

The subject of this dissertation Prehistoric Culture and Birth of Human Imagination is an interdisciplinary analysis of creation, evolution and interpretation of prehistoric art. The work aspires to establish a new academic discipline temporarily referred to as “prehistoric art” as well as embracing the genesis of human creativity and imagination from the point of view of human sciences.

The first part of the dissertation focuses on the phenomenon of so-called proto-art, i.e. non-utilitary artefacts created by hominidae in the Lower and Middle Paleolithic. That is why these artefacts are the subject of many scientific controversies concerning the issue of genesis of symbolic manifestations of human behaviour. In this context, paintings and drawings done by apes are analysed; some scientists believe they prove that no boundary line can be set between the man and other apes. This might be the reason why works of parietal Upper Paleolithic are considered to be the pivotal proof of genesis of human creativity. However, these works were questioned and criticised for their prehistoric authenticity at the end of the 19th century. The effort to understand the purpose and meaning of prehistoric artefacts is documented in a chapter discussing the history of interpretation, theories and hypotheses formulated on the topic of the origin of human creativity and art. The fact that symbolic manifestations of behaviour are linked to the material basis of culture is documented by another part of this work dedicated to everyday life of prehistoric hunters and gatherers seen through the perspective of their ability to survive in strenuous ecologic conditions.