

Conversaciones...

Conversaciones...

ISSN: 2594-0813

ISSN: 2395-9479

conversaciones@inah.gob.mx

Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

México

MATTOS, LORETE

The meeting of conservation of cultural heritage and psychoanalysis: a possible metaphor

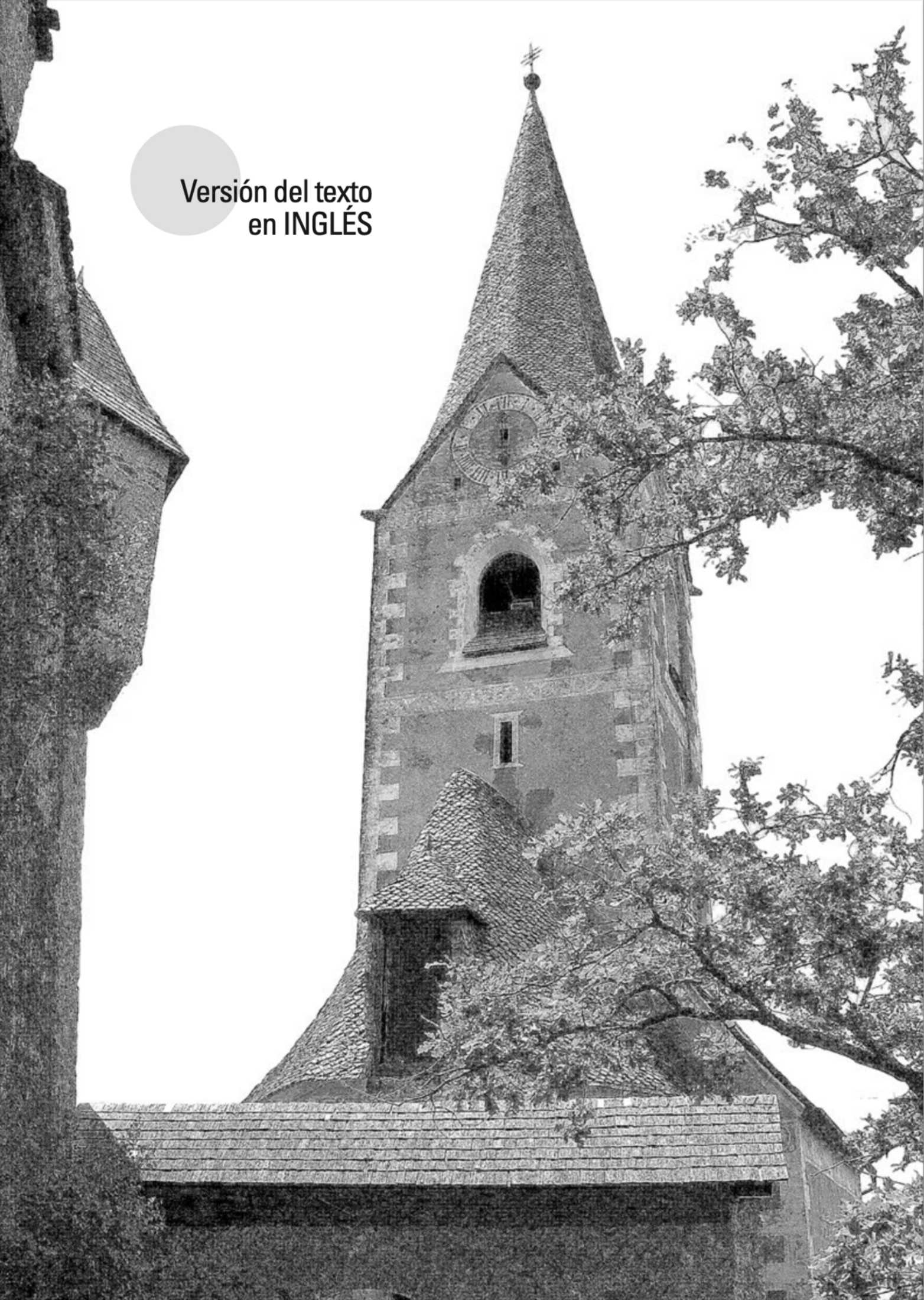
Conversaciones..., no. 5, 2018, June, pp. 393-406

Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

México

- [Complete issue](#)
- [More information about this article](#)
- [Journal's webpage in redalyc.org](#)

Versión del texto
en INGLÉS





The meeting of conservation of cultural heritage and psychoanalysis: a possible metaphor

LORETE MATTOS

Translation by Valerie Magar

Abstract

This article raises questions affecting cultural heritage conservation today that have already been covered in Riegl's and Dehio's texts written at the beginning of the 19th century. It deals with the contradictions and the antagonisms concerning the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage. It also discusses the lack of clear definitions regarding concepts related to this field and the difficulties in implementing consensual policies for the preservation of heritage, as well as questions related to heritage education. It contemplates the conservation goals of cultural heritage and the divisions between theory and practice. It links the values assigned to the significance of cultural heritage for individuals. It presents Freud's archaeological metaphors and an attempt to understand the questions that arise when dealing with cultural heritage conservation as seen through the optics of psychoanalysis.

Keywords: *Conservation, restoration, cultural heritage, psychoanalysis.*

The conservation of cultural heritage is a field that undergoes constant change, but it has also carried the burden of contradictions and antagonisms since its emergence. The work of the conservator-restorer raises endless discussions: concepts, policies, criteria, solutions, techniques, philosophies, intentions, comprehensiveness, extension and depth, among others, are topics that heat up discussions in congresses, seminars and meetings, such as history, aesthetics, culture, science, legitimacy, authenticity, significance, relevance, representativeness, etc.

In Brazil, the challenges begin with the very name of our profession, and give respectability to our professional identity: Are we conservator-restorers, conservators and restorers, or will we be conservators or restorers? What training is required? What is the profile of the conservation professional? What is our job market? Do we have a common conceptual basis? Can we apply the established principles and concepts for conservation and/or restoration of architecture to other materials? Is it possible to think of conserving and/or restoring a document in the same way as conserving and/or restoring a film?

These are some of the issues that provoke intense debates in congresses, seminars and meetings, and for which we have no definitive answers. There may be an intention here, a proposal there, but there is no consensus; we continue in search of a unity that we are not even sure is possible.

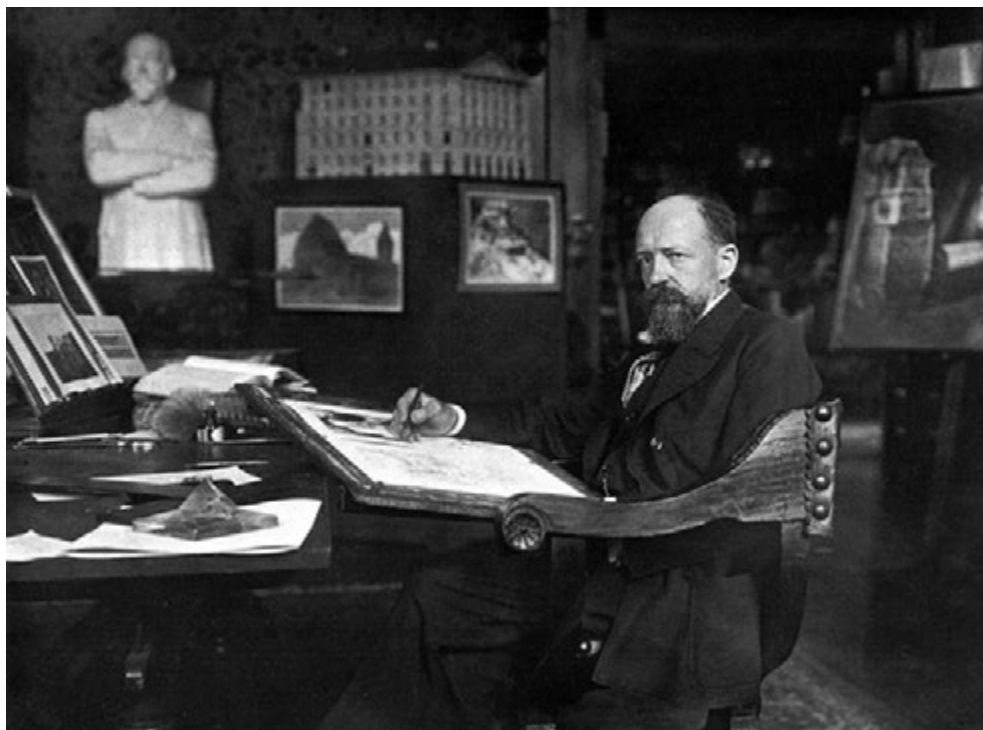


RIO DE JANEIRO, 1921. Image: Public domain.

We live times as contradictory as those described by Georg Gottfried Dehio in his text of 1905, *The protection and care of monuments in the 19th century*¹. The central question he posed then could easily be posed today: the balance between theory and technique, or, as one might say, the lack of balance between discourse and action. The profession of conservator-restorer of movable heritage in Brazil is not regulated and, recently, the position of restorer has been eliminated in several federal institutions. There is a proliferation of short-duration courses, promising to enable people to perform technical procedures, but without the appropriate conceptual tools for decision-making. We have to live with poorly-trained professionals performing automated intervention treatments with no basis, structured conservation and restoration faculties that do not receive adequate resources and associations that struggle to remain active and to be able to bridge the gap between professionals and society, as well as between professionals and their peers.

This is a very different scenario from what Dehio had projected. He hoped that the 20th century would not repeat the disastrous interventions that were undertaken in the 19th century, a time when concepts were even more fragile. Now that we have entered the 21st century, we realize that we still have a long way to go. For Dehio, himself an art historian, it would be better to conserve rather than to restore. And although this concept is gaining more and more fans and is becoming more widespread, Dehio, if he were still alive (he died in 1932), would certainly be disappointed. By the end of the 20th century we did not have very different situations from those of the beginning of the century. If technological advances have been able to offer us a wider range of technical possibilities, from gamma radiation to nanotechnology, we have not advanced much on conceptual issues and we have not reached a consensus on how to best protect our heritage.

¹ Original publication: Georg Gottfried Dehio (1905) *Denkmalschutz und Denkmalpflege im neunzehnten Jahrhundert, Rede zur Feier des Geburtstages Sr. Majestät des Kaisers gehalten in der Aula der Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität am 27 Januar 1905*, J.H.ED. Heitz (Heitz und Mündel), Strassburg.



BODO EBHARDT IN HIS STUDIO, BERLIN. *Image: Public domain.*



RUINS NEAR INNSBRUCK. *Image: Public domain.*

In *New trends in the care of monuments*², Alois Riegl made an analysis of the thoughts of Dehio and of the German architect Bodo Ebhardt, who had completely opposed discourses, and he suggested that there may be a middle way

[...] they have long accustomed us to consider the positions of creative architects and of art historians who, in principle, are opposed to any intervention treatment in monuments, as two extremes, between which there must undoubtedly be a balance in order to achieve a respectful but realistic practice of caring for monuments. Taking into account that both sides share the same objective, of course one cannot omit in advance the thought that, with good will, one could at least find a mid-point between both extremes, which could only be beneficial³ (Riegl, 2018: 63).

If we consider that the objective to which Riegl refers is the conservation of the monuments, it is necessary to question just what exactly we want to preserve. We speak of historical, artistic and cultural issues, of antiquity, etc., and with this, we are talking about values. What causes a building, a document, a painting, a ruin, a book, a movie, or any other artifact to become a candidate for conservation? We attribute values and then we associate values to discover a meaning that, in turn, would justify the steps to ensure the availability of the given object to future generations, and this goes beyond materiality.

This understanding, which is widely studied and discussed by conservation-restorers and by scholars studying social memory, often leaves out those with influence who have the power of decision. Our most important cultural heritage is, in general, under the care of the state, which should act as a faithful depositary and watch over the heritage that belongs to all of us. However, this is not always the case. When institutions' top positions, those who are responsible for the care and conservation of heritage, are occupied by political bureaucrats unfamiliar with the intricate issues involved in this activity, it creates a high-risk condition in regard to the maintenance of sites and collections. Decisions based on economic, electoral or any other interests that do not protect what represents us as citizens, can have disastrous consequences. These managers are the maximum expression of a population that did not, and still does not, have access to a minimally adequate heritage education. Dehio already emphasized in 1905:

The sensation that a people with many artistic monuments is noble, must permeate all social classes. It is only when people are educated about the arguments regarding the subject that they can assume the responsibility for a decision when a conflict arises between the present and the past. We want to practice the care for monuments not with sentimentality, smugness or with romantic arbitrariness, but as a spontaneous and natural expression of self-respect, and in recognition of the rights of the dead for the sake of the living⁴ (Dehio, 2018: 39).

² Original publication: Alois Riegl (1905) "Neue Strömungen in der Denkmalpflege", in: *Mitteilungen der k. k. Zentralkommission, Dritte Folge IV*, Sp. 85-104 [Ernst Bacher (Hrsg.), *Kunstwerk oder Denkmal? Alois Riegls Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, Wien, Köln, Weimar, 1995, Ss. 218-233].

³ Original quotation: *[...] nos han acostumbrado desde hace mucho tiempo a considerar la posición de los arquitectos creativos y aquella de los historiadores de arte que se oponen por principio a cualquier intervención en los monumentos, como dos extremos, entre los cuales sin duda debe encontrarse un equilibrio para una práctica respetuosa pero realista del cuidado de los monumentos. Teniendo en cuenta que ambas partes comparten el mismo objetivo, por supuesto no se puede omitir de antemano el pensamiento que, con buena voluntad, se podría encontrar por lo menos un punto medio entre ambos extremos, que no podría ser más que beneficioso.*

⁴ Original quotation: *En todas las clases sociales debe penetrar la sensación de que un pueblo que posee tantos monumentos artísticos es un pueblo noble. Solo cuando el pueblo está instruido sobre los argumentos sobre el tema, entonces puede asumir la responsabilidad de una decisión en el momento en que surja un conflicto entre el presente y el pasado. Nosotros queremos practicar el cuidado de los monumentos, sin sentimentalismos, sin pedantería, sin arbitrariedad romántica, como una expresión espontánea y natural de respeto hacia nosotros mismos, y como reconocimiento del derecho de los muertos por el bien de los vivos.*

The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century saw a phenomenon that has been having an impact on us in many ways: the Internet. While it enabled us to share thoughts and experiences through instant contact with peers from all over the world, and gave us access to an almost endless amount of quality information, it also enabled a huge flow of information and unqualified opinions that contributed to increasing the risk to our heritage. This includes cleaning formulas, do-it-yourself tutorials, dissemination of treatments done by untrained people often using misguided approaches, and even the most varying views on conservation and restoration. If, on the one hand, it is interesting because it has obliged professionals to approach the public to explain and clarify their work, their training and their projects – and this contributes to heritage education –, on the other hand, it provokes tension between managers and specialists. And the result is not always favorable according to the point of view of heritage conservation.

As conservators, we start with the conviction that “how to conserve” is subordinate to “why to conserve” as well as to “what to conserve.” However, there remain questions such as: do we conserve the matter or do we conserve the values? Do we conserve a spirit or a feeling? If we are clear about what an object is and why we are intervening, we can better define how to act and establish the limits of our action, in terms of extent and depth.

Therefore, we should probably try to better understand which heritage we are referring to, what its significance is and why we cannot renounce its existence. We believe that by conserving elements from the past, we are searching to understand our present, perhaps in order to be able to project our future. It is a well-known fact that we create museums to maintain the memory of, and at the same time, to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our ancestors; we also do it to keep in mind the difficult times in hopes of not allowing them to be repeated. Notable examples of this are the museums dedicated to the Holocaust and or to dictatorships that exist in several places around the world. We also maintain the memory of what are common ways of life, customs and habits of simple people and their day to day activities. What for?

When analyzing the positions of both authors – the option for a more invasive approach, characterized by the reconstruction defended by Ebhardt as opposed to the proposal of conserving and not restoring Dehio –, Riegl transits these questions helping us think about how and why we undertake conservation treatments on monuments.

He argued that the historical and artistic aspects, so widely associated with monuments, do not account for justifying why we conserve them.

Dehio correctly believes that the aesthetic-scientific scheme of “artistic and historical monuments” is no longer applicable today and that the true motive for the cult of monuments is based on an altruistic feeling, which imposes piety as an inner duty, that is, the sacrifice of certain opposing and selfish interests. However, Dehio interprets this altruistic feeling as a national feeling: “We protect the monument as an element of our national existence”⁵ (Riegl, 2018: 64).

⁵Original quotation: *Dehio intuye correctamente que el esquema estético-científico de los “monumentos artísticos e históricos” ya no es aplicable hoy en día y que el verdadero motivo del culto de los monumentos se basa en un sentimiento altruista, que nos impone la piedad como deber interior, es decir el sacrificio de ciertos intereses opuestos y egoístas. Sin embargo, Dehio interpreta este sentimiento altruista como un sentimiento nacional: “Protegemos el monumento como un elemento de nuestra existencia nacional.”*

However, this nationalist conception does not account for the shock we perceive in the face of a loss of heritage belonging to other cultures. Riegl recognized this as “the value of antiquity by itself, regardless of the nationality of its makers,” and he concluded: “Seen from this perspective, they will surely appear to us as a part of our existence, but not in the national existence, but the human one.”

Riegl believed that a universal and human sentiment is what motivates us to care for our heritage. And to defend this broader vision of heritage that regards it as something that directly concerns human existence and, therefore, goes beyond borders, he sought an analogy with the protection of natural monuments, which, at that time, were a source of concern. This was a fairly modern concept that would only be regulated in 1972 by UNESCO through the *Convention for the protection of the cultural and natural world heritage*.

We then go back to the question: What are we referring to when we talk about conserving our heritage? Do we conserve it because it is beautiful or because it is part of the history of our ancestors and consequently of our own history? What affects us when we look upon an artifact that went through centuries to reach us? Why do we often place greater value on what comes from another culture than what is closest to us?

Riegl still questioned the validity of the search for beauty or the historical value of monuments to define their importance. According to him, beauty is only accessible to those who have an aesthetic culture, while the historical value requires a historical-scientific culture; nevertheless, neither of them is sufficient to explain the effect it creates on the modern spectator. He refers to an “undefinable feeling in itself that manifests in an insatiable nostalgia for contemplation of the ‘old’”. If we contemplate a house, we realize that it is ‘old’ and it simply fills us with pleasure.”

Therefore, in his opinion there is something else that makes us want to preserve monuments, a perception of its importance not only for us, but for humanity, and this remains absolutely consistent with its time and the cultural effervescence that surrounded him:

That this aspect of the matter has been ignored for so long and that today it is still vehemently denied, can probably be explained with the discomfort that the modern learned person feels whenever he is confronted with something he cannot comprehend using reason alone. The observer does not want to recognize that he is not able to explain the feeling he experiences while the contemplating a monument, and thus continues to be under the illusion that the monument pleases him just because it is beautiful or historically interesting⁶ (Riegl, 2018: 69).

This inexplicable sensation that Riegl denominated as a “feeling” appears recurrently in his text, indicating that there is something human and undefinable that can influence the way we relate with monuments; that is at the heart of what motivates us to conserve them. The discomfort of the modern man to which he refers – and which would be developed by Freud in 1930 in *The discomfort in civilization* – gives us a clue as to what we could think of the care of monuments according to psychoanalysis.

⁶ Original quotation: *Que se haya ignorado durante tanto tiempo este aspecto de la cuestión y que hoy en día se siga desmintiendo con vehemencia, se puede explicar probablemente con el malestar que la persona erudita moderna prueba cada vez que se confronta con algo que no puede comprender con la razón. El observador no quiere reconocer que no es capaz de explicar la sensación que experimenta durante la contemplación de un monumento, y vive así en la ilusión de que el monumento le agrada porque es bello o históricamente interesante.*

In 1905, while Riegl wrote *New trends in the care of the monuments*, Sigmund Freud was immersed in the development of his theory of psychoanalysis; for this, on innumerable occasions, he employed metaphors taken both from archeology and conservation and restoration of sites and artifacts.

Freud was born in 1856, and grew up in an intellectual environment at a time when archeology was booming. After the campaigns in Egypt at the end of the 18th century and the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone in 1822 by the Frenchman Jean-François Champollion, the expeditions and archaeological studies nourished a fascination for antiquity and ancient history; they opened the way to a great trade of items that arrived in Europe in large quantities. Freud was a great collector of antiques that he acquired easily in the Vienna of the early 20th century. With this, he obtained a respectable collection and a library that, by its composition, made it clear that his research “[...] was directed not only to the infantile experiences of an individual, but also to the origins of civilization and culture”⁷ (Botting, 1994: 192).

Freud wanted psychoanalysis to be a scientific discipline and, at the same time, as popular as archeology. He saw in archaeological metaphors a way to make his theory simple and accessible.

In Freud's eyes, psychoanalysis, as well as archaeology, was a heroic research into a legendary reality. [...] Both deal with the presence and the unexpected power of the past. Both are ways of remembering it. [...] For Freud, archaeology and psychoanalysis announce the same fundamental paradox: they are both ways of recovering and articulating what remains alive – in the immortal truth – and continues to determine our humanity, even if it seems dead, buried or lost for always, permanently forgotten. The past even seems to be subject to forgetfulness, because it is old-fashioned or obsolete, inadequate in the real world of the present and, therefore, insignificant⁸ (Kuspit, 1994: 160).

With this Freud tried to make accessible “[...] the core of psychoanalytical thought, if not the details [...] its general orientation”⁹ (Kuspit, 1994: 159).

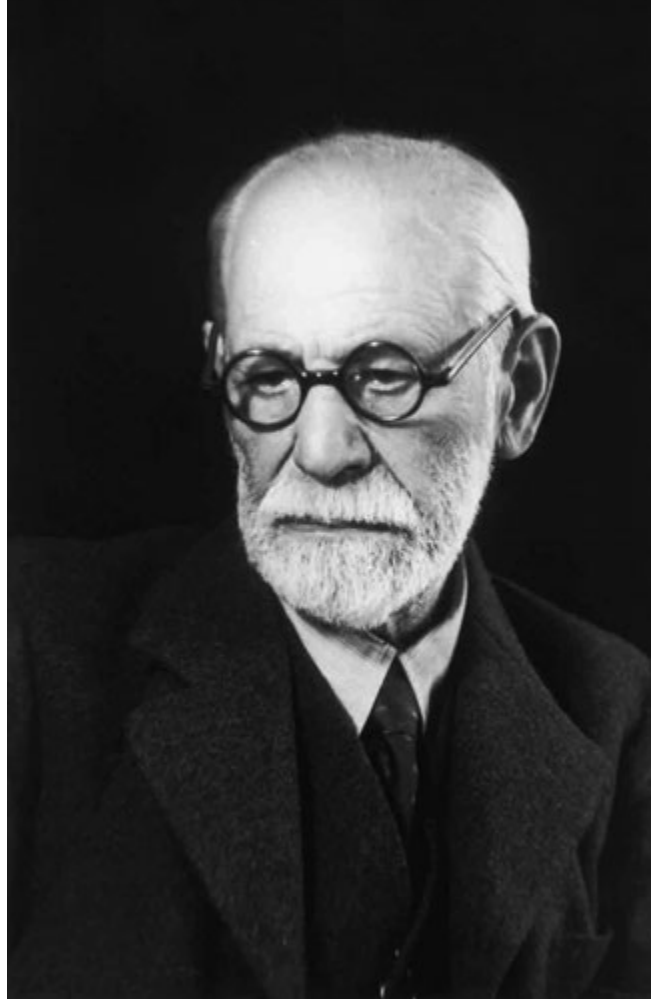
Understanding archeology as a sister discipline of conservation and taking into consideration the archaeological metaphors used by Freud, could we, in a kind of reverse thinking, try to understand the issues that affect the conservation of cultural heritage through psychoanalysis?

In *Discomfort in civilization*, Freud made an extensive analogy between the psychic apparatus and ancient Rome to show that, just as Rome presents aspects of its various historical phases, the psyche is composed a stratigraphy of layers of marks and psychic features that overlap throughout existence.

⁷ Original quotation: [...] dirigiam-se não apenas às experiências infantis de um indivíduo, mas também às origens da civilização e da cultura.

⁸ Original quotation: Aos olhos de Freud, a psicanálise, assim como a arqueologia, era uma investigação heróica de uma realidade lendária. [...] Ambas lidam com a presença e o poder inesperado do passado. Ambas são modos de recordá-lo. [...] Para Freud, a arqueologia e a psicanálise anunciam o mesmo paradoxo fundamental: são ambas formas de recuperar e articular o que permanece vivo – na verdade imortal – e continua a determinar nossa humanidade, ainda que pareça morto, enterrado ou perdido para sempre, permanentemente esquecido. O passado chega mesmo a parecer passível de esquecimento, por ser antiquado ou obsoleto, inadequado ao mundo real do presente e, portanto insignificante.

⁹ Original quotation: o cerne do pensamento psicanalítico, se não os detalhes [...] sua orientação geral.



SIGMUND FREUD BY MARCEL STERNBERGER, LONDON, 1939.
Image: Public domain.



ROSETTA STONE. British Museum. *Image: Public domain.*

Let us now make the fantastic assumption that Rome is not a human dwelling, but a psychic entity with an equally long and rich past, in which nothing that came to exist came to perish, in which, together with the last phase of development, all the previous ones continue to live. [...] Where the Colosseum is now, we could also admire the disappeared Domus Aurea, by Nero; in Piazza della Rotonda we would see not only the current Pantheon, as it was left to us by Adriano, but also the original construction of Agrippa; and the same floor would support the church of Maria Sopra Minerva and the old temple on which it stands¹⁰ (Freud, 2011: 13-14).



DOMUS AUREA. Image: Valerie Magar.

¹⁰ Original quotation: *Façamos agora a fantástica suposição de que Roma não seja uma morada humana, mas uma entidade psíquica com um passado igualmente longo e rico, na qual nada que veio a existir chegou a perecer, na qual, juntamente com a última fase do desenvolvimento, todas as anteriores continuam a viver. [...] Onde agora está o Coliseu poderíamos admirar também a desaparecida Domus Aurea, de Nero; na Piazza dela Rotonda veríamos não só o atual Panteão, como nos foi deixado por Adriano, mas também a construção original de Agripa; e o mesmo solo suportaria a igreja de Maria Sopra Minerva e o velho templo sobre o qual ela está erguida.*

This fantasy describes an unimaginable situation for a city: the possibility of conserving everything, since all cities are subject to demolitions and substitutions. But through this image he tried to visually represent a phenomenon that occurs in psychic life. Freud complements this:

Perhaps we should be content to affirm that what happened can be preserved in psychic life; it does not necessarily have to be destroyed. In any case, it is also possible that in the psyche ancient elements are erased or consumed - as a rule or exceptionally - to the point that they can no longer be revived and restored, or that in general conservation depends on certain favorable conditions. It is possible, but we know nothing about it. We can only stick to the fact that the preservation of the past in psychic life is the rule rather than the surprising exception¹¹ (Freud, 2011: 15).

This analogy allows us to think about a basic issue in decisions regarding the conservation of cultural heritage: the selection of what can or should be conserved based on the assumption that once the cultural heritage is exposed to an infinity of aggressors, what reaches our days is a fraction, not always integral, of elements of the past. They are material elements that possess values and that, in turn, give them a meaning.

Likewise, Dehio reminds us that the passage of time changes the meaning of goods and, although we have the material support, we will no longer have the perception of its meaning as it was perceived by his contemporaries. If through psychoanalysis it is possible to revive the traumatic events and to re-signify them, thus breaking a chain of repetitions, we think that the effort to conserve the assets of our ancestors may be of service in an identity search of the links of a chain of meanings that can make our existence more meaningful.

For Kuspit (1994: 162), "archeology symbolizes psychoanalysis in what it has as the most revealing and revolutionary [...]"¹² and complements:

For psychoanalysis, life that occurs in the clinical situation should not be understood in its nominal value, but as a place for the excavation of past life in order to discover its true construction. The constant refusal of psychoanalysis to accept the present as data directly leads to its character as an archaeological undertaking. In addition, the process of psycho-archaeological research is the beginning of the process of psychic change. For archaeological investigation is a preliminary act of intervention, providing preliminary insights. It is a form of partial interpretation, or pre-interpretation, or propedeutic suggestion of the need for change. It is the awkward awakening necessary for acute full consciousness. The act of discovering the past necessarily brings into question the psychic present, promising transformations¹³ (Kuspit, 1994: 162).

¹¹ Original quotation: *Talvez devêssemos nos contentar em afirmar que o que passou pode ficar conservado na vida psíquica, não tem necessariamente que ser destruído. De toda maneira é possível que também na psique elementos antigos sejam apagados ou consumidos - via de regra ou excepcionalmente - a tal ponto que não possam mais ser reanimados e restabelecidos, ou que em geral a conservação dependa de certas condições favoráveis. É possível, mas nada sabemos a respeito. Podemos tão só nos ater ao fato de que a conservação do passado na vida psíquica é antes a regra do que a surpreendente exceção.*

¹² Original quotation: *arqueologia simboliza a psicanálise naquilo que ela tem de mais revelador e revolucionário [...].*

¹³ Original quotation: *Para a psicanálise, a vida que ocorre na situação clínica não deve ser entendida em seu valor nominal, mas como local para a escavação da vida passada, de modo a descobrir a sua verdadeira construção. A constante recusa da psicanálise em aceitar o presente como dado conduz diretamente ao seu caráter de empreendimento arqueológico. Além disso, o processo de investigação psico-arqueológica é o começo do processo de mudança psíquica. Pois a investigação arqueológica é um ato preliminar de intervenção, propiciando percepções preliminares. É uma forma de interpretação parcial, ou pré-interpretação, ou sugestão propedêutica da necessidade de mudança. É o incômodo despertar necessário para a aguda consciência plena. O ato de descobrir o passado coloca necessariamente em questão o presente psíquico, prometendo transformações.*

Thus, we can think that the act of collecting and conserving goods meets our search for meaning, a search for understanding how the construction of the present occurred. We search through parts, often very small, clues or indications that allow us to reconstruct human evolution. What are the steps of this journey and the extent to which the evolution of thought has led us to what we are today?

If we consider this assertion to be valid, on the contrary, how can explain why it is the same human being that destroys much of heritage? Is it a voluntary process of denial of a hurtful and oppressive past, a process imposed on identity repression, a natural cycle of destruction and construction, or an unconscious resource to conceal something that cannot be withstood?

Buildings, libraries, works of art and countless monuments are destroyed by political, ideological or religious conflicts, or simply to build something new in place of the old. Neglect, abandonment, lack of investment and conservation are also passive means of destruction; they generate marks that are incorporated into heritage and also tell a story. Such is the case of ruins that denounce with more force the events that happened there. To deny these events is to distort the history that constitutes us. Collecting the information that a ruin presents to us, we can reconstruct it virtually and, with that, imagine how it would have been before the events that caused its loss. Material reconstruction will erase traces and vestiges, and every conceptual meaning that the ruin holds will be lost, like the feeling, the aura, that makes us see what is no longer there. Rebuilding a ruin is a process of denying the marks of time, history, and our own ruin – the ruin we do not want or cannot stand to see. Although this way of thinking seems unanimous, if we consider the Greek ruins, to cite just one example, it becomes much more difficult to apply in constructions that are not within an archaeological site.



GRADIVA, 1906. Vatican Museums. *Image: Public domain.*

In this sense, it is interesting to observe how we have created icons of the past and revere them, but we cannot devote the same reverence to the goods that were left by the ancestors closest to us. Many people travel across continents to marvel at works of art, architecture and ruins without ever having entered a single museum in their hometown. There remains one question: what can there be in our past that we cannot bear to see?

Freud sees psychoanalysis as a construction – or reconstruction – of what has been forgotten from the traits that have been left in order to have a more complete awareness of our present. In *Constructions in analysis* (1937) he proposed:

His construction work [referring to psychoanalysis] or if one prefers, of reconstruction, resembles a great deal the excavation made by an archaeologist of a dwelling that was destroyed and buried, or of a building. The two processes are in fact identical, except that the analyst works under better conditions, and he has more material at his disposal to help him, since what he is dealing with, is something destroyed, but still alive; perhaps for another reason as well. But just as the archaeologist raises the walls of the building from the standing foundations, he determines the number and position of the columns by the depressions on the floor and reconstructs the decorations and wall paintings from the debris found in the rubble, the analyst proceeds when he extracts his inferences from the fragments of memories, associations and behavior of the subject. Both have an undisputed right to rebuild by supplementing and combining the remains that have survived. Both, in addition, are subject to many of the difficulties and sources of error¹⁴ (Freud, 1996: 273).

Although he refers to the reconstruction of historical ruins, Freud points out that, for lack of all the necessary information, this is only possible to some extent and he concluded by pointing out a difference that separates psychoanalysis from archaeology:

[...] keep in mind that the digger is dealing with destroyed objects, large and important parts of which are certainly lost due to mechanical violence, fire or looting. No effort can result in their discovery and lead to them being reunited with the remains. The only course of action that is available to the digger is that of reconstruction, which, for this reason, can often only reach a certain degree of probability. But with the psychic object whose primitive history the analyst is seeking to recover, it is different. Here we regularly confront ourselves with a situation which, as with the archaeological object occurs only in rare circumstances, such as Pompeii or the Tomb of Tutankhamun. All the essentials are preserved; even things that seem utterly forgotten are present, somehow, and somewhere, and simply buried and made inaccessible to the individual¹⁵ (Freud, 1996: 273).

¹⁴ Original quotation: *Seu trabalho de construção [referindo-se à psicanálise]. Ou se se preferir, de reconstrução, assemelha-se muito à escavação, feita por um arqueólogo, de alguma morada que foi destruída e soterrada, ou de algum edifício. Os dois processos são de fato idênticos, exceto pelo fato de que o analista trabalha em melhores condições e tem mais material a sua disposição para ajudá-lo, já que aquilo com que está tratando é algo destruído, mas algo que ainda está vivo – e talvez por outra razão também. Mas assim como o arqueólogo ergue as paredes do prédio a partir dos alicerces que permaneceram de pé, determina o número e a posição das colunas pelas depressões no chão e reconstrói as decorações e as pinturas murais a partir dos restos encontrados nos escombros, assim também o analista procede quando extrai suas inferências a partir dos fragmentos de lembranças, das associações e do comportamento do sujeito da análise. Ambos possuem direito indiscutido a reconstruir por meio da suplementação e da combinação dos restos que sobreviveram. Ambos, ademais, estão sujeitos a muitas das dificuldades e fontes de erro.*

¹⁵ Original quotation: *[...] há que manter em mente que o escavador está lidando com objetos destruídos, dos quais grandes e importantes partes certamente se perderam, pela violência mecânica, pelo fogo ou pelo saque. Nenhum esforço pode resultar em sua descoberta e levar a que sejam unidas aos restos que permaneceram. O único curso que se lhe acha aberto é o da reconstrução, que, por essa razão, com frequência só pode atingir um certo grau de probabilidade. Mas, com o objeto psíquico cuja história primitiva o analista está buscando recuperar, é diferente. Aqui, defrontamo-nos regularmente com uma situação que, com o objeto arqueológico ocorre apenas em circunstâncias raras, tais como de Pompéia ou da Tumba de Tutancâmon. Todos os elementos essenciais estão preservados; mesmo coisas que parecem completamente esquecidas estão presentes, de alguma maneira e em algum lugar, e simplesmente foram enterradas e tornadas inacessíveis ao indivíduo.*

Finally, since we cannot live with the past, Freud also points out that in psychoanalytical intervention, such as the restoration of an artifact, truth must take precedence, pointing out where there was an intervention:

In the face of the incompleteness of my analytical results, I have only to follow the example of those discoverers who had the happy task of bringing into light the day after long burial, the inestimable but mutilated relics of antiquity. I restored what was lacking according to the best models that were known to me from other analyses, but as a conscientious archaeologist, I did not fail to draw attention to, in each case, the point at which my construction overlaps with what is authentic¹⁶ (Freud, 1996: 23).

Reflecting on heritage conservation from the perspective of psychoanalysis seems to give a more organic aspect to our activity, as it was already indicated in Riegl's text from 1905. When referring to a feeling as justification for the conservation of monuments, he was aligned to a historical moment of a great intellectual turmoil and in perfect coherence with Freudian thought. This implied that conservation is a human manifestation more integrated with the roots of our existence and what constitutes us. If conservation and psychoanalysis work with the past, with remains, traces and vestiges, what can they learn from each other? Understanding the past may be the key to a more promising and sustainable gift. It is not an easy task, but if we consider that the past is a living part of our present, maybe we can work on its conservation in a more conscious and generous way with those that preceded us and with those that happen to us.

*



AGGSTSTEIN. Image: Public domain.

¹⁶ Original quotation. Ante o caráter incompleto de meus resultados analíticos, não me restou senão seguir o exemplo daqueles descobridores que tem a felicidade de trazer à luz do dia, após longo sepultamento, as inestimáveis embora mutiladas relíquias da antiguidade. Restaurei o que faltava segundo os melhores modelos que me eram conhecidos de outras análises, mas, como um arqueólogo consciencioso, não deixei de assinalar em cada caso o ponto onde a minha construção se superpõe ao que é autêntico.

References

- Botting, Wendy e J. Keith Davies (1994) "A Biblioteca de Freud e um apêndice de títulos relacionados a antiguidades", *in: Sigmund Freud e arqueologia: sua coleção de antiguidades*, Salamandra, Rio de Janeiro, pp. 191-194.
- Dehio, Georg (2018) "La protección y el cuidado de los monumentos en el siglo XIX", *Conversaciones... con Georg Dehio, Alois Riegl y Max Dvořák* (5): 29-44.
- Dvořák, Max (2018) "Catecismo del cuidado de los monumentos", *Conversaciones... con Georg Dehio, Alois Riegl y Max Dvořák* (5): 102-126.
- Freud, Sigmund (2011) *O mal-estar na civilização*, trad. Paulo César de Souza, Penguin Classics Companhia das Letras, São Paulo.
- Freud, Sigmund (1996) "Construções em análise", *in: Jayme Salomão (org.), Obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud*, Imago, Rio de Janeiro, pp. 271-283.
- Freud, Sigmund (1996) "Fragmento da análise de um caso de histeria", *in: Jayme Salomão (org.), Obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud*, Imago, Rio de Janeiro, pp. 15-116.
- Kuspit, Donald (1994) "Uma metáfora poderosa: a analogia entre a arqueologia e a psicanálise", *in: Sigmund Freud e arqueologia: sua coleção de antiguidades*, Salamandra, Rio de Janeiro, pp. 159-177.
- Riegl, Alois (2018) "Nuevas corrientes en el cuidado de los monumentos", *Conversaciones... con Georg Dehio, Alois Riegl y Max Dvořák* (5): 62-75.