Presented by the author, JL Bintliff

Extracting Meaning from the Past

Edited by John Bintliff

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This book is dedicated to my wife Elizabeth,
for her love, support and encouragement
during the preparation of this and all my other publications

Foreword

Disneylands, Parables, or Value-Free Knowledge For Its Own Sake: Why Do We Need a Past?

On Saturday March 28th, 1987 a conference took place at Bradford University, on the theme of 'EXTRACTING MEANING FROM THE PAST'. The invited speakers were all archaeologists, and represented the many and varied roles that archaeologists fulfil in contemporary society: museum curators, university teachers and research scientists, professional field archaeologists – but all employed by local or central government to look after and interpret the nation's past.

Archaeology's public role is causing the profession many practical difficulties nowadays, as well as much soul searching about what its practitioners are trying to do with 'The Past'. On the one hand, the Government is keen to see responsibility for Britain's 'Heritage' left in the hands of quangoes, and increasingly commercial agencies. This has led to 'The Past' being defined in terms of museum objects or impressive ruins, which need to be 'protected', but whenever possible featured in current and future plans for self-funding public 'theme parks'. Most speakers at the Bradford Conference stressed the neglect that could ensue, with these approaches, of a rounded, educational experience portraying our past in all its rich complexity. 'Disneylands' understated the ability of the general public, with its increasingly technical background and social awareness, to enjoy a genuine mixture of spectacle and educational display, as successfully achieved at Fishbourne Roman Palace and the Jorvik Viking Centre.

Several speakers also criticised the mismanagement of Stonehenge, as an example where immense popular interest in an ancient site had not been channelled into an imaginative but informed educational experience, with access to all. The ambivalent attitude of the authorities to the Druids and the Hippie Convoy raised the question: Whose Past Is It Anyway?

Similar problems of communication with the general public appeared in contributions reflecting the role of the nation's museums' service. Most displays were not aimed at 'the person in the street', and many museums seemed to exist to cater for the elite tastes of those who ran them or advised in their running. Access for archaeologists to the media was also highlighted as generally very weak, and whilst the newsagents' shelves are overflowing with specialist popular journals in other fields, popular archaeology journals have failed to establish themselves in this market. Likewise, books on archaeology are usually only widely read if they are written by journalists and television personalities or are fanciful astro-archaeology potboilers of the 'spacemen and ley-lines' variety. Most speakers stressed the urgency of training archaeologists to communicate their findings better, or alternatively, of collaborations with the media and its journalists in joint presentations of accurate but attractive reports on our 'past'.

Several important theoretical questions to do with the 'meaning' of the past were raised during the Conference, and led to deep and wide-ranging debate. Should archaeologists strive to interpret the past with total objectivity, aiming to produce 'scientific' truths and general principles about human society like the laws of Physics or the axioms of Mathematics? All

the speakers were agreed that human beings are too variable in behaviour, both as individuals and as whole societies, ever to justify a search for 'laws' in history and prehistory. On the other hand, a profession devoted to what has already happened, but which left others to draw any conclusions and lessons from the past for today's society, hardly deserved public interest or financial support.

Yet, on the question of what kind of interpretations archaeologists should put across to the public, opinion was divided. There was certainly agreement that the past can demonstrate 'parables' about important current issues such as Ecology, Politics, Economics, Religion and Morality. Some speakers supported a conscious 'politicizing' of archaeology, underlining the key message 'the Past' could bring into contemporary debates, to help swing opinion in particular ideological directions. Other speakers pointed out that successive governments and wide sectors of the public would be unwilling to fund a discipline with too obvious a 'party-line'. On the other hand, there was clear evidence that major research themes in archaeology tended anyway to follow closely current intellectual and social trends in modern society. In the end, a helping hand might be recognised from the resolution of current controversies in the teaching of History in Secondary Schools. Here for some time teachers and professional associations have been at odds with the Government about what should and should not be taught as 'significant' in our history (with strong political overtones). Whatever comes out of this debate might be borrowed by archaeology in order to introduce 'value' without undue 'bias' into our selection of 'significance' in the story of past societies.

A final question, more of a philosophical one, centred on the reasonable query: How knowable is 'the Past'? It seems that until early modern times, it is almost impossible to discover with any degree of certainty what past individuals really thought about events they participated in or were responsible for. For Roman times, for example, only Cicero has left us sufficient intimate, personal detail in his letters and speeches for any adequate biography to be written. We must therefore interpret what happened in the past 'from the outside' by cataloguing things that occurred, and by piecing together by archaeological excavation and survey, or the study of historical documents, the interplay of different components that made up the organic system of a past society.

In the last analysis, the patterns we claim to detect as archaeologists, and which we pass on to the public as the 'significant' trends and events, are difficult to justify by the techniques of laboratory science – we cannot experiment on the past. Yet as the philosopher of science, Karl Popper has pointed out, a scientist validates his results by achieving the confirmation of his scientific peers – what Popper calls 'inter-subjectivity'. We perceive the key features that 'explain' the human past, the 'pattern', because we are human beings, a species that specializes in sorting the important out from the background 'noise' – hence our probably unique capacity amongst animals for abstract thought. One speaker likened the process of testing-out models of the past on each other to a court of law: the jurors are not specialists in the law, but we accept their ability to adjudicate between the opposing arguments (or 'theories') offered by opposing counsel.

The past *is* knowable, and archaeologists' reconstructions have to pass the test of fire of their informed colleagues, which is a form of scientic validation. Archaeologists should aim to reach out and interest more and more of the general public in their heritage (the objects *and* the knowledge), not by over-trivialising the past, nor by overt party-lines. The past has a lot to tell the present, and archaeologists should speak up more often on issues where they have relevant 'parables'.

John Bintliff, Bradford University

A Review of Contemporary Perspectives on the 'Meaning' of the Past

John Bintliff
Bradford University

The 1980's is promising to be a highly innovative and exciting period in the development of the discipline of Archaeology, and it is therefore an appropriate moment both to look back over the way we have recently trod and scan the horizon ahead of us. The title of this Conference encapsulates what I take to be the central issue in contemporary archaeology, and one which all the signs point to as becoming the focus of theory and practice for future years.

In the introductory paper to a volume recently appeared (*Archaeology at the Interface*. BAR 1986, edited by myself and Chris Gaffney), I have tried to "map out" what seem to me to be the major trends in British (and to some extent European and American) archaeology since the last war. It proved instructive to eavesdrop on similar self-analyses carried out lately by historians, geographers, sociologists and even architects. It appears that we have all had similar experiences in both the theoretical developments and practical/public practice of our disciplines.

Practical Perspectives
Part 1

Firstly, on the PRACTICAL side, the postwar decades witnessed a growing involvement of academic disciplines in the rebuilding of Europe, the planning of the landscape (rural and urban) and of society itself. Enthusiasm for 'public service' was matched increasingly by government's desire to extract immediate practical benefits from educational establishments and their offspring. The prominence given by professional field archaeologists to conservation and "rescue" meshed easily with the State's wish to redefine Archaeology as Heritage Management. "Public Archaeology" is therefore confronted by demands to be accountable and productive, either to the nation of taxpayers, or increasingly, to private entrepreneurs into whose hands much of the responsibility for the funding of archaeology may be heading. In essence, practical or public archaeology might be seen to be the victim of its own success. Through increasing government awareness of the threat to the national physical past, our data has become part of management and central government ideological strategies – the "heritage" is too important to be left to archaeologists. Moreover, the "heritage" is defined as a tangible set of historic objects or structures, rather than an understanding of the societies which produced artefacts and ecofacts. This kind of object-centred past requires guardians not interpreters, exploitation along commercial lines not educational holistic experiences. In my view, the archaeologist is an historian and a social anthropologist of past cultures; objects as data define the special operational sphere of archaeologists within those broader disciplines, but they are our particular means to the same ends.

The very obvious danger that now confronts public archaeology is that the "meaning" a historian or anthropologist tries to extract from observation of a developing society will be largely discarded in favour of two linked approaches to the "meaning" of the past: firstly that it is not the State's role to sponsor research into the society which produced an ancient monument, the State should protect such sites with minimal expense as a cultural resource; secondly, that wherever possible money needed to conserve the physical heritage should come from private, and in that case, commercial exploitation of the heritage, by selling the past for all it is worth. My criticism of the first approach is that starving the nation of people who make sense of the heritage hands over our past to those who know little about it, except for the physical conservation of its fragments. For the second approach, it is all too easy to conceive that by trivialising ancient sites and concentrating inevitably on the mind-boggling, the sensational, rather than the thought-provoking potential of our heritage, pots of money may be made at the expense of any real understanding of the past being handed over to the general public.

Behind this discussion is a fundamental issue, which seems to be being bypassed all too often in that familiar shortcut of governments (manage people and things as form, not content, and spend as little as you can get away with before public outcry). That issue is the real potential or Meaning of the Past to our society. We need to investigate the use and relevance of the past, both in terms of already-existing purposes the past serves, and in terms of untapped potential. Unless we have a clear idea of this many-facetted function, and this is essentially an intellectual process of evaluation and criticism by those of us involved with the past as a profession, no imposed management strategy or commercial hard-sell can hope to do justice to our heritage.

I would like to discuss briefly a number of kinds of response to the past which such a broader debate needs to take account of.

Disneylands

It has rightly been pointed out that our presentation of the past in terms of monuments or museum collections is still largely overtechnical, uninspiring and lacking emotional stimulation. There are many exceptions we all can think of, but there is little doubt that a radical change is called for to sharpen public interest and support. Fishbourne and the York Trust Heritage Projects have certainly shown the way, but at Jorvik one begins to wonder whether what is done in terms of the smell-rich, train-ride through the centuries, to enliven the more formal displays, in other hands might not become a titillating end in itself, a Disneyland of fantasy fullfilment. Future scenarios might include reconstructed ancient sites complete with human actors, and here we are hardly a missile's length from the already vastly popular entertainments involving re-enactments of Civil War battles and medieval tournaments run by the Sacred Knot and smaller organisations.[1] The world of Great Men and Famous Battles is part of the real past, but fantasy re-enactment offers a flavour of the past which need have no real basis and, even if factually correct, encourages an oversimplified and sensual contact which undervalues the full complexity of bygone societies. It would be a poor History teacher who continued to teach teenagers through Illustrated Histories and encouraged them to comprehend the past in Dressing-Up games, but there is a real danger that formal presentation of the past to intelligent adults in this country may come to rest on similar principles.

At the same time as we show concern about future plans to trivialize the life of past communities by commercial organisations, we see official hypocrisy towards grass-root or popular involvement in the past. Chris Chippindale (1985) and others have reminded us that

we undermine what we are trying to achieve, with an informed knowledge of the past, in the mishandling of monuments such as Stonehenge. The spending of three quarters of a million pounds to keep the hippie convoy out, when in other years the British Druids are allowed in, betrays a total confusion in official circles: neither of these groups has a more tangible connection to the original function of the monument than the other, and both have a basic right to visit a site that has so many resonances for them. We academics may pour scorn on their interpretations and mystic experiences, but have no real understanding ourselves of the meaning of Stonehenge to its builders and users.

Landscapes of the Mind

It came as a real shock to big-time property speculators and the trendy end of the architectural profession to find a public outcry at the demolition of a collection of Victorian and Edwardian buildings in order to make way for an enormous glass skyscraper (the Mansion House Square project). It was argued that the old buildings were second or even third rate designs and hence discardable. But such attitudes show total ignorance of how a society interacts with its visible past. David Lowenthal and others have shown in a number of important and perceptive studies (Lowenthal 1979, 1985; Lowenthal and Binney 1981), that our awareness of the past in our community is a subtle and complex set of sensations. An analysis for example of public responses to different English townscapes has shown clear-cut and unexpected results: the higgledy-piggledy juxtaposition of unpretentious buildings reflecting the almost random accretion of centuries, received vastly greater affectionate response than the formal, alien groups of Jacobean and Georgian classical buildings. Aesthetic classifications are only one facet of our perception of value in the past, and many monuments or groups of buildings attract the interest and emotion of the public: 'because of their association with the private work and family lives of large numbers of common people in the past' (Lowenthal 1979). A critical awareness of the several meanings attached by different groups and subcultures in society to the physical past should lead not only to informed judgement on issues of conservation, and presentation, but is inseparable from a commitment to action. By far the most striking paper in an otherwise dry and scholarly volume on the history of European towns (Barley 1977) was a highly-charged account by Mannoni and Poleggi of the changing social composition in the historic old town quarters of Italian Renaissance cities. Originally a medieval social mosaic or multi-cultural community, early modern times saw the old town centres left to decay in the hands of the poor; most recently the rich have returned from the smart outer suburbs and aim to oust the proletariat, so as to ape the Medicis from expensively refurbished 'medieval' penthouse flats.

For an evocative meeting with different landscapes of the mind, a visit to the medieval Yorkshire monasteries of Rievaulx and Fountains shows how during the 18th century the rising taste for the Romantic, especially Gothic, became integrated with the Classical house and garden tradition of the English country house. By 1768 the Aislabie family had incorporated the splendid ruins of Fountains into the great formal garden at Studley Royal – the Abbey formed the culminating part of the whole design (Fleming and Gore 1979, 128). At Rievaulx, a great grass terrace was made, with a Classical rotunda at one end and a temple at the other (begun 1750). As one walked from one to the other, the hillside below was covered with trees, but vistas were cut to give different "picture" vews of the Abbey ruins which rose at the foot of the hill (Fleming and Gore 1979, 127). Another landscape of the mind is found in Pugin's wistful *Contrasts* (1841). In these illustrations a Catholic town of 1440, idealized, is compared with its Protestant and materialistic successor of 1840 (Figure 1).

Conclusions: We need to be more sensitive to the subtleties as well as the better-known romantic fantasies that coexist in the 'mindscapes' of the public. There is an endless spring of interest that can be tapped by those of us concerned with understanding and explaining the past, yet we need a genuine, informed feedback with our public. We certainly should not indulge the taste for the sensational and vulgar, the false and overly tendentious, just to make money; we underestimate the ability of the public to respond to a less glamorous but more insightful past if we take that route to their pockets and appetites. A final point: it is a central tenet of current thinking in academic and intellectual life, sometimes called post-Modernist thought, that we professionals should become much more self-aware, more explicit about our own experience of our data and tasks; by clarifying what we wish to share with our public we will also expose to ourselves the nature of our personal interaction with the past – this is actually the more important exercise, since we have chosen to devote our lives to unravelling what is past and gone.

Practical Perspectives

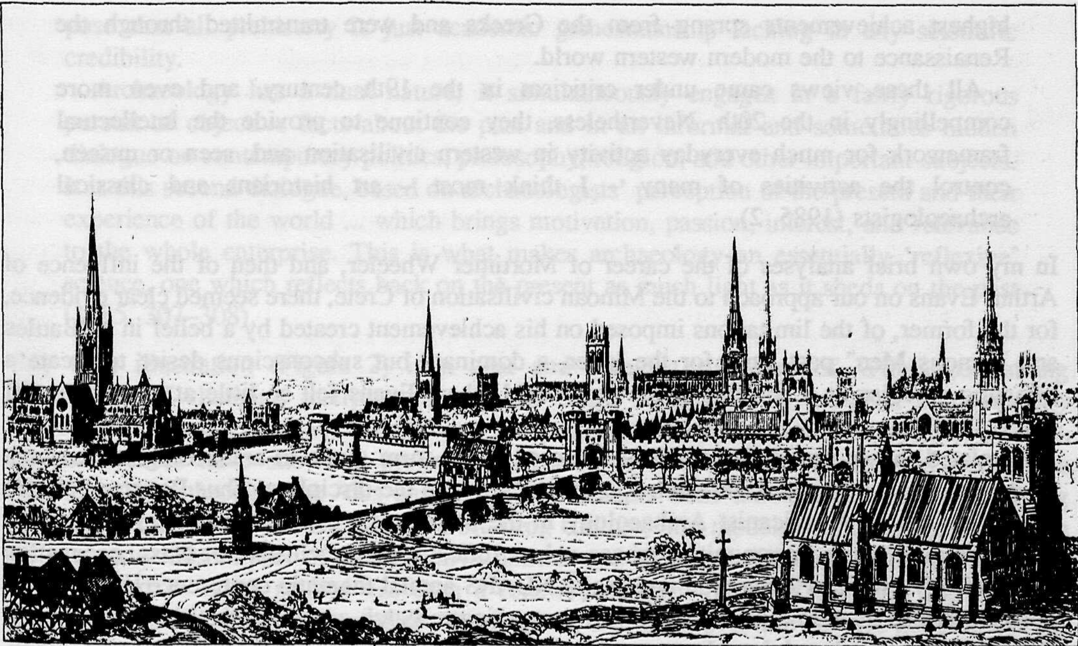
Part 2: Reflexive Archaeology – The Scholar in his/her Social Context

Whilst many academic disciplines, including Archaeology, have recently spent one or two decades trying to sweep away subjective attitudes and replace them with a unified, objective and scientific methodology (cf the New Archaeology), the current post-Modernist, post-Positivist perspective seeks to emphasize how far individual scholars are influenced by their personal background and beliefs, in their approaches to and interpretations of their data bases. These studies of particular scholars or whole generations of scholarship are uniformly eye-opening, exposing bias and blinkered thought as well as a more forgivable tendency for a generation to explore concepts and themes of great topicality in their own society. Some commentators would use these studies to demolish Archaeology's pretensions to recover an agreed reality in the past, claiming that in the future our activity will be recognised to be self-projection onto an essentially unknowable past (Hodder 1986).

Take Biblical Archaeology for example. In a scathing critique, Dever (1981) has dismissed a major part of archaeological work carried out till the 1970's in Palestine, because its practitioners were motivated by religious insights and paid scant attention to the progress of practical techniques in Archaeology, preferring to match old-fashioned excavations to events and personalities in the Bible. Or let us consider the role assigned to women in Human Evolution: a recent review article on this topic (Fedigan 1986) showed with undeniable clarity how all our supposedly objective interpretative theories of how human society evolved, how tool-using began, how human diet became established, rest on the assumption of male innovativeness and a male centrality to early human communities. The evidence from Palaeolithic studies and ethnographic inferences make a major female role not merely equally plausible but in some areas likely to be more significant for Human Evolution.

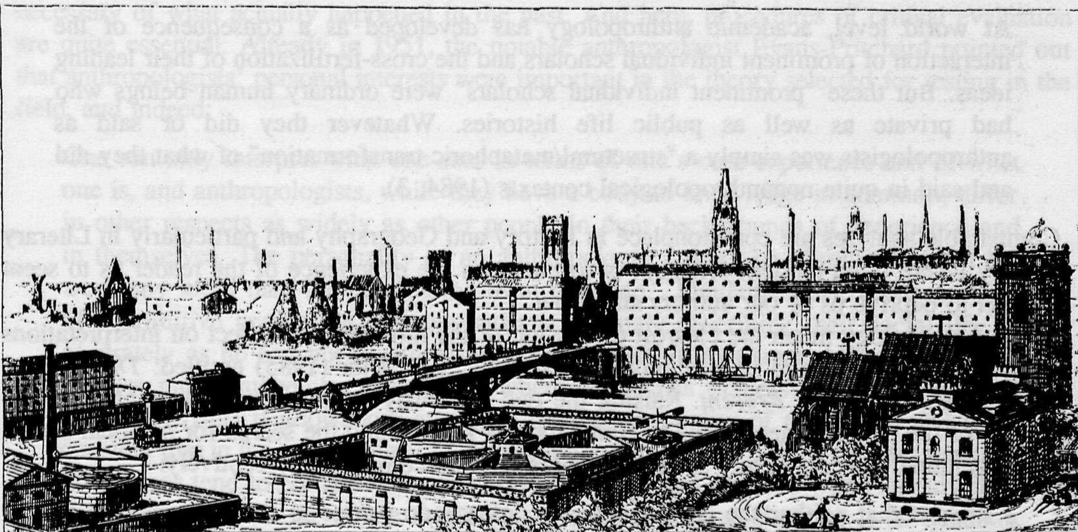
McNally (1985) has provided a stimulating commentary on the development of Classical Archaeology and its recent ambivalent position towards adopting the supposedly value-free, scientific ethos of the New Archaeology. She argues:

> Art history, archaeology and aesthetics began in the 18th century with their basis in certain fundamental and interlocking concepts of the period: that individuals achieve dignity through reason; that great individuals determine the course of history by both exemplifying and developing the values of their societies; that there is a hierarchy of human achievement based on dignity, rationality, and leadership; and that the



A Catholic Town in 1440

1. St Michaels on the Hill;, 2. Queens Cross, 3. St Thomas's Chapel, 4. St Maries Abbey, 5. All Saints, 6. St Johns, 7. St Peters, 8. St Alkmunds, 9. St Maries, 10. St Edmunds, 11. Grey Friars, 12. St Cuthberts, 13. Guild Hall, 14. Trinity, 15. St Olaves, 16. St Botolphs.



The Same Town in 1840

1. St Michaels Tower; rebuilt in 1750, 2. New Parsonage House & Pleasure Grounds, 3. The New Jail, 4. Gas Works, 5. Lunatic Asylum, 6. Iron Works & Ruins of St Maries Abbey, 7. Mr Evans Chapel, 8. Baptist Chapel, 9. Unitarian Chapel, 10. New Church, 11. New Town Hall & Concert Room, 12. Wesleyan Centenary Chapel, 13. New Christian Society, 14. Quakers Meeting, 15. Socialist Hall of Science.

> highest achievements sprang from the Greeks and were transmitted through the Renaissance to the modern western world.
>
> All these views came under criticism in the 19th century, and even more compellingly in the 20th. Nevertheless, they continue to provide the intellectual framework for much everyday activity in western civilisation and, seen or unseen, control the activities of many – I think most – art historians and classical archaeologists (1985, 2).

In my own brief analyses of the career of Mortimer Wheeler, and then of the influence of Arthur Evans on our approach to the Minoan civilisation of Crete, there seemed clear evidence, for the former, of the limitations imposed on his achievement created by a belief in a "Battles and Famous Men" past, and, for the latter, a dominant but subconscious desire to create a romantic paradise as a contrast to the real world where Evans felt so little at home (Bintliff 1983, 1984a).

A related theme now being actively explored is the form given to archaeological research by the existence of separate research communities within the discipline. Thus Patterson (1986) in an analysis of Americanist Archaeology in the States over the last sixty years, identifies distinct interpretative communities whose values reflect separate clusters of class, occupation and ideology. Jim Lewthwaite, in last year's NUARS annual thematic conference (Lewthwaite 1986) provided us with a rich overview of competing research groups in the history of French Geography and explored the relevance of such an analysis to the recent history of Archaeology. In fact, as with virtually all major new ideas in our discipline, the source of this self-analysis lies outside Archaeology in earlier soul-searching in sister-disciplines. Thus Sir Edmund Leach, the doyen of British Social Anthropology, provided us several years ago with a candid but illuminating anthropological analysis of British anthropologists, including himself (Leach 1984):

> At world level, academic anthropology has developed as a consequence of the interaction of prominent individual scholars and the cross-fertilization of their leading ideas. But these "prominent individual scholars" were ordinary human beings who had private as well as public life histories. Whatever they did or said as anthropologists was simply a "structural/metaphoric transformation" of what they did and said in quite nonanthropological contexts (1984, 3).

Comparable analyses are commonplace in History and Geography and particularly in Literary History where often modern criticism is so intent on the experience of the reader as to seem to wish to deprive us of our authors altogether.

For Archaeology much the clearest discussion of the modern filter effect on interpretations of the past can be found in a stimulating paper by R R Wilk (1985) entitled: *The Ancient Maya and the Political Present*. Raising the two obviously contrasted positions (1) that our models of the past are merely due to contemporary fashion and the search for personal status, or (2) genuinely reflect steady scientific progress, Wilk comments perceptively:

> I suggest that neither the critique nor the defence do justice to the true complexity .... of archaeologists' relationships to the past. The process of explaining the past is not a frivolous game, but neither is it a simple scientific quest for objective truth. There are elements of truth in lay perceptions of the profession: hypotheses about and explanations for the past are not generated in an abstract, objective way, and the acceptance and/or rejection of these hypotheses is not necessarily based on rigorous scientific tests. But to accept this as fact does not require that we adopt the cynical

pose that all prehistory is just academic gamesmanship lacking in any scientific credibility.

Archaeology has a dual nature; it simultaneously engages in a fairly rigorous pursuit of objective facts about the past and in an informal and sometimes hidden dialogue on contemporary politics, philosophy, religion, and other important subjects. It is this second dialogue, based on archaeologists' perception of the present and their experience of the world ... which brings motivation, passion, interest, and relevance to the whole enterprise. This is what makes archaeology an essentially 'reflexive' science, one which reflects back on the present as much light as it sheds on the past (1985, 307–308).

My next illustration (Figure 2) is a neat and amusing summary of Wilk's convincing correlation of changing interpretations of the Maya civilisation in terms of contemporary American life since the War. Following early 20th century escapist, anti-modern models, recent decades have shown a progression from war and invasion approaches during the Vietnam '60s, through late '60s and early '70s "middle class movement" models involving Ecology, Population Pressure and the Soft-Drug Culture, into models reflecting the end of the '70s to mid '80s impact of Conservative politics and Religious Fundamentalism. This most recent trend in Maya studies has seen a renewed concern for elite lifestyles and religious underpinnings, the importance of the family unit, and even pressure to "get government off the backs" of the Maya!

It seems to me that Wilk's attitude is just right. Of course we ought to be "in the past" professionally because we believe it has a value for us and for everyone else in our society, i.e. it has modern relevance. To claim that Archaeology, because it reveals ever new data, needs no further justification, strikes me as quite absurd. The key question of course is whether we can operate a "reflexive" discipline without prejudicing the pursuit by whatever means necessary of what actually happened in the past. And here, procedures of critical evaluation are quite essential. Already in 1951, the notable anthropologist Evans-Pritchard pointed out that anthropologists' personal interests were important in the theory selected for testing in the field, and indeed:

One can only interpret what one sees in terms of one's own experience and of what one is, and anthropologists, while they have a body of knowledge in common, differ in other respects as widely as other people in their backgrounds of experience and in themselves. The personality of an anthropologist cannot be eliminated from his work any more than the personality of an historian... Fundamentally, in his account of a primitive people the anthropologist is not only describing their social life as accurately as he can but is expressing himself also. In this sense his account must express moral judgement, especially where it touches matters on which he feels strongly... (But) If allowances are made for the personality of the writer, and if we consider that in the entire range of anthropological studies the effects of these personal differences tend to correct each other, I do not think that we need worry unduly over this problem in so far as the reliability of anthropological findings is in question (1951).

In the Philosophy of History, Steinberg (1981) reminds us of Popper's realistic comments (1972):

We all have our philosophies, whether or not we are aware of this fact... the impact

of our philosophies upon our actions and upon our lives is often devastating. This makes it necessary to try to improve our philosophies by criticism.

And Steinberg provides a practical context:

To tell an undergraduate that his essay needs to be improved is to make assertions about methodology, and every methodology, however inchoate, is applied philosophy. By "philosophy of history" in this context, I mean that analytical and critical activity by which we scrutinize the things we do and say as historians (Steinberg 1981, 455–56).

There is also an even simpler answer to this problem: do we as practitioners feel that we are infinitely more knowledgeable, as our subject evolves, about each past society we are studying? That notable historian, W H McNeill has recently given this response to the issue of subjective versus objective reconstruction (1986):

I actually believe that historians' truths, like those of scientists, evolve across the generations, so that versions of the past acceptable today are superior in scope, range, and accuracy to versions available in earlier times.[2]

Thus one may, as an act of faith, believe that our historiographical myth making and myth breaking is bound to cumulate over time, propagating mythistories that fit *experience better and allow human survival more often, sustaining in-groups in* ways that are less destructive to themselves and to their neighbours than was the case or is the case today.

(And here he cites the way future histories will give due and novel emphasis to women, coloured populations and the Third World).

Anyone who reads historians of the 16th and 17th centuries and those of our own time will notice a new awareness of social process that we have attained. As one who shares that awareness, I find it iempossible not to believe thaet it represents an advance on older notions that focussed attention exclusively, or almost exclusively, on human intentions and individual actions, subject only to God or to a no less inscrutable Fortune, while leaving out the social and material context within which individual actions took place (1986, 9–10).

Going back to Biblical Archaeology, we might now reasonably ask of Professor Dever whether his antiseptic Palestinian New Archaeology (Dever 1981) is much the poorer by passing a floundering Biblical Archaeology on the other side of the road. A dispassionate application of the latest techniques to sites in the Holy Land, as long as that includes a healthy scepticism about misuse of inadequate data, can and should contribute to our understanding and appreciation of the Jewish and Christian Bibles. I am thinking for example of a recent newspaper article (*The Guardian, October 20th, 1986*) where Mark Rudall wrote the following in an admirably reflexive way:

When archaeologists went to work on the city of Lachish, in Israel, a few years back, they found that the remains from the 11th century BC showed the ancient walled city to have been composed of small dwellings all of similar size. The remains from 300 years later, however, looked very different. They consisted of the foundations of a number of very large dwellings spread out within the city walls, yet there was also a group of ill-found shanty-like slums jammed up in one quarter of the city.

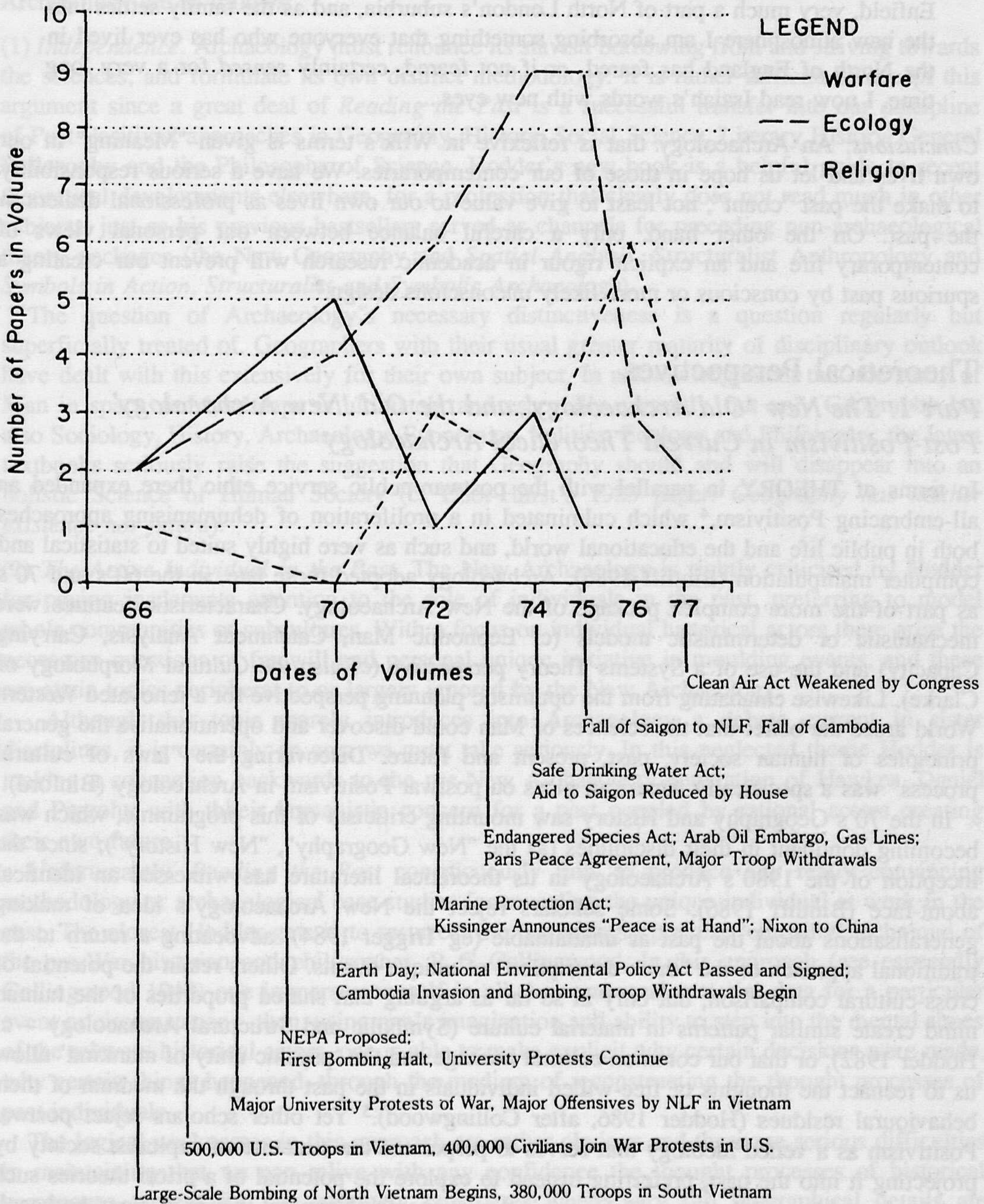


Fig. 2

This latter picture represents, of course, the period of Jewish Old Testament history that saw the emergence of the great prophets. It was gross inequality and feckless exploitation that wound the springs of men like Isaiah of Jerusalem and his depressive colleague, Jeremiah, in particular.

I have recently moved to the South-east from the city of Liverpool. I now live in Enfield, very much a part of North London's suburbia, and as the family settles into the new atmosphere I am absorbing something that everyone who has ever lived in the North of England has feared, or if not feared, certainly *sensed* for a very long time. I now read Isaiah's words with new eyes...

Conclusions: An Archaeology that is reflexive in Wilk's terms is given "Meaning" in our own lives and let us hope in those of our contemporaries. We have a serious responsibility to make the past "count", not least to give value to our own lives as professional dealers in the past. On the other hand, only a careful balance between our personal views of contemporary life and an explicit rigour in academic research will prevent our creating a spurious past by conscious or more likely unconscious design.[3]

Theoretical Perspectives

Part 1: The New 'Old Archaeology' and the Old 'New Archaeology'
Post-Positivism in Current Theoretical Archaeology

In terms of THEORY, in parallel with the postwar public service ethic there expanded an all-embracing Positivism,[4] which culminated in a proliferation of dehumanising approaches both in public life and the educational world, and such as were highly suited to statistical and computer manipulation (Bintliff 1986). Archaeology adopted these late, in the 60's and 70's as part of the more complex package of the New Archaeology. Characteristic features were mechanistic or deterministic models (cf Economic Man, Catchment Analysis, Carrying Capacity) and the use of a Systems Theory perspective (cf also the Cultural Morphology of Clarke). Likewise emanating from the optimistic planning perspective for a renovated Western World arose the belief that the sciences of Man could discover and operationalise the general principles of human society, past, present and future. Discovering the "laws of cultural process" was a specifically American gloss on postwar Positivism in Archaeology (Binford).

In the 70's Geography and History saw mounting criticism of this programme, which was becoming dominant in their disciplines (as the "New Geography", "New History"); since the inception of the 1980's Archaeology in its theoretical literature has witnessed an identical about-face (Bintliff 1986). Some scholars reject the New Archaeology's idea of making generalisations about the past as unattainable (eg Trigger 1984), advocating a return to the traditional approach of the "thick description" of unique events. Others retain the potential of cross-cultural comparison, but only in so far as arguing that shared properties of the human mind create similar patterns in material culture (Symbolic and Structural Archaeology – cf Hodder 1982), or that our common cultural heritage and the 'psychic unity of mankind' allow us to reenact the thoughts of free-willed individuals in the past through the medium of their behavioural residues (Hodder 1986, after Collingwood).[5] Yet other scholars reject postwar Positivism as a veiled ideology that serves to perpetuate the structure of capitalist society by projecting it into the past, preferring instead to explore the potential of a priori theories such as Marxism. Meanwhile some of the original proponents of general theory in New Archaeology have retreated to the limited perspectives of Middle Range Theory.

We have here defined a cluster of new attitudes to interpreting the past, which Ian Hodder (1982, 1986) and other theorists would identify as a new movement contrasting with the "New Archeology" movement of the '60s and '70s. It is probably most economical to look at these approaches via a critique of Hodder's recent theory volume, *Reading the Past* (1986). The main arguments put forward by Hodder as the platform of Post-Positivist or Post-Processualist Archaeology are as follows:

(1) *Independence*. Archaeology must renounce its slavish borrowing from and striving towards the sciences, and formulate its own distinct methodology. It is rather difficult to accept this argument since a great deal of *Reading the Past* is a successful transfer into our discipline of Post-Positivist approaches in Geography, History, Social Science, Literary History, General Philosophy and the Philosophy of Science. Hodder's new book is a helpful guide to recent theoretical developments elsewhere, for a profession that clearly does not read much in other subjects, just as his previous bestsellers served as channels for preceding non-archaeological theory packages (the New Geography and *Spatial Analysis*, Structuralist Anthropology and *Symbols in Action, Structuralist and Symbolic Archaeology*).

The question of Archaeology's necessary distinctiveness is a question regularly but superficially treated of. Geographers with their usual greater maturity of disciplinary outlook have dealt with this extensively for their own subject. In acknowledgement that the study of Man in space and landscape is ultimately and especially currently, not only Geography but also Sociology, History, Archaeology, Economics, Politics, Ecology and Philosophy, the latest textbooks seriously raise the suggestion that Geography should and will disappear into an holistic Science of Human Society (cf Eliot-Hurst's 1985 paper: *Geography has neither existence nor future*).

(2) *The Active Individual in the Past*. The New Archaeology is rightly criticised by Hodder for paying inadequate attention to the role of individuals in the past, preferring to model whole communities or subcultures. With a focus on individual historical actors there arise the necessary questions of freewill and personal unique initiative in moulding events, and these are again topics peripheral to or largely ignored by the New Archaeology.

Although this topic merely introduces into Archaeology a debate current in sister disciplines, it is certainly an area we must take seriously. In this neglected theme Hodder is making a connection backwards to the pre-New Archaeology generation of Hawkes, Daniel and Piggohtt with thheir humanistic concern for a past peopled by rational actors creating their own future.

Unfortunately, *Reading the Past* conspicuously fails to produce any really convincing methodology or archaeological case-studies for revealing the unique individual at work in the past. The closest Hodder gets is to resurrect the increasingly popular 'empathy' technique of the pre-War historian and philosopher, R G Collingwood. In this approach (see especially Collingwood 1948) one immerses oneself in all the contextual material data for a particular event or circumstance – then, using one's imagination and ability to step into the mental shoes of the relevant historical actors, one is able to make explicit why certain decisions were made, why certain things happened, through the medium of reconstructing the thought processes of past individuals.

The logical weaknesses in this approach are rather obvious and there are serious difficulties in maintaining that we can relive with any confidence the thought processes of historical personages, except for the extremely rare cases where very full biographical details are available from historic sources. That situation is *so* rare as not to be of any overall value to the archaeologist or historian of pre-modern times. In fact the Collingwood method, far from

discovering the unique, unpredictable individual, abolishes him, because its fundamental assumption is that past personages are like you and me, and their responses to situations are normative enough to belong to general human types of response. 'Given the background in class, education, given assumed unchanging properties of human nature, we are led to suggest that the Emperor x would have thought such and such about this situation', etc.

Collingwood is often grouped in the philosophical school of Idealism, which argues that our mental states filter the evidence of our senses and act as semi-independent controllers of our actions. But Collingwood's theory of reconstructed action is actually highly positivistic: it rests on the belief, not only that the underlying reasons for past actions are the motives of rational historical actors, but also that we can always recover these motives by a critical analysis of the contextual circumstances in which the decisions were made (cf also Lewthwaite, this volume). In this very important respect Collingwood's approach, in so far as anyone might want to use it as a speculative tool for processual research, is hardly at odds with the model-building positivism of the New Archaeology. What it lacks though, and this is surely crucial, is any means for validation.

From this discussion we are led to an acceptance that the past *was* formed by individual people and individual actions, yet also to an affirmation that in almost every historical and every prehistoric context, the way particular individuals conceived of their situation, and the way particular individuals reached mental decisions which altered the course of the past, are likely to remain beyond the analytical grasp of archaeologists and historians, even though we may speculate with Collingwood, and with varying degrees of plausibility.[6]

In Geography, a version of Collingwood's "Idealist" approach has been propagated by Guelke (1974, 1982). Critical evaluation of his work has exposed familiar limitations. Gregory (1978) for example, has commented on Guelke's attempts to comprehend actions and their perpetrators as "rational responses to their situations as they saw them": '*who* is to regard them as rational and on *what* basis?' Baker (1979) points out that false consciousness, where the technique has not actually been realistic, cannot be recognised unless the analyst retains his own external frame of reference. In general, reviewers of Guelke's work have found it impossible to agree that thoughts can be rethought convincingly in this fashion. Moreover they suggest that Guelke is unintentionally hypocritical in that the method advocated is not culturally relative but a new form of 20th century positivism reformulated to include human thought (Baker 1979, 565).

However, as mentioned above, in *Reading the Past*, whilst we are given Collingwood's empathy *in theory, in practice* all the relevant examples from archeology and ethnography are cases of group *not* individual mental processes. These are paradoxically labelled as exhibiting the active individual, but this is only apt in so far as each individual in the culture or subculture actively shares the group ethos Hodder is seeking to derive from material culture. Thus in a lengthy case study of a Kenyan tribe Hodder argues that the significance of decorating milk containers is to express communal female frustration at their social inferiority.

It seems to me inevitable that except for recent heavily documented history, we are only very rarely given the data from which to infer the contribution of a unique event or a unique person to the course of the past. On the other hand, by implication, such specific occasions and specific individuals only become objects of importance because of their wider ramifications and influence on society as a whole. It is at that stage that we can hope to pick up transformations in particular societies. In this respect our focus must necessarily rest on phenomena at the local group and regional population level upwards. Even when historic personages make their literary presence felt, our understanding of their significance comes from a critical analysis of their impact within the major observable features of their society,

and our treatment becomes merely speculative when we turn our focus on their own personal psychology and detailed motivation.

I could demonstrate this point simply by reminding you that despite the immense wealth of historical records available from the last war, we still cannot clarify a central historical question, namely whether Hitler was responsible for, or even aware of, "The Final Solution". It is even more relevant to bring to your attention an excellent and perceptive review article by Bradley of several recent publications in Roman imperial history. Commenting on a new book about Nero which attempts a psychological biography (Griffin 1984), Bradley writes:

> If there can be no doubt about the theoretical value of this approach and its superiority over a straightforward chronographical account, the key to judging its success must lie on what *can* be discovered about Nero's personality... This is why it is such a hazardous undertaking to write not just a biography of Nero but imperial biography at large, because it is very rare for the modern historian to have access to sources contemporary with the subject or personally detailed enough to permit him to go beyond superficial character study. What the historian needs to establish character and personality convincingly are letters, diaries, notebooks, that is, literary material of a private sort, but none of these materials exists for Nero. Indeed the only prominent Roman from the Classical era who has left private correspondence in bulk is Cicero, and it is the availability of his letters, and comparison of them with his voluminous public works, that allows some understanding of Cicero the man to emerge in a way impossible for any other Roman figure...
>
> In the final analysis it may well be possible to measure Nero's performance as emperor against conventional, institutional expectations of him without relying so much on his personality. After all, this is what Suetonius did to some extent. Certainly by Suetonius' day, and probably as early as that of Nero, there were ways in which the Roman emperor was supposed to behave; by showing his concern for the material welfare of his subjects, for example, an area in which Nero's performance was unquestionably sound. The tradition that Nero was extravagant and wasteful of money cannot and sohotuld not be altogether denied, but whether weaknesses of personality, insecurity, paranoia, the need for self-justification, or a simple lack of political judgement provided the basis for the tradition is an open question. The victimisation of political opponents and even the possibility of a real reign of terror are issues that cannot be brushed aside, yet by nature the principate was a repressive form of government which did not allow for any sustained sort of opposition (Bradley 1986, 93–96).

(3) *The Search for Meaning in the Past.* Hodder picks up on a very lively debate in our sister disciplines in mounting a prolonged critique of the limited conception of Meaning attributable to New Archaeologists. In his view, what passes for a meaningful analysis by a New Archaeologist merely links up data in supposed cause and effect chains, apeing the methods of the hard sciences. As philosophers have repeatedly pointed out, notably Dilthey in the last century, the fundamental distinction between explanation in the hard sciences and the humanities is that between an approach that places phenomena in conjunction in a billiard ball model, describing from "outside" what is seen to occur in sequence, and an approach that derives human events from inner thoughts, the "inside" of events, the "meaning" lying in past mental landscapes that obey no necessary rational laws.

It would seem therefore that we are being advised that the key to the human past is to reconstruct the mental landscapes of past cultures (we can forget the solitary individual, as

noted above), using language clues left in the symbolism of material culture. Unfortunately, Hodder has soon to admit that reading off the meaning of symbols works fairly well in cases such as water designs on water jugs, monumental tombs that are pseudomorphs of houses, but rapidly becomes highly problematic with more typical items in cultural assemblages. In fact we are reduced to inferences about the mental processes of past peoples, using an "outsider" technique based on comparative sociology. Now the critical analysis of the significance, in context, of a past community's actions, as preserved in material culture, using what amounts to ethnohistoric analogue, is quite characteristic of the New Archaeology and its emphasis on cross-cultural comparisons and anthropological guiding models. In practice, therefore, Hodder's approach is a variant of New Archaeology. What about validation (again)? Hodder, in denying his reliance on uniformitarian assumptions of cross-cultural analogue, offers us internal validation by "contextual archaeology". This turns out to look very like traditional systems theory analysis of the interconnections traceable across a culture in order to comprehend its several dimensions of meaning, and as such, still requires external interpretation. On the positive side, there *is* a need to remind archaeologists (but not historians) that past societies acted through the filter of their particular perceptions of the world about them; these mental landscapes of the past should be sought for within material culture (especially in art and other forms of ideological and symbolic expression, cf Renfrew 1982), or through their expression in historical records (if we have them), using traditional methods of ethnohistoric analogy critically. But let us be quite sure about how we achieve this: for historic and ethnographically-recorded societies we can collect verbal expressions of worldviews, for prehistoric societies we have only the mute patterns of material culture to decipher. In the former case we are often privileged with an "insider" view of the past, in the latter case we are always operating "outsider" interpretations.

A second major criticism of the "insider meaning" approach is that it assumes that all historic actors at the individual or community level always act perfectly consciously, and that therefore all important processes affecting past societies find expression in conscious material culture symbolism. A corollary of this is that all of importance that happened to and within a past society was created by the independent functioning of innumerable mental landscapes directing external action. Such a view is difficult to reconcile both with our own experience of the world and the careful analyses of sociologists, anthropologists and historians. It simply is not correct that we weigh up consciously everything we do; human infants have an exceptionally prolonged rearing in order to be programmed into the most complex cultural patterns. Most of the time we conform to the established norms of our society, or *most* of us do; all societies tolerate both individual deviants and a major part of their populations fluctuating their behaviour around predictable norms. We *do* make decisions, but generally between a limited range of normative behavioural choices common to our society or subculture, age or sex, class or occupatioon, nationality and religion.[7]

Furthermore, the study of History demonstrates a whole range of forces acting on or operating within societies and severely limiting their members' development, detectable as medium-term climatic cycles, agrarian cycles or demographic cycles. Since most contemporaries were unaware of the secular trends our scholarship reveals, it is not possible to view these important developments merely by studying short-lived symbols.

Hodder implicitly admits to such interpretations, (communal, insider *and* outsider), of the "meaning" of the past in almost every example he provides of "reading the past". Thus as we have seen, in his Kenya tribe, the stated reason given by the women who decorate milk containers is 'to make them beautiful'. Clearly not content with the "actors' version" Hodder treats us to a long and undoubtedly "outsider" analysis of the role of milk containers in the

changing socio-economic structure of the community, ending up with an elaborate explanation that would never have occurred to the tribe.

Indeed, so much of what goes on in any particular society is not patterned consciously, and the sociologist reveals a myriad of interconnections of which participants are unaware at an explicit level. The understanding of a society must therefore occur at two levels: a sincere attempt to reconstruct the mental landscape of a past community or subculture, seeing events through the "participant observer" perspective – in general we needs must rely on ethnohistoric models for much of this even where literary evidence is available; and a distanced, "outsider" analysis of what seems to be going on beyond the immediate cognised perception of historical actors. In practice, Hodder's own examples are almost entirely of the latter variety.

In operating in effect a two-tier analysis of human actions in society, (or a three-tier if he proceeds to compare one society with another case study society), Hodder has adopted a recognised variant within traditional Social Anthropology methodology).[8]

In Ancient History, the same conflict between cultural relativity and an overarching search for cross-cultural synthesis can be found (Bradley 1986). On the one hand we have historians such as Millar, whose book *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1977) prides itself on the following approach:

> In preparing the work I have rigidly avoided reading sociological works on kingship and related topics, or studies of monarchic institutions in societies other than Greece and Rome... For to have come to the subject with an array of concepts derived from the study of other societies would merely have made even more unattainable the proper objective of an historian, to subordinate himself to the evidence and to the conceptual world of a society in the past (1977, xii).

In contrast we have sociologists of the ancient world such as Keith Hopkins, whose reply to Millar ran as follows:

> This position is untenable. It is untenable on a literal level because Millar hdeas written in English, not in Latin or Greek. Over the last century, the English language has developed abstract concepts to cope with the increasing complexity of social arrangements. Besides, the historian interprets a lost world to modern readers through the medium of a living language: one of his objectives may well be to enter the thought world of his subjects, both actors and sources... but he must also relate the lost world to contemporary concerns, whether consciously or unconsciously... (Millar's) declared objective of subordinating himself to the ancient sources... is unnecessarily restrictive, impossible to achieve and undesirable (1978, 180).

In an illuminating and original paper, John Haldon (1986) has recently opened up discussion in Byzantine history on the same key issues of the Post-Positivist agenda. He, like Hopkins, highlights the limitations of Collingwoodian "empathy" with the past and opts for a two-tier analysis based on Social Anthropology.[9] Firstly, we identify what the Byzantines thought they were doing and their general and subcultural worldviews, then by using a systemic perspective we analyse what we as "outsiders" think they were doing -which is not the same thing.[10] The Byzantinist has a rich literature to help achieve both "insider" and "outsider" goals, and Haldon lays stress on the analysis of contemporary historical narratives as guides that relate concepts of self to events. Nonetheless, throughout this analysis there is a constant appeal to make explanatory frameworks explicit and testable by critical and interpretative frameworks of validation.

The particular theme chosen by Haldon to illustrate his argument is the "antisocial" in Byzantine society, but he also tackles the natural reaction that Byzantine mentality is too alien for us to bring it into any kind of anthropological cross-cultural analysis. For instance, we might cite the alien religiosity of the Byzantines. However:

> "religious" in a pre-industrial context is effectively an equivalent of "social" for us: the universe was made sense of through a vocabulary which we refer to as religious because it is not our vocabulary. It invokes non-human agencies and, in the terms of our common sense, an often impenetrably "irrational" logic... at every level. Which means that religious, in the broadest sense, is also an equivalent of ordinary/everyday/ commonplace. Ungodly, or impious or even godless signifies thus by no means "not religious", but rather not conforming to the norm: different, alien, or even simply, "anti-social" (Haldon 1986, 71).

(4) *Anarchic Subjectivity*. Alongside these fairly uneven attempts to get at people's mental processes in the past, Hodder offers a very contrasted approach to history and prehistory, once more borrowing from trends in sister disciplines. I will dub this "anarchic subjectivity" because it basically states that the past is unknowable, and our professional efforts to penetrate its mysteries merely serve as a means of expression for modern ideology, public and private. There is no validation possible for our personal visions of the past, each is as good as any other, and originates in our own viewpoints of the present.

Although in some disciplines such as Literary History this approach is widespread (and devastating in its negative effects), the inroads of such reductionism are less common but still recognisable in History and more peripherally in Geography.

In Steinberg's (1981) discussion of Post-Positivist approaches to History, the subjective approach to an unknowable past is focussed on the influence of Barthes' Structuralism on historians such as Hayden White. Kuzminski is quoted (463) as commenting:

> From this point of view the meaning of an historical narrative lies *not* in its ability to depict truly or falsely independently existing facts; rather, it lies in its ability to *purport* to do so... The actual historical process is not so much denied, as decreed to be unintelligible. The unprocessed historical record consists in events, but they only come in meaningless one-damn-thing-after-another sequences.

Steinberg points out that this kind of Structuralist dogma, applied say, to a history text by Le Roy Ladurie,

> is irrefutable... What I can do is to choose between two propositions: (a) Le Roy Ladurie is making statements about the past; (b) Le Roy Ladurie only thinks that he is making statements about the past. I prefer (a) on grounds of economy... I behave rationally if I choose the simpler statement (467).

In the conclusion to Steinberg's evaluation of the subjective/objective debate, Steinberg writes:

> How much "authentic history" in Dr. Johnson's sense is there? More than he thought. Popper is right to show us the objective evidence of the past around us. We have no reason to think that the perception of such evidence is more or less problematical than any other perception. That all perception has its problems is one thing; to say that the historian's are worse or different from any other now seems to me to be false. There is, then, "out there" a knowable past. In that sense I have come through

> this epistemological total immersion a convinced realist about the past as such. I am sure that we can make statements about the past which are either true or false... The past is knowable, but not all of it by the same techniques nor with the same degree of certainty. Some knowledge, however secure it may feel to the knower, will not easily be contested and proved false; other knowledge can be refuted by techniques not all that different from the scientist (1981, 471–472).

We have already examined the interesting 'reflexive' role of Archaeology, and seen fit to support it wholeheartedly provided principles of validation are observed. Anarchic subjectivity on the other hand revels in a contradictory variety of viewpoints, and can best be summed up in the words of one of its philosophical idols, Feyerabend:

> There is only *one* principle that can be defended under all circumstances and in all stages of human development. It is the principle: anything goes (quoted in Skinner 1985, 8).

It is a curiosity of Hodder's *Reading the Past* that this apparent negation of scientific endeavour is frequently encouraged throughout the volume, side by side with continuing and equally well reasoned attempts to make sense of the past as a real and recoverable set of processes. As Waldemar Janusczak has commented on the equivalent trend in Post-Modernist Art, there is a lack of educational, didactic and creative purpose, the only subject left being the artist himself, enforcing Expressionism as the chosen painting style of the 1980's (*The Guardian, December 2nd, 1986*).

Theoretical Perspectives

Part 2: Towards a New Synthesis? – Some Cogent Pointers

In the first three parts of this paper I have identified and discussed a wide-ranging debate about the 'meaning' of the past, its meaning to us in the modern age, and independently to those who lived through the events we seek to unravel through Archaeology and History. Firstly we saw that the necessity to clarify what the past means to us is an urgent task in the current political and economic climate. We next moved on to demonstrate how closely our general models of the past interact with modern life, reinforcing our responsibility to seek to say something relevant whilst hopefully yielding to the judgement of scientific, peer group validation. Finally we analysed the main themes of the so-called Post-Positivist or Post-Processual Archaeology and found that in reality an outside imposition of analytical meaning must take precedence over speculative but imaginative reconstructions of meanings attributable to past historical actors. The niew 'Old Archaeology' is in reality a more sophisticated version of the old 'New Archaeology'.

I would like now to summarise a number of recent developments and some not quite so recent, in sister disciplines, which seem to me to point to an exciting future prospect for Archaeology, perhaps towards a new synthesis of the Sciences of Man, in which the apparent difficulties exposed in New Archaeology by the Post-Positivist package can be turned to the profitable improvement of our discipline. The ultimate aim is to link arms with the other disciplines of Man under a unitary theoretical umbrella, recapturing that grand synthesis in which Archeology basked as an essential component discipline during late Victorian times. Inspired by the victory of Darwinism, a coherent paradigm for the evolution of Nature and Man was created at that time between Anthropology, Prehistory, Zoology, Geology and Sociology (cf Sterud 1973: Bintliff 1984b, Introduction; Bintliff 1986).

Social Anthropology

European archaeologists tend to think of Social Anthropology as providing a methodological model for tackling how societies work, in the form of the Structural-Functionalist tradition that has dominated British Anthropology for most of this century. To our minds, S-F is typified by a rather static, equilibrium model of societies, each one of which is made up of an interactive cluster of subsystems. The aim of every persistent feature in a society is the *functional stability of the whole structure of that society. Practitioners of SF are supposed to* reject historical and evolutionary perspectives.

Now this characterisation certainly holds for many of the anthropologists who dominated the subject in the first half of this century. But over the last 30–40 years a more subtle version of this approach has appeared. Let us consider the later work of that giant of ethnography, Evans-Pritchard. He began research with a strongly functionalist approach adopted from Radcliffe-Brown, equally strongly rejecting an historical perspective. But in his later works his attitudes changed. The central concept which made sense of society was still its structural coherence, and here he did not deviate from orthodoxy, quoting Radcliffe-Brown (1931) approvingly:

> the function of culture as a whole is to unite individual human beings into more or less stable social structures, ie. stable systems of groups determining and regulating the relation of those individuals to one another, and providing such external adaptation to the physical environment, and such internal adaptation between the component individuals or groups, as to make possible an ordered social life. That assumption I believe to be a sort of primary postulate of any objective and scientific study of culture or human society (1951, 54–55).

Here we have an ordered pattern of custom and social relations essential to the coherence of society and offering systematic and experienced reaction to the potential of the physical environment. But then Evans-Pritchard takes a critical stance towards other central concepts of orthodox Social Anthropology at the time he was writing (1951):

> social anthropologists are maintaining that societies are natural systems of which all the parts are interdependent, each serving in a complex of necessary relations to maintain the whole, and that social life can be reduced to scientific laws which allow prediction (49).

This set of concepts can be traced back to the Victorian pioneers of Anthropology and

> the assumption they had inherited from the Enlightenment that societies are natural systems, or organisms, which have a necessary course of development that can be reduced to general principles or laws. Logical connections were in consequence presented as real and necessary connections and typological classifications as both historical and inevitable courses of development (42).

Evans-Pritchard attacks in this fashion:

> I now come to the postulate of functional anthropology, that social systems are natural systems which can be reduced to sociological laws, with the corollary that the history of them has no scientific relevance. I must confess that this seems to me to be doctrinaire positivism at its worst... Up to the present nothing even remotely resembling what are called laws in the natural sciences have been advanced – only... assertions. The generalisations which have so far been attempted have, moreover,

> been so vague and general as to be, even if true, of little use, and they have rather easily tended to become mere tautologies and platitudes on the level of common sense deduction.
>
> Such being the case, I think that we may ask again whether... a legal system is really comparable to a physiological system or the planetary system... Those of us who take the view I have expressed above... must ask ourselves whether... the claim that the history of an institution is irrelevant to an understanding of it as it is at the present time is acceptable... for history is not merely a succession of changes but, as others have said, a growth. The past is contained in the present as the present is in the future... It is also evident that problems of social development can only be studied in terms of history, and furthermore that history alone provides a satisfactory situation in which the hypotheses of functional anthropology can be tested (57–60).

The kind of understanding of societies here being offered is still focussed on orderly, structured sets of relationships between people and with the physical environment, but now these patterned behaviours float free of rigid deterministic laws of society, of "inevitable" sequences of development, or ecological determinism. It is the coherent pattern of society that ensures its functioning, but the form and especially the content of this pattern owes as much to the particular historical trajectory of a culture as to the requirements of structural stability at any one point in time. In other words, there is nothing inevitable or even predictable about how a society is transformed over time, yet always we can expect dominant patterns of behaviour, structurally comparable between numerous societies, to hold a society together as a successful body of people. The particular or historical is a unique variant of the general, the principle of structural coherence.

Edmund Leach, a pupil of Evans-Pritchard, takes this a stage further (1984), whilst arguing likewise that human cultures and societies cannot merely be read off from a priori determinism of an environmental, Darwinian or law-like nature. Societies are complex wholes with an internal logic that only we as human beings can penetrate. At the same time our created societies must follow strong structures if they are to hold up and endure, and there must also be functional adaptation to the realities of human nature and physical conditions if a society is not to dissolve rapidly. Turning to the 18th century philosopher of history, Vico, Leach finds a similar viewpoint:

> His key perception in his *New Science*... was that only the maker of an object fully understands its nature; for example a carpenter understands why the chair he has made does not collapse. But human society was made by man, so man should be able to understand society, in an engineering sense, for example why it holds together and does not collapse. Behind this there is the further perception that all the artifacts (including human society) which man thus 'makes' must necessarily be projective transformations of what the human brain already 'knows'. This implies, to use computer terminology, that social products are generated by 'software programmes', operating through but limited by the computer-like machinery of the human brain. The 'software' comes from our cultural environment, the 'hardware' derives from our genetic ineheritance... I reject the notion that I have swung back and forth between being a functionalist and being a structuralist; I have quite consistently been both at once (1984, 19–20).

Going much further back in 20th century Anthropology, Malinowski also seems to have held an almost "existentialist" view of the Functionalist approach:

> Functionalism contents itself with directing attention to stable configurations and contributions to the stability, without invoking any intentions supposedly carried out by the contributions... When functions are interpreted as intentions, real social processes are replaced by fictitious goal-directed behaviour of abstract entities like 'institutions', 'social classes', or 'the culture' itself (quoted in Kaplan 1984, 37).

From this tradition within Social Anthropology we can obtain a model of society as patterned form rather than predicted content; this form needs to be well-structured and coherent for a society to work and endure. For the content, adaptation to the natural world and to essential requirements of social cooperation *can* be expected, but only as an effective normative structuring. The exact and particular mechanisms adopted by each society are not predictable and are to be understood by historical analysis not by general laws and deterministic principles. Significantly Evans-Pritchard cites Maitland:

> By and by anthropology will have the choice between being history and being nothing (1962, 152).

History

The American historian, William McNeill, in a paper published in 1986, has been looking with insight into the way historians make sense of the past, with an eye, once again, to the Post-Positivist critique. Although "scientific history" has been a great advance on what went on before, its limitations

> were far more constricting than its devotees believed. Facts that could be established beyond all reasonable doubt remained trivial in the sense that they did not, in and of themselves, give meaning or intelligibility to the record of the past. A catalogue of undoubted and indubitable information, even if arranged chronologically, remains a catalogue. To become a history, facts have to be put together into a pattern that is understandable and credible; and when that has been achieved, the resulting portrait of the past may become useful as well – a fount of practical wisdom upon which people may draw when making decisions and taking action.
>
> Pattern recognition of the sort historians engage in is the chef d'oeuvre of human intelligence. It is achieved by paying selective attention to the total input of stimuli... Here is the great secret of human power over nature and over ourselves as well. Pattern recognition is what natural scientists are up to; it is what historians hav always done, whether they knew it or not.
>
> The great and obvious difference between natural scientists and historians is the greater complexity of the behaviour historians seek to understand. The principle source of historical complexity lies in the fact that human beings react both to the natural world and to one another chiefly through the mediation of symbols... Resort to symbols, in effect, loosened up the connection between external reality and human responses, freeing us from instinct by setting us adrift on a sea of uncertainty. Human beings thus acquired a new capacity to err, but also to change, adapt, and learn new ways of doing things.
>
> What a particular group of persons understands, believes, and acts upon, even if quite absurd to outsiders, may nonetheless cement social relations and allow the members of the group to act together and accomplish feats otherwise impossible. Moreover, membership in such a group and participation in its sufferings and

> triumphs gives meaning and value to individual human lives... shared traits that provide a sanction for common effort have obvious survival value. Without social cement no group can long preserve itself... The historic record available to us consists of an unending appearance and dissolution of human groups, each united by its own beliefs, ideals, and traditions (1986, 2–3).

Later in the same paper, as quoted earlier in this essay, McNeill expresses his belief that we can and should evaluate, through objective criteria, all patterns claimed for the past, not least such past ideologies, and that historical knowledge is not only real but cumulative.

We have already put to full use the penetrating and illuminating discussion of objective/subjective interpretations of the past in the discipline of History, offered by J Steinberg in the form of a review article (1981). Although, as we have seen, he comes down clearly on the side of an objectively-knowable History, he qualifies this by introducing an important distinction between rigorously-validated interpretations and those where we perceive the essential structure of how things happened by virtue of our recognition of shared experience and shared values:

> Popper is right to show us the objective evidence of the past around us... I am sure that we can make statements about that past which are either true or false. On the other hand... I am equally sure that the sciences of man simply cannot be covered by the techniques of the physical sciences. Popper is wrong... Historians know their material reflexively; the natural scientist does not. The past is then knowable, but not all of it by the same techniques nor with the same degree of certainty. Some knowledge, however secure it may feel to the knower, will not easily be contested and proved false; other knowledge can be refuted by techniques not all that different from the scientist (1981, 472).

We sit somewhere between the two contrasted positions. On the one hand, we recognize that Popper and others who

> posit an objective, rational, discrete, knowing subject separate from, and independent of, the object of knowledge are too simple.

Yet

> Those approaches which, be it through dialectical materialism, or hermeneutic "Verstehen", link the knowing subject and the object known, run into perilous circularities(1981, 472).

Common themes that link these approaches to society and the human past in Social Anthropology and History are:

(a) Society, past and present, is knowable. Much of our reconstructions and model-building is directly amenable to validation procedures as practised in the natural sciences. But there remains a further level of analysis where we operate "uniformitarian" principles of pattern recognition in social and historical process. As human social beings, we are uniquely able to find our path through the endless data and distinguish key structures of cause and effect, significance and relevance. Even here, however, explicit statement of models and the data provoking them can and must lead to critical evaluation of alternative "readings" of pattern, so that at any time the closest fit to the knowable true pattern is achieved. Knowledge in both spheres of analysis is cumulative.

(b) We can accomplish the selection of the most significant facts and processes for a given

society over a chosen time-span because societies consist in essence of, and function and endure because of, structures of behaviour and cultural values which are normative for the majority of their members.

(c) Social structures serve the function of regulating inter-personal and inter-group relations, and community-environment relations. In an important sense therefore, social structures are argued to be adaptive, promoting the stability of a society and encapsulating advantageous learned procedures in exploiting the natural world. The individual members of these structured societies are considered to be adaptively advantaged likewise through their participation in ordered structures of behaviour. Yet on the other hand, the elaboration of human culture, as a potentially "open system" subject to immense and rapid variation in time and space, is seen to have freed human behaviour, however normative it appears to be on the intra-community level, from having to conform in anything but the most general terms, to the constraints of natural selection. That society needs order and structure is therefore an adaptive constraint. But the exact mode of expression which a structure takes might be as variable as there are known societies – this is a central distinction of form versus content.

(d) To analyze the most significant features of a society we therefore operate on three levels: we begin by seeking to identify the patterns, firstly conscious, secondly unconscious, that dominate the changing nature of that society. Thirdly, we seek to disentangle with an historical and "outsider" critical perspective how such patterns grew and declined, and the degree to which patterned behaviour and values have been adaptively successful to that society as a whole, its subcultures, and individual members.

Geography

Geographers have been adapting and adopting facets of the Post-Positivist paradigm since the early 1970's, and their mature deliberations on its themes are of particular interest to archaeologists, since our subject matter overlaps so considerably. The mainstream opinion appears to agree on a compromise, where the most useful features of the new "people-orientated" Geography are built onto the stable structure of the New Geography with its central emphasis on scientific procedures.

Thus Smith, in a review paper of 1979 entitled *Geography, Science and Post-Positivist Modes of Explanation*, upholds the position of necessary validation:

> By seeking scientific laws and theories, by applying models and systems scientifically, or at the very least by testing hypotheses according to scientific criteria, geographers made geography a science... What is important is that new research in geography, whether strictly "scientific" or not, can no longer ignore the scientific criteria according to which the discipline's findings are internally judged. To be sure, this is not quite the science on which so much euphoria and hyperbole were wasted in the early sixties (1979, 357).

Smith goes on to the important theme we have just seen arising in History and Social Anthropology, the merging of those areas of analysis where we can with confidence use natural science validation procedures, and those where we "recognize" significant pattern through our use of a uniformitarian perspective, our shared-experience recognition facility. Thus, whereas Buttimer suggests that geographers introduce interdisciplinary confusion if they accept a behavioural/Phenomenological/perspective:

> Phenomonology muddies the waters for those who believe in separating "subjective" and "objective" modes of knowing; it questions the assumptions and ideological foundations of conventional scientific models (cited by Smith, op cit 365).

Schutz on the other hand has managed to square the circle. For Schutz, natural science studies the physical world and abstracts from it, social science abstracts from the commonsense constructions through which people experience this "Lebenswelt". Both are united in "people". The key to integration of the two perspectives is "intersubjectivity":

> we share the everyday world with others and share or understand many of their interpretations and experiences of it. Social scientific explanations therefore employ constructions with intersubjective meanings; out of this intersubjectivity objectivity becomes possible. Moreover, it is an objectivity capable of conveying the emotion, feeling and meaning of everyday life (Smith, op cit 365–366).

This holistic view of the intended merging of "objective" and "subjective" pattern recognition reminds us of McNeill's view from History that "knowable truth" emerges through the ever-closer fit of "mythistories" that converge from contrasting initial perspectives, and of Leach's adoption of Vico's philosophy. Popper has also recognized the importance of intersubjective validation, arguing that "objectivity":

> is not a product of the individual scientist's impartiality but a product of the public character of scientific method (cited in Steinberg, op cit 458; cf also Lewthwaite, this volume).

An overview paper, also of 1979, by A R H Baker, examined the possibilities of Positivist and Post-Positivist merger (*Historical Geography: A New Beginning?*). Relating the current debate to some very long-standing contrasted positions in Historical and Regional Geography, Baker points out that the French tradition of "Possibilism" may offer an appropriate resolution, stressing the constraints/potential that the environment and selective/adaptive pressures offer or enforce for any given society. Taking advantage of selective potential, operating within selective constraints, still allows "a hundred flowers to bloom" in the variety of human cultural expressions and historical trajectories.

> This approach, balanced between possibilism and idealism, needs to maintain contact with both while rejecting the excesses of each (Baker, 564).

Gregory (1976) adds an additional dimension to this "insider/outsider" framework for analysis – our "outsider" position should incorporate structures within society recognized by a historical materialist perspective: it is

> only by relating the way in which individuals constitute and apprehend their phenomenal world to the deeper structures framing their actions and experiences that such experiences can be transcended (cited in Baker, op cit 564).

Geographers also provide us with a practical suggestion about the appropriate scale for operational research in an integrated new synthesis of Human Sciences: the Region. Baker (op cit) argues that the unifying theme of much of the newest generation of Positivist and Post-Positivist geography is regionalism; here we find on a manageable, research project, scale a mixture of the particular and historical in place and time – yet permeating all is structure and system. R J Johnston has recently stated (1986, 451–452) that in a search for a new

common ground for the different subdisciplines of geographical endeavours:

> Regional rather than systematic subdivision would seem to provide a better approach... Regions are identifiable entities and are deserving of study, but not in the exceptionalist mould... they must be seen as place-bound responses to general tendencies... we must produce general theories of the economic, social and political manipulation of space... in order to understand particular events, places and periods.

A final and powerful argument which one can discover in a perusal of recent geographical debate on Positivist/Post-Positivist, or Value-free/Value-laden ("Reflexive") approaches, appears in a forceful paper by lan Douglas, a contribution to a symposium on *The Unity of Geography* (Tr. Inst. Brit. Geogrs. 11, 1986). In essence, Douglas points out that convoluted philosophical debate, often leading to totally inconclusive statements of unprovable and contradictory nature, should be circumvented in order to focus attention on what geographers actually do or what they should be doing. The world is heaving with moral and practical challenges which geographers are particularly well-equipped to tackle. Moreover, these issues of practice offer a pragmatic merger of objective methodology, moral, social and emotional commitment of a reflexive nature, and a measured involvement in the perceptual worlds of those who occupy problem regions. Ecology has hitherto occupied much of this expanding niche due to neglect by geographers:

> Debate on the unity of geography suggests some worry about what geographers are doing, yet devotion of time to the debate may seem foolish when so many other urgent problems of geographical concern press upon us: growing global, European and British spatial, inequality of wellbeing; continued land degradation and food shortages; the environmental implications of pollutant emissions, forest clearance and nuclear waste disposal; not to mention the awesome implications of ever-expanding defence industries and weapons' stockpiles

By the 1960's:

> So many of the new texts produced in the ecoscience and environmental field looked better geography texts than many offered by geographers. Issues like population, resources, food, pollution were presented in dramatic and effective ways that gripped the imagination of the students, public and media alike. The unity of people and environment was clear – but it was called ecoscience or environmental studies, not geography (Douglas 1986, 459, 461).

We as archaeologists can detect strong resonances from this statement. Under the external pressures discussed in the first part of this paper, we are also being forced or encouraged, to bring the past "out there" alive to the public and to ourselves. Douglas' approach is far from one rejecting theory, but rather it reminds us that the merger of theory and practice should be going on "out there" where the philosophical paradoxes cease to hinder successful practice and problem-solving. Although we cannot prove philosophically that every pavement-edge is like another, who outside their book-lined study examines each one before stepping off it?

Evolutionary Zoology, Biology and Human Evolution

In a series of books and papers, Stephen Jay Gould has refashioned the Darwinian theory of Evolution in a way that converges directly on trends already identified in Anthropology, History and Geography. His most recent general paper is a clear statement of his approach

and is significantly entitled *Evolution and the Triumph of Homology, or Why History Matters* (1986). It begins (60) with a quote from E H Carr:

> The real importance of the Darwinian revolution was that Darwin, completing what Lyell had already begun in geology, brought history into science.

History, Gould continues (61), is supposedly the domain of narrative, unique events – science works with prediction and experiment – attitudes seemingly incompatible:

> How then can we marry these two apparently contradictory statements – the claim that Darwin's "long argument" made history matter and the usual impression that Darwin was a great scientist? The problem vanishes when we locate Darwin's singular greatness in his extended campaign to establish a scientific methodology for history – to make history doable for the zealous researchers of science.

Darwin followed Lyell who said that small scale accretionary changes were not just all we had to work with but the world really works that way too. Another key concept of Darwin's was to deny a "purpose" or "direction" to evolutionary trajectories;

> Darwin's greatness as a scientist lay in the middle ground between his most basic elucidation of evolution as a fact, and his most general development of the radical implications (randomness, materialism, nonprogressivism) that so upset Western culture(61).

Recently there have been impressive arguments that, if accepted completely, would alter features of Darwin's overall model, whilst still conforming to his central theory of selection. One of these is the pace of evolutionary change:

> The "gradualist-punctualist debate"... is but one small aspect of a broader discussion about the nature of change: Is our world... primarily one of constant change (with structure as a mere variation of the moment), or is structure primary and constraining, with change as a "difficult" phenomenon, usually accomplished rapidly when a stable structure is stressed beyond its buffering capacity to resist and absorb. It would be hard to deny that the Darwinian tradition, including the modern synthesis, favoured the first view while "punctualist" thought... prefers the second (Gould 1982, 383).

The key noteworthy feature of both models is that "history" is crucial to understanding development, with "structure" constraining *either* constantly varying material *or* largely stable material. For this reason an evolutionary scientist makes no pretence to "predict" future evolution, yet on the other hand he can successfully "postdict" evolution by teasing out the general structural regularities from the unending variety of life forms over space and time (Gould 1986, 65).

A second radical change to Darwin's approach (Gould 1986, 62) is to broaden the range of selective pressures, so that the original "competition" between organisms yields to a hierarchical theory of selection, independent at several levels from genes to species, yet with complex interactions occurring between the levels. The effect of this alteration is to allow more far-reaching and rapid evolution to occur at times, and to open up selection to a broader set of subject-matters, which in human terms could include whole societies, or cultural and other behavioural patterns.

A third and especially interesting modification concerns the degree to which non-adaptive variation is permitted in living forms:

creativity lies in the process of variation, and selection only eliminates the unfit (Gould 1982,381).

Much greater scope must be given to non-adaptive variation which offers raw material for eventual selection if needed. Randomness can be a direct source of modification in form, not just for raw material; indeed:

most evolutionary changes, particularly large-scale trends, include major non-adaptive components as primary directing or channeling features, and if they proceed more in an episodic than a smoothly continuous fashion, then we inhabit a different world from the one Darwin envisaged (op cit 382)... many features of organic architecture and developmental pathways have never been adaptations to anything... we tend to think of these nonadaptations as a... set of small and incidental modifications with no major consequences. I dispute this assessment and claim that the pool of nonadaptations must be far greater in extent than the direct adaptations that engender them. This pool must act as a higher-level analogue of genetic variation, as a phenotypic source of raw material for further evolution... No one doubts that the human brain became large for a set of complex reasons related to selection. But, having reached its unprecedented bulk, it could... perform in an unimagined range of ways bearing no relation to the selective reasons for initial enlargement. Most of human society may rest upon these non-adaptive consequences... I do not claim that a new force of evolutionary change has been discovered. Selection may supply all immediate direction, but if highly constraining channels are built of nonadaptations, and if evolutionary versatility resides primarily in the nature and extent of nonadaptive pools, then "internal" factors of organic design are an equal partner with selection (Gould 1982, 383–384).

In an earlier publication Gould (1981) had elaborated on this model of hierarchical selection that thrives on a looser, more flexible subject-matter such as human cultural variety, as follows:

Humans are animals, and everything we do is constrained, in some sense, by our biology. Some constraints are so integral to our being that we rarely even recognise them, for we never imagine that life might proceed in another way.

Examples given are size, growth patterns, sleeping and eating patterns, ageing patterns:

These are all results of our genetic construction, and all are important influences upon human nature and society.

These biological boundaries are so evident that they have never engendered controversy. The contentious subjects are specific behaviours that distress us and that we struggle with difficulty to change (or enjoy and fear to abandon): aggression, xenophobia, male dominance, for example:.. I believe that sociobiologists have made a fundamental mistake in categories. They are seeking the genetic basis of human behaviour at the wrong level. They are searching among the specific products of generating rules... while the rules themselves are the genetic deep structures of human behaviour...

If intelligence sets us apart among organisms, then I think it probable that natural selection acted to maximize the flexibility of our behaviour. What would be more adaptive for a learning and thinking animal: genes selected for aggression, spite, and

> xenophobia; or selection for learning rules that can generate aggression in appropriate circumstances and peacefulness in others? (Gould 1981, 328, 329, 331).

There is an immense amount of food for thought here for those of us concerned with the human past, and I shall merely underline the key repetition of themes met already: form rather than content as the principle for permitting the general and unique to coexist; in corollary, "content" can only be studied "historically"; the trajectories of evolutionary change and development are unpredictable in content but post-dictable as a succession of structural regularities; much of the variety of life, including human behaviour, can arise in a nonadaptive way and follow its own pathways alongside but ultimately constrained by selective pressures.

In the field of Human Evolution there has naturally been a strong theoretical input from these developments in Evolutionary Biology and Zoology. Alan Bilsborough, for example, has recently discussed the relevance of the "punctuated equilibrium" model for the physical development of Palaeolithic hominids (1986):

> The observed pattern of variation within Pliocene and basal Pleistocene specimens indicates polyphyly, whatever the underlying processes may be, and, as such, contrasts with the later (post-1.5 mya) stages of human evolution. These contrasts in turn imply differing selection processes and adaptive strategies between Villafranchian and later hominids... at the least this supports an "historical" not uniformitarian simplistic view (1986, 213).

Archaeologists studying the same transformation, have implied a new relationship after the transition, towards that looser interaction of human culture and adaptive, selective pressures identified by our other disciplines. Before the changeover it is possible that more instinctive hominids prevailed, dominated primarily by ecological, demographic and genetic forces, even including the earliest tool-users. These creatures are arguably not "human"in their behaviour and mental patterns, and our understanding of them will continue to follow non-empathetic approaches such as experimental archaeology on technological sequences, or game theory for human palaeoecology (Issac 1986, 237).

Let us turn to the evidence for, and interpretation of, the elaboration of distinctively human culture in the later Lower Palaeolithic. Isaac and Gowlett have shown that the hominid makers of the enormously successful Acheulean industry c. 1 mya:

> show great precision in the execution of what appear to be standardised designs... Gowlett uses this to argue that the materialistic/economic approach that has been in vogue among Palaeolithic scholars in recent years may have led to underestimates of the material and cultural ability of early Pleistocene hominids... we need to seek methods for assessing the balance point between minimising mechanistic indications and maximising mentalistic ones (Isaac, op cit 234).

The same mutual feedback between a semi-independent cultural trajectory and necessary selective pressures occurs with the next major industrial tradition of the early Middle Palaeolithic:

> Prehistorians have long made a fuss about the emergence of the Levallois method as evidence of advances in development of mental ability. The validity of this seems clear enough, but like the increasing refinement and differentiation that has already been discussed, stressing the cognitive developments leaves unanswered the questions about adaptive significance... during the Middle Pleistocene the whole of the conduct

> of proto-human life became more and more governed by customs and precepts that specified with increasing exactitude what procedures were appropriate and socially acceptable. One way of thinking about this is to use a linguistic/cognitive metaphor and argue that behaviour in general, including tool-making behaviour, was acquiring a deep grammatical structure for sociological reasons rather than engineering reasons, thus calling for an increase in orderliness and predictability... The deep structural rules, and the specific artefact form-grammars generated by them, would be transmitted by teaching and imitation and would be subject to variation from region to region and in the same region throughout time. This model of change would predict that if cultural definition of appropriate conduct facilitated more and more efficient rules of adaptation, then the orderliness, symmetry and standardisation among artifacts could be expected to increase even if the same craft tasks could perfectly well be accomplished by simple, opportunistic tool-kits (Isaac op cit 236).

The convergence of these approaches to the developments just examined in Social Anthropology, History and Geography, is very striking.

Cosmology and Theoretical Physics

I am far from being alone in also observing convergence towards these common ideas in the world of Cosmology, for indeed Gould in his overview paper draws the parallel as well (1986, 69).

Professor Paul Davies, in one of his recent books (1983) has summarised some of the more startling features of current cosmological theory in order to investigate their wider implications for other disciplines. The base-point, as always, is the reality of pattern, or order:

> Science is possible only because we live in an ordered universe (144). Everywhere we look, from the far-flung galaxies to the deepest recesses of the atom, we encounter regularity and intimate organisation. We do not observe matter or energy to be distributed chaotically. They are arranged instead in a hierarchy of structure: atoms and molecules, crystals, living things, planetary systems, star clusters, and so on. Moreover the behaviour of physical systems is not haphazard, but careful and systematic (145).

Furthermore, according to one prominent theory, the several fundamental laws of matter and energy may now exist separate only because we observe them as

> a low-temperature phenomenon. As the temperature of matter is raised, so the varied forces that act upon it begin to merge their identity.

The continual search, therefore, for a unified general theory of matter and energy could be solved by placing them in an *historical perspective*. In the origins of our universe the physical laws have evolved just as the matter they control (Davies 1983, 54–55).

More remarkable, and better known, are the implications of Einstein's investigation of the nature of time through his theories of Relativity:

> The revolution of our concept of time which has accompanied the theory of relativity is best summarized by saying that, previously, time was regarded as absolute, fixed, and universal – independent of material bodies and observers. Today time is seen to be *dynamical*. It can stretch or shrink, warp or even stop altogether at a singularity. Clock rates are not absolute, but relative to the state of motion or gravitational situation of the observer (Davies op cit 123).

Once again, we find a convergence, a compatibility of the unique and the general – the Einsteinian laws in their *generality* account for everything in the universe as essentially a product of *particular* combinations of spatial location and gravitational forces.

Another significant finding of Theoretical Physics is the congruence at almost every level of ordered matter, of both order and random disorder. Thus subatomic particles behave in an unpredictable fashion, at the level of the individual, and their appearance can be argued to be "without cause"; on the other hand these particles studied in large groups, behave with statistical regularity (op cit 101). In the same way, as Hofstadter has pointed out, if you are wondering about what to choose on a menu, this is not a confusion emanating from your neurons –

> the fact that the lower level is ruled by logic need not contradict the fact that the upper mental level can be illogical and emotional (Davies op cit 84).

Both in this and earlier sections of this paper we have identified (and cf also Lewthwaite, this volume) an important sphere of scientific analysis where as human beings we respond "innately" to pattern recognition that cannot always be justified by rigorous objective criteria, yet can be "tested" by Popper's concept of progressive "intersubjective" evaluation. Mirroring this situation is that identified in Physics in relation to the curious implications of Heisenberg's "Uncertainty Principle":

> It says you can't know where an atom, or electron, or whatever, is located *and* know how it is moving, at one and the same time.
>
> According to Bohr, the foggy and nebulous world of the atom only sharpens into concrete reality when an observation is made... It only materializes when you look for it... Look for its location and you get an atom at a place. Look for its motion and you get an atom with a speed. But you can't have both. The reality that the observation sharpens into focus cannot be separated from the observer and his choice of measurement strategy (Davies op cit 102–3).

As David Bohm has expressed it:

> A centrally relevant change in descriptive order required in the quantum theories is thus the dropping of the notion of analysis of the world into relatively autonomous parts, separately existent but in interaction. Rather, the primary emphasis is now on *individual wholeness*, in which the observing instrument is not separated from what is observed.

Bohm here echoes the words of Werner Heisenberg:

> The common division of the world into subject and object, inner world and outer world, body and soul is no longer adequate (both quoted in Davies op cit 112).

Finale: Structural History

In the preceding section, we have brought together from disparate sources in sister disciplines, some convergent approaches and concepts, which I would maintain could cohere into a complex body of unitary theory for analysing and understanding human society and human development in a future holistic Science of Man. We also identified the "Region" as an ideal location for such unified research.

As a final but very significant piece in the jigsaw, I would like to introduce a further methodological procedure, the analytical framework developed by the French *Annales* school of historians and geographers.

Its core characteristic is a sophisticated model of history. We have seen that a central theme of new approaches in many disciplines in both the Sciences and Humanities is the contention that the analysis of the general and particular leads to all the sciences being seen as ultimately forms of *History*. If History is to become a unifying feature, we need an effective analytical programme for structuring and hence simplifying the phenomena of the past in all their complexity. French "Structural History", the central model of the Annales school, offers an analytical framework that incorporates all the key elements of structure in the human past already identified earlier in this essay.

The best known representative of the *Annales* tradition is the late Fernand Braudel. His elaboration of Structural History can be brilliantly observed in his classic study of the 16th century Mediterranean world (1972): here Braudel illustrates how the texture of the past is created by the constant interaction between historical forces operating on different timescales.

Firstly we witness the short-term events (EVENEMENTS) that dominate conventional History, and in which we may identify actions and persons, if we are lucky. To offer a familiar example from Archaeology, Ian Richmond's excavations of the Iron Age hillfort at Hod Hill, Dorset, uncovered a dense settlement attacked by the Roman legions under Vespasian. The largest internal enclosure was interpreted as the chieftain's hut, and a concentration of ballista fire around the hut suggested a policy of striking at the heart of the community to compel an early surrender (cf Richmond 1968).

These "events" interact with influential views about the world shared by past social groups or even whole societies, so-called MENTALITES. Here a bridge to Symbolic, Structuralist and Cognitive Archaeology can be made, and the valuable information from art works and literature invoked into the analysis. But we would argue that as much "mentalite" is subconscious normative, as it is conscious normative behaviour, and we need both "insider" and "outsider" perspectives. To cite an example from Archaeology, a recent case-study of Egyptian painting and colour technology successfully related the symbolic content of different colours in Egyptian ideology to advances in Egyptian chemical technology (Ragai 1986).

Next, permeating past societies are medium-term pressures of which most contemporaries are inadequately, if at all, aware. The upward and downward trends of population cycles, agricultural cycles, climatic perturbations, core-periphery effects in political and economic macrosystems: these phenomena, operating over timescales frequently of the order of several centuries, are termed CONJUNCTURES and are the kind of recurrent, patterned phenomena "New Archaeologists" pick up from their excavations and surveys. My own project with Anthony Snodgrass in Central Greece has provided very clear evidence of "conjunctural" cycles in the medium-term development of Boeotian society (see Bintliff and Snodgrass 1985, Bintliff 1988). Further evidence for similar cycles in the archaeological record can be found in my studies of Neolithic to Iron Age Europe (*European Social Evolution*, 1984, chapters 3 and 7), and in essays on Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilisation by Adams and Butzer (respectively 1978, 1980).

The final structural element is Braudel's famous long-term perspective or LONGUE DUREE, where operate the almost timeless constraints on human behaviour set by certain properties of landscapes or by slowly-changing technologies and worldviews.

In essence I have tried to demonstrate in this essay that the core of our discipline of Archaeology must remain positivistic and scientific – all *is* structure; at the same time our discipline is immensely enriched by the addition of post-positivist, humanistic perspectives,

because all *is* History. To understand any moment in the past is to see it as a unique fusion of the general and the particular.

Notes

1. In fact English Heritage is already funding 'battles' and 'tournaments' at sites in its care. It is also amusing but true that the producers of the 1963 film *Cleopatra* were so unimpressed by the original dimensions of the Roman Forum that they rebuilt it in the studio on a far larger scale.
2. Cf. 'History proceeds by the accumulation of knowledge' (Steinberg 1981, 464).
3. For very pertinent commentaries regarding the role of the Historian in modern Britain, and pointing towards similar conclusions to the views here expressed, see D Carradine (1986) and M Goldie (1987).
4. "Positivism" has many definitions and variants. What is meant here is that highly influential brand of Logical Positivism which has underlain so much of the attitudes and strategies adopted by the postwar Western World's Establishment in key areas such as national planning, social development, and academic research in the Sciences and Humanities. In essence, this kind of Positivism rejects as meaningless all observations and experiences which cannot be subjected to experimental verification or validation, as if under laboratory conditions, or reducible by logic and rational analysis to empirically-verifiable statements. The whole of Metaphysics, including all questions of morality or religion, are thereby ruled out of serious consideration as valueless. Furthermore, by stipulating that valid knowledge and any reliable basis for action must rest on propositions of an empirical, ideally also statistical or mathematical nature, any scope for "irrational behaviour" (which would include decisions and actions affected by emotional or spiritual factors rather than pure logic), at either the level of the individual or that of the community, is therefore excluded on *a priori* grounds. People's feelings and perceptions about what they do or experience are also of little relevance compared to the scientific establishment of the supposedly rational pattern observable by positivists from their analysis of aggregate, impersonal human behaviour. In its most extreme form, a world ideally suited to analysis and manipulation by logical positivists would consist of the faultlessly logical behaviour of characterless human automata.
5. Of the trend away from Positivism and towards a more "Humanistic Geography", Neil Smith has commented wittily:
   'As Lancelot sought the Holy Grail, geographers in the last twenty years have sought the scientific paradigm. Lancelot failed but he learnt the pleasures of more earthly things. So too geographers' (1979, 356).
6. Very uncharacteristically Popper has toyed with an approach ("situational logic") to the role of the individual in history that is little removed from Collingwood's empathy:
   'to judge the problem that each individual actor in the past faced and by that logic assessing his reactions to them' (Steinberg 1981, 459).
   According to Popper:
   'if we know anything about different attitudes in different historical periods, then it is from experiments carried out in our imagination'(1976, 94).
   Steinberg comments:
   'Professor Taylor Watkins shows clearly that Popper must end up by admitting into the heart of his system the very subjectivity he denies. This paradox is inherent in questions such as: "Why did X act in the way he did?" It justifies the instinct by which examiners and tutors refuse to set such questions... The whole notion of reconstruction is not only unhistorical, as Popper conceives it, it is profoundly unscientific by his own standards. How do I falsify by a thought experiment what an agent in the past tells me when his is the only account?' (Steinberg 1981, 459–460).
7. Steinberg (1981) finds that 'methodological individualism fails' for similar reasons:
   'What is an individual? Are you and I not made up of all sorts of sub-systems and categories? As

I type this, the pound in my pocket is depreciating at a measurable rate, so my relationship to the means of production is altering. I can be aggregated in all sorts of ways and subjected to chi-square analyses, as an immigrant, as a voter, as a person of a given age and sex, as a member of a profession or resident in a community. I change over time and in relation to others. My hair falls out. I lose my ability to read small print without spectacles' (473).

8. To quote Evans-Pritchard in a standard textbook (1951):
'As I understand the matter, what the social anthropologist does can be divided into three phases. In the first phase, as ethnographer, he goes to live among a primitive people and learns their way of life. He learns to speak their language, to think in their concepts, and to feel in their values. He then lives the experience over again critically and interpretatively in the conceptual categories and values of his own culture and in terms of the general body of knowledge of his discipline. In other words, he translates from one culture into another.

In the second phase of his work, and still within a single ethnographic study of a particular primitive society, he tries to go beyond this literary and impressionistic stage and to discover the structural order of the society, so that it is intelligible not merely at the level of consciousness and action, as it is to one of its members or to the foreigner who has learnt its mores and participates in its life, but also at the level of sociological analysis. Just as the linguist does not merely learn to understand, speak and translate a native language but seeks to unravel its phonological and grammatical systems, so the social anthropologist is not content merely to observe and describe the social life of a primitive people but seeks to reveal its underlying structural order, the patterns which, once established, enable him to see it as a whole, as a set of interrelated abstractions.

Having isolated these structural patterns in one society, the social anthropologist, in the third phase of his work, compares them with patterns in other societies. The study of each new society enlarges his knowledge of the range of basic social structures and enables him better to construct a typology of forms, and to determine their essential features and the reasons for their variations.

Most of my colleagues would, I fancy, disagree with this description of what a social anthropologist does. He would prefer to describe what he does in the language of the methodology of the natural sciences, whereas what I have said implies that social anthropology studies societies as moral, or symbolic, systems and not as natural systems, that it is less interested in process than in design, and that it therefore seeks patterns and not laws, demonstrates consistency and not necessary relations between social activities, and interprets rather than explains' (1951, 61).

As an example of a totally-realized analysis of another culture, Evans-Pritchard cites his own classic, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937), which
'is about a Central African people. It is an attempt to make intelligible a number of beliefs, all of which are foreign to the mentality of a modern Englishman, by showing how they form a comprehensible system of thought, and how this system of thought is related to social activities, social structure, and the life of the individual' (1951, 98).

The third tier, cross-cultural comparison, is made explicit with cross-reference to witchcraft in historical Europe.

9. Even when dealing with a clear "insider" contemporary literary account:
'we face substantial problems if we take what a text appears to tell us... at face-value, or even at face-value interpreted through our own subjective, common-sense logic... It may well be that much analysis based in such terms turns out to describe correctly aspects of another society and even to suggest explanations for these aspects. But this is, to a greater or lesser degree, coincidental. For there is no way in which it can justify these descriptions without the help of some more structured critical and interpretational framework which can demonstrate the logic of its conclusions – one may disagree with this logic, but the grounds can at least be specified and the disagreement located. Without this, we are left merely with a variety of individual responses to the data, and no way of knowing where or why these responses differ' (Haldon 1986, 60).

10. Initially,
'we obviously need to provide a wider structure of cultural meaning which will mesh in with social and cultural practice as we can observe it through the medium of literary production and other forms

of evidence. This should provide some sort of motor or dynamic for the things people do, and at two levels: on the one hand, what Byzantines themselves thought they were doing; and on the other hand, why we think they did them... For Byzantium, we can try to relate these general clues – these inherited cultural characteristics – to more specific historical determinants: the nature of Byzantine political orthodoxy, the symbolism surrounding the emperor, the nature of the state and its relations institutionally with its representatives, with the agricultural producers whose surpluses supported it, with its military and civil bureaucracies; and most importantly, we can relate these clues to the interaction between the social institutional aspects of Byzantine culture... and people's beliefs about what they do' (Haldon 1986, 61–61).

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Whose Archaeology is it anyway?

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Council for British Archaeology

In a perceptive essay entitled 'Archaeology, the public and the sense of the past', Peter Fowler (1981) defined the public as being, first, 'that minority which is consciously interested in the past as represented by what archaeology studies and produces', which he quantified – perhaps a little optimistically – as 'hundreds of thousands'. He went on to divide the remainder of the population into 'several million people who have some awareness of and perhaps a mild interest in the past (and) the bulk of the population who, frankly, do not give a damn about the past or archaeology.' Despite his brusque dismissal of some forty million of our fellow-citizens, Fowler concluded that, 'if archaeology is to proceed at all other than as an introverted specialism for the recondite few, the retention and indeed the development of the public interest is vital. Ultimately, the public pays the piper and its right to influence the tune has to be accepted.'

This realistic and courageous statement represents a minority view so far as the archaeological profession in this country is concerned. It highlights a fundamental source of insecurity and instability which threatens both the discipline of archaeology and the preservation of Britain's archaeological heritage, a problem which needs to be confronted and resolved as a matter of urgency by the whole archaeological profession in this country.

Such statements as this are usually associated with developing countries and not with countries such as the United Kingdom, which, after all, enacted its first statute for the protection of the archaeological heritage as long ago as 1882. Britain is not like Cyprus, where partition of that unhappy island has resulted in wholesale looting of archaeological sites, or like Guatemala, where archaeologists have been murdered by *huaqueros* whom they have disturbed as they have been dismantling Mayan temples, or like Peru, where Machu Picchu is being exploited ruthlessly for tourism with complete disregard for its great archaeological importance (Bonavia 1984, Meisch 1985). In this respect the British achievement in archaeology is a notable one, which merits some acknowledgement here.

Britain has long been a leader in the field of archaeological research: the academic mantle of Childe fell upon Clark and Piggott and is being handed on by Renfrew and others to a new generation of scholars, whilst the innovative approach to field research of Pitt-Rivers, Petrie, Wheeler, and Crawford continues through the work of Cunliffe, Biddle, Christopher Taylor, and their pupils and disciples. Although under severe pressure at the present time, university departments of archaeology continue to sponsor and encourage fundamental research that commands international respect.

In the field of heritage management, too, Britain is among the most highly regarded nations in the world, only surpassed perhaps by the Scandinavian countries. Field and aerial survey are the province of national bodies such as the three greatly respected Royal Commissions on Ancient and Historical Monuments and of the County Sites and Monuments Records that cover most of England and Wales (though there are some sad gaps in the coverage of Scotland). The monuments in State care in the three countries are superbly conserved by craftsmen with a century of tradition behind them, all are open to the general public, and many are equipped with display and interpretation facilities. The same can justly be said of those buildings and monuments in the care of the National Trust, a pioneering British

organization whose structure and principles have been adopted by many other countries, both developed and developing.

All might then be thought to be for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Even the most complacent archaeologist would concede that there are some problems still to be overcome – a Government that is not overly sympathetic to research that is non-commercial, insensitive developers, illicit treasure hunters, and so on – but by comparison with much of the rest of the world the United Kingdom would appear to be doing pretty well by its archaeology and its archaeologists. The message that so often comes over, in the pages of *Rescue News*, for example, is that Britain could be an archaeological paradise if only archaeologists were given a great deal more money for research and preservation, combined with tougher protective legislation.

It is salutary at this point to set against this introspective view of archaeology and its objectives the public perceptions of the subject. In a treasure chest of a book, David Lowenthal (1985), a geographer by training, has attempted to analyse public attitudes to the past. These are many and complex, conditioned by a variety of stimuli – class, family, education, media attitudes, psychological makeup, and many more. Here there is space to cover only the more obvious and contemporary of these attitudes, leaving the in depth analysis of their origins to Lowenthal.

Let us look first at media presentation of the subject. Of the sober national dailies *The Times* publishes short notes on major discoveries from time to time and *The Independent* has in a short time shown a keen interest in both the research and the political aspects of archaeology. Neither *The Guardian* nor the *Daily Telegraph* has any discernible pattern in its presentation of the subject. For the rest of the national press, archaeology seems to be identified with treasure hunting and the more sensational and salacious discoveries – witness the coverage given to the more macabre aspects of Lindow Man or more recently to the discovery of 17th century contraceptives in Dudley Castle in newspapers such as *The Sun* or the *Daily Star*.

The local press varies widely. There are rare examples of informed presentation, usually where archaeologists have succeeded in establishing a foothold (best exemplified by David Miles's regular column in the *Oxford Times*), but the more general treatment is usually perfunctory and inaccurate, with the more substantial stories being reserved for the finds made by metal detector users – often described as 'amateur archaeologists'.

On radio and television archaeology is treated as a minority interest, best left to off-peak transmission times on Radio 4 and BBC2, by contrast with wildlife programmes, which regularly go out at peak viewing times. This is not to belittle the work of Roy Hayward, John Knight, and Malcolm Billings on radio or the late Paul Johnstone and his disciples on television. It is sad that the esteem in which *Chronicle* was held by BBC programme planners in the 1960s and early 1970s has declined. Of the independent television companies, only Anglia regularly broadcasts programmes on archaeology, produced by Paul Jordan, formerly of *Chronicle*.

The standard of these programmes is generally high; they are conscientious in their presentation and usually succeed in giving an account of archaeology with which most archaeologists would wish to be associated. Their viewing and listening figures are, alas, depressingly low – corresponding in effect with the readership of the AB readership newspapers. It may be that archaeologists have only themselves to blame for this failure to reach a wider audience; they have certainly failed to produce a charismatic figure since Mortimer Wheeler who can front these programmes in the way that the younger David Attenborough and David Bellamy have served natural history.

Elsewhere on television the image of the archaeologist is projected by feature films such as *The Curse of the Mummy* or *Indiana Jones*. The great American archaeologist, Alfred Vincent Kidder, once characterized the public perception of archaeologists in a memorable antithesis: 'In popular belief, and unfortunately to some extent in fact, there are two sorts of archaeologists, the hairy-chested and the hairy chinned.' He described the former as 'a strong-jawed young man in a tropical helmet, pistol on hip, hacking his way through the jungle in search of lost cities and buried treasure', and the latter as 'old' and 'benevolently absent-minded. His only weapon is a magnifying glass, with which he scrutinizes inscriptions in forgotten languages. Usually his decipherment coincides...with (his) daughter's rescue from savages by the handsome young assistant' (quoted in Gumerman 1984, 7). These stereotypes still prevail in the minds of the modern public; the archaeologist deals in death, treasure, and the occult, working either in an ivory tower or in romantic or wild places. The reality of so much archaeology is such that it is rejected in favour of treasure hunting with a metal detector or the wilder flights of fancy of leylines or the Atlantis myth. Public acceptance of the discipline of archaeology and of its cognate concern, the preservation of the archaeological heritage, is seriously weakened by misleading perceptions of this kind.

The prime concern of archaeology at the present time should, therefore, be to bridge the gap between these public perceptions and the reality, and to present an image of the subject and the profession that is sufficiently stimulating to command the interest and support of a much wider section of the public. This is not a view that will necessarily be accepted by the whole of the profession. Some years ago the CBA wrote to all directors of excavations advertised in its *Calendar*, urging them to make their digs open to the public, or at least to arrange one or more Open Days. One university archaeologist wrote back indignantly, stating that in no circumstances would he allow the public anywhere near his site, since this was a scientific project and no concern of the *hoi polloi*; he made no reference to the fact that his excavation was being supported to a considerable extent by public funds. It is some consolation that he was in a minority, and that the CBA initiative has gradually become accepted by more and more directors of excavations.

What in fact is the involvement of the public with archaeology? It may be argued with some justice that most university research is directly funded by the State, through the University Grants Committee, the British Academy, or one of the British Councils. Similarly, the Ancient Monuments legislation can be seen as having been enacted in the public interest, though it is interesting to note that nowhere in any of the Acts since 1882 is this specified. The parliamentary history of this legislation is of considerable interest (Cleere 1984), not least some of the opinions expressed in debates on the 1882 and 1913 Acts (Kennet 1972, 21–48). The clearest statement of public interest was made by Lord Curzon in an olympian speech to the House of Lords in 1912, in the following words: 'Owners now recognise that they are not merely owners of private property but trustees to the nation at large.'

Although the protection legislation is deficient in this respect, public interest is explicitly defined in the National Heritage Act 1983, which set up the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England. Section 33 (1) (c) of that Act lays a duty upon the Commissioners 'to promote the public's enjoyment of, and advance their knowledge of, ancient monuments and historic buildings situated in England and their preservation.' There can be no clearer expression of the public purpose of monuments protection and presentation, and by implication of archaeology, which underpins this work. Archaeology has a social responsibility towards the general public; to what extent has it discharged that responsibility?

It has to be said that archaeological research has so far failed almost completely to get its message over. Very little of the work in the field and in the laboratory carried out in the past

decades has been communicated to the public in terms that are accessible or comprehensible. There are honourable exceptions; following the precedent, above all, of Sir Leonard Woolley, Barry Cunliffe has been assiduous in producing 'popular' accounts of his excavations at Fishbourne (1971), Bath (1971, 1985), and Danebury (1983), whilst the York Archaeological Trust has presented its Coppergate excavation to a wider public (Hall 1984) and the Department of Urban Archaeology at the Museum of London has done the same for its long series of waterfront excavations (Milne 1985). The Roman period is always popular among general readers and has been the subject of a number of popular accounts (eg Wacher 1978, Webster 1978, 1980), whilst there is a plethora of books about London (eg Marsden 1980, Merrifield 1983).

These works, however, have aimed at the public already reached through television and radio programmes such as those referred to above; indeed, several books (eg Hills 1986) have been 'tied in' to TV series. They have sold well – in relative terms – through the Ancient and Medieval History Book Club, but none has achieved the best-seller lists published regularly in *The Bookseller*.

Nor does archaeology have an outlet for communication with the public through journals and magazines. *Current Archaeology* has always eschewed distribution through bookstalls and the attempt by *Popular Archaeology* to do so was unsuccessful (though in its new incarnation as *Archaeology Today* it may try again). No popular archaeological journal has achieved the success of *Archéologia* in France, with its circulation nearing 100,000 and its availability at newsagents and bookstalls all over France. In short, the results of archaeological research, of whatever form, are not getting over to the public who are paying for the work.

Much research, of course, is virtually impossible to impart to a lay audience. Leafing through the annual list of *Archaeological Theses in British Universities* the reader may, on occasion, be reminded of Lucky Jim's description of research as 'throwing a non-light on pseudo-problems', but even when that unworthy thought is repressed it is difficult to see how most research, especially that emanating from the New Archaeology, can be interpreted for any but the specialist. That, of course, is equally true of research in most other fields, not least the sciences. It is significant, however, that the Royal Society has recently become aware of the increasing alienation of scientific research from everyday life and is taking vigorous action to close the gap (Royal Society 1985). It behoves archaeology to take stock in a similar way.

Let us now turn to the field of archaeological heritage management, that of English Heritage and its Welsh and Scottish counterparts. Officials of these bodies – notably the administrators – are at pains to stress that their responsibilities lie in the fields of preservation and presentation of monuments and not that of archaeology *pur sang*. Whilst this is undeniable in terms of the statutory duties laid upon them, it is to some extent sophistry on their part to seek to isolate themselves from the discipline of archaeology, since the monuments that are their concern are the raw material of archaeological research and the criteria by which they work are of necessity influenced profoundly by archaeological considerations. To what extent are they meeting their obligations and promoting the public's enjoyment of, and increasing its knowledge of, the monuments in their care?

A few short years ago the stereotype of a Guardianship monument was of an earthwork or ruin that was immaculately conserved and tended, in the custody of a functionary in a peaked cap whose duty was to sell tickets and guidebooks and to stop children from climbing on the monument. The monument itself had few, if any, interpretive plaques or boards and the guidebook was a work of scholarship, drably bound in a blue cover and impenetrable in its academic jargon to the casual visitor, uncertain of whether the Normans preceded the Romans

and ill-equipped to deal with the intricacies of reredorter and garderobe, orthostat and trilithon, *porta principalis dextra* and *principia*.

Happily, this is beginning to change. The concept of the 'interpretation centre', pioneered at the Fishbourne Roman palace, is now becoming acceptable. The custodians at monuments are being recruited from a different social group, the guidebooks are being redesigned, with publications at several levels at certain monuments, and explanatory notice boards and signs are beginning to appear at strategic points.

This revolution is not being greeted with acclamation by the entire archaeological community, however. The 'experience' at the Jorvik Viking Centre, whilst now generally accepted, is seen as the thin end of the wedge; every new proposal from English heritage for improved presentation – at Stonehenge, for example, or at Maiden Castle – seems inevitably to have had the appellation 'archaeological Disneyland' appended to it at some time or other. The declared aim of English Heritage to attract more visitors to its monuments is often decried, since 'the atmosphere' of the monument will be lost if there are too many visitors. Whilst this might well be justified in the case of Grimes Graves, it is not such a good argument when applied to the 45 acres of Maiden Castle. In any case, it is arguable whether, given its statutory remit, English Heritage has the right deliberately to limit the numbers of visitors to its monuments. It is the public that is paying, both through its taxes and its entrance fees, for the preservation of these monuments, and in return the state organizations must surely have a duty to make them accessible to the public, both physically and intellectually.

It is this aspect of intellectual accessibility that is in greatest need of concentrated study at the present time. The 'AB newspaper/Ancient History Book Club' market is now being catered for adequately, and the needs of foreign visitors are being met at a number of monuments by multi-lingual signs and guidebooks. There is still, unfortunately, little for the *Sun* reader, or even the *Daily Mail* reader, with little, if any, knowledge of English history and prehistory. If monument preservation, and therefore archaeology, are to continue to receive support from public funds, it is imperative that the understanding and sympathy of this group is secured. They need to be reached through the imagination, not the intellect; a didactic approach is bound to be resented and resisted. For this purpose it is necessary to distill from *The News of the World* and *Eastenders* those methods of communication that are most effective in capturing and holding the imagination of this very large group. Language and images must be used that will evoke the right responses; perhaps it is the advertising industry that can contribute most in this process.

There is a grave danger at the present time, given the materialistic and monetarist policies of the present Government in this country (and, indeed, in a number of the developed countries of the West), that the major effort of the protection agencies will be expended on a very small number of 'honeypot' sites, to the exclusion of the rest. If the sole criterion is to be a financial one, such a result might well be inevitable, and all that would remain would indeed be a series of archeological Disneylands, bereft of historical or social context and relying for their attraction on extraneous features such as funfairs, safari parks, and motor museums, like a number of historic houses.

Monuments with little or no commercial potential would be sacrificed to agriculture, forestry, or housing. Preservation policies would focus on the individual site or monument, disregarding the overall landscape context and, at the same time, the intimate relationship between historic, wildlife, and landscape conservation. Excavation would be focussed on the more spectacular sites and those likely to produce the most important remains, regardless of their research interest or of the existence or otherwise of any threat to their survival. A crucial factor in preventing such a disastrous development is the archaeological profession itself.

There is a growing divergence in the UK at the present time between research archaeologists, working principally in universities, and archaeological heritage managers, engaged in survey, rescue excavation, and monument preservation. It is not unlikely that, if no steps are taken to prevent this split, a situation will develop similar to that in Poland, where the research archaeologists employed by the Institute for the History of Material Culture and those working for PKZ (the State Conservation Workshops) will form two distinct communities, with little or no contact at any level. The absence of the commercial imperative in Poland means, of course, that preservation is in no way downgraded, but the dichotomy between the two groups has resulted in the policies for preservation being mechanistic and without any sound research basis.

A first step towards preventing such a situation developing in the UK should be the establishment of proper courses in heritage management. Such courses would not be confined to the more routine aspects of the subject such as legislation and organization, but would embrace techniques of presentation and communication at all levels. At the present time undergraduate courses for the most part pay lip service to the 'applied archaeology' aspect of heritage management. One or two lectures are devoted to legislation and organization, but these are merely excrescences on the main courses and rarely taken seriously. It may be that the undergraduate course, directed as it is in most universities to a general humanities education rather than a vocational training, is not appropriate and that postgraduate courses should be instituted. However, funding difficulties must regretfully rule out such a solution in practical terms. The alternative might be to offer a management option in the third year of the undergraduate course, at a time when most undergraduates will have decided whether they wish to follow a career in archaeology. The benefit of such a system would be that it would produce a cadre of trained heritage managers capable of making an immediate and effective impact on preservation policies and practice. Training in interpretation and communication would enable these people to make informed contributions to discussions on presentation, at present the sole preserve of 'specialists' with little or no appreciation of the limitations and the potential of archaeology in this connexion. It would also open up the centres of research excellence in the universities to a greater awareness of the problems and potential of heritage management.

At the same time – and, indeed, as a direct result of such a development – there should be closer integration between research and heritage management. To the outside observer the programmes and policies of organizations such as English Heritage in rescue archaeology and monument presentation give the impression of being dictated solely by expediency and with little, if any, proper research basis. Similarly, research programmes seem to take little heed of the requirements of heritage preservation and management. Recent statements of research priorities (eg Thomas nd) have made no perceptible impact on either the universities or the heritage agencies. The interdependence of the two needs to be aacknowaledged in practical terms. The Area Archaeological Advisory Committees set up by the Department of the Environment in 1975, to be axed along with so many other quangos in 1979, produced some excellent results in their short existence and might be seen as models for some future system. Another possibility would be the secondment of heritage managers to universities and university teachers to heritage agencies for short spells.

These recommendations relate only to the internal problems of archaeology and heritage management, but they are fundamental to any broader considerations. Unless a rational and cohesive structure can be worked out for the archaeological profession as a whole, it is idle to contemplate the involvement of the general public in its heritage. Here the *leitmotiv* must be communication; without effective communication, the message will not be transmitted.

The British public has demonstrated, through its avidity to read von Daniken or to purchase metal detectors, that it finds its past intriguing. At the present time the messages that it is reading are false gospels; it is the responsibility of archaeology to preach the true word, using a language and media that the public will be able to comprehend and appreciate. Unless this is done soon, Mammon will prevail and the meaning and most of the substance of the heritage will be lost for ever.

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Poor Museums, Rich Men's Media: An Archaeological Perspective

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Whether we like it or not museums, in which category I include ancient monuments in the care of the State, continue to be the prime means by which archaeology communicates with its non-specialist public. Certainly, particular television programmes and occasional, widely reported, spectacular discoveries lead to temporary surges of awareness but the base levels of understanding are set by museums. For most people they are the refresher courses, which mould or reinforce whatever distorted images of the prehistoric and early historic past were acquired at school. Effectively challenging these received images, so that they are permanently altered, is a formidable task because all of us have to understand the past in terms of our own experience. One of our education officers has a series of drawings mounted on her office wall. They were done by primary school children and show their interpretation of the houses at the neolithic village of Skara Brae, Orkney on the basis of information they had acquired in the Royal Museum of Scotland. Most have come to terms with the absence of windows in these structures, something that does not conform to their knowledge of houses, but one has brought them back closer to her experience by surrounding them with gardens full of flowers. In effect, Skara Brae has become the prehistoric equivalent of a suburban estate of semi-detached houses.

Now it would be easy to dismiss this as no more than an example of the inexperience of childhood but to do so would, in my view, be mere delusion. Adults may have more sophisticated preconceptions but they are every bit as adept at using museum displays to reinforce them. In the past two years I have been in charge of teams producing exhibitions shown during the Edinburgh Festival. One, *Symbols of Power at the time of Stonehenge*, was archaeological in content and the other, *The Enterprising Scot*, was not. It would be ludicrous to claim that the ideas and contents of those exhibitions were mine alone but I had an influence on what was included and both of them reflected accurately my views on the subject matter. Yet published comments included descriptions of one as a Marxist production and the other as an unashamedly monetarist Thatcherite experience. Neither I nor those closest to me detected the sea change in my views, which these comments imply, during the year that separated these two exhibitions. My interpretation is, therefore, that the titles of these two shows created certain expectations on the part of the individuals concerned and that these inhibited the communication of the messages that the organisers intended. In short, most of us find challenges to our deep-seated beliefs and prejudices disturbing and readily discover ways of transforming such information so that it supports rather than erodes our position. This is especially the case in museums where dialogue is limited and essentially a one-way affair. The displays have a one-off shot at communicating; they cannot answer supplementary questions or check whether the visitor has accepted, rejected or misinterpreted the information on offer.

All of this, of course, applies to museums in general and not just those presenting archaeological material. Moreover, museums are clearly seen as worthwhile institutions by a significant section of the community. There are more museum visits than attendances at

football matches, the national museums and galleries alone get 27 million visits every year, and the growth in the number of museums over the last two decades has been quite remarkable. The recent Miles Report on Museums in Scotland notes that the number of museums there has risen from just over 100 in 1968 to some 320 today (Museums and Galleries Commission 1986, 8). Eleven new museums every year for the last twenty years in Scotland alone. Nor is it clear whether the limits of this expansion have yet been reached. The reasons behind this phenomenon need not concern us overmuch here and I only mention it to emphasise that the position of museums as the prime communicator of our understanding of the past, far from being threatened by other media, is actually being strengthened.

On the other hand, archaeology has figured relatively little in all this activity despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that it is one of the bedrock disciplines of the museum world. Right from the beginning of museums in Britain, archaeological objects have been seen as appropriate material for them to collect. This has had the effect of concentrating holdings of British finds in a small number of long-established museums, most notably the British Museum, the Royal Museum of Scotland and the National Museum of Wales. The consequences of this concentration and the fact that virtually all of the museums with major archaeological collections regard themselves as academic institutions are only now beginning to engulf us.

Before examining those consequences in a little more detail, it is worthwhile considering some of the difficulties that have to be confronted in the presentation of archaeological material. None of them is exclusive to archaeology but in combination and degree they constitute formidable problems. Even today very little archaeology is taught in schools and what there is, is normally only provided as a prelude to history. This might not be so bad were it not for the remarkable emphasis which has been placed on truth and fact in so much history teaching. The new emphasis on investigative approaches to the past, both welcome and long overdue, still means that it will be upwards of a generation before the majority of museum visitors cease to view the displays without expectations dominated by a belief in truth and fact. Neither concept is much preparation for facing up to the contemporary world of British archaeology and its version of information. Facts seem in short supply and those that are around are heavily hung with qualifications and exceptions, while truth appears to be more of an individual pursuit than a universal quality. There is every possibility that the observant visitor will be able to find major discrepancies, both in date and identification, between apparently similar objects in different museums. Added to this, however, is the nature of the objects on display. With rare exceptions, they are incomplete and often quite different in appearance from when they were in use. Understanding them as new and complete objects is itself a major act of imagination, for which, all too often, no serious information is provided and no indication given of whether that information exists. The final piece in this jigsaw of barriers is that the museum visitor's experience will be insufficient, in many instances, for him to read visually the object before him. Confronted by a flint scraper the level of information acquired on the basis of visual inspection will be much lower than if the object were a longcase clock of 1720 or a Charles Rennie Mackintosh chair. Both of these last two objects have sufficient elements in common with objects known to the viewer for him to make an accurate initial assessment. This may sound rather trivial but considered in terms of complete displays rather than individual pieces the effects can be quite serious. Commitment and involvement to achieve the same level of information and understanding has to be proportionately greater with archaeological material than with objects of a more recent date. And the dominant image for the visitor may be more one of his own ignorance rather than a sense of enhanced knowledge. In saying this I am not trying to suggest that there are no problems for the visitor

associated with understanding objects of relatively recent date. Lowenthal, for instance, has drawn attention to the difficulties that functional obsolescence creates for our appreciation of quite modern objects even when they are presented in contextualising but static displays (1987, 33).

Not that much attention has apparently been given to these problems. Archaeological displays, particularly those in museums with major holdings, remain true to the nineteenth-century tradition –long on objects but short on information and explanation. Few can be said to be models of effective communication but then, does that make them any different from most of British archaeology? Our productions for the wider public have a pretty standard formula: keep it traditional and uncontroversial. In practice this means a chronological format using the Three Age system for prehistory and a series of historical epithets such as Romans or Anglo-Saxons for the early historic period.

This basic structure is then cluttered with detail using the maxim, 'Never show one beaker if you've got ten in the collections'. Moreover, the chronological framework invariably starts the visitor at the beginning, the earliest point in time represented in the collections. It seems logical and sensible but it actually puts the viewer at a position on the timescale farthest from his own experience and knowledge. Could we think of a more brilliant piece of disorientation even if that was our explicit intention? Nor is this problem seriously dealt with by a quick ride down a time tunnel as at Jorvik since we do not have time or context to build our way back into the past from our knowledge of the present. When you come out of that kind of time-tunnel all you really know is that you are a long way back in time from today, something which your first sight of the main displays would tell you anyway.

Now all of this takes us back to the spurious emphasis on truth and fact that we noted has characterised much of the history teaching in schools. By seeking to present only established views and to do so in a form which suggests that those views are incontrovertible because they are objective is to mislead our audience and misrepresent our subject. The situation is not addressed by a cosmetic thinning of the number of objects on display, the introduction of colour into the display cases or the creation of a more attractive atmosphere in the gallery as whole. Certainly, these elements can create a more seductive ambience in which to learn but that is not much use if equal care and consideration has not been lavished on what you might be learning.

The questions then become how has this situation come about and why are we apparently so uninterested in changing it? Archaeology as a museum discipline has largely managed to avoid the recent changes in attitude and approach of much of the museum world. You do not find too many archaeological curators talking about museums as centres of informal learning or other such buzz words that characterise the more socially conscious members of the profession. Largely, one suspects, this is because these attitudinal and methodological changes are being pioneered in local museums and they, for the reasons I alluded to earlier, generally have relatively impoverished archaeological collections. One might also add that they may well have recognised that the problems inherent in creating innovative archaeological displays require a greater level of resourcing than other areas of their holdings, particularly social history.

This turns the spotlight, where perhaps it should always have been, on the museums with major archaeological holdings, particularly the national institutions. Here we have the museum culture portrayed in its boldest form. Without exception these are large organisations with interests extending far beyond British archaeology. The one in which I work, the National Museums of Scotland, is among the smallest but still employs some 260 people, just over 1% of whom work with the British archaeological collections. It is almost a microcosm of

archaeology's perennial competition for resources in fields that embrace the arts, other aspects of the heritage and the environment. Clearly, archaeologists inside museums are no better or worse at securing increased funding than their colleagues elsewhere. But this, of course, is getting dangerously close to the time-honoured claims that with adequate money and other facilities we could do a proper job. I would not, for a moment, deny that archaeology is under-funded but I do believe that all too often lack of resources becomes a convenient excuse for avoiding the required analysis of what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Certainly, the explanation for the weakness of the major museums' current presentation of archaeology is not simply or even primarily a lack of resources. It is principally a question of attitudes, both on the part of the staff of those institutions and, equally important, of their visitors. As I noted earlier, these museums consider themselves to be academic establishments. They are also organisations with well developed and highly structured hierarchies. Within these hierarchies a great deal of power lies in the hands of the curators, particularly when one is dealing with the style and content of the displays. Yet the curators are recruited on the basis of their perceived academic expertise and most have no experience at all of display work before entering the museum's portals. Indeed, we do not just enter this world without experience, we bring a number of attributes which act as a positive hindrance to effective communication with the non-specialist. Not least of these is the educational background which qualified us for the job in the first place. We almost certainly have a wider vocabulary than average, use more complex sentence constructions and understand a fair amount of jargon, most of which we have been so conditioned to that we have difficulty recognising it as such. In the early 1970s I had the labels in our main prehistoric gallery looked at informally by an educational psychologist with a view to understanding how intelligible they were for our visitors. On the basis of a fairly cursory inspection he felt that the information they contained might be accessible to between 5 and 7% of the population. Now this is something that many curators know but knowing it is different from admitting it or acting upon it. To behave in this way, to acknowledge that one needs the help of specialists in communication and education to get your messages across, is usually perceived as threatening the overall position of curators in the institutional hierarchy. These hierarchies foster a sense of elitism, which may be productive in terms of individual achievement but generally creates an air of schizophrenia. When the organisation is internally stressing elitism and externally its accessibility to all, how can one give equal commitment to two such divergent attitudes? It is not altogether surprising that most of us, in these circumstances, choose to produce displays that conform to established norms and do nothing to jeopardise our standing with our colleagues. This is the sense in which museums are truly poor. That they have created structures in which internal values dominate the needs of their public.

But there is another side to this situation, namely the museum visitors. They, you might expect, would be demanding a better service more in tune with their interests. After all, most major museums have boards of trustees or some similar body, one of whose prime responsibilities is to represent the public interest. A cursory review of the composition of these boards suggests that the politicians and officials who appoint them have a very curious image of the public. The trustees of the National Museums of Scotland, for instance, are all eminently successful middle-aged men, hardly a representative cross-section of Scotland's inhabitants. Yet they may well be much more representative of our visitors. Surveys have regularly shown that museum going is predominantly an activity of the best educated members of the community, that is if we leave on one side the enforced attendance by schoolchildren on ediucdiiational visits. A recent survey of visitors to the British Museum, for instance, found that 'nearly all visitors were middle class and well-educated' (Caygill & House 1986, 5). In

the broadest sense these people are the rich men of our society but like everybody else they feel most comfortable with what they know and expect.

By way of example of this, I would like to look briefly at two reactions to the *Symbols of Power* exhibition and the accompanying book. This exhibition set out quite consciously to present only one aspect of life in part of the prehistoric past and to structure that interpretation using generalisations based on the present. One visitor, who admitted going to it three times, felt 'it was a demonstration of modern prejudices and preoccupations'. Why, she asked, 'bother with archaeology at all if 2086 BC was exactly like 1986 AD' (*Current Archaeol*, 9 (7), 1986, 222–23). The other reaction was to the accompanying book which the reader believed gave 'cause for dismay' because it was 'intended to be read by non-specialists – those who by definition are untrained in the disciplines of archaeology and therefore suggestible and uncritical'. The authors had, she felt, demonstrated a wholly inadequate sense of their responsibility to show 'an awareness of their readers' vulnerability' (*Current Archaeol*, 9 (4), 1986, 126).

These are strong reactions to what were, after all, only moderate changes to the traditional museum presentation of archaeology but they make me think that our regular visitors like the bland, uninformative displays that are our stock in trade. They want to preserve the idea that we are the experts who tell them the way it was in ways that they understand but the more 'suggestible and uncritical' members of the community do not. It certainly suggests that some, at least, of our visitors do not wish to face any explicit indication of bias on the part of museum staff and displays even though none of us can eradicate bias of one form or another from our interpretations of the past.

What lies behind much of this is the exaggerated importance of the object brought into museology from fine art, the idea that the object embodies some unalterable truth and its mere availability to the viewer is sufficient to enable it to communicate that truth. There have been a large number of exhibitions using archaeological material since the invention of the blockbuster show some decades ago but only *Symbols of Power* and the recent *Archaeology in Britain* have, to my knowledge, attempted to use the objects to convey archaeologically based interpretations. In all the rest the items have been displayed as art objects. When Waldemar Januszczak complains, as he did recently in *The Guardian*, that 'Today's museums are elegant warehouses. Where once they were temples of enlightenment they are now shrines to our national greed', he is not concerned with our archaeological and historical museums but with art museums. And neither is he arguing for enlightenment as I understand it but for a return to the display techniques of the past where the object unaided by explanation and information conveyed, as if by magic, what he describes as 'its moral, aesthetic and social purpose' (Januszczak 1987). Not a single national newspaper employs a critic capable of reviewing competently any museum exhibition that is not an art show. For these critics the past has been reduced to not much more than an aesthetic fix and museums to the providers of a comfortable environment for the sophisticated junkie. This situation is symptomatic of the attitudes that will keep museums as rich men's media, in which curatorial and visitor desires and expectations combine to maintain standards that keep the presentation of archaeology narrow and ineffective.

There are grave dangers in leaving these views unchallenged and complacently continuing on our way. The balance in museums between education and entertainment will not be easily maintained in the future as expanding the consumer base becomes ever more important as the paymasters' touchstone of success. Perhaps the distinction is not as sharp as some might suppose: 'curators today must lard instruction with lots of entertainment. They might recall the root term is the same, the Muses being given no less to amusement than to reflection'

(Lowenthal 1987, 33). Nevertheless, in such a situation archaeology's image is on the wrong side of the divide as an anonymous friend of Sir Roy Strong inadvertently made clear – 'the question which is worrying everyone (is) is heritage primarily about archaeology – saving things – or the nation's cultural lifeblood, relating to live developments outside? If it's both, where should the emphasis lie?' (quoted in Tait 1987). In the nineteenth century, archaeology, through its contribution to such matters as the antiquity of man and racial theory, affected the way men thought about themselves and the rest of humanity. Are we now content to accept the possibility that the subject's importance is reduced to that of the savers of things and the providers of early art objects? It does not require much imagination to realise the implications sfor the well-being of archaeology of such a situation coming to pass.

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Community Archaeology and the Archaeological Community: A normative sociological approach?

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Introduction

> Far from being an irrelevance on the pale of society, archaeology is a very sensitive indicator indeed of changes in social attitudes and in the elements of society itself. By and large, society gets the archaeology it deserves; it is next to impossible for archaeology to dictate its own terms or to break free of social constructs which have placed archaeology in such a richly frustrating state of tension today (Fowler 1981, 58)

This paper reviews the current position of field archaeology from the viewpoint of one cultural heritage resource manager, or Unit staff member, closely associated with the growing trend towards presentation and the use of M S C schemes. The paper takes its stance from the view that any archaeological work carries with it an explicit theoretical base, and a view of the past, that has a direct impact on either our society or its social structure. If this is true then it is a moral imperative that field work should either explicitly state its prejudices or adopt a conscious methodology that seeks to establish an 'objective truth' in terms of the subject itself, rather than society at large.

This paper adopts the latter viewpoint and assumes that a 'scientific' approach to archaeology is required. Whether this is methodologically possible has been openly doubted for some time – however, this paper takes the view that science is not merely a matter of method but also a matter of mores. It espouses the view that in the absence of a methodology it is at least possible to adopt a scientific sociology.

The paper consists of four main parts: The Background, Community Archaeology, Archaeological Paradigms, Future Prospects.

The Background outlines some views of how science functions. The section, Community Archaeology, by contrast, outlines recent trends, especially political ones, and the dangers inherent in them. As an alternative to pragmatic field work Archaeological Paradigms outlines, by an example, how the search for scientific laws and methodology is not at an end. The final section, Future Prospects, seeks to argue that a sociological approach is not only possible but perhaps desirable.

The Background

Science consists of:-

> Collectors, classifiers, and compulsive tidiers-up; many are detectives by temperament and many are explorers: some are artists and others artisans. There are poet-scientists and philosopher-scientists and even a few mystics.... (Medawar 1985, 10–11)

So said Sir Peter Medawar in 1985. As science, so of archaeology, it is a collection of individuals with their own attitudes, thoughts, and activities welded together by a common interest. What archaeology is not, is a coherent body of theory. It is doubtful whether archaeology per se has contributed one substantial inter-disciplinary theory to modern Western thought. What Stuart Piggott said in 1959 seems true of community archaeology in 1987:-

> The truth is that none of our models of the past, inherited or recently devised, seems capable of providing a wholly convincing picture of prehistory on its own, there does not seem to be what a scientist would call a general theory (Piggott 1959, 6)

What field archaeology has done is create or generate data about the past that need explanation. The large number of schools of thought present in archaeology suggests, as Kuhn (1963) has pointed out, that it is in a pre-paradigmatic or pre-scientific phase, like chemistry before the periodic table. Horton Smith (1986, 400–504) has analysed the crisis affecting the pre-paradigmatic behavioural sciences and the similarity to that affecting archaeology is striking. The features common to both disciplines are competition between schools of thought, the lack of cumulation of knowledge and contested models.

There are two main schools of thought about how science, which should be admired, and other soft science disciplines, function; these are derived from the works of Merton (1970, 1972, 1973) and Kuhn (1970, 1977). Merton envisaged that scientists should have common views of their subject, be disinterested, sceptical and reserve their criticism of colleagues to technical matters. Merton felt that science had a goal which required a clear code of behaviour and that it was driven by a reward system of peer recognition. Merton presented a social model; Kuhn saw science as a community of values (a paradigm) which proceeded through cycles consisting of normal science (applying a paradigm), revolution (the new paradigm) and mopping-up (applying the new paradigm). The mopping-up arising out of a new paradigm constrained puzzle solving, leading to incompatible theories and so to renewed revolution .(For a critique of these models see Durbin 1980).

The paradigm, that is the collection of coherent thoughts and values we use when looking at phenomena, as described by Kuhn (1964) is three separate things in one (Masterman 1970).
(1) *The world view paradigm.* The understanding of phenomena or observations against an agreed concept of reality (eg religion, the mores of politics, culture).
(2) *The sociological paradigm.* The conceptual model that is a recognised achievement held up for admiration in a discipline (eg party political creeds).
(3) *The problem solving paradigm.* The models used for solving particular problems with phenomena or observations (eg the matrix model, CP schemes, pragmatic politics).

Recent Trends in Community Archaeology

In 1882 a new Ancient Monuments Act, in part, created a new archaeological activity, that of the cultural resource manager, the preserver of our heritage. Cultural resource management as a concept did not really grow in this country until the 1970's and is currently reaching a

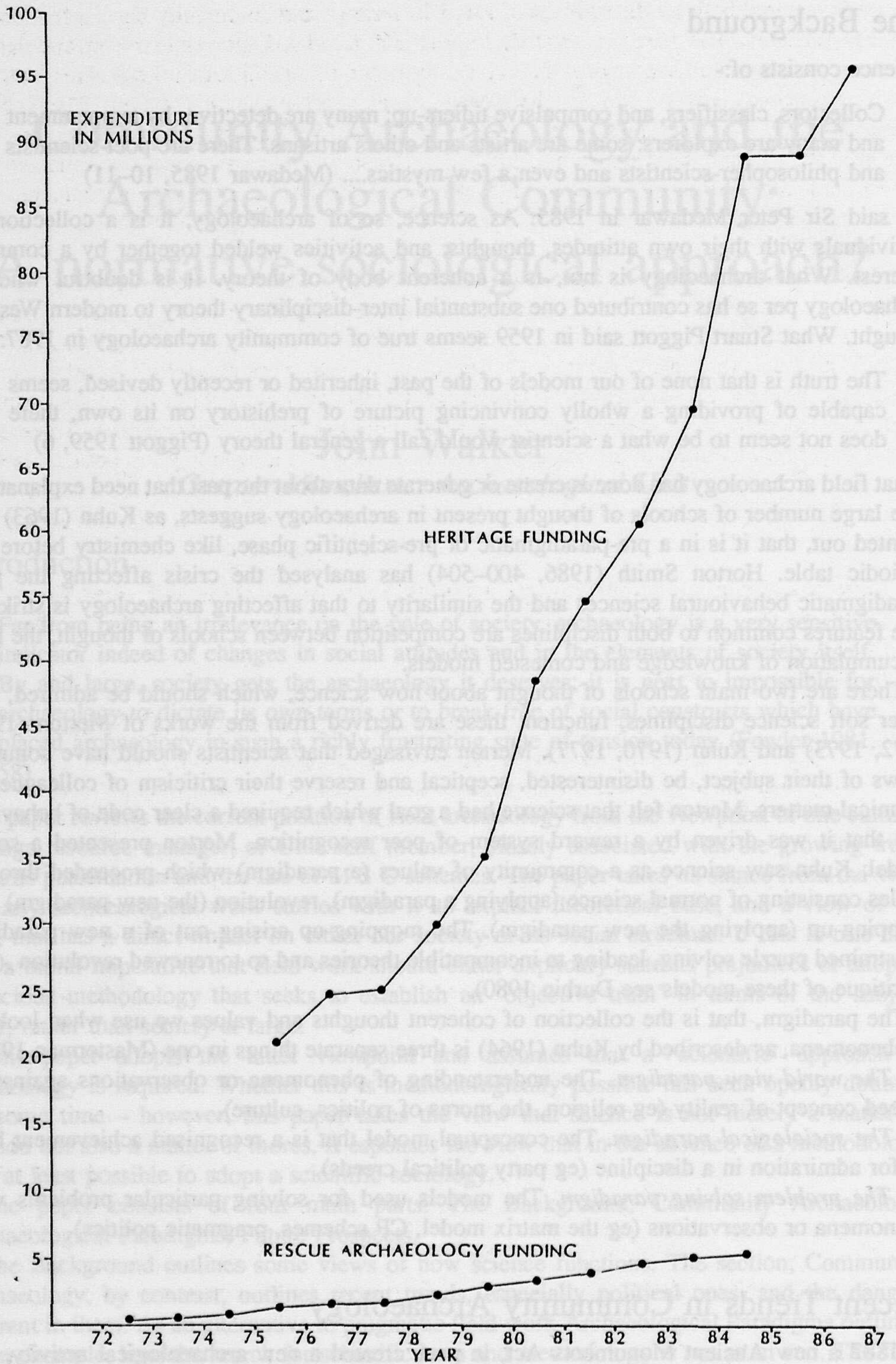

Fig. 2 Pragmatic Political Expenditure on Heritage (Central Government support of buildings and archaeology)

new peak inspired both by the creation of English Heritage and community benefit Manpower Services schemes. The first act created, funded and fossilised the popular concept that in some way or another archaeological sites could be preserved as entities, in themselves, without any explicit acknowledgement of the theories or concepts that are applied to them. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 and the National Heritage Act of 1983 have seen the triumph and extension of that cultural resource management, as it is the avowed and explicit aim of English Heritage to preserve and display the historic environment. The impact of this approach is seen in the expenditure recorded in Figure 1, which is the result of a popularly held cultural view of, in other words, political values.

G Jones (1969) in her book (see also Durbin 1980, 583–9) saw society consisting of two elements, one of which may be called political culture, that is the ideas, aspirations, moral values and aesthetics of a society (what could be called a social world-view paradigm). The values that form that view are thought by many to be morality, religion, art, science, economics, politics, law and custom (Durbin 1980, XVIII). Below that can be seen what I would like to call political pragmatism (a sociological or political paradigm). There is a relationship between these two elements. The relationship is one whereby the politicians will only consider those steps which are in keeping with the political culture of their society. This political culture, or world-view, not only frames our attitudes towards political actions, it frames our views elsewhere on all aspects of life. As Lipe pointed out:-

> Value is not inherent in any cultural items from our past.... Value is learned about as discovered in these phenomena by humans, and this depends on the particular cultural, intellectual, historical, and psychological frames of reference held... by the groups involved (Lipe 1984, 2)

This model of society, which is an artificial construct, is presented for clarity because, in fact as Jones has pointed out, in a country such as Britain, there is not one particular group of people that exercises power, but rather a coalition of different power groups and elites (see Crane 1980) working in different spheres but working under the same political culture (Durbin 1980, XX).

General social values, attitudes and aesthetics that exist within this political culture can and have been upset by scientific findings and theories – the classic example being the impact upon the political culture of evolutionary theory (a situation exemplified in Figure 2 on the next page). Daniel in *A Hundred Years of Archaeology* and the *Origins and Growth of Archaeology* indirectly showed how our archaeological perceptions have changed in keeping within the political and social culture of Britain so that, for instance, in times of war there was emphasis on Man the Aggressor (Leakey 1981, 51–8), and now in times of enterprise there is a new emphasis on the individual (Hodder 1985). As much as science is subject to fashions, so is field archaeology in practice. Whereas we can conceive of science being a linear development process indirectly subject to the changing general world-view (indeed US Science Research and Development obtained government funds in the 1960's without having to justify them in political terms (Figure 2A), (Price 1965)), field archaeology is directly subject to changing social problems – that is lower value problem solving paradigms, exemplified by various M S C schemes (Figure 2B). It seems fairly evident that without a core theory that relates directly to the intellectual consensus and which is acknowledged by the political/social culture, in the same way as evolution or defence matters have been, field archaeology will take its lead from the political decisions (problem solving paradigms) (illustrated by Figure 2B) or from a world-view fossilised in 1882. This is not to deny the benefits of community archaeology. The last few years have seen a tremendous growth in

public awareness of the past, the pleasures derived from such an awareness and an understanding of the value of historic sites and their settings. M S C schemes, many of which are bold and imaginative, have provided new facilities, work experience and inspiration to the long term unemployed. The problem is that the archaeological understanding is not derived from new general theory and that it is difficult to support theoretical advances in community archaeology where such advances would be both useful and, if based on objective theory, in the public interest.

This situation has some interesting general characteristics. Firstly, the greater the change in the political aspirations of a country, the greater the change in field archaeology. Secondly, in times of rapid social and economic change, such as we experience today, there will be correspondingly rapid changes in solutions (Horton Smith 1986).

Thirdly, fund raising activity will be directly aligned to current political issues. It remains a fact that the majority of field projects are financially assessed either from the view-point of their pragmatic political content, or from the cultural view expressed in 1882, rather than their academic content. As any project tends to be self justifying, it is hardly surprising that, when financial considerations drive field-work into the problem solving political sphere, political considerations come to appear as justifications. If we look at a current enthusiasm, presentation, and subject it to this kind of political analysis it becomes quite clear that it originated, in financial terms, from central and local government and in ethical terms from 1882.

However, as Cherns (1984), Gaston (1978) and others (Open University, 1971) have pointed out, all decisions about research and development are in the end political, the political freedom of US Research and Development in the 1960's being an aberration. As such, Research and Development grants are, of course, subject to instability: internal DOE R and D between 1978 and 1983, for instance, fell by three quarters and SSRC income has failed to keep pace with costs (Cherns 1984, Table 10 and Table 12).

Nonetheless, it is usually assumed that scientific research grants are made dependent upon wider science criteria. Typical of such criteria are the following:-

Intrinsic (subject specific) criteria;
(1) Is the field ripe for exploitation?
(2) Are the applicants expert in their field?

Extrinsic;
(1) Does the project support new technological advances?
(2) Does the project, judged by its impact, have scientific merit?
(3) Is there a social benefit?

These criteria have their limitations, as the initial work of Einstein, Planck and Heisenberg would have scored badly (Open University 1971, 26–8). In practice (see Open University 1971 for examples) these criteria are not hard and fast but it is clear that they derive, in part, from a scientific world-view paradigm. Grants from English Heritage and M S C do not; the former basically assesses projects in terms of rescue or preservation, the latter in community or participant benefit terms derived from other non-archaeological, social or political paradigms.

The criteria for obtaining rescue grants from English Heritage are, in summary, as follows:-

(1) Cultural Resource value (site condition, period, rarity, vulnerability, documentation, group value, potential). *These conditions are crucial; there must be a threat to the site and the* site must have high cultural resource value.

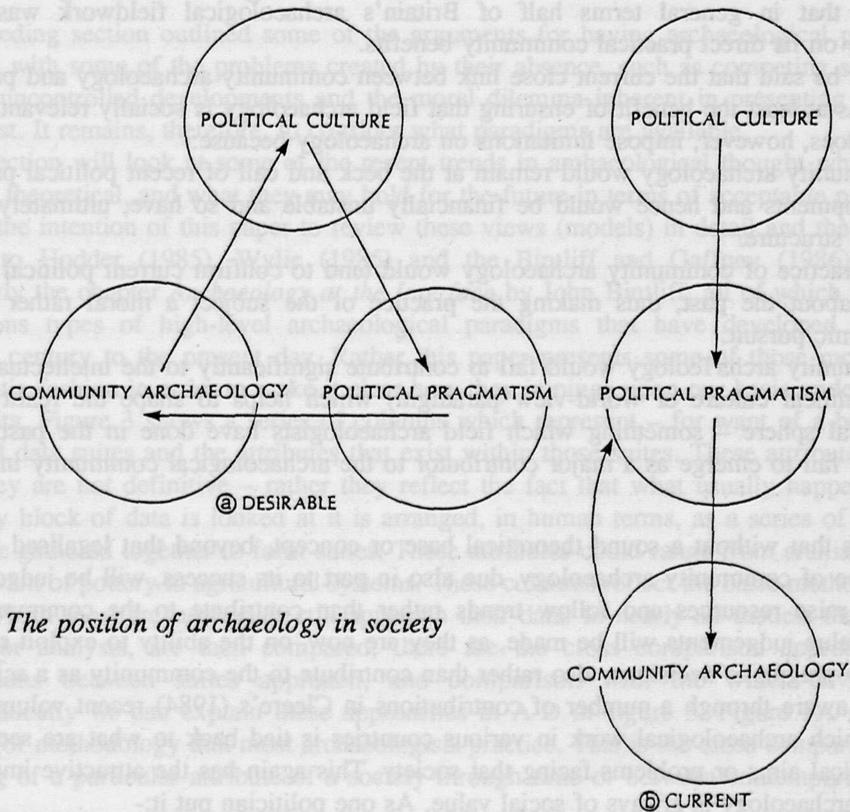

Fig. 2 The position of archaeology in society

(2) Intrinsic (is the project properly organised).
(3) Extrinsic (how does the project relate to the desires of the main period societies).
(Summarised from English Heritage 1986, 4–5)

Clearly these criteria derive, in order of importance, from:
(a) A world-view paradigm based on an aesthetic adopted in 1882.
(b) Political and managerial pragmatism derived from that world-view.
(c) The demands of a pre-paradigmatic subject.

M S C criteria, which govern the operations of over half the community archaeology expenditure (English Heritage n.d.), are derived from current social problems and as such are even further from normal scientific Research and Development criteria. They are as follows:-
(1) Extrinsic social value (practical benefit to the community, contribution to employment prospects, non-political).
(2) Intrinsic (the project should be properly organised, funded and monitored and not create job losses).
(Manpower Services Commission 1985, 1–3)

The impact of their criteria can be measured by the fact the fall in applications for rescue grants from 765 in 1983 to 504 in 1985 was made good by a corresponding rise in M S C archaeology schemes (English Heritage n.d., 4).

In 1984 M S C grants to archaeology equalled those from central government, meaning therefore, that in general terms half of Britain's archaeological fieldwork was judged principally on its direct practical community benefits.

It could be said that the current close link between community archaeology and pragmatic politics has at least the benefit of ensuring that field archaeology is socially relevant. Such a situation does, however, impose limitations on archaeology because:-

(1) Community archaeology would remain at the beck and call of recent political pragmatic developments and hence would be financially unstable and so have, ultimately, a poor career structure.
(2) The practice of community archaeology would tend to confirm current political conceptions about the past, thus making the practice of the subject a moral rather than an academic pursuit.
(3) Community archaTeology would fail to contribute significantly to the intellectual sphere (or political culture or world-view paradigm) which helps to shape the reality of the political sphere – something which field archaeologists have done in the past; thus it would fail to emerge as a major contributor to the archaeological community in its own right.

It seems that without a sound theoretical base or concept, beyond that legalised in 1882, the practice of community archaeology, due also in part to its success, will be judged on its ability to raise resources and follow trends rather than contribute to the community as a science. Value judgements will be made, as they are now, on the ability to exploit resources and follow pragmatic decisions, also rather than contribute to the community as a science.

We are aware through a number of contributions in Cleere's (1984) recent volume of the way in which archaeological work in various countries is tied back to what are seen as the main political aims or problems facing that society. This again has the attractive implication that such archaeology is always of social value. As one politician put it:-

> The one and only thing that matters to us and the thing these people (archaeologists) are paid for by the state, is to have ideas of history that strengthen our people in their national pride.

These words by Heinrich Himmler (Daniel 1964, 120) show the other side of the coin of archaeology being socially relevant. Pre-paradigmatic archaeology is a powerful political tool as it can easily be used to create any world-view paradigm. In such a situation it becomes a moral question as to what the role of the field archaeologist should be. It is worth being conscious that Nazism grew out of an evolving political culture or world-view paradigm (Daniel 1964), *to create its own world-view based on pragmatism fostered by bad science.* Clearly a subject which fails to make a contribution from its own viewpoint, which it has a social duty to do, to the political culture or world-view, remains a discipline subject to the other views current in that culture. This is yet another reason why a move from a pre-paradigmatic stance in community archaeology is needed.

As Renfrew noted:-

> The innocent confidence that archaeologists knew what they were doing and should get on with it has been replaced by the awareness that they didn't, and that we ourselves are none too sure (Renfrew 1974, 40).

Archaeological Paradigms

The preceding section outlined some of the arguments for having archaeological paradigms and dealt with some of the problems created by their absence, such as competing schools of thought, uncontrolled developments and the moral dilemma inherent in presenting any vew of the past. It remains, therefore, to consider what paradigms are available.

This section will look at some of the recent trends in archaeological thought which could be called theoretical, and what they may hold for the future in terms of acceptable paradigms. It is not the intention of this paper to review these views (models) in detail and the reader is referred to Hodder (1985), Wylie (1985) and the Bintliff and Gaffney (1986) volume, particularly the chapter *Archaeology at the Interface* by John Bintliff, all of which deal with the various types of high-level archaeological paradigms that have developed from the sixteenth century to the present day. Rather this paper presents some of those models in a diagramatic fashion in order to make it clear how they impinge upon our basic understanding of the data. Figure 3 shows a series of columns which represent – for want of a better term – cultural data suites and the attributes that exist within those suites. These attributes are not fixed; they are not definitive – rather they reflect the fact that what usually happens is that when any block of data is looked at it is arranged, in human terms, as a series of attributes which are gathered together to form suites. These attributes could range from cranial capacity to the advent of pottery to agricultural systems. These columns reflect the basic methodological way in which most archaeologists still approach their data. In nearly all models these suites, of data or analysis, are then compared; there are the cross comparison approaches, the comparisons between suites approach, and comparison with the wider environment. Diagramatically we can explain these approaches in A-D of figure 3. Figure 3A shows the situation or methodology that most archaeologists practice. This is the cross comparison – the following of a particular attribute of a society through time or between contemporary suites,

Fig. 3 Diagrams illustrating the basis of the major archaeological paradigms/models

be that something like pottery forms or the Marxist viewpoint that specific kinds of social attributes may be seen through time.

Figure 3B is the comparison of complete or partial suites that is generally used with a positivist point of view – positivism being seen as a methodology, whereby high definition attributes which show strong trends through time are identified by scientific analysis to give general laws, or as in structuralism, where both structure and individual (attribute) are important. Belonging to this approach are some elements of Marxism, evolutionary theory and historicism. Figure 3C shows cultural systems analysis as used in Marxism and synergetics. We can see here how suites are described in terms of the interaction of attributes. Important in this area is the work of the synergeticists, who are exploring the importance of slaving, whereby we can identify systems, shown here by a bracket, which are in turn controlled by another attribute, so that systems may vary, but their variation is strictly delimited by wider and more powerful attributes. Again one can notice a similarity to the positivist argument under Figure 3B. In Figure 3D we have the theories that deal with relationships of attributes and their suites to outside factors – a viewpoint used in both evolutionary theory, and landscape archaeology. Figure 4 shows how many basic methodological theories or philosophical approaches analyse the data using either one of, or combinations of, thsee approaches to create a basic data box. The resultant expansion into three dimensions, implicit in all archaeological thinking, is done by adding a third onus to represent two things; the outside environment and/or time. This expansion depends on the assumption that the outside environment in which we live is not time constant but time variable and that time and environment may therefore be seen as synonymous. Figure 4 gives then a 3D box in which to view the competing world-view theories. The fact that these conflicting schools of thought exist, and are still held strongly by many adherents, indicates, as Kuhn would have it, that archaeology is in a pre-paradigmatic position, which as we have seen above gives rise to real practical problems.

There is, however, a long tradition in archaeology of the call for a general theory or paradigm. It is not the intention in this section to present such a general theory but to show how it can still be sought.

Figure 5 shows the attributes of cultural suites and cultural suites within the box already created. It is a commonplace of most of the theories that are currently available that they have limitations in terms of their suites and limitations in terms of their analysis in one form or another, hence competing schools of archaeology. Clearly, however, when "cultural attributes" are seen within their time related box, there are limitations upon their possible existence and combination. It is to the discovery of, or mapping of, the surface of these limitations that any general theoretical research should be aimed in the hope of its providing an explanation of the limits and hence a paradigm. We need to know what are the total possible ranges of human societies, in what total range of natural or created environments, and their total possible forms of development, in order to obtain a clear viewpoint of how attributes are formed, defined and related. This may seem a grandiose thing to say but similar work is already being done by synergeticists, and Horton Smith (1986) has displayed the development of such models in the behavioural sciences. The definition of that basic model of how it is possible for human societies to exist, in what combinations and how their detritus reaches us, should give the desperately needed world-view paradigm. With such a paradigm no longer would archaeology be placed low in social value, no longer should it be afflicted by political changes in will or desire and no longer would its own internal values be applied in a random and often conflicting variety of ways.

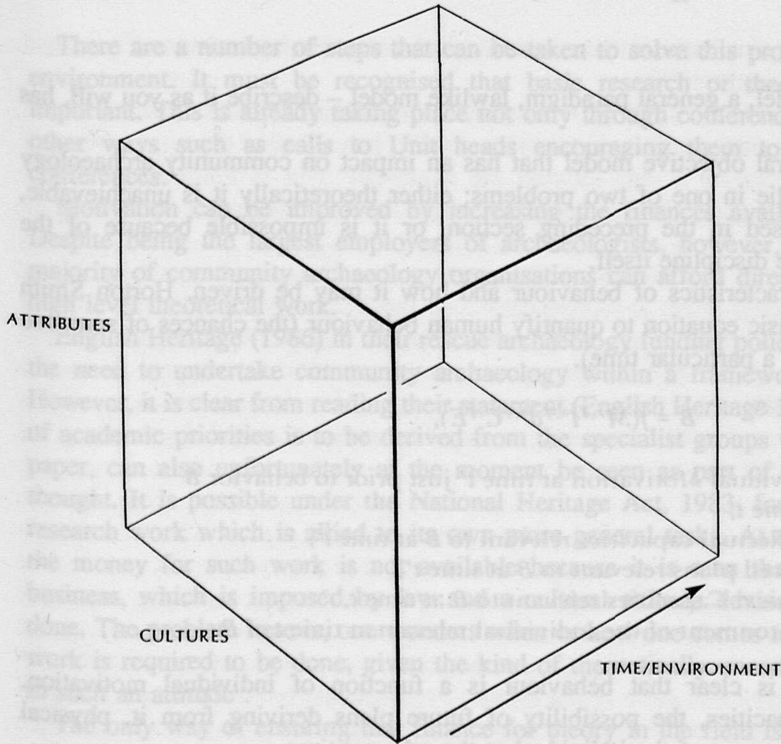

Fig. 4 The framework for major archaeological paradigms

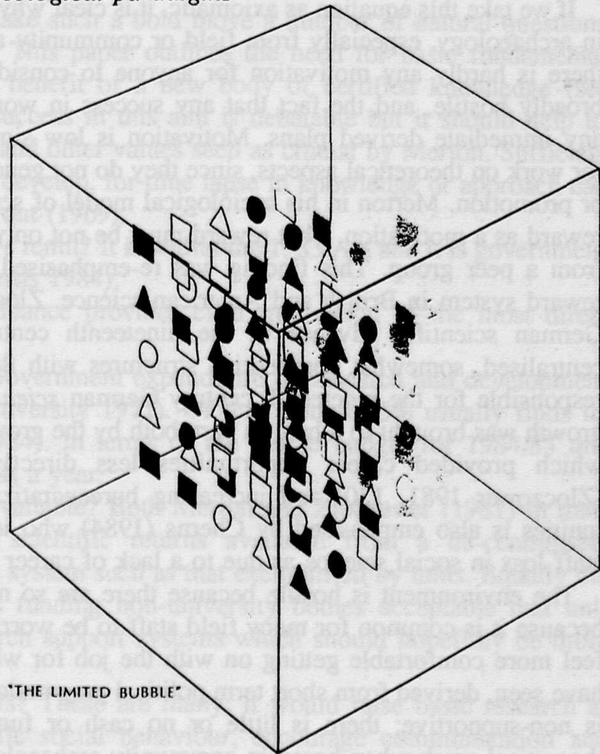

Fig. 5 Diagram illustrating the probable world-view archaeological paradigm

Future Prospects

The call for a general model, a general paradigm, lawlike model – describe it as you will, has been made many times.

The reason that a general objective model that has an impact on community archaeology has failed to occur must lie in one of two problems; either theoretically it is unachievable, and this has been discussed in the preceding section, or it is impossible because of the behaviour and drive of the discipline itself.

Let us look at the characteristics of behaviour and how it may be driven. Horton Smith (1980) has developed a basic equation to quantify human behaviour (the chances of someone altering their behaviour at a particular time).

$$B = f(M' \cdot {}^{r}I' \cdot {}^{r}d' \cdot {}^{r}C \cdot {}^{r}E),$$

where M' = Individual *M*otivation at time t' just prior to behavior B at time t,
${}^{r}I'$ = *I*ntellectual capacities *r*elevant to B at time t',
${}^{r}d'$ = *D*erived plans *r*elevant to B at time t',
${}^{r}C$ = Physical *C*apacities *r*elevant to B at time t,
${}^{r}E$ = *E*nvironment of the individual *r*elevant at time t of B.

From this equation it is clear that behaviour is a function of individual motivation, individual intellectual capacities, the possibility of future plans deriving from it, physical capabilities and the environment of the individual at the relevant time.

If we take this equation as axiomatic, it is clear why there are few major theoretical advances in archaeology, especially from field or community archaeology. Three main problems exist; there is hardly any motivation for anyone to consider theoretical work, the environment is broadly hostile, and the fact that any success in work on a theoretical base will not lead to any immediate derived plans. Motivation is low simply because there are no clear rewards for work on theoretical aspects, since they do not generate further income, esteem, job security or promotion. Merton in his sociological model of science emphasised the important need for reward as a motivation. That reward must be not only financial but also appear as recognition from a peer group. This finding was re-emphasised by Gaston (1971) in his survey of the reward system in British and American science. Zloczower (1981) in his historical survey of German scientific advance in the nineteenth century went further – he found that decentralised, somewhat competitive structures with the opportunity to create new posts were responsible for the nineteenth century German *scientific* boom in medicine. This intellectual growth was brought to a halt, in part, both by the growth and expansion of municipal hospitals which provided career opportunities less directly orientated towards medical *science* (Zloczower 1981, 120) and increasing bureaucratization. The importance of career opportunities is also emphasised by Cherns (1984) who identified widespread demoralisation and staff loss in social science as due to a lack of career opportunities.

The environment is hostile because there are so many competing schools of thought, and because it is common for many field staff to be worried about being labelled as theorists who feel more comfortable getting on with the job for which they were paid for, which is, as we have seen, derived from short term political pragmatic considerations. Equally the environment is non-supportive; there is little or no cash or funding available for people to undertake theoretical work when based in community archaeology.

There are a number of steps that can be taken to solve this problem; firstly, changing the environment. It must be recognised that basic research or theoretical considerations are important. This is already taking place not only through conferences such as this but also in other ways such as calls to Unit heads encouraging them to send staff to theoretical conferences.

Motivation can be improved by increasing the finances available for theoretical work. Despite being the largest employers of archaeologists, however, there is no way that the majority of community archaeology organisations can afford directly to support the cost of high level theoretical work.

English Heritage (1986) in their rescue archaeology funding policy statement acknowledged the need to undertake community archaeology within a framework of academic priorities. However, it is clear from reading their statement (English Heritage 1986, 5) that the framework of academic priorities is to be derived from the specialist groups which, in the terms of this paper, can also unfortunately at the moment be seen as part of the schools of contending thought. It is possible under the National Heritage Act, 1983, for English Heritage to fund research work which is allied to its own more general tasks. At the moment it is clear that the money for such work is not available because it is seen that the other more pressing business, which is imposed by law and a cultural attitude devised in 1882, requires to be done. The problem here is, one wonders when or how one comes to a point whereby no more work is required to be done, given the kind of theoretically unconstrained demands inherent in such an attitude .

The only way of ensuring that finance for theory in the field is available is to establish a specific research fund within English Heritage.

In calling upon English Heritage to take such a bold move a number of natural questions arise. Firstly, would there be benefits? This paper outlines the need for basic fundamental research and makes clear the possible benefit of a new body of certified knowledge (see Merton and Kuhn). The likelihood of success in this aim is debatable but it should help to foster communication, peer recognition and other values seen as crucial by Merton. Sufficient time must be allowed for the process to develop, for time lapse in knowledge or approach can be exceptionally long, as Craig pointed out (1969).

Secondly, is it within the organisation's remit? It is within the 1983 Act and it is government policy to fund some basic research (Cherns 1984).

Thirdly, why financial assistance? Finance provides clear motivation of the most direct kind (Horton Smith 1986).

Fourthly, how much would it cost? Government expenditure on research and development usually averages 3% of GNP (Open University 1971). Of this around 16% usually finds its way into non-direct matters (Cherns 1984). In terms of the rescue budget for 1984/85 this would equal twenty-five thousand pounds a year.

Fifthly, to whom would it be made available? Both Merton and Zloczower (1981) in their different ways emphasise the higher scientific returns available from a de-centralised, non-bureaucratic, somewhat competitive system such as that exemplified by units. Equally the Social Science Research Council finds funding non-university bodies acceptable and universities already have some basic research support systems which should hopefully be more effective in the future (Hart 1985).

Lastly, what are the possible spin-offs? These are many; it would raise basic research as an issue within units, improve scientific social behaviour, encourage communication and perhaps even force people to re-consider data pushing post-excavation programmes. Grants

to community archaeology for basic research would also create the beginnings of a crucial *scientific* reward system (Gaston 1978).

A new boost to motivation is reflected, by extension, in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' code of conduct, which has many rules encouraging scientific behaviour of the type advocated by Merton. This code represents a step forward but adherence to it is voluntary and not necessarily rewarding. If it is to help, then adherence to it must foster economic and social gain.

The further development of a peer recognition system can at least be fostered by things such as awards for theoretical work. It is noticeable that the British Archaeological Awards are largely for middle level sector work or for general books which, Kuhn emphasises, are symbolic of pre-paradigmatic science. In the past, major recognition in personal terms for theoretical work has come through the universities. It is clear in the present economic situation with its poor prospects for university archaeology, that this recognition and the crucial jobs (Zloczower 1981) are unlikely to be available.

Conclusion

For theorists this article paints a somewhat grim picture of community archaeology; a pursuit which has made many meaningful contributions to society – a society which, in England, made over 98 million visits to historic buildings, museums and galleries in 1982 (English Tourist Board 1983). Whether this view of the quality of fieldwork theory is over-painted is left to the reader to decide. What is sought is a balanced approach that admits that an advance in high level theory would also be of major, perhaps crucial, social benefit. The argument is that such a theoretical advance is possible and its possibility is improved by approaching the problem of non-scientific archaeology from a social angle. Binford and others (Wylie 1985), worried about how our cultural attitudes impinged on the data, and chose to study how the data were formed. Here it is argued that social values do impinge on the data, that science is a social activity and hence the changes of a scientific pardigm are, at least, improved if scientific norms of behaviour are observed. Whether this is true, or not, is open to question but the fact remains that in community archaeology there have never been effective inducements to observe such behavioural codes.

Community archaeology should continue to struggle for the establishment of higher level theory, for it would relieve applied archaeology of some of the vagaries of political pragmatism and establish it as a subject in its own right rather than a vehicle for the achievement of broader political aims alone.

If a small country like Hungary can fund extensive archaeology (400 excavations a year) because they recognise that it is a subject with its own demands, requirements and usefulness, then surely it should be possible to achieve a similar situation in Britain. To create a situation whereby community archaeology is tied not just to conservation concepts but also to academic concepts. In Hungary a great deal of order and usefulness is given to archaeological work by the existence of a general Marxist-Leninist world-view paradigm. Unfortunately, because of the apparent totality of that explanation, there is little pressure for theoretical growth. In British community archaeology there are equally few advances. In Hungary it is due to a lack of pressure to explain, because of the dominance of a social political model. In Britain it is a lack of pressure to explain because of the absence of motivation and environmental hostility.

Fundamental theory should be part of community archaeology so that field archaeologists can continue to contribute to the community not only through bold and imaginative physical

schemes and increasingly successful preservation but also, with support, through bold and imaginative theory.

Postscript

This paper has presented three main themes; the intellectual and general sea-change facing archaeology, the possibility of a solution to this derived from theory, the possibility of a solution derived from a sociological approach.

That the possibilities suggested here will either be implemented or succeed is perhaps unlikely, especially at a time when most Unit Directors face an impending financial crises (SCAUM, AGM, 1987), departments face closure, archaeological science is in disarray (Hart 1985) and more and more field work is subject to the instability of political pragmatism (eg Radice to SCAUM, AGM 1987). At the same time some theoretical schools are moving towards a greater and greater emphasis on the individual in the past (eg Hodder 1985) or into the possibility of a pluralist approach to the past (which amounts, by extension, to the same thing, both approaches seem to be following current social trends).

In view of these trends it would seem sanguine to hope that archaeology can provide a common objective understanding of the past that is meaningful to our present society. By common objective understanding one means an apolitical understanding held in common (which is what scientific laws are) and by meaningful to our society, one means espousing understanding that shapes our world-view paradigm.

It would seem that the past can only be what we observe and that observation is limited by comprehension derived from evolving theory and, to an extent, technique. The meaning that we attach to this past can only be meaningful if it explains the past in terms that are humanely comprehendable by being related to a, hopefully expanding, body of knowledge. There is, unfortunately, the possibility that the future holds a lessening of observation through the scaling down of field activities and that the expansion of comprehension will be limited both by cost, confusion and indifferent theory.

Notes

The views and opinions expressed in this article are the personal views of the author and should not be construed as representing those of any institution or organisation either explicitly or implicitly or as affecting their actions or philosophy.

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Giving Meaning to the Past: Political Perspectives in Archaeology

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Introduction

This conference, entitled "Extracting Meaning from the Past" has set itself the question "What is the meaning of the past?". In what follows I won't attempt to answer this, since I don't think that the question itself means anything. Indeed the very title rests on a false assumption – that there is meaning *in* the past in some way and that it is our job to try and prise it out. On the contrary I would argue that any interpretation of past societies involves imposition of the perspectives of the present. So I will ask "How can we *give* meaning to the past?" or, more particularly, "How can we make the past relevant to the present?". The change is more than just one of emphasis or a semantic quibble.

My short answer is that we can only make archaeology relevant by adopting explicit political positions and that these viewpoints must be derived from our immediate experience of working in archaeology. The aim is to infuse archaeology with politics or, more accurately, to make clear the political aspects which have always been present when considering the role of archaeology in society. Underpinning the whole discussion, therefore, is the often repeated idea that "investigation of the human condition cannot be ideologically neutral". This is not just an unfortunate contingent fact, as some believe, but a theoretical necessity and an opportunity to be grasped.

In what follows, I will make a few points about the political aspects of theoretical approaches, followed by a rather more detailed look at politics in the practical sphere, before drawing some conclusions about the implications of all this for how we make archaeology relevant.

Theoretical Sphere

Drawing attention to the fact that archaeological research is necessarily political does not seem to be doing anything very substantial to me. But many archaeologists still insist that good archaeology is apolitical (Rahtz 1985, 15). This view is generated by two devices. Firstly, knowledge is characterised as a thing-in-itself, divorced from the society employing those who seek it. Secondly, academic archaeologists reinforce their own position by separating their subject from other disciplines (often at the same time purporting to be a bridge between subjects, for example, the humanities and the social or hard sciences – a difficult balancing act). So they make knowledge an end in itself and give themselves rights over a defined segment of it. With the foundations of the ivory tower so firmly in place, no wonder making archaeology relevant then becomes difficult.

But the arguments for divorcing academic research from society, and separating archaeology from other areas in this way, are unconvincing. If archaeology is so separate, how can we

explain the corresponding patterns of development in archaeology and other disciplines (Bintliff 1986)? Below the surface, the relationship between these developments and the rest of society is clear. Foucault (1979) has characterised the modern state, which organises most archaeology, as having contradictory traits, being both increasingly totalitarian and individualising. Changes in theoretical archaeology reflect the tension between these traits. The totalitarian needs – to control people, predict reactions etc. – were expressed archaeologically in the systems theory, quantitative techniques and hypothetical-deductive approaches of the late 1960s and 1970s. The individualising needs – to divide those with common interests who, if joined, might counter the power of the state – are seen in the recent return to individualism via structuralism, or humanism in a poststructuralist phase. "New" archaeology has not died. It has been changed to old archaeology, not with the passage of time but by being converted into a more acceptable form. Renewed stress on the importance of the individual in previous societies gives a past more in keeping with the present requirements of the government which funds our research.

A good example of this change of emphasis is the recent "new direction" of Peer Polity Interaction (Renfrew and Cherry 1986). Here, rather than favour diffusion or core-periphery analysis, social change is analysed in terms of interaction between *equal, competing, highest order* units. The approach claims to rely on the inherent characteristics of the data (*op cit* 153) rather than the political dogma which is said to generate other viewpoints. This is misleading. Data are produced not collected, just as results are creations not findings. Talking of their inherent characteristics is simply muddying the waters. Peer polity interaction implies that competition between equals at the top of society is the "natural" way to development. The political implications of selecting this type of explanation are surely quite clear. All of this is not necessarily to deny the validity of this as an approach to interpreting change in the past. We can still distinguish the reasons for believing in a particular archaeological interpretation from what causes someone to believe it. But it does mean that the debate cannot be lifted entirely out of the present political arena. Indeed, it is this attachment which makes it interesting and important.

Practical Sphere

So much for the political content of theoretical perspectives. What about the practical sphere? Firstly, the whole split between field and academic archaeology has political implications itself. Part of the discipline has taken up the challenge to be "useful" and "relevant" (the empirical/analytical model of Habermas (1974)), leaving the interpretation of what it all means to academic institutions (the historical/hermeneutic model).

Continuing with this distinction between theory and practice for the moment, it is obvious that work in the field encounters modern politics directly, with funding via HBMC projects, the MSC or site developers. Walker (this volume) discusses the implications of this involvement at a general level. But I would like to consider political aspects at a micro level – the lessons to be learnt from how data production is organised on site, how technical change affects the relations between field workers, and how its subsequent analysis takes place.

(a) Organisation of data production

Work on an archaeological project can be organised in various ways. There may be a rigid hierarchy and set chain of command, the project director (the great polymath) at the apex, the specialists at defined levels below and the lowly troweller at the base, with all levels paid

according to their status and "worth". Or it can be a team effort, with or without agreed and defined areas of responsibility, with economic reward allocated according to need. The above positions are theoretical extremes on a spectrum of possibilities. In practice, a combination of such approaches occurs. But where one lies on this spectrum is a political statement about that particular field project.

(b) Techniques of data production

Archaeology in the field has been very much concerned with developing new techniques for producing data. Do these transform, or even transcend, the politics of the work place? Not only is it impossible for advances in technique to produce theoretical advance of themselves, any such technical changes have no simple relationship with modifications in the political context in which data production takes place.

Recently, for example, we have seen the formulation of more exact languages for describing excavated features. The descriptive criteria are set out and the terminology regularised, especially where computer storage is envisaged. It has been suggested (Carver 1985, 48) that this will reduce the central role of the site director as recorder and interpreter of all, thus making data production more democratic. Specialised languages allow communication between everyone – we can all do the layer description now. But this picture rests on the assumption that all site workers are allowed to learn the language. The change can be used in the opposite way, to let one group increasingly dominate the rest. Special site recorders and stratigraphists are created, these being the only ones who know what the accepted terminology means (usually because they made it up). Computer storage raises the same issues. Do we hand it over to the computer "expert" (often someone who jumped on the bandwagon a few months before the rest of us)? Or does everyone input data? (See Richards 1986 for discussion). Technological change can break down hierarchical structures, but can equally well be used to reinforce or extend the pre-existing relationships. Which direction is followed is a function of the political situation on the project in question.

(c) Manipulation of data

The same alternatives arise in analysing excavated data. Do interpretations derive from the inspiration of individual directors during the process of excavation? Or from detailed analysis by individuals, or teams of people, afterwards, some of whom may not even have been involved in the data production stage? There are real differences of opinion on how these things should be done. The strength of emotional response which often arises when such matters are discussed itself suggests that there is something more at stake than just methodology. I am not recommending one approach over another here. But I do say that there are alternatives, and that which is selected defines the political context in which data analysis then takes place.

An Example and Conclusion

Even if it is accepted that work in the practical sphere always has political implications for its practitioners, how does this help in making the past relevant, in giving it meaning? An example from our present situation may show one way forward. We are at a conference to which some people have been invited (the speakers) and some have applied to come (the audience). Very often this means those who are paid to talk and those who pay to listen,

though not in our particular case. But, as usual, we do have speakers who stand up in front of their audience. They adopt an inefficient mode of communication, the lecture, in which enough is given out to keep up interest, but enough retained to allow the lecturer to keep his dominant position. It could be otherwise. Everyone could have a copy of each talk beforehand, split into small groups for discussion and come back together to give collective reactions. Of course, the control of the lecturer would then be circumvented. The point of this example is that the artefacts around us – their character and physical disposition – display this approach to communicating archaeology. There is one large room rather than many small ones; seating is organised in a particular way, with the seats of the audience bolted to the floor, that of the lecturer movable. Control of the technology – slide projector, overhead projector – are in the hands of the person at the front. What is the "meaning" of this particular configuration of artefacts? One way to clarify it would be to take the political position that knowledge is power and, in a capitalist system, is subject to the forces of supply and demand. The producer needs to control the introduction of knowledge into the market place, making sure (s)he creates enough interest (a saleable product) but retains a residue for future dissemination (owns the patent). This explains the position of the speaker, the mode of communication and *the organisation of the objects around us to create and re-inforce the impression*. It's the political perspective which gives a meaning to the archaeological record. Similar approaches could be taken with the remains which we excavate. Analysed in these terms, they could be made relevant to the situations in which many people outside archaeology find themselves – could help them understand their position in society. This can never be done whilst we continue to strive to make archaeology apolitical.

I must stress that I am not saying that there should be a single political viewpoint, still less that it should be my own. For instance, a group of women seeking to understand the archaeological evidence in this room, taking on board the fact that some, albeit a minority, of the audience are women but all the lecturers (and questioners so far) are men, may come up with a different perspective from that of male ideas on "power relationships". In doing this, they would no doubt appeal to a different group and convey the "meaning" of the archaeology in a different way. But this is just to say that the "general public" was never a useful way of characterising the target of archaeology.

In sum, only when we recognise the political implications of our activities in our own workplaces – on the site, in the museum, in the lecture room – can we decide on the groups who may be interested in archaeology. Once we know the messages, and why they are important to us, then the modes of transmission and the specific audiences will define themselves.

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Changing Perceptions of the Past: The Bronze Age – A Case Study

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For many years historians have been aware of the profound influence their individual values have on historical interpretation (Carr 1964), but it is only relatively recently that archaeologists have begun to come to terms with the ways in which the selection, ordering and interpretation of archaeological evidence is related to problems and issues facing contemporary society (Bintliff 1986 this volume; and Patterson 1986). Many archaeologists feel that they are participating in an ever progressing discipline, accruing knowledge which brings us ever nearer to the 'truth' about the unwritten past. In a recent paper Wilk has suggested that this is only part of the story, and that archaeologists also pursue an 'informal and often hidden political and philosophical debate about the major issues of contemporary life' (1985, 307). Whilst in practice it is usually impossible wholly to disentangle development in the discipline from changing values, a greater appreciation of the social factors affecting the continuing process of construction and reconstruction of prehistory would be of benefit to the work of archaeologists in all fields and periods.

This paper takes the Bronze Age as a case study, in which the value-laden, revealing, and sometimes bizzare ideas used to make sense of the period are brought to the surface and related to broader social issues. It must be remembered that the idea of a Bronze Age is itself an historical construction, not an independent entity. Its existence is dependent on its relevance to the conceptualisation of prehistory. The three age system of stone, bronze, and iron, has in fact proved a remarkably resilient and adaptable framework: originating in Classical Greece as a model of moral progress; re-introduced in early nineteenth century Denmark as a chronological scheme for museum display; used as an evolutionary model later in the century; and given new life by the technological thesis proposed by Childe in the 1930's (see below). At the present time, the legitimacy of the Bronze Age as an interpretative tool is being increasingly challenged,[1] and a leading scholar of the period has commented that the idea of the three ages has been retained almost by default in the absence of satisfactory alternatives (Burgess 1980, 12). This does not however affect the validity of examining the models used in Bronze Age studies in the past, and of considering the contemporary situation.

The most influential approaches of the twentieth century will be examined in turn. These are:- 1) The Celtic/heroic model; 2) autonomous development; 3) prestige goods systems; 4) peer polity interaction; and 5) the new culture history. The impact of these models in academe, local field studies, and museums will be considered and a brief appraisal attempted. Finally some tentative comments on future directions are offered.

The Celtic/Heroic Model

Until recently the Celtic/heroic model has formed the dominant way of characterising Bronze Age society. This concept celebrates the values of competetive individualism and nationalism;

popular and relevant themes in the context of the political and economic aspirations of the Western states during the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. Historically this approach forms part of the tradition of culture history (or historicism) of which two variants may be identified:

Firstly the chauvinist perspective, which developed directly from national historicism, and which seeks to establish the origins of particular national characteristics and cultural forms (Girdwood 1986, 38, and see for example Gimbutas 1965, and 1971); and secondly a broader approach examining the origins of Europe's special and unique culture which eventually culminated in the industrial revolution (Rowlands 1984, 147). In British Bronze Age studies this latter approach has received more attention, although interest in nationalistic concerns is often apparent. Approaches of this type are usually characterised by the definition of cultures and peoples and an emphasis on diffusion in the process of cultural development and change. The central concept which binds both approaches is that of heroic society (defined as a society dominated by a competitive elite), derived from an amalgam of Iron Age Celtic and Homeric society. For most writers of this genre, the Bronze Age is visualised as a less developed version of Iron Age Celtic society. Prior to the acceptance of the three age system, bronze artefacts were seen as part of a vaguely defined Celtic prehistory peopled by the 'Ancient British', representing a composite between the barbarian known from ethnographic studies and the warlike Celtic tribesman depicted in the early literary sources (Ashbee 1978, 30). When the relative chronology and time depth of the Bronze and Iron Ages became apparent, rather than start afresh with new models, this idea was merely stretched backwards in time; the documentary evidence provided a touchstone for British prehistory not available from the material remains and it was therefore understandable that the secure certainty of the written word remained as a strong (albeit very elastic) lifeline to those venturing further and further into the darkness of uncharted prehistory.

This inherited model has had the most profound effect on studies of the period. For two of the most influential writers of the middle of the century – Childe and Hawkes – Heroic society began with the appearance of the Beaker Folk, representing the historical point at which the supposedly European characteristics such as 'individuality, entrepreneurial skill, and inventiveness' became apparent (Rowlands 1984, 148). Childe writes:

> The self sufficiency of neolithic economy was broken down by the advent of warlike invaders imbued with domineering habits and an appreciation of metal weapons and ornaments which inspired them to impose sufficient political unity on their new domain for some economic unification to follow (1940, 91).

He also observes that:-

> All the vital elements of modern material culture are immediately rooted in The Bronze Age though their presuppositions may go back to the closing phase of the Stone Age (1930, 2–3).

Hawkes took this idea even further by tracing elements of Celtic culture back to the Beaker Folk, although Childe was rather dubious about this argument (Hawkes 1940, 372; Childe 1940, 261–2). More recently Hawkes has been content to stress the continuity of cultural aspects from the Bronze to the Iron Age without the benefit of ethnic labels (1976, 2–3).

Supplementing this perspective was the vision of heroic society encapsulated within the epic poems of Homer, significantly described as the

> ...first expression of the western mind in literary form (Rieu 1972, 10).

Piggott for example saw the world of the Iliad and the Odyssey as typifying European Bronze Age culture of the second millennium (1965,140). The Celtic and Homeric perspectives are nevertheless basically similar. In his famous paper on the Wessex culture, Piggott's attitude coincides closely with that of Childe. He writes of a 'somewhat uninteresting and unenterprising substratum' conquered by an 'intrusive ruling class' who have a 'delight in barbaric finery' (1938, 52). Piggott also stresses the importance of foreign influences on the Wessex culture especially from Brittany. Trade routes both local and international are similarly emphasised, especially the hypothesised Mycenean connection; and the ultimate origin of the Wessex culture is traced back to central Europe (ibid, esp. 94–6). This concern with the particular nature of British Bronze Age culture is a common one; Childe for example suggests that the British superiority over mainland Europe in metal and commerce may be explained by 'the variety of cultural influences focussed on the islands....'(1939, 321). This approach belongs to the historical tradition of visualising Britain as a blend of cultures – Celtic, Saxon, and Norman, and as an independent trading nation (cf S Hawkes 1945, 22–3).

The heroic model of the Bronze Age was fully developed in the 1930's and has exerted a powerful influence ever since. In 1960 Ashbee restated the position thus:-

> The formidable edifice which is our modern technology and scientific knowledge rests, ultimately, upon the progressive skills of unnamed artificers in bronze who were active and inventive in the second millennium BC. For Western European society must be viewed against its own Western European prehistoric past....(1960, 11).

In a more recent book, he presents what is perhaps the most detailed interpretation of Bronze Age society explicitly based on the Heroic model (Ashbee 1978). He stresses the continuity of social forms from the Beaker period and earlier, into the Iron Age, and points to the Wessex Culture as a florescence of heroic society. The Beaker peoples are characterised as migratory groups perhaps living in 'mobile houses, like Romany caravans' (ibid 139). (A link between 'Beaker Folk' and gypsy society had earlier been made by Childe, in relation to the commercial element of Beaker society (1958, 147)). Amongst other explanations of their presence in Britain he suggests that they may have been employed as mercenaries by Neolithic chieftains whom they subsequently usurped. The Saxon foederati brought into this country in later Roman times are used as a parallel for this proposal (ibid 137–9). Similar historical allusions are made with reference to the Wessex Culture which is interpreted as a principality at the heart of which lay the Henge/Palace of Stonehenge, associated with a vast royal court (ibid 150–1, 181). The influence of Wessex spread across much of England, the Wessex type graves of Yorkshire perhaps representing '... the interments of knightly Wessex warriors who exercised viceregal powers' (ibid. 150–1, 181).[2]

Another remarkable characterisation of the Bronze Age is given by Briard (1979, 225–6):

> The Neolithic world had glorified the cult of fertility and representations of Mother Goddesses proliferated... Starting in the Chalcolithic period, mobile bands of corded ware peoples arrived to upset the traditional religious beliefs and laid the foundations for the development of individualism.

This perception of the Neolithic as feminine, egalitarian, and soft; and the Bronze Age as male centred, individualistic and hard can be traced back to Morgan but is reiterated by modern scholars such as Gimbutas (1973, 1974) and Sherratt (1984, 127). This application of stereotyped gender traits represents one of the more bizarre attempts at personifying prehistoric society.[3]

Briard continues by invoking this 'Macho' competitive vision of the Bronze Age in terms of capitalist values:

> The Bronze Age witnessed the assertion of personality, the recognition of the value of a spirit of enterprise. This was a consequence of the increase in travel and contacts, made necessary by this burgeoning industrial society. In short it was the start of a more elaborate organisation of labour, with the appearance of new professions and social classes: prospectors, miners, smiths, traders and commercial travellers, not to mention scrap metal dealers, and the warriors stationed at the toll posts and strategic points on the trade routes (ibid 221).

It is not just in works of academic synthesis that the traditional culture history approach has dominated. The fieldwork research priorities of the Council for British Archaeology (1948) for example, examined each chronological period individually and identified problems and concerns for future research within an historicist framework. The Bronze Age section, written by Hawkes and Piggott, presents the period as one characterised by invasions, and waves of immigrants which were gradually assimilated into the native population. Thus a priority was to define more clearly the absolute and relative chronology in order to clarify the sequence of Bronze Age cultures both one to another and to Neolithic and Iron Age cultures. Some attention was also paid to social and economic considerations although this was done within the culture history context of the study of lifeways. Thus the total excavation of Bronze Age settlement sites was advocated in order to gain 'a realistic picture of the mode of life and social organisation; in other words, to make prehistory live' (1948, 91).

Museum exhibitions also largely remain pragmatically rooted in the three age system. Devised in the context of museum display, this way of compartmentalising the past has proved difficult to avoid in the presentation of prehistoric artifactual material. To some extent it is felt that the visiting public are familar with this scheme and more readily able to grasp information organised on this basis. The prominence given to the Bronze Age is usually dependent on the composition of the collection, as at Devizes museum where this period receives more attention than any other on the basis of its outstanding Bronze Age collection. Artifact and monument typology remains an important element in museum galleries: at Devizes the technical development of bronze axes and spears in the Middle and Late Bronze Age is presented, and henges receive special treatment as a class of monument, with individual models of each site. Also on a typological theme, both Devizes and Salisbury museum display a variety of urns in large shop window-like showcases (Conybeare and Viner 1985, 186).

Elements of culture history are also often evidence: cultural developments may receive attention, for example the distinction between artifacts of Wessex 1 and 2 is illustrated at Devizes. More commonly it is lifeways (and deathways) which are given emphasis, thus bringing in the imaginative perspective. This can take the form of single site study (eg. the Late Bronze age midden at Potterne presented at Devizes) or the display of mortuary practices, symbolised by the ubiquitous Beaker burial reconstructions found in museums throughout the country.

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Since the nineteenth century models which seek to draw general conclusions about the way human society is organised have existed in parallel with the preceding, traditional culture history approach. By their nature they are often more explicit in their value systems, and can encompass a wide range of philosophical stances. For example, in the nineteenth century the

most powerful concept was that of progress, linked to the development of industrial capitalism. This was reflected in the idea of evolutionary stages of social organisation based on the means of subsistence, as promulgated by Morgan, Engels, Pitt-Rivers and others (Daniel 1975, 49; Girdwood 1986, 36; Renfrew 1982, 6). Worsaae writing in 1886 of the need for further research comments:

> ..it will be long ere each single group of lands and peoples can be assigned its right place in the whole steadily progressive development of man during the far-reaching pre-historic ages (1886, xxviii).

At the present time there are three main generalising models used in Bronze Age Studies. Autonomous development; prestige goods systems; and peer polity interaction. These are discussed below and their impact on local fieldwork and museums is assessed.

Autonomous Development

For many archaeologists the general evolutionary concept was retained well into the twentieth century as a framework within which cultures developed and diffused and in which invasion speeded the process of cultural advancement (Bintliff 1986, 6–8). Until the late 1960's however, diffusion remained the main explanation of social change in the Bronze Age, innovation occurring outside the Western European theatre in the Mediterranean and the Near East.

This was challenged by the concept of autonomous development, noutlined for the British Bronze Age by Clark (1966) and Coles and Taylor (1971). To a great extent this reflected a shift in attitude within Western society towards the political domination of external territories, and was catalysed by technical developments such as radiocarbon determination and spectrographic analysis (Gilman 1981, 2), the increased use by archaeologists of systems thinking, and the examination of culture process (which laid emphasis on the functioning of defined entities rather than external relations and interactions).

There are two opposed camps within studies of autonomous development. Renfrew presented the 'establishment' case, in which the local elite were seen as managers promoting social development. For example he stressed the importance of local trajectories of social development based on generalising anthropological models of chiefdom society developed in the United States (1973, 540–43). He explained the changes in Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Wessex as a transformation from group orientated chiefdoms with communal burials and henge monuments, giving way to individualising chiefdoms characterised by individual elite burial witth prestige goods. In this model Renfrew accepts Childe's view of the chiefly elite as the dynamic force in social change (Rowlands 1984, 149) but here the similarity ends. Whilst Childe was trying to pinpoint a key episode in European development (albeit against a background of economic stages), Renfrew was profoundly influenced by the theories of the New Archaeology and viewed Wessex society as a functional system. Thus although his approach to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age is consistent with changing western attitudes towards empires and colonisation, he retains a belief in the functional rather than exploitative aspects of social elites.

In contrast, Gilman (1981) views the local elite as parasites. His neo-Marxist approach stresses the importance of the organisation of subsistence production. The desire of certain individuals to dominate social groups is taken as a natural human trait, and Gilman suggests that the adoption in the Neolithic of capital intensive subsistence production made the

segmentation and fission of communities less attractive thereby removing the mechanism by which self aggrandizement had been previously checked. This development led to the establishment of parasitical hereditary elites (Ibid 4–5). This vision of regionally evolving Bronze Age societies has been elaborated by Bintliff, who emphasizes the long term, cyclical route of social development (1984, 29–30).

Prestige Goods Systems (Neo-Diffusionism)

This model reflects a concern with global relations of dominance and control in the post-colonial era, emphasizing core/periphery roles. Developed from neo-Marxist anthropological theory it has become a widely adopted model which rejects the primary importance of autonomous development but retains elements of the systems functionalism of the New Archaeology. The locus of social change is seen to be inter-elite competition associated with pan-European systems of alliances and networks based on the exchange of prestige goods. Thus for Rowlands the hierarchical nature of Bronze Age society depended 'directly on the manipulation of relations of circulation and exchange and not on control of production *per se*' (1980, 46). Elite exchange is also viewed as a force for economic development. He writes:

> The exchange of weapons, ornaments and livestock for example ...operates as a kind of pump to stimulate the production of food and other forms of surplus. (ibid).

In a developed version of Childe's dependency model Britain is seen as part of a regional economy spreading over much of Europe. Describing the situation in the ninth century B.C. Rowlands comments:

> such systems never appear to develop in isolation but as peripheries in the expansion of more dominant communities or semi-commercial state systems, in this case the Near East and the later Mediterranean world. (ibid 47)

This concentration on the role of the elite and on interregional contacts currently forms the most widely accepted way of looking at Bronze Age society. Shennan writes:

> One could say with little exaggeration that the archaeology of the earlier Bronze Age is the archaeology of its prestige artefacts and the rituals in the course of which they were deposited (in Champion et al 1984, 221).

It is illuminating to observe the way in which scholars hop about from culture to culture in attempting to pinpoint the leading and most powerful social unit (see for example Bradley's treatment of the decline of Wessex and the rise of the Thames valley in the later Bronze Age (1980, 64–9), and Shennan's notion of peripheralisation in the same context (1986, 146)). This interpretative slant is clearly related to the traditional historical approach to nationalism and power politics. The visibility of elite status symbols determines those societies which are perceived as successful, important and consequently worthy of study (see for example Daniel 1975, 372).

Peer Polity Interaction

The concept of peer polity interaction (P.P.I.) has recently been proclaimed as a bridge between the conflicting models of autonomous development and neo-diffusionism (Renfrew and Cherry

1986, 152). In fact Renfrew strips the critical element from both models – namely the concern with the nature of political and economic power – leaving only a politically 'neutral' husk which is in reality ideologically capitalist in terms of its assumptions (see Roskams this volume). The full range of interactions taking place between adjacent autonomous polities (particularly at elite level) is ascribed an important role in determining social change. For Renfrew this is a development of his "Cognitive Archaeology" in which universal mental concepts could be recognised through material symbolism (Renfrew 1982a). He writes that in studies of P.P.l. 'The intention is to develop a cross-cultural approach, with the hope of obtaining general insights' (1986, 18). In contrast to the core/periphery model however, relations of dominance between polities are seen as one of a range of possible interchanges, thus demoting the significance of the neo-Marxist concern with power relations between cultures. As with Hodder's work the structuralist influence is evident in the emphasis on individual perceptions and actions; a basic question posed by the concept of P.P.l. being: 'Who impresses whom, and how, and what effect does that have upon the future actions of both?' (Renfrew 1986, 18).

Shennan's work provides the most important application of this approach in Bronze Age studies in his consideration of the Beaker problem (but see also Lamberg-Karlovsky 1981). He hypothesises that the occurrence of Beaker cultures across much of Europe was not the result of movement of peoples but of the spread of ideas and ideology marking a changed form of hierarchy and control (in Champion et al 1984, 211). He observes that the accompanying expansion of social hierarchy was the result of:

> A convergence of local trajectories and an interaction between them, based on the influence of a widespread ideology and subsequent elite interactions which followed from it (ibid 221).

Unlike the heroic and neo-diffusionist models of the Bronze Age which treat the elite as if they have an independent existence, Shennan considers Neolithic and Early Bronze Age ideology in terms of its power to legitimate social inequalities. For example he interprets the construction of ceremonial monuments in Wessex and Brittany as an attempt at elite legitimation by masking social hierarchy. He contrasts Athis with the ideology developed in central Europe which was based on elite display, exemplified by rich individual burial. This overt form of expression was ideologically more robust (although it could lead to intra elite competition for prestige artefacts) and eventually superseded the use of group ceremonial monuments in Wessex (Shennan 1982, 158).

The main question which is deliberately shirked by Renfrew and Cherry is the extent to which PPl was a major cause of change in social relations, or whether it was a mechanism used by local "decision makers" to reinforce their position: whilst Shennan argues that the "Beaker kit" acquired an inherent value which actually changed power relations in society, Bradley and Chapman suggest that the adoption of common symbols and monuments in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age represented '...the use of polity interaction by local elites to develop their own political power' (Shennan 1986, 146; Bradley and Chapman 1986, 135).

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To what extent have such generalizing approaches, with their potential for wide ranging discourse, permeated Bronze Age studies at the level of local archaeology?

Field Archaeology operates at several different levels and has a number of facets. Unlike university departments, where research and debate are of considerable importance, it is more

directly responsible to the state, serving various establishment expectations at the local, regional, and national level. The full time fieldworker remains largely concerned with data gathering and management and derives his/her models of the past from academic synthesis. Although they tend not to follow every fashion and trend in theoretical archaeology, changes in approach have occurred since World War II.

For example by the early 1980's there had been a profound change in the attitude of the CBA from its 1948 policy statement (Thomas 1983). The document contains seven sections divided not chronologically but by categories such as aerial archaeology, historic buildings, and archaeological science. This emphasis on technique, methodology, and the *form* of the evidence appears to take priority over its *content* (cf Bintliff 1986, 14–17). The Bronze Age is included in the section entitled 'Research objectives in the countryside', although in common with other prehistoric periods it is hardly discussed. Instead a number of pan-chronic themes are outlined as general research considerations eg population levels, settlement hierarchy, land use and allotment and site catchment analysis (Thomas 1983, 21). Great concern is also given to the conservation of the archaeological heritage by active land management (ibid 25).

The Prehistoric Society underwent a similar change in attitude. In the first volume of the Proceedings, Childe's paper stressed the importance of historical order and temporal sequence, culture definition and diffusion (1935, 1, 3, 12–13), and the Bronze Age has an important role in this perspective. In contrast, the 1984 paper entitled 'Prehistory, priorities and Society: the way forward' states:

> Our first priority is to recommend the adoption of a coherent preservation policy for monuments and historic landscapes throughout the United Kingdom (Prehistoric Society 1984, 438).

Fieldwork policy forms only one of seven sections of the report and is predominantly concerned with forms of evidence such as wet sites, colluvium and alluvium covered sites, and landscapes. Bronze Age burial monuments are briefly considered in the context of environmental and dating evidence, and the place of ritual monuments in the landscape is also mentioned (ibid 440). There is however no elaboration of fundamental research directions or objectives.

Clearly both the CBA and the Prehistoric Society were faced with the difficult task of reaching a consensus view from the competing approaches and interest groups, and they chose 1) to play down or leave implicit the central role of time depth and chronology; 2) to reject an overtly theoretical approach (although economic and systems models are enmeshed in the ragbag of themes presented by the CBA); and 3) partly to provide common ground between archaeologists, the importance of preserving the data base was given prominence.

Thus by the early 1980's the ahistorical approach to fieldwork had apparently triumphed in the archaeological establishment; the Bronze Age along with other temporal divisions in prehistory were largely deposited on the scrap heap. To what extent is this attitude reflected in the approach of the local fieldworker in today's units, county planning offices and museums? It is fair to say that most local fieldworkers have not been profoundly influenced by the New Archaeology and its aftermath (Pryor 1980, 486) and they continue the traditions of the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century. Barrow excavation is carried out usually in the antiquarian mould of single monument investigation (although now almost invariably in response to threat). Barrow chronology remains a central concern as it has from the mid-nineteenth century, although C14 dating offers new possibilities for the absolute dating

of artefact typology and culture complexes (Barrett and Bradley 1980a). Reflecting more recent concerns for economy and environment is the use of barrow excavation for the reconstruction of landscape history from the molluscs or pollen in the buried soil.

The importance of settlement evidence has also long been recognized and recent years have seen several notable excavations (eg Barrett and Bradley 1980, vol 2 passim). But it is in Bronze Age landscape studies that field archaeologists have made the biggest strides. Developing the geographically based tradition of Crawford, Grinsell, and Fox, recent approaches have concentrated on defining settlement territories and land divisions in order to reconstruct economic and social units (eg Ellison 1981, Wainwright et al 1979–81). Given the geographical limitations of most local fieldworkers their studies are almost invariably concerned with data gathering from individual sites, or landscapes arbitrarily divided into modern administrative boundaries. Thus relatively few areas offer the environmental or archaeological diversity appropriate to the analysis of local trajectories of social change. As a consequence, locally generated studies are not usually characterised by the application of specific theories or models. This is exemplified by a recent synthesis of the Bronze Age evidence for Hampshire by two local fieldworkers. The writers hedge their theoretical bets by presenting an outline for the period in the county based on accepted chronology, followed by the examination of the evidence for selected themes such as environment, settlement and subsistence economy (Fasham and Schadla-Hall 1981, 32–3).

A notable theoretically orientated local fieldwork policy document is that prepared for Wessex by Ellison (Wessex Archaeological Committee 1981). She proposed a number of thematically organized regional projects based on sub-systems such as subsistence, exchange, ideology, etc. Five major projects were suggested, each period based. One is entitled 'Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements and their associated landscapes', which incorporates the sub-system elements of subsistence, population, and social organisation. Proposed activities included fieldwalking, survey and excavation in the areas of the main barrow cemeteries and Stonehenge (ibid 14–16). Additionally a rank order of site importance is presented, compiled from Groube's analysis of research priorities for Dorset. Of 28 possible categories, 'later Bronze Age enclosures and fields' rate equal fourth; 'Bronze and Iron Age linear earthworks' lie seventh; whilst a 'single bowl barrow' lies miserably at the bottom of the list below the 'average medieval urban site' (ibid 11). Despite the reservations one might have about the now dated sub-systems model invoked, this polilcy represents a bold attempt by a Bronze Age specialist to marry a theoretical approach with the practical considerations of field archaeology.

The bulk of fieldwork however is single site orientated as a scan of the papers in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society demonstrates, and in contrast to the impression given in the policy documents of the CBA and the Prehistoric Society, the Bronze Age retains an identity at the level of local studies, albeit an unhappy blend of typology, culture history, and economic analysis. But in the later 1980's the situation may be rapidly changing. With the effective reduction of central government funding for fieldwork, and the cash squeeze on local authorities, resources increasingly have to be obtained from developers or central government employment schemes. The result is that non-archaeological factors such as site location and prestige are becoming vitally important in resource allocation, inevitably leading to diminished emphasis on overall research objectives and a widening gulf between the field unit and the university.[4]

Perhaps even more damaging to local Bronze Age studies is the concept of the historic environment which arose in response to the destruction of monuments and historic landscapes since the war. Directed largely by central government via the various monument protection

and scheduling programmes, and supported in many county planning offices, it rapidly gained ground in the 1970's and 80's. It represents a cheap alternative to the Rescue ethos (an attractive proposition for state based organizations), concentrating on landscape conservation and monument management (Hughes and Rowley 1986). The great danger of this approach is that the record of past human activity becomes transformed into a static ahistoric landscape: a theme park of interesting lumps and bumps to be enjoyed as leisure experience (Bintliff 1986, 16–7, but cf Baker 1983, 10).

To a lesser extent Museums have also been affected by the increased importance of generalizing approaches. By and large they have retained their traditional role as interpreters and presenters of national and regional history and culture, but recent museum practice has increasingly involved more adventurous display technique and the adoption of themes to make the past more intelligible to the non-specialist. There are two trends apparent in this approach: Firstly, the dressing up of culture history in more fashionable clothes in which the Bronze Age may get only a passing glance. This was exemplified at the very successful exhibition at the British Museum entitled 'Archaeology in Britain since 1945'. The prehistoric themes included 'A way of life preserved 4000–1200 BC', concerning waterlogged sites; and 'Landscapes through time 3200 BC–1100 AD'. Secondly, the incorporation of different models of the Bronze Age; a clear case of this approach was the recent exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland called 'Symbols of power at the time of Stonehenge' at which the nature of power in the Bronze Age was directly compared to status and hierarchy in modern Western society. The model used was a generalizing one: that the prestige goods of the Neolithic and Bronze Age served fundamentally similar purposes as modern status symbols such as televisions, cars, and uniforms (Clarke, this vol.; Clarke, Cowie and Foxton 1985, 5–6). For the spectator this presentation cast light in two directions: on the one hand it served to bring life to prehistoric people by correlating ancient material remains with symbols familiar to the viewer. As with the British Museum exhibition this lies within the historicist scope of 'lifeways'. On the other hand it showed modern symbols in an almost dialectical perspective. The impact of this approach can be gauged by the reactions aired in the letters' page of Current Archaeology. In response to criticism of the exhibition Frankland writes:

> It caused a dialectical approach to the objects. Instead of being described, people began to interact with them and began to understand them in terms of their own condition. Given this interpretation, an interpretation very much related to 1986, many thousands of people were able to see the relevance of archaeology to today (1986, 191).

The authors of the exhibition considered in some detail the historical context of social change in the Late Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age, using the most up to date syntheses. Additionally the period was used as a case study illustrating general principles about social hierarchy. This aspect of the exhibition moves rather close to an ahistorical framework in which Bronze Age remains represent little more than attractive artefacts and structures illustrative of general principles.

The New Culture History

The Culture History approach, perhaps with less emphasis on external relationships, looks set for a big comeback, spearheaded by two ill-suited bedfellows: the first being a reflection of ideological changes within the elite stratum in the First World, the second being a reaction to these changes.

The ascendent ideology in the West lays emphasis on the concept of the competitive individual, exemplified by the call for a return to Victorian values in the U.K. The idea of heroic society encapsulates these attributes in a pristine form and therefore one might expect scholars to indulge in the renewed exploration (and for some, the elaboration) of this model. We also live in a time of heightened nationalistic feeling, where the government wishes to see kings and queens and historical dates brought to the fore of history teaching. In this climate it is likely that changes occurring in the Bronze Age will be included in the search for a British identify. For example one can forsee a renewed debate in which one side stresses cultural continuity from the Neolithic whilst the other sees the later Bronze Age as the decisive time (cf Ashbee 1978; Burgess 1980, 353–4). Furthermore in parallel with this trend one might see an increase in studies with no explicitly theoretical base, eg art, metalwork, and ceramic style, etc (cf Wilk 1985, 318).[5]

The second new historicist approach emphasizes the role of individual action and perception in a more self-aware fashion. This echoes the values of Post-modernism (see Januszcak 1986) and arguably represents a retreat from the positivist approach of generalising models in such concerns as group interaction and economic forces. It is most clearly espoused by Hodder who has recently suggested a return to the theories of R G Collingwood (Hodder 1986). In this model social change is seen largely as created by individuals within society rather than pre-determined by ecological factors or imposed from outside by "society" (ibid 89–90). Hodder emphasizes that every cultural sequence is specific and unique, and that archaeological explanation should be directed towards reconstructing and interpreting the origins and nature of prehistoric societies. Influenced by structuralist concepts he criticizes the New Archaeology and previous culture history for failing to consider the symbolic dimension of material culture. Thus on the one hand simplistic correlations were drawn between technology and economy, and social reality: whilst on the other hand the meaning of explicitly symbolic activities such as ritual and religion were perceived as unknowable. Hodder suggests that with sufficient consideration of the particular cultural context of archaeological phenomena seen against their historical background, both tendencies can be corrected.

A particularly important aspect of this thesis is his treatment of ideology. This he defines as

> ...that component of symbol-systems most closely involved with the negotiation of power from varying points of interest within society(ibid 69).

This is rather different to the eotne dimensional approach to ideology inherent in the heroic model. For Hodder this aspect can ebeeest be explored through study of the 'context of historical meanings' (ibid 76).

For the purposes of the present discussion it is appropriate to speculate how the Bronze Age might be tackled by this new historicism. One might expect Childe's suggestion of distinctive European traits to be elaborated. The data might also be trawled again for the precursors of Celtic cultural forms. In contrast to the standard heroic model, attention would be paid to interactions between the various groups in society as manifested in symbolic systems. This might be undertaken by examining settlement forms (eg Drewett 1980), or pottery and metalwork styles. Whilst the technology, typology and cultural influences of metal implements have been the subject of much previous study, increasing attention is being paid to their symbolic qualities. For example it has been proposed by Needham that axes acquired a special meaning in the Neolithic. The context of a number of bronze hoards suggests that this meaning may have been carried forward into the Bronze Age. As Barrett has pointed out, this phenomenon may be contrasted with the value system associated with bronze daggers

which occur more frequently in burial contexts (Barrett in Clarke et al 1985, 184, Gourlay and Barrett 1984).

Burials offer particular scope for Hodder's approach, possessing a variable combination of symbolic contexts: artefactual, structural, and topographical. Thus to take a simple example – the Bush Barrow, a large barrow located one mile south of Stonehenge containing a rich grave assemblage has been interpreted as the burial of a paramount chief of Wessex, possibly the individual who instigated the construction of Stonehenge III (Ashbee 1978, 23–4). For a more developed version of this approach one might cite Bradley's comparison between the Wessex barrows and the Deverel Rimbury cemeteries. He observes:

> The patterns of intervisibility among the downland barrows surely symbolise the extensive exchange networks of the social elites, just as the less prominent siting of the cremation cemeteries may match the more enclosed world of the ordinary settlements. Indeed, the small 'family' clusters may reflect the structure of the rural workforce. (1981, 102; see also Ellison 1981, 432–3).

Similarly he contrasts the permanently visible display of the barrows of the Wessex elite with the often lavish but evanescent water deposited funerary assemblages of the Thames Valley. This, he suggests, may represent different attitudes to continuity and ancestry (Bradley 1984, 13). Clearly there is great scope within the period for the detailed study of such aspects within their extended cultural matrix.[6]

Conclusion

It is apparent that to some extent Bronze Age studies can be seen as a barometer of the immediate political and economic concerns of Western society – as Wilk (1985) has suggested for Mayan studies. Equally important however is the way in which it has been used to address the issue of social relations at a more profound level. This is perhaps true for every period division, each one offering different grist to the same interpretative mill. Roman Studies for example provide special opportunities for examining large scale state structures, the problems concomitant with empires, etc. The special quality of the Bronze Age utilized this century is its capacity for exploring the qualities and characteristics of leadership within capitalist society (that this association is being lost to the Neolithic has already been mentioned – see introduction and note 1). Thus despite fifty years of debate, elite dynamics are as important to Renfrew and Bradley as they were to Childe and Piggott. This fundamental concern with social relations should not become overshadowed by more ephemeral (although important) matters, or by changes in the ways in which the underlying questions are analyzed.

To accept that all approaches are products of contemporary ideology does not mean that responsibility for assessing their contribution can be abrogated[7] although a good measure of subjectivity and hindsight is inevitable. Typological study, for long the basis of Bronze Age studies, has consumed enormous quantities of scholastic energy, but has been hampered by implicit assumptions about the significance of technological stages and progressive development. To a great extent it is a passive approach which has done little to stimulate new methods of enquiry, and now rightly forms one of a whole battery of analytical techniques available to the student. .

It is difficult not to be harsh on the Celtic/heroic model. It has proved to be an enduring concept, but a very selective one. Its interest in the elite and with cultural diffusion was largely satisfied by burial data, which led to something approaching sterility in field archaeology (a

situation not reflected in Neolithic and Iron Age studies). Furthermore the lack of debate over the basic principles ascribed to Bronze Age society was a severe drawback to the development of ideas.

Thus the developments of the past twenty years can be viewed as very healthy, with an active concern for the full range of information: burial, settlement hierarchy, agrarian landscapes, etc, and a wide ranging set of interpretative models to foster new methods and increasingly detailed and precise cultural sequences. In fact it is increasingly said that the pendulum has swung too far and there are now too many competing models. Perhaps the time has come to take stock and search for common ground amongst the different perspectives.[8]

Lewthwaite has asserted that archaeologists must:

> ...concentrate on 'tinkering' with a few well chosen models in order to achieve solid if unspectacular success through a series of infinitesimally small adjustments to some sort of given 'asset' (1986, 82).

How might this 'asset' achieve coherence in studies of the period in question? Three common areas might be discerned:-

Firstly there is the delineation of culture development. Hodder's emphasis on specific culture sequences is an important corrective to some of the ahistorical generalisations of the New Archaeology. In essence this approach concerns the study of change in terms of individual and group interactions. Although this may involve the analysis of long chronological sequences, the focus of investigation remains the cultural matrix.

The second area concerns long term evolutionary trajectories. Although the nineteenth century concept of linear progress in social evolution is no longer accepted, empirical observation of the evidence demonstrates a progressive (if cyclical) development in population levels, social complexity, and technology. Research relevant to this field includes environmental, demographic, and economic studies, designed to chart detailed patterns of settlement and subsistence and the monitoring of cycles of expansion and contraction. Ironically this is the very type of work which local archaeologists are increasingly unable to undertake.

A third area exists at the point where the first two perspectives coalesce. It concerns the occurrence of general patterns and regularities in social evolution. Although Hodder implies that culture is adaptively blind and directionless, the long term perspective indicates that there are underlying general processes at work. It is suggested that the more sophisticated delineation of culture sequence might be used as an interpretative counterpoint to the empirically observed long term trends. Thus one could focus on the relationship between apparently significant cultural changes (such as the introduction of the Beaker complex or the rise of hillforts) and long term demographic and subsistence change.[9]

In this manner it may be possible to throw new light on possible correlations between the restructuring of social relations and economic change, and to abandon the conceptual s traight-jacket of the three age system.

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Notes

1. For example, hierarchical social differentiation, traditionally viewed as the central feature of Bronze Age society has been traced back into the Neolithic:- The occurrence of the full range of Early Bronze Age burial rites in the 4th and 3rd millennium has recently been recognized (Kinnes 1979, 73), and many scholars have placed emphasis on the non-egalitarian nature of Neolithic prestige artefacts and social interactions (see for example Sherratt 1976). One consequence is a growing feeling that the importance of bronze especially in the early period, has been considerably overemphasized in the past (Rowlands 1984, 150).
2. A less scholarly but similar vision of Wessex society is presented by Crampton (1967). The dustjacket reads: 'This was a warrior society, living by War and pillage and death, with kings and chiefs and serfs...'
3. Sonia Hawkes relates this contrast to agriculturalist/pastoral communities. She writes that the Neolithic fertility cult: '...is in stark contrast with a new symbolism, that of the male sky god soon to be introduced into Britain by the invaders of the Bronze Age. The one is seen here to be characteristic of peasant communities, probably originally matriarchal in their organisation; the other of strongly patriarchal nomadic pastoralists' (1945, 17).
4. Thus for example a City of London site scheduled for development by a national company is more likely to attract funding than a cropmark site being destroyed by deep ploughing.

   It will be most interesting to compare the Wessex policy document referred to above with the new version currently in preparation. One might speculate that it will shy away from broad economic and social research questions and concentrate more on fund-raising concerns, eg liaison with developers, display, and public profile. One might also expect the provision of a more community based service examining local developments in a cultural historical context. Site specific investigation may also come to the fore in favour of landscape analysis; and the relatively wealthy urban centres, large and small, might also expect to be targeted.
5. This might be seen as a side effect of the growing "art as commodity" trend, the archaeological respectability of which is epitomised by Grahame Clark's recent offering (1986).
6. Neo-Marxists are also coming to perceive the significance of using the material symbolism of elite ideology as a means of analysing social relations, although the importance of economic factors in the relationships between social groups is stressed, as are external power relations (Kristiansen 1984, 756; Spriggs 1984, 6).
7. Thus for example we can see the power of alternative archaeology, yet at the same time reject its legitimacy as a view of the past. Although it is a recent development, its roots lie in the Romantic movement. A number of variants exist including dowsing, leys, geomancy, and para-astronomy, but a unifying theme is that of an ancient harmony between prehistoric communities and the "natural" world, which was destroyed by the advent of materialist values (Chippindale 1983, 247). From this standpoint orthodox archaeologists represent 'unconscious apologists for industrial civilisation' (Chippindale 1983, 248 quoting Thompson 1978), Piggott's heroic warriors or Briard's proto-capitalist scrap-metal merchants perpetuating the myth of an uncivilised primitive and acquisitive prehistory. Although alternative archaeology has predictably been castigated for creating a 'World that never was' (Burl and Mitchell 1983, 18), it should not be dismissed too lightly. Indeed a similar sentimentalised view of Aegean prehistory was a powerful influence on mainstream archaeology until relatively recently (Bintliff 1984a). What this phenomenon shows us is the way in which our models and perceptions about the past are embedded in contemporary ideology and the "negotiation of power". This was graphically demonstrated at Stonehenge in 1986 when the combined forces of the state (including the archaeological establishment) and the media, created folk devils out of a relatively small group of people attempting to follow a non-competitive, harmonious lifestyle in opposition to the 'heroic' values of Thatcher's Britain.
8. This approach relates strongly to the 'Modernist' stance which seeks consensus between competing views, and rational discourse and the testing of norms leading to the qualitative development of knowledge (Habermas 1975, Jameson 1984, X).

9. This is based on Braudel's structured approach to historical analysis which stresses the integration of the general and the particular (Braudel 1980, and see Bintliff, this volume).

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Living in Interesting Times: Archaeology as Society's Mirror

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Introduction

In this paper I wish to take up and develop further certain points made in an earlier NUARS context (Lewthwaite 1986). The proposition in question is that since we live, in accordance with the well-known Chinese curse, 'in interesting times', we are both obliged and peculiarly privileged to be conscious constantly of our own historicality and therefore variously drawn or driven to reflection on prior, in a sense alternative, states, indeed to contemplation of the historical process as such. As archaeologists professionally bound to ask 'how may we acquire true knowledge of the past?' we are now much less likely to put our faith in naive realism following the demise of positivism, but as post-positivists we seem as yet unprepared to accept that there can never be a knowledge 'true' for all times and circumstances, i.e. unprepared for historical relativism. Perhaps we ought rather to consider ourselves as 'translators' condemned in perpetuity to a Sisyphean servitude; revising the translation of past into present meaning.

There are as many definitions of 'positivism' as authors who have discussed it; in any case, the term has come to be used almost entirely by its opponents, as invective (cf Bintliff, this *vol., note 4). To my mind, the best way to grasp the spirit of positivism is not through an* exhaustive list of its attributes (preference for analysis over synthesis, for form over content, for the context of verification (*sensu* Reichenbach) over that of discovery) as much as through its preference for a visual metaphor for comprehension, its equation of knowledge with perception: sight is science. In effect, the positivist asserts that he can see things as they really are (or were) and that what cannot be seen is in any case not worth seeing, being metaphysical: the dominant image is that of a photograph of reality. Meaning is therefore apprehended in terms of 'etic' categories imposed by the observer: in our case, typically through reference to a scheme of stages of human progress achieved through the mastery of cognitive and technical skills. The meaning of acts for the actor is deemed irrelevant. A celebrated case of this is Childe's insistence that the magical ritual accompanying the fashioning of a flint knife, being bad science, meant nothing for his project (Childe 1956, 171). The absurdity of positivism has been demonstrated, most ironically, by progress in the psychology of perception (the Rorschach test being the example most familiar to the man in the street), that is to say, by science. For as Heelan points out, 'visual perception – and, by analogy, all perception –is hermeneutic as well as causal' (Heelan 1983, 181) '... the "text" which science "reads" is an artefact of scientific culture, caused to be "written" by nature on human instruments within the controlled context of a scientific environment' (Heelan 1983, 182), '... the perceptual hermeneutical process of scientific observation is thus a horizon- or World-building process; it is reality in the process of constitution' (Heelan 1983, 195).

Moreover, it is worth recalling that the greatest, the most creative, scientists have been those who were without doubt the most conscious of the meaning of their discoveries for their contemporaries (sc. Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Einstein) i.e. the most metaphysical. In any case, even archaeology appears to be struggling free from this reversion to a pre-Kantian empiricism, if somewhat belatedly.

The humanities are regaining ground lost to science, or rather to a certain caricature of genuine science; in archaeology this takes the form of the resurgence of the historical idealism of previous generations of scholars (cf Bintliff this vol), identified with the constructionist (or constructivist) mode of knowing. A more appropriate metaphor for this mode would be that of a painter attempting to construct a likeness of a subject faithful to the original, capturing the "character" or "personlality" rather than merely the profile, despite the singular inconvenience of the sitter's being hidden behind a screen and assisting the artist in his interpretation only by answering such specific questions as are put to him (and in an unfamiliar tongue, to boot). Clearly, the accuracy of the outcome would depend as much on the artist's capacity for rational enquiry (interrogation) as on his craft skill in translating the resultant idea onto canvas; in marked contrast to the "photographic" metaphor of positivism, the enterprise would be achieved by the active reasoning of the artist. (As Kuzminski (1976, 132–3) has noted, this concept of the artist as a skilled interpreter has ceased to be familiar precisely because of the intrusion of scientism into the arts).

In plain language, the constructivist builds up a model of reality through the logic of question-and-answer, until he is compelled by the evidence to accept a certain interpretation which is in no way "given" by the brute "facts" of the case. In this respect, as Knorr (1979) has shown, the constructivist prehistorian is not so very different from the scientist: both are analytical hermeneuticians, even if their respective rhetorics differ!

However, the very triumph of anti- and post-positivism has occasioned unease in some quarters, not only because of the sheer diversity of approaches being touted (sc. Marxism, humanism, idealism, hermeneutics, phenomenology, existentialism and any number of combinations thereof). Awkward questions have begun to be asked: how exactly can the individual scholar be so sure that he has constructed a true likeness of some past reality? How can he expect to convince others of the validity of his construction? How can a community of scholars be expected to reach agreement when a plurality of constructions gives rise to controversy? (cf Bintliff this vol.) As this problematic is only just becoming perceptible to prehistorians, and as, moreover, the critical mass of this scholarly community is in any case relatively small, I make no apologies for referring in what follows to the conclusions of historians and philosophers of history, not as a substitute for but as a stimulus towards debate in archaeology.

Constructionism in History as a Model for Prehistory

Nothing better indicates the essentially derivative nature of the New Archaeology than its strident advocacy of Hempelian positivism (CLM) and Humean causality, operationalised in the search for law-like statements of ever greater sweep, just as historians were tiring of such a posture (Murphey 1986, 46). Thus Golob (1980, 57) observes:

> But the great positivist debate actually went the other way. The autonomy of history became evident in the very fact of the failure of the positivist takeover bid. There was in fact a slow and quiet convergence among serious historians, a tacit shedding of the preordained causal sequences and ineluctable regularities, a search in all branches of the discipline for the way people small and great thought and enacted

their thoughts in daily living, in processes of long duration as well as in periods of intense crisis; a seeking after consciousness, mentality, or even *mentalité*. The positivist-idealist debate finally lagged not... because historians could not agree, but because they began to agree, and the influence of positivism rapidly waned.

The philosopher of science Stephen Toulmin (1977, 144–5) concurs:

By 1976, the pursuit of abstract and universal ideas has become curiously out of fashion, as compared with the concrete analysis of particular historicocultural episodes and situations. Mere formalism no longer seems of deep interest, at least when divorced from considerations of function; and the minutiae of disciplinary expertise need to be explicated and justified, by being applied to specific instances and cases. Nowadays, we seek to develop not so much timeless theories about the general nature of "social groups" and "social action" as historical insights into the character and experience of this or that human group or collectivity; to grasp not so much the general statics of cultural equilibrium as the dynamics of particular cultural changes; to achieve not so much the formal rigour of axiomatic systems as the practical testability and computability of programs and algorithms... we have in this way achieved some kind of "relevance" to the fact of human experience, and we derive a new kind of intellectual satisfaction from the "concreteness" of the resulting discoveries. That satisfaction no longer rests on any formal, Cartesian warranty of deductive necessity; rather it comes from a Viconian assurance that we have succeeded in coming to grips with human actualities.

With the demise of positivism, historians have turned to a greater or lesser extent to the constructivist mode of knowing.

The Construction of Historical Facts

The basis of Collingwoodian constructionism consists of a rebuttal of the common-sense fallacy of knowing (naive realism). Its foremost contemporary advocate, Leon Goldstein, argues thus:

It seems clear that everything we can come to say about the historical past emerges entirely within the framework of historical knowing. Every attempt to subject to verificational test the claims that historians make requires that the procedures which led to the claims in the first place be repeated. There seems to be no way to the referent of an historical assertion except by means of the procedures of historical constitution themselves (Goldstein 1977, 51).

Central to these procedures is the method of question-and-answer. Golob (1980, 60) sums up the method thus:

But historical events cannot be observed like mountains or cows... Historical inquiry, like all other inquiry, is a matter of asking questions about evidence, initial questions which frame the inquiry and subsequent questions which, as they proceed from each other, constitute the inquiry, and their answers the narrative. Thus the direction and context of the narrative depends on the kind of framing question that is asked.

In short, naive realism errs in supposing that the past is directly accessible to us: 'At no point does nature break into our consciousness –if that makes any sense –to present itself unmediated by methodologies of knowing' (Goldstein 1977, 47).

A corollary which is more disturbing for realists is the inadequacy of the correspondence compared with the coherence definition of truth. W H Walsh (1977, 54) argues the case for coherence thus:

> Historical facts are not so much discovered as arrived at by processes of argument, and the question whether we can accept something as fact is the question whether we can fit it in with other conclusions to which we have already committed ourselves, or can fit it in without disturbing these conclusions to an undue extent... In history, far more than in perceptual situations, it is possible to argue that we accept or reject suggested truths not by confronting each of them directly with reality, but by thinking about their coherence with the rest of our beliefs.

This sounds alarmingly like an equation of facticity with the certitude of the historian in his own speculative construct. In fact, the constructionist must accept as factual, following Oakeshott, 'what the evidence obliges us to believe'. As Walsh (1977, 54) put it:

> We try to reconstitute the past on the basis of the evidence we now have, but it is not a question of making our constructions conform to the latter as independent fact. Rather what we have to do is think out a hypothesis about the nature of past fact which will allow us to take the evidence for what it is and offer a connected account of what it is.

The Construction of Historical Consensus?

The weakness of constructionism lies in its inability to specify a mode of reaching intersubjective consensus among a community of scholars except through a sort of reciprocal, iterative rethinking by one individual of another's labours, a sort of silent exchange of each other's intellectual washing. Thus Goldstein argues that rethinking rather than debate is the appropriate procedure for the testing of all hypotheses, one's own and one's colleagues': 'the procedures whereby we come to know about the historical past are always cognitive-constructive; the testing of our conclusions usually requires that the procedures of historical thinking – inquiry be done again' (Goldstein 1977, 35);

> If an historian wants to determine whether a colleague has reasoned truly in the only sense of the phrase that can be interpreted by a methodologist of history, he must simply go through the thinking himself. That enables him to think whether, given the evidence and the ways in which historians think about evidence of that sort, the conclusions he is examining are sound (Goldstein 1977, 33).

As a result, he (Goldstein 1977, 43) comes to the rather depressing conclusion that 'for whatever reasons, some historical conclusions will seem to the community of scholars better than others that have been proposed, and these latter will simply be dropped too'. Walsh (1977, 55) at least recognizes that

> One point which Goldstein stresses and which I and, I think, Collingwood overlooked is that historical thought is carried on largely on a corporate rather than on an individual basis. The consensus or near consensus of historians is important both when it comes to saying what is to be explained and when we ask what explains it

indeed showing a certain complacency:

> If the "real" past eludes us, the whole point of history is to constitute an "historical" past where authenticity will be recognised by the community of historians. And the fact that historians do largely agree about the character of the human past shows that this aspiration is successfully carried out (Walsh 1977, 58).

Is consensus, especially with the implication of finality, either feasible or desirable? An alternative viewpoint is put forward by Golob (1980, 60): 'each age will rewrite history to suit its needs, its questions, asked by minds differing through the very process of history from those of times preceding. Disagreement and perpetual revision, far from being symptoms of malaise, are in fact the evidence of historical study, and their presence is a sign of health'.

Ankersmit (1986, 24–5) develops this point further, into the 'proliferation thesis':

> Philosophy and science in their epistemological cloak always "aimed at putting an end to writing". If a problem has been solved, it was believed, writing about it comes to an end; looking *through* writing at language, we now observe the workings of nature and reality themselves. Especially in historiography, this picture is utterly misleading. In historiography, "paradoxically, the more powerful and authoritative an interpretation, the more writing it generates". The great books do not put an end to an historical debate, do not give us the feeling that we now finally know how things actually were in the past and that clarity has ultimately been achieved. On the contrary: these books have proved to be the most powerful stimulators of the production of *more* writing ...the truly interesting historical text does not "wipe itself out" (by having removed a item from the list of historical problems) but has a *metaphysical* relationship to itself... As I have pointed out elsewhere, if we have only *one* historical interpretation of some historical topic, we have no interpretation. An interpretative way of seeing the past can only be recognised as such in the presence of *more* ways of seeing the past. Narrative interpretations mutually define each other and therefore owe their identity to their "intertextual" relations. Consequently, a maximum of clarity can only be obtained in historiography thanks to a *proliferation* of historical interpretations and not by attempting to *reduce* their number. Historiography can therefore never afford to become forgetful of its past; even past interpretations which we reject at present should still be remembered in order to define the identity of the interpretations we now prefer. The proliferation thesis thus also requires us to respect the uniqueness and "difference" of each historical interpretation.

Such a relativism is new and will be shocking to some: it is one thing to accept that, in practice, scholars and schools of thought differ on account of all manner of idiosyncratic, contingent, contextual, *wissenschaftssoziologisch* factors, while clinging to a notion of objective Truth, quite another to admit the relativity of truth itself. Yet this, Walsh concludes, is what constructionism à la Goldstein implies:

> Truth, fact and knowledge will lose their total independence and become relative, in part at least, to the conditions of particular cognitive situations: if what is true for me remains true for you, unless you show that I am mistaken, that will be only so far as we share fundamental ways of thinking and recognise the same initial data... The problem of cultural relativism already threatens the notion of a single unchanging truth, and though what we have here is clearly something different (since historians of different generations would normally be thought as working within the same cultural tradition), once absolute facts age, the way is open to a radically new

conception of truth and fact generally...Goldstein's arguments point toward it even if Goldstein himself does not examine the question (Walsh 1977, 70).

Recourse to Judgement

Such relativism does not commend itself to Golob, who leans to the more traditional concept of judgement exercised by the professional scholar:

> The fact that we do not always agree, I have argued following Collingwood, derives from the nature of historical thinking itself, in its aspects of question-and-answer and a priori imagination. We *justify* what we say by showing it is inferred from the evidence; we *explain* by constructing narratives; and the principle of *understanding* to which we make implicit appeal is not human causality but what Mink calls "synoptic judgement", the kind of judgement we employ when a sequence has been completed and when we grasp the interconnectedness among the elements of a picture (Golob 1980, 61).

The trouble with this exhortation is its permeation by ambiguous visual metaphors: are we meant to understand a purely internal scrutiny of the facts and logic of the case or are we invited to perpetuate the fallacy of imagining ourselves outside and above the phenomena, in a position to deliver a divinely correct judgement? Commenting on Nowell-Smith's recourse to Collingwood's analogy of the detective solving a murder enquiry, Goldstein observes that:

> What is important to ask about the example is whether it resembles the knowing situation in which historians typically find themselves; and the answer is: no. Nowell-Smith looks at the situations which make up his example from the outside: he "observes" the witnessing of the act of murder, and he "observes" the detective reconstructing it. The purpose of the example is to suggest that the detective knows – in the end – what Nowell-Smith knows, but the example cannot show this. With respect to the situation of the example, Nowell-Smith occupies a position which God is said to occupy with respect to what goes on in the cosmos. The vantage point of God would enable one to know that some event in the actual human past had precisely the features that some subsequent historical reconstruction imputed to an event in the human past; and for God, knowledge of the human past would not have to be mediated by the discipline of history. But what features an historian felt impelled to impute to the event he was reconstructing would be determined by an historian working only within the framework represented by the detective's standpoint in the example, not by that represented by Nowell-Smith's standpoint (Goldstein 1977, 37).

A divine judgement of a rational rather than visual nature is precisely that which is demanded by Walsh (1977, 63–4):

> One who says that historical events are constituent of historical judgement must understand the latter in an impersonal sense... The subject of judgement... is the Kantian unity of apperception, and this is not concrete but abstract. Insofar as each of us thinks rationally he conforms his actual thinking to the ideal thought of which the unity of apperception is the subject. To speak of judgement is thus to speak of a proceeding which is logical rather than psychological, and which is accordingly not peculiar to the personal history of a particular thinker... judgement has to do with

> mind as such or, in Kantian terminology, "consciousness in general"... What exists in this objective sense, on this way of thinking, is not what is acknowledged or concluded to by any actual thinkers, but what would be acknowledged or concluded to by thought in its ideal form. Error consists of failing to attain this ideal: the Kantian argument I have suggested, which connects the notion of established fact with that of warranted judgement, but allows that particular thinkers on particular occasions may fail to satisfy the requirements of judgement proper, is designed to provide for this result... And the question about the status of the events which are historically authenticated gets an answer: they are conclusions forced on us when we think as we should and with all the resources we need (Walsh 1977, 67).

Walsh moreover places great faith in the competence of the community of scholars:

> That there is wide and general agreement among competent scholars that such and such an event took place will not *prove* that it did... (sc. but)... The presumption must be that, given the right conditions... competent historians can be expected to get things right, with the result that what is widely accepted in the historical community must indeed have been the case. There may be special circumstances in which historians fall into collective error. But such circumstances will be rare; normally things will go right, and hence normally the past as constituted to the satisfaction of the community of historians can be taken to be the past as it objectively was (Walsh 1977, 65).

An unduly sanguine evaluation, others may think!

The classic forum for the exercise of collective judgement is of course the law court, particularly in the English common-law tradition. Golob points out common-sensically that 'as we know, men of contrasting temperament, tastes, moral outlooks, and even ideologies, regularly reach agreement on the facts of the case, *on what actually happened*' (Golob 1980, 62) in the context of a jury trial. This forensic analogy is taken to its logical conclusion by Struever (1980, 67):

> The structure of the *discipline* is argument, and this invests each well motivated historical text, whatever the form, with a specific and contemporaneous historical purpose. In other words, history does not simply consider "essentially contested concepts"; history is an essential contest, with the particular responsibility of generating these issues.

The Return of Rhetoric

In effect, Struever argues that the historian attempts to make good his case in a legal, indeed in a specifically rhetorical sense:

> As a discipline, history is more like law than literature... Historical and legal rules pertain to proof and confrontation, evidence and persuasion; they govern a range of complex activities – investigative, organisational, critical, expressive – ordering them so as to achieve a single conviction: a goal which could be paraphrased as the establishment of the nature of a civil event. Thus I do not see "rhetoric as philosophy" or as counter-philosophy, but as a civil discipline which, like law, depends on investigative ingenuity as well as expressive force... A case for the intimacy of the connection could begin with the claim that rhetoric shares with history a "legal"

purpose: thus... Quintilian insists that the purpose of the orator is not simply to "instruct", *docere*, but to "make good your case", *sua confirmare* (Struever 1980, 68).

The mere instrusion of "rhetoric" into a scientific context is, of course, profoundly unsettling to 'an Anglo-American tradition that feels most confident when confronted with a rather simple statement in common language' (Kellner 1980, 9). Nevertheless, it is common knowledge that some of the strongest emotions aroused by the New Archaeology were precisely the reactions to its utter contempt for the poetic potential of natural language. As Struever (1980, 76) remarks of the New Historians, 'thus neglect of argumentative discipline in "scientific" history can, in spite of its pretentious, technical prose, make it seem rustic and unsophisticated in contrast with, say, the urbane Tacitus.' It is not difficult, therefore, to appreciate the brouhaha engendered by Hayden White's *Metahistory* (White 1973) which, in the words of Nelson (1980, 89) marked 'a return to a rhetorical conception of argument, displacing that caricature of formal logic which has been so influential in the guises of logical positivism and logical empiricism' and offered, along with certain other appeals to the rhetorical tradition 'the best chance in many years to escape the iron hold of geometric proof upon the modern mentality'. This is far from being the first instance of a 'rhetorical turn', of course:

> The replacement of a logic with a rhetoric in the interest of eliminating a host of false problems has been the task of a series of thinkers. Each of them reconfronts the same opponent – a spirit-deadening scholasticism which refuses innovation and levels discourse again and again into a series of debates which are in advance impossible of resolution. (sc. Lorenzo) Valla is the type, but Giambattista Vico is the incarnation of a more self-conscious philologist... Nietzsche is another apparition of this type... this procession of "philologist-reformers" includes Hayden White (Kellner 1980, 5–6).

White's mention of the tropological prefiguration of the historical field is but part of a wider movement in Anglo-Saxon historiography, that of the appreciation of language in both its rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects:

> In historiography it is particularly difficult to distinguish between what is said and how it is said. Consequently, historiography is *preeminently* the discipline where "the compulsion of language" tends to be confused with the "compulsion of experience" and where that which *seems* to be a debate on reality is *in fact* a debate on the language we use... A linguistic philosophy of history is therefore badly needed... When philosophy of history finally joined in the linguistic turn in Anglo-Saxon philosophy it did so under the guise of narrativism. In fact, one of the most peculiar characteristics of Anglo-Saxon philosophy of history is that it was so reluctant to develop a linguistic philosophy of history. Most Anglo-Saxon philosophy has been a philosophy of language since the wane of neopositivism (Ankersmit 1986, 16).

The less contentious part of this 'turn' is the metaphor of translation:

> The linguistic turn announces itself unambiguously in White's philosophy when he compares the historical past itself with a text. Just like a text, the past provides a meaning that we are trying to discover, it needs interpretation, and consists of logical, grammatical, syntactical and semantic elements. Therefore, what the historian essen-

tially does is to translate the text of the past into the narrative text of the historian (Ankersmit 1986, 18).

What has aroused consternation is White's 'tropological view of historiography':

> This translation procedure is always guided by either one or more of the four tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, or irony... it is here that philosophy of history in so many words explicitly abandons the epistemological approach and becomes a philosophy of language. Naive realism, according to which an historical account of the past is like a picture that is tied to the past itself by epistemological bonds, is rejected; rather, the historical narrative is a complex linguistic structure specially built for the purpose of showing part of the past. In other words, the historian's language is not a transparent, passive medium *through* which we can see the past as we *do* perceive what is written in a letter through the glass paperweight lying on top of it... the historian's language has more in common with a belvedere: we do not look at the past *through* the historian's language, but *from* the vantage point suggested by it. The historian's language does not strive to make itself invisible like the glass paperweight of the epistemological model, but it wishes to take on the same solidity and opacity as a thing (Ankersmit 1986, 19).

Hermeneutic Historiography

The metaphor of the past as a "text" awaiting only historiographical translation and troping perpetuates an obvious fallacy which has already drawn its due measure of criticism: no such text exists in itself, requiring to be constituted through the activity of the historian. Obviously it is convenient for White to make this simplifying assumption in order to concentrate on the rhetorico-poetico-historiographical aspect; but as a representation of the totality of the (pre)historian's profession it is clearly inadequate. In particular White overlooks the "mirror-image" of his project: the recovery of meaning from the past, a task still more difficult than the mere constitution of historical 'facts' (cf Bintliff this vol.). The most succinct and eloquent introduction to this problem of 'interpretative historiography' is that of Rock (1976).

(i) To the question: what is the aim of the historical enterprise? Rock replies

> Whatever its level of magnification or abstraction may be, historical analysis must finally be construed as an attempt to capture the everyday reality of men. Any treatment of massive historical changes or minor occurrences is no more than an imploded discussion of that reality. It receives its animation and intelligibility from its accounts of typical motives and courses of action... As mediator and creator of order, the historian produces a particular kind of description whose coherence and plausibility flow from his technique of reconstructing that everyday reality (Rock 1976, 354).

(ii) Rock's basic epistemology is faithful to constructionism:

> Indeed, the "past" has no existence at all outside its reconstitution by the historian; it appears only when it has been creatively disinterred, and its appearance can never be the same as that which the dead themselves experienced. It is simply an artefact, a contrivance, and not a resurrection... Even if a reconstruction were successfully accomplished, there are no recognized practices which allow the historian to demonstrate that his is a faithful rather than a spurious explanation. The materials

for such a demonstration cannot be discovered by any of the methods which are available to him. On thse contrary, some independent vantage point is required to assess the fit between a description and what is described. Historiography cannot provide that external perspective on itself, and it cannot underwrite any of its interpretations (Rock 1976, 355, 358).

(iii) The goal to be attained is ideally 'the "we-relation" of the face-to-face encounter... in a collaboratively constructed, intersubjective world that presumably transcends the personal environment of each individual participant' (Rock 1976, 356); 'historical projects thus revolve around the ability of the historian to capture and know what are probably alien existential worlds' (Rock 1976, 355).

(iv) The problem is that the historian 'shares no intersubjective world which transcends his existence and theirs... his phenomenological distance from the described events is often acute' (Rock 1976, 354–5).

(v) The solution cannot be inferred from the material residues themselves, because of the problem of entering the hermeneutic circle:

> Those traces must be read as meaningful productions which stem from stated and unstated contexts of meaning. They cannot be usefully employed until those contexts are reassembled... Until that theory is furnished, historical traces must be regarded as tantamount to meaningless. Although they appear to have some intelligibility, it is a conjectural and problematic intelligibility that may be held to proceed from the historian's own common-sense understanding and not from any appreciation of the outer world... It is in this sense that history becomes a virtually impossible object of inquiry. If signs cannot be averred until their larger meaning and mode of production are first established, they must remain closed systems of significance. There is no totally defensible strategy for entering them (Rock 1976, 355).

(v) Even the construction of ideal types is epistemologically insecure:

> The dead are thus known mediately, by means of typifications which are derivative, inferential and speculative... the historical personal ideal type is possibly the most complex of all. It raises possibilities of solipsistic imputations... as personal ideal types, they acquire their unity and coherence chiefly from the historian's ability to order and synthesize ideas... congruity can only be gauged by matching the tacit inner world of a past event with the modes of being and knowing that are employed by the historian and are believed to be typical of his contemporaries (Rock 1976, 354–6).

(vii) Rock rejects one mode of verification suggested by Simmel, which perhaps deserves a fuller hearing:

> Personal ideal types must be continually monitored. If they have any authenticity, it is likely to stem from their capacity to surprise, inform and change the historian. They must be experienced as moderately recalcitrant and as part of a world which is itself resistant and external. They must take on appearances which are novel and unfamiliar enough to reassure their producer that he is not simply engaged in a form of solipsistic introspection. They must, moreover, convey the impression that they are descriptions of 'independent' yet possible persons and events... Additionally, the historian is obliged to reflexively examine his own thinking in order to gain some knowledge of its processes. It is from the absence of a complete fit between these

processes and the processes which he has attributed to his ideal type that plausibility emerges. The historian is obliged to attend to himself as a problematic figure whose work is to be dismembered and compared with its productions... some self-distancing is required to allow the historian to explore the strangeness of his own creations (Rock 1976, 366–67).

Antihistorism and Alienation: Living in Interesting Times

By way of conclusion I would like to invite the reader to reflect on the interrelationship between these quotes:

> In this respect, our present predicament offers a striking illustration of Nancy Struever's intriguing thesis that history and a sense of history can only flourish when absolute certainties (either philosophical, theological, or scientific) have fallen into disrepute. History with its interest in the 'intermediate and relative' has always been the archenemy of absolute truth and the formal schemes claiming to justify these truths (Ankersmit 1986, 14).

> The antihistorism of the epistemological tradition is avoided since the strangeness of the past is no longer reduced to the comforting certainties embodied in covering laws, in normic statements (Scriven) or in the principles of the philosophy of action (Ankersmit 1986, 21).

> We do not know the laws of that country – a phrase from an essay of Charles Lamb (Gellner 1971, 173). To write good history is a moral act because, as Kant wrote, to choose a past by constituting an image of it is to choose a future, to describe a model of how men ought to live, and to invoke an active sense of will (Kellner 1980, 27).

I think we can relate all four observations to a single argument: that the 'timeless' certainties of the covering-law theorists are the last line of defence against the irruption of the plurality of meanings suggested by our divided experiences as scholars in a pluralistic, increasingly anti-academic society. In effect, we are both privileged to be the spectators of an unprecedented rate of cultural change and diversification and proscribed as its principle victims. The alienation of the scholar from the present is likely to be an effective antidote to the "presentism" which increasingly grips the non-academic majority, but is it not likely to lead to a search for past Utopias in the archaeological record, wish fulfillment through projection (cf Bintliff this vol.)? Some, no doubt, will wish to go still further, constructing prehistories "meaningful" in terms of present-day issues, oriented towards some deeply desired future; in any case, the principle characteristic will be a refusal to leave the familiar cocoon of certitudes, to open oneself to the potential strangeness of that far country. That surely is a *trahison des clercs*.

Now Maxwell states in his discussion of the rationality of scientific discovery that:

> There is a widespread idea that to explain, to render intelligible, is to reduce the unfamiliar to the familiar. But the familiar is almost bound to be the parochial, the anthropomorphic, the culturally and socially egocentric; and all this means – once we grant that objectivity is an essential intelligibility requirement – that a theory which reduces the unfamiliar to the familiar will be highly unsatisfactory as a good explanatory theory. Implicit in the very *idea* of rendering things (objectively) intelligible or comprehensible is the idea that the more intelligible our theories

> become, so the stranger, the less familiar they will become... All this is, however, a mistake. It is entirely wrong to suppose that increasing intelligibility involves increasing familiarity. As we have seen, just the reverse of this is the case. A necessary condition for the universe to be (objectively) intelligible is that it should be very, very strange... Our automatic intuitions as to what is intelligible or comprehensible are thus not to be trusted... (Maxwell 1974, 271).

That the human, including the historical, sciences have been pursuing some such goal with increasing vigour throughout the post-war period seems undeniable; but, to field a platitude, such "interpretations", whether positivist or deconstructive, have a habit of changing the very world they interpret. What is increasingly strange is precisely the parochial, anthropomorphic, ego or ethno-centric mode of existence, rich in Gadamerian "prejudices" which has been eroded during our lifetimes by the universalizing, homogeneizing, objectifying, leveslling, materialistic trend in Western e (csf aBintstsliff this vol.). The particularistic bonds of the traditional *Volksgemeinschaft.* the social groupings which intervened between the atomized individual and the state and which gave everyday life its unquestionable "meaning" – family, village, region – have succumbed to the double assault of the merchants and the intellectuals. The "meaning" to be "extracted" from the archaeological past through hermeneutic prehistoriography is surely that of this "world (or rather, worlds) which we have lost". I have suggested elsewhere (Lewthwaite 1988) that the Vidalian tradition of French geography may have atrophied less because of any methodological deficiencies than because the object of its attention – the traditional lifeworld of the rural *pays* – had simply ceased to exist; post-Vidalian geographic discourse asks different, not better, questions of a different, not better, world (cf Bintliff this vol.). What is profoundly depressing about most contemporary prehistoric discourse is its reluctance to encounter past meaning on any but its own terms, with the inevitable result that the past is peopled by moderns in period dress, the plots guilelessly(?) lifted from the ideological repertoire of the present; what is intolerably irritating is the complacent assurance that this easy intelligibility is in fact "objective" .Before we bend our backs to the thorny travail in the vineyards of a hermeneutic, constructivist archaeology, therefore, we had better ask ourselves, firstly, whether we are really all that interested in the eventual harvest and, secondly, whether as a "discipline" we are capable of the necessary work rhythms. Perhaps we can learn from our historical neighbours, who have been toiling since the break of day whereas, the last to be hired, we face the glare of the noon-day sun.

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