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The design of archaic Korinth: the question of a beginning and an interpretive archaeology

This chapter deals with the interests which lie behind the book, the issue of where to begin, the object of interest (the design of archaic Korinth), how this may be understood (the methods of interpretive archaeology), and finally a sketch is made of some directions to be taken from the starting point adopted - a single perfume jar from the early seventh century BC.

Interests and discourse

Korinth and its material culture in the eighth and seventh centuries BC - why have I chosen to research and write upon this topic? Any answer to such a question must deal with interest and discourse.

The topic is at the margins of several (sub) disciplines and historical themes and narratives. There is the art history of orientalising style, first appearing in Korinth fully fledged within a generation at the end of the eighth century. The characteristic black figure incision was taken up in Athenian and Attic potteries, forming the basis of fine classical ceramics found in art museums the world over (see Cook 1972). Iconographers take up the figured designs as illustrations of myth and narrative (for example Fittschen 1969). In classical archaeology this style 'protokorinthian', with its distinctive aryballoi, is the basis for the relative and absolute chronologies of the century in most of the Mediterranean (after Payne 1931). An ancient historical interest lies in the emergence of the polis and the tyranny and social revolution in the middle of the seventh century (Salmon 1984 for Korinth).

These disciplines have become the subject of significant change of outlook, with new anthropologically informed approaches in ancient history and classical studies, critical approaches to early literatures, new social archaeologies and iconologies, art histories too, breaking the mould of the last two centuries. Detailed reference will be made to these later; here and for orientation, I cite discussion in my book *Classical Archaeology of Greece* (Shanks 1996a). This interdiscipliniarity makes of archaic Korinth a rich topic.

These are the interests of discourse. However, my interests do not lie in the fulfilment of any obligations or rites of passage in these disciplines (such as the filling of lacunae in empirical knowledge of the past). My interest is in the *constitution of an object,* how Korinth and its material culture, particularly its pottery, came and comes to be what it is. I consider early archaic Korinth as an artifact, in two senses. First, the material culture, the archaeological sources: presented is an interpretation of their

design. In so doing it is necessary to consider style and design generally - a theory of design. Second it is considered how this Korinthian past itself is and may be designed - the category 'archaic Korinth' is treated as artifact. Hence this study is between disciplines, somewhat meta-disciplinary. There is also here a symmetry between past and present about which there will be more below.

A premise is that an artifact is always and necessarily an object of discourse. I do not mean by this a stronger (idealist) sense of the material past being created by the discourse of the present. I refer to the (unexceptional) argument that while the raw materiality of a Korinthian pot may have been given shape some time ago, and in this way be considered to *belong* to the past, the same pot can only be known, understood and described through discourses which are of the present. Its raw substance is meaningless. A Korinthian pot, any artifact, cannot exist for us without interest, even desire, sets of assumptions, categories valued, without questions and answers con- sidered meaningful, forms of expression. Discourse (as a shorthand term for such a nexus) is a mode of production of the past; hence I refer to 'archaic Korinth' as artifact.

In foregrounding the constitution of the past in the present, a substantial part of this book is a presentation of what can be called an interpretive encounter with the material culture of Korinth and what it touches. I conceive this as the construction or crafting of an interpretation and understanding which can only be said to lie *between* past and present; the past is no more 'discovered' than its empirical form is invented (such 'constructivist' thought is dealt with below). Again, within the interstices.

I have described this awareness of the contemporary location of interpretation as unexceptional; why is it therefore necessary to raise the issues? Because the implica- tions are beginning to re-emerge in classical studies. I have worked in the theory and philosophy of material culture, archaeological methodology, prehistory and modern material culture studies. The contrast between these, with their disciplinary intro- spection of the last two decades, and the discourse of early Hellenic studies is a sharp and fascinating one. The weight of classical discourse has obfuscated and acted against considering the constitution of the empirical object of study; it is already there, built by decades of research (Morris 1994). The sheer weight of remains stored in museums is there, *a posteriori,* the empirical past to be known, discovered. I anticipate eagerly the changes sweeping the field and alluded to above; this study, and its accompaniment (Shanks 1996a) will, I hope, contribute to the fervent debate (see also Dyson 1989, 1993; Fotiadis 1995; Morris 1994).

The question of a beginning and a problem of method
Thus my approach is an oblique one and rooted in personal circumstance. I have this topic, archaic Korinth, and a set of interests. But where do I begin? The introduction *here* of the personal may seem inappropriate because there are well-established methodologies and research strategies to follow, but I begin with a worry concerning the idea of methodology - that there can be independent and *a priori* specification of how to approach and deal with an empirical encounter. Essentially, the worry originates in an argument that methodology defines the object of study in advance.

To approach an empirical situation with a general method requires that the empirical is to fit the method. This assumes that the objects of archaeological study all have something in common, and this is what the archaeologist is interested in; idiosyncrasy or the particular is secondary. Is this reasonable?

The immediate context of this issue is the argument presented by myself and Tilley (1992: esp. Chapters 2 and 3) against what we termed 'positivist' archaeology, the scientific movement in archaeology, associated with new and processual archaeologies, which has proposed an independent and supposedly neutral way of building archaeological knowledge, one usually meant to be modelled upon the natural sciences. The classic opposition to such a primacy of method came from critical theory (see particularly the collection *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (Adorno *et al.* 1976); and within, Adorno 1976a, 1976b; Habermas 1976; also Pollock 1976; more generally, Arato and Gebhardt 1978: Section 3). The matter is succinctly put in pointing out that method is indeed simply the act of questioning and no method can accordingly yield information that it does not ask for (through its very formulation). It should be acknowledged that method is best conceived as resting not upon methodological ideals, something which would entail a metaphysics of method, but upon the object world itself. A key question is therefore how to ensure an open encounter with an object of interest. So while method may be more or less flexible, I wish to raise the idea that method may also and alternatively be conceived as arising out of the empirical encounter, and not be the means whereby the empirical encounter is made. This is also, *afortiori,* to reject an empiricist notion that there need be no method, only descriptive sensitivity.

An aryballos from Korinth: the beginning of an approach

I asked - is it reasonable to elide individual traits and categories of method? The word reasonable contains reference to both rationality and ethics. So consider now the past, the object of interest, as a partner in a dialogue, with method as encounter. Is it not reasonable to approach a meeting or encounter with an openness to possibility, an acceptance of fallibility? We reason in conversation, moving from initial statements towards a consensus (of sorts) which is better conceived here as being more than the sum of the initial positions. The Hegelian term *Aufhebung,* 'sublation' - cancellation and preservation - captures this movement. Reasoning here is not some absolute for which we can formulate rules and procedures (methodology). Method can impose unnecessary and possibly damaging constraints, preventing a recognition of the partner in the desire to follow the rules. Rationality is best conceived as a recognition of partiality; and an encounter depends in its nature on being open. Dialogue requires tact and judgement - these are ethically *reasonable.* I wish to explore this idea of methodological dialogue.

Essentially this is to propose learning the lessons of hermeneutics (for archaeology Shanks and Tilley 1992: Chapter 5; Johansen and Olsen 1992; Preucel 1991; Shanks and Hodder 1995). A topic is approached with interest and prejudgement (prejudice) and a dialogue followed of question and response, a spiral of interpretation of answers given to questions posed which draws the relationship forward. Details of a

critical hermeneutics are less important here (for which see above and also Bleicher 1980, 1982; Ricoeur 1981; Warnke 1987) than pointing out some aspects of this metaphor of dialogue applied to the material past (discussion also in Shanks 1992b *passim,* 1994). It may appear absurd to hold that the material past, inert and dead, could be conceived to partake in anything like a dialogue. But it is quite feasible to treat the results of scientific experiment as a response to hypotheses posed; problem orientation, involving questions and answers is a major feature of the scientific method of processual archaeology (Binford 1972, 1983; Watson, LeBlanc and Redman 1971). But, as I have maintained, dialogue entails an ethics of relationship and respect which goes beyond such methodological rules. What I wish to stress is a need to be sensitive to the independence of the material past, for this is the basis of critique of the present.

So rather than beginning with a methodology, I begin more simply and empiri-cally, with a Korinthian pot (Fig. 1.1), its character (as pottery), and, of course, its insertion in various discourses, the things that have been said and written about it.

Design in the material world: understanding an artifact

There now follows a discussion of artifacts and style, design and interpretation. The aim is to consider the character of archaeological sources and what may be made of them.

What is illustrated in Fig. 1.1? It appears upon a shelf in a museum of 'fine art' (Boston, Massachusetts). It is small, 7.5 centimetres high, and carries upon its surface two friezes of finely drawn animals, birds and human figures. With the size and shape, the hard, smooth, pale clay fabric, the incised and painted decoration, its subject matter and style indicate that the pot is Korinthian and of the seventh century BC. Specifically it is of the art style or industry proto-korinthian, so named because it prefigures *ripe* Korinthian of the late seventh century and after. The depicted monster, stand with bowl, animals and floral ornament mark it distinctively as orientalising, making reference to eastern design. It has been attributed by Dunbabin and Robertson (1953:176), Amyx (1988:23-4) and Benson (1989:44) to the so-called 'Ajax Painter', on the basis, mainly, of style of figuration and subject matter. Such attribution allows fine-grained dating (according to estimates of rates of stylistic change between fixed points supplied by stratigraphical associations in dated colonial foundations). The scene is considered to illustrate either Zeus and Typhon, Zeus and Kronos, or Zeus and a centaur (discussion: Fittschen 1969:113-14,119f; Shanks 1992a: 18-20). The Ajax Painter is so named (since, at the latest, Johansen 1923:144) because a scene reckoned to be of the death of Ajax appears upon another aryballos in Berlin's Pergamonmuseum (inventory 3319; Amyx 1988: 23). This 'artist' is considered to have produced key pieces in the evolution of protokorinthian style. The violence of the scene certainly seems to invoke an heroic ethos characteristic of dark age and archaic Greek figurative design (for example, Boardman 1983:23-33; Snodgrass 1980a: 65-78,1980b, 1987: 158-69) further discussion Chapter 3, Part 1).

The shape and size mark the pot as what is conventionally termed an aryballos, an oil jar. The small size of such aryballoi means that they held only little oil. It may be
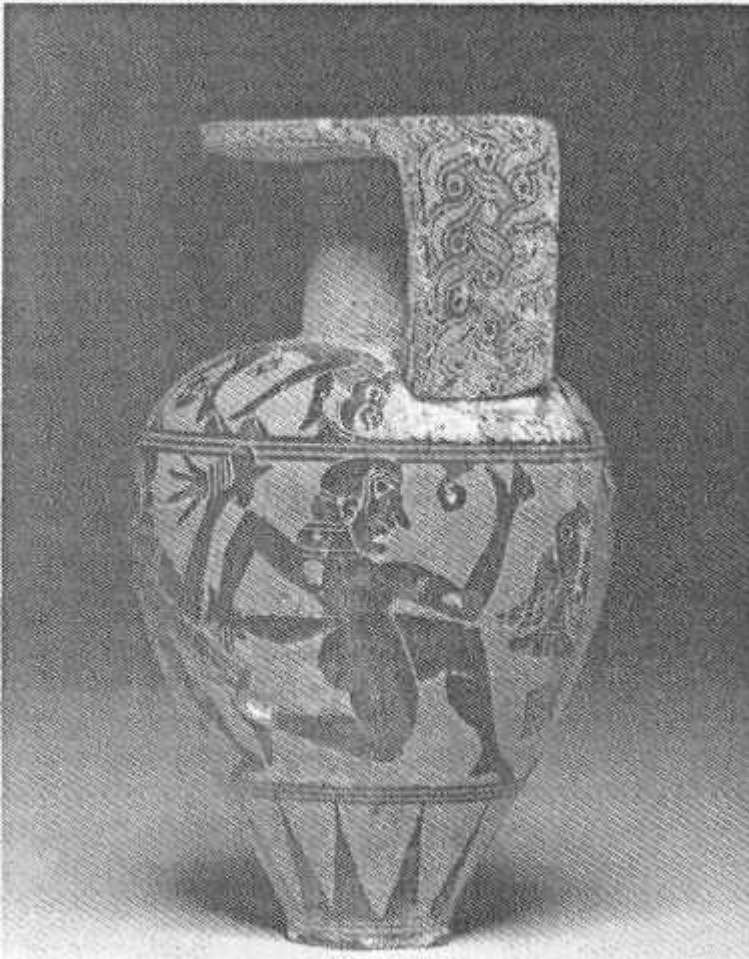
Figure 1.1 An aryballos in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Numbered 95.12. Recorded as from Korinth. Catharine Page Perkins Collection.

supposed therefore that the oil was special, expensive, or rare, probably perfumed. This was a perfume jar for full discussion see pp. 172-5, in Chapter Four. Mention has already been made of the context of trade/export of such wares from an early city state to colonies abroad.

In answer to the question of what the pot is, conventional discourse produces such a description. This is quite valid, but in a limited way. Here I wish to delve behind such description into the assumptions made concerning the interpretation of material culture. Specifically the following will be discussed:

particularity and its relationship to classification;
the motivation of style (why potters make in certain ways and not others);
materiality (acted upon by potters);

social structure and its influences on production;
style itself and how the concept is best conceived and used;
temporality, that the pot survives to be interpreted by contemporary scholars.

I begin by identifying some questions.

Particularity
Traditional classical archaeology seems to focus on the particularity of this aryballos, attributing it to a style, identifying its date to within a decade through stylistic comparison, appreciating its relation to the development of style, recognising its subject matter, and even the mark of its maker. However, in all of this the pot is subsumed beneath some thing other than itself: it requires relating to chronology, style and artisan's workshop, and the sense of its figured decoration is found in the body of Greek myth. Though the terms of close description, both analytic and evaluative, seem to represent direct and intimate contact, not merely empirical but also affective and aesthetic, the aryballos is epiphenomenon. It *represents* some thing else, which is often general and abstract.

Also those approaches to style which would place the pottery in social or cultural context (of trade and export, or ideologies, for example) can make the particular artifact as epiphenomenal. Artifacts are taken to *signify* cultural belonging (Korinthian or Greek); pots are considered as *representing* social interaction (trade and colonisation); style is *explained* by its social function, expressing the heroic or epic temper of contemporary society. The artifact becomes a by-product of social practice or cultural outlook. The primary determining forces are style, artist, culture, society; the artifact expresses, reflects, signifies, or engages with the 'something else' which gives it significance or meaning.

This is an observation that is valid of many archaeological treatments of material culture, and indeed those found in cognate disciplines. Here are some examples from classical archaeology (more generally see Conkey 1990; Hodder 1991).

Artifacts may be conceived as signifiers, carrying meanings, belonging not singly to an artifact, but inhering within sets of signifying artifacts, structures of difference (for example Hoffman's structuralist analysis of Attic askoi, 1977).

Artifacts may be conceived as a surface upon which is written a cultural (or other) text. The many iconological studies of black and red figure illustration, seeking mythological or political meaning, may be referenced here (for example, the work of Schefold on Greek art generally, 1966 and 1992).

Artifacts may be conceived as icons, carrying a particular meaning. This may be date or ethnicity (for example Coldstream on Geometric pottery, 1968 and 1983). Boardman (1983: 15-24) has interpreted elements of geometric pottery from Argos as icons of the city and its people (images of horses, fish, water and water-birds).

Patterns of artifacts may be held to reflect social practices, interactions or social structures. Whitley (1991b) has related differences in Geometric pottery style and the use of pots to social class in Athens. Morgan and Whitelaw (1991) have

explained variability in the decoration of pottery found in settlements of the plain of Argos in terms of changing political relationships, with pottery conceived as an index of interaction.

None of these conceptions is exclusive of the others.

I am asking whether the relation between this particular aryballos and that other which is to give it meaning (date, style, social structure) is necessarily one of representation. Let me move on with a simple, perhaps naive, question. Can the particular pot only be understood through the general (categories of description, whatever is conceived as going beyond the artifact)? Consider the role of the interpreter.

The role of the interpreter

Close empirical description, definition of attributes and consequent classification would seem to belong with the artifact itself. They do not. They are but a gloss upon it. Description necessarily derives from operations carried out upon the pot. These operations to achieve description, such as measurement or optical scrutiny, are the interpreter's own and not of the pot itself, as are the terms and language of description, the purposes of classification. For the most part this is all taken not to matter. How can these things not be as they are? - they are the condition of any interpretation. Quite. But the question of the artifact remains: what is beneath the descriptive attribute?

There is an associated hermeneutic problem: is explanation and interpretation of the artifact in Figure 1.1 to be in the terms of its maker and their times, or in those of the interpreter? Is a mix possible or a problem? Beard (1991) has provided a programmatic call for an empathetic approach to Greek vase-painting understanding in terms of the viewer. Should the terms of explanation be neutral and not specific to an historical context? The distinction, in an awkward anthropological terminology, is that between 'emic' and 'etic' (Harris 1968, 1977; also Melas 1989), between empathy and objectivism (Wylie 1989a, 1989b, 1991). This is the old debate about forms of explanation or understanding appropriate to the humanities and social sciences with their historical and cultural objects of interest, and whether they should be distinct from the physical and natural sciences (Hollis 1977; von Wright 1971; see also comments and references to the dispute over positivism mentioned on page 11).

Society and the motivation of style

To hold that the artifact's style represents something else implies that whatever is represented exists somehow prior to the pot. (Analogous argument is about the possibility of pictorial or iconic *illustration* of, for example, a person upon a pot's surface.) Possible corollaries of such a function of expression are that society exists prior to the pot, that there is a realm of 'real' society and a subordinate field of representation. What people do is separated from what they make or draw. 'Real' people and their 'real' social relations come first. Perhaps style is held to represent social structure (as in the idea of a status symbol). But where is this structure? Is it the

logic of what people do? Does it exist in the mind of the potter? The potter creates the artifact and the pot signifies their unconscious social structures?

The relationship is between the pot and some 'other'- its maker, and/or that which it signifies. Separated are fields of contingency and determinacy- the unreal and real, the dependent and the determinate. How are these *to* be distinguished? Is a pot less real than a thought? Style and culture are identified with the potter, the social subject, in that their meaning is to be found there. Or style and culture are conceived as descriptive, a set of attributes, a collection of types of object: culture and style are identified with the object. Mysteries remain of the meaning and genesis of materiality (the real), and of the meaning and origin of society and its structure. These often somehow exist prior to the potter and the pot. Where do they come from?

I have marked a distinction between the particular artifact and general categories to which it is referred. Why do people make the particular pots they do? This is a question of the motivation of style, or more abstractly, the variability of variability. How do social forces or structures impose upon the action of the potter? If style or society achieve expression in the artifact, how does this work through the individual potter, through the potter's particular encounter with clay? How does art style, such as protokorinthian, reveal itself in the act of the potter? Four sources of motivation may be invoked:

  the mind of the potter (unconscious or conscious);
  time or temporality (history, the weight of tradition, future destiny);
  social structure (the force of the norm);
  nature or the environment (determining social responses).

The individual potter may be conceived as being socialised, receiving the rules, values, dispositions of 'society' as they grow into their society; these then appear in the things made by the potter. More actively, the Ajax Painter is conceived as struggling creatively with the depiction of action and event in a painting upon a pot, struggling to change the traditions and conventions of ceramic art, pushing style forward (Benson 1995: 163-6). The issue is that of agency, the power of the individual to act and change, and the degree to which this is regulated, curtailed, determined (Anderson 1980: Last 1995: 148-53). The conventional choices are between

  voluntarism (the power of the agent's will);
  idealism (the primacy of the cognitive, of the intellect, or of abstract principles);
  determinism (a primacy of society or the environment).

(For further discussion see Shanks and Tilley 1992: 119-29; Giddens 1984; Hollis 1977).

Temporality

When the artifact is considered as representative, referring to something else, analysis of style becomes a search for pattern (which represents), or involves a symptomatic logic, finding *traces* of that other which is desired - the person of the maker, the

artistic hand, the date, the society. It is a desire for that other which, in fact, can never now be had - the dead and lost artisan, the society no more. There are considered absent origins to which the artifact must be referred to achieve meaning. Time has passed; the person is torn away. In filling this absence, the pot is referred to that which is desired by the interpreting archaeologist. The desire is here given shape by our discourse; date, mark of maker, society are required. The pot duly delivers, but is this not possibly on condition of its loss, a loss often disguised by an assertion of explanatory scope, by the text or subjective self of the archaeologist or connoisseur? The terms of classification and aesthetic apperception which claim communion with the past, intimate knowledge, have their source in the discourse and sensibilities of the archaeologist.

I have indicated that if the pot is treated as a relay or device to get the interpreting present to something else, there is a need to explain the materiality of the pot. A related question concerns time or temporality (Shanks 1992c). If the meaning of the pot is found in some thing else (myth, the mind of potter, society), and in some thing else *then* in the seventh century BC, what becomes of the pot *now ?* The thing remains, the aryballos in the museum case, worn, scratched, surviving in its materiality, its particularity. What becomes of this material resistance to the death, loss and decay which have overtaken so much to which it apparently refers?

These are not questions incidental to interpretation, for they concern the character of archaeological sources.

What is this pot? - the fallacy of representation

What is this artifact in Figure 1.1? My response has been to unpack the question. Issues of style and design, interpretation and temporality have been shown to involve relationships between the following: the particular and the general; potter and artifact; individuals and their society; agency and social structure; empathy and indifference or objectivity. Artifacts are clearly about their social contexts of production and use; they carry meanings, help create meanings. It is quite legitimate that these may appear in archaeological accounts through reference to social structures and the agency of makers and users, through analytical stance or aesthetic response. However, I have outlined at length a series of issues which need careful resolution. It is important to be clear about what it is that we are trying to understand - archaeological sources, material cultural remains. Failure to do so can lead to the problems, unresolved questions and conceptual dead ends of what I term *a fallacy of representation,* which is to hold that artifacts somehow represent what discourse desires to discover - past artists and artisans, their societies and cultures.

The intellectual contexts of this concept are varied and complex. There is the wide philosophical problem of representation which took a particular, and for the position I adopt here influential, turn in western Marxist debates about modernist aesthetics, the relation of cultural production to society more generally (Bloch *et al* 1977; Lunn 1985). Mention should be made of poststructuralist critiques of *logocentrism,* the notion that meaning and reference can be anchored to some fixed point or principle *(logos),* some primary and underlying order such as reason or 'reality', with language,

meaning and the 'real world' following a traditional order of priorities, from reality through secondary perception by mind, expression in speech and representation in written signs or figures (Derrida 1974; Leitch 1983; Ryan 1982 on links with Marxism relevant to discussion here; for archaeology Yates 1990). Photographer and critic Victor Burgin (1982) has presented the argument for a fallacy of representation in relation to photography, making a stand against a reification or fetishisation of the photographic image (as somehow objective representation with a privileged relation to 'reality') and for an emphasis on the practice that constitutes photographic objects - photowork. This closely connects with the position taken here.

Social structure and design: the primacy of production

Let me now deal directly with the questions I have raised. To avoid the intractable separation of the real and the represented I suggest that (material) culture be accepted as *production* or *design.* 'Works of art' are works indeed, and not self-contained or transcendent entities, but products of specific historical practices (Shanks and Tilley 1992: esp. 146-55).

The pot is *both* signifier and signified. An artifact operates in both ways. The pot is both of the potter and their society, and is also of the social object environment within which the potter works. The pot, maker, society and other contexts cannot be separated because they exist together in the act of production. The pot *is* the act of (raw) material taken and transformed, expression of potter (more or less), and an object of culture and style which opposes the potter who made it, those who take and use it. The artifact as signifier and signified is the creation of a social form, and then its distribution/exchange, and consumption, Consumption refers to both simple use of an artifact, and also the use of the object world to create other cultural artifacts: aryballoi were taken from Korinth to be placed in sanctuaries and cemeteries, helping to create the artifact of religious devotion, the experience of travel and burial in an early colony. Nor does it end with discard from a temple or deposition in the ground: the aryballos was collected and sold in the nineteenth century, has come to signify so much through the practices of discourse and metanarrative. I will say more of this *continuity* below,

Concomitantly, the style of an artifact is not an expression or an attribute. Style is the means by which objects are constituted as social forms. Style is the *mode* of transformation of material into social form, the way that a social group constructs its social reality; it is the way something is done (Hodder 1990). Styles, genres, rules of design and aesthetic codes are always already established, confronting the artist-worker, and so delimiting and constraining the modes in which style may appear. Style is thus situated practice, and the worker-artist is the locus where technological, stylistic and social propriety are interpreted in the production of ideas and other cultural artifacts. Nor is culture an assemblage of objects or things done: culture is a *process* of constructing identity and values.

Just as the artifact cannot be separated from its mode of production, the potter cannot be separated from their object environment (the world of things produced). There is no *a priori* 'potter subject' who acts in society. The primacy of production

involves a dialectic between potter and pot, social subject and object world. Neither are separable unities. They exist in their process of transformation or becoming: the potter becoming subject self in their (social) practice; the pot becoming what it is in (life)cycles of production, exchange and consumption.

The refusal to separate real and represented on the grounds that the signifying pot is a material form as much as it is representing means an artifact is as much a social actor or agent as its maker (for analogous argument: Callon 1986; Latour 1988b; Law 1987, 1991). This is the argument for active material culture. Artifacts help to form the society and makers who produced and consume them.

Asserting the primacy of production is simply saying that people, pot and society have to be made; they are not 'given'. So there is no context (such as society), or subject of history (such as individual artist) which is necessary, can be pre-defined, and which may be conceived as supplying meaning and significance to the pot (arguing to the same end but from different premises, Bapty and Yates 1990: passim).

This is to deny the absolute reality of 'society' as *sui generis.* Society and social relationships do not exist in-themselves, as detached realities. I am happy here to follow Marx's appropriation of Hegel in arguing that society is in a continuous process of self-creation through people producing, making or attaching themselves to forms outside themselves (see Oilman's reading 1977). This is objedification and self-alienation: people making things which appear then as objects and forms separate from them. These productions may achieve various degrees of autonomy from the people who made them (alienation may be rupture, estrangement and reification), but the consumption, use and re appropriation of things produced is the condition of history: people eat food produced, use languages and live with institutions, use pots and live with their imagery. The process of reappropriation and consumption may remain incomplete as people can fail to overcome the alienation and estrangement of those objects and forms which remain autonomous and even determining forces. This is one of the operations of ideology. For example, an artifact can become a commodity part of an abstract(ed) order with separate logic and values opposing the individual. But the full process is one of *sublation,* taking those external forms back within oneself (the meaning of consumption) in further cultural production: artifacts, ideas, institutions are the basis of further construction of society and culture. And such sublation recognises that these things and forms consumed retain their identity and difference; they are not simple reflections of people's wishes, aims, purposes and thoughts, but have material, logical and temporal/historical autonomy.

The full implications of *sublation* for an understanding of the social construction of reality are brought out by Miller in his *book Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987). In Hegelian terms society is created through its own *negation,* as the object created by people stands opposite and alienated. In consumption, far from being simply a commodity consumed (a principle and experience which dominates today)[3] the object 'confronts, criticises and finally may subjugate those abstractions in a process of human becoming'. That is, the commodity is product and symbol of abstract structures which deny people's creative involvement in production, and the

object of consumption is, in contrast, a negation of the commodity *(ibid.:* 191-2). *Sublation* is argued as being 'the movement by which society reappropriates its own external form - that is, assimilates its own culture and uses it to develop itself as a social subject' *(ibid.:* 17). This enables Miller to write that the full process of objectification (the social subject projecting into the world) is one where the subject becomes at home with itself in its otherness.

Social structure, in such a position adopted here, is not a determinate given, but comes to be in people's practice. Social structure is both medium and outcome of people's practice; it is the condition whereby people can act, but only exists in those acts. This 'duality of structure' is central to what Giddens terms the process of structuration (Cloke 1991; Giddens 1984; Thompson 1989; for archaeology: Barrett 1988). In lacking any definable essence, and in coming to be only in particular acts, structure is not like a rule book or legal or ritual code, giving precise directions as to what people must do. Structure is better thought of as disposition and propriety! a sense of normative order; it provides a basis for the acting out of people's plans and social strategies according to their perspectives, interests and powers. Structure is a sense or feeling that something is 'right'; it is about feeling, comfort, *taste* (Miller 1987: 103f, after Bourdieu 1977, 1984; further discussion for archaeology: Shanks and Tilley 1987, 1992).

I suggest that structure in this sense has a great deal of obvious relevance to the understanding of artifact design. Material artifacts are not easily analysed as having fixed rules of use and meaning, as in a language. The object world 'does not lend itself to the earlier analyses of symbolism which identified distinct abstract signifiers and concrete signifieds, since it simultaneously operates at both levels. It cannot be broken up as though into grammatical sub-units, and as such it appears to have a particularly close relation to emotions, feelings and basic orientations to the world' (Miller 1987: 107). Just as structure is to do with feeling and sense of 'right', providing an environment of propriety) so too artifact design, transformation of material, is a lot to do with taste, choice of what is conceived appropriate - a central point made by designer David Pye (1978). The object world is constructed and manipulated around flexible feelings or dispositions to do with things appearing appropriate and proper, tasteful and becoming. Of course, these may be deliberately flouted in strategies of opposition, but they then still act as points of reference. Objects and artifacts provide an environment for action, frameworks which give cues as to what is right and appropriate to do; they can literally be a structure or medium and outcome of action (Miller 1987: 100-1; Giddens 1984: 73-92; Goffman 1975). This is a field permeated by uncertainty and interpretation. Technical manuals for artifact design are, like legal and ritual codes, formalised custom and taste, and may provide secure routes through interpretive uncertainty and choice. The connection between social structure, design, and indeed history, or any cultural artifact is, of course, not coincidental; all are cultural production.

This primacy of production thus also assumes a continuity to the artifact form (and indeed to social agents), from a material artifact such as this aryballos to

something as conventionally immaterial as the *experience* of travel implied in the shipping of aryballoi out to the margins of a seventh-century Greek world. Both aryballos and experience are artifacts. This is because production is less about *being than becoming.*

A note on ideology

The potter/painter of this aryballos in Figure 1.1 has followed traditional manufacture and then painted a scene of violent encounter which may be interpreted as part of a new expression of an heroic ethos, an ideological system closely allied to the interests of an archaic aristocracy. The concept of ideology is vital, I argue, in understanding this interpretive act, when the worker takes material, propriety and taste, interest and purpose, and makes something else of them. For the artifact enfolds the interests and interpretive decisions of those who made it, and these may be ideological, bolstering inequality, reconciling social contradictions, working on social reality to make it more palatable.

Some remarks about this complex concept of ideology are appropriate here.

The concept of ideology has been found useful in a number of archaeological interpretations (for example Kristiansen 1984; Leone 1984; McGuire and Paynter 1991; Miller 1985a; Parker-Pearson 1984a, 1984b; Shennan 1982; Tilley 1984). But little reference has been made to the manifold nature of the concept; ideology is usually used to refer to a situation where social 'reality' is represented or misrepresented, in burial ritual, for example. The usage thereby falls within what I have termed the fallacy of representation.

For example, in his study of iron-age Attic burial, Morris (1987: esp. 37f) adopts a two-level model of social reality: social 'organisation', what people get up to, and social 'structure', a logic or patterning which is expressed in ritual. He mentions but bypasses the thesis developed by Bloch (1977: 280-1) that the order of ritual may be an ideological and therefore distorting one, with a pragmatic argument that 'ideologies are multi-layered, and difficult to grasp' (Morris 1987: 41), the character of archaeological data preclude their consideration, so they are best left alone, or considered only in theory (see also *ibid.:* 137; but compare his pragmatic use of the concept, p. 186). Morris adheres to a notion of ideology as above and secondary to social structure, a realm of ideas and world views. Again, this allows ideology to be ignored: actions and structure would appear to matter more. It is unfortunate that Morris follows only Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1980) in general discussion of the concept and the question of the nature of the social, its relationship with the archaeological record. There is so much more, as I hope to indicate.

Hodder has criticised the concept with justification because of the problems of distinguishing 'real' and 'represented' social relationships; indeed he has rightly questioned this division of the social (Hodder 1991: 64-70). And the concept has no place in his programme for a post-processual archaeology concerned with understanding the meaning of things (Hodder 1985: 9). Thomas (1990) has presented a

similar critique, but with important remarks on how 'ideological' features of society and practice may be conceptualised, and with which I here broadly agree.

Whitley (1991b: 196-7; see also Whitley 1993) has criticised the use of the concept ideology in understanding style (his topic being the style of Attic geometric pottery in context of burial practices). 'To view material culture and, more importantly, prehistoric art as simply material ideology, the means through which a particular (and, of course, unjust) social order is naturalised. . . is to ignore aesthetics; that is, everything that makes the art of past societies interesting' (Whitley 1991: 196). Whitley presents ideology as a simple matter (in contrast to Morris) of the justification of an unjust social order: and such a concept, he claims, makes social analysis easier. More importantly he associates the use of the concept ideology (to relate style and social practice) with a 'pernicious' and 'perverse' anti-aestheticism and relativism which 'denies human sensuality and the value of the material world' *(ibid.:* 197; also Taylor and Whitley 1985). I hope to show that this need not be the case.

The term is indeed a complex and 'overdetermined' one, subject to all sorts of strategic and rhetorical uses: consider the entry on ideology in Williams' analytical cultural vocabulary *Keywords* (1976). The different uses and contestation over meaning itself implies that there is something to the concept, I suggest that the apparent complexity should not be avoided, nor should there be easy and formulaic applications (such as ideology is the distortion of reality which fools people into accepting the *status quo).* Such simplicity and formulaic analysis can itself be an ideological strategy, reducing particularity, making heterogeneity, difference and the possibility of alternatives marginal.

So it is important to note the considerable and sophisticated discussion of the concept of ideology as a counter to formulaic and rigid use of social theory in archaeology. Fine and comprehensive surveys are those of Larrain (1979 and 1983), Eagleton (1991), Thompson (1984, 1990). Most discussion has been within Western Marxism (Anderson 1976) - attempts to understand the cultural construction of later and contemporary capitalism, and indeed societies prior to capitalism. An attractive feature, one particularly relevant to archaeology, has been the argument that cultural production cannot be reduced to the economic. More recently, particularly with and after Althusser (1971, 1977; Althusser and Balibar 1970), have been efforts to integrate a psychology of socialisation (for Althusser through Lacan's concept of the 'imaginary'), that is to avoid reducing the individual to consciousness or social structures, but attempting to understand social practice and how people become social subjects or agents. Important here are the implications of Foucault's connections between self and knowledge constituted through discourse and technologies of power (Foucault 1980; and see Tilley 1990).

Given the apparent absence of the individual from archaeology, this is again of great interest.

The ideological may work in various ways (Shanks and Tilley 1987: 181, 1992: 130):

as simple political or social propaganda, a distortion of social reality;

as a universal in place of that which is partial, presenting interests which are partial as those of everyone;

as a natural and necessary order in place of that which is cultural and contingent;

as coherence, misrepresenting contradiction;

manipulating and referring to the past in making what is mutable appear permanent.

The ideological may well be associated with the propagation of 'false consciousness' - mistaken views and ideas of the way things are. However, according to my argument above concerning social structure and design, it is often much more, referring to taste, propriety, sense of correctness in the way things are done and appear. Thus it not only applies to the cognitive, but to style, practice and experience.

A major conclusion to Larrain's studies (1979,1983) was that the significance and power of the concept ideology lie in its critical edge. This is lost when the term is used simply to refer to a body of ideas or beliefs held in common by a group of people. In contrast to this *positive* use, ideology may also belong to a *negative* thinking, or critique. Critique is to think according to the task at hand, shifting and adapting. There is no methodology here, hence some of the problems with the concept ideology. Critique is to do with the constraints to which people succumb in the historical process of their self-formation, outlined above. These are questions of people's identity, their subjectivity, power as people's ability to act and their subjection to power beyond them (see Calhoun 1995; Connerton 1976; Held 1980; Kellner 1989 for introductions to a Marxian line of critical theory). This critical edge which relates cultural production to power and interest foregrounds contestation: ideologies are about constant reworking and manoeuvring.

So, ideology refers not simply to a set of ideas, or imaginary views of society, false, distorting;, or revealing. The endemic interpretability of social structure means ideology works directly on the negotiated and constructed character of society in its relationship with interests and people's (political) strategies. It is best thought of in an adjectival way, as an aspect or dimension of practice and production: ideological structures are those which have a particular relationship with power and interests, serving, working in those ways I have outlined (containment and closure) to achieve ends in line with the interests of some and not all.

Objects have a particular relation with time. They are a principal means of referencing the past because of their (possible) durability, their life-cycle. Through durability and continuity of use, or through a tradition of production, the object can provide a medium wherein the transient present is brought into a much larger temporal experience of past-present, cultural order re-enacting its own self-creation, the particular practices of people in the present lost in the whole. This particular view entails an ideology of denying or making natural that which is subject to change. Alternatively, the fashionable artifact signifies the present (and/or) future, as the value of an object is related to transient knowledge and cultural production. Here the dynamic of production and design is tied to a system of emulation (Miller 1982,

1985a; discussion pp. 38-9), as artifacts associated with a valued sub-culture or disposition are followed by others in cycles of innovation by style-setting group and imitation elsewhere. Innovation and artifacts are thus involved in an ideological system of stabilising social difference (Miller 1987: 126).

Interpretive archaeology and relational philosophy

The previous sections dealt briefly with the character of design and production. I will now move to an archaeological ontology through an outline of a relational philosophy for an interpretive or contextual method.

Internal relations: multiplicity and the character of an artifact

This aryballos in Figure 1.1 only makes sense when related and compared to others. Its (unique) identity can only be appreciated when seen as *different from* others and from other things, qualities, experiences. Sense is also made of the aryballos by seeing that it is *similar to* others; the aryballos is classed (Ajax Painter, middle protokorinthian) of style and date. These are relations between the one and the many, the pot and its 'other'.

   As I argued that the relation between the pot and its other cannot be separated (into potter and pot, culture and nature, material and (social) structure, for example), so I argue that the relation between the one and the many is as inseparable; or, rather, the (sometimes pragmatic and necessary) separation is not given but carried out under certain interests (analytical, for example). The relation is part of the character of an artifact. One aryballos and many other things - here the word 'many' is adjectival. I mean that the character of the artifact is *multiplicity* - that is, substantive.

   I look at this aryballos in a Boston museum. I can attribute an identity and unity to it; it is not a stone or metal blade but a pot of a certain size, with decoration of a particular type, with colour and markings, a particular ceramic fabric. I can relate such attributes to styles of pottery (protokorinthian), to production centres, to places where such pots are found (Korinth). This is not what the pot *is*. Ontology (being) is in question. These attributes are not present *within* the pot, giving it an identity; they are an extra dimension. Its colour may bring me to think of flesh tone in a picture I know. Its painted strutting lion may remind me of my cat. The figures race round the pot like 'motorbikes round a wall of death', as someone once said of it to me. I may think of the first occasion I came across this pot, my mood or circumstance when I did so. Others may find different things through the aryballos. All is shifting. It would be better to talk of the piece of pot *becoming* rather than *being* something. It does not have (a unitary) identity and being, so much as difference and becoming. The pot *connects* and I am led into associations and periphrasis, metaphor (which asserts the identity of difference).

   The pot is old. Is it the past? Does it bring the Greek past to me? Is it a sign of the past, its trace? Is the past its meaning? The past and the pot cannot, I am arguing, be reduced to promises of communion with a definitive or transcendent meaning. The meaning is here and dispersed elsewhere. The pot is always more. I may try to

remove my feelings and perceptions and see through to what the pot actually is. But its existence is simply and grossly material, and even its chemical and physical composition lead me off into associations. It is always referred to something else; the pot is always somehow absent. Where do I begin? How do I know which lines of flight from the object, which deferrals to take? One answer is according to a law - being told the 'right' chains of relation. This is the operation of discourse in creating identities and knowledges. On another hand the (pot as) signifier may be subverted; instead of the sovereign signifying pot there are webs of difference - multiplicity.

The reality of the past is not simply its factuality, its raw existence as fact, as that which is there remaining after decay and loss, this aryballos. The reality of the pot is *realisation,* the process of it becoming other than itself. It is from the past, but here, changed, with us now, no longer what it was. This becoming-other-than-itself involves the intercession of subjectivity, of the perceiving, feeling, analysing archae-ologist, attending to interest. The pot is not defining itself as aryballos, as anything, but depends on its *relation* with me. The subjectivity of the interpreter is the form that the objective takes. It cannot speak for itself.

I am referring here to *relational thinking*. The background to this book is a body of thought focusing upon the character of relations and their importance to the identity of things. Hegel's idealism is one vital source (Marcuse 1955) running into Marx's dialectical materialism, where I follow the reading of Bertel Oilman (1971), see also McGuire (1992). Stress is placed upon the importance of internal relations. These are defined as intrinsic to the nature and identity of items they connect; external relations are those which could be removed without making any difference to what they connect (see Bradley 1930 for an argument for the universality of internal relations on the grounds that without relations nothing would be different from anything else). Structuralism and poststructuralism have emphasised the importance of structured context and webs of difference, other variants of relational thinking upon which I draw (Leitch 1983 for an introduction; Deleuze and Guattari 1988 for an application of the idea of connectivity I use).

The position taken here is that to know what something really is, what its concrete reality is, we have to get beyond its immediately given state, which is a tautology ('this pot is a pot), and follow the process in which it becomes other, something else, as in the proposition 'the pot is yellow'. In the process of becoming yellow however, the pot still remains a pot. This is *sublation* - the dynamic of turning into something else and effecting reconciliation. I have already introduced the concept in relation to Marxian notions of production. Let me expand.

Sublate is the word usually used to translate the German *aufheben (Aufhebung m* its noun form) as used by Hegel. It is the central moment of dialectic. *Aufheben* is to take up, save, but also to cancel, terminate, annul, suspend. *Aufheben* is a term used of overcoming *an* opposition. I have already described sublation in the case of the pot and the other, for example, the opposition between potter (social subject) and object form. To sublate is not to find a middle way - a bit of both. It is to transcend or suspend the distinction without suppressing either element. Sublation contains a notion of preserving, and also of reconciliation. It means that artifact and potter lose

their immediacy, but are not destroyed by the loss; the loss of immediacy is mediation by the other. So in the sublated *relation* the artifact object is mediated by subjective factors.

Relational thinking maintains that things, states (like presence), and concepts (such as fact and objectivity) *exist* in their relation with other things, states and concepts. So relations are not links between things which exist in themselves, separate from the relations. Relations are internal.

Non-identity thinking

The concrete world is permeated by negativity, and identity is otherness. Another name for this is non-identity *thinking* (Buck-Morss 1977). The identity of the pot, conceived as a substantive multiplicity, is produced as a *supplement* (in Derridean sense too: Derrida 1974; 141-64; Yates 1990: 215-25), an extra dimension. It is the 'other' of which I was writing in the previous section. For Deleuze and Guattari (1988:6,17, 21) the artifact as multiplicity is characterised by 'n-i' dimensions, that is a set of 'n' relations without a supplementary dimension of 'identity'; see Figure *1 .2*.

Abstract now comes to mean this aryballos devoid of (abstracted from) the particular and negative otherness which gives it concrete form and which depends on the mediation of my subjectivity. Common sense might have us believe that the pot is concrete in itself, while following of the 'negations' of the piece of pot (tracing it through its contexts, associations and relations) involves abstractions.

The artifact as assemblage

Clarke provided a classic definition of an archaeological assemblage: an associated set of artifact types (Clarke 1968: Chapter 6). Here I am providing another use of the word. The artifact, existing in these internal relations (with what might seem separate to its identity, beyond its unitary being), forms a multiplicity. The association and displacement, as the artifact becomes what it is in our understanding, make of the artifact itself an *assemblage*. Centrifugal and centripetal forces (of displacement and association) make of the artifact an assemblage of particles of information and connection. The forces are set in motion primarily through the intercession of the investigating and interpreting archaeologist, their interests and desires. This means that the artifact is defined more by what is conventionally conceived as the outside, than by a set of 'internal' qualities or attributes (Fig. 1,3).

The creativity of interpretation

Just as the possible number of data points upon an artifact is infinite, so too the internal relations of displacement and association are a threat of infinite dispersion. I wrote above of the aryballos suggesting a line of investigation through the look of animals, through pictorial flesh tones, through a dynamic of circular motion. Where does it all end? I could say in an eventual loss of meaning, in absurdity, an existential loss of sense in the raw materiality of the past (the question again of the raw substance of the pot) and its dissolution in the present, in its material decay. This would be true, but disingenuous, The artifact disperses as the interpreter follows lines of associ-

ation. These lines can be of various sorts: they may be of empirical association (as in conventional concept of assemblage), of conceptual alignment (circular motion), or of creative elaboration (drawing cats). Which interpretive line is adopted depends on the interest of the interpreter. The lines of displacement can be made to reconvene, forming a new unity. *Deleuze* and Guattari (1988) write of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation: territorial unity dispersed and reconvened. How this occurs depends partly on what the interpreter wishes to make; it is a creative choice, I refer again to the primacy of (material) production. Dispersion and identity are matters of *design.* Choices are always already given to the interpreter; particular purposes and interests are already regarded as valuable (sense of chronometric date, operational qualities of measurement in asserting identity, the artifact's 'territory') and may be institutionalised; particular knowledges are pre-chosen. So usually the dispersion is curtailed or ends in those identities and narratives I have outlined for the aryballos of Figure 1.1 and which we know so well; this is the work of discourse. But it remains that this is work of production, and other 'artifacts' may be made. This is the craft of archaeology (Shanks 1992b; Shanks and McGuire 1996).

Much contemporary teaching of creativity in the fine and applied arts works with such notions, as I observed and experienced at Newcastle, Cardiff and Carmarthen Colleges of Art 1988-95. Dispersion away from an opening design brief and accepted solutions, dispersion through 'n' dimensions of elaboration and transformation, countered *by convergence* upon a viable production or *artifact* is a standard methodology. Clifford (1988) and Hebdige (1979), writing on native American and popular sub-cultural identity, provide analogies in (sub)cultural production - creative appropriation of material goods and reorganisation around constructed cultural identities.

Nor does the element of creativity necessarily involve a loss of the empirical. The facts of archaeological knowledge are created from observations of a reality, and, given an interest in 'knowledge', the archaeologist may be able to recognise that reality and master the technical aids that assist or allow us to observe it. But this does not mean giving absolute primacy to the object past. In the interplay between archaeological interpreter and object, both are partners in the final product. The archaeologist gains familiarity through working with the artifacts from the past, but they defy this familiarity through their resistance to classification and categorisation. The archaeological record can never quite be captured or pinned down - there is always more to say and do.

A conception of an artifact as assemblage brings problems to the notion that categories of evidence are 'given' or somehow self-evident. A relational stance holds that there are no natural units of data. I have been arguing that they are constructed. The concepts 'artifact' or 'aryballos', just like 'site' and 'region', are complex and determined, without unity or final all-purpose identity. The vectors of affiliation break away from the familiar.

There is nothing 'natural' or given about style, date and context of social structure. I would argue that their relation to the particularity of this aryballos is not a strong one, because so much is ignored. These conceived aspects of the pot are a part of the

production of knowledges, part of discourse, and that is where they find their justification. This is not to deny the relative significance of date and style and such; they are vital to respectable, but *particular* interests in the past. Full use can alternatively be made of the variability and particularity apparent in artifacts such as this, rather than subsuming detail under high-level generalisations. I also suggest that the interests in or desires for lost potter and 'society' are perhaps inappropriate. As archaeologists we might rather accept the decay and loss of the past. This implies an obligation of restitution, the redeeming act of reconstruction.

So, this aryballos is cultural material over-worked with association and filiation. The question is not so much - what is it?, but - what is to be made of this aryballos?

Contextual archaeology

Context has long been recognised as vital in establishing an artifact's significance. It has rightly been stressed that context should be taken to refer not only to date, place and material location, but also to social context. 'Contextual archaeology' (Hodder 1987, 1991) makes much of associations, holding that meanings of things can only be ascertained if contexts of use are considered. I am arguing that these possible dimensions of context should indeed be noted, but *not* defined *a priori*. The artifact, as assemblage, may define its own context through the interpretive encounter (Shanks and Hodder 1995: 14-17). There need be no necessary or intrinsic context.

Constructing the past

In the background is a debate about the objectivity of archaeological (and other) accounts of the past. That the past can be separated from the present, as epistemological object from subject, that the object past is the *origin* of the meanings archaeologists deal in, has been seriously challenged. This is often known as the debate between processual and post-processual or interpretive archaeology, and is often (misleadingly) characterised as a polarisation of scientific research aiming at objective knowledge versus relativist interpretation in a postmodernist idiom (for such polarisation see, for example, Binford 1987; Bintliff 1993; Renfrew 1989; Trigger 1989, 1991). I will briefly attempt some clarification.

In tightly relating the observing archaeological subject and object past (the factual past imbued with the forms, meanings and significances of the archaeologist), past and present are no longer to be treated as separate temporal realms, but as informed by each other. (Hence my proposal of an interpretation *between* past and present.) The past exists as part of the present in terms of the aims, assumptions and conceptual frameworks of the archaeologist; and these may be political. But objectivity questioned (as a guide and aim in the production of the past) has prompted the fear of an incapacity to prefer one interpretation of the past to another - this is taken to be relativism, with each interpretation valid in terms of the subjectivity of each interpreter. Objectivity questioned may be taken to mean subjectivity unleashed. The past may even be open to political manipulation, if disinterested knowledge is discounted.

These issues have long been the subject of sociologies of knowledge. What has

been termed the weak programme is a sociology of error, *explaining why* scientists get things wrong by finding some social source of distortion such as ideology or class interests. Sometimes it is a limited exercise of studying the general conditions for the growth of knowledge. This weak programme supports or excludes from its study notions of the rational origins of genuine knowledge. So, for archaeological *examples,* Nazi ideology *is frequently seen* as a distorting factor in racial theories *of* prehistory promoted by the likes of Gustav Kossina; Trigger (1984) has related the growth of archaeological knowledge to ideologies of nationalism, colonialism and imperialism.

In the last twenty years a stronger programme in the sociology of knowledge has developed, sometimes associated with the term 'constructivist philosophy', which sees *all* knowledge claims as social phenomena, and does not distinguish social and irrational sources of error from rational and detached knowledge (Bloor 1976; Knorr-Cetina 1981; Knorr-Cetina and Mulkay 1983; Latour 1987; Latour and Woolgar 1986; Lynch 1985; Pickering 1992). Apparent scientific truth and falsity are thus to be treated symmetrically.

This strong programme is supported empirically by many anthropological and historical studies of scientific practice (in addition to items just cited see also, for example, Latour 1988; Pinch 1986; Shapin and Schaffer 1985). Detailed elucidation of events like Pasteur's stand for a microbial theory of infection are shown conclusively to erode the distinction between socially sustained error and rationally sustained truth (in this case between Pasteur's truth and his opponents' theories of spontaneous generation). There are innumerable social contingencies in the development of knowledge, but, most importantly, this has been established regardless of the distinction between true or false theory.

Philosophical support for the strong programme comes in part from Quine's notion of the undetermination of theory (Quine 1981, 1990). With any theory *never* fully underwritten by data or 'rational' argument, other factors, some psychological, some sociological, some historical contingency, are involved in forming a conception of the world.

Thus it can be legitimately argued that recent sociologies of knowledge are effectively countering the traditional criticisms of relativism. Knowledge can be constructed without threatening the security of claims to truth (recent archaeological argument: McGuire and Shanks 1996; Lampeter Archaeology Workshop, forthcoming). Indeed it now seems that the onus is upon those who deny the social construction, as opposed to discovery, of knowledge to provide what they need to sustain their view of the generation of knowledge, and that is a transcendental origin of objectivity and rationality.

I have made this short detour into constructivist ideas to bring me to three conclusions. The first involves the creativity of our efforts to construct archaeological knowledge, and includes an exhortation to think laterally in those connections which sustain interpretation and understanding. The second is that there is an inherent and irreducible pluralism in our interpretations and narratives of the material past. The third is a temporal extension of the principle of symmetry introduced above: that

archaeologists are in principle no different from those in the past whom they study, each constructing their own knowledges and lifeworlds.

Relational philosophy - summary points
Consider again Figure 1.1 and the question - what is this artifact?

Multiplicity It has been argued that, conceived as an assemblage, the pot has dimensions (conventionally conceived as external to what the pot is) which provide the pot's particularity. Crucially, these relations between the pot and its dimensions are internal and are not to do with signification or being (the aryballos *represents;* the pot is). So I would supplement a conception of attributes upon a pot with association and displacement, understanding the aryballos in following lines of suggestion and affiliation (subsuming signification - a unity of signifier and signified) through design, form and decoration. An understanding of the singular or particular artifact, such as this aryballos, is not only to be found in a separation of the one and many (implied when the artifact, identified as one, is compared to many others, or placed in a class with others). The artifact, as assemblage, is a substantive multiplicity.

Singular works of art? The paradox is therefore that the more singular and 'particular' the artifact, the more it is multiple. Is this not indeed the character of the work of 'art' - an over-worked cultural product, referencing so much more in what is conceived as, paradoxically, its singularity (Ovid *(Metamorphoses* 10.252): *ars adeo latet arte sua,* art so conceals its own art)?

Classification and the articulation of assemblages   Artifact classification, and associated procedures such as discrimination and ordination, usually involve an idea of similarity between artifacts as the object of analysis, with similarity established according to attributes upon an artifact. I suggest also an agglomerative and *synthetic* articulation of assemblages (Fig. 1.3). This is based not upon a sense of internal, but external difference, though I should write external identity, according to the argument for internal relations of non-identity.

Non-identity The *assemblage* of association and displacement is the *non-identity* of the aryballos (a supplementary dimension of identity 'i' subtracted from 'n'):Fig. **1.2.**

The creativity of interpretation Identity is *asserted,* not *discovered.*

Interest and discourse   Desire, interest and discourse are instrumental in initiating and constraining the dispersal of the aryballos.

Continuities of interpretation   The questions raised of what the aryballos is, its materiality, and relation to notions of pot, painter, style and social context are resolved in the persistence of *acts of interpretation.* The pot is the product of the interpretive act of potter, acting upon clay, interpretation of decoration by potter,

$$A = i \qquad\qquad A \Longrightarrow n(-i)$$

Figure 1.2 Conceptions of an artifact (signified by 'A'). Identity (i) may be asserted, or the n dimensions of association and affiliation followed in the artifact's *assemblage*, while its 'identity' is suspended/subtracted (−i).
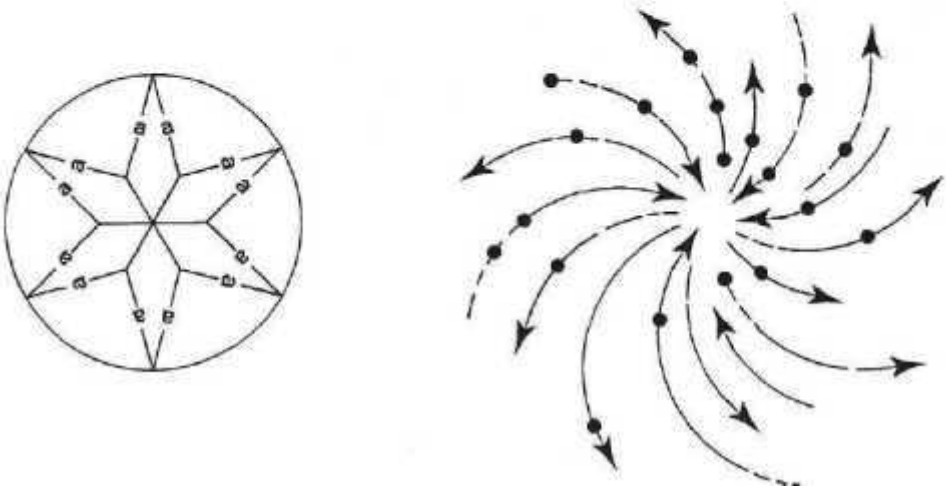
Figure 1.3 Classification and identity. Classification may consist of asserting the self-contained identity of an artifact defined according to attributes (a), or it may also involve following an agglomerative and synthetic articulation of the artifact's *assemblage*.

trader and whoever placed such pots in graves, but then of the farmer (probably) who found the pot again, the person who bought it and sold it to a museum, and the scholars and others who have reinterpreted it then and since.

Past and present in symmetry   The primacy of interpretation: a concomitant argument is that style or culture are to be conceived as production, taking sources and resources (clay, creative insight, decorative sources, skill, interest, desire . . .) and making something of them. A homology is thus implied between potter and pot (or rather clay), and between pot and archaeologist. This is *the persistence of acts* of interpretation; it is a temporal *continuity;* there is no separation of original past and secondary present.

Time and life-cycle   The temporal continuity of cycles of interpretation is the *life-cycle* of the artifact, 'economic' cycles of production, exchange and consumption whose outcome is material culture.

Origins deferred   There is thus no signified origin (the past or dead potter or dead society), beyond or within the artifact.

Following tracks   Interpretation of an artifact now comes to consist of establishing associations (the dialogue I have mentioned), of building connections through the assemblage that is the artifact.

A relational method of an interpretive archaeology
How is relational thinking put into operation? Rather than begin with the question of what an artifact is, it is better to ask what it does, inquire of the social work of an artifact. This may be reworded as what it connects through its design, exchange and consumption. With the artifact understood as assemblage, the task is to establish the (internal) relationships which make an artifact what it is, and to make sense of them. There is nothing mysterious or new about this empirical method of following the tracks leading from a particular artifact.

The following are four kinds of connection and some methods appropriate to their investigation:

empirical association (as in Clarke's concept of assemblage); things found together)
methods: inductive reasoning, statistical analysis (based upon data definition, collection and classification)
logical links:
methods: structuralist readings, formal/mathematical analysis of patterning and design
conceptual alignment, causal relationships, narrative employment:
methods: historical and social interpretation, semiotics, deductive reasoning
creative elaboration:
methods: abduction (Peirce 1958: 89-164; Shanks 1996a: 39-41) rooted in exploration of metaphor.

This is heuristic and not a definitive listing; there are many cross connections. It is necessarily an eclectic collection - just as in conversation, many different strategies may be adopted in engaging with what the interpreting party finds interesting.

Concepts and bodies of theory play the important constitutive role of explaining, making sense or giving significance to different kinds of link or association. They may deal with anything relevant: for example, historical motivation, social practice, economics and manufacture. Some, concerning style, design and agency, have already been provided in this chapter. Others (including ideology, translation of interests, technology of power, sovereignty) will appear later when needed. The main point is that bodies of theory, tools for constructive thought, are essential.

Traditional qualities of scholarship are all appropriate and valuable in developing the links running through an artifact's assemblage: wide and deep reading; familiarity with 'the material'; historical interpretation and source criticism. Note should, however, be made of two vital moments (Shanks 1996a: 126-8). One is critique,

which attends to interest, working on the (discursive) relationship between object and interpreter, past and present, asking questions of the purpose of interpretation and ideological motivation, issues of cultural politics. The other vital moment is creative interpretive choice, working against the strictures of discourse under the practical recognition that interpretation is about exploration and possibility in taking up the remains of the past to make something of them which enlightens, enriches, edifies. After all, a conversation which begins and ends with a rigid questionnaire may miss much of value.

Interpretation always deals with historical fragments. This feature is given added poignancy by the character of archaeological sources as ruin in the face of decay. But it is never any other way: there is never plenitude in understanding or explanation, in the sciences or humanities. Interpretation is always provisional. This does not mean that nothing of lasting value maybe said or done. This is not a pessimistic stance but one of optimistic realism, that in the melancholy that is history we can take up the pieces and make something of them again. The call is simply to recognise our humility and reject the claims of total systems of thought to end history and know the place of everything. In constructing our interpretive journeys there is simply more or less material and time to work with,

I end this section with an aim of historical interpretation to create, in Walter Benjamin's phrase, dialectical images. The term acknowledges the roots in dialectical thought of what I have been proposing - the construction of archaeological assemblages (see also Shanks 1992b). Benjamin's great project, the *Passagenwerk* (1982, superbly annotated and read by Buck-Morss (1989)) was to be a collage of historical materials relating to Paris in nineteenth-century modernity, its shopping arcades emblematic of an emerging consumer capitalism. A work of *Geschichts-phibsophie,* the frictions of juxtaposition run structural, historical and anthropological vectors (such as historicity, myth and the modern, nature and industry, dreams and class conflict) through the intensely empirical and richly textured historical fragments.

The task of constructing archaeological assemblages is one of montage - the cutting and reassembling of quoted pieces, of fragments of meanings, images, things, quotations, borrowings. This process is proposed to be dialectical because of tensions and mediation on several grounds. Something is taken out of what may be considered to be its time and replaced in the coordinates of the interpreter's present, taken out of its 'original' context and placed in another, with the aim of constructing something new out of old. Such quotation mediates past and present. The paradox is that the past is revered (with micro-archaeological interest in detail, in the particular) in order to break with it and generate insight.

In so placing them in a new context, fragments once incidental and arbitrary may attain extraordinary significance. Transient archaeological ruin, broken out of the context of times past, may become emblematic, bringing alive the past by breaking with it, renewing it. The perfume jar, once perhaps a mere aspect of the quotidian, may, quoted in contexts it could never have known, unlock all manner of insight. This is a redemption or rescue of the past from the decayed and moribund, with its

fragments turned into charged particles, electro-cultural elements of an archaeological assemblage.

Montage may be openly constructive, preserving the integrity of fragments imperfectly joined, highlighting the frictions between the pieces, but the joining also implies a continuity, perhaps expressed in a smoothed-over line of narrative, a whole picture revealed through the fragments brought together. Past and present, representational images and artificial constructions, wholes emerge through the parts.

The broken pieces of montage attest as much to absence as to a fluid and coherent story present through the construction and interpretation. Anticipating the presentation of the next chapters with their focus upon masculine sovereignty, the presence of certain classes and gender positions may be marked out, but through their conspicuous absence.

An objective passivity before the empirical remains, a necessary respect for their particularity, accompanies a creativity like dreamwork, seeking and forging links which know no necessary limits.

The assemblage of an aryballos

Let me anticipate the interpretation a little and show what I mean by drawing upon what has already been mentioned of the aryballos in Figure 1.1.

- miniaturism - fine ware, technically accomplished - animated bodies - illustrated violence - weaponry- animals and monsters - assertions of power- the geometric and floral - perfumes - exotic design - travels out to sanctuaries and colonies - offering to divinity - deposition with the dead. . .

Is this not a strange constellation? What is to be made of these associations? This is a task of interpretation. Immediate contrast may be made with the familiar stories of decorated pots, artistic genius, the (inexorable) evolution of style, impending *Korinthian* commercial success.

A productive map

For this aryballos in Figure 1.1 I begin, quite conventionally, with a life-cycle (broken in antiquity) (compare also Kopytoff 1986). Figure 1.4 is a summary diagram of the conceptual space suggested by an aryballos such as that in Boston, from production and technique through to consumption, expanding from the pot (circled point).

Figure 1.4 attempts to summarise 'design', a term which disperses into style, the technical, economic relations of production, class, ideology and social or subjective identity. Some of these may be treated relatively autonomously, such as technical matters and workshop organisation, but all come back to the pot, its tracings through production, style, distribution and consumption; energies, powers and desires. There is no hierarchy to these questions, no primacy of the economic or of artistic creativity over other aspects of design, and no pre-defined social context. And the description of an aryballos immediately implies a constellation of concepts (bodies of theory): style, value, ideology, class, creativity, identity, for example. As indicated, such concepts are like tools for constructing descriptions and stories of design.
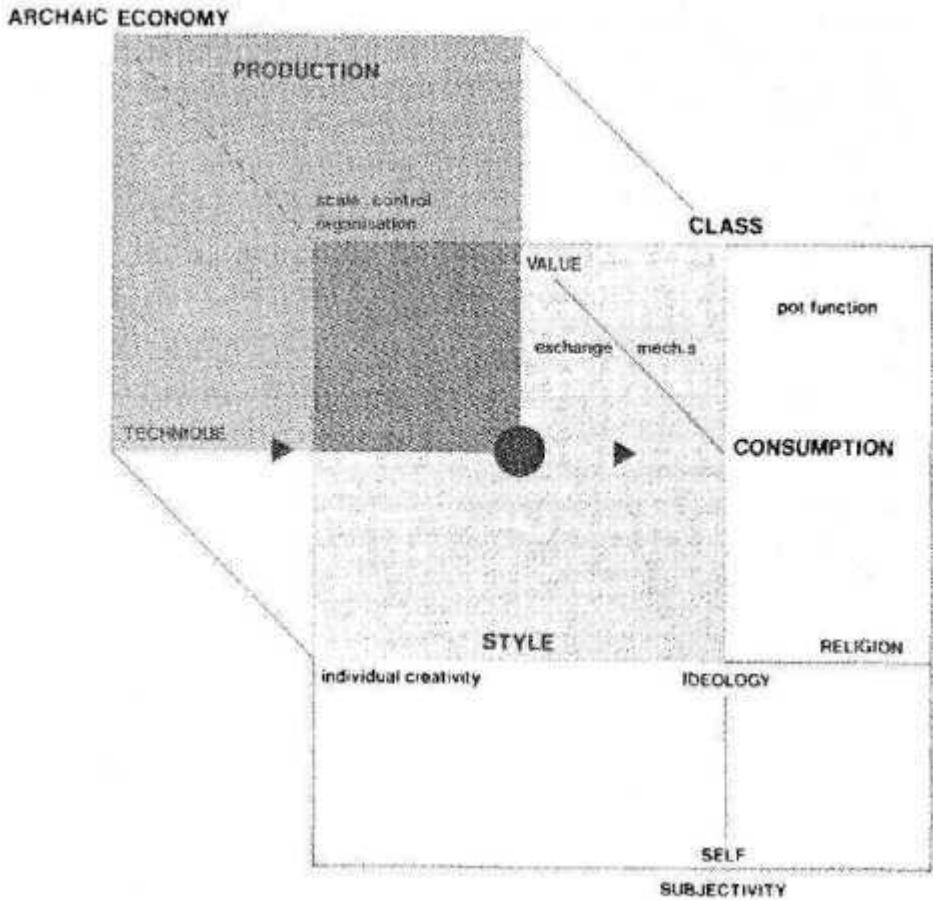
ARCHAIC ECONOMY

PRODUCTION

scale control
organisation

CLASS

VALUE

pot function

exchange mech.s

TECHNIQUE

CONSUMPTION

STYLE

RELIGION

individual creativity

IDEOLOGY

SELF

SUBJECTIVITY

Figure 1. *4* The life-cycle of an aryballos, *a general economy* from production to consumption. The pot itself (centred in the figure) is the product of technique which involves questions of the possibility of individual creative input into the design, which in turn begs the question of the control and organisation of production. Questions follow about how production was scaled accord ing to perceived demand, questions of patronage and information flow, as well as more practical issues of workshop organisation and ownership. (It is assumed that it is meaningful to identify individual artist styles, but this assumption implies much about the whole ethos of material production and is to be carefully examined.) The style of the pot may be interrogated, from creativity of design through its iconography to its referencing of structures of social relationships- ideology. This latter involves considering the occurrence of particular designs (of violent figured scenes and decorative order) within their apparent location of consumption as accessories to death and worship. The use of miniature figured perfume jars and drinking accoutrement in ritual and religion suggests questions of the subjective identity of people who used such pots in this way; what does it mean to associate such style with religion and ritual? That the pots were exported to be consumed in such ways involves questions of value and the mechanisms which achieved the widespread dissemination of the pots. This is not a simple matter of abstract exchange values and mechanisms. The pots and their carriers engaged in the experience of travel. Referenced also are social distinctions such as class (the absence of merchant middle class?). The possible functions of jars as perfume containers (oil for body and dedication) and vessels accompanying drinking party reference lifestyle, as does the control and organisation of production (free artisans or functionaries for social elites looking for stylistic emblems of social status?).

The figure I present is a map through production, exchange, distribution and consumption: 'economic' categories which disperse beyond the boundaries of the economic. So this is a *general economy* of the aryballos. I draw this term especially from Georges Bataille (Bataille 1977; Derrida 1978; Habermas 1987; Richman 1982), a major source for the ideas of social power which inform the interpretation to follow. (Profitable comparison may also be made with Hebdige's presentation of the post-war scooter (in Hebdige 1988), shifting through design, production and consumption.) The aryballos is to be conceived as 'total social fact'.

Mapping narratives: interpretive beginnings

Considering this aryballos in Boston has led me to raise the questions of style and design, and to digress into questions of the conception of an artifact, an archaeological ontology. Concepts of assemblage and general economy describe the artifact as a substantive multiplicity, an assemblage of internal relations through production to consumption. The starting point is an interpretive choice, depending on strategy and interest. The task I have set myself is to provide and plot pathways, lines of association and dispersion.