FROM OWNERS AND AUTHORIZED INTERPRETERS TO PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT CULTURAL HERITAGE AND WHAT THEY MIGHT SEE

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Non, les braves gens n'aiment pas que
L'on suive une autre route qu'eux…
Georges Brassens

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Abstract: The representation of cultural heritage as property of descendant groups is inaccurate and should be replaced with notions inspired by the capability approach to well-being and the Faro Convention. The current administrative and scientific practices, pervaded by knowledge without piety, aiming more at dominating the past than at understating it, generate indifference towards the monuments and alienate the public, whose knowledge is devalued. The encouragement of amateur knowledge could bring more interest for cultural heritage and improve participation in public life.

Rezumat: Reprezentarea patrimoniului cultural ca fiind proprietate a unor grupuri de descedenţi din strămoşi comuni contrazice realitatea şi ar trebui înlocuită cu noţiuni inspirate de abordarea bunăstării din perspectiva capabilităţilor şi de Convenţia de la Faro. Practicile administrative şi ştiinţifice curente, marcate de o cunoaştere lipsită de pietate, de dorinţa de a stăpâni trecutul şi mai puţin de cea de a-l înţelege, generează indiferenţă faţă de monumente şi îndepărtează publicul a cărui cunoaştere este devalorizată. Încurajarea cunoaşterii produse de amatori ar putea aduce mai mult interes pentru patrimoniul cultural şi îmbunătăţi participarea la viaţa publică.

Cultural heritage is usually presented in Romania as being a common inheritance, a public good belonging to the people, preserved by the state through legislation and institutions. However, most presumed owners have no possession rights over monuments and other artefacts and are not encouraged to think about them, because they are presumed incompetent. Knowledgeable people designated by the state are supposed to do that.

People who want to protect monuments are not groups of owners. Their actions are set in motion by particular interests which cannot be declared as such and therefore are presented as general interests of large collectivities, sometimes using the support of international norms and the prestige of foreign scholars whose interest for monuments is also not derived from ownership claims.

The representation of the presumed owners does not function as we would expect. Administrators act as if they were the only ones endowed with the appropriate knowledge and as if cultural heritage was their property, taking out from the list of protected monuments what other people think it should be left there. Their mission seems to be action in the interest of people who do not know what their interests are and, eventually, one of educating them, rather than one of representing informed owners.

De facto owners are also frequent among archaeologists, who create cultural heritage during their excavations, when their research strategies lead to the preservation of some artefacts and to the destruction of others, without any external control over such decisions (this is a good thing). The artefacts transformed by them in cultural heritage remain at their disposal for an unlimited time and they do not make them public unless pushed by the requirements of their profession. The reluctance to offer access to the finds is greater when scientific performance is linked to the control over the artefacts and when their presentation to selected publics, in chosen circumstances, is a valuable career strategy.

The notion of ownership, which is structured around the idea of the power people have over the things they own, does not seem appropriate for describing our relations with cultural heritage. Property is a form of domination, of subordination of the things owned to the wishes and interests of the owners. In the case of monuments, the opposite seems to be the case: their value comes from the fact that they transcend the wishes and interests owners might have. We might care about them, but they are indifferent to whatever we may

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think. The functions of cultural heritage place it above the inheritors, possessed in variable degrees by their inheritance.[1] The past does not belong to us; we belong to the past that lives in us and in our institutions.[2]

However, the past does not make us owner groups of cultural heritage. The representation of mankind as being made of descendant groups of common ancestors whose particular values they have inherited is no longer supported by current research.[3] Cultural heritage is not made of material facts which contain durable meanings. It is recently constituted, without links with the initial meanings of the objects and, in more than a few cases, it has contributed to the destruction of other meanings, linked or not to the initial ones. The material substance of cultural heritage, which can be owned, sold or destroyed, does not determine what people think about it. Interpretations, feelings and remembrances are beyond what owners might wish them to be.

Another problem with imagining cultural heritage as property is that while goods are valuable for owners because of their exclusive rights on them, the value of cultural heritage is increased by access to it.[4] It is the difference between the value a book has for its owner, who might have bought it for reasons that have little to do with its content, for instance as a status symbol or as an investment, and the value of the same book for a reader, who does not possess it and is willing to go to a public library to read it, to spend time and energy in order to understand what it contains. While for the book owner, exclusive rights increase the value of what he owns, for the reader the value of the book increases if other people read it and talking with them about its content is possible.

Among the approaches which try to replace the inadequate idea of property, one, proposed by Ian Hodder, takes into account something very important: the functions of cultural heritage depend on the social world and on political action. Hodder starts from the capability approach to well-being, developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, and deems the access to the benefits cultural heritage can offer, from jobs to the stimulation of thought and imagination, more important than abstract ownership rights, which depend on the belonging to an imagined community of owners. What matters is not what people may believe they own, but what they can do with cultural heritage when they are granted universal access rights.[5]

This way of thinking is compatible with the Faro Convention from 2005, in which the interest for the past is detached from ownership and the groups who show an interest for cultural heritage are no longer those constituted by common ancestry.

In article 2a, the convention defines cultural heritage as being "a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions".

Those who care about cultural heritage are described as constituting heritage communities, made 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".

The explanatory report (*ad* art. 2) presents heritage communities as being self-made, without reference to ethnic communities. They may have geographical grounding, a common religion or a common language, but they can also be constituted on other types of interests. The report takes archaeologists as an example: "[an interest in (...) archaeology, can create an 'archaeological community' whose members are linked only by the cultural heritage which forms the focus of their activities".

The convention invites the states to recognize the diversity of the interests for monuments and to assume the responsibility for preserving what is their legal property, but should be rather conceived as being under their stewardship.

1 For the idea that accepting an inheritance implies being inherited by it, see Bourdieu 1962 and 1996, p. 108.
2 Bourdieu 1980.
3 From the huge literature which has abandoned the nationalist idea that peoples are coherent groups built on ancestral values, see the seminal paper of F. Barth (Barth 1969) and the book of A. Wimmer (Wimmer 2013).
4 See Carman 2012, p. 5, for the importance of displaying the most valued objects in Western European domestic contexts.
5 Hodder 2010, pp. 872-873, 876. This is his definition of the right to cultural heritage: "[e]veryone has a right to participate in and benefit from cultural heritage that is of consequence to their well-being, and everyone has a duty towards others with respect to that right". On culture and well-being, see Sen 2004.

The Faro Convention was welcomed by some archaeologists, for instance by Michael Shanks (2010), for whom it is "a visionary document". Such reactions are more probable from people who are not entrusted by states with any possession rights on the objects that are interesting for them.

It is difficult to know what value cultural heritage might have for people who do not belong to professional groups, who cultivate specific values of the monuments and artefacts, like those made of architects or archaeologists. We are poorly informed about what happens outside professional knowledge because we have been for a long time accustomed to see it as the only one worth having and the relation between what we know and what other people know as one between truth and ignorance. Therefore we are inclined to tell them what we think they should know, which is almost always something different from what we do, usually some simplistic stories linking identities to the past, thus fulfilling our duty, the duty of intellectuals in any national state, to educate them. Although the gap between scientists and laypersons is growing,[6] making communication, even when powered by excellent intentions, very difficult, many professionals present their knowledge as being more difficult to understand than it really is. This is a continuation of what happens inside the disciplines, where quality is equated by many with the pursuit of cryptically formalized research and the use of some special words. In Romania, the invocation of a "technical" point of view, i.e. that of the professionals, valued about all others, in situations of contact with people who do not belong to the blessed few, but are interested in what they discuss, be it electoral reforms or the improvement of university education, indicates the wish to exclude other perspectives.[7]

Our ignorance of what happens outside the esoteric circles of the professionals is overdetermined. We do not want to know, because knowledgeable people should not spend time on inferior and therefore negligible thinking, and even if we do, we are not trained to engage in such research. So, if we are willing to suspend our superiority, we have to look for help outside the disciplines traditionally trusted with the study of cultural heritage.

The ethnographic practices of the anthropologists are particularly suitable for the investigation of what non-professionals think about cultural heritage,[8] because they turn upside-down the current relation between professionals and the public: anthropologists have to learn from people and avoid guiding them.[9] It would be useful for those who are authorized to take care of cultural heritage to adopt this attitude, and future projects of cultural heritage studies should consider providing the students with the means of transforming it into scientific practice.

Without paying attention to what people outside professional environments think about cultural heritage it is difficult to know what kind of heritage communities might come into being when we will be able to recognize the value of multiple perspectives, even if they are dissonant,[10] and to accept that it is better to have more people interested in cultural heritage, for reasons that are different from ours, than to continue hoping that people will start thinking what we suppose they should.

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6 On the general trend towards the widening of this gap, see Bensaude-Vincent 2001.

7 See Foucault 2003, p. 10: "The question or questions that have to be asked are: 'What types of knowledge are you trying to disqualify when you say that you are a science? What speaking subject, what discursive subject, what subject of experience and knowledge are you trying to minorize when you begin to say: 'I speak this discourse, I am speaking a scientific discourse, and I am a scientist'".

8 This kind of research is done especially where cultural heritage professionals are confronted with indigenous claims (e.g. The United States or Australia), but also in Greece (e.g. Deltsou 2009, Stroulia and Sutton 2009) and in countries where ethnographic research is developed. On archaeological ethnography, "the merging of ethnographic and archaeological practices in order to explore the contemporary relevance and meaning of the material past for diverse publics, the politics of archaeological practice, and the claims and contestations involving past material traces and landscapes", see Hamilakis, Anagnostopoulos 2009 (the quoted text is from p. 66) and Hamilakis 2011.

9 See Spradley 1979, p. 3: "Rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people* (original emphases)…Instead of collecting 'data' about people, the ethnographer seeks to… be taught by them." A strategy of our ministry of culture, designed for culture and cultural heritage development until 2020, includes the use of sociological research, but only for its capacity to study those who are represented as users and consumers. Particularly suggestive is the expectation that the research should enlighten us on "the factors that influence the market for cultural heritage goods" and on "the methods of forming tastes, preferences, perceptions and expectations from the offer of goods and services of this kind" (Mucică *et alii* 2013, p. 51, my translation).

10 See Smith, Waterton 2009, p. 55 sq.

We can imagine future heritage communities starting with things known to most of us that usually are not included in programs of scientific research or administrative action: piety and resistance.

A useful understanding of piety was formulated by Gianni Vattimo, who, inspired by the thinking of Martin Heidegger, linked it with the nature of our access to reality, "not through presence but only through recollection", through categories whose transience transforms them into monuments, in "a heritage evoking the pietas due to the traces of what has lived".[11] From this perspective, our interest for cultural heritage is given by the finite character of existence. Monuments are interesting because they have survived and, by being ruins, by showing visible signs of decay, signify the reality of worlds that once existed. As such, they are tangible testimony of the human condition. Another approximation of piety is the Hasidic story quoted by Carlo Severi[12] at the beginning of his recently translated book: the story teller knows that his ancestors knew where and how to pray, and that this knowledge gradually disappeared, his way of worshiping God being the story about this loss of heritage. Here again, the evocation of knowledge from the past makes us understand the limitations of what we know today.

The care for cultural heritage can also be resistance to the arrogance of the local present, which presents itself as eternal and universal, to the replacement of the richness and variety of humanity with the caricatures promoted by political ideologies. The materials and shapes of the artefacts are a constant reminder that other kinds of life were possible and resist any attempts to reduce them to current discourses.[13] They continue being what they are despite what anyone can write about them and they can be used against any interpretation.

The affection and respect contained in the notion of *pietas* and resistance against the authority of the present are rare among administrators and archaeologists. More frequent is self-sufficient indifference, a consequence of domineering knowledge practices and of bureaucratic state actions.[14] There is a strong link between the two. The state needs domination and offers recognition to those who think from its perspective, see what they study as subjected to them and are ready to populate the past with people happy to obey whatever had authority (traditions, rulers or common interests). Bureaucrats and archaeologists are also together in their representation of knowledge as power to do what you want with is known, from social sciences understood as domination tools, to interpretations of material culture meant to domesticate the unruly world of objects. Such domination, represented as being without passion, rational and practical does not help us examine what we are doing.

The pervasive interest for accumulation – an archaeologist, Reinhard Bernbeck, qualified accumulation as pathological addiction and archaeology as its symptom[15] – as source of well-being, knowledge and power is also common for state agencies and archaeologists and is a central concern for cultural heritage administrators. Better means for archaeologists and museums more excavations and more artefacts, not better interpretations. It is not that we lack materials to interpret, probably less than 1% of what archaeologists have discovered has made its way to the simplest list.[16] But they are of difficult access. So we need more finds, which will be quickly exhausted because with the current rudimentary interpretation practices little beyond the number of artefacts matters.

Objects are reduced to what they can offer to bureaucratic and scientific production and that usually takes the paradigmatic form of lists, which can be of many types, but all share the ambition to replace material complexity and unexplored meanings with the assertion of professional prowess, that is with what can make

[11] Vattimo 2012, p. 47

[12] Severi 2015.

[13] For the resistance and obstinacy (*Eigensinn*) of the objects, see Hahn 2014, who refers (p. 77) to Aleida Assmann's notion of the unreadability of the material (*die Unlesbarkeit des Materiell*en).

[14] Herzfeld 1992.

[15] Bernbeck 2013.

[16] We have national databases of artefacts and sites (they are not linked) maintained by The National Institute of Cultural Heritage (http://clasate.cimec.ro and http://ran.cimec.ro [30 August 2015]). Only 8335 "archaeological" artefacts are listed. This is probably less than what archaeological excavations produce during one year or what a site like Histria has produced, and, according to the law, all the finds must be "classified" (see Legea 182/2000, art. 11.1.e).

monuments and artefacts lose their individuality and become members of categorical groups.[17] Researchers are anxious to see in monuments and other artefacts what they are supposed to see, following written or oral prescriptions,[18] and are equally anxious not to see anything else. Scientific progress becomes more the domestication of more artefacts in the prescribed framework, and less the discovery of new properties and traits gained by looking at them.

Lists are a form of domination. They allow quick overviews, the reduction of wild variety to tame simplicity and, of course, they keep track of accumulation, confirming the principle that more is better. The big merchandise store, with its well organized storage facilities and beautiful catalogues seems to be the model of current archaeological accumulation and its presentation.[19] It is not an accident that inventory is the professional notion for describing the material content of an archaeological assemblage. The less we know about artefacts, the more we need, something which brings to mind, again, the current consuming practices during which we spend little effort to fully understand what we buy and a lot to buy a new version of what we did not understand (consumer electronics, appliances and so on).

The inventory point of view taken by administrators and archaeologists is that of owners, not of users, is that of few people in the present, who want to control a lot of objects, very different of that of the many from the past who owned a few and, we have reasons to believe, were likely to have on them non-classificatory perspectives, constructed over a long time of personal experience and observation.[20]

Once classified, objects are no longer interesting, because we know all that there is to know about them. Of course, they are from time to time reclassified, but this rarely means a new look at the artefacts. Bureaucrats and archaeologists frequently compile new lists from the old ones.

Usually, small artefacts that are not spectacular are seen only once, by one professional, during decades following their promotion to cultural heritage. Many do not even get that one look and, after being selected following the instructions given by archaeologists, spend their time in unopened packages. Few are drawn and/or photographed, and this is at the same time their greatest moment and the end of the road, because they tend to disappear behind the images. Everybody admits that they should be preserved, that this is our duty, but no one needs them, so the preservation costs are reduced to a minimum.

The indifference contained in such practices is so strong that it produces paradoxical effects. Reading the legislation and what people who are authorized by the state to take care of cultural heritage write, we might expect that the financial means available for it would be directed primarily towards preservation. This is not happening and it has never happened in Romania. Most of the meagre available funds are directed towards the production of knowledge about cultural heritage, cherished both by administrators and archaeologists as we can see both in normative texts and in practice. This is only widening the gap between us, the owners of knowledge, and the public.

The social distribution of epistemic value is not an outcome of scientific research; what we value as superior knowledge might lose its glamour on close inspection. The radical opposition between knowledge and ignorance is not helpful. We all know some things and ignore others. Therefore we should pay more attention to what we ignore and to the knowledge of people who look differently at things we are accustomed to perceive in certain ways. Rejecting ignorance, constructed in contrast with whatever knowledge we may have, which can only be partial, is an epistemic vice, while accepting the limits of what we know is beneficial for scientific

[17] The poverty of what professional archaeologists can offer may be illustrated by the following anecdote: in the 1970s, during an ethics seminar, the professor, who was teaching about the *ethos* of the Dacians, found out that one of the students was an archaeologist. He was enchanted and rapidly evoked what archaeological knowledge might bring to this theme, especially the funerary finds. Then he asked the archaeologist about the world of Dacian funerary practices. The answer was: some were cremated and some inhumed.

[18] On the indirect contact offered by reading and its capacity to reduce the uncertainty (Verunsicherung) generated by prolonged visual contact, see Hahn 2014, p. 68, who refers to Aleida Asmann's opposition between reading, described as quick glance, and the long gaze, a condition for discovering something unknown or partially known in what we see.

[19] For classification of the material world following the model used by department stores, see Hahn 2014, p. 70.

[20] Hahn 2014, pp. 72-73.

research.[21] We should be motivated by the desire of better knowledge, not by that of confirming our beliefs – this is what bureaucrats do – through the implementation of their consequences to everything new that comes along.

There are many kinds of knowledge and many kinds of ignorance. There are also many ways of evaluating them. Many disasters are the outcome of actions based on what is believed to be incontestable knowledge, and they include the destruction of cultural heritage.[22] Objects, monumental or not, are better protected by what we do not know about them than by what we learned trusting forms of knowledge without piety. We should be reluctant to destroy them because we don't know what we will destroy.

An examination of the sources of the prestige enjoyed by our knowledge practices would help us see to what extent they are useful for research and not just a quest for social distinction, accompanied by submission to authority. We can evaluate what we have achieved by granting superiority to certain kinds of knowledge and whether scientific progress imagined as being mainly an outcome of having more artefacts, to which routine standards of interpretation are applied, does not increase the chances of artefacts becoming invisible beyond their description and illustration and does not make us believe that the best we can do is to make more excavations and longer lists, just as Cezar Bolliac, the first local archaeologist to go each summer on an excavation campaign, financed by the state and followed by excavation reports, did a long time ago, at the beginnings of archaeology in Romania. Bolliac's archaeology was rejected by Alexandru Odobescu who believed that, unlike the historian who tries to raise the dead trunk of the past, the archaeologist gathers with piety all the dead leaves and all the withered flowers and tries to give back life and strength to the tree, the green to the leaves, the colour and fragrance to the flowers, and the savour to the fruits.[23] The dispute was won by Bolliac, who became the head of the National Commission of Antiquities, and lists are until today a sign of scientific excellence, while Odobescu's withered flowers are usually perceived by the professional archaeologists of today as an amusing extravagance of an amateur.

After a long domination by the state of many fields of scientific inquiry, the sense of the word amateur has changed. It is no longer derived from its etymology and does not designate people who love something. It designates ignorants who pursue activities which are irrelevant or even harmful to knowledge, therefore the less we speak about them, the better.[24]

In Romania, many archaeologists think about the Thracomaniacs when they think about amateurs. This is an error. Thracomaniacs are not attracted by ancient artefacts and do not develop new forms of knowledge. They try to imitate the professionals and dream to replace what they term official knowledge, incessantly presented as ignorance or as a scientifically worthless result of malicious intentions against the Romanians, with their own scientific knowledge,[25] supported by what seems to them to have scientific authority, for instance genetics, and recognized by the state. Thracomaniacs do not propose new interpretations: they cherish well known political interpretations of the past, being more inclined to subordinate the material remains to ideologies than professional archaeologists and eager to promote a nationalism based on past achievements beyond what is currently acceptable to most politicians, while getting support from some of them. They are not amateur archaeologists. They are dabbling in politics, using what they claim to know about our origins and therefore about who we are, the central ingredient of identity politics, developed since the 19th century by national states and assisted by many scientific disciplines. Thracomaniacs love present power, not the ruins of the past. They are more interested in

[21] Firestein 2012.

[22] Among the unfortunately numerous such situations, see the case of the destruction of the Babri Mosque from Ayodhya by hardline Hindu activists (Bernbeck, Pollock 1996). For the consequences of war on cultural heritage see Sørensen, Viejo-Rose 2015.

[23] Odobescu 1877, pp. 16-17.

[24] For an instructive definition, see http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/amateur (8 August 2015): "A person who is contemptibly inept at a particular activity".

[25] One of their organizations, *Asociația geto-dacii*, has even a scientific board, made exclusively of people with academic titles (http://www.geto-dacii.ro/cons+iliul-stiintific; 1 September, 2015).

the construction of new monuments, monuments of their ideas about the national past, than in the protection of cultural heritage.

True amateurs are not ignorants with exaggerated knowledge claims. They derive their pleasure from developing personal strategies of knowledge production, enriching their lives with ways of exploring their own capacities and the value of what they think, in a world in which we are told, on a daily basis, that our thinking is worthless and that we should let politicians and experts do that for us.

Although amateur archaeological knowledge in Romania is even less interesting than artefact lists, the quantity of barren and predictable texts made by professional archaeologists, texts only archaeologists read when they need some information, makes desirable alternative ways of thinking about the material past, based on perception untamed by authority. Paul Cézanne's words about what would bring a revolution in painting – a single carrot, freshly observed and naively painted[26] – could be read as a warning for archaeologists too absorbed by their routines, who systematically avoid the fresh gaze and confront themselves not with actual carrots, but with drawings of carrots, that is with conventional representations which are frequently less than faithful to the originals and reduce their complex materiality, their infinite number of traits[27] to a few. "What has painting to do with archaeology?" might wonder some of my colleagues. Following particular styles of thinking and avoiding others is necessary for any tradition of scientific research. We have to choose. But that should lead us to epistemic humility, to the recognition that we do not see all that we could, not to an aggressive rejection of other perspectives, which makes calling someone an artist or a philosopher one of the damaging things you can do to the reputation of an archaeologist in Romania.[28]

While true amateurs are hard to find in Romania, because they do not want to appear as naïve in a world dominated by the prestige of authorized knowledge and in which forms of association that might make them feel comfortable are hard to find, in Western Europe, the different valuation of the relation between knowledge and ignorance is matched by a bigger number of amateurs and of institutional attempts to encourage them. Just an example: *BBC Your Paintings*, a website on which can be seen more than 200,000 paintings from British museums and collections, invites amateurs to make contributions to their description and not be intimidated by what they do not know. Their efforts are recognized by their inclusion in categories, from green to master, and by the listing of the names of the 10 top taggers. There is a section of answers to frequent questions which includes one about what the taggers should know about art. The answer is: "[n]o knowledge of art or art history is needed. Instead, all we ask is that you look carefully at the paintings and tell us what you see." [29]

However, even in Western Europe the number of amateurs is dwindling. Some art historians[30] now defend the connoisseurs, their former competitors, who were able to determine the author of a painting just by looking at it and using their knowledge about personal styles, built on extensive visual culture and careful examination of the paintings. The "cognitive richness"[31] of connoisseurship cannot be replaced by professionals who know a lot about painting materials or by those who know a lot of theory but have seen too few paintings. The need for amateurs exists in other cultural pursuits. Theatrical or musical performers might pay more attention to specialized critics than to the public, but that does not alleviate the sense of pointlessness generated by being applauded when they perform badly. As in scientific knowledge, the replacement of the interest for what is real and significant with the compliance

[26] See Gasquet 1991, p. 68 and Zola 1886, pp. 46-47.
[27] Clarke 2014[1968], p. 155.
[28] See Wittgenstein 1998, p. 42: "People nowadays think scientists are there to instruct them, poets, musicians etc. to entertain them. *That the latter have something to teach them (*original emphasis*)*; that never occurs to them."
[29] http://tagger.thepcf.org.uk/ and http://tagger.thepcf.org.uk/faq/1175 (10 august 2015)
[30] See, e.g. Freedberg 2006 (I am grateful to Anca Oroveanu for this paper) and Grosvenor 2014. See also the conference titled "The Educated Eye? Connoisseurship Now", organized by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, on 2 May 2014, especially the talk of Liz Prettejohn (http://livestream.com/accounts/7709097/connoisseurshipnow; 11 November 2014).
[31] Carlo Ginzburg, quoted in Freedberg 2006, p. 34.

with authorized claims of knowledge is a source of intellectual poverty and destroys meaning even for those who generate such claims.

People who want to closely examine artefacts belonging to cultural heritage should be encouraged to do so and conditions should be created to make such examination possible.

Unfortunately, in Romania not even archaeologists have access to many of the artefacts they need to see, and that explains in part, along with the costs of travelling to distant museums, their reliance on drawings. There are no clear access rules to artefacts that theoretically belong to us all, although the law of the museums[32] states that the access of the public and of the specialists to cultural heritage goods is guaranteed (art. 11.1.d) and specifies heavy fines for contraveners (art. 37.1.c. and 2). There are some encouraging efforts to make public archaeological literature and even images of artefacts accompanied by professional descriptions,[33] but museums continue to keep cultural heritage away from those who are interested.

To take an example, besides reproductions of posters dedicated to particular events, The National History Museum has on its website only four images, none of them being a representation of a whole object,[34] and no database. Instead of images and information about the rich collections of the museum, the site offers a link to a scientific project, Collage, to which the National Museum participates, presented only in English, only for professionals and administrators, with no images of artefacts, but figuring a common symbol of scientific knowledge – a beautiful young woman looking into a microscope – that suggests the distance from common knowledge.

The website offers no mission statement, but something close to one can be found in the aims declared in the internal regulations of the museum,[35] to which the website gives access. The first is research and artefact accumulation, the second, preservation and restauration, the third and the fourth refer to the constitution of archives, documentary funds, and inventories. Only the fifth refers to the visitors, as a part of the general aim of using, promoting and enhancing the value (Rom. *punere în valoare*) of cultural heritage. The document mentions "the organization of documentary services open to the public by using the information on the institution and on the cultural heritage it possesses, according to currently valid legislation" (my translation), but in the comprehensive description of the sections of the museum these are not mentioned, and they also do not appear in the long lists of the responsibilities of the managers and of the directors. Anyway, these services do not seem meant to give access to artefacts, only to information about them, information unavailable on the site of the museum.

Described as the "public of all categories", the visitors should be included[36] in nothing less than "an educational system" that will make them "familiar" with "the history and civilization of the societies which came one after another on the territory of our country, of Europe and, in general, of the human species". So, instead of bringing the public closer to the artefacts and stimulate the capacity of the local members of the human species to look at them and explore their richness, the museum intends to disseminate what its employees think about local and general history. I was unable to find in these internal regulations anything relating to the access to the artefacts, not even for those who work in the museum. The museum has a section for the relations with the public (art. 35), which has so much to do besides those relations that it has a special sub-section for that, dedicated to "museum education, cultural marketing and relations with the public" (art. 38).

[32] Legea 311/2003.

[33] http://clasate.cimec.ro; 15 August 2015.

[34] http://www.mnir.ro/(8.11.2015). Two images are used for the presentation of Trajan's Column, the inscription and a fragment from one scene. For comparison, two research institutions, which do not have the obligations towards the public of the museums, the German Archaeological Institute and the Archaeological Institute of the University of Cologne, have created a website, Arachne (http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/drupal/[8.11.2015]), which offers to visitors a wealth of visual and written information, including the complete presentation of Trajan's Column, with several images for each scene, accompanied by interpretative descriptions and bibliographic references.

[35] MNIR-ROF, art. 4. A very similar document, containing the internal regulations of the Turda History Museum (http://muzeu-turda.cimec.ro/), lists the aims of the museum in the same order and almost with the same content.

[36] The Romanian word, "angrenare", suggests the mechanical transmission of knowledge and the reduction of the individual to a component of a majestic machinery, in which meaning can be found only by being geared to it.

Involving more people in the protection of cultural heritage is a widespread concern and there are many innovative and appealing ways to do that.[37] Some are related to the open access movement.[38] But most of them try to sell access to cultural heritage, mainly to its "owners", and are not encouraging the creation of new knowledge, only the transmission outside the professional circles of what is known inside them or of common knowledge banalities.

Scepticism about the value of what the visitors might know can be based on a generalizing view of the public, wrongly imagined as made of ignorants. One could make a long list of academic professions that produce knowledge used, not always appropriately, by archaeologists: geology, social sciences, statistics and so on. Visitors could belong to these professions. People who work outside academia might also have valuable knowledge on the artefacts, knowledge coming from their day-to-day use of similar artefacts, and this knowledge can be useful especially when archaeologists are tempted to see the artefacts not as products of past uses, but as antiquities, radically severed from the present, to speculate on their symbolic meanings and to give less attention to what people were doing with them. Archaeologists are good at excavating, analysing and publishing. They are not good at using artefacts that were made to be used, not to be studied. Therefore they are prone to scholastic illusions that go from ignoring the conditions created by particular materials and technologies to representations of society made from the positions of observers who repress their own social experience in order to be "scientific".

In Romania there is one category of non-archaeologists who have valuable knowledge about a decisive moment in the creation of cultural heritage: the workers. They discover the artefacts, not the archaeologists credited with their discovery because they are supposed to know what they mean. Besides the meagre pay they receive they are not given any recognition. They follow the instructions of the professionals, but what they do and what they know go beyond that. They could tell a lot of interesting stories about our excavations, stories no one wants to hear because that would mean accepting people with no rights in the higher class of those who know. The fact that none of them did, as far as I know, shows the obliterating effects of cultural dominance. We think that whatever they might know has no importance and they do the same.

Encouraging the development of knowledge on cultural heritage that is not a result of the dissemination of professional knowledge does not mean giving it more value than that we are accustomed to give to what we know. If we want more people to be involved in the protection of cultural heritage, we have to offer them ways of building autonomous knowledge and we should consider the benefits of giving up our positions of uncontested authority in favor of "playing a role of facilitator in other people's exploration of the past",[39] of assisting those who have other views than ours with our knowledge. The cultivation of other kinds of knowledge might bring people closer to understanding what we do and us closer to understanding what they think, even if that does not resemble scientific knowledge. From them we can learn what they want preserved and why. Of course, we cannot expect widespread interest for cultural heritage and quick generation of fresh perspectives. The influence of general education and mass media will continue to give authority to prevailing representations. But direct access to the artefacts, e.g. by making the storage facilities public, will make interpretations based on what people see and not only on what they read less improbable.

The amateur quest for intellectual autonomy[40] deserves to be encouraged. A society in which people

[37] Adoption, used also in zoos, is one of them. It takes different forms: while the Museum of Ontario Archaeology invites people to adopt an actual artifact and enjoy several privileges, including that of writing "a label explaining why the artifact is important" (http://archaeologymuseum.ca/adopt/; 30 August 2015), Nurture Cambria offers for adoption virtual stones, turrets and milecastles with the purpose of gathering money for the maintaining Hadrian's Wall (http://adoptastone.co.uk/index.php; 30 August 2015).

[38] See, e.g., Oberländer-Târnoveanu, Musteaţă 2015, where open access refers to access to information, not to the artefacts. They welcome the input of amateurs, but only with information deemed relevant by the specialists and certified by them (p. 15).

[39] Thomas 2004, p. 192.

[40] See Said 1994, p. 76, on amateurism as "the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a specialty, in caring for ideas and values despite the restrictions of a profession".

are afraid to think something that is not "scientific", something different from what those who have epistemic authority believe, is not a democratic one and, after experiencing the disastrous consequences on scientific knowledge of a political regime that repressed autonomous thinking, we should abandon the fear of losing our more or less imaginary state supported control over what people think about the past.

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