

TREES AND GARDENS

A topography of archaeological interpretation

ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHOD: THE SOVEREIGNTY OF SCIENCE

What do archaeologists do? I shall begin with the answer given by academic and professional archaeologists. It is the answer: archaeological method.

A quick assessment of any introductory text will reveal one aspect of archaeological method: the mechanics of fieldwork - survey, excavation and post-excavation work on recovered materials. These are the technical matters of different means of surveying regions, sites and features, choice of appropriate excavation strategies, recording procedures and means of objective presentation, including perhaps some statistical summarizing. Scientific analysis of artifacts, biological and environmental materials (studies of artifact composition, identification and characterization of plant and animal remains) might be included here as might be work on conserving and consolidating things which are perishable or in a ruinous state. These are all things that a lot of archaeologists do for most of their time. Perhaps much less time is spent on interpreting and explaining what is found, but it is on this that I wish to concentrate in considering some assumptions and ideas underlying archaeological method, lying within the things that archaeologists do.

There are a set of ideas which make up an orthodoxy concerning the way archaeologists go about doing archaeology. There is a methodological hegemony; it is the sovereignty of science. Archaeology is a science. This orthodoxy is not a tightly organized or formal set of procedures and conditions. The hegemony is flexible and accommodating, within reason.

Fundamentalism

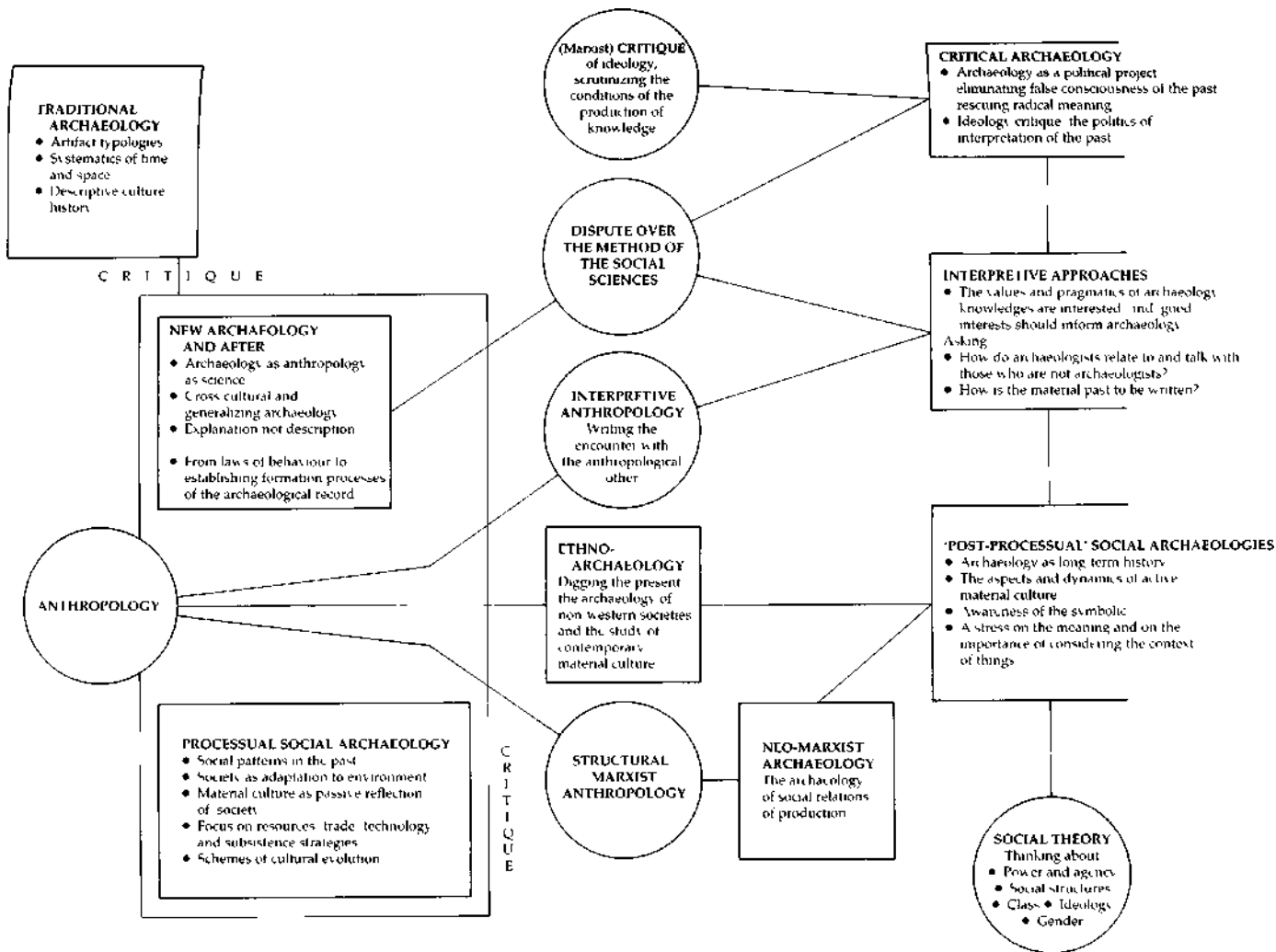
That archaeology should model itself on the natural sciences was vigorously proposed in the 1960s and after. The name of Lewis Binford

is particularly associated with this proposal, part of the inauguration of 'New archaeology'. At first this was a rigid fundamentalism. Certain features of scientific method were defined, often with reference to what philosophers of science had written (in practice this meant Carl Hempel), and archaeology was construed accordingly. The dogmatism and fundamentalism - strict adherence to the arguments of a particular philosophy and rigidity of method - have now mostly gone. Neither is there a simple and abstract understanding of the character and form of what natural scientists do. Enthusiastic theory building also proved too rigid or abstract when archaeologists went out into the field. The code of tight deductive reasoning tied to explaining particulars by referring them to general laws was not very useful when an archaeologist had to plan a survey of a canyon in the American South West. The laws with which science supposedly works were not at all obviously around in archaeology.²

Critical rationalism and realism

So another line taken by New archaeology was, and is, to conceive of archaeology as science, but to characterize science in different ways. This has been the main thrust of theory produced within the methodological hegemony. Some make a stand for varieties of a scientific realism. This is basically the plausible idea that archaeologists can gain objective or approximately true knowledge of an independently existing past reality (which may not be directly observable), if they are careful and 'scientific'.³

The views of Karl Popper have had a significant effect on how many archaeologists think of what archaeologists should be doing, though he is not frequently cited. This is an argument that archaeology should be a form of critical rationalism. As rational study, archaeology should struggle against irrational beliefs about the past. This involves testing ideological and other claims about the past (its form and meaning) with reason. Reason is the means of advancing knowledge (as opposed to irrational and ideological beliefs) and takes the form of critical testing; science is the model of such controlled reason. To be knowledge a claim or proposal must correspond with the facts - the 'reality' beyond the knowing archaeologist. This is fundamental to testing. There is a strong *methodological* premise; by which I mean the procedures adopted (as opposed to the values or motivations of the archaeologist, or the actual character of the past being studied) are of vital importance in doing this critically rationalist archaeology. It doesn't matter who or what is being studied as long as certain procedures are followed. This premise is that the only meaningful (or rational) statements are those which are founded in the facts. This is taken to mean that only those statements can be considered as empirically based about which it can be said that



Some recent trends in archaeological thinking

they can be disproved by an empirical method. All other statements or claims about the past are superfluous, ideological or irrational.

This is a very cognitive form of reason. There is no place for sentiment or emotion. This may be so, but an ethics is implied in the procedures adopted. The possibility of critical testing implies open communities. The only criterion of a claim being meaningful is that it is open to testing against the bedrock of the factual. Anything which hinders testing is therefore undesirable, providing we wish to live in 'knowledge' and not in 'ignorance' or 'superstition'. Liberal and open debate about everything is part of critical rationalism. But not everyone may agree with such a definition of reason, or believe such a cognitive ideal, and what about faith, intuition and emotion?⁷ So the only restriction on open communities is that they may be required to be under the 'guidance' of experts in critical rationalism. Experts are needed.

Archaeology has changed much in Britain and the United States over the last twenty-five years. The pace of change, the polemic, the variety of new and imaginative insights into the past can be largely attributed to an ethic of liberal debate. No longer did the authority of the professor count in relation to critical testing, anyone could be challenged on the grounds of testing. Literary skills were irrelevant in comparison to furthering archaeological knowledge with the democratic falsification of some unexamined assumption. Careers could develop very early without the discipline of academic hierarchies, especially when there was an expansion in the number of available posts. Compare the situation in Europe still now with its entrenched authorities and hierarchies unassailable.

At least this is one story. To what degree the ethic of liberal debate actually exists, or whether it depends in any way on reason, never mind testing, is very debatable.

Positive knowledge and empiricism

A scientific archaeology may be a more general or less developed idea. To some it may mean positive knowledge. Within a positive knowledge archaeologists would be working to acquire more knowledge of the past. The reason for such acquisition may be simply that knowledge is a good thing to have for its own sake, anyway the reason is less important than the knowledge being objective. Archaeological knowledge is positive and of the past if objective and so neutral and timeless (the past happened in the way it did and that much will not change). The timeless quality of knowledge is important if we are to aim to acquire it and build on what is already known, it would be no good building on facts we cannot rely on, because they might change. Timeless and neutral knowledge also enables specialization, knowledges isolated in their own field, and disconnected

from the present Cultural politics of the 1990s do not affect what happened in Archaic Greece, the archaeologist can live with one while quite separately gaining knowledge of the other Reference to a discipline other than archaeology might help with new ideas or questions, but it will not change the object of archaeological knowledge

It will be clear that this idea of archaeology as positive knowledge did not arrive with the urges for archaeology to be explicitly scientific, it is a much more general project But it does knit without contradiction with the project of a scientific archaeology It is perhaps a more unexamined set of assumptions about what archaeologists do We might easily resort to notions of positive knowledge if asked for justification when we had not reflected in detail on what archaeologists do

Scientific archaeology being a form of empiricism is another general position Empiricism is to conceive ourselves as fundamentally subject to the empirical world This is to affirm that what matter are the facts of the past These are the origin and end of what archaeologists do Empiricism has formed a significant part of theories about what science is And it seems to permit an emphasis on the acquisition and processing of facts about the past This is certainly what many archaeologists do with their time, even seeing it as their role

Reason, facts, models

Fundamentalism, critical rationalism, positive knowledge, empiricism these are the main aspects of the sovereignty of science in archaeology, the methodological hegemony that would have of archaeology an empirical science It can be summarized perhaps as an emphasis on reason and the facts

In terms of what archaeologists do, how they go about the subject, it often appears as problem orientation and the application of models Total recovery of all the surviving past is not possible, some selection must be made The most efficient and rational way to make selection is to pose meaningful questions and set about answering them Although flexibility is important (questions may need redefinition or even abandoning in the light of data recovered), posing questions and testing out ideas pertinent to their answering is the procedure for applying reason to the past

This application often takes the form of model building and testing Models are ideas or sets of ideas which simplify the complexity of archaeologically observed remains, isolating those aspects considered important from irrelevant facts and information, and offering an explanation of what has been observed A favourite set of models has been systems (The use of systems to explain the archaeological past is almost a defining characteristic of New archaeology and its later variant processual archaeology) A system is an interconnected network of parts

which form a complex whole. So society (the whole) may be divided into subsystems of economy, religion, technology, whatever, relationships between the parts specified, and then archaeological data fitted within. Testing models involves applying them to data - fitting data within a model to see if it works as expected.⁴

The methodological sovereignty of science has had a great deal of success in generating new types of facts (for example palaeobotanical and environmental evidence) sought in addressing new and different questions. It has produced finer definition and control of the empirical, achieved particularly through the widespread use of quantification. There have been new insights into the workings of the past with the development of powerful and integrating holistic models, bringing different types of data together. There has been useful insistence on making the application of reason explicit with tight definitions of concepts and a shift towards theory-building - bringing out into discussion assumptions and aims. And simple description of the past or descriptive narratives telling what happened in ancient times have given way to explanation and the search for causal processes. The idea of archaeology as a social science can be connected with a re-evaluation of the relation between archaeology and anthropology. Archaeology has been predominantly a branch of anthropology in the United States. Archaeology as anthropological science means producing social explanations for what archaeologists find (a social archaeology), not writing historical narratives.⁵

Criticism and debate are very much part of the methodological hegemony and this has made archaeology stimulating for some people.⁶ And there have always been challenges to the sovereignty of science.

CHALLENGES

Traditional humanist and antiquarian archaeologies are still around. Apart from some adoption of scientific recovery techniques, large sections of archaeology remain untouched by the developments in archaeological thinking of the last three decades. This is particularly the case in Britain and in Classical and Near Eastern archaeology (see the comments in Tim Champion's (forthcoming) review of theory in Britain). Some still aim to piece together a story of what happened in ancient and prehistoric times unencumbered by theoretical apparatus and worries. Such stories often stick closely to descriptive accounts of the changes archaeologists find in the material culture they excavate. There may be a gloss of the historical and human drama over the remains set in their time and location; often the stone axes, bronze swords and potsherds stand as their own testimony. There is a melancholy about such archaeologies - that so much of the past is lost, that all that is left to do

is to recite the list of survivor traces, that human reason is inadequate to the task of reconstructing the past. And scepticism, of attempts to move beyond the only certainties we have - the remains, scepticism also of the shaky theoretical structures of scientific archaeology set on thin scapings of detritus. Some, the antiquaries, find fascination in simply objects brought to light, their qualities, typification, codification. This traditional outlook can be seen most clearly in the established archaeological journals in Britain, and in artifact typology studies (see also the comments in Shanks and Tilley 1987b, Chapters 1 and 2).

Traditional archaeologies are still firmly rooted in countries other than the United States and Britain. The methodological hegemony I am sketching is a hegemony of Anglo-American archaeology. Different interests, histories, and institutional structures (organizing career paths and the hierarchies of archaeological services) create markedly different national archaeologies. Contrasts pertinent to this book are between the object of American archaeology conceived ethnographically as the remains of another culture, and the object of British archaeology conceived as the past remains of British history - the *Blood of the British* (to use the title of a television series and book by Catherine Hills). I think this is a deep contrast and comes through in the tighter hold of images of science in American archaeology. That the archaeology of Classical Greece and Rome is not located within departments of anthropology in the United States, and often not in departments of archaeology but Classics in Britain, is part of Classical archaeology's markedly traditional orientations in both Britain and the United States.⁷

The claims of scientific reason have no hold on some of what have been termed fringe archaeologies. These are archaeologies in that they are concerned with material traces of the past, but many decry the lack of humanity in scientific reason or indeed any orthodox academic study, and they may not hold the same reverence for facts. Something has been lost: ancient and mysterious wisdoms, human communion with nature's powers perhaps; but it can be regained somewhat. The means of contact are primarily mystical - beyond scientific reality, and often ignored or denied; dowsing is a favourite. Conceptions of the past which escape science may be put forward (they may be claimed as consonant with science if it were more open). Visitors from alien worlds, great catastrophes (floods, volcanoes, wayward movements of planets) change history and are yet forgotten but for the dim memory of myth and the more enigmatic aspects of the archaeological record.

The writings that archaeologists produce have changed significantly with the sovereignty of science. Theoretical debate and innovation, new terminologies, presentation of quantified analyses, and less emphasis on descriptive historical narrative in the terms of common sense mean that archaeology is much less accessible to non-specialists. This has been

an object of complaint (for example Hawkes 1968). And while not directly challenging technical and specialist work, there are those who fix on the popular attractions of archaeology, spectacular sites and finds, mysterious pasts and the romance of discovery, in journalistic writing designed to be accessible to a wide audience (for example Wood 1985). The concern with spectacle, romance and discovery can far remove such work from professional archaeology; it may be closer to a genre of travel writing. Popular archaeologies merge with tourist guides, into general historical writing, and into novels. Such archaeology may indeed be taken to complement specialist work, adopting a role of presenting difficult jargon and ideas.

The sovereignty of science has been challenged on deeper philosophical and methodological grounds within the discipline. Before I come to this body of critique I want to take some steps back.

TREES AND TREE-THINKING

Archaeology under the sovereignty of science, the methodological hegemony of processual archaeology and its variants, together with the alternatives, challenges and complements represent, I claim, a sort of *tree-thinking*. Their disciplinary topography is arboreal. I shall explain what I mean by this.

Trees signify. As much as a material resource, trees provide a rich symbolism. Noble, solid, upstanding, stable, deep-rooted, aged, trees have evocative ideological power. Cultivated and managed in forestry and the designer landscape estates of the aristocracy, yet products of nature, trees and woodland are a particular compound of a social relationship with the natural world. In an especially clear example Stephen Daniels has shown how 'in later Georgian England woodland imagery was deployed to symbolize, and so naturalize, varying and conflicting views of what social order was or ought to have been' (1988, p.43). Property, ownership, social hierarchy, a working yet charming countryside, shelter, conscious design and cultural identity (great oaks of England) were all written into the landscape works of Capability Brown, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight. Tree-thinking draws on all these associations.

Trees are hierarchical. In a tree system order is fixed (the structure of trunk, branches, twigs) and materials or information flow along pre-established lines. Individual points can be plotted in a tree system according to place in the flows. Armies are trees - each individual is integrated into the whole by an allotted space, a rank, a point fixed in the whole. And individuals receive orders, determinations from more integrated levels - higher ranks; responses and information from those of lower and less integrated rank. The individual is subject in their allotted place.

Theories and approaches

Interpretations

Synthesis and
data processing

Excavation



An archaeological tree

Trees have a unity to their multiple elements, from roots to leaves. The trunk stands solid at the centre; it segments, splits into branches but always supplies the higher unity. Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (to whom I owe much of this image) relate this centring and segmentation as a law of reflection - a binary logic of the one that becomes two (1988). This is how the multiple is created in tree-thinking. Or the trunk is severed and multiple branches sprout: pollarding. Radicles and fascicles. But the many branches or rootlets still depend on a higher or lower unity.

Trees have an identity. Particular identities and types can be specified. The unity of tree-order is an organic and internal one. The tree grows in its wood or field separate and with its own identity. Chain-saw the trunk or axe the roots and the tree dies; order is no more. And it is internal - the order is fixed according to relations within and between the different branches, roots or parts. This fixing of order and plotting of points depends on a principle of identity. In tree-thinking it is possible to specify identities (of objects, substances, concepts), to relate what something is. Tree-thinking depends on the notion of *being*: this object substance/concept *is* something: A is B. This principle of identity involves attribution and classification. And in depending on being, it is an ontological principle.

The sexuality of trees is a reproductive one. By this is meant that trees are organic and a significant purpose of theirs is reproduction. In tree-thinking the world is reproduced in thought. The tree-book represents its object either by means of external image, or in terms of an internal structure held in common. This reproductive logic depends on there being an identity of something which is to be reproduced, on it being something in the first place.

Trees are genealogical. Family trees, lines of descent, roots and ancestors. In tree-thinking we need to dig deep to find origins and our identities. Authenticity comes with depth. And this entails that there are only a limited number of authentic entry points; the tree begins in the roots. Trees cannot be grown from dry leaves.

In sum, tree-thinking has these characteristics: it is unified and hierarchical, concerned with the meanings and identities of things (what they are), conceives that there are roots or bases to what we know, aims to reproduce its object in thought. The symbolism of trees implies that such reasoning is solid, upstanding, and stable.

Tree-thinking in archaeology. In the arboreal topography of their subject archaeologists identify things and attribute the things they find to types and classes. Digging deep; the past is the root, origin of archaeological thought; the roots are objective data. I do not mean that this tree-logic is inductive reasoning, whereby general conclusions are drawn from a set of factual premises; the roots do depend on the whole

for their existence. It is conceived as reasonable to identify objects from the past not simply as axes or vessels, but more generally as objects with attributes. The past *is* some-thing, if nothing else an array of objects with contexts.

There is a hierarchical order of practices in archaeology - from excavating roots through syntheses to interpretations. And I think that the pre-established order into which are assimilated individual items, be they artifacts or analyses, implies a concern with method and procedures (their efficiency and fitness) which comes before the particulars to which method is applied. It is thought possible to detail method without reference to the actual data, archaeologists and situations in which it will operate.

Archaeological texts reproduce the world of archaeology in this tree-thinking. There is, of course, a recognized difference - the excavation report must select and order the material excavated, treated, classified, scrutinized, as appropriate. The interpretation may be within a fashionable theoretical framework. But nonetheless the past is final point of reference. They may be descriptive images of how the past was, or explanatory models of how it worked, but it is as accounts of the past and of the material world that archaeological texts are produced.

Finally, arboreal archaeology has a unity and an identity. Even though it has immense diversity, from conservation chemistry to faunal analysis to grand philosophy of history, and it may be similar to the anthropological tree, archaeology nevertheless has its objects, purposes and practices. At a very practical level it exists in disciplinary form as a subject in museums and institutions of education.

CRITIQUE

The sovereignty of science has been subject to considerable criticism in the last ten years and more. The criticism comes from what is often called post-processual archaeology. There are convenient introductions to this work and here I will only sketch the main outlines of the critique.⁸

The critique of positivism

Elements of the methodological hegemony of processual archaeology have been identified as positivist; and in philosophy and social theory a positivist is not a good thing to be. A positivist archaeology might hold to the following.

- Archaeology is to be a science, modelled on scientific principles.
- What is important is not the particularity of the material past (the infinity of minute detail) but *generalization*, bringing the past under

world through reason (with nature as object and stuff of manipulation), in reducing questions of the meaning of the past and social practice to technical questions of how best to operate efficient methods for bringing the past, classified and explained, to order. Such a use of reason is described as instrumental and is the dominant form of reason in contemporary capitalism. The advocacy of this form of reason to the exclusion of others is therefore criticized as ideological in its disparagement of alternative relationships with the past and its implicit support for the more inhuman and execrable aspects of contemporary society, in particular reification - the treatment of (natural and social) others as objects, of development, management, exploitation.

Other criticism has been levelled at particular social models of the past. Much work goes into making sense of the animal and plant remains of ancient economic activities. Archaeologists dig up great quantities of such material and certainly more can be said than simply which animals were hunted or kept and which plants eaten. But some economic reconstructions have assumed that economic principles operating in the contemporary capitalist market operated also in the past and in simpler societies - principles of a rational labour market such as efficiency of effort and maximization of output or profit. This projects our present on to the past, and so it is criticized as ideological in the failure to consider that the past may be different, and in justifying the present through the assumption that it is based on universal and so natural principles.

Systems theory (which often comes with the idea that past societies are like organisms living and functioning in environments) has been criticized for its inherent conservative bias and implied opposition to social change (organisms stay in balance, imbalance constitutes illness and threatens societies tend towards stability, change is disturbance of this natural state).

Museums have also come under criticism for projecting the present on to the past.

Rather than continue this rapid review of ideology critique in archaeology, I want to map the directions it has pointed.

Historicism is one. This is to hold that every present understands the past in terms of its own historical location. History is constantly rewritten as the present changes. So archaeology is inevitably affected by its present. The optimism of some archaeologists in the 1960s regarding the promise and universality of science might be related to the aspiring fortunes of the professional middle classes, with economic expansion in the United States (Trigger 1981, 1989a, see also Patterson 1986). We should expect archaeological explanations to reflect the present, there is nothing particularly worrying about this, it is argued, we should just take note.

surest ground for judging what people may make of the past. How are we to decide between mainstream academic archaeology and the fancies of those who may believe that ancient monuments lie on lines of earth force and were to guide incoming spacecraft?

I have mentioned pluralism as an option implied when interpretation is related to social interest, and archaeological work is located within different social contexts. A past which cannot be reduced to singular meaning and which is caught in expansive webs of association would also seem to permit multiple interpretations of the same archaeological reality. This pluralism may be criticized as a decadent voluntarism - that it is a luxury of comfortable and isolated academics to be able to exercise choice between different pasts, playing with text and meaning. They may have the power and opportunity to do so; others do not and do not want fragmented and indeterminate pasts which have lost their power and authority to be relevant. Archaeologists should draw on their authority to present for people a coherent and authentic past, not dissolve into vapid speculations.

A lot of the critique is difficult reading. It is thick with new terminologies, references to debates in other fields which can be very specialized, and goes on a great deal about theoretical and other matters without getting straight down to what archaeologists do or may do. Much of the critique has come from just a few university centres and individuals within them. Some suspect that what is happening is a mystification of what are relatively straightforward issues. This mystification creates a class of experts in the difficult matters, and the apparent expertise furthers academic careers. Create a trend and wait for promotion. I think that there is something to this suspicion.

I have talked of critique. What is it? Later I will draught out critique as a tradition of negative thinking. But it can also simply mean being critical as part of the cycle of (archaeological) method. I tried to show how a critical attitude is an important part of the success of the sovereignty of science. I see this as a taming of the potential of critique. Critique becomes 'liberal' and open debate within the academy and profession. Its character is often not a pleasant one: chastisement (how could you have got it so wrong and how dare you); legality (you can't do that, it's not allowed); prescription (don't do that, you must do this); and authority (I know, you don't). There is now a well-established pattern to the development of academic archaeology and critique is incorporated. Ideas are borrowed and adapted from another discipline; other archaeologies are criticized on the basis of these borrowings; a new archaeological approach is outlined and prescribed; application is made to archaeological data; polemic follows. This has happened many times with borrowings from the philosophy of science, mathematics, geography, sociobiology, social theory, Marxism, anthropology, biology,

the control of general statements, subsuming the meaningless particular find under meaningful general statements which account for the particulars found. This means that descriptions of the past which involve staying at the level of sequences of particular changes are not enough. Explanations involving generalization about causal processes are what are needed. Not a descriptive narrative of how ideas about farming spread throughout Europe, but why it happened, and this question involves general processes such as how ideas are passed on, how populations spread.

- In such explanations societies can be treated as if they were like the natural objects of science. This means that social practice (social actions with all their meanings, implications, motivations and intentionality) is treated as behaviour (actions as bodily movements stripped of meaning and intentionality)
- Positivism's theory of knowledge (its epistemology) involves our explanations corresponding with the facts as we experience them with our senses, primarily as we observe. Facts are given primacy.
- And facts, good facts that is, are neutral, free of people's bias and values which would spoil neutral explanation, since explanation must correspond with the facts.

The criticisms which have been made of these points are now very well known in archaeology and have been advanced elsewhere for some decades. I shall repeat them in summary for the sake of clarity.

There is the problem, indeed the impossibility of devising a totally neutral observation language (words which describe the reality encountered in archaeology). Descriptive terms, as words, are always burdened and charged with meaning and associations which are not neutral. More generally this is the great philosophical question of the relation between the senses and language, between consciousness and language, between the object world and language. There is no simple correspondence and the attempts to define links have not been successful. This means that facts cannot be separate from values. There is no bedrock - the factual past as it is - separate from the value-laden terms which apply to those facts.

There is a related question of experience. Archaeological data are created in people's experience, through their senses, their application of terms of description and attribution, their social practice of archaeology. In the account of positivism this experience is sanitized and reduced to controlled observation and recording. But what happens to the social and personal elements? After all, in creating a body of data in their work, noting and describing their excavation and finds, archaeologists are performing acts of autobiography, albeit strange ones. Positivists (and others) dismiss such elements as sources of bias, at the best irrelevancies.

Another general issue inadequately resolved is that of the relation between the observer and the observed, the knowing (epistemological) subject and object. Separating and collapsing one into the other (the observing subject having to discard subjectivity in deference to the object, an object world created entirely within consciousness) leads to the philosophical problems of idealism (that there is some 'substance' or 'essence' named objectivity which imposes itself on perceptive subjectivity, that reality is created in thought).

Finally, to treat society as second nature, social practice as bodily behaviour, is to miss what makes society what it is - meanings and the intentions of its individual members, their power to act (their agency), and their relation with the form and structure of their society.

On one hand such criticisms have brought forward new approaches to explaining past societies. These emphasize archaeology as a study of social practices through material remains recovered archaeologically. Much work has gone into questioning how society is organized (stressing the importance of power), into examining the whole notion of structure (of society and of action), into understanding action, agency (people's power to act), the meaning (a key concept) of the things people do and **the things they make**⁹

On the other hand such criticisms force archaeologists to ask just what **the** object past is supposed to be and how archaeologists are to deal with **the** facts of the material past if it is not a simple matter of describing them, orientating problems around them and finding explanations which correspond with them.

From ideology to critical archaeology

Another line of criticism has been that of ideology critique. In part this is an extension of the argument that facts and values are inseparable, **that** subjectivity and objectivity are much more closely related than some might wish. In tightly relating the observing archaeological subject and object past (the factual past as imbued with the forms, meanings and significances of the archaeologist), past and present are treated no longer as separate temporal realms but as informed by each other. 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.

Archaeologies which celebrate national or cultural identity, or which imperialistically impose a cultural identity, are obvious and prevalent outside Anglo-American archaeology. Such archaeologies definitely have a political point to prove. But the relation of ideology between past and present can be more subtle. The sovereignty of science has been criticized as belonging with a social interest in controlling the natural

If past and present are inextricably linked, pluralism may be entailed. Under such a view different social groups in the present may well develop different pasts. This has been a particularly interesting and important issue with the emergence of groups outside the professional academy who claim a right to think their own pasts in the public sphere. The issue is also one of relativism - are all such pasts which arise authentically (a difficult term) out of social experience. Valid? If archaeological pasts are always part of the present, are we to expect a multiplicity of equally valid pasts? How are such competing pasts to be judged?⁷

For some, ideology critique is a way through this question. Critique could show us how a museum exhibit distorts, raise such unwanted bias to consciousness and so bring about its avoidance. Self-consciousness is what is needed. There could be a distinct and separate politics of archaeological interpretation, relating pasts to presents.

Pragmatism is another related but more radical proposal. In brief the argument is that the meaning and justification of different pasts depends on their 'practical' effects or practical content. Knowledges are related to social interests in an inseparable nexus of power, knowledge and a will-to-truth. Some interests are good, so some knowledges are good. Alternatively knowledge is what it is good to know. In either case it is necessary to shift argument to ethical matters, questions of value, of politics. Accordingly values as yet not forcibly championed in archaeology are advocated in some recent works, they are against authority and for a more participatory archaeology, challenging archaeology's exclusivity, its institutional and hierarchical organization, countering archaeological pasts which trap us in the ideas and structures of a faulty present. Archaeology is to be political practice.¹⁰

In sum, this body of critique has questioned the validity of what a lot of archaeologists are doing or think they are doing. Serious doubt has been cast on the sort of procedures which are taken to go with a scientific archaeology. An increasing awareness of archaeology's place in the present and the refinement of a politics of archaeological interpretation is showing that archaeologists cannot just get on with a neutral study of the past. They may even be preferring views which arise more from present concerns and interests.

In asking questions of the language used to describe the 'reality' of the past, objectivity is bracketed with the theoretical aims, interests, and subjective orientations of the archaeologist. This subversion of objectivity is taken to a fitting end in post-structuralism. It is to this that I now move.

Post-structuralism

Post-structuralism is a dislocated commixture of writings in various fields - philosophy, literary studies, cultural criticism, social thought, and history. Although it is not immediately apparent, the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida in particular has had a significant effect on some archaeologists.¹¹

The characteristic enemy is metaphysics. It cannot be said that there is a recognizable archaeological metaphysics, but metaphysical notions there are. These are judgements about what really exists (the primary component of metaphysics is ontology), and the archaeological relationship with it. A dominant archaeological metaphysic is that the object of study is the origin or source of what archaeologists do. The past, present in its traces, is the beginning and end of archaeology. The word itself - archaeology - contains all that exists in its project: 'archaeology' comes from the Greek *arche* meaning origin and beginning, power and sovereignty; its adjective *archaios* meaning from the beginning, ancient; and *logos* meaning account, reason, explanation, expression, discourse. That these elements have presence and meaning in themselves is to be questioned in a post-structuralist account; in particular all ideas of identity, origin, and meaning. It is argued that the past has no determinate meaning, that it has no final meaning but constantly slips from our conceptual hold, that it is not the origin or source of what archaeologists know or do (Yates 1990, p.261).

A key to understanding this is to realize that it depends on foregrounding language and its structure. Language is argued as central to what it is to be human, and language is primarily signification - communication in and through signs. Saussure's structuralist linguistics established a fundamental split within the sign: between the (differential and sensible) *signifier*, a sound or image which acts as a vehicle; and the (formal and intelligible) *signified*, a concept referred to. Signifiers have no necessary meaning in themselves (words are arbitrary sounds), but hold potential. This potential comes from signifiers being located in systems or structures of signifiers which differ from each other. The word 'pot' on its own means nothing. What brings meaning is that the sound or marks on a page are different from 'axe' or 'bone'. This structure of difference enables the signifier to be tied to the signified. It can be noted that the signified is still *within* the sign. It is not the actual thing to which the sign refers. This is known as the referent. The relation between sign and referent, between the components of our language and the 'real' world is also in question here.

So such structuralism might lead us to doubt the tightness of the link between sign and meaning. We get to meaning in realizing that it involves signifiers located in structures of differences. Jacques Derrida

takes this differential or relational conception of language further. It is encapsulated in his term *differance*. The word 'pot' involves us in a move to other (coded) sounds or words in determining its significance. We relate the word and its associations to others. Nothing can function as a sign without referring to another element which is not present. The result is a texture, each dimension or element being formed on the basis of traces within it of other elements. Nothing is ever simply present or absent. And there can be no end to this differing. We are always delayed in reaching meaning. Meaning is constantly deferred, divided from itself. There are only webs of signifiers. This entails meaning always being absent in some way. It is not present in the sign.

If signification is a primary aspect of the world we live (objects, utterances, inscriptions, experiences signifying to us), if our hold on 'reality' is primarily through language, then identity and meaning are elusive and not as readily available as common sense would have us think.

I hold a piece of pot. I can attribute an identity to it: it is not a stone or metal blade but a fragment of pottery of a certain size, perhaps with decoration of a particular type, with colour and markings, a particular ceramic fabric. I can perhaps relate such attributes to styles of pottery, to production centres, to places where such pots are found. This is not what the piece of pot *is*. Ontology (being) is in question. These attributes are not present *within* the potsherd, giving it an identity. I might see in the marks on the broken fragment a reminder of a pebble found on the beach. Its colour may bring me to think of a picture on my wall at home. Its painted strutting lions may remind me of my cat. I may think of the first occasion I came across this potsherd, my mood or circumstance when I did so. All is shifting. It would be better to talk of the piece of pot becoming rather than being something. It does not have identity and being, so much as difference and becoming. I am led into associations and periphrasis, metaphor.

The piece of pot is old. Is it the past? Does it bring the past to me? Is it a sign of the past, its trace? Is the past its meaning? The past and the potsherd cannot be reduced to promises of communion with a definitive or transcendent meaning. The meaning is here and dispersed elsewhere. The potsherd is always more. I try to remove my feelings and perceptions and see through to what the potsherd actually is. Its existence is simply and grossly material, and even its chemical and physical composition leads me off into associations. It is always referred to something else. Where do I begin? How do I know which lines of flight from the object, which deferrals to take? Only according to a law - being told the 'right' chains of relation.

The signifier is subverted; instead of the sovereign signifying potsherd there are webs of difference. The past is not the origin of meaning, but



neither is the archaeologist. Archaeologists write: their excavations, the finds, interpretations. But given that there is no ultimate meaning to such works, no unity of signifier (the archaeological text) and the signified (the past), what is the origin of meaning of the texts? We do not find the past in the archaeological work, nor do we find the archaeologist. There are no origins of the meanings we read through archaeological books. There is no sovereign archaeological subject dreaming and communicating meanings behind or beyond the words and images we see. The author is dead. Authorship gives way to text; authors as fixed points of identity and origin give way to discourse. Discourse consists of sets of practices, values, concepts, powers which enable the production of what are considered as meaning and knowledge, and of texts produced within its structures and law. We are inserted into such discourse.

Such post-structuralist argument should not be taken to say that there is nothing that we can know, only uncertainty, that there is no past and present, or indeed objects from the past which may mean or be known. It does not question truth to replace it with a free-play of signifiers. What is questioned is the hope that the truth in archaeology (however far we may be from it), the truth of the past, is one of presence and being, meanings within and belonging to the past and brought to us in the presence of the potsherd. These are transcendental notions: the presence and being of a past existing before signification, without necessary relation with anything else, in and for itself, immediate, beyond our question. Instead the truth or the past (a reasonable aim) is material and institutional, social and personal; and archaeologists write in the space between past and present.

So objectivity slips off into lines of affiliation and association. Archaeology seems less to do with the past than contemporary interests. What is to become of archaeology if such critique is accepted? What are archaeologists to do?

What is a post-structuralist archaeology to be?

The critique I have sketched is in no way widely accepted. I am in sympathy with a lot of it, will try to show how and why, and I have given it support in my other work in archaeology. But others are suspicious of the critique of the sovereignty of science and are not happy with what it would seem to make of archaeology.¹²

It may be considered that the questioning of objectivity as guide and aim leads to an incapacity to prefer one interpretation of the past to another. Anything goes and interpretation may proliferate according to subjective will. Objectivity questioned may be taken to mean subjectivity unleashed. The doubting of objectivity may mean removing the

ethology, ecology, linguistics, philosophy, and literary criticism. It has indeed enabled some to establish their academic and individual worth by figuring in the cycle. That many more grow tired and cannot or will not keep up with the carousel of approaches is understandable. Value can be seen in sticking with an idea and thoroughly working it out in the data, or it can be enjoyable watching from the sidelines.

But the suspicion of careerist elitism is also an unjust one. I believe that there is much more to the critique than that. I also believe that the dreadful spectres of unchecked subjectivity and relativism can be avoided without lapsing into the problems of the sovereignty of science. Before this though another image.

WEEDS, RABBITS AND POTATOES

In the North East of England it's called wicken grass. Scutch or twitch grass, couch grass. You can't get rid of the stuff. It sends out creeping white underground stems. Chop it up and each piece grows again. Mint grows anyhow too. Throw a piece away in the garden and next year there'll be a mint plant. Mint and iris grow from their rootstock. Thick crawling crabwise stalks underground sprouting more plants. Extensions then focus in tubers and bulbs. Rhizomes: this is a favourite metaphor of Deleuze and Guattari (1988). Invasive and spreading weeds sometimes; but potatoes are also rhizomes.

Prairie dogs and rabbits live in great burrows or warrens which provide shelter, supply and movement; they allow evasion and escape, breakout. Animal rhizomes. Ants also form a sort of insect rhizome.

Rhizomes-thinking is conjunctive. Its principle is not, as in tree-thinking, an ontological one, of *being* something (*A is B*), but of connection and lines of sequence (*A, B, C, D . . .*). Its character is multiplicity, in contrast to the multiple of tree-thinking. Trees can have multiple branches and leaves on the basis of segmentation of a higher unity or pollarding, but rhizomes are always already more than one - multiplicity. There is no unity in a rhizome in the sense of a centre or focus which can support attributes (*A is B and C and . . .*) or a pivot of division and segmentation. The rhizome is not a multiple unit derived from the division of a central unit or trunk. There are no points, pivots, positions of a fixed structure (arboreal and hierarchical) in a rhizome; any point can be connected with any other. Rather than points there are lines, of sequence, of connection which have no beginning or end, but middles in motion: dimensions and direction. So you can never feel secure with a binary division or dichotomy in a rhizome; the division may turn back on itself with new organization, re-entering the sequence. There is no fixed entypoint, but many. The rhizome is anti-genealogy. There is no meaningful sequence from origin or ancestor to descendant.

Rhizomes move sideways; they do not dig deep. The rhizome is not itself by virtue of its own form, like a tree. It is constantly in movement, shifting. The lack of centre and clear structure means that it is defined more by the outside. And if certain lines are followed we end elsewhere, in another multiplicity, deterritorialized, in another patch of wicken grass, out of the burrow, in a line of flight.

The sexuality of wicken grass, of rhizomes, of the burrow is not really reproductive but erotic. Open and conjunctive, it is about fostering connections and associations. This is an oneiric desire: desire like dreamwork in which the deep and forbidden meaning of our dreams and fantasies is turned into the dream stories we have. Rhizomes are not so much about being, identity and reproduction, as becoming something else, movement and relationality.

There is an aspect of signification in tree-thinking. Trees stand for other things, and this signifying depends on principles of identification - specifying points of identity and of representation. Unlike the tree-book, which is a model or representation of its object, the rhizome-book connects with its object - it does not represent but constructs with and for the object. Rhizome-writing forms an assemblage with what it is about.

What are the implications for the archaeological garden? The characteristics of rhizomes-thinking are: making connections, anarchic associations rather than hierarchical procedures of thinking, denial of final and definitive identities of things in reconstructions of the object world, rather than reflections. I have introduced the images of trees and rhizomes to raise some old questions of how archaeologists represent or write the past, give it identity and classify it, relate the different things we find to each other and to ourselves, how we understand the things archaeologists do. I am not going to say that tree-thinking is out. I shall try to see through the images to the fertility of a rhizomes-thinking augmenting tree-thinking in a more varied topography of archaeological interpretation.

A WIDER VIEW: PHILOSOPHY AND MODERNITY

Can archaeologists afford to lose their hold on what may be considered objective reality? Can they afford to admit that the facts of the past may not be at all what they were but are inextricably wrapped up in our subjective present? Are archaeologists, with the authority of objective source material gone, to be on an equal footing with novelists and mystics? What is to be made of the fears of relativism, of not being able to judge different archaeologies? I want to try to answer these questions by considering the intellectual context of the criticisms which have been levelled at the methodological hegemony of archaeological science, by thinking again what critique may be, and then by picking out some ways of working archaeology which promise much to me.

Archaeology can be a narrow and parochial subject. It can be very secure and rewarding to excavate or survey, conserve and describe, photograph and collect archaeological materials. These are all necessary parts of doing archaeology. But I think the fears of losing a hold on the past, of multiple and incommensurable explanations at the whim of present political interests are, unfortunately and as unacceptably, as insular, when the intellectual context of the questions raised in the last fifteen years is considered.

I think of the philosophical challenges which have been made to some of the premises of archaeology's methodological hegemony. The distinction between analytic and synthetic statements is a vital one for an archaeology which wants to hold on to the empirical. (Analytic statements are those which can be shown to be true by laws of logic and definitions which are grounded in meanings independent of facts; for example, 'this axe is a cutting implement'. Synthetic statements are those, often grounded in fact, where what is asserted of the subject does not repeat all of the meaning of the subject; for example, 'this axe is large'.) With the dissolution of the distinction by Quine and others, it is difficult to maintain the distinction between facts and meanings. The logical atomism of Russell and Wittgenstein's early work, and analogous philosophies such as positivism, have also lost credit. These hold that atomic propositions (or protocol or basic propositions) are elementary terminal or originary statements established in philosophical analysis which reveal the actual structure of facts, directly picturing them, mirroring the world. It does not seem possible to reduce statements to terms which refer directly to immediate experience of reality, and to define meaning or significance on the basis of this reduction. It is not so easy to hold a distinction between metaphysics and another more secure reason such as science.

More generally such philosophical doubts belong with a failure of the compact between word and world. 'In the beginning was the word and the word was with god' (in Greek: *en arche en ho logos* - *arche* and *logos*, here are some pertinent reflections for archae-ology). We read in the Gospel of Saint John of an original compact between speaking the meaning of the world and divinity, its foundation. But Nietzsche, and modernity, write of the death of god. The link between the words we use and the world we live seems no longer so trustworthy. We have had thrown in doubt our ability to say the meaning of the world.

It is with this reference that we may think of the attacks by Derrida and others on what they call *logocentrism* and *ontotheology* and which are argued as lying within much of western thought. Logocentrism is the centring of thought on *logos*, which is an order of meaning conceived as existing in-itself, in communion with reality, a foundation - thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word of God. And it holds that we need not go

beyond this foundation. Onto-theology is a theology in that it assumes a transcendental existence of some sort as foundation. Existing in-itself as presence, it is a divine first principle. In logocentrism the potential compact between word and world means that being is sayable, that language is a direct analogy of existence. But this forgets about the signifier. The word is not a unity of neutral vehicle (the sound) and meaning. Expression, the realm of the signifier, is material and differential; it is not a transparent and neutral vehicle bringing to us the presence of the world. Derrida takes us from presence to *differance*, from speech as a direct and natural relation with meaning to signifiers constantly deferring absolute meaning. There is no simple correspondence between word and world.

Logos and cosmos no longer meet. And this is not some empty intellectual motif. It is part of the experience of our (post)modern condition. To this experience belong not only philosophical but also moral, psychological, social and political configurations. In this context of my speculation on the character of archaeology I am interested in the cultural and aesthetic responses to (post)modernity: the visual, tactile, textual experiment around perception and representation, the questioning of what realism may be, of what our knowing and being are in contemporary modernity: these are the characteristics of the movements of modernism and postmodernism. World and word, being and reference are separated, and left are absence or language and imagery themselves. From the saying of meaning to deafness - absurdity (Latin: *surdus* means deaf). To an absence of the world as its truth. I say this is a pot, but the word pot is not the real ceramic object, and to use the word as if it were stand-in is to abuse the word. With Mallarme: the force and vitality, the meaning of the word I form is the absence of that ceramic. Jean Cocteau: the only work which succeeds is that which fails (see Steiner 1989).

Art not as imitator of the world, but referring to itself, self-consciously aesthetic. Where does perception and representation begin, the world end? Collage draws in the world as aesthetic material. A surrealist searches the flea-market for the ready-made art-object. An object world no longer secure and familiar but strange and shocking, though media saturation dulls the sharpness. With the death of God as the omniscient narrator comes a many-sided world, secret and unconscious worlds, paradox and ambiguity as opposed to single objective reality. What story-telling can now cope with the world? And what has happened to the faith in progress and the exponential growth of technological reason and knowledge? Linear and consoling time gives way to synchronous montage.

With modernity came revolutionary change. The aftermath of the defeat of revolutionary political movements outside the Soviet Union

after the Great War of 1914-18 brought a crisis in orthodox Marxism. Western Marxism - writers such as Lukacs, Gramsci, Adorno, Marcuse and the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, to Sartre and Althusser - was a decisive shift in attention away from economic and political structures as central concerns of Marxist theory to questions of culture and consciousness. These were conceived as the ideological locus of the stabilizing features of capitalism which worked against revolutionary political change. As well as managing a major critique of 'bourgeois' philosophy, a considerable theoretical apparatus has been developed for understanding culture and ideology (cultural constructions which misrepresent or deny a contradictory social reality). There has been innovative work on the constitution of subjectivity, and on the analysis and reception of art and literature. The latter has raised serious questions of the place of the artist or cultural worker in society (Brecht's theatre and Adorno's avant-garde have had considerable influence). Western Marxism has also been a revitalization of dialectical and relational thinking which finds a major recent origin in Hegel (I shall come to this soon). Nor is western Marxism over and done with; Habermas notably continues in a similar but extended trend. And without it contemporary European thought is inconceivable (Anderson 1976).

However naive and unsophisticated, much recent archaeological work is also in debt to this branch of critical Marxism. This is visible in the use of the concept ideology, the influence of French structural-Marxist anthropology on social archaeology, and the branch of archaeology termed critical by Mark Leone and others (Leone *et al.* 1987; see also Shanks and Tilley 1987b).

Another important context is that of feminist critique with its politics of the personal and scrutiny of androcentric bias. Sandra Harding has written a particularly relevant introduction to a gendered critique of science (1986) from which I have gained much.

NEGATIVE THINKING (AND DIOGENES)

This brings me back to 'critique'. I have written how critique may simply be the element of criticism in the rise and demise of different approaches to the archaeological past. It is part of the liberal open debate of the academy. The critique of the methodological hegemony in archaeology belongs with this somewhat. But I see there is more.

Critique also refers to a tradition in western philosophy which goes back to Kant and Hegel especially. In the Kantian line critique is reflection on the conditions of possible knowledge, a rational reconstruction of the conditions which make language, cognition and action possible. It is in this sense that the term comes into Popper's critical rationalism as described above in its archaeological variant.

It is the other line of descent from Hegel and through Marx that I make much more of. This is critique as negative thinking, in contrast to positive knowledge.¹³ Its characteristics include an aversion to neat systems of thought on the grounds that they are inadequate to reality, thinking instead according to the task at hand, shifting and adapting. It aims to subject everything to rational scrutiny, with oppositional unveiling and debunking, reflecting on the constraints to which people succumb in the historical process of their self-formation. These are questions of people's identity, their subjectivity, power as people's ability to act and their subjection to power beyond them. Negative thinking includes ideology critique as the scrutiny of sedimented meanings in our cultural works which serve particular social interests, and as a project of liberation from distortions, constraints and tradition by critical insight into relations of power.

Negative critical thinking implies a tighter and reciprocal relation with the present; it is situated knowledge. I have learned much from work in this tradition, so much so that Chris Tilley and I have argued that archaeology is nothing if it is not critique (1987b). But critique is not a panacea for archaeological ills. It is not a body of theory which can be 'applied' to the past, not a prescription. There are other problems with critique too which concern its arguing from 'truth'. To take the line that people are subject to distorted views of the past or of what they are doing as archaeologists, that they are in a state of false consciousness, implies that the critic has the missing truth and is enlightened. This begs the question of the source of that enlightenment, the grounds for claiming truth.

And more. Peter Sloterdijk, in his book *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1988), holds that the old strategies of enlightenment, correcting people's errors and false consciousness, do not work any more. In part this is because Marxist ideology critique turned into political legitimation in the Soviet Union (and in this version is now even more discredited with the political modernization of Eastern Europe). More importantly it is because of cynicism. Sloterdijk sees this as a predominant mindset or social character which has emerged since the 1960s. 'Cynicism is enlightened false consciousness' (1988, p.5). This unhappy condition is one where the lessons of enlightenment have been learned (we know that the philosophy of science is not the answer; whoever really was a positivist? Of course archaeology is part of the present; whoever denied that there is an unavoidable subjective element in what we do in archaeology?), but they have not been followed up with an enlightened practice. 'Well off and miserable at the same time, this consciousness no longer feels affected by any critique of ideology; its falseness is already reflexively buffered' (Sloterdijk 1988, p.5). This may not capture precisely how archaeologists feel (how many are miserable in not being able to

realize the claims of post-structuralism?!), but I sense some of this cynicism in archaeology. I ask, what is the reflexive buffering which holds people from acting, from taking seriously the subjective, feeling, and the ethical dimensions of archaeology? Is it not that there is too much to lose? In for a penny, in for a pound. The job, the committees and institutional structures, the administration all have a pull, and you have to survive in the real world. So you come to terms *privately*. You accept the problems of the sovereignty of science, the great philosophical problems. You know, but. . . there are all those engagements to get on with, getting on with real archaeology.

It reminds me of something Theodor Adorno wrote. 'There are no more ideologies in the authentic sense of false consciousness, only advertisements for the world through its duplication and the provocative lie which does not seek belief but commands silence' (1981, p.34).

There is also the unpleasant subjective side of much ideology critique. It becomes a relation of power in which the opponent is put down, depersonalized; the ideas to be criticized take on a life of their own, the person criticized identified with the ideas. Enlightenment claims to liberate, but so much enlightening critique seems to involve domination and exclusion, putting down the archaeologist who does not agree and excluding them from the coterie of practitioners of the new enlightened approach. There has certainly been some of this in archaeology.

Sloterdijk reclaims another cynicism - the kynicism of Diogenes, the ancient philosopher. Diogenes lived in a barrel outside Athens. Provoking and joking, he mocked the pompous pretensions of Plato's philosophical system (as an answer to his theory of eros, Diogenes tossed himself off), the values of the city state (Diogenes was self-sufficient and ascetic; he pissed in the market place), and the claims of imperial power and fame (when Alexander the Great visited the famous philosopher and offered anything he wished, Diogenes asked him to move to one side as he was blocking the sun). Sloterdijk sees this cheekiness as part of a 'low' theory, rooted in the animal in the human (Diogenes was called a dog - *kuon* - hence kynicism), as opposed to the 'high' theory of Plato, rarified and abstract, detached from the material body. Sensual, joking, irreverent rationality. I shall have more to say about this prospect of subjective embodiment.

The objection, the side-leap, light-hearted mistrust,
the pleasure in mockery are signs of health. Everything
that is unqualified belongs to pathology.

(Nietzsche)

In plotting these intellectual contexts I am asking us to dare to think on a grander scale. Not to be affected and self-important, but to appreciate what archaeologists are and may be doing; to appreciate that archaeology

too brings us to limitless questions of what we are in relation with the object world. We might see written in even the potsherd our modernity.

All the same I need to give more particular attention to what archaeologists might do in answer to questions raised of relativism and pluralism, of archaeologists losing hold on what makes them what they are - the past.

**THINKING THROUGH DICHOTOMIES:
RELATIONAL THINKING**

It is now quite commonplace to note the dichotomies which run through western culture. They are very evident too in much archaeology and I introduced some in the Prelude:

professional	popular
past facts	present response
intelligible	sensible
truth	beauty
public	private
rationality	emotion
detached	involved

I asked the question of the character of archaeology which involved such separations and have tried to give an answer at one level by outlining archaeological method under what I have termed the sovereignty of science. This brought further dichotomies:

objectivity	subjectivity
science	humanities
facts	values
generalization	particularities
reason	commitment

Some see the critique of the methodological hegemony of scientific archaeology as aiming to shift the balance in these dichotomies from one side to the other in a revaluation of the emotive and subjective appreciation of the particular. There is also the worry that neutral reason may give way to social and political commitment as archaeologists apply their work to the present.

Post-structuralist questionings have disclosed other hidden dichotomies, particularly:

presence	absence
identity	difference

Are archaeologists to just live with these fissures and trust to a liberal academic environment which can cope with different archaeological

approaches? This must be partly the case because these dichotomies go very deep into the whole way we live. And there have been swings along these axes before: in anthropology for example, from nineteenth-century schemes of cultural and social evolution to the exclusive study of particular societies. Some might be more positive about finding a middle road - the moderation of science with an appreciation of the human aspects of the past, mingling statistical analysis with poetry.

I see another way. The aim is a materialist sublation of the dichotomous thinking. This sounds very cryptic and esoteric; I shall explain and show it need not be.

Sublate is the word usually used to translate the German *aufheben* (*aufhebung* in its noun form). *Aufheben* is to take up, save, but also to cancel, terminate, annul, suspend. *Aufheben* is a Hegelian term used of overcoming an opposition. To sublate, for example, the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity 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 objectivity and subjectivity 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 object is mediated by subjective factors. 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. The reality of that piece of pot is *realization*, the process of it becoming other than itself. This becoming-other-than-itself involves the intercession of subjectivity, of the perceiving, feeling, analysing archaeologist. The piece of pot is not defining itself as anything, but depends on its relation with me (as I do with it). Subjectivity is the form of the objective. This concept of sublation is part of relational thinking, and all the dichotomies I have listed are relations. Relational thinking holds 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 (the potsherd is a potsherd), and follow the process in which it becomes something else, as in the proposition 'the piece of pot is yellow'. But in the process of becoming yellow, however, the potsherd still remains a potsherd. This is sublation - the dynamic of turning into something else and effecting reconciliation.

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. The concrete world is permeated by negativity, and identity is otherness. Another name for this is non-identity thinking. I hope it is clear that it is analogous with my reading of Derrida's *differance*.

Abstract now comes to mean the piece of pot 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 potsherd is concrete in itself, while my following of the negations of the piece of pot (tracing it through its contexts, associations and relations) involve abstractions 14

MATERIALISM

The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively

(Marx, 'First Thesis on Feuerbach')

Archaeology might seem to be inherently materialist, dealing as it does with the material remains of the past. But I am using the term to mark a move from metaphysical notions such as objectivity, identity and presence, to thinking of archaeology as the practices of archaeologists. Materialism as embodiment. In contrast to abstract definitions and pre-defined rules of procedure, materialism, as I intend it, is not a methodology.

What do archaeologists do?⁷ I want to abandon the answer that it should be archaeological method. Instead to begin with the imperfections of the particular encounter with the past, with interests and aspirations, no clearly defined premises, but to follow the movement of the piece of pot in its concrete affiliation or connection. This occurs in the job of the archaeologist and in cultural experiences of contemporary society. Understanding archaeology necessarily involves reflection on the wider relations of our archaeological practice now. It is to move from a subject or discipline archaeology, to think of experiences and practices which can be called archaeological. Through this book I shall try to unfold what such a materialism means to me.

HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is the theory and skill of interpretation, of understanding the significance of actions, writing, institutions and products. It is concerned with studies of essentially meaningful subject matter. The classic recent formulation of hermeneutics is Hans-Georg Gadamer's book *Truth and Method* (1975). I shall pick out some pertinent points 15

A major distinction can be drawn between the object of scientific work and that of historical and social studies. There is a valid place for the technical knowledge of a scientific analysis and understanding of materials from the past. But the things archaeologists deal with are also

of a different order. They are and were part of social practices, and this entails an assessment of their meaning as precondition of understanding them. Hermeneutics gives an account of how such understanding may proceed.

We cannot transcend the located nature of historical understanding. It is always historically located itself, from the viewpoint of whoever seeks to understand, understanding in the light of subsequent events and unintended consequences of people's actions (history does not happen as people intend in their present). Historical knowledge is thus partial. Neither has the past any particular or original meaning, for the same reasons. Rejected is any metaphysical category of the past 'in-itself as origin of meaning, there can be no pure reception of a 'raw' past. Rather, understanding an object from the past is always understanding it as something. The act of looking and sensing the object always involves an intentional act of giving meaning - it is never raw object but *becomes* potsherd or ceramic. This is a pre-judgement. And according to Gadamer, all understanding is so pre-judged. The past is always *for* something else, it is a projection, part of our archaeological project, it is understood in terms of its possible applications in the present. Meaning, in going beyond the simple given, is seated in the situation of the interpreting archaeologist (its significance to interests, concerns, politics). This is the fore-structure of understanding into which we are 'thrown' or projected.

Gadamer argues that prejudice (as pre-judgement) is not bias or faulty reason, but essential to understanding. The archaeologist participates in the meaning the object has. Understanding involves mediating the meaning of the past with one's own situation. Gadamer calls this a 'fusion of horizons'. So the prejudice of the archaeologist's social and personal situation is not a barrier but the medium of understanding the past. We have to have some way of approaching the object, some orientation, and this orientation belongs with us. Partiality and prejudice, in Gadamer's terms, are not limitations on objectivity at all.

This is maintaining that all understanding (indeed the argument can be extended to include all knowledge) is grounded in a *traditional* orientation. We always pre-judge, and the terms of that pre-judgement are given to us or are informed by the history of the society and culture to which we belong. Even standards of rationality may be included in prejudice, reason too is embedded in our experience and language. (This may be an attack on the autonomous rational subject and on the idea of an invariant and universal reason.) But does this involve an acquiescence to the norms of the tradition to which we belong? Many see this as where Gadamer leads us. We can construe some ways out (see Warnke 1987).

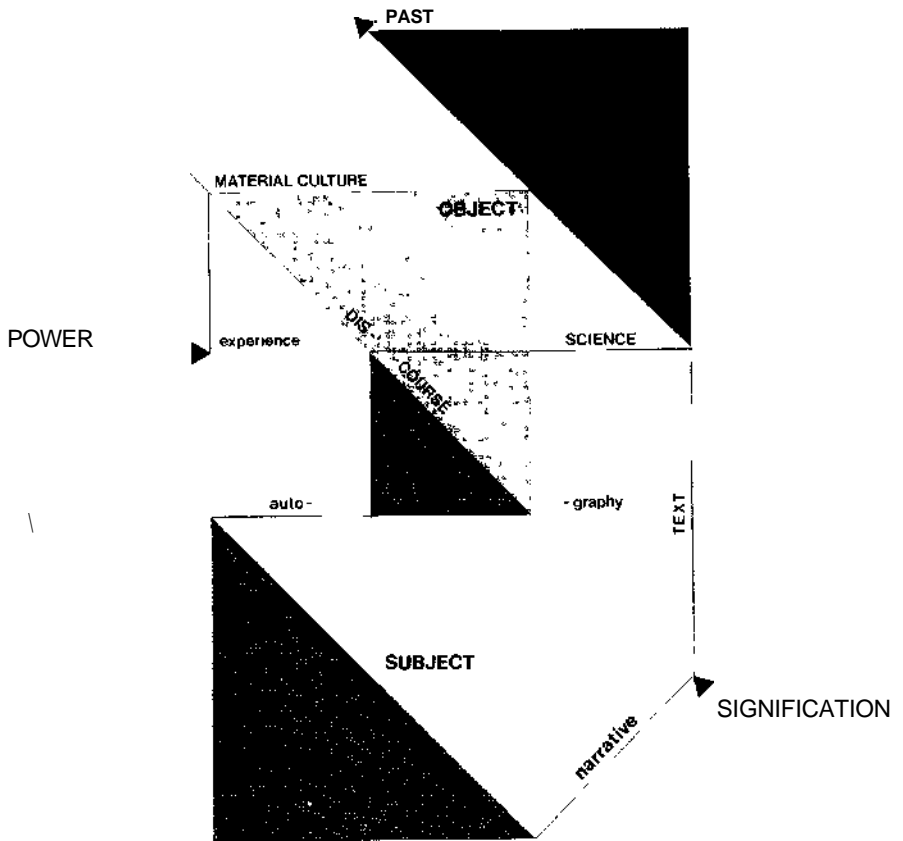
For Gadamer understanding is like a dialogue or conversation (not a monologue). In a dialogue we move from initial statements towards

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a consensus (of sorts) which is more than the sum of the initial positions. This fusion of horizons is potentially a learning experience in which one takes account of the other, their objections and views, even if we are not won over. Sublation, as cancellation and preservation, captures this movement. Our assumptions and approach can prove faulty and needing change. We do not have to accept given traditional forms. And we discover their inadequacy in the confrontation or dialogue with the other. Dialogue depends in its nature on being open, on a willingness to put ourselves in a larger perspective, under a wider horizon. This condition is the rescue of reason. Rationality is not some absolute for which we can formulate rules and procedures, but is the willingness to recognize our partiality, that our knowledge and reasoning are open to challenge and modification. Dialogue is also the basis upon which we may judge our approaches. Their degree of openness is potential subject of critique: philosophical, political, ideological and social. We can ask of the assumptions and orientations of the archaeology whether its philosophical structure, ideological and political stand, its model of society, will allow it to listen.

I have given some answers to the question of what archaeologists do. They practise the mechanics of fieldwork and finds analysis. They engage in scientific method, acquire positive knowledge of the past, propagate ideological views in support of contemporary capitalism; they engage in cultural work to achieve a liberation of consciousness, further their academic careers, write texts within a discourse archaeology. I have omitted something they have in common with others: they administer museums and departments of archaeology, institutions of education. This may well involve imparting the discipline - finds, methods and theories - to students and others who may wish to listen.

What is the purpose of archaeology? Is it a quest for objectivity; to acquire more facts; to understand or even explain the truth of the past? Is it even to provide justification for an epistemology which holds that truth is to correspond with the facts of the past? Might it not be to foster an open reason, an acceptance of fallibility. In doing archaeology we might not just gather more facts, approaches, explanations, but also acquire the ability to engage in understanding, a learning of tact and judgement in a dialogue with the past.



An archaeological rhizome.
 A field of archaeological discourse.
 Plotting pathways.

We might begin with the relation of the archaeological subject and object (archaeologist and perhaps an artifact from the past) - cubed in the figure. Brought together in the subject discipline archaeology - discourse Which depends on signification, turning to signs - a plane through the figure. Its tangents narrative text, science (discourse of the empirical and analytical treatment of the object), and material culture (itself signifying and meaning). And auto-biography - the subjective constitution of the object, the form in which it appears. The object and material culture point to the past and slip off. (Subjective) experience of discourse is of agency (the power to act on the object past), and of discipline (authority and the conventions of the academy). In the auto-biographical constitution of the factual past is also formed part of the identities of archaeologists; pasts produced relate to social and cultural identities, class, the state and its institutions which facilitate archaeological study - the power to produce pasts.

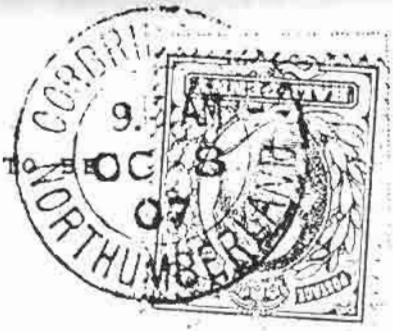


ROMAN LION, CORBRIDGE.

I wonder if this will get to you
 I have already got lost
 fair and junk stalls at the antiques
 original excavations of old
 Fort I dug there (suburbs) from the
 it makes me think of it lost a great amount
 ications of a network of crossing images and settings.
 all sorts of messages picked up. I've gone out
 to you were here as if this were
 the way of talking to it. Has it eaten its prey?
 out. How do you feel about the things
 from. M. J. J.

CARD

THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE
 WRITTEN HERE



Mrs. Scott.
 River View.
 Black Hall Mill.
 Elchester.



Dunstanburgh Castle, Northumberland