



# The Necessity of Conservation and Restoration in Modern Axiological Approach to Historic Monuments

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**ABSTRACT:** Any monument that is deemed competent for conservation and restoration, is bringing the values of their creation time and then. Thus with any work which is conserved and restored, in fact, the culture and civilization is maintained. Because of the intrinsic link between “history” and “conservation”, it is necessary to reflect on related factors to the restoration, and the importance and necessity of it. When it comes to art and history, logical necessity requires the third factor; humans who formulate the subject and are the creator of art piece and history. Thus, the concern of this investigation is analyses of the cognitive value of history and the layering effect of these three factors interacting with each other. The method of the present study is the cognitive value analysis of historic monuments based on philosophical and logical arguments. In addition to these two categories, the historical values are also considered and then their relationship is discussed and evaluated. As much as the human considers an ontological and epistemological value for himself, he can consider it for others. The manner by which human comprehends his existential and noetic values, defines the way he understands the outside world and therefore the value position of history and the piece of art is confirmed. It must be understood what is the perception of people (either experts or ordinary ones) from themselves and their surroundings when they are standing in the courtyard of a historic mosque or in the area of an ancient city. As long as this question is not answered correctly, not even a step forward can be taken towards the understanding of the current conditions of architectural restoration and conservation.

**Keywords:** Axiology, Conservation and Restoration, Historic Monuments, Human, Value.

## INTRODUCTION

The question on the importance and necessity of conservation and restoration is in a way similar to asking why any piece of work (in its general sense) should be conserved and restored. Consequently, several other questions will arise like which monuments must be conserved and restored? Or what are the criteria to determine the need for restoration. Facing these questions, the concept of “value” (the value of a monument and how this was formed in individual and public awareness, etc.) comes to mind and it seems there is no way to answer all these questions but to understand what exactly the term “value” stands for.

In his book “The global viewpoint on architectural conservation”, Stubbs (2009, p. 34) has properly addressed the above-mentioned questions. In response to the question of which monument should be restored, that is one of the biggest architectural restoration challenges, he encounters the question of what is valuable and mentions that the professional practice of architectural restoration, has considered the concept of value as a special purpose which has been sought by generations of human. He then relates the necessity of conservation and restoration of a monument to what it really is (Idem, 51).

In the present paper, first the man’s place in history

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and then his awareness of this position is considered. Although there is an undeniable relation between these two, the study of each can be quite illustrative dealing with the afore mentioned questions. Then the relation between human and monuments is defined and finally, taking into account the relation of human with himself, the importance of human will be discussed.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of the present study is the cognitive value analysis of artistic pieces of work and historic monuments based on philosophical and logical arguments. The logic behind the discussions is comparative and the examples are presented for a better understanding.

The cognitive value analysis is in fact the philosophical study of values and it mostly investigates moral and aesthetic values. In the present article, in addition to these two categories, the historical values are also considered and then their relationship is discussed and evaluated.

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The subject of axiology was first raised in the 19th century by economists' theories on the value and production and then in philosophical contexts by Niche (Akbari & Hoseini, 2009, p. 98). In the field of cultural heritage, the Venice charter emphasizing on historical values and the guidelines of the world heritage convention in 1972 focusing on outstanding universal values, are considered as the first conservation documents (Salehi Sourmaghi, 2014, p. 29). Ayvazian (1997), in a study: "Conservation of the traditional architecture in contemporary architecture in Iran" has explained the values and principals of the traditional architecture and their applications in the contemporary architecture. In the article "Priorization of historic monuments based on their values" Mehdizadeh Seraj (2011) has introduced the hidden values in architectural heritage and intervention priorities based on their values.

## MAIN QUESTIONS

In this paper, the study of the concept of value against the historic monuments will lead to other questions in the lower layers. For instance:

- What is the relationship between human and others (including the surroundings, a monument, etc.)?
- What is the relation between human and his historical position?

Does the monument itself, regardless of the role

it plays on the understanding of the human's historical position, hold values? What is the relation between human and this valuable monument?

These types of questions and trying to respond to them are of great importance because they actually separate us from our prejudgments and our usual attitudes towards various issues which can illustrate different relations in the world under scrutiny.

## THE CONCEPT OF VALUE

The way of prioritizing the available values is probably the most important factor when considering the historic monuments. Priorities should first be defined by the requirements, then they are adjusted by beliefs and at the end they are realized regarding to the facilities (Hojjat, 2001, p. 101).

In the valuation process, theorists have been facing several issues and categories. For instance, Jokilehto puts forth the idea that the perception of the value of monuments is dependent on their validity and originality (Jokilehto, 2007, p. 322).

There are also a lot of different ideas concerning the valuation based on age. However, there is a consensus that the antiquity of monuments is one of the key factors in their value recognition. As Feilden says: "The older the work of art, the more valuable it is." (Feilden, 2003, p. ix)

"Value" is a complicated concept which is the consequence of human's awareness in history. Addressing the concept of value with all the meanings embedded in it will make us encounter several issues like the value of a monument itself, its value for us, and the value that we give to this piece of work and eventually, the human's value both as the creator and the audience of a monument. Actually, speaking of values and excluding human would be pointless. Human is the one who values, and this value can be addressed only in relation to the human.

When human faces the history of a work of art, there are three precious times. First, the time of the its birth. Second, the period between birth and the time we become aware of that work of art; and third, the moment when it strikes awareness like lightning (Brandt, 2008, p. 55). Therefore, when human communicates with a work of art he actually gives it a value. When connecting with the world of his time, human determines his historical value and social identity and when connects with the inner self, he puts himself in the place of absolute value.

The presence of human in a particular time and place and his relationship with the outside is an obvious issue which can lead to the understanding of some abovementioned discussions. Throughout the historical



presence (place and time) of human, he has achieved a beyond-historical awareness that has provided the possibility of relations with himself and his position. This relationship will necessarily be followed with a relationship with outside. This “outside” would mean someone else or the environment or the whole world, and based on the previous discussions in this study the focus will be on one monument. The man can never be regarded as unconnected with the outer world. It must be emphasized that the proposed relations are entangled and interdependent and the separation has been conducted only for the understanding of the problem and in the analysis level. In fact, this separation is rather impossible to be done.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN AND HIS HISTORICAL POSITION

The article entitled “The valuation principals of monuments and old building sets” has investigated different aspects of human awareness for two categories; the old and contemporary human. The author suggests that human, either old or contemporary, should rebuild its social identity using the samples and examples that are remaining from the past. The old human learnt this identity from his ancestors and the modern human, in order to convince his realistic mind, refers to the history which studies the cultural evolution and in this way builds the narrative of his existence and his world (Safamanesh & Monadizadeh, 2003, p. 33). The authors assume an identity for human that roots in the past. Here, the relation between human and his historical position is highlighted as an identity-giving relationship.

Jokilhto believes that current attention towards ancient heritage is due to the sense of historicity and romantic nostalgia in relation with the past. He identifies three areas in highlighting this trend: 1) Respecting to the symbolic past achievements, 2) Tendency towards learning lessons from previous and current experiences. 3) The resultant shock of the unconsidered changes in familiar places like destructing city monuments or exquisite artwork (Jokilehto, 2007, p. 1).

The “new feeling of historicity” is the historical identity which human pursues in relation with his historical position, the destruction of such identity will result in destroying a part of human’s identity. Such destruction would recklessly disrupt the formed relation between human and its historical position and would disturb him. Jokilhto and Filden also suggest that the widespread destruction of the world war and industrial development era in 50s has enhanced the importance

of the relationship between human and his surrounding environment. Destroying this relation will disassemble the cultural foundation and mental and spiritual quality of people’s lives. Consequently, the issue of reconstruction is known as the understanding the cultural heritage in the broadest sense which includes the signs of all human activities and achievements (Feilden & Jokilehto, 2003).

When Jokilhto sees the relation with past as an inseparable dimension of the current existing form, in fact, this is a part of the human’s historical position which is rooted in his past. A dimension which forms historical identity and demands the necessity of respecting it. It must be noticed that above items put the emphasis on the identity-making connection between human and his historical position. Although this relation is highly important, it does not cover all the aspects of human’s life and his beyond-historical awareness. However, Safamanesh and Monadizadeh have briefly discussed this issue and relate the differences between modern and old human to his relation with himself and the outside. But instead of analyzing these two in their place, they justify them by the relation between human and his historical position as follows: “Renaissance was when human changed his viewpoint on himself and his role in the environment; actually when the system of his values changed.” (Safamanesh & Monadizadeh, 2003, p. 39) They finally come to this conclusion that when human distances himself from his myths, his awareness and all the products of this awareness throughout history will become more valuable and worthy of respect. In their point of view, these works play a great role in connecting social man with his conscience and self-awareness. This can provide the restoration, sustaining and survival of the “quality of being a human” for the future (Idem, 32).

John Stubbs believes that a person’s sense of physical location and position in time is mainly based on his historical position, regardless of the building, the city or the country he is currently in. “The memorials, monuments and cultures of Italy, England, Egypt and China help every single person who knows these places to comprehend his location in time and place” (Stubbs, 2009, p. 3). However, this statement should actually be the opposite. In other words, the understanding of the historical time and place will draw one’s attention to the memorials and monuments. For instance, a person who lives in the vicinity of a historical set, based on his historical position pays a special attention to the set along with a sense of belonging. Also, residents of countries with ancient civilizations like Iran, Greece and Egypt, due to their time-place position, can have a perception of their countries archaeological remains.



Stubbs also says that in the absence of historical monuments which gives value to human's presence, the individual and social identity will somewhat lose their meanings (Idem, 40). The loss of human's relation with his historical place, which has appeared to him as identity-making, is one of the most important issues that modern human has encountered. Many consider this as the origin for sense of nostalgia and in another level, romanticism. Stubbs believes that rapid social changes and the influx of industrialization at the very end of the 18th century is the reason for and a milestone in creating this sense of nostalgia for the historical past (Idem, 57). He further mentions that "Since renaissance, a modern awareness about past and present has developed in western Europe" (Idem, 72). Furthermore, Michael Hunter thinks that today's restoration and conservation has its roots in three levels of awareness about past: 1- The difference between past and present, 2- The sense of identity and 3- The disappearance of the ancestors' heritage (Hunter, 1891, p. 23).

In all previous discussions, historic monuments were regarded as identity-making and were studied relative to the human and his historical position. The question which arises here is that "Does the monument, aside from the role it plays in defining the human's historical place, hold a value in itself?" and "What is the relation between human and the valuable monument?"

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN AND THE WORK OF ART**

There are many views and opinions about the relationship between human and a work of art through time. In Rigel's point of view, a work of art itself is not a message and therefore doesn't communicate with the viewer. Actually, it transfers a message. It's also not a physical phenomenon but an artistic modern value which its presence should also be found in human consciousness (Jokilehto, 2007, p. 237). In fact, many of the ancient architecture remains are firm stones over the stones. What makes them valuable is the description of why and how they were created and their survival. Therefore, one of the duties of inheritors is to understand the people who have constructed and conserved the monuments (Hojjat, 2001, p. 86).

Influenced by the art phenomenology, Cesare Brandi has scrutinized the relation between human and the artistic work (a reduction from the relation between human and his outside world), regardless of the historical place of human and the work of art. Facing the work of art, he suspends the historical world view which has somewhat

been affected by the historical position of human and the art piece and pays attention to the sheer truth of a work of art: "The monument never sees the truth unless in awareness". As a result, the monument distinguishes itself from the material object which brought it to this world (Brandi, 2008, p. 26).

He considers a spirit for the work of art which roots in human's awareness which takes place when human faces the monument regardless of its historicity and helpfulness. For further illustration he refers to John Dewey: "A work of art regardless of its age and how classic it is would be counted as a work of art in practice and not potentially artistic, when it is experienced individually." Through time, this work will remain what it has been so far, but as a piece of art, whenever is experienced aesthetically, it will be reborn" (Brandi, 2008 quoted from Dewey, 1934).

Through the above discussion, we can clearly notice the relation between human and the work of art in its most pure form. A relation which takes into account the "importance of aesthetics" and "artistic nature" relate to human. However, Brandi values the relation between human and his and the monument's historical position for deriving a principal for restoration.

It should not be neglected that a work of art has got a dual historical nature. The first aspect of this characteristic conforms to the action that has formed it; a creative action by an artist in a particular time and place. The second aspect is the result of its existence in individual awareness that relative to any time and place, will give it a historical image. The distance between the birth of a work of art and the historical present (which continuously moves forward), consists of several historical "present times" that form the past. Therefore, the piece of art will probably save some works of these levels (Brandi, 2008, pp. 61-68).

A return to Brandi's view of the piece of art and human's relation with it which was discussed before, will put forth another aspect of our initial question in which a work of art as a "product of the human spirit" and in relation with human's awareness beyond any specific time and place, becomes valuable. The potential value which can be taken into action with every new experience and this is why he turns to Kant's pure morals idealistic approach dealing with the piece of art. He believes that the required thought for the support of art pieces has its roots in an obligation which has been freely accepted. However, this obligation shouldn't be avoided and it's unbiased which means it can't be influenced by any factor.

It's from this perspective that he thinks art belongs to humanity while it is valuable and respected. The value focused on everything that exists outside the



human, considers human to be the creator of it. This assumption has been accepted as well as sometimes been ignored. Here arises another important question: what is the relation between human and himself? Human that comprehends his historical identity and is the creator of a piece of art.

## THE HUMAN'S RELATION WITH HIMSELF

At this stage dealing with the above issue is inevitable. A relation which has been assumed according to Brandie, when he says "art belongs to human" or speaks of art to be a "product of the human spirit". When humanity or the human spirit is discussed and the purpose is to understand the relation between human and himself, in fact we are challenged in another dimension of the universe – perhaps its most fundamental layer.

Moritz Geiger one of Edmund Husserl colleagues who studies the aesthetic psychology, questions the aesthetic pleasure: This pleasure is individual-centered and its authentication is proactive and it is centered on "I/Me" and not in objects. Therefore, the aesthetic pleasure is not related to the body and the pleasure that is experienced by the senses. The aesthetic pleasure is deeply dependent on the extent of human awareness (Khatami, 2007, p. 24). Also, John Piper focuses on pleasure in the study of aesthetic value. Furthermore, by rejecting any relativism in the field of aesthetics, Michael De Franc discusses this issue. He believes that experiencing aesthetics is of the viewer and not its creator's because in his point of view, the experience of the audience of a piece of art will lead to the understanding of it. The creator of the piece of art has only an inner perception and sense that is in nature based on the personal psychology of that artist (Idem, 30). Therefore, according to Geiger and De Franc, the attention towards the relation between human and himself becomes significant. The center or the viewer in fact denotes the importance of human- An importance which puts human in the position of value. The correct understanding of this relation, in a broader level, will cover the relation between human and his historical place and also the outside world.

There is departure point in the study of the relation between human and himself by which the segregation between tradition and modernity can be fundamentally understood (Mohammadmoradi, 2002, p. 2). The value position in tradition originates from a sacred, supernatural or mythological matter, something that precedes human and involves him while in order to find the value, the

traditional human will ultimately appeals to it. On the contrary, modernity views the human's value position only in his nature, rationality, understanding and sense (Tabatabaee, 2003, p. 26). The modern human finds an initial dignity and value in himself. This is not permanent; it exists inexhaustibly and dynamically in the universe (Berman, 2007, p. 43). The quest for this value leads to the modern human's curiosity.

All the experts in the field of restoration and all the ordinary people are in modern human condition. That is why the architectural modern conservation is not just the elites' concern, but due to the importance of past and a sense of belonging to it, a large group of people are in pursuit of conservation (Stubbs, 2009, p. 27).

## DISCUSSION

All the introduce references in the research background section and the ones related to the value and valuation of cultural heritage have one thing in common: all of them believe that the values of cultural heritage (aesthetic value, historical value, applied value, economic value, structural value, architectural value and exclusive value), are intrinsic values which are embedded in the piece of art and have somehow ignored the human's place in valuation and axiology. The present article is different from the previous studies because it puts the human in the value position by human's relations with himself and external factors (the piece of art, its historical place, and the outside world). In this way, it pursues the necessity of restoration and conservation not in the subject itself but in people who give this subject a meaning. As a result, the importance and necessity of conservation and restoration is first a human necessity and from the axiological viewpoint, the other aspects will be formed following this necessity.

## CONCLUSIONS

In order to illustrate the importance and necessity of restoration and conservation, three relations were discussed. First, the relation between human and his historical position in which history would act as an identity-making element for the human who is in the value position. Second, the relation between human and the piece of art which is itself in the aesthetic value position and third, is the relation between human and himself where human is considered as the creator and audience of the piece of art and history is of great value. This trilogy of history, piece of art and human are entangled and interconnected layers of the restoration and conservation



issue that define each of the value and existence layers in this field (Fig. 1). Any kind of invasion, aggression and encroachment toward these value layers, will challenge the value system of human and the modern world. Therefore, the importance and necessity of restoration and conservation becomes more obvious and obligatory.

Hence, because of its value roots and necessity, the restoration should be based on value recognition. This value can be in the human's historical place which manifests itself in the national identity, ethnic identity, the human heritage, etc.; or in the piece of art itself, either from the aspect of aesthetics and originality or its conceptual relation with different people; or in human himself. As much as the human considers an ontological and epistemological value for himself, he can consider it for others. The manner by which human comprehends his existential and noetic values, defines the way he understands the outside world and therefore the value

position of history and the piece of art is confirmed.

Perhaps, the abovementioned discussions may sound rather abstract or that they don't explain the current condition of conservation and restoration in Iran or they can't bring any new method to improve it. But it must be mentioned that as long as these issues are not addressed and the value position of human (which can be reflected in one person, people in a city or a country), that of monuments and also of the time they were built up to now are not studied, the conditions cannot be illustrated. It must be understood what the perception of people (either experts or ordinary ones) from themselves and their surroundings when they are standing in the courtyard of a historic mosque or in the area of an ancient city, really is. As long as this question is not answered correctly, not even a step forward can be taken towards the understanding of the current conditions of architectural restoration and conservation in Iran.

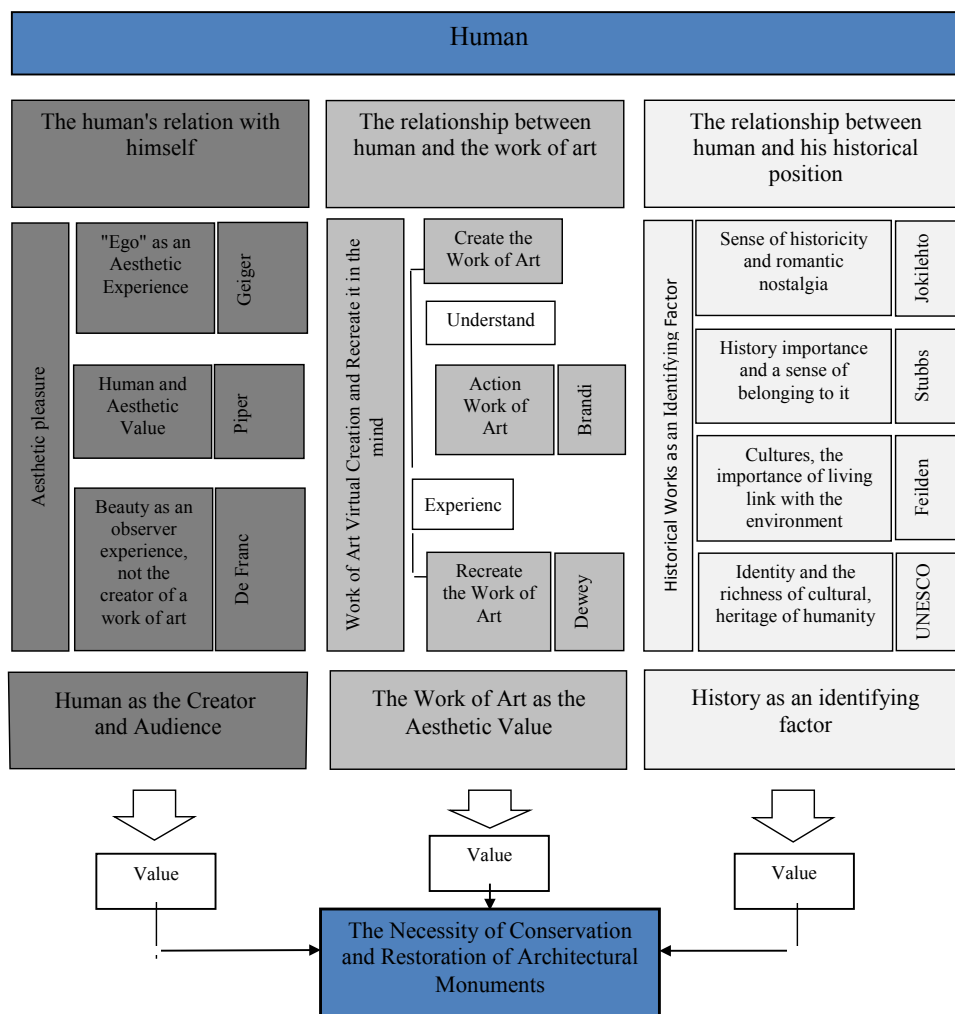


Fig. 1. The Value and Existence Layers in this Field (Human, History and Work Art)



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