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'ARCHAEOLOGY AND MODERNITY' – OR ARCHAEOLOGY AND A MODERNIST AMNESIA?

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In the spring of 2005 I had the opportunity to attend Julian Thomas' excellent talk, 'Archaeology and modernity: Depth and surface,' at the Archaeology Research Facility at the University of California Berkeley. At the same time I had been reading bits and pieces of Thomas' recent book *Archaeology and Modernity* (2004b), which the talk nicely summarised. In both performance and paperwork Thomas has raised a number of extremely important and fundamental questions about the nature of archaeology and how archaeology has 'conceived' its key ingredients – humanity, materiality, space and time – in the context of the discipline's relationship to modernity. This work and its core argument deserve further consideration and discussion.

In brief, archaeology, for Thomas, could not have existed prior to the modern era because modern thought created the very conditions for the existence of archaeology. Archaeology is distinctively modern. Well, at least this might be construed as how it has always characterised itself. After all, it is important to question, how else could it be? It is this matter of concern that Thomas and I share. In what follows here I will not engage so much with the idiosyncrasies of the book as much as this issue of archaeology and modernity in general. Let it suffice to say that the book is a rich and valuable contextualisation of the history of modernity and its relationship to archaeology (albeit from a modernist perspective) and for this it should be read.

We should begin with the question of what modernity is. For Thomas: 'modernity may represent a chronological division of human experience, but more importantly it is distinguished by the growth of a particular philosophical outlook, and by particular ways humans have operated socially' (2004b:2). Modernity came about through a revolution in how humans thought of themselves in relation to the world. Modernity is characterised by epistemic breaks and philosophical ruptures against the Aristotelian teleology and dynastic rulership of medieval Europe and toward Renaissance humanism, Cartesian dualisms, rationalism, atomism and so on. With the social contract in place, the crossed-out God was replaced by Man. Constructed, planned, ordered, modern life, Thomas emphasises, is put into theory before it is put into practice. Without modernity there would be no archaeology. There would also be no sciences, no nation-states. Without modernity, according to Thomas, the world would be a very different place.

So to underline the point, modernity is a constellation of ideological, material and social beliefs oriented around notions of progress and development, which presuppose a separation with the past (for further work in archaeology on the topic of modernity

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refer to the collection of articles in Schnapp *et al*. 2004; also Gonzales Ruibal's wonderful work on the failures of modernity (in press)). Here I will transition slightly to what I understand modernism to be (as an archaeologist I am a little more comfortable with the 'ism', though simultaneously uneasy as this ambiguous leviathan lacks one gram of empirical content (cf. Crease *et al*. 2003:18)).

If we follow the Latourian brand of modernism (because it rises in 'defence of things' (Olsen 2006)), the term refers to the firm separation of society, culture or moderns from things, nature or the ancients. In this rather circumscribed sense, modernism, as a particular way of *thinking and acting* in the world, first purifies these entities into two separate and often opposed categories and then grants this dualist conception of the world an ontological status. Modernist thought in archaeology manifests itself in the peculiar way that archaeologists either speak about 'objects' or the 'past' as if they were ostensibly independent of and separate from the practitioner, or conceive of them as discourses which are socially constructed now in the present and as such simply act as a seemingly blank canvas for contemporary socio-political relations. Whereas the former would be conceived of as blatantly modern, the latter would be regarded as unquestionably postmodern. This broad logic of demarcation and division where humans stand independently of the world around them is modernism (refer to Latour 1993:10–15). Building up to the penultimate question, Thomas asks whether archaeology can exist outside modernity.

Indeed, when it comes to this question of whether archaeology can exist outside of the conditions of modernity (modernism), Thomas is deeply pessimistic. Because modernity created the conditions for archaeology, archaeology is nothing but thoroughly modern, and therefore cannot exist apart from it (2004b:223–248). This is not sufficient, for here in addressing this very conundrum Thomas presents us with a tautology. It is what it is.

Furthermore, the very modernist divides – ideas and things, cultures and natures, present and past – that Thomas contextualises are, as he would maintain, arbitrary, oversimplified and outmoded. But if this is so why should we reproduce them? Thomas argues for a counter-modern archaeology where ethics, politics, rhetoric, difference and dialogue take centre stage. Such, he contends, is still a modern archaeology (2004b:224). Thomas reminds us that so long as we are modern (which if you are an archaeologist then you are) there will continue to be a counter point of view. The pendulum swings back and forth across the divides, first allying with one side, then the other, continually turning modernity's revolving door of polarity and contradiction. Faithful to the Kantian (Copernican) revolution, a counter-modern archaeology continues to provide the energy and momentum for this. After all we have no choice.

But what if the moderns got it wrong? What if we could bypass such a predicament altogether by retracing our steps? What if, to use Latour's now clichéd expression once more, 'we have never been modern'?

Indeed, Thomas argues against 'going back to first principles' (2004b:224). Fine, of course, but this is not the issue. Thomas readily embraces a modernist epistemology and this is the problem. He believes the thinkers of modernity. In taking their myths at face value, he has sieved away the world with a 10 cm by 10 cm screened mesh so that we are left only with subjectivity and meaning floating at the top. This very course mesh gives us a world-for-human-consciousness where the initiative always comes from the 'thinking man' (cf. Thomas 2004a). It denies what lies beneath. This take on modernity validates what we have been spoon-fed for so long. It also deals with a sensationalised, mystical and partial way of understanding the world – modernity – that needs to be

understood and reworked on the ground in practice.

In step with Thomas, I firmly believe that a recharacterisation of modernity and archaeology is in order; a recharacterisation of how we understand and interact with the material world. But this is not to suggest that we need to throw out the tub containing both the baby and the bathwater. However, in contrast with Thomas, but not in contradistinction, this endeavour requires a symmetrical archaeology.

In a symmetrical archaeology modernist thought is treated as the outcome, rather than the prime mover. On the ground humans are always entangled within a heterogeneous collective (Witmore 2004). While Thomas has in his new book performed a great service for the history of the discipline, we need, more than ever, to understand how archaeologists operated on the ground under the banner of modernity (for important work in the 'new history of archaeology', refer to Schlanger 2004, Schnapp *et al.* 2004). We need to understand how earlier antiquarians and archaeologists interacted with a diversity of entities in real-time practice and not only what they regarded as the outcome (though this too is important, refer to Bowker & Star 2000:48). It is in this sense that we need to recognise how we have 'never been modern'.

Digging under Thomas' claims, there was no new man, no more rational mind, born out of a revolution of thought, rather the transformation came in combination with the proliferation of mundane and humble modes of engagement and articulation. Modernity presents itself as a revolution in thought when it was actually a revolution in how humans circulate *something more of themselves and the world* at a spatiotemporal distance. Modernity simultaneously denies the action of things. But this rebuttal is not a call back to materialism. Instead, along with archaeologists such as Dan Hicks, Bjørnar Olsen, Michael Shanks and Timothy Webmoor, I wish to plead for symmetry (Olsen 2003, Shanks 2004, Witmore 2004, Hicks 2005, Webmoor 2005).

What are held as revolutions of thought by Thomas actually occurred in step with the mobilisation and proliferation of the printing press and the graven image. They occurred alongside the slow accretion of optically consistent and standardised modes of showing and the ability to transfer something more of the world at a spacio-temporal distance (Latour 1986). There are no mystical and over-dramatised ruptures, fissures or divides. We do not witness the birth of a new rational mind, but we encounter new collectives on the ground. We encounter, for example, a mixture of a person, a compass, a chronometer, a telescope, a microscope or an accurate, optically consistent and standardised flat projection of the earth. We encounter different distribution of humans and things in the world. We witness the birth of new collectivities and new mixtures. What people thought in these contexts is not the same issue as who they are. Humans and things (to be distinguished from modernism's burdened 'subjects' and 'objects') are constructed simultaneously. This is symmetry.

There are very important lessons here for archaeologists. For example the ordered, stacked boxes of chronology separated by transitions within linear measures of time are but one way of conceiving of today in relation to the material past (Olivier 2003, Lucas 2005, Witmore (in press)). The nature of time and the material past is more complex and turbulent. Multiple pasts percolate simultaneously and archaeology can be understood as an engine of this process (Serres, personal communication). These pasts have action, are wrapped and gathered together in everything from the automobile to a Leica IIIc. Ancient innovations and transactions between people and things in the presence of wheels – a Neolithic technology (Serres & Latour 1995:45) – or glass – the manipulation of silica into beads occurs in the Near East and Egypt as early as the end of the 4th millennium BCE – are mixed

into these seemingly modern, complex machines. A modernist amnesia disarms the world of things, the environment of nature or the realm of the past and makes them the dominions of humans now. Archaeology should remind the modern world that, as long as it holds on to a peculiar notion of society and subjectivity, it has never had complete dominion. Modernism is a myth, these divides are of our own making, and we need to always remember that diverse pasts are proximate 'now' and that things are 'us.'

This is also why archaeological relationships with the digital world are so thoroughly interesting today. Archaeologists are becoming ever more complex collectives and the enrollment of new media cannot be wished away by a superficial critique of the digital as a 'pattern of pixels' (Thomas 2004b:201) – let's not forget the pixelated history of photography in its early years! More importantly, in this digital world we have to understand ourselves (with the proviso that there is more to understanding than meaning) as distributed entities, whether one wishes to dub it ANT (actor-network theory), the posthuman, or whatever (Latour 2005 and Hayles 1999, respectfully). The crossed-out God (who has never really gone away) needs to be joined by the crossed-out Man (who will also never really go away). Certainly there is a need to write a new contract. Perhaps they may be joined by the 'birth of nature.' Following Serres (1995), we might articulate a natural contract, in order to understand how it is that we human beings are of nature, entangled with the things of the material world and the collectives of the material past. For Serres, 'we are always simultaneously making gestures that are archaic, modern, and futuristic' (Serres & Latour 1995:60). Let's not deny it.

Archaeology, 'the discipline of things' is ripe to take centre stage in the articulation of this new contract, but this cannot occur if we limit ourselves to modernism's myth. ANT and notions of the posthuman are awakenings to an archaeological sensibility at large. They are awakenings to the qualities of things (Olsen 2003). Focus on how archaeologists have operated on the ground locally and one understands that we have always done more that the modernist gloss suggests (Witmore 2004). We have never forgotten things; some of us have only been blinded to their action.

In beginning to address Thomas' extremely important question, of whether archaeology can exist outside of modernism, the answer is a resounding 'yes!' Modernism, the myth of a new, more rational, freestanding, thinking individual, never existed as such. But this is not to say that it should dispel all things modern. There is no need to repeat that gesture. There was also a great deal of value that came out of the social contract, as Thomas has endeavoured to point out so clearly. Both should be thoroughly mixed with an understanding that the past, which is populated by things, has action, continues to percolate and is itself entangled with the contemporary and the future. To be sure, this is a much more complicated and tricky task. But it is necessary. Let us put aside the oversimplified and contradictory framework that continues to burden modernity and begin to understand the world symmetrically.

ANTI MODERNITY AND ANTI LIBERALISM: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

Håkon Glørstad

I am pleased to be allowed to comment on this recent book by Thomas. Having followed his authorship through books like *Rethinking the Neolithic* (1991) and *Time, Culture and Identity* (1996), his latest book, *Archaeology and Modernity* (2004b), generates some crucial questions concerning its

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existence in relation to his earlier work. As an eager reader of post-processual archaeology, the themes Thomas discusses in his latest book are well known – maybe even in some aspects out-debated. I have drawn attention to his earlier work because most of these subjects are discussed here in a more explicit archaeological manner. Why then has Thomas written this book about archaeology and modernity? He himself wants to see it as a continuation of themes investigated in his earlier work (p.X); to me the book represents a broad background to the development of his Heidegger-inspired archaeology (Thomas 1996). Thus the book from 1996 takes over where the book on modernity ends, presenting a counter modern archaeology. As a reader trained in understanding scientific literature I want the arguments to be ordered in a certain manner. I expect the premises to come first and then the conclusion. In my opinion Thomas has turned his argument upside down, giving us the conclusion before the premises and problems are dealt with. Given the framework of the discussion I consider this strategy to be a conscious attack on analytical or modern thinking. The attack affects me because I consider myself a modern archaeologist, doing modernistic archaeology. This raises a paradox because I also share many of Thomas' views on how archaeology should be considered and done, including that kind of archaeology he considers as counter-modern.

I think the whole concept of modernity is a bit difficult and unclear in Thomas' book because it is so broadly defined (p.2). When he writes that 'modernity represents the condition of the possibility of archaeology' (ibid), he could equally have stated that Western society is the raison d'être of the discipline. What then is modernity? To me three ideas are central to modern thought: faith in progress, the free individual and reason (Østerberg 1999:11). In this framework several of the phenomena Thomas classifies as modern could rather be viewed as counter- or a-modern (for instance the Nazi regime and the holocaust (pp.48–49; see also Østerberg 1999:303, 307). My point here is not to argue with Thomas over classificatory details; instead I want to ask whether the concept of modernity in the book ceases to be a concept and attains a life of it own as a beast of evil, because it is so all-encompassing. According to Thomas almost every intellectual misdeed of Western society seems to be a failure of modern thought. An equally valid interpretation could be that these shortcomings are limited modes of thought in Western society, and thus alternative, even contradictory viewpoints and theoretical models can also be found that can be classified as modern. For instance I cannot understand why statements such as 'the production of knowledge about the past … is a collective interpretive labour, which involves the working of a set of social relationships between people and things' (p.76) cannot be viewed as a modern uttering. In the work of Emile Durkheim, an arch-typical modernist, several statements such as this can be found, not to mention the young and very modern Karl Marx (Foucault 1996:348). This argument could be extended by numerous references to the Thomas' book, but limited space only allows for one. On page 150 Thomas claims heavy debts to the work of the post-modern hero Michel Foucault. The author emphasis the similarities between the Foucaultian concept of archaeology and that defined by Immanuel Kant in *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. The similarity is not coincidental. Foucault had an epistemological breakthrough in his interpretation of the *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* by Kant, and large passages of his *Thèse complèmentaire,* devoted to this book, were reused in his main work *Les mots et les choses* (1996). Foucault's debt to Kant was so large that he did not hesitate to classify himself as a continuer of Kant's critical tradition (Svendsen 2002:21). Now, if even Foucault saw the value of the modern, critical analysis

of Kant, I think it is wise to rethink the statement that this philosophy was a failure and hostile to decent living (pp.37, 54, 135, 137–139, 175, 180, 230, 236).

In the above-mentioned passage (p.150), Thomas (unnoticed?) also draws attention to the core of Kant's critical project as it is reformulated in Foucaultian archaeology: the interest in the specific and particular. This is an echo of the critical credo of Kant: 'Given an empirical fact, what are its conditions of existence?'. This modern fiat is the starting point of the scientific projects of post-modern and late modern researchers such as Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. The hallmark of their projects is precisely to choose a specific empirical *object*, preferably remote to the great traditions of philosophy, for scientific *construction* (Broady 1991). Foucault took for instance madness and prison (Foucault 1986, 1995) as objects to be constructed in order to make his post-modern criticism and deconstruction. In the same manner Bourdieu has constructed taste as a sociological object, in order to make comments on the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Bourdieu 1989). Thus they both tend to choose a certain mundane object for construction and through this work attack the great and pure philosophical discourse. This empirical and practical reformulation of the pure philosophy is what makes their analysis so powerful and interesting. This strategy is only partially applied in the book of Thomas. Large parts of the book, especially the opening session (chapters 1–6), are presented as an 'Ursprunggesichte' of modernity, where Thomas outlines as a horizon the historical development of modern thought. This story makes up the context where archaeology then is installed. This context is taken from the history of pure philosophy, and hence Thomas has to navigate in one of the most difficult academic traditions, with, as an archaeologist, only imperfect philosophical means, and his route is not directed by a certain goal, except of making a tableau for archaeology. It goes without saying that this journey is troublesome. I will not say that Thomas fails to make his story of modernity, but it must be fair to say that his tableau raises several questions. Why just deal with philosophy; and why emphasise particularly the work of Descartes, Locke, Hobbes and Kant, and not more complex modernists such as Hegel, Marx or Sartre? And finally, is it not contradictory to make a history of the origin of modernity in order to be counter-modern and at the same time classify the grand narrative as typically modern (p.84–87)?

It follows from these questions that I find the parts of the book where Thomas has a defined target to attack as the best. His criticism of methodological individualism, behaviourism, evolutionary social biology and evolutionary psychology is quite brilliant (as is the chapter about the archaeological influence on psychology). The reason for this, I presume, could be the truly archaeological starting point of the discussion, an arena Thomas really masters; and the sincere academic anger towards his opponents. Here archaeology is the starting point of his analysis, not secondary, installed in the philosophical discourse. My argument here touches upon the quality of a scientific discipline, such as archaeology. I do recognise archaeology as *science*, but not as a positivistic, evolutionary, non-social, and behaviouristic one. I think every science has its own objects, logic and field-specific practice defined by the history of the field in question (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1993:81–90, 171, Bourdieu 1999:102). This should be the starting point of the analysis, and one should thus avoid treating a discipline as a function of another (more pristine) academic discipline or politics. Of course archaeology is influenced by both politics and philosophy, but this influence is rather a conversion or derivation into the specific logic of the archaeological field, and not a passive submission to forces stronger than archaeology (Glørstad 2003). I want to

agitate for a semi-autonomy of the archaeological field but also for the semi-autonomy of science in society. The value of future science is not, I think, to confess involvements in political fights (p. 234–235, 242, 248); instead it is to strive to construct objects of knowledge that are, as far as possible, reducible to the logic of the scientific field in question, and not political or economic engagements (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1993:162–163, 171–180). What does this old-fashioned and naïve statement mean? First, I think it means to take the thrownness (p.143) of science seriously. I fully agree with Thomas (p.41, 216–217) that archaeologists are not acting in the academic world as computers, goal-seeking missiles or actors able to see their world objectified from outside. They feel more or less at home in their environment, take its meaning for granted, revealed in their physical existence. But should we accept this state of pre-reflexivity as the end point of archaeological science? Here I disagree with Thomas. I think the fiat of science should be to start to investigate the limits of this world taken for granted – systematically asking Kantian questions of epistemology: what are the epistemological limitations of this particular variant of prehistory? This way archaeology neither detects the past nor inhabits it, but *constructs* it as an object of scientific work, continuously investigating the limits of the perspective in question (Bourdieu 1999:110–119, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1993:163–174). This way science offers a mean to reify the thrownness of archaeology, making it determinable and possible to describe, investigate and discuss in an analytical framework. This work is of course never perfect or finite, but it can act as a utopian goal of the practice. In this way I wholeheartedly adhere to modernist archaeology: archaeology should make as its *object of analysis* the being-in-the-world both in past and present, thereby investigating the epistemological limits of its practice and objects. Thus reason is not given; it is the outcome of hard, scientific work.

The question of moral and ethics are central throughout Thomas' book. I think his hope for a more democratic (p.218) and socially just (p.232) world is easy to share for most of the archaeologists partaking in the Western system of scientific exchange. As far as I can see, democracy, as we understand it, is a typical modern concept (Østerberg 1999:307), and it should not be forgotten that the counter-modern Martin Heidegger was not a particularly democratic thinker (ibid:272, 305, Bourdieu 1996b). There are therefore parts of his counter-modern project I am at unease with. The modern will to objectify and make comparable (p.234) is in my opinion intimately connected to the development of democracy after the Second World War (Slagstad 1998:331–32). The European states invested enormous resources in development of mass-universities and making access to higher education more evenly distributed. This was a fight against social destiny, not an acceptance of it; the way Thomas perhaps is suggesting (p.243, 230). Thus it was the modern fight against education as a reproduction of class society that allowed for the development of present archaeology, which, in my opinion, is far more interesting than the upper class archaeology of older periods. It is important to remember that both in academia in general and in archaeology the recruitment of students of lower class origin was mainly through objective science (Bourdieu 1996a, Glørstad 2003). One important reason for this was that the means to cope with the subjects are more objectified and they are more easy to learn than the subjects of the humanities and literature, which demand a higher portion of pre-learned cultural competence (Bourdieu 1989, 1996a). It is thus interesting that processual archaeology was introduced in Norway at the same time that mass education started having an effect, when key figures were not of bourgeois origins, but from lower middle and working class. Their entrance to the field of archaeology through the regime of positivistic

science was not coincidental, but the most accessible way (Glørstad 2003). I therefore think it is wise to consider thoroughly whether a counter-modern archaeology will make archaeology more democratic and just – the difficult subjects and language of Heidegger can also exclude groups from partaking in it, because they lack the implicit competence of master this part of Western elite culture.

I will conclude my comments with one last remark. Even if many of the subjects of the book are already dealt with in other literature I find Thomas' book valuable and thought provoking. One important reason for this is the need to fight for the autonomy of archaeology as science. I think the most vicious attacks on this autonomy today come from the striving of economy and politics to control production of knowledge through controlling the economic means of science. The perspectives Thomas most forcefully attacks tend also to be the extra-archaeological visions of how archaeology should be done. Hence it is important to reveal the neo-liberal influence on the discipline in order to make epistemological reflections and to reformulate counter arguments to fight back. Whether to call this a critique of modernity is another question.

QUESTIONABLE SOURCES AND QUESTIONABLE REASONING

Søren Kjørup

My interest in archaeological theory started when I realised that the 'New Archaeology' of the 1960s was positivist archaeology. What better example could I, a professor of the history and theory of the humanities, get of the way in which different disciplines develop differently! Just imagine: exactly when most other humanistic disciplines are having their great revolt against positivism, positivist theoretical and methodological ideals at long last reach archaeology. Since then lots of things have happened within archaeological theory, and one cannot claim that archaeology has avoided the many abrupt changes of theoretical fashion within the humanities and the social sciences during the latest decades.

Julian Thomas' book on *Archaeology and Modernity* (2004b) is an example of the new theoretical awareness within archaeology, yet a disappointing one. Thomas wants to explore the relationship between archaeology and modern philosophical thought, but he does not use his insight into his own discipline to give a thorough description of archaeology and then show how significant traits stem from philosophy. What he has done is closer to the opposite. Thomas has written a book that is mainly a broad reproduction of everything he has read about modernity and its discontents, with a few comments on archaeology added at the end of each of the last eight chapters (while the first two nearly do not mention archaeology at all). For a reader who approaches archaeology and archaeological theory from the outside, the rather few pages on this discipline even look suspiciously as if Thomas just has some axes to grind with his colleagues. And I am pretty sure that both insiders and outsiders join my disappointment when it turns out that much of what Thomas has to tell us about the rise and fall of modernity is repeated at length in every single chapter.

But what is worse: The rendering of the material from philosophy and the history of ideas that Thomas has picked up and now reproduces, is not quite convincing for somebody who happens to know this field. And the picture of modern thought that he gives us is not only very complex, but also confusing and close to self-contradictory.

One example is that he has not decided whether modernity contains conflicting

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points of view, or whether modernity is a special set of ideals that have been met by a counter-modernity nearly from the very beginning. The text moves back and forth between these two positions. Just take a look at the beginning of the paragraph 'Contradictions of modernity' (p.42): the first eight lines render modern thought as a coherent 'set of philosophical understandings' that have however been met by certain objections all along. Then follow a couple of lines that claim that modern thought happens to be 'self-aware, and consequently self-critical', so here counter-modernity starts looking as a part of modernity as such, and not only as objections from somewhere else. And finally the following sentence makes it clear that 'In most cases, counter-modern positions were clearly initiated within the developing traditions of modern thought.'

But even though this ambiguity marks many passages in Thomas' text, his general opinion on modernity is quite clear: to Thomas (drawing mainly on Martin Heidegger) modernity is fundamentally bad, for instance because it has created nothing less than a pathological concept of a human being, hence something that both archaeologists and everybody else should revolt against – archaeologists by trying to create a 'counter-modern archaeology'. And the great villains here, those who nearly single-handedly have laid the foundations for modern thought, are first of all Francis Bacon, René Descartes, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant. But even though Thomas' book is nearly weighed down by all the references to all the literature he has been through, you should not jump to the conclusion that he has actually read those ancient classics. Except for a few not quite convincing examples, he does not cite texts by Bacon, Descartes, Locke, or Kant when he tells us what they wrote and thought, but secondary works – if not tertiary, as when he tells us about Descartes through a book about Heidegger (p.61) or about Kant through two different books about Foucault (p.36). It is of course not surprising that the ideas of these classics often appear somewhat odd after having passed through these filters before they reached Thomas' text.

But also Thomas' general rendering of the history of ideas from the late Middle Ages to the 20th century is often not quite recognisable, partly because it draws on problematic sources. To give a general outline it is natural to build on surveys, but Thomas does not seem to care about the difference between works written by specialists and works written on top of other surveys (like his own). If he did, he would hardly have told us about pre-modern ways of thinking with the well-known *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (1992) by the museum lecturer Eilean Hooper-Greenhill as his source (p.8), but would have gone directly to her very competent source, Peter Burke (whose *Tradition and Innovation in Renaissance Italy* (1974) Hooper-Greenhill actually plagiarises wholeheartedly at the relevant place; her p.35, his p.209).

This is not the place to discuss the problems that Thomas' questionable use of sources and lack of clarity in his own thinking create for each of the main topics both in his historical overview and in the concluding and forward-looking final chapter. Let me just look at one example, Thomas' view of the ethics of modernity, especially the ideal of human rights.

Thomas sees Kant as the founding father of the ethics of modernity. As I have suggested, the account of Kant is somewhat faltering, probably because Thomas has not read Kant himself. He tells us (correctly, but awkwardly) that Kant thought that 'Reason commands us to act morally', and that this has something to do with 'a categorical imperative' (both p.36), but we are never told how the categorical imperative demands that we act, i.e. the content of the imperative. As every first year student of philosophy knows, it is that we ought always to act in such a way that the principle behind our

action can be consistently willed as a universal law (which among other things means that the same rules should apply for everybody, and that I am no exception), and that we ought never to act without respect for the human dignity of other people (never use other people instrumentally only). And first of all Thomas never mentions that the ethics of Kant are deontological, i.e. concerned with duty: The moral character of actions should be decided by the intention behind them, not by their consequences.

Actually, Thomas never mentions that there is at least one clear alternative to Kantian ethics that might just as well be seen as the ethical foundation of modernity, namely consequentialism: that the outcome of actions decides their moral worth. The best known version of consequentialism is utilitarianism, founded by Jeremy Bentham and given its first rounded presentation by John Stuart Mill: the principle that we should always act in such a way that we create the greatest amount of happiness for the largest amount of people. However, Bentham is only mentioned in this book in connection with his 'panopticon' (known through Foucault), and utilitarianism and Mill are completely absent. (And there had even been more reasons to include Mill, namely his influential systematisation of positivist scientific thinking in the middle of the 19th century and his just as influential claim that what he called 'the moral sciences' – roughly humanities and social sciences, hence also archaeology, even though Mill does not mention this discipline – ought to imitate the natural sciences).

Thomas is especially concerned about the Enlightenment concept of fundamental, equal rights for all human beings, and he claims that archaeology ought to find another ethical foundation. His main argument against human rights is that it is much too easy to define specific groups of people as 'not fully human, and thus exempt from the moral law' (p.137) – as the Nazis did to Jews, Romanies, and homosexuals. He finds a better foundation than the Enlightenment 'rights' in Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy about our responsibility for 'the other' (ibid). Or as Thomas formulates this towards the end of the book, 'There are ways of denying that another person is the same as us, rendering them [*sic*] 'subhuman', and thus declaring them ineligible for human rights. But there is no way of avoiding the otherness of the other person. We cannot fail to recognize another as an embodied being who speaks to us, and issues a call to which we must respond. Our responsibility to the other person in their [*sic*] alterity and in their suffering cannot be neglected' (p.237).

I simply do not understand why it should be easier to define others as non-human with no rights than to define them as some kind of completely 'other' for whom we have no responsibility. To me, this must be exactly the same (and Nazi henchmen did actually manage to neglect the suffering of others). But Thomas' argument becomes really strange when he claims that Levinas' thinking about 'the other' can give a better foundation than human rights for archaeology's relationship to people of the distant past.

We are here talking about people who with Thomas' own words 'have been dead for centuries', who 'no longer exist', who 'can no longer act or feel', and who 'exist no more tha[n] a handful of bones' (p.238). He even makes it clear that he thinks that '[w]e cannot harm these people, or offend them through what we write about them' (ibid), and yet he argues that they somehow belong within the ethical logic of Levinas. Therefore we ought not to treat them as just 'a kind of raw material for the production of knowledge' (ibid), the way – according to Thomas – that modernist archaeology, ethically resting on the concept of human rights, tends to do.

I would rather argue that if our ethics are founded on our meeting with embodied beings who speak to us and issue calls to which we must respond, dead people who are now just 'a handful of bones' cannot be part of this. But if we take our point of departure

in the Enlightenment thought that all human beings have certain fundamental rights, we do not create any distinction between the living and the dead, those with living bodies and those who have withered away. And if we care to read Kant and notice what he meant by his categorical imperative about respect for the human dignity of everybody, we will see that we are not allowed to treat human relics in whichever way we may please. I agree completely with the Thomas' ideals about the way archaeologists (and museum people, one might add) ought to treat remnants of people of the distant past, but his own line of reasoning, his reliance on Levinasian ethics and his critique of human rights, points to the directly opposite conclusion.

Thomas does not end his concluding chapter on counter-modern archaeology with ethical considerations, but by claiming that it is impossible to make a clear distinction between neutral observation and theory-laden interpretation in connection with excavations, and this is both completely true and extremely important. But the hermeneutic thought behind this observation has been common knowledge within most humanistic disciplines (and part of the revolt against positivism) at least since Norwood Russell Hanson published his *Patterns of Discovery* in 1958, Hans-Georg Gadamer his *Wahrheit und Methode* in 1960 and Thomas Kuhn his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962 (but only Gadamer is mentioned in Thomas' book). If it is revolutionising news within archaeology more than 40 years later, I have found a new example of how different humanistic disciplines develop differently!

MODERNITY: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF ARCHAEOLOGY?

OLA W. JENSEN

In the last few decades an increasing number of archaeologists have devoted themselves to research relating to why we study the past, but also what it is that deep down influences our interpretations of long gone people and ancient remains. Since our understanding of past conditions is filtered through present values these studies tend to focus on concepts of modernity. Now, probably the best way to scrutinise the heart of modernity, and its influence on archaeological thinking is to perceive it from a historical perspective which is precisely what Julian Thomas has done in his book *Archaeology and Modernity*.

Thomas' well-written book is indisputably one of the most in-depth and absorbing works exploring characteristics of modern thought in relation to archaeology. Since the book covers a great number of subjects concerning the issue both in the past and in the present I have chosen to comment on the text in my capacity as a historian of archaeology.

The author's point of departure is that archaeology as a phenomenon is an outcome of modernity and the mutation of the conceptions of science, humanity, nature and time. This process has been going on since the days of the Renaissance. To choose the Renaissance as the starting-point for modernity is not uncontroversial and the question is whose version Thomas presents. The question is legitimate, since that period has, as the historian Peter Burke put it, come to play a most significant role in the explanation and the vindication of modernity and modern society (Burke 1987). Even if Thomas does note that the roots of modernity go as far back as to the Greeks and Romans, he tends to present the transition of the mind from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance in terms of a rather sharp break. Many historians today argue that the differences between the periods are far too exaggerated, and also that quite a few of

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the features we associate with the Renaissance were already established in the Middle Ages. The earlier perspective was according to Burke an idealisation created in the 19th century, which includes the individualism, the discovery of man's creativity, emphasised by Thomas, and to some extent also the use of the past as a rectifying ideal in the present.

Thomas accounts for several epistemological and ontological alterations that have had a profound impact on modern society and archaeological thought during the last half-millennium. Since I have worked with similar issues in Swedish archaeology I am inclined to agree that he has covered the essentials (cf. Jensen 2002). A perusal of the book presents a rather eclectic, but not uncommon, theoretical approach. Thomas stresses Foucauldian epistemes as well as religious, political and identity-creating concepts. Above all he emphasises modern philosophies that have 'continually "trickled down" into everyday discourse' (which is a rather simplistic way of describing the relation between philosophical and scientific ideas and societal values). In this context Thomas also stresses that many of the early antiquarians had personal contact with philosophers and scientists which entailed that the former were 'directly informed by current ideas'. This is an interesting fact that most certainly affected the British antiquarians presented by the author, even if I do think that this kind of direct intellectual influence should not be exaggerated in a wider European antiquarian context.

The archaeological actors presented are few and are already well known, such as Bureus, Pitt Rivers, Worsaae, Montelius and Childe. This is a circumstance that tends to reproduce the impression of an archaeological society populated by but a few Great Men and Founding Fathers of archaeological theory and methods. An illustrative example is C.J. Thomsen who due to his interest in numismatics and intellectual experience during his period of study in Paris 'was first to apply the three-age system to prehistoric artefacts', according to Thomas. It should be noted that Thomsen was not the only one, or even the first in Scandinavia, to classify artefacts into ages on the basis of material, or to make use of the concept of the three-age system (cf. Hildebrand 1937:301–363). Consequently he was not the founder but the one who systemised and exhibited the usefulness of the system. Hence, in line with constructivistic reasoning (such as Ludwik Fleck and actor-network theory) we have to revaluate the work of the Great Men since theories and methods are seldom the result of mere individual performance but rather the outcome of social negotiations, strategies and even conflicts.

Even if I realise that Thomas is using historical examples to illustrate archaeological change in relation to modernity, I do think that he could have made use of more examples, since the result is a rather generalised exposition of antiquarianism and early archaeology. Recent studies performed by historians of archaeology have exposed a complex and heterogeneous archaeological world inhabited by actors with often very diverse opinions about past conditions, based on different philosophical, epistemological but also religious standpoints. Quite a few of these do not fit in to the rather uniform process of modernity and archaeological thought that Thomas presents. By using more detailed historical examples his argument about the influence of different philosophies on archaeology would have been more nuanced and in the end also more convincing. I am also inclined to say that if he had concentrated more on the past of archaeology some of his examples and conclusions would have been somewhat modified.

One example is his interesting outline of archaeological methods that were introduced in the 17th century due to a new philosophical and epistemological stance (such as the principle of classification). However, I miss a

thorough discussion of another method which was established as an archaeological practice in the second half of the 17th century – excavation (Schnapp 1996:198, Jensen 2004). Since the art of excavating is emblematic for archaeology I would personally find it most interesting to read about how the new concept of knowledge made the antiquarians shift their focus from the exterior of the monument to the interior; how and under what circumstances the earth as a source of knowledge and the spade as a tool were integrated into the antiquarian world.

In this context I also want to comment on Thomas' inference concerning the transition from antiquarianism into archaeology in the 19th century. Thomas emphasises two significant circumstances of which the first was the growing nationalism that implied a 'popular support for its material substantiation through archaeological investigation'. The second was the epistemic break, which entailed that time, history and change became the main principles for knowledge and understanding which led to the 'search for deep structures underlying manifest entities'. I would like to add yet another circumstance that may explain why the study of the past came to focus on the material things per se, which is the common definition of the subject. At the turn of the 19th century many historians and antiquarians described the remote past as 'shrouded in fog' and even 'lost' (cf. Olsen & Svestad 1994). The reason was on the one hand the increased influence of source-criticism, which had reduced the quantity of historical sources previously used to describe this period. On the other hand history had turned out to be far older than the 6000 years that was the previous calculation based on the Bible. That is why the concept 'prehistory' was concurrently developed and that is why antiquarians became obsessed with past material culture (Jensen 1998). As we all know, the time gap was filled with the ages of stone, bronze and iron. This situation is perhaps most noticeable in Scandinavia, which can explain Thomas' argument that archaeological innovations 'were often first established in northern Europe'.

My next comment concerns the changing concept of history, which naturally is a central subject within the frame of the history of archaeology. One of the most characteristic features of modernity and archaeology is the notion of history as a linear progress. In his in-depth but rather uniform discussion of the topic, Thomas describes how the progressive view of history was preceded by the biblical one, which perceived history as a negative process of degeneration. He also refers to the fact that this apprehension corresponded well with 'the classical notion of humanity's decline from a Golden Age', which was adopted with the Renaissance. It should be noted though that the Golden Age tradition was already established within Christianity (metaphorically expressed in the Book of Daniel). It did not only perceive history as linear but also circular since the future promised a new divine Golden Age (Eliade 1989, Lundmark 1989). The circular concept was however perceived in different ways by different scholars; this had far-reaching consequences for the view of the ancient past and the interest in antiquarian issues. Influenced by Augustine, many orthodox historians, including Lutherans, perceived the entire history from the Fall of Man as negative. Since history was mainly to serve the purpose of Man's salvation, the heathen ancient past received little or no attention at all. Others argued that the Golden Age was prolonged even after the Fall of Man, which explains the humble attitude towards the classical world during the Renaissance and the interest in the past within for example Swedish Gothicism. Some, like the Catholic Archbishop Olaus Magnus, even argued that history had experienced several Golden Ages (a cyclical perspective).

As Thomas points out, during the Enlightenment the past became viewed as a progression that 'would lead to a perfection

of the human condition that had not yet existed in any form'. As followed, the past 'came to be of interest because it contained the origins of developments that are not yet complete'. I agree with that, but it can also be argued that this altered view had negative effects on the study of the ancient past, since it was seen as a barbaric and undeveloped period from which one had nothing to learn. As a consequence quite a few historians turned their backs on their distant 'forefathers' and even criticised antiquarianism for being outdated. What is more, far from everyone abandoned the idea of a cyclical or even circular perspective. Even if most scholars perceived history as a linear progress it was a matter of discussion whether the improvements covered all the features of humanity. One argument was that while concepts like reason and science were perceived as evolving through time, morality, bravery and virtue were constant or even in a state of degeneration (Nordin 2000:220).

Thomas' own view of the past, or more precisely modernity's history, is that it is the 'legacy that still burdens archaeology', a circumstance which is to be challenged and complemented with his own 'counter-modern archaeology' presented at the end of the book. Hence, in some sense his historiographical approach resembles Glyn Daniel's motive to expose 'false archaeology' (Gustafsson 2001). I must admit that as an historian of archaeology, and in line with constructivistic historiography (Golinski 1998), I sometimes find it a bit hard to cope with his right versus wrong approach. Even so, and even if I have some objections concerning Thomas' interpretation of archaeology's past it doesn't diminish my impression that he has made a most important contribution to our understanding of the relation between modern thinking and archaeology, both in the present and in the past. The book is also thought provoking and the question is, since archaeology according to the author is an outcome of modernity, will that also be the end of it, or is it already dying, in spite of the counter-modern approach, since we are said to be living in a post-modern society?

A reply to Christopher Witmore, Håkon Glørstad, Søren Kjørup and Ola W. Jensen

Julian Thomas

I am grateful to Christopher Witmore, Håkon Glørstad, Søren Kjørup and Ola W. Jensen for taking the time to comment on *Archaeology and Modernity*, and to the editors of the *Norwegian Archaeological Review* for the opportunity to respond to their reactions. I will treat each contribution in turn:

CHRISTOPHER WITMORE

Chris Witmore's comments appear to me to indicate differences of emphasis rather than fundamental disagreements with the book.

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When he suggests that I am 'deeply pessimistic' over the possibility that archaeology can survive outside of the modern conditions that gave rise to it (if indeed we are entering a 'post-modern' world, which is open to debate), I think it would be more accurate to describe my view as one of extremely cautious optimism! That in the final chapter of the book I discuss the form that a 'counter-modern' archaeology might take is an indication that I consider such a thing possible. The implication of my argument is that an archaeology that can self-critically evaluate its debt to modern thought is one that could find a place for itself under other historical conditions. However, I do think that this requires a reappraisal of archaeological practice, and that we do ourselves no favours by underestimating the difficulty that this will involve.

Witmore's assertion that modernity is as much concerned with the circulation of persons, products, images and information as with thought is well made. While I have attempted to emphasise that the modern experience is composed of practices, relationships and material conditions, it was inevitably modern thinking that predominated in *Archaeology and Modernity*, since my principal concern was with the way that characteristically modern ideas have come to be embedded in archaeology. Witmore is also correct when, echoing Latour, he argues that 'we have never been modern', and when he stresses the status of much modern thinking as myth. But the point is that these are myths that people have lived by and through. No-one ever achieved the condition of being fully modern, became a wholly autonomous individual or acted in an entirely dispassionate and rational fashion. But they behaved as if such a thing were possible, and developed their legal and moral codes accordingly.

Witmore's insistence that the relationships between human beings and technology involved in the new electronic media are complex and inextricable is again something that I would agree with. Certainly, archaeology has to address its place in an emerging world of information flows and digital images. In the book, my intention is not to suggest that archaeologists should back away from this reality, and adopt a Luddite perspective on digital technology. My argument was that much of the use that archaeologists have made of this technology to date, in VRM and GIS, actually reproduces distinctively modern ways of looking and thinking (notably a realist conception of representation), and with them a particular understanding of the way that the world is. The relationship between archaeology and digital technology is going to be an interesting one, but its path to maturity depends upon a more thorough engagement with the sophisticated perspectives on virtuality that Witmore alludes to, rather than an unproblematised construction of cybernetic pasts.

HÅKON GLØRSTAD

I am a little puzzled by Glørstad's suggestion that the opening chapters of *Archaeology and Modernity* amount to a conclusion, arrived at before I lay out the issues that the book will address. What this would suggest is that the book seeks to use an analysis of archaeological thought and practice as a means of developing insights into the general character of modernity. In reality, the volume's objective is rather more modest. The first two chapters present a synthetic (and by no means unorthodox) account of modernity, placing archaeology into the context of the development of modern thought and modern social life. This is hardly a conclusion; it is rather a gathering of arguments, preparatory to the analyses that are conducted in chapters 3 to 9. It is also intended as scene-setting, given that the book's likely audience is archaeological rather than philosophical. Glørstad would prefer that I begin with the archaeological, but I think that it is important to demonstrate initially that the critique of recent

archaeological debates that is offered in the later chapters stems from a mutually connected set of concerns, and is to some degree coherent. I am aware, of course, of the irony that what is presented in the early chapters represents a kind of 'master narrative' of modernity.

Glørstad asks why I concentrate on earlier modern thinkers such as Descartes, Locke, Hobbes and Kant, rather than Hegel, Marx or Sartre. The answer is that it is the former whose ideas have become more thoroughly embedded in the educational, political and legal systems of the modern West, in such a way as to contribute to the unconsidered and habitual way that modern Westerners confront their world. For this reason, they have been incorporated into archaeological thought and practice at a level of pre-understanding. Now, Hegel, Marx or Sartre might have been more sophisticated (and perhaps more interesting) thinkers, but when they occur in archaeology they tend to do so explicitly, where an archaeologist knowingly draws upon their work in order to develop an argument about the past. Thus we have self-professed Marxist and even Sartrian archaeologists, yet the more common Cartesian or Hobbesian assumptions in archaeological arguments have to be teased out. As to Glørstad's observation that a thinker like Foucault owed a considerable debt to Kant, it is unsurprising that most critiques of modern thinking emerge from within modern traditions of thought. This is rather akin to Derrida's view that any argument, if pushed to its limit, will reveal its own *aporia*: the idea of critical thinking emerges under modern conditions, and is inevitably turned back on modernity itself.

This point underlines the ambivalent character of modernity. It may be that the overall tone of the book suggests a negative view of the modern, and this is perhaps because I understand modernity as a *problem*, from an archaeological point of view. Modernity is one of our principal obstacles in understanding the distant past. But it is in itself neither a wholly good nor a wholly bad phenomenon. Glørstad points to the achievements of post-war social democracy, in terms of education and welfare, and I firmly agree with him on this positive aspect of the modern programme. However, in more recent times the notion of a state that provides for the population from cradle to grave has been eclipsed by neo-liberalism, with its talk of 'choice', 'rolling back the state' and 'small government'. The trouble is that social democracy and neo-liberalism are both equally products of modernity. The ease with which we have slid from one to the other indicates the importance of a critical attitude towards the modern project. Similarly, while I recognise the force of Glørstad's observation that participatory democracy is a modern innovation, the form of democracy that I would advocate is one that does not rely upon a universalised and mythical conception of the political subject (see Mouffe 1993).

SØREN KJØRUP

Kjørup's views are the most trenchant, but also the most misleading. On the basis of an inattentive reading, he has rushed to form some judgements which seem to me to be seriously flawed. In particular, he seems to have misunderstood what sort of a book *Archaeology and Modernity* is, and what its purpose might be. As he tells us, he is a professor of the history and theory of the humanities, and his evident disappointment derives from his expectation that this is an example of the kind of book that he or one of his colleagues might write. That is, he treats it as if it were a piece of intellectual history, in which archaeology is regarded as an object of investigation: a comparative study in disciplinary development. This much is evident from his suggestion that I would have done better to begin with 'a thorough description of archaeology'. Yet he is mistaken: the aim of the volume was to identify

a series of central themes in modern thought, to demonstrate the ways in which these have been incorporated into the archaeological project, and to use the insights generated in the process to illuminate a series of *contemporary* debates within the discipline. The book does not reflect on the place of archaeology in the modern world as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. For this reason, it is quite unlike the book that either a historian of ideas or a philosopher might write. Kjørup's inattentiveness in this respect is demonstrated by his statement that 'a few comments on archaeology [are] added at the end of each of the last eight chapters', when in reality each chapter works its way toward issues that are presently under discussion within the discipline, hoping to recontextualise them in the process. How far Kjørup has misconstrued the work is apparent from his 'suspicion' that I 'have some axes to grind' with my colleagues. Well, of course I have! That is the whole purpose of writing the book, which is not a dispassionate reflection on archaeology's past, but an intervention into its deliberations in the present.

Kjørup's misunderstanding of the character of the book is also demonstrated in his heavy emphasis on the use of sources. As I have indicated already, the earliest chapters in the volume are synthetic in character, and aim to distil a coherent argument concerning the character of modernity and the place that philosophical thought has occupied within it, from a variety of sources. This argument is not intended to radically revise established views, but to selectively render them in a form that can be brought to bear on archaeological issues. In this context, while a first-hand knowledge of the works of the early modern thinkers has much to recommend it, I am concerned less with the emergence of ideas and practices than with their selective reception by and incorporation into a broader intellectual culture (and beyond). For such a project, what Cassirer says about Kant and what Collingwood says about Newton are *actually more important* than an exhaustive dissection of the originals. In any case, as a philosopher one might expect Kjørup to be cautious of scholasticism: what exactly is his return to the 'original sources' intended to achieve? A recovery of the *original meaning* of ideas? Having accepted that ideas have a history, is such a thing possible?

This concern with the use of sources comes perilously close to a kind of intellectual snobbery when Kjørup refers to Hooper-Greenhill's *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. It seems unremarkable that an archaeologist would consult a book that is concerned with the emergence of the museum as an institution, and employ (in passing) material which relates to cosmology and cultural order. Yet, says Kjørup, Hooper-Greenhill has 'plagiarised' this material from the more 'competent' Burke. So the question is this: if Hooper-Greenhill has merely *reproduced* the statements of Burke, in what sense are those statements less helpful when they have been recovered from her book? There appears to be a rather curious notion of authenticity at work here, and it is akin to saying that one's knowledge counts for nothing if one has not fondled ancient leather bindings and inhaled the smell of parchment in acquiring it. In place of this kind of authenticity, I am concerned with the *usefulness* of knowledge in providing conceptual leverage on archaeology's predicament in the present.

Several of Kjørup's substantive criticisms are overstated, and this perhaps again reveals both a cursory reading and a series of expectations on his part that relate to a different kind of book. For instance, he suggests that I do not explicitly outline the content of Kant's categorical imperative: that we should act as if in accordance with a universal law. Yet he seems not to have noticed that the paragraph that he refers to is concerned precisely with the notion of moral law. Similarly, he says that 'Thomas never mentions that the ethics of Kant are … concerned with duty'. I do, on page 36,

where I say, 'Kant's arguments are concerned with the moral duty of treating other human beings as ends in themselves, rather than means, and showing an "active sympathy for their fate"'. Other assertions that Kjørup makes are equally questionable. For example, while the argument is implicit rather than explicit in the book, I see no contradiction in maintaining that while modern thought has been characterised by a series of distinctive themes, it has nonetheless taken on a series of specific forms that might easily be mutually contradictory, and that out of this complex pattern distinctly counter-modern positions might emerge.

Kjørup's arguments in relation to modern ethical systems are no more convincing. He is correct to say that utilitarianism differs from Kantian ethics, and it would have been entirely legitimate for me to have included a discussion of it in the text. However, given that Benthamism was founded on notions of human nature (the maximisation of pleasure and the minimisation of pain), its inclusion would not have radically altered the overall argument. More seriously, when it comes to the ethics of archaeology, Kjørup seems again to have failed to pay attention. He implies that the question at issue is 'the way archaeologists ought to treat remnants of the distant past': exactly the view that I suggest has limited the scope of an archaeological ethics. Debates on reburial and repatriation focus narrowly on the wishes of the dead and their descendants, within the terms of an individualised, rights-based morality. The alternative view that I propose in *Archaeology and Modernity* is that our dealings with the past (even the distant past) are constitutive of our attitude toward humanity in the present. Obviously, the dead are no longer embodied, sensuous beings: but it is imperative to recognise that *this is precisely the kind of beings that they once were*. And this is why archaeological evidence is so important: it speaks to us of human incarnation in forms that we are unfamiliar with, and which exceed our ability to conceptualise them. In this sense, the dead *do* confront us. An ethical archaeology bears witness to the past, not for the sake of the dead, but because of the consequences in the present of treating past humanity as mere raw material. The past always legitimises the present, and what we conceptually impose on past people indirectly makes the attitudes and actions of the present seem more acceptable. Here again, Kjørup fails to recognise that the principal focus of *Archaeology and Modernity* is the present rather than the past.

Kjørup's astonishment that archaeology took so long to discover positivism, and his comments on hermeneutics, suggest an approach to the history of the academic disciplines that concentrates on the date at which particular ideas became fashionable, as if each area of study had to pass through a series of 'necessary stages' in an orderly and parallel manner. Now, it is curious enough to hear Kuhn and Gadamer treated as if they represented much the same thing, and the former was of course introduced to archaeology by David Clarke in the 1970s. But the stage at which specific authors and concepts are first cited in a discipline is comparatively trivial. What is more important is the way that intellectual resources are put to use in the local context. At a certain point, ideas that may have been circulating in a broader intellectual culture for some while are identified as having something to contribute to an academic tradition, casting a new light on the specific problems that it has set for itself. At the moment, I think that the modernist views and values implicit within archaeological arguments are well worth considering. It is for this reason that, while Kjørup professes to be disappointed with my book, I hope that the same will not be the case with my archaeological colleagues.

OLA W. JENSEN

Ola Jensen raises the important question of when the modern world can be said to have

emerged, and points out that many aspects of modern thinking were already established in medieval times, if not earlier. I think, though, that it is helpful to draw a distinction between the initial emergence of particular understandings of the world, and the stage at which those understandings are no longer simply entertained in a discursive manner by an educated minority; in other words, the juncture at which understandings become embedded in practices, slip away from explicit evaluation, and come to be lived through, as the common currency of unreflecting everyday conduct. It is, of course, extremely difficult to identify a specific calendar date at which this might have occurred, and a 'modern attitude' crystallised, even within a particular geographical area.

I am grateful to Jensen for the insight that the development of a more critical evaluation of written sources dealing with the ancient past coincided with a growing appreciation of the antiquity of the earth and of humankind. This further enhances the importance of the early nineteenth century for the emergence of archaeological thinking. I am happy enough to agree with Jensen that the account of the history of archaeology that I present in *Archaeology and Modernity* is a rather orthodox one, and that a more complicated and nuanced history is currently being written. Jensen's own work is an important contribution to such a history. However, the purpose of my book was not to present a radical reworking of the development of the discipline, so much as to place it into the context of Western modernity. Where I do take issue with Jensen is in his suggestion that the book polarises 'good' and 'bad', modern and counter-modern positions. What I want to suggest instead is that a recognition that aspects of a modern sensibility are embedded in archaeological practice enables us to reform that practice, through an enrichment and transformation of what we do, rather than rejecting our established traditions of working. This is not intended as a criticism of other archaeologists, written from a position of some form of enlightenment. The book represents a personal attempt to come to terms with the problems of investigating and writing about the past from within a modern setting, and to modify my own practice accordingly.

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