FROM ONTOLOGY TO ONTOGENY: A NEW, UNDISCIPLINED DISCIPLINE

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Something interesting is happening in archaeology right now. After many years of "normal science" (to follow the Kuhnian term), discussions are becoming bolder and more interesting. This forum is one such example. Unsurprisingly, Olsen offers us a thoughtful and daring piece which serves as an excellent springboard for a debate on the state of archaeological thinking today, and by implication, on the nature of archaeology as a whole. There are several interesting points in the essay, especially in his programmatic statements, which I would wholeheartedly endorse. But there are also some, especially with regard to his retrospective view and the assessment of today's situation, which I found somehow unsatisfactory. I will briefly try to bring up some concerns, but more importantly and more positively, I will try to expand on some of his programmatic principles, which are inspiring and hopeful but do not seem to go far enough.

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS? A HERETICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Olsen's historiographic attempt seems to follow a scheme which has become canonical in the literature on the history of archaeological thinking: a seamless transition from culture-history to new archaeology, to post-processual archaeology and on to the current situation of diversity and

fragmentation. As he himself admits, this is an Anglo-American view, and a rather neat, linear and progressive, almost cultural-evolutionist one, as we move from the more problematic theoretical paradigms to more appropriate and useful ones. There are several objections and concerns one could raise here.

For a start, this is a floating narrative, an account of intellectual developments that take place in a social and political vacuum. What were the conditions that gave rise to the apparatus we call archaeology? Why do we still insist that the discursive and practical operation we academics today (mostly in the west) are engaged with is the only archaeology that there is, the only game in town? Why do we find it so difficult to qualify our operation as a modernist, western archaeology, a qualification which could perhaps encourage us to critically analyse that modernist heritage, and find ways to overcome it? It seems that the challenges to that modernist archaeology by trends and movements such as indigenous archaeologies, or by critical genealogical projects that exposed its colonialist and nationalist roots, are still not taken as seriously as they should be. In the same vein, I have tried to show elsewhere (e.g. Hamilakis 2011a) that prior to the establishment of modernist archaeology in conditions that were shaped by colonialist and nationalist imaginings, there existed other archaeologies, indigenous, local archaeologies which may have lacked the disciplinary apparatus of modernist archaeology but which were based on their own distinctive discourses and practices on material things. After all, this is what archaeology is at its very core: the discursive and practical engagement with things from another time. Local people, peasants and farmers (and not only antiquarians and scholars as we often assume) took a keen interest in material things from another time, constructed interesting discourses about their origin, character and agentic qualities, and engaged with them in meaningful ways: re-sculpturing classical columns and reliefs into Muslim tombstones (some of which can be still seen, dumped on the cliff of the Athenian Acropolis, for example), embedding ancient inscriptions and other artefacts in churches and mosques or even above the doorways of their houses, making sure that their worked part was visibly exhibited, worshipping ancient statues with dung offerings and burning lamps placed in front of them, and so on. To call these practices archaeological, as opposed to say, archaeo-folklore, is to valorize them as valuable, multi-sensorial material engagements worthy of reflection and study. This valorization is not simply a matter of archaeological historiography but can also contribute to our attempts to reflect on and historicize our own current archaeology, which emerged partly out of the sensorial-cum-political clash with these pre-modern archaeologies: sculptures, artefacts and

other objects were removed, at times violently, from their social, contextual and multi-sensorial fabric; they were reclassified by archaeologists as art or as important archaeological objects, in need of protection and exhibition in special places where they could be appreciated almost exclusively through the sense of autonomous vision. We can learn much from these "pre-modern" material engagements, and from conceptions of temporality very different from the linearity and cumulative developmentalism that shape our own temporal imagination. In other words, such an exercise can contribute to our attempts to construct the future, counter-modern or alter-modern archaeologies, which is what I think Olsen proposes to do in the second part of his paper.

Such an exploration of the socio-political entanglements of past archaeological thinking could also allow us to trace continuities and breaks, to interrogate neocolonial regimes of truth in current intellectual production and in contemporary archaeological practices. Both the emergence of what we call new archaeology and several strands of the heterogeneous developments we call post-processual archaeology owe much to the radicalism and the overtly political discourses of the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, in the USA, in the UK, and a few other countries. Olsen, along with several others, tends to forget that such political critique was a major strand in these developments. This was a critique that addressed the persecution of indigenous groups, gender inequality, and the labour and employment injustices in archaeology as a whole. In fact, one volume which deserves much more credit than it has received and which has transformed our thinking is *The Sociopolitics of Archaeology* (Gero *et al.* 1983). Critical archaeology was a major movement in these early years, as was the radical interrogation of colonialism and racism by historical archaeologists in the USA and in other, non-European countries, fuelled partly by the echoes of the civil rights movement. One aspect of the political economy of archaeological thinking that deserves discussion is the mode and style of its production. Olsen refers to the various centres of such production, but perhaps it may be worth mentioning also another, peripheral hub, Lampeter in the 1990s, where amongst other things, we experimented with collective forms of producing and engaging with archaeological thinking, including collective authorship (e.g. Lampeter Archaeology Workshop 1997).

Outside the UK, some other countries especially in Scandinavia, and some academic pockets in the USA, things seemed to have been more diverse, although not much can be said, given the linguistic barriers and the lack of systematic historical survey work, especially of a comparative nature. It seems that, far from being passive consumers of the latest theoretical offerings from the metropolitan centres of the north,

our colleagues were engaging in lively debates and in intense, original theoretical production, following at the same time some of the developments in these centres in the north and reading Anglo-American writings, whereas their own writings were (and still are) mostly ignored by those writers based in Anglo-American contexts. Why is it, for example, that we know very little about the Marxist traditions of archaeology in South America and in the European south? Olsen notes that the current theoretical production is geographically fragmented and diverse, but was this not perhaps always the case, and it was we archaeologists in the north (and, of course, the publishing industry) who were not paying any attention?

To return to the Anglo-American tradition, leaving aside the important and undervalued strand that emphasized the socio-politics of archaeology, how radical was the rift that took place in the early-mid-1980s? There is no doubt that it did indeed allow for diverse interpretative attempts to be tried out and to flourish, but I would suggest that, in fact, the continuities with the 1960s and 1970s are more than the raptures. Both new archaeology and the dominant trends within post-post-processual archaeology were interventions addressing the epistemology of archaeology, not its ontology. In other words, they avoided a radical redefinition of the very nature and purpose of archaeology, in favour of what they considered as the most appropriate interpretative schemes and strategies. The question was not what archaeology is and how was it constituted, but what were the most appropriate theoretical and methodological principles to be followed, how we can arrive at richer and more interesting interpretations of the material past. Subsistence was replaced by symbol, economy by ideology, the physical record by the "textual" record. Binary schemes survived this seemingly radical shift, and they even resurface in some contemporary phenomenological writings, especially the ones to do with British landscape archaeology, which is at times reminiscent of good-old structuralism with a moderate dose of Merleau-Ponty. Things did change indeed in the 1980s, but can we talk of a radical paradigmatic shift? I am not certain that we can.

And what about our present moment? And just to remind us, this is a moment when according to an academic study, more than a million people have died in the 1990s in Eastern Europe as a result of ruthless mass privatization (e.g. Stuckler *et al.* 2009), a moment when capitalism faces one of the worst crises in its history, a crisis which is being used by the financial elites as an opportunity for a frontal attack on labour and on the global commons. This is a moment when the wandering poor, the economic immigrants who, once they have survived, by the skin of their teeth, drowning in the waters of the Mediterranean or

getting shot by militias in Arizona, are continually persecuted by state authorities and right-wing extremists. So at this very moment, what kind of archaeological thinking is being produced and what kind of archaeological practices are we engaging with? Olsen rightly points out the lack of boldness in many current writings, and the sense of complicity, but he does not elaborate on the phenomenon. I would go even further to say that the politicization of archaeological thinking of the 1980s and part of the 1990s has given way to bureaucratized ethics, while unholy alliances have been formed with the worst representatives of corporate capitalism such as the oil industry, and with the western military engaging in neo-colonial wars, as in Iraq (cf. Hamilakis 2007; 2009). Archaeological theory readers and textbooks are still filled almost exclusively with contributions by scholars based in Anglo-American contexts (save for a token participant from elsewhere), and are being marketed as "the global" and thus authoritative voice on the matter. The political economy of archaeology, the inequities in our own profession, such as the ones suffered by the thousands of our colleagues exploited by archaeological companies and consultancies, are rarely addressed, especially by the most prominent academic archaeologists (cf. Everill 2009; Zorzin 2011). Our own contemporary social movements, the movement against neoliberal capitalism, the "occupy" movement, the solidarity campaigns for immigrants, do not seem to inspire archaeologies as much as the 1960s and 1970s movements did. Even the World Archaeological Congress, which according to Olsen is a positive example of the globalization and diversification of archaeological thinking (a feeling that I would partly endorse) has been trying to ally itself with ruthless mining companies such as Rio Tinto, and is seeking to become a professionalized organization on a global scale, a future platform for global archaeological businesses, rather than for social justice, which was its founding principle (cf. Shepherd & Haber 2011; and *Public Archaeology* 10(4) for a response). In the present and coming clashes, revolts and insurrections, many archaeological thinkers, and especially the ones who were instrumental in shaping the field in the 1980s, seem to have already taken sides.

Yet not all is negative. New south-south conversations are taking place, partly facilitated by global media technologies. Theoretical writings from outside the Anglo-American tradition emerge and gain prominence. Philosophical and theoretical inspiration is sought not only in the usual suspects such as the early French post-structuralist thinkers but also in contemporary political philosophers who challenge neo-liberal capitalism in its various guises, from Žižek to Agamben, and in South American thinkers such as the de-colonial school (e.g. Escobar 2007).

Neutralized professionalization and the alliances with corporate capitalism are being challenged in the theoretical literature as well within organisations such as WAC. New groupings are being formed, often outside Anglo-American academia, and in some cases around journals, adopting an explicitly critical stance and trying to reconnect with the political and radical thread of the 1980s (see for example the new online journal, *Forum Kritische Archäologie* – http://www.kritischearchaeologie.de/fka). Theoretically innovative and empirically daring projects are being launched, whether to record the material culture of undocumented immigrants on the Mexico-USA border (De Leon 2012), or to address the homeless in the streets of UK cities (Kiddey & Schofield 2011). A new, more edgy, more political, and more theoretically interesting archaeology is being born; thankfully, this one is not in need of "great synthesizers", sages and gurus.

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In this hopeful climate, Olsen's ideas on the need to produce an ontology of things and to return to the archaeological, are certainly worthwhile and valuable. Yet my feeling is that such moves do not go far enough, they fall short of the radical paradigmatic shift that the current moment needs. The welcome ontological turn in archaeology certainly takes us further and prepares the ground for such a shift, especially after thirty years of not-always-fruitful debates on epistemology. But it is my conviction that what we need is not only a new ontology but also a new ontogeny, not only a new discourse on what we are and where we are going as a discipline, but a practical reconstitution, a genesis of a new discipline, albeit an undisciplined one. Space limitations do not allow me to outline in full my preliminary ideas on this, and in any case such an operation should be a collective and not an individual effort. But it will be suffice to mention briefly a couple of points, for the sake of the current and future debates.

A new relationship with materiality

As with modernist archaeology, materiality will continue to be at the centre of attention in the new discipline, but this will be a radically reconfigured sense of materiality. This is not a materiality which forgets the material, the physicality of things, and the embodied nature of labour and skill that went into their production, and continuous maintenance and reworking. It is a carnal materiality which recognizes that a unifying element of bodies, organisms, things, environments and landscapes

is their "flesh" in the sense of Merleau-Ponty (1968[1964):139–140), their sensorial character and nature which becomes animated through trans-corporeal, affective entanglements and engagements. This is an ontology not of things, but of sensorial flows and movements; not of bodies, but of corporeal landscapes; not of single actions but of continuous inter-animation. The new discipline is multi-sensorial, synaesthetic, and kinaesthetic (cf. Hamilakis 2011b; forthcoming). In such a way, we can avoid the dangers of fetishizing things, and of creating an artificial separation between things and bodies (human or other), between things and environments, and amongst things, the environment and landscape, the atmosphere and the weather (cf. Ingold 2010a).

A new relationship with temporality

The new discipline needs to forge a novel relationship with time and temporality by getting rid of the "archaeo-" in its title (cf. Ingold 2010b). By making as its central concern not ancient nor past things, but all materiality irrespective of its conventional temporal attribution. Furthermore, and more importantly, the new discipline needs to demonstrate, following a Bergsonian philosophy (Bergson 1991), that a fundamental property of matter is its ability to last, its duration. As such, by virtue of its participation in multiple temporal moments, matter is multi-temporal, it cannot be contained and imprisoned within a single chronological bracket. A task of the new discipline is not to fix things into a certain moment in the past, not to prioritize their initial genesis, as happens at present with the use of archaeological dating techniques (despite the usefulness of such an exercise), but to engage with their multi-temporal character, to show how they continued living and interacting with humans, through constant "reuse" and reworkings which have created their temporal patina and their eventful, mnemonic biography. I have attempted to outline such a multi-temporal perspective in a number of writings elsewhere (e.g. Hamilakis 2011c).

A new engagement with politics

If such a reconfigured relationship with materiality and temporality is to be engendered, then a new engagement with politics will follow. This is not simply a matter of disciplinary politics, the political economy of knowledge and practice, not simply the politics of the past and the politics of heritage. It is rather a deeper and more fundamental relationship which connects the material, the (multi-)temporal, and the political. Rancière (2004) has noted that aesthetics, as lived sensorial experience and practice (and not as an abstract, philosophical reflection on judgement and beauty) and politics share the same ground, they

are both about the *distribution of the sensible*: what is allowed to be sensed and experienced and what not. The sensorial properties and affordances of materiality are thus by definition political, they have political implications and effects. Temporality is also implicated with the political, especially the durational temporalities activated by the material. Such temporal-material politics can find diverse expressions, from the materialization of the national time, the time of seamless continuity with its political connotations of homogeneity and exclusion, to the time of cultural evolutionism, the progressive march of "civilization" with its colonialist/racist associations. A multi-temporal materiality, however, can also engender and activate a different politics, the politics that can leave behind temporal compartmentalization and fragmentation, and refuse to resort to escapism by finding refuge in a remote or not-so-remote era in the past. This is a politics that recognizes that all temporal moments can be continually and simultaneously present and active through materiality, and can have thus various political implications and effects. This multi-temporal discipline engenders and enacts presence not representation, material and social life, movement and flow, not static, almost "dead" and mummified objecthood.

Naturally, these "bare bones" will need to be fleshed out in much more detail, something that cannot be done here. The fact that it was Olsen's thoughts that encouraged the articulation of such reflections here is an indication of the power of his own writing.

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