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From the history of eastern and western archaeological thought: An introduction to discussion

In accordance with the aim of this meeting, which is a discussion on the history of archaeological thought and a deepening of the bond between theory and practice in our discipline throughout our continent, I shall allow myself a short discussion of the main problems connected with the advancement of knowledge within the scope of processes differentiated by archaeology: the socio-cultural process, the source-formative process and the discovery process.

The first of these, i. e. the socio-cultural one, is a primary process. The second, the source-formative process, is a secondary one, dependent on the primary process. The third, the discovery process is also a secondary process, dependent mainly on the primary one, and on the source-formative process. These processes treated jointly comprise a certain "sample space" within which the archaeologist works, realizing his research program. At the same time, it should be stressed that of these three kinds of processes, the primary one, on which the attention of the researcher, as such, is concentrated, the secondary one – dependent on the primary process, and the discovery process – dependent on the secondary one, characterize the cognitive discovery process of many historical disciplines. In these disciplines, there always exists the key question of a total or at least a partial lack of being able to observe the primary process itself as well as the secondary one. It is not hard to see that this division is, to a certain degree, close to those divisions of methodology proposed by Jerzy Topolski (1973, 30f.; 1976, 30f.; 1983; 1996, 335f.). He divides his methodology into three parts: a pragmatic one (encompassing the theory of source and extra-source knowledge, as well as methods of reconstructing the historical process), a non-pragmatic one (encompassing considerations of what the effects of a historian's work are, the place of history within the sciences and questions of historical truth), and an objective one (including disputes around a given historical fact, its classification, determinability and the conformity of the historical process).

Quite independently of the areas of methodological reflection proposed herein, two aspects are always significant, and should never be lost sight of. These include, on the one hand, the internal methodological structure of our discipline. We simply must consider certain questions concerning it and put them in order. On the other hand, there exists something that, in the terminology of D. L. Clarke, we can generally describe as the ecology of archaeology, i. e. its relationship to other sciences, and not only those directly concerned with the investigation of past societies, but also of nature and technological matters. What is most significant when it comes down to the attitude of archaeology and archaeologists to the "external world" is to constitute optimal relations between archaeology and society. It is, after all, in the name of society that archaeolo-

gists take up and realize their assignments in the course of research, their teaching and the preservation of the cultural heritage.

The socio-cultural process

Within the thought still dominant in many positivistic circles, the object of archaeological research (and also history) is the “objectively existing” and “unrepeatable” reality. This reality exists objectively not only in an ontological sense (as something that had occurred), but also in a cognitive sense, as an already formed and unknown structure of historical facts. The researcher aims to determine these objective facts that are graspable for him. He constructs their image in the form of a one-level linear narration, which R. G. Collingwood (1962, 257f.), not without a certain degree of irony, described as a history of “scissors and paste.” In such a traditional understanding of discourse about the past, the researcher is neither a sovereign nor an autonomous subject of the narration, particularly in view of the “multi-level thinking” of the listener so often prevalent today (Ermath 1992, 78, 194, 213). The crux of the matter lies not only in whether or how much of the source is true or false, but what it signifies. According to Collingwood, F. B. Vico anticipates the later development of historiography. Vico states that the researcher subjects the source materials to evaluation. He treats them as symbols, indicating that the area of “signifie” is most important from the cognitive point of view. The elimination of the history of “scissors and paste” is accomplished by differentiating the reality being presented from the reality of the presentation, i. e. a differentiation between reports about the world and the world as it is (Collingwood 1962; Wrzosek 1998, 414-415). A researcher of the past becomes a sovereign being, an autonomous author presenting the results of his empirical investigations and his own considerations. The crux here is the formulation of questions. The historical source is constituted by all that allows an answer to wisely posed questions. The process of questioning is concentrated more on problems than on epochs. Cast aside are false understandings of differences between subjectivism and objectivism. And it is precisely here that idea of G. B. Vico and R. G. Collingwood obtain full rights to citizenship, and from here that I. Hodder took his idea. John Chapman speaks of this more extensively. In any case, I believe that just as in history (Wrzosek 1998), this idea will for a long time describe the means by which we understand the narration of history.

The main problems of subjective methodology however are causality and matters of determinism in the historical process together with those of explanation. These are ever open and constantly the object of lively discussion, both in the circles of Western countries and Eastern European ones. Personally, closest to me is the approach represented by the so-called Poznań school with Jerzy Topolski, Jerzy Kmita and Anna Pałubicka, particularly the concept of nomological formulas as the fundamental kind of laws available to theoretical historical research (Kmita 1991, 44). This nature characterizes the general statement of historical materialism. It occurs, as well, in evolutionary-biological research. The qualities of a nomological formula constitute a rational basis for an opinion about the idiographic character of historical research, and

also about the non-specificity of the predictions which are based on this research. Nomological formulae are the fundamental laws available to theoretical historical research (the assumptions of historical materialism, for instance, display such a character). These laws also appear within the evolutionary approach (natural selection), in which each unequivocal evolutionary change is something reversibly singular (Pańbicka / Tabaczyński 1986, 91).

On the other hand, I see no fundamental contradictions between such an approach and a logicist program, whose author and chief representative is Jean-Claude Gardin. I see no contradiction between an analysis of language with a logical structure of texts (material, analytical, interpretative) that present the results of knowledge-expanding research (the basis for producing good, from the point of view of logicism, scientific constructions; Gardin 1979, 274), and the seeking out and formulation of overall structures, as the basis for a historical explanation, as understood by Jerzy Kmita.

Both research approaches accept, in any case, that obtaining and gathering knowledge about the past of society is not exclusively the domain of that discipline, e. g. archaeology, but of very many other sciences, and that only a common road leads to designated aims. A considerable expression of weakness in our particular discipline on the cognitive level is what has often been stressed by J.-C. Gardin as an acceptance of ever more new paradigms. The cumulation of these paradigms does not at all mean, as J. Chapman writes in his paper, the discarding of older (it would appear used up and useless) models of scientific activity. Speaking, however, in general terms, the knowledge of archaeologists about past societies is still unusually feeble. The causes of this state of affairs are varied, so that it is not possible to formulate a diagnosis today.

The source-formative process

In the case of the second process – derivative with relation to the first – the source-formative process, known also as the depositional process, or stratification process, considerable progress has also been observed. There have already occurred and will in all certainty occur, the final elimination of the so-called “Pompeii premise” that expressed the archaeologist’s intellectual inability of dealing with relics of the past discovered by himself. We can with certainty discover the mechanisms of many post-depositional processes (which I count here among the source-formative ones, not differentiating the post-depositional process as a separate phenomenon). It will also be possible for a fuller reproduction of the primal structures preserved in the soil as witnesses to the presence and actions of man in the broader natural context. The source-formative process was for many years the object of particular interest among many archaeologists on our continent, for example the works of L. S. Klejn (1978) and E. Neustupný (1993), and also the second volume of *Theory and Practice of Archaeological Research* (1995). The promotion of rescue research, in many countries brought new experiences, and above all new challenges with respect to methodology and excavation techniques in the field. It appears that in this respect many successes can be noted, but one must not, at the same time, forget a growing danger to the substance of artifacts, not only from the point of view of investors working outside the law, but also

the activity of so-called treasure hunters – often common criminals and thieves of our cultural patrimony. Putting a stop to this is one of the unusually pressing, as well as particularly difficult tasks facing the very organizationally weak and legally ineffectual countries of the former Eastern bloc.

The discovery process

Also in the third of the mentioned processes – the discovery process – which is derivative of the first two, i. e. the socio-cultural process and the source-formative process, there has been continuous progress made. This is evident in the course of applied technologies in fieldwork – non-invasive methods are replacing destructive ones, the amount of information in the realm of the natural sciences has increased. The center of gravity has clearly shifted from the find (*Fund*) to its context (*Befund*).

What is more, the discovery process includes a whole grouping of scientific methods by means of which a researcher is able to formulate problems, present subsequent diagnoses, discover, register as well as analyze and interpret the complexes of artifacts together with their biological contexts.

When it comes to the role of paradigms in shaping the discovery process, I tend to share, to a considerable degree, the critical opinion of John Chapman about the excessive tendency to accept new paradigms, while continuing to use existing ones. I also share his opinion, expressing it in the terminology of Thomas Kuhn, that archaeology appears to continuously dwell in the pre-paradigmatic phase of development. I would venture to add – even more; it appears that Kuhn's whole idea, built on the experience of the natural sciences, is not totally congruent to the social sciences. In the matter of paradigmatic roles, I refer you, as well, to an unusually interesting article by J.-C. Gardin (1997, 83-90): "Quand on voit ce qu'on voit, quand on sait c'qu'on sait..." ("When one sees what one sees, when one knows what one knows").

This motto of the inhabitants of Romanesque Switzerland describes the best way in which an archaeologist defines his philosophy, investigates the bond between that in which he believes and that which he knows to be. It is not insignificant, however, to fully realize that independently of the changing models of scientific research, faith in their effectiveness and scientific potential. The ongoing search for new paradigms that are to be something of a panaceum for the troubles and ineffectiveness of the archaeologist's research apparatus, in the course of this century, has achieved evident progress.

It is evident, for example, in technologies for obtaining, gathering and processing information; in simulation programs, in multi-dimensional reconstructions of spatial systems, and also, in opposition to all difficulties, in the course of intellectual cognitive operators, i. e. methodologies and theories. The latter of these will shortly be endowed with artificial intelligence and expert systems in a way that is similar to what is taking place today in geology and medicine, where they serve as a tool for identification and diagnosis (Gallay 1986).

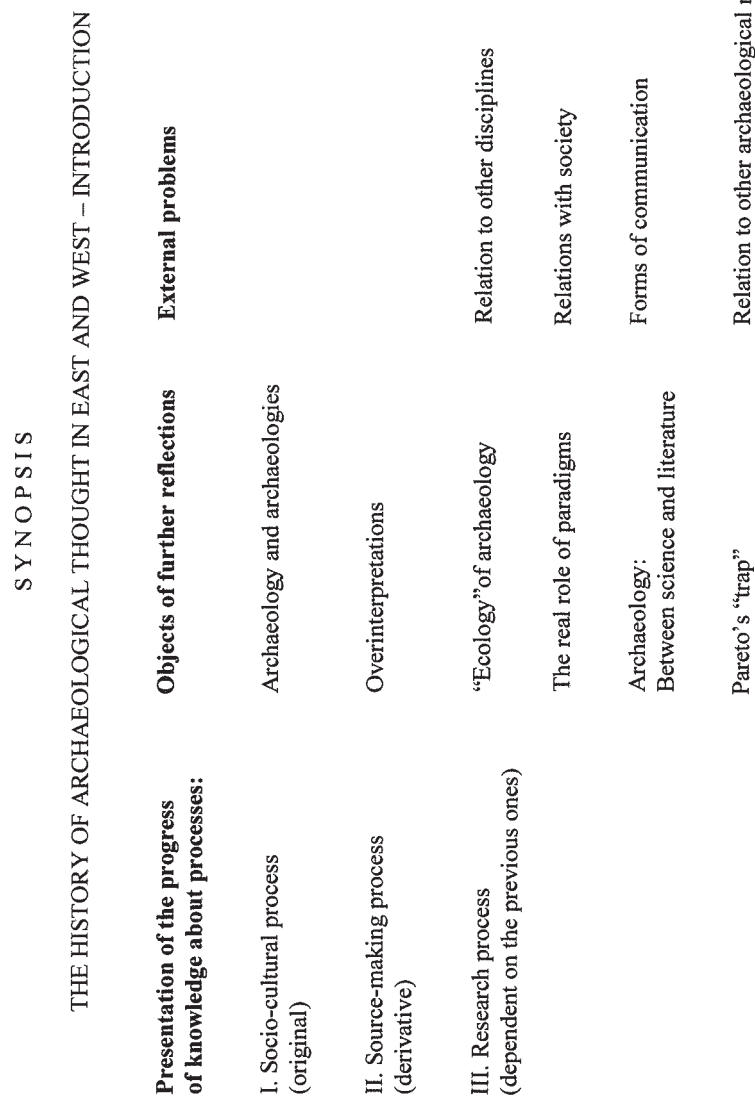


Fig. 1. The history of archaeological thought in east and west.

I would like to conclude my statement with some summary remarks and suggest several problems, which – in my opinion – would require deeper reflection and a more involved discussion.

Conclusions and problems for further reflection

Archaeology and archaeologies: what kinds are there, and what are the possible lines of division among them? Archaeology, independent of any geographic location, i. e. Eastern and Western, from ancient times gradually became a science as it gained the ability to provide information about the past surrounding man. This process occurred, as A. Schnapp so aptly put it, on three main levels: typology, technology and stratigraphy.

I think that the next link in this developmental chain will be a semiotic approach to cultural phenomena.

These overall rules cannot, however, exclude what is unrepeatable, unique, what constitutes a separation in the history of archaeological thought in all the given countries, or communities of Europe. At that point, the question arises whether and to what degree there is justification in this situation. It might appear somewhat premature, for such generalizations as, i. e. placing the “Archaeologies of the West” versus the “Archaeologies of the East” on the basis of the strictly political criteria of the Yalta Treaty. No one will, of course, deny the sensible consequences of this division. Does not this division, treated as an overriding one, however, not overshadow other equally, if not more important, divisions of archaeological circles in various countries?

Archaeologists have always acted within society and for a society. The differences of cultural traditions as well as the changing political situations of these societies had and continue to have no small effect on the investigation of their ancient and more recent past. An example might be taken from any archaeological community; my choice, however, is taken from the example of Polish archaeology. It had, to a large degree, developed and traditionally remained under the influence of German science (I needn't remind here that Józef Kostrzewski was, of course, the student of Gustaf Kossinna). It was, however, in the latter half of this century, following 1956, much closer to French and Italian archaeology. Polish archaeology had, thanks to the influence of the Parisian *Annales* school, much closer contacts with them (both in regards to research and publications) than with, e. g., West-German archaeology. Polish contacts with Russian archaeology and that of other countries of the so-called “bloc” were, however, more formal than substantive, including, as well, questions connected with Slavic archaeology.

It should, however, be remembered that from the 1950s, Poland became an area for contacts and scientific cooperation that included an exchange of both persons as well as scientific thought. It is enough to mention the joint Polish-Italian research on the beginnings of Venice, in cooperation with the *Fondazione Giorgio Cini*, crowned by a considerable monograph published in Rome, or of the many years of research on the culture and society of the Langobards in Castelseprio, Capaccio Vecchia, Civita di Ogliara, conducted in cooperation with other Italian institutions and which also re-

sulted in extensive monographs. Mention should also be made of the long-term research, also including joint excavations and publications, with *École Pratique des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris. The many years of joint Polish-American research has continued on to this day in the Valley of the Nile as well as on Neolithic sites in Southern Poland. Partners in these works were the Universities of Dallas, Michigan and New York, and provide just a few examples of such joint projects.

Ethnic overinterpretation and materialistic vulgarization of the
“covering-law model”

Against any easy juxtaposition of archaeologies of East and West is also the influence of nationalism – destructive of the very fabric of scientific activity. Ethnic overinterpretation conducted for these reasons undermines, in every measure, the plausibility of archaeology as a scientific discipline. Here, however, one cannot delimit regions characterized by the number of scientists influenced by this type of unscientific emotion by an arbitrarily proposed line dividing the Eastern from Western part of our continent. The influence of nationalistic ideas touched Italy (from the “*teoria Pigoriniana*” to fascist archaeology) as well as Germany (Kossinna and the effects of his theory). As a consequence, only later did it spread to the countries of Central Europe, among them Poland (Kostrzewski and his students, in reaction to the conclusions of Kossinna’s theory, but without a substantive critique of its basis) and Russia (among others, opposition to the Norman theory, dictated more by emotional than any substantive reasons). The truth, however, is that the yet unhealed wounds inflicted upon archaeology by nationalistic ideas were layered, both in Poland and in other countries of the bloc, with the top-down enforced influence (meeting with varied success) of vulgar materialism. These two conditions, radical nationalism, poisoning the soul and darkening the minds of researchers, as well as the official ideology forced, of course, not only upon archaeology, but on all the humanities, as well, constitute a factor influencing both the development of scientific thought as well as research practice. They are also a factor accompanying the development of our discipline in the last half-century, and its consequences have yet to be fully overcome.

I believe the fact of over-interpreting the historical process, in keeping with previously formulated postulates, to be one of the greatest mistakes made in the countries of the bloc dominated by vulgar Marxism. There was a time here, when the Morgan-Engels periodization model was treated as though it was something of a Hempelian “covering-law model”. The interpretation and, at the same time, explanation of the investigated phenomenon (event) was performed by its subsumption under this periodization model, expressing in the false conviction of the authors of this overinterpretation, a more general relationship and generally recognized consistency. The role of archaeology here, amounted to providing falsely postulated rules with empirical material. No doubt, this is one of the main sins of vulgarly understood and obsessively enforced official Marxism. Properly understood Marxism and process-based archaeology led, no doubt, to the neutralization of these vulgarisms, and to a fuller and deeper understanding of the very essence of the historical process and the attitude of the researcher to the reality being investigated. In Poland, in any case, with its honor-

able tradition in the realm of the social sciences, beginning with Florian Znaniecki in the 1920s (see Kmita 1991, 94), these subtleties in understanding post-process-oriented tendencies were probably more easily understood than elsewhere.

Archaeology within the context of other disciplines

Among the sciences dealing with the societal past, archaeology occupies – as we know – a unique place. Investigation of the most ancient historical periods belongs to a discipline that was formed most recently. Since it is thoroughly humanistic, it is most closely bound with the social and technical sciences. In drawing on the wealth of these disciplines, it provides them, in return, the priceless value of empirical data. In formulating new research questions, it expands and often initiates the very direction of this research.

However, one has the impression that we have traversed only the first step on the road leading to an integral understanding of the social past. Archaeology constitutes an important, though not the only, tract on that wide road travelled by cultural anthropology and other social sciences. In contemporary understanding, the historical sciences comprise a formulation of new questions in an ever-newer dialogue with the past. Our civilization is the first to have created a science about human culture on a global scale, penetrating the identifiable confirmation of the presence and activity of man from primeval times to contemporary ones. Thus, they fulfil an important social cognitive function and satisfy, in keeping with the progress of research, the growing needs of historical self-knowledge, particularly significant in light of the expanding processes of integration, expanding over the face of the globe on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

Archaeology, providing empirical matter of unprecedented scientific value, has drawn upon and should continue to draw upon the wealth of other sciences.

The cognitive structure of archaeology and history – Between science and literature

I believe the archaeologist's research facility that has developed over the decades during which our discipline was being formed, must continue, to a certain extent, to account for the fact that archaeology is, at the same time, a science and a literature. To this extent, I fully accept the view of Jean-Claude Gardin and Maria Borghetti (1995) in criticizing proposals encouraging a hybridization of two essentially different ways of approaching the investigation of reality. One approach is logical-scientific and proper to the exact sciences, while the other is a narrative one, proper to research on society and its culture. Like Gardin and Borghetti, I do not believe that there is any possibility of some third road ("terza via" or "via di mezzo" – as these researchers say) of scientific activity. I am convinced, however, that both approaches should find a place – a particular place for themselves – within the structure of scientific activity on the part of archaeologists, historians, historians of art and other representatives of the humanities.

The future of peripheral archaeologies. Transition or transformation:
how to avoid Pareto's "trap"

Will the meeting of the archaeologies of the East and West be seen only as an encouragement to catch-up with the model of the archaeologies in the developed countries of the post-industrial era by the archaeology of the East? Would this not be a naïve and unrealistic illusion? Vilfredo Pareto – as the well known Polish sociologist and anthropologist Zygmunt Bauman recently reminded – rightfully stresses that "progress, at any given time, runs along a curve, but so that it can occur, people must view the aim along the tangent at its point of contact. The problem exists, insofar as the formulas that are the systems of this relationship, change before the goal is reached, thus, the distance between the goal and our aim cannot be completely overcome; what we are dealing with is a continuous chase" (Bauman 1993, 21).

Is it, thus, proper to embrace a strategy of achieving a desired and previously described state, which cannot be defined in a way sufficient to allow us to avoid the "trap" described by Vilfredo Pareto of playing methodological blind-man's buff with more developed milieu?

Is it not thus better and safer to accept a paradigm of transformation (rather than transition)? This paradigm does not describe from the outset a state we wish to achieve, but assumes that it will only gradually be shaped in a process of scientific activity, accumulated experiences and deepened critical reflections. This paradigm is an open one and thus does not exclude any viable route to achieve the aim. This may even include the potential of intellectual achievements by Marxist thought (as Alessandro Guidi writes), but neither does it assume it from the outset.

This discussion will probably show whether Gordon Childe's Marxist fascinations, along with those of many other Western intellectuals, are but ballast which should be rather quickly discarded, or if they will actually become elements of this postulated transformation paradigm. Personally, I hope that the latter would be the case; I do, however, ask myself the question, whether, and to what extent, this would be in keeping with the intentions of the participants of our meeting.

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