

Archaeology and Capitalism



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Archaeology and Capitalism

From Ethics to Politics

Edited by
Yannis Hamilakis and Philip Duke



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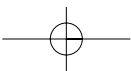
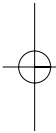
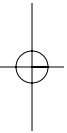
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Foreword: Politics Is a Dirty Word, but Then Archaeology Is a Dirty Business

Randall H. McGuire

Thirty years ago the Mexican archaeologists Rebeca Panameño and Enrique Nalda (1979) asked: *Arqueología para quien?* (Archaeology for Whom?) This was and remains a radical question for archaeology. Radical because it implies that archaeology is not a selfless search for knowledge. Instead, the question asserts that archaeology serves the interests of specific social groups. This question is the basic query of an explicitly political archaeology. It is a question that English-speaking archaeologists would take up in a serious way in the 1980s and early 1990s. But since that time, calls for archaeology as political action have gradually faded away. The authors in this book have revived this query and tried to answer it. They argue that archaeology in the West has consistently served the interests of capitalism and this is something that they want to change.

In the English-speaking world, politics is a dirty word. People spurn politics as a grubby business tainted by dishonesty, strong feelings and self-interest. In popular discourse, politics is contrasted with dispassionate, objective science. Many people resist any explicit discussions of politics, because political judgments are emotional and political discussions often acrimonious. People are passionate about politics because they are about what we believe and who we think we are. Political positions necessarily involve moral and ethical attitudes about the world. These attitudes invoke powerful zeal in people. We are taught as young children to exclude politics from polite conversation because politics create tension and hostility between individuals. Politics also have real consequences for peoples' lives. These consequences are often pernicious. People lose their land or their jobs; people starve, die, or are imprisoned. All of this suggests that the safest thing to do is not 'make things political'.

Many archaeologists will view the overt political agenda of this book with alarm and unease. After the political and theoretical turmoil of the later 20th century, these archaeologists look forward to a new century free of theory wars, political struggles and conflicts with descendant communities. In their minds, the codification of ethics, the bureaucratization of

conflicts over issues like repatriation, and the mainstream adoption of terms like gender and agency have safely eclipsed the political nature of archaeology. This leaves archaeologists free to go about their business. What they fail to recognize is that none of these actions fundamentally address the feminist, post-processualist, Marxist and Indigenous critiques of archaeology. These actions instead simply gloss over the question of 'archaeology for whom?' More importantly, they leave archaeologists with primary control over how the past is defined, studied and interpreted.

The currently popular concept of archaeologists as stewards of the archaeological record embodies this sidestepping of the political nature of archaeology. A steward is someone who manages someone else's property and/or affairs. A steward is a servant. If archaeologists are stewards, whom do they work for? Or, to put this question another way, *Arqueología para quien?*

Scholars need to recognize that politics may be a dirty word but that archaeology is a dirty business. The authors in this book argue that archaeology began as a bourgeois project embedded in the logic of capital and the fetish of commodities. They clearly show how archaeology has been used to advance imperialistic, colonial, nationalistic and racist agendas in the world. The commodification of archaeology in capitalism manifests itself in many ways from the use of archaeological knowledge to sell Las Vegas casinos, to the conversion of museums and ancient monuments from public teaching tools into entertainment theme parks, to the creation of an archaeological underclass in cultural resource management. Archaeology as a project of Western cultural domination reveals itself in paternalistic attempts to give Indigenous peoples their pasts back and collaborations between archaeologists and US invasion forces to save the 'cradle of western civilization' in Iraq.

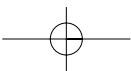
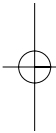
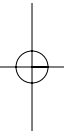
Archaeology and Capitalism: From Ethics to Politics effectively reopens a serious discussion of archaeology as political action. It does so by situating the discussion of ethics in the political realm. It does so by advocating a praxis of archaeology that involves knowing the world, critiquing the world, and taking action in the world. It does so by challenging the codified ethics and bureaucratic solutions to conflict that have lulled archaeologists into complacency. But most importantly, it does so by asking the question that we can never fully answer but that we must never quit asking, archaeology for whom?

REFERENCE

Panameño, Rebeca and Enrique Nalda (1979) 'Arqueología para quien?' *Nueva Antropología* 12, 111–124

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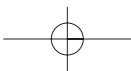
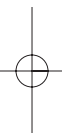
This volume grew out of a symposium titled *An Ethical Archaeology in a Capitalist World* which was held at the 5th *World Archaeological Congress* in Washington, DC in 2003. The participants in the symposium were Alexander Bauer, Shanel Lindsay and Stephen Urice, Pedro Paulo Funari, Francisco Noelli, Martin Hall, Tracy Ireland, George Nicholas, Mark Pluciennik, Nick Shepherd and Alison Wylie. Michael Shanks served as the symposium's commentator. Unfortunately, not all of the participants were able to contribute to this volume, but we are most grateful to them for their stimulating contributions that persuaded us that a volume would be of value. Our gratitude is offered to those contributors whom we subsequently solicited for papers. We are very grateful to Joan Gero for her support of both the initial symposium and this volume, and to Mitch Allen and his production team at Left Coast Press for making the process as painless as possible. We would also like to thank the British Academy and Fort Lewis College for funding our participation in WAC5. The Editors also express their gratitude to the Fort Lewis College Foundation for their generous financial support of the preparation of the index.

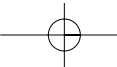
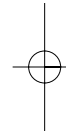
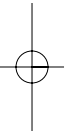
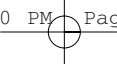




PART 1

INTRODUCTION





CHAPTER 1

From Ethics to Politics

Yannis Hamilakis

Why another book on ethics and socio-politics in archaeology? After all, in the last 25 years a good number of them has been produced (eg, Gathercole and Lowenthal 1990; Gero *et al* 1983; Kane 2003; Karlsson 2004; Lynott and Wylie 1995; Meskell and Pels 2005; Pinsky and Wylie 1989; Pluciennik 2001; Scarre and Scarre 2006; Zimmerman *et al* 2003), not to mention many others on looting, repatriation, indigenous archaeologies, and nationalism, which are linked one way or another to ethical and political issues. And this is just what has come out in English (although some of these volumes include contributions from outside the Anglo-Saxon tradition). So why add to the inflation of titles, put further pressures on already struggling academic libraries, and waste world resources? How can we justify the production of this book, beyond the academics' ambitions to publish and further careers, the editors' ambitions to set academic agendas, and the publishers' hopes to compete in the crowded market of academic publishing?

We, the editors and the contributors to this volume, believe that this book does something different. It of course builds on some of the above discussion (and acknowledges its debt to several seminal works on the subject), but it also departs from many of them in significant ways. What makes this book different is its aim and ambition to reframe the discussion on ethics in archaeology by shifting the debate into the field of politics, showing that the ethical and socio-political arenas should not be treated as separate (*cf* Bernstein 1991:9), as is often the case, and proposing that conundrums such as the tension between universal and context-specific ethics can be only dealt with through political praxis (*cf* McGuire *et al* 2005).

The book is divided into four parts, the first being this introduction. The second part questions some of the taken-for-granted assumptions on ethics in archaeology, demonstrating their problems and weaknesses. The third re-examines the debate on ethics indirectly, by looking at the intersection between western archaeology and capitalist economic and social structures. And the fourth takes a

prospective view and offers suggestions, through specific cases and examples, on how an ethical-political praxis in archaeology can be achieved. This chapter is more of a programmatic paper and an introduction to the main ideas and motivations behind this book, and not so much an introduction to the specific contents of the volume. That task is achieved with the short introductions for each part. In this chapter, I will start by providing a social and political background for the development of western archaeology, reviewing briefly the debates on ethics and politics to date; I will then proceed to discuss the main problems and pitfalls in these debates and practices, and show how these can be tackled and even avoided if a different framework, based on what I call *the political ethic*, is adopted. I will conclude with some suggestions for future research and debating agendas.

ARCHAEOLOGY AS CAPITALISM

It is now increasingly realised that archaeology as we know and practice it in the modern West is a device of modernity, that is, the constellation of social, economic, cultural and ideological processes that shaped the West in the centuries from the end of the Middle Ages to the present (*cf* Schnapp *et al* 2004; Thomas 2004). The era of modernity reshaped the world, produced the modern individual as we know it (*cf* Foucault 1970), established the ideas and the realities of nation-states, and above all, created the new regime of capitalism. Archaeology as a process of engaging with the material traces of the past and attempting to produce narrative and discourses about them is not of course new, as studies such as the one by Schnapp (1996) have shown. What is new is the regime of western archaeological apparatus that produced a specific set of ideas, discourses and practices in dealing with the material past. It meant the reframing of time and space, the creation of linear, cumulative temporality, and the establishment of a homological link between space and time: As the West, through early colonialism, realised that there was new, previously unknown territory to be conquered and subjugated, in the same way, deeper and longer pasts became available for conquering and colonisation, through the new sciences of geology and archaeology and the ideas of evolution.

But modernity is primarily the era of commodities, the era of equivalence, exchange and capitalism. It is also the era of national imagination, that is, the formation of a new imaginary way of organising space and time, based on homogenisation and easy communication and mobility, essential elements for the development of capital (*cf* Anderson 1991). Archaeology was crucial for national imagination (*cf* Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Hamilakis 2007; Kohl and Fawcett 1995); it could not only provide the material truths necessary to forge a long

antiquity for the nation, but it could also generate objects and sites as commodities for (primarily visual) consumption and entertainment by the new middle classes during their newly discovered leisure time. This is what I want to call 'official archaeology' – as opposed to alternative archaeologies such as the pre-modern archaeologies of the West (that may go as far back as prehistory) and the nonwestern archaeologies: the diverse, social engagements with the material traces of the past, and the stories and narratives around them, produced by people outside western modernity. Official archaeology 'rediscovered' sites and ruins, divorced them from the web of daily life, and declared them the object of archaeology; this is what we now call the 'archaeological record' which is meant to be protected, conserved, studied and admired, but primarily from a distance, and mindful of the potential damage that people can cause to it. The ruins that were once experienced through multi-sensory bodily encounters, were the subject of countless stories, and at certain times, such as in the 18th century, the subject of the romantic admiration of westerners who were fascinated by decay and loss (*cf* Roth *et al* 1997), now became archaeological monuments. The fence that was often erected around them operated as the symbolic barrier that ended or at least regulated these earlier encounters. Other sites were dug out of the ground – in other words, they were produced anew as archaeological monumental sites (*cf* Hamilakis 2001). This constructed 'archaeological record' found its way into national mythologies, chronometric timelines, and cultural evolutionist narratives of progress and civilisation.

Alongside these processes, the commodification of these new objects was progressing steadily (*cf* Kehoe this volume). The early 'antiquities fever' of the 18th and early 19th centuries that gripped antiquarians, diplomats and scholars and led them to pillage the sacred sites of western imagination, especially in the Mediterranean, was an early form of commodification; it transformed objects into valuable and highly desirable commodities; indeed, financial transactions were often involved in their handling. It is worth recalling here Walter Benjamin's observation (as part of his examination of the 19th-century European modernity) that there is a close association between the department store and the museum (2002:415):

There are relations between department store and museum, and here the bazaar provides a link. The amassing of artworks in the museum brings them into communication with commodities, which – where they offer themselves *en masse* to the passerby – awake in him the notion that some part of this should fall to him as well.

With the establishment of the nation-states in the 19th and early 20th century, antiquities acquired additional value as national icons. Ruins

became organised archaeological sites that charged entrance fees, and museums became the regimented exhibition of objects and artifacts to be consumed by the autonomous and highly disciplined gaze (cf Bennett 1998); within this framework, these objects and artefacts were often devoid of their physical and experiential properties and became instead abstract equivalences, much like money, that stood for specific time periods, cultures, and ethnic groups. They became the symbolic capital for nations, as well as for a range of groups and communities.

This process of course was far from linear, entangled into a series of tensions such as the one between the role of antiquities as national values and icons, and their commodification as capital, symbolic or otherwise. National imagination wanted them to be venerated almost religiously, as material truths of continuity and the glory of the nation. But nationalism as a worldview originates from the middle class. Capital and commodification are at its base. As a result, antiquities cast as national icons had at the same time to operate as a resource, to be exchanged in the international symbolic economy for financial capital or prestige and national standing (cf Hamilakis 2003a, 2007). Other tensions and complications resulted from the diverse forms that western modernity took, often incorporating pre-modern ideas and engaging in a creative dialogue with nonwestern cultures and modernities, for example in areas such as southern and southeastern Europe. As a result, modernist official archaeology can take various guises and forms, and cannot be described as a monolithic construct.

This brief and schematic excursus into the socio-political and economic origins of the discipline of archaeology is meant to remind us that official western archaeology – be it classical, prehistoric, historic or other – is intricately linked with capitalism from its conception and birth. The extreme commodification of archaeology that we have experienced in the last 25 years (especially in countries like USA, UK and Western Europe), and which is thoroughly analysed and critiqued by a number of authors in this book (eg, Silberman, Everill) is simply the most recent and the most aggressive phase of this entanglement.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CRITIQUE

It is well known that culture-history and processual archaeology traditions in official, western archaeology discouraged any explicit reflexive discussion on the politics of origins of western archaeology, and on the ethical and political dimensions of archaeological thinking and practice. This situation changed in the 1980s when a number of processes forced the discipline to confront its own heritage. In Australia, New Zealand and the USA, it was the pressure by indigenous groups

who demanded a stop to being treated as the object of western scientific discourse, insisting that their own archaeologies be considered valid and important. As a result, western archaeologists started rethinking their practices, especially in relation to the excavation of human burials.

In Europe, other intellectual and broader social and political processes were under way, the most significant of which were the increasing criticism of the objective and value-free nature of processual archaeology, and the emergence of a number of diverse critical theoretical discourses that are now known as post-processual archaeologies. These discourses, at least at their beginning, emphasised the political character of the archaeological enterprise, and some of its main proponents went as far as to state that archaeology should provide the platform for socio-political action in the present (*cf* Tilley 1989). At the same time, in the USA and in some European countries, feminist archaeology came into play and challenged the patriarchal nature of the discipline, in terms of both its portrayal of the past and its internal workings and practice. A key event in this early movement of political awareness of archaeology was the foundation of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) at Southampton, UK in 1986 (*cf* Ucko 1987). This episode signified a rare moment when a broader socio-political movement, in this case the world anti-apartheid struggle, resulted in a fundamental change in the disciplinary culture of archaeology. WAC was founded on the assumption that archaeology cannot be divorced from the broader political climate, and that values of equality and social justice should be at the centre of archaeological thinking and practice. WAC contributed further to debates on indigenous groups, and on repatriation and reburial of human skeletons and archaeological artefacts. In some of these areas its impact was crucial, in terms of both ideas and practice.

So, where are we today? Where did this early politicisation of archaeology lead? Conventional accounts would respond to this question by pointing to the increased level of writing on the topic as an indication that this move is going from strength to strength, acquiring cumulative weight and disciplinary acceptance and recognition. I contend, however, that the picture is more diverse and somehow less optimistic than it appears. A number of battles have been clearly won and others are still ongoing. For example, the earlier discussions on indigenous issues in archaeology have now given way to an emerging array of *indigenous archaeologies* (eg, Smith and Wobst 2005; Watkins 2001; *cf* Nicholas and Hollowell this volume). The difference here is significant. Whilst before it was the official, western archaeology that was forced to take into account the grievances of the indigenous groups, the emerging indigenous archaeologies now demand a much more proactive and dynamic role, an agenda-setting

role. As we saw above, these alternative archaeologies existed all along and well before the official, western archaeology was established. But now, under the rubric of indigenous archaeologies, these alternative epistemologies and practices claim a central and defining role, alongside the official western archaeology. This hopeful move has the potential of transforming the official western archaeology as well, not only at the level of ideas but also at the level of practice, from data gathering to exhibition and dissemination.

Feminist archaeology has also become more prominent and has achieved some of its goals, especially when challenging patriarchal narratives on the past, although present-day gender inequalities are far from being eradicated (*cf* Conkey 2005 for a recent review). The looting of archaeological artefacts and its impact have become a major area for discussion and debate (eg, Brodie *et al* 2001, 2006; Brodie and Tubb 2002; Renfrew 2000) although the dominant archaeological stance on the matter is often monolithic (*cf* Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2004), ignoring the sometimes deeply felt connections of local people towards the land and the antiquities that come out of it, as well as the economics and politics of 'subsistence looting' for low-income and exploited people (eg, Hollowell 2006; Matsuda 1998). Despite their problems, however, these debates have challenged the commodification of the material past and the impact of the art market. Nationalism has attracted much interest in the last 10 years or so (eg, Atkinson *et al* 1996; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998), thus drawing attention to the national origins of archaeology but also to the impact of often exclusivist nationalist archaeologies in the past and present, although these writings are often unreflexive, seeing only the nationalism of the 'other' (*cf* Hamilakis 1996, 2007).

I want to suggest, however, that in addition to the above largely positive and hopeful phenomena, other developments are more worrisome and problematic. Indeed I want to suggest that what has happened in the last 15 years or so is nothing less than the bureaucratisation and instrumentalisation of ethics, and these transformations have resulted in the depoliticisation of ethical debate in archaeology. These are serious contentions, and I do not utter them lightly. The earlier radical calls by prominent advocates of post-processualism for archaeology to be viewed as political action have been toned down and gradually almost disappeared. Since then, most of the focus on theoretical discussion has moved on to interpretative issues having to do with the past, not the present.

Explicitly political archaeologies, of course, continue to exist (such as radical feminism or the Marxist archaeology in the USA, Latin America, or Catalonia; *cf* McGuire *et al* 2005), but their impact has been less pronounced. Politics in archaeology, in common with other

disciplines, has become primarily the politics of identity, more often than not seen simply in terms of discourse rather than as discursive *and* material power. Some would claim that this is a side effect of the success of post-processualism as an intellectual movement, at least in the UK, some academic pockets in the USA and elsewhere. This success has also meant a success for its advocates, in terms of jobs and positions of influence. As the political project of archaeology inevitably has to start from the interrogation of the power structures internal to the discipline, the move of many of the critics into positions of authority and control within these structures made such a project very difficult. But this is surely an inadequate explanation, despite the fact that it may contain an element of truth. If the political project in archaeology was alive and thriving as it was in the 1980s, it would have produced a much more widespread wave of critics. The explanation therefore needs to be found in other, deeper developments beyond personalities.

My contention is that a more satisfactory explanation can be found in the structural and disciplinary power of professionalisation, and its effect on the ethical debates in archaeology. In the last few years, ethical matters were removed from the arena of conflict in the world, and became a matter of regulation for the professional organisations. While in the 1980s the ethics of doing archaeology were linked to clashes such as the anti-apartheid movement (in the UK), or the earlier civil rights movement and the battles for racial equality (in the USA, *cf* Lynott 2003:22; Zimmerman 1998), in the 1990s ethics were increasingly and primarily a matter for working groups and meetings of the Society for American Archaeology or other such organisations. Whereas in the 1980s the advocates of ethical and political archaeologies were academics (individually, or in groups and forums such as WAC) debating and fighting out of political convictions, in the 1990s the advocates for ethical matters were often academics but increasingly middle and high rank professionals in the cultural resource management (CRM) sector, and operating within the confines of professional organisations.

The establishment of a code of ethics was the next step. The idea was to codify the basic ethical principles that western archaeologists should adhere to in their professional practice. The contentious matters of the day, from reburial and indigenous issues to looting, often became single-sentence principles, after a series of internal debates and compromises. The device of the code and its impact has already become the subject of some penetrating critiques, both in archaeology (Smith and Burke 2003; Tarlow 2000, 2006) and in other cognate disciplines such as anthropology (eg, Pels 1999). These critics point out that the codification of ethics is inscribed within the broader managerial culture of auditing, dominant in western academia at least in the last

two decades (*cf* Strathern 2000); they also claim that the logic of the code of ethics relies on the notion of individual morality (taking as its basis the western notion of the autonomous individual person), and it attempts to establish abstract principles of universal applicability. Finally, critics point out that the process of codification closes off and solidifies debate (*cf* Meskell and Pels 2005, esp. Introduction; Pels 1999; and especially Tarlow 2000 for one of the most penetrating and thoughtful critiques).

I am sympathetic to all the above arguments with one slight qualification: I believe that the process of discussion and engagement that precedes the establishment of a code of ethics has the potential to bring into the fore the contentious, difficult, and often swept-under-the-carpet issues of archaeological practice. It can thus be a dynamic and fruitful process (*cf* Wylie 2003:13), although that potential is not always realised. Having said that, unless the codes of ethics and practice are in a constant state of revision and negotiation, the dangers of solidification, stagnation, and ethical complicity are always present. The major weakness of the above critiques on ethics and their codification (in archaeology and anthropology) is that they fall short of suggesting plausible alternatives: alternatives that will reconcile the need to address pressing ethical issues with the need to avoid the risks and the pitfalls of codification; more importantly, to reconcile the need to avoid abstract decontextualised principles based on the notions of western individual morality, with the need to articulate an effective and powerful discourse that does not become paralysed by ethical relativism (*cf* Lampeter Archaeology Workshop 1997).

I believe that there are three fundamental problems that are associated with the phenomenon of the instrumentalisation of ethics. The first is the internalisation of the professionalised ethic, and the notion of professional responsibility: the idea that archaeologists are professionals above everything else, and they should thus adhere to the ethics and principles of their profession. This often means that archaeologists divest themselves of other roles, such as the role of citizen with ethical responsibilities, the role of human being, the role of politically active agent, and so on. These roles, when considered, take secondary place to the primary role, which is the role of the professional archaeologist. Associated with this is the problem of the reliance on a heavily problematic conceptualisation of the nature of archaeological practice. As we saw above, western official archaeology is a recent construction of capitalist modernity, and it carries with it the foundational ideologies of the western middle classes, from the belief in the autonomous individual and the logic of capital and commodity, to the logic of patriarchy and the notion of the disembodied reason.

Moreover, time and again recent discussion has shown (eg, Barrett 1988; Hamilakis 1999; Patrik 1985) that western official archaeology

has fetishised an abstract metaphysical entity which it calls the 'archaeological record', and it declares it as its primary object of concern and study. Yet the record as such does not exist, neither in the sense of the intention on the part of past people to leave a record of their actions, nor in the sense of objective reality outside the realm of archaeological practice. What exists is only the fragmentary material traces of the past which are then shaped, reordered, organised, recorded and exhibited by archaeologists as the 'record'. The archaeological process of creating the record is conditioned partly by the ability of these fragments of the past to extend their agency into the present (see below), but it is also significantly constrained by socio-political contexts and practices (colonialism, nationalism and so on) and internal disciplinary regimes, ideas and conditions. The fetish of the 'record' is reminiscent of the fetish of the commodity (as analysed by Marxian thought), a key symptom of capitalism. Given the western archaeology's close links with the logic of the commodity since its inception, this fetishisation is perhaps explainable.

These ideas (especially the role of the archaeological practice in producing the 'record') are now increasingly accepted at the level of archaeological thinking, but they have not influenced discussion on ethics and politics in archaeology which seems still to rely on the ideas of objectivism and positivism. As a result, the professionalised archaeologist now declares as his or her primary professional duty, but also primary ethical responsibility, the care and protection of the archaeological record, as any even cursory look at the codes of ethics of professional organisations can reveal. For example, most (if not all) contributors to a recent important volume on ethics (Zimmerman *et al* 2003) take the notion of the 'record' as given and unproblematic. The primary ethical role of archaeologists, therefore, appears simple according to this logic: It is an issue of doing everything they can within their power to protect, rescue and conserve that record 'for future generations'. The problem with this principle is not simply that it is out of synch with the recent discussion on the social history, the genealogy, and the epistemology and nature of archaeological practice. More importantly, this logic has important ethical and material implications 'on the ground' as I will show below.

Finally, the third problematic aspect of the instrumentalisation of ethics is that the political dimension is almost always absent. It seems that for some, the word *politics* in archaeology is becoming again a dirty word, something to be avoided, something that contaminates, biases and distorts the primary archaeological principles and duties. Politics mess up our work and interfere in what we do, the argument goes. In this logic, therefore, ethics become the decoy that can rescue us from politics, and, once we make sure we comply with the ethical

guidelines of our professional organisations, once we have checked the boxes and filled in the forms (along with 'health and safety' forms), then we are okay.

It may sound trivial, but it seems necessary to respond that everything we do in archaeology or in other fields and arenas is political, want it or not. To address the inherently political dimension of archaeology is to address and confront the political means through which it has been constituted as a discipline, to reflect on power structures and dynamics, on power asymmetries, on inequality, inside and outside the discipline. It also means to always ask the question, who is benefiting from our archaeological and other interventions, and at whose expense? What kind of class, gender, ethnic, national or other interests are being promoted by our interventions? This political ethic also constitutes the most profound and penetrating archaeological reflexivity, unlike recent attempts at reflexivity that have ducked the political, and have often failed to go beyond the level of western individual morality or the level of purely archaeological techniques.

I argue that it is this *principle of political ethic* that provides the best antidote to the instrumentalisation and professionalisation of ethical debate. Instrumentalism sees ethics as a tool, as a purely technical device, that can be used to achieve something else, most commonly to continue doing archaeology as normal, to declare that it is 'business as usual', now with the additional advantage of a clear ethical consciousness. I do not wish to deny the good intentions of many archaeologists involved in these procedures; nor that the adoption of ethical principles, even in their instrumentalised form, *may* result in different practices, and at times benefit disadvantaged and persecuted groups and communities. But due to the inherently depoliticised nature of these debates, most of the time they result in generic and vague calls to support and benefit the 'community', the 'people', the 'locals' and so on; they thus implicitly ignore the conflicting interests amongst these diverse groups and take for granted that archaeology and heritage (most often meant in its modernist sense) is good for 'them', only if we could share its benefits with those 'others'. By contrast, the political ethic puts the archaeological enterprise constantly into doubt, asking always the difficult questions, including the most fundamental of all: Why archaeology? These unsettling questions are bound to have unpredictable outcomes and may lead to the abandonment of specific archaeological projects, but then again, who said that archaeology is always a 'good thing'?

I thus contend that it is this political ethic that can provide a way forward and a potential solution to the problems identified by recent critiques of codification and of the managerial view of ethics; it is the same principle, the political ethic, that may potentially help resolve a key dilemma: that of universal versus context-specific and situated ethics.

While, as several authors have suggested, ethical actions and practices are always situated, we need something else if we are to avoid the paralysis of ethical relativism: and that is, politically situated ethics. This does not mean universal and abstract ethics, in fact it means the opposite: It means ethics that take sides, that recognise the contingency and historicity of human action, the nexus that links knowledge and power and produces specific 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1980). These are also ethics that acknowledge the inequalities and asymmetries of power and the necessity to adopt a stance that sides with certain interests and groups and against others. It is this ethic that moves the debate from the arena of abstract principles within professional structures to the arena of theorised practice. The political ethic is an embedded ethic, and at the same time is a social ethic, an ethic that goes beyond western individuality by recognising the need to address social dynamics (such as class struggle, labour, feminist, green or anti-capitalist movements), and forge alliances with affected groups and people with whom these specific archaeologists share political convictions and goals. I do not suggest that this process is easy, unproblematic and straightforward; in fact it is the most difficult, uncomfortable and risky of the options open to us, but still the one that holds the most promise.

AN ETHICS OF STEWARDSHIP?

Let me illustrate some of these problems and some of the suggested ideas for tackling them by looking at a key concept; a concept that, more than any other, has been at the centre of the archaeological discussions on ethics, that is the concept of stewardship. A look at the codes of ethics and practice of most professional archaeological organisations will show that the primary ethical principle advocated is that of the stewardship of the archaeological record. Here is what the first principle of the Code of Ethics of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA, the largest professional archaeological organisation in the world, which includes academics as well as CRM archaeologists, and plays a key role in the discussion on ethics worldwide) says, under the title of stewardship:

The archaeological record, that is, *in situ* archaeological material and sites, archaeological collections, records and reports, is irreplaceable. It is the responsibility of all archaeologists to work for the long-term conservation and protection of the archaeological record by practicing and promoting stewardship of the archaeological record. Stewards are both caretakers of and advocates for the archaeological record for the benefit of all people; as they investigate and interpret the record, they use the specialized knowledge they gain to promote public understanding and support for its long-term preservation. (www.saa.org)

The code in which this article forms the most fundamental principle was adopted in 1996, and it was the result of extensive consultation and debate. To my knowledge, this was the first archaeological professional body to adopt this principle. In 1997, the European Association of Archaeologists adopted a similar code, where again the stewardship of the archaeological record forms a fundamental principle (see www.e-a-a.org). It is not my intention here to discuss these codes as a whole (which address many important issues, containing at the same time many contradictions: *cf* Zimmerman 1995), nor even to engage in a broad-ranging discussion on the origins, the biography, the meanings and the effect of the concept of stewardship (which is encountered today in a variety of contexts, from environmental conservation to religion). I only want to interrogate very briefly a specific entanglement of this concept: the association of this idea with ethics, responsibility and advocacy, and the archaeological record (*cf* also Groarke and Warrick 2006; McGuire 1997; Zimmerman 1998 for rare critiques).

If one reads the reports and documents that are associated with the adoption of this principle (eg, Lynott and Wylie 1995) and talks to some of the people who were involved in it, the concept was thought to be an accepted alternative to the concept of ownership. The SAA had to come to terms with the pressing question, Who owns the past? – a question that had acquired a key importance since the challenge leveled at archaeologists from indigenous groups in the USA. At the same time, it had to deal with the increasing commercialisation of the past that took various forms: from the vast sums of money circulated in the market of looted artefacts (sustained by powerful, wealthy collectors and museums) to the pressure of land owners and developers who were (and are) keen to maximise profits and who treat attempts to rescue antiquities as an obstacle. In that sense, declaring that the archaeologist is not the owner of the material past but its steward, and declaring as the primary duty of that steward the care for and protection of that past, solves two problems at once: It sends the message to indigenous groups that archaeologists are there to protect a shared value (indeed the concept of ‘shared stewardship’ is often employed) rather than claiming exclusive rights of ownership, and it encourages archaeologists to stand up to the destruction of the material traces of the past by developers, looters and others.

Seen in the above light, the principle of stewardship appears to play a dual political role: It counters the logic of private property which is at the basis of capitalist modernity, and it encourages archaeologists to oppose the destruction that results from the ceaseless race for profit. Nevertheless, the concept becomes hugely problematic when its effects ‘on the ground’ are taken into account. I discussed above how the concept of the archaeological ‘record’ has been shown to be problematic for

archaeology, in that it is an entity not given but constructed by archaeologists and others out of the material fragments of the past. For archaeologists, therefore, to declare that their primary responsibility is the care and preservation of and advocacy for the record sounds suspiciously self-serving, as some authors recognise (eg, Wylie 2002, 2005). The stewardship principle, of course, justifies this duty/task as a mission for the 'benefit of all people', an aim that appears laudable at first. The idea of archaeology as a 'benefit to all people' may have been intended to oppose the notion of purely archaeological interests, or the interests of a few, but in its generality, abstraction and universality, it sounds vacuous and inconsequential. At the end of the day we should not aim at benefitting the people who already benefit from inequality and power asymmetry but rather protect the people who suffer from these inequalities and asymmetries. Moreover, given the genealogy and history of the development of official, western archaeology (a genealogy that is not acknowledged in these formulations), why should archaeologists declare themselves the sole advocates of the 'record', and why should official, western archaeology play that role, as opposed to, say, alternative archaeologies, be they indigenous or other (cf Zimmerman 1998)? The concept of shared stewardship, which is meant to establish a collaborative mission of care and protection, has attempted to address this last question, but its impact and acceptance is still limited. Furthermore, the implied idea that this responsibility and advocacy aims at preserving the 'record' for future generations (an idea evoked in the passage above by the repeated use of the expression 'long-term') can mean that archaeologists abrogate themselves of the responsibilities towards the present and towards the living (cf Duke 2003).

Perhaps the most problematic notion in the above formulation is the idea of the 'conservation and protection of the archaeological record'. A discussion on the ethic of conservation and its genealogy in archaeology is long overdue (cf Ouzman 2006). This ethic has been the cornerstone of official, western archaeology since its inception as an autonomous discipline. Perhaps it needs to be reminded that this is not a universally accepted principle and should not be proclaimed as such in an unproblematic manner. A number of groups and people worldwide who practice their own alternative archaeologies do not necessarily consider the conservation of the material past as fundamental. Artefacts, sites and material fragments are often living and in a process of constant change and transformation, as the case of the continuous remaking of the Australian aboriginal rock art (one example among many) indicates (cf Mowaljarlai *et al* 1988). In other contexts such as in some areas in Papua New Guinea, people may want to produce forgetful landscapes, to 'cover the tracks' of their ancestors, rather than expose and preserve them (cf Harrison 2004). In still other cases, the

destruction, decay or death of an artefact is part of its biography and is essential if this artefact is to perform its social role within a community, such as to generate remembering and forgetting for example, as in the case of the Melanesian Malanggan figurines (cf Kùchler 2002). In the case of the Zhu Botswana rock art, the installing of a shelter to protect rock art from rainwater damage was not deemed necessary according to Zhu adviser Toma, 'because the rock art's authors were gone and the mountain was reclaiming its images' (cited in Ouzman 2006:347). A Zuni spokesman made this point eloquently: 'Everything for ceremonial, religious, and ritual purposes that my culture makes is meant to disintegrate ... to go back into the ground. Conservation is a disservice to my culture' (cited in Sease 1998:106; see also Lowenthal 2000, with further discussion).

One could claim, of course, that in my examples there is a living and active relationship between the people who made these artefacts and the artefacts themselves; also that we can know how these people wish the artefacts to be treated and we can thus take these views into account (or better, allow *them* to practice their own alternative archaeology), something we cannot do with the material traces of people long dead. A second objection to my argument could be that destruction due to commercial profit, ethnic or national conflict, is rife today, and the best thing we could do is to protect these traces in the face of greed, national and ethnic hatred, or indifference.

Both arguments are valid, and I do not suggest here that we should declare all attempts at conservation problematic, futile and useless. But it must be remembered that the ethic of conservation is context-specific, seeped in its western origins and linked to the logic of commodity and to identity processes such as colonial and national glorification. Bernbeck and Pollock (this volume) remind us of that important phrase by Walter Benjamin, that there is no document of 'civilisation' that is not at the same time also a document of barbarism and, indeed, conservation in archaeology since the 18th century has always been accompanied by destruction (cf Arrhenius 2003). In other words, archaeologists and others were and are engaging in a selective conservation of some material traces and the erasure and destruction of others. The purification of 'sacred' national sites by archaeologists from their 'barbaric' remnants around them as in the Athenian Acropolis in the 19th century is now well documented (eg, Hamilakis 2003a, 2007). Even the process of excavation today creates a certain selective record (depending on research priorities, techniques and so on) and it eliminates a range of other possible 'records' (that is, alternative material constructions of the past).

In view of the above, therefore, the political ethic approach that I am advocating here should always ask, who wants to conserve and why?

Who wants to destroy and why? What interests are being served today by the destruction or the conservation of the material traces of the past? And furthermore, what are the broader issues at stake for the different communities and groups today, in each context? These questions will help provide context-specific answers to the dilemmas of conservation and protection. In addition, in some cases archaeologists may want to borrow concepts from the green movement and implement a strategy of sustainability (*cf* Lyons 2003:305), but even this principle carries its own problems and should be subjected to political critique rather than seen as a transcendental value.

It is, of course, disingenuous to assume that all archaeologists today will share the same ethical and political views on this and other issues. And this is one of the central fallacies of any attempt by professional archaeological organisations to establish unified codes of ethics and practice. Archaeologists are divided not only by gender, ethnic and national origin (although in the western world, they are overwhelmingly white), but also by rank and, by implication, class, income and hierarchical position. Why should we assume that the managers of major archaeological firms in the CRM sector share the same interests and ideas with the many thousands of low-paid, often itinerant 'diggers' in short-term jobs (*cf* Everill this volume)? This diverse group will necessarily provide equally diverse answers to the above dilemmas, but for the archaeologists who are concerned about social justice and inequality (within and beyond their own context), attitudes towards preservation and destruction, and, by implication, the archaeologists' role and stance in relation to them, will depend on whether equality and social justice are being advanced or whether their archaeological intervention promotes instead commercialisation, class, gender, ethnic or other inequality, or furthers private profit, or operates as the ethical and environmental pretext for the destruction of habitats and communities. The case of prioritising 'rescue' archaeological projects ahead of major 'development' plans is a vivid example of this (*cf* Ronayne, this volume).

Western official archaeology relies on a linear temporality that assumes a radical break between past and present. It also relies on a sharp separation between humans and inanimate things. At the level of archaeological and social thinking, these notions are of course put into doubt by developments such as the anthropology of agency (*eg*, Gell 1998) and theories of materiality (*eg*, Brown 2001) which have shown the agency-like properties of objects and things, the archaeology of contemporary life (*eg*, Buchli and Lucas 2001) and the field of material culture studies, as well as the archaeology of memory that looks at the 'past in the past' – in other words, the reworking of and constant engagement with past material forms (*eg*, Van Dyke and Alcock 2003).

I want to go one step further and suggest that, as an essential property of materiality is its duration (*cf* Bergson 1988), the material traces initially created in the past embody and re-enact in the present a multi-temporal existence: Their origins lie in the past and they thus carry with them the temporality of the past into that of the present; as such, they are alive, especially when they are implicated in a reciprocal engagement of making and remaking with humans. Archaeologies, both the official one and the alternative ones, deal with the present, not the past; but this is a multi-temporal present, not one that is sharply separated from the past; they also deal not only with the living people who are engaging with these traces today, but also with the material traces of dead people, that is, a projection of their existence into the present.

This thesis has two important implications: firstly, that contemporary people who are engaging with these traces today may have views on their treatment which must be respected, as indigenous archaeologies have been saying for years; and secondly and more importantly, archaeologists, much like anthropologists, engage with living animate and inanimate entities, not dead communities, people and things. They are thus responsible towards the present-day people and to the material traces that may come from the past but continue to live in the present, including the material traces of past people (*cf* Tarlow 2006). This creates a much more complex set of responsibilities but one that is more consistent with nuanced understandings of time, history and materiality, and one that is in tune with widespread beliefs outside western modernity. It also carries a sense of responsibility that prevents archaeologists from treating material things and human remains simply as objects for scholarly study, or creating a distinction between past and present and thus adopting a conveniently escapist view, ignoring present-day people and communities as separate and distant from the past.

Again, the principle of political ethic does not imply that archaeologists and others should always side with these people and communities; they should instead adopt a critical stance towards them, depending on each group's position within the structures of power, views, practices and interests. But this fundamental principle – that we deal with living animate and inanimate entities, not dead people – puts a different light on the notion of stewardship of the record, and brings us much closer to the ethical position of anthropologists and others who have long accepted this principle.

A look at a recent event will help put these ideas into perspective. I refer to the archaeological reactions to the looting of the Baghdad museum and the looting and destruction of archaeological sites following the 2003 US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. The events are

now well known, and I come straight to my point. I claimed elsewhere (Hamilakis 2003b) that, like the apartheid in 1986 (and the subsequent foundation of the World Archaeological Congress), this event represents nothing less than a deep ethical crisis in archaeology that demands serious debate. Archaeologists, both individuals and organisations, before and after the invasion, engaged in a serious and consistent attempt to emphasise the potential dangers and later the losses from looting and destruction. And this is fine; it is their job after all. But several organisations and individuals did more than that: They in fact acted as advisors to the Pentagon and the British Ministry of Defense in providing information and lists of sites to be spared during the bombing of Iraq (*cf* Stone 2005), an advisory role that may become permanent, so that the invading armies can avoid the embarrassment of looted museums 'next time' (Stone 2005). These advisors thus became 'embedded' archaeologists offering professional expertise without explicitly and publicly questioning (with rare exceptions) the ethical and political justification of their own actions and of the war operations of which they became part. In one of the most extreme expressions of this phenomenon, many major archaeological organisations in the USA signed a letter to the president calling for the rescue of antiquities, in which the rhetoric of the invading countries was completely adopted, and where the invasion was called a 'return to freedom of the Iraqi people'; in another passage the signatories stated that

[d]uring the fierce fighting of the past few weeks, we were relieved to see that our military leaders and the coalition partners took extreme precautions to avoid targeting cultural sites along with other non-military places. It was also comforting to receive reports that our armed forces have conducted inspections at some of the important archaeological sites. (cited in Hamilakis 2003b)

All this was written when tens of thousands of civilians were killed, and the vast majority of people in the world (including a large proportion within the USA) were opposed to a war that they saw as illegal and immoral and part of a neo-imperial strategy, claims that were vindicated by later events. Leaving aside the adoption of a nationalist rhetoric (when so much has been written recently on archaeology and nationalism), it is clear that archaeologists here feel that in calling for the rescue of antiquities in Iraq they fulfill their duties as the stewards and advocates of the 'record'. Moreover, archaeologists have constructed this 'record' in a highly selective manner, as the production of a list of sites to be protected (as opposed to a holistic approach that sees the whole country, with its living and non-living entities, as heritage to be protected), primarily on the basis of the highly problematic (Eurocentric and racist) rhetoric of the 'cradle of civilisation',

prioritising certain ancient Mesopotamian 'firsts' such as writing and urbanisation. Finally, archaeologists have performed an act of symbolic appropriation by declaring this 'cradle of civilisation' as western heritage (*cf* Pollock 2005 for further discussion), justified on the basis of the ethic of stewardship that imposes a western idea of what constitutes the archaeological 'record', heritage, and the sites worthy to be rescued, upon a non-western context.

In the ongoing Iraq war, archaeologists have failed the people of Iraq. The approach of the political ethic would have emphasised the holistic nature of the materiality of heritage, stressing that the human beings who were (and are) being killed daily are the most important agents of this heritage, and that they should thus be the number one priority. It would have also opposed the invasion and the war outright, on the basis of the overwhelming empirical, legal, ethical and political arguments, joining forces with the world anti-war movement. Since 2003 other phenomena, including the undertaking of archaeological surveys and other work with the collaboration and protection of the occupying armies, and the opening of the pages of a major archaeological journal to a US Army officer (where, among other things, he attacks anti-war archaeologists – Bogdanos 2005), testify further to the subjugation of this professionalised archaeology to the dominant structures of power.

AGENDAS OF THE POLITICAL ETHIC: EPILOGUE

In this chapter, I have argued that the debate on ethics in archaeology should adopt an explicitly political approach, what I call the political ethic. It is an approach that not only acknowledges the power dynamics, asymmetries and inequalities both within archaeology and in the broader world, but also takes a political stance in today's battlegrounds and conflicts. It is an approach that is in tune with current theoretical discussion; it recognises that what we call archaeology is only the modernist, western official archaeology, and that a range of alternative archaeologies exist both within and especially outside western modernity. It is a stance that acknowledges the context-specific and situated nature of ethical dilemmas and rejects abstract universalism, but at the same time, rather than adopting an ethical relativism, opts for political values such as social justice and an end to all discrimination and inequality. Finally, it is an approach that embeds ethics into practice but at the same time acknowledges that practice means the adoption of an active stance in today's clashes and battlegrounds. This approach is related to (but not necessarily in full agreement with) various approaches proposed in anthropology (eg, Caplan 2003a, esp. introduction, 2003b), especially within the American Anthropological Association where several voices have

called for an activist role for anthropologists, an explicitly political stance, and for the role of the anthropologist as witness (*cf* Scheper-Hughes 1995). In archaeology, this approach is close to the thinking that has defined archaeology as a craft rather than a profession (Shanks and McGuire 1996), and the view that sees archaeology as social praxis (*cf* McGuire *et al* 2005). It also builds on my previous call (Hamilakis 1999, after Said 1994) for the archaeologist to see her/himself not as a steward of the 'record', but as an active intellectual who is involved in the field of cultural production and who maintains her/his critical autonomy and resists professionalisation.

One could argue that there is a danger in this thesis: that the political ethic may mean the adoption of one specific set of ethics and politics, for example the politics of the author in this case, and/or that it will be difficult to define goals such as 'social justice', even in context-specific situations. First, I have made it clear that the political ethic is a collective rather than an individual ethic, one that is against the notion of western individual morality. The collectivity in this case is one based on shared ideas for the present and the future; these are the ideas of an emancipatory post-capitalist present and future where equality, freedom from all discrimination, and social justice are fundamental. It will mean the alliance with like-minded archaeologists against others, as it will also mean the alliance with some broader groups and collectivities against others. As for the definition of social justice, the concept as I employ it here, while relying on the 19th- and 20th-century major social liberation movements with Marxism being the most prominent, also relates to more recent movements fighting for freedom from all forms of exploitation, based on the constant resistance to hegemonic structures and ideologies, from patriarchy, racism and xenophobia to ruthless neo-liberal capitalism. It is the *articulation* of until recently disparate movements, identity quests, and claims, in a non-totalising but coordinated political discourse and praxis that is the big and difficult challenge for anti-capitalist politics in archaeology and more broadly (*cf* Butler *et al* 2000 esp. 298–301).

The suggested approach could contribute to the reinvigoration of the political project in archaeology. The return of the political (*cf* Hamilakis 2005) and the establishment of the political ethic, however, will not be the work of a single contribution. It is a collective project and should be in constant contact and communication with the movements and groups with which it shares ideas, values, and causes. The essays that follow in this volume are a significant contribution towards the achievement of that goal.

I would like to end with a brief account of some of the many directions that the approach of the political ethic could take. An explicitly political archaeology should address the genealogy of official archaeology as a

device of western capitalist modernity, and interrogate the conservation (and exhibition) ethic and the power dynamics that gave birth and continue to sustain this device. This means not simply the investigation of how, for example, colonialism, nationalism or capitalism have shaped archaeological thinking and practice, but also how archaeological practice itself has contributed and continues to contribute to the reproduction of these ideologies and practices. The chapters by Bernbeck and Pollock, Kehoe, Mourad, Nicholas and Hollowell, and Riggs all deal with these issues. The political ethic should also re-examine the often depoliticised ethical stances adopted by archaeologists and others in major issues, such as repatriation of cultural 'property', reburial and the treatment of the dead, and indigenous issues. Bauer *et al*, for example, point out that we should be asking 'who is benefitting from the restitution of cultural artefacts in each context?', and Shepherd proposes that we should examine the recent exhumations in downtown Cape Town in light of the current political climate and the inequalities and struggles in post-apartheid South Africa. As one of the black activists noted in relation to the burials of black people who were to be exhumed from the now prime real estate land in downtown Cape Town, 'that is a site they have owned for the first time in their lives', thus shifting with a simple phrase the debate on reburial into the arena of past and present ownership, exploitation and destitution.

The adoption of the political ethic also means that a central concern should be the critical exploration of the political economy of the archaeological practice, in the field, in academia, in the museums and in the 'heritage' sector. This does not mean simply discussion and debate on the commodification of material traces of the past by the heritage industry, however important that discussion may be, but also the political economy of doing archaeology in terms of funding and sponsorship, wages and salaries, exploitation and work hierarchies, the politics of academic publishing, the politics of involvement in the neo-liberal capitalist university (*cf* Hamilakis 2004), and the politics of production and reproduction of authority and prestige, be it patronage or selective citation strategies (*cf* Hutson 1998). Why is it, for example, that there is so little discussion on the ethics and politics of sponsorship of archaeological projects by major corporations with questionable environmental and human rights records (Çatal Höyük being the most prominent but hardly the only example – *cf* Hamilakis 1999)? Or on the strategies of major Anglo-American publishers (with the complicity and collaboration of academics) to market ideas of primarily Anglo-American origin and authorship as *the* global – and the only – authoritative agenda-setting voices in the discipline? The chapters by Everill, Funari and Robrahn-González, Silberman, Silverman, and Riggs all address aspects of the political economy of archaeology.

The political ethic in archaeology should attempt to combine the political-ethical arena with the micro- and macro-scale – that is, the micro-politics of a community with the macro-politics of power, from neo-liberal economics to imperialism and neo-colonialism. This is particularly important today when the reinvigorated concept of community archaeology offers much hope (*cf* Marshall 2002), although community archaeology may be in danger of positioning itself as the antidote to macro-politics which are too often seen as irrelevant at the local level. ‘Community’ of course is not an undifferentiated and homogenous whole but includes many and at times conflicting interests. The political ethic approach asks: Who in the community is benefitting from any community archaeology project, and how are local structures of power implicated in it? For example, how do the alliances and pacts that archaeologists have to make at the local level empower some groups and marginalise others? Importantly, community, especially in view of the recent globalised phenomena, is not a space immune to the macro-scale, and the effects and workings of neo-liberalism, colonialism and nationalism; in fact, the local community is the space where these processes find a direct and explicit expression. A political-ethical approach therefore, should explore the articulations of the macro- with the micro-scale, the local expressions and effects of these broader processes. The chapters here by Saitta, Ronayne, and Gassiot *et al* propose an alternative community archaeology that combines the micro-political with the macro-political, embedding at the same time ethics into practice and in the arena of political struggles of today, from labour rights, to the support of communities displaced by corporate capitalism, to the fight for democratisation.

Finally, the key ethical issue of indigenous rights and claims, an area where most of the recent advances seem to have been achieved, needs to be problematised further from the point of view of the political ethic. Such an ethic, for example, should suggest that we examine indigeneity in relation to the severe social problems some of these groups face, in terms of employment, income, educational opportunities and health, and in conjunction with the debate on claims on property, and the right of these groups to establish their own alternative archaeology. The same logic should recognise that indigenous movements against neo-liberal capitalism (such as, for example, the fight against the privatisation of utilities and resources in South American countries) is part of the indigenous struggle for self-determination and a living heritage; they thus deserve consideration and support. At the same time, however, it should be recognised that in some contexts, such as in Europe, for example, the concept of indigenism may acquire exclusivist political connotations, and fuel racism against immigrants and refugees. Finally, the approach of the political ethic recognises that the

important postcolonial critique within which indigenous issues are often discussed should neither imply that early colonialist mentalities are dead, nor that neo-colonial practices and projects are non-existent, as the recent imperial wars have reminded us. Nicholas and Hollowell address some of these issues in their contribution.

As Bauman has recognised, the complex realities of late modernity (or postmodernity) at the start of the third millennium, and the subsequent academic deconstructionist projects, have not made the ethical and political questions less relevant; in fact they have made them more relevant and urgent than before (Bauman 1993:250):

Contrary to one of the most common uncritically accepted philosophical axioms, there is no contradiction between the rejection of (or skepticism towards) the ethics of socially conventionalized and rationally 'founded' norms, and the insistence that it does matter, and *matter morally*, what we do and from what we desist. Far from excluding each other, the two can be accepted or rejected only together.

If archaeologists in the 1980s were radicalised by the struggle against apartheid, today's western archaeologists may wish to reflect on new segregations such as the ones affecting the urban poor, or the millions of economic and political immigrants. If race and gender were the key issues a few decades ago, today class (despite the changes in the industrial structures in the developed world) is emerging yet again as key (*cf* Duke and Saitta 1998), often in close articulation with race, ethnicity or gender; as noted earlier, it is these intersections and articulations that we need to examine urgently today, rather than continuing to treat specific identity quests in isolation and identify politics as a fragmented field (*cf* Conkey 2005). Archaeologists may also wish to consider their ethical and political response to the militarisation of society everywhere, whether it is the bombing of non-western countries or the panoptic surveillance and the imposition of draconian anti-democratic 'terrorism' laws 'at home'. Materiality, time and history – that is, the key concepts of our craft – are at the heart of these social phenomena. Moreover, as we saw in the case of Iraq, militarisation is threatening to engulf (as in the 18th and 19th centuries) the whole western archaeological project. Political-ethical responses are as urgent today as they were 20 years ago. This book does not advance a unified party line, nor is it an evangelical call to arms. It is, however, an academic and political intervention that, through a range of approaches and case-studies, demonstrates the need to repoliticise ethics, that is, to be attuned and attentive to the pain of the other; to be reflexively aware of the knowledge/power nexus; and to accept that the political-ethical dilemmas and decisions will have to be constantly debated in the arenas of today's social clashes and struggles,

where archaeologists, like all others, will have to take sides, maintaining at the same time their critical autonomy from professionalisation, institutions, and structures of power.

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