

Appendix

Notes Towards a New Problematic

1. ARCHAEOLOGY AND THEORY

1.1. Archaeology is immediately theoretical. There can be no meaningful separation of theory, method and practice in archaeology.

1.1.1. The idea of applying theories or models or concepts to archaeological data and the idea of theories as abstract heuristics (different ways of looking at the same data) both involve a disabling split between the theory and practice of archaeology.

1.2. It is not possible to provide a set of abstract rules of archaeological method. Method is in part style, or rhetoric, aspect of the relation between theorizing and the practice of archaeology.

1.2.1. A stress on methodology associated most recently with the advocacy of 'middle-range theory', or the attempt to produce a science of the archaeological record, represent a retreat into a practical empiricism of the most antitheoretical kind. Methodology is to be criticized as determining the past in advance of its confrontation in archaeological practice.

1.3. What is needed are not new answers to the old archaeological questions such as the origin of the state or 'civilization' but the redefinition of these questions in terms of a fresh problematic for social archaeology. This problematic focuses on archaeology's specific object and context: the place and meaning of material culture within the changing social worlds of past and present, and the meaning and form of gaining knowledge of this complex.

2. THE SOCIAL AND THE INDIVIDUAL

2.1. There is no such thing as 'society'; there can be no abstract and universal definition of society.

2.1.1. Social typologies or hierarchies of determination (such as ritual practices determined by material economic logic) are both essentialist and reductionist.

2.2. The concepts of function, adaptation and evolution have no explanatory role in a consideration of the social and need to be either completely abandoned or reduced to a simple descriptive vocabulary.

2.3. The social is an open field fixed in the politics of social relations and strategies and in the interpretative practices of discourses.

2.4 The individual cannot be screened out of archaeological analysis. The individual is to be conceived as knowledgeable and active and yet at the same time positioned in relation to social structures and strategies, a trace within a structured social field. This means that social relations cannot be reduced to interacting creative individuals.

2.5. The social practices of agents are always to be regarded as situated in relation to power, group or individual interests, ideology and symbolic and signifying practices.

2.6. Power is central to social analysis; power (both productive and repressive) is coextensive with the social field.

2.6.1 Power does not simply involve social stratification, nor does it simply arise from the logic of economic base or control over resources.

2.7. Ideology as a technology of power is a strategy for social containment and is fundamentally implicated in the reproduction as opposed to the transformation of the social. It is never a unitary phenomenon and is related both to forms of domination and the way in which agents must necessarily relate to and live through forms of social signification within a field of asymmetrical power relations.

3. MATERIALCULTURE

3.1. Material culture does not provide a window through which we can see through and read-off past social reality.

3.2. Actions refer and relate to sign systems. Material culture is to be conceived as a sign system, a non-verbal discourse.

3.1.1. As a sign system there are multiple transformations involved in the elements of material culture: parallelism, opposition, inversion, linearity, equivalence.

3.3. Material culture is a social, not an individual creation.

3.4. Material culture is active. Meaning is always actively created; the meaning attributed to any item always has to be argued for and against; meanings are mediated in relation to interests and social strategies.

3.4.1. Material culture constitutes an open system, a chain of signifiers. It is irreducibly polysemous.

3.5. Material culture forms a reified channel of communication and can be drawn on as a significative resource, activated in the contextualized matrices of particular social strategies.

3.6. Understanding material culture is an act of translation. Meaning depends on context and the position of the interpreter in relation to this context, whether prehistoric social actor or contemporary archaeologist. There is no original meaning to be discovered.

4. TIME AND ARCHAEOLOGY

4.1. There is no singular time, but temporalities. Time is related to social practice. It is part of the social construction of reality. As with space, it does not simply form a container for action but is a medium giving form to action and establishing action as meaningful. Different structures of temporality are implicated in different practices.

4.1.1. Time as chronometry, measured as date, is not a universal temporality and only emerged as a dominant frame within capitalism.

4.2. Archaeology is in part a history of times, times to be related substantially rather than abstractly to social structures and practices. Different temporal orientations shape history itself.

4.3. History is a contingent and not a necessary progress, contingent upon determinate and historically variable sets of social relations. There can be no universal histories.

4.4. Archaeology is a mediation of past, present and future. It is a social practice involving a temporal mode of *presencing*, uniting and yet holding apart past, present and future, constituting each other in their difference.

4.4.1. The past exists not as the past studied in itself but represents a project in the present.

4.4.2. The past requires completion by the interpreting archaeologist.

4.4.3. Archaeology as contemporary practice reinscribes the past within our own society. The interpretation of the past does not transport a truth or property of the past into the present; it transforms or translates.

4.4.4. Choosing a past, constituting a past, is choosing a future. The meaning of the past is political and belongs to the present.

4.5. Capitalism is unique in relation to the past. This requires the rejection of uniformitarian assumptions as regards a connection between past and present. The uniqueness of capitalism - in terms of (1) rapidity and tempo of change; (2) dominance of the economy; (3) stress on the individual as discrete centre of consciousness; (4) mass production and mass consumption; (5) abstract or spatialized notion of time - has to be offset against the otherness, the difference of the past. Conceptual tools are required to theorize the otherness, this difference.

5. SOCIAL CHANGE

5.1. It is stability rather than social change that needs explaining.

5.1.1. Both stability and change are intimately connected, specific, located in determinate historical and social conditions and not amenable to redescription in terms of an atemporal aspatial 'culture process'.

5.2. Social change is a process of the mediation of strategic practice and structure.

5.2.1. The social is immediately temporal. Social action, structured and situated in relation to schemes of signification, involves the constant reproduction of these structures and schemes within political, strategic interests.

5.2.2. Social change involves structural contradiction and particular, contingent historical conjunctures of actions and events.

5.3. The separation of statics and dynamics, synchrony and diachrony depends on the abstract temporality characteristic of the alienating calculus of the capitalist labour process. Analysis of social change which involves such a duality and temporality may thus be ideological.

5.4. Any notion of social causality in the form of cause-effect type relationships, however complex, needs to be abandoned.

6. THE FORM AND POLITICS OF THEORY

6.1. Archaeology, as cultural practice, is always a politics, a morality.

6.2. Theory is thoroughly subjective. It is not a technical product of a specialist but a delimited and localized production, arising from a specific contextualized interaction between individuals, the experiences of these individuals, the manner in which their life and work interacts, and the way

in which the archaeologist manages to arrive at a specific picture of the past based on the scraps of contingent materials (texts, knowledges, artefacts) and life experiences at his or her disposal.

6.3. No discourse on the past is neutral. The validity of a theory hinges on intention and interest: it is to be assessed in terms of the ends and goals of its archaeology, its politics and morality.

6.3.1. There can be no neutral algorithm (such as simplicity, comprehensiveness) for evaluating particular archaeologies.

6.4. Archaeology is a signifying practice, expressive and transformative. The past is written. Past and present are mediated in the archaeological text.

6.4.1. Self-reflection: it is necessary to consider archaeological discourse in terms of systems of concepts, rules and conventions for the production of knowledges.

6.4.2. What is needed is an archaeological topology, a rhetoric; an archaeological tropology, a stylistics: an archaeological poetics concerned with how the archaeological past may be written.

6.4.3. Established archaeologies need to be engaged in terms of a dialogue with their always present, absent other - that which is systematically suppressed or marginalized in the text.

6.5. Archaeology is nothing if it is not critique.

6.5.1. We do not argue for truths about the past but argue through the medium of the past to detach the power of truth from the present social order.

6.5.2. A critical archaeology is value-committed, a willed personal act with the aim of transforming the present in terms of its conceived connection with the past.

6.5.3. The past is not to be dispossessed of its difference by erecting it as a mirror reflecting the present. The difference, the tension between past and present subverts the legitimacy of the present.