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## THE CONCEPT OF HERITAGE

### POJĘCIE DZIEDZICTWA

#### Abstract

The relationship between history and design is explored through an examination of the concept of heritage, both etymologically and in the many forms it can take in various fields of knowledge, from law to culture and testimony, as well as in terms of value, which connects it to the notion of tradition. Tradition should not be understood in a conservative or romantic sense but should be seen as a living legacy and a necessary heritage to be used actively and intentionally in an architectural project that is cultured, appropriate and sensible in order to look further ahead, standing on the shoulders of giants, as Bernard of Chartres teaches us. The 'social object' that, according to philosopher Maurizio Ferraris, characterises the artefact 'architecture' becomes, with reference to heritage and using the notion of 'hyperobject' proposed by Graham Harman and Timothy Morton, a true 'hypersocial object', collective and shared, part of the collective memory to be preserved in an unconventional or merely protective manner. In this transformative interpretation, the architectural project is called upon to renew the heritage received and recognised in order to finally make history, seen as the 'terrain of choices' and the past that it investigates à la Faulkner as 'the visible part of the future'.

*Keywords: heritage, tradition, project*

#### Streszczenie

Relacja między historią a projektowaniem architektonicznym została w pracy przeanalizowana poprzez refleksję nad pojęciem dziedzictwa – zarówno w jego etymologicznym znaczeniu, jak i w wielorakich formach, jakie przybiera w różnych dziedzinach wiedzy: od prawa przez kulturę po świadectwo – a także po względem wartości, która łączy je z pojęciem tradycji. Tradycji nie należy rozumieć w sensie konserwatywnym ani romantycznym, lecz jako żywe dziedzictwo – niezbędny zasób, który powinien być aktywnie i świadomie wykorzystywany w projektowaniu architektonicznym, aby tworzyć dzieła kulturowo zakorzenione, adekwatne i rozumne, a zarazem zdolne patrzeć w przyszłość, stojąc na ramionach olbrzymów, jak „nauczał Bernard z Chartres. Według filozofa Maurizia Ferrarisa artefakt zwany „architekturą” jest obiektem społecznym (*social object*), który – w odniesieniu do dziedzictwa oraz w świetle koncepcji „hiperobiektu” (*hyperobject*) zaproponowanej przez Grahama Harmana i Timothy’ego Mortona – staje się „hipersocjalnym obiektem” (*hypersocial object*): wspólnym, zbiorowym bytem, częścią pamięci zbiorowej, którą należy chronić w niekonwencjonalny, a nie jedynie zachowawczy sposób. W tej transformacyjnej interpretacji projekt architektoniczny staje się narzędziem odnawiania odziedziczonego dziedzictwa, by tworzyć historię pojmowaną jako „teren wyborów” oraz przeszłość, którą bada w duchu Faulknera jako „widzialną część przeszłości”.

*Słowa kluczowe: dziedzictwo, tradycja, projekt*

*Bernardo argued that we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more things and further than them, not because of the sharpness of our sight or the strength of our bodies, but because we sit higher and are elevated thanks to the greatness of the giants.*

Iohannes Saresberiensis, *Metalogicon*, MCLIX

## PREMISE

In order to reflect on the indissoluble relationship between history (the past) and architectural design (the future), we must first try to answer the question, the *Grundfrage* (about the present): ‘What is heritage?’. Heritage, in addition to being a beautiful town in Corsica or a part of Sabina<sup>1</sup>, is a classic ‘umbrella concept’ often evoked by various parties to shelter under its generality, which, however, often becomes a precarious semantic generality. Hence the need to clarify the terms in which we wish to understand the notion of heritage, first by retracing its common, accepted, conventional meaning and then arriving, *sub specie architecturae*, at a declination capable, in a renewed perspective, of re-signifying and re-semanticising it.

Even the very notion of ‘project’ can serve as an ‘umbrella’ for many areas of knowledge: everyone does projects, and there are many ‘project disciplines’. But in what sense? With what definable and comparable approaches, given that all of them – from restoration to technology to urban planning – deal in various ways (from study to protection, from interpretation to transformation and modification) with the natural or man-made physical environment? Through what argumentative and operational techniques would these liminal disciplines be characterised?

Bringing together ‘Heritage’ and ‘Project’ and making a distinction between them means, to a large extent, taking on the task of defining twice the meaning to be attributed to the first term as an object to be observed and/or transformed and to the second as a specific perspective and approach to be adopted for its appropriate modification. To try to approach the most common and conventional meaning of ‘Heritage’, it is necessary to start from language, since the names that it selects, combines and puts back into play through grammatical and syntactical rules contain most of the sedimented and intelligible meaning of the concepts we use. For Martin Heidegger, thought and language ‘hold’ each other: language, the eponym of thought, ‘guards’ being, “Language is the home of being. Man, dwells in its dwelling place. Thinkers and poets are the guardians of this dwelling place. Their vigilance is the fulfilment of the manifestation of Being, in fact through their words, they bring it to language and preserve it in language.”<sup>2</sup> It is in language that thought finds its home, and it is thinkers and poets, artists – and architecture is an art and not a mere *téchne* – who preserve and make visible, so

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<sup>1</sup> *Patrimonio* is a French municipality with 681 inhabitants located in the department of Haute-Corse and belongs to the arrondissement of Calvi, while *Patrimonio di Sabina* refers to a part of ancient Sabina.

<sup>2</sup> M. Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus* [in:] *idem, Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*, A. Francke, Bern 1947, p. 267.

that it may manifest and reveal itself, the truth of being. Only art can ‘put truth into action’<sup>3</sup>. Starting from language to arrive at the deepest meaning of words in relation to things<sup>4</sup>, seeking in some way to create an ‘archaeology’ of them, we must rely on etymological science, on the original, source, and auroral meaning, and therefore the most authentic and capable of retaining the essence that the term has assumed in Indo-European languages, for example, starting from Émile Benveniste’s treatise<sup>5</sup>.

## WHAT’S ‘HERITAGE’

The eminent French linguist and semiotician, referring to the concept of ‘paternity’ and its importance, from which, as we shall see, the derivative<sup>6</sup> ‘patrimony’ derives, writes:

Father and mother, brother and sister do not constitute symmetrical pairs in Indo-European. Opposite *\*māter* ‘mother’, *\*pater* does not designate the physical father, as evidenced, among other things, by the old juxtaposed term preserved in Latin *Iuppiter*. *\*Bhrāter* is not even the blood brother: Greek, in *phrātēr*, preserves better than any other language the meaning of ‘member of a brotherhood’, a term classifying kinship. As for *\*swesor* (Latin *soror*), it literally designates the female (*\*sor*) of the group (*\*swe*), another term classifying kinship, but not symmetrical to *\*bhrāter*<sup>7</sup>.

Italian word *Patrimonio* (Heritage), for instance, refers primarily to *patrimo*<sup>8</sup>, or offspring, to that which ‘comes from the father’ (*pater*), and if from the mother it is called *matrimo*, ‘which is still alive’, both in the etymological and material sense in the etymological trace, in continuity with the root *\*pater* (father) combined with *-mūnūs* (gift|duty)<sup>9</sup>, which in turn refers to *patrīmus*, it can be identified as follows: “patrimony n. [second half of the 13th century] – the totality of assets owned by a person, from Latin *patrīmōnīum* ‘assets inherited

<sup>3</sup> M. Heidegger, *L’origine dell’opera d’arte*, Marinotti, Milano 2000.

<sup>4</sup> M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Gallimard, Paris 1966.

<sup>5</sup> É. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, vol. 1, *Économie, parenté, société*, Les Éditions de Munuit, Paris 1969.

<sup>6</sup> É. Benveniste, *Parole derivate da termini di parentela*, *ibidem*, pp. 204–211.

<sup>7</sup> É. Benveniste, *L’importanza del concetto di paternità*, *ibidem*, p. 161.

<sup>8</sup> *Patrimo* adj. [from Latin *patrīmus*, derived from *pater*-*tris* ‘father’]. In ancient Rome, it was said of a child whose father was alive; the term occurred especially in the expression *patrimo e matrimo*, used in relation to worship, since it was required, in order to serve in religious ceremonies, to have both parents alive, in: *Vocabolario Treccani online*, <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/patrimo> (access: 5.08.2025).

<sup>9</sup> According to Anna Brancolini, *mūnūs* would designate the ‘necessary gift, morally due and recognised by a community [...] the linguistic root of the term takes us to the area of *commūnicātio*, that is, the action of “putting something of ours in common so that it becomes the heritage of all”, an action which, in the archaic phase of Latin and some neo-Latin languages, concerns the transmission of a quality, an energy, or a movement [...]. We should not overlook the links between *mūnūs* and *commūnis* (common, put into communion) and *commūnō*, synonymous with *sōcietās*, or the etymological relationship with terms that express the idea of defence and protection (*mōenīa*=walls, *mūrus*=wall, *mūnō*=fortify). A. Brancolini, *Munus* [in:] S. Veloci, A. Brancolini, *Oratorio di San Desiderio a Pistoia*, Massimo Biagi, *Munus*, Gli ori, Pistoia 2017.

from the father’, derived from *pater patris* ‘father’ through the adjective *patrīmus* ‘having a father (alive)’ > French *patrimoine*, Spanish *patrimonio*<sup>10</sup>.

*Patrimonio* is literally the ‘duty of the father’ and designates the totality of inherited assets transferred to the next generation, to the *pārentes*, which “pass from father to son and, by extension, all kinds of assets that are acquired”<sup>11</sup>. It is useful to emphasise, as Benveniste already noted, how “two apparently similar terms such as ‘marriage’ and ‘patrimony’ have two such different meanings; in particular, the ‘duty of the mother’ has always been linked to the concept of procreation, while that of the father has been linked to the sustenance of the family, in a relationship of complementarity and interdependence”<sup>12</sup>.

If, on the other hand, we investigate the multiple meanings that the term *Patrimonio* has currently assumed in the Italian language, we recognise various possible meanings which, from the first financial-legal connotation, linked to the definitional right of property (hereditary heritage, separate heritage, autonomous heritage, permanent heritage, heritage for consumption or use, financial heritage), to their protection (crimes against heritage), denoting assets subject to charges (taxes on heritage), while in science it designates the transfer of biological characteristics (chromosomal heritage, genetic heritage) and then, for particular assets (tangible or intangible) rich in community and shared value (cultural, historical, artistic, anthropological, etc.), to its semantic extension to broad or community enjoyment (ecclesiastical heritage, public heritage, national heritage) and, as *res communis omnium*, even to the universal and accruing (heritage of humanity).

## HERITAGE AND TRADITION

Despite the vast polysemy of meanings that the term can assume in various contexts, it should be noted that in some of them there is a reference to ‘legacy’ or ‘inheritance’ (of goods and/or values) to be passed on in some way. In axiological<sup>13</sup> terms, the term ‘heritage’ could therefore be associated with ‘everything that has an undisputed value and can be held or transferred by/ to increasingly broader groups of individuals or communities who identify with these values or even derive their distinctive identity from them’. ‘Heritage’ would therefore have to do with a ‘gift’ (*testamentum*<sup>14</sup>), with an inheritance of identity<sup>15</sup> to be received and passed on not

<sup>10</sup> *patrimonio ad vocem* in A. Nocentini, *L'etimologico. Vocabolario della lingua italiana*, Le Monnier, Florence, Ver. 1.0.0.

<sup>11</sup> *patrimonio ad vocem* in O. Pianigiani, *Vocabolario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*, Società editrice Dante Alighieri, Rome 1907–1926, now available at the *Vocabolario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*, edited by F. Bonomi, 2004–2008: <https://www.etimo.it/?term=patrimonio&find=Cerca> (access: 5.08.2025).

<sup>12</sup> *patrimonio ad vocem* in: etimoitaliano, <https://www.etimoitaliano.it/2014/01/patrimonio.html> (access: 5.08.2025).

<sup>13</sup> *Assiologico* (less common *axiológico*) adj. [derived from *assiologia*] (pl. m. -ci). – Relating to axiology; referring to a scale of values or based on a value judgement: consideration a.; axiological categories, in: *Vocabolario Treccani online*, <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/assiologico> (access: 5.08.2025).

<sup>14</sup> Testament – a written document in which a person disposes of their assets in favour of their heirs. From Latin *testamentum*, derived from *testāri* ‘to testify; to declare officially’, derived from *testis* –is ‘witness’ > French *testament*, Spanish *Testamento*, in: A. Nocentini, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> See below the reflections of Sergio Bettini quoted and the related note 31.

as a burden but as a legacy to be reinvigorated, nurtured and defended. As Jacques Derrida<sup>16</sup> reminds us regarding inheritance:

[...] we must, first of all, know and be able to reaffirm what came before us – and which we therefore receive before we can choose it – but also be able to behave towards it in an unconditional manner [...] Reaffirm – what do we mean by this term? Not just accepting this heritage but giving it new impetus by keeping it alive [...] a heritage is never collected, it never forms a whole. This supposed unity, if there is one, can only consist in the injunction to reaffirm by choosing [and how we must] succeed in conceiving life itself starting from the idea of inheritance [since] only a finite being can inherit.

Again in *Spectres of Marx*, returning to the theme, the French philosopher argues that “one always inherits from a secret” and that “one must take on the legacy of Marxism, take on what is most alive, that is, paradoxically, what continues to raise the question of life, spirit and the spectral, *la-vie-la-mort* beyond the opposition between life and death. We must reaffirm this legacy, transforming it radically if necessary”<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, any legacy, including Marxism, in order to be reaffirmed and accepted as a value and an experience that is still alive and operative, must be questioned, transform and transmute it into a ‘Tradition’, which, far from being merely an invention<sup>18</sup>, must be taken on as a legacy to be preserved but above all to be betrayed and transcended, renewing it each time anew. As Stefania Romito points out, “Tradition is not a heritage that can simply be inherited. Tradition is not only the past; it is good that it continues to exist in our consciousness because only by being aware of the past can we act in the present, and only with an awareness of our past does what we do acquire meaning”<sup>19</sup>, since, for Thomas Eliot<sup>20</sup>,

If [...] the only form of tradition, of transmission, consisted in following the paths of the immediately preceding generation, with blind and timid adherence to the successes already achieved, ‘tradition’ would certainly be discouraged. We have seen so many trickles that soon disappear into the sand, and novelty is certainly preferable to repetition. Tradition, however, is a matter of much broader significance. Tradition [and, by metonymy, ‘Heritage’] cannot be inherited, and if you want it, you have to work hard to get it.

Still on the essential dialectical relationship between tradition and innovation, betrayal and transmission, Walter Benjamin states that “In every age, we must try to wrest tradition from the conformism that is about to overwhelm it”<sup>21</sup> and, with many similarities, Adorno<sup>22</sup> adds that:

Dialectics is the attempt to see the new in the old instead of only the old in the new [...] tradition is not a product of the past, passively received by contemporaries, but a point of view

<sup>16</sup> J. Derrida, É. Roudinesco, *Quale domani?*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2004.

<sup>17</sup> J. Derrida, *Spettri di Marx*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano 1994, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup> See: E.J. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (eds.), *The invention of tradition*, Cambridge University, Cambridge 2012.

<sup>19</sup> S. Romito, *L'importanza della Tradizione in T.S. Eliot*, “Il Corriere Nazionale”, 28.11.2020, <https://www.corrierenazionale.net/2020/11/26/limportanza-della-tradizione-in-t-s-eliot/> (access: 5.08.2025).

<sup>20</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Tradition and the individual talent. Part I*, “The Egoist” 1919, no. 4, pp. 54–55, <https://modjourn.org/journal/egoist/>; T.S. Eliot, *Tradition and the individual talent. Part II*, “The Egoist” 1919, no. 5, pp. 72–73, <https://modjourn.org/journal/egoist/>.

<sup>21</sup> W. Benjamin, *Il compito del traduttore* [in:] *idem, Angelus Novus*, Einaudi, Torino 1995, pp. 45–46.

<sup>22</sup> T.W. Adorno, *Sulla Tradizione* [in:] *idem, Parva Aesthetica*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1979, p. 33.

that people of the present develop on the past. It is an interpretation of the past, conducted in relation to the present. Tradition is not what has always been, but a reference to the past (real or presumed) for certain purposes related to the present.

## PAST – PRESENT – FUTURE

In accordance with these interpretations, which go as far back as Stravinsky<sup>23</sup> and which start from the past but look to the present and the future, detailing them in relation to Italy's urban, artistic and landscape heritage, and associating them with the relationship with history and in relation to the European condition, never free from crisis, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben<sup>24</sup> states that:

The past is not only a heritage of goods and traditions, memories and knowledge, but also and above all an essential anthropological component of European man, who can only access the present by looking at what he has been from time to time. Hence the special relationship that every European country [...] has with its cities, its works of art, its landscape: it is not a question of preserving assets that are more or less valuable, but in any case, external and available: what is at stake is the very reality of Europe, its unavailable survival. This is why; by destroying the Italian landscape with concrete, motorways and high-speed railways, speculators are not only depriving us of an asset but destroying our very identity. The very term 'cultural assets' is misleading, because it suggests that these are assets among others, which can be exploited economically and perhaps sold, as if one could liquidate and put one's identity up for sale.

Defend, do not commodify<sup>25</sup>, and do not offend the historical and artistic heritage to which Agamben refers, which is protected, together with the landscape, by the Italian Constitution<sup>26</sup> as a

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<sup>23</sup> The great composer states, with regard to the close relationship between heritage, legacy and tradition, that 'A true tradition is not a testimony to a past that has ended, but a living force that animates and informs the present. In this sense, the paradox is true that [...] everything that is not tradition is plagiarism [...] Far from implying the repetition of what has been, tradition presupposes the reality of what lasts. It takes the form of a family heritage, a legacy that is received on condition that it is made to bear fruit before being passed on to one's descendants'. I. Stravinsky, *Poetica della musica*, Edizioni Curci, Milano 1942, pp. 51–52. I would like to thank my friend Giorgio Peghin for reminding me of this beautiful quote, so beloved by the deceased Luigi Snozzi.

<sup>24</sup> Gabriella, *Giorgio Agamben, Crisi e tempo presente* [in:] – gabriella giudici, 31.09.2012, <https://gabriellagiudici.it/giorgio-agamben-crisi-e-tempo-presente/> (access: 5.08.2025).

<sup>25</sup> On the subject of commodification and, more generally, heritage, see, among others: S. Settis, *Paesaggio costituzione cemento. La battaglia per l'ambiente contro il degrado civile*, Einaudi, Torino 2010; T. Montanari, *Istruzioni per l'uso del futuro. Il patrimonio culturale e la democrazia che verrà*, minimum fax, Roma 2014; *idem*, *Privati del patrimonio*, Einaudi, Torino 2015. Specifically on architecture, also in relation to the very general theme of living, with significant extensions to other areas, see: C. Andriani (ed.), *Il patrimonio e l'abitare*, Donzelli, Roma 2010 (Proceedings of the conference 'Ricordo al futuro. Patrimonio dell'esistente e paesaggi urbani', MiBAC\_PARC held at the 11th Venice Architecture Biennale from 22 to 23 October 2008), and L. Dal Pozzolo, *Il patrimonio culturale tra memoria e futuro*, Editrice Bibliografica, Milano 2018.

<sup>26</sup> In fact, Article 9 of the *Constitution of Italian Republic* states: "The Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific and technical research. It protects the landscape and the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation".

‘common good’<sup>27</sup> and a tangible repository of ‘collective memories’<sup>28</sup> rather than ‘imaginings’<sup>29</sup>, starting from the subtle and not insignificant distinction between the concepts of ‘Legacy’ and ‘Heritage’ and between this notion and that of ‘Patrimony’<sup>30</sup>, does not mean, however, turning it into a museum, making it intangible or freezing it in the status quo, but, in a renewed sense, re-designing it in order to re-recognise it. It must be ‘re-launched’ because, on the one hand, as Maurizio Bettini points out, “[...] tradition is not something that is inherited genetically – or that memory mechanically transmits from one generation to another – but is constructed and taught step by step, that roots, ultimately, are a deceptive and exclusionary image”<sup>31</sup>, on the other hand, for Settis, “‘Tradition’ does not mean inheriting something and taking possession of it [but] transforming it into something else”<sup>32</sup>, adhering to the meaning of Gustav Mahler’s famous aphorism: “Tradition is not worshipping ashes but keeping the fire alive”.

If, from an ontological point of view, architecture as an artefact is a particular version of a ‘social object’, as the philosopher Maurizio Ferraris<sup>33</sup> argues, then heritage, archaeological, architectural, urban, landscape, or territorial objects become so to the nth degree, assuming the status of social ‘hyperobjects’<sup>34</sup> as a whole. Or, even better, if heritage, as Joseph Rykwert argues, is “everything ‘within which we are’”<sup>35</sup>, we should speak not so much of a ‘social hyperobject’ but of a ‘hypersocial object’, because it is shared and recognised in its value, always to be renewed, by an extended community.

In more explicit terms, archaeological and monumental heritage, protected and studied by archaeologists and protected by the Superintendence, studied by historians, should not be handed over as a ‘sinopia’ to restorers alone, but be re-put ‘into operation’, re-signified with *nove sed antiquae* recognisable forms and skilful syntax. Just as the urban and morphological heritage

<sup>27</sup> See: S. Settis, *Il paesaggio come bene comune*, La scuola di Pitagora, Napoli 2013.

<sup>28</sup> According to the well-known definition by historian Pierre Nora, collective memory is nothing more than “the memory, or set of memories, more or less known, of an experience lived or mythologised by a living community whose identity is an integral part of the feeling of the past”. See P. Nora, *Mémoire collective* [in:] J. Le Goff (ed.), *La nouvelle histoire*, Retz, Paris 1978, p. 398; M. Halbwachs, *Le cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Alcan, Paris 1925.

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Abruzzese, *L’intelligenza del mondo. Fondamenti di storia e teorie dell’immaginario*, Meltemi, Roma 2001.

<sup>30</sup> On the distinction between Heritage, Legacy and Patrimony, see: F. Irace, *Un’antologia in senso classico* [in:] C. Andriani (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 83–85.

<sup>31</sup> M. Bettini, *Contro le radici. Tradizione, identità, memoria*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2012.

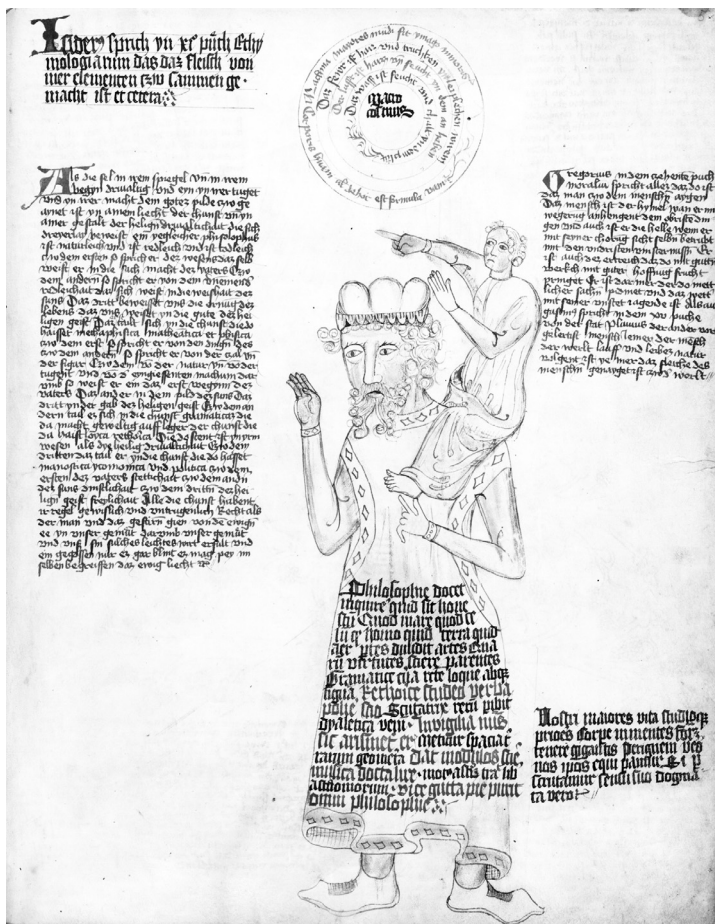
<sup>32</sup> S. Settis, *IncurSIONI. Arte contemporanea e tradizione*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2020, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> See M. Ferraris, *Lasciar tracce: documentalità e architettura*, Mimesis, Milano 2012. See also, assuming a variation of the new realism for architecture: S. Malcovati et al. (eds.), *Riflessioni sulla costruzione architettonica della realtà*, Maggioli, Sant’Arcangelo di Romagna 2013; R. Capozzi, *Moderno realismo: un progetto da compiere* [in:] P. Gregory (ed.), *Nuovo realismo/postmodernismo. Dibattito aperto fra architettura e filosofia*, Officina Edizioni, Roma 2016, pp. 134–143; M. Ferraris, R. Capozzi, F. Visconti, “Architettura”. *Attorno all’architettura*, Lettera Ventidue, Siracusa 2021.

<sup>34</sup> On the notion of “hyperobject”, based on Graham Harman’s text, *Object-oriented ontology. A new theory of everything*, Pelican Books, London 2018, see: T. Morton, *Hyperobjects: philosophy and ecology after the end of the world*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2018. For a possible interpretation of hyperobjects for architecture and in particular for the notion of the periphery (also potentially a possible Heritage), see the very recent: C. Prati, *Iperoggetto Periferia*, Bordeaux Edizioni, Roma 2021.

<sup>35</sup> J. Rykwert, *Il patrimonio è ciò entro cui siamo*, introduction to C. Andriani (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. IX–XII.

of cities – whether public or not, thinking not only of historic centres but also of social housing estates in our suburbs – should not, assuming an ‘antiquarian rhetoric’, remain so but be reconfigured, modified, and reintroduced into renewed and appropriate systems of order that are able to grasp its formal, morphological, and settlement qualities. Similarly, the rural or peri-urban landscape, the natural substrate of our territories, increasingly at risk, should not be handed over solely to techno-eco-sustainable specialists, ‘reconditioned’ for recycling or to protection agencies, often ineffective, but re-activated as essential material for the construction of the contemporary ‘open city’ in which nature can once again become the general context of its construction. In this sense, the words of the poet T.S. Eliot<sup>36</sup> remain unrivalled and eloquent:



Ill. 1. The blind giant Orion (the past, tradition) carries his servant Cedalion on his shoulders so that he can see further (the future, innovation). Unknown medieval author, *encyclopaedic manuscript containing allegorical and medical drawings*, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection at Library of Congress

<sup>36</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Tradition and the individual talent*, *op. cit.*, also in: *Thomas Stearns Eliot Tradizione e talento individuale da Il bosco sacro, Saggi su poesia e critica* (1922) traduzione di Giulia Bordignon, “La rivista di engramma” 2014, no. 118, [http://www.egramma.it/eOS/index.php?id\\_articolo=444](http://www.egramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=444) (access: 5.08.2025).

Existing monuments compose an ideal order that changes when a new (truly new) work of art is introduced. The existing order is complete in itself before the new work arrives; for the order to persist after the appearance of the *nōvītās*, the entire order must be altered, albeit to a minimal extent. And so, the relationships, proportions and values of each work of art are corrected in relation to the whole: this is the relationship of conformity between old and new. Anyone who shares this idea of order, of the form that is proper to European literature [read architecture], will not find it absurd that the past is modified by the present, just as the present is directed by the past.

The present can only find its guide in the past, *à-la* Faulkner<sup>37</sup>, and therefore in the heritage that history has handed down to us, if it is capable, *super humeros gigantes*, through architecture, of renewing it, again and again, as the ‘visible part of the future’.

## References

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<sup>37</sup> “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” W.C. Faulkner, *Requiem for a nun*, Random House, New York 1951.

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