCO Universal declaration on cultural diversity* (2001). Here it is stressed that culture takes diverse forms across time and space, and that cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In 2005, UNESCO adopted the *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*, where the question of heritage is interpreted as a group of cultural expressions, including the tangible and intangible aspects associated with movable and immovable properties. Similar definition is also offered in the 2005 *Faro Convention* adopted by the Council of Europe, which refers to cultural heritage as resources inherited from the past, which people identify as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. Special attention is given to the heritage community consisting of people “who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.”<sup>4</sup> The questions of knowledge and competence are indeed fundamental issues that need to be taken up in the capacity building.

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<sup>3</sup> *Venice Charter*, article 1. “La notion de monument historique comprend la création architecturale isolée aussi bien que le site urbain ou rural qui porte témoignage d’une civilisation particulière, d’une évolution significative ou d’un événement historique. Elle s’étend non seulement aux grandes créations mais aussi aux œuvres modestes qui ont acquis avec le temps une signification culturelle”.

<sup>4</sup> *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* adopted at Faro (Portugal) in 2005 (ref. article 2).



TODAI-JI TEMPLE, NARA. *Image: Valerie Magar.*



FARO. *Image: Public domain.*

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