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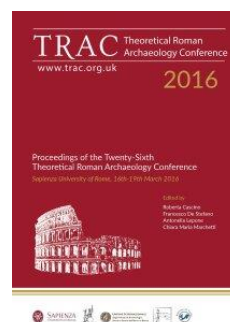
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Welcome-back Marx!

Marxist Perspectives for Roman Archaeology at the End of the Post-Modern Era

Edoardo Vanni

I haven't rejected Marxism. Something very different has occurred. It's Marxism that has broken up and I believe that I'm holding on to its best fragments.

Laclau 1990: 201

Introduction

Talking about Marx means, more or less, addressing most of the history of western thought with its philosophical, sociological and political implications. To make a synthesis of the Marxian thought, one has to be either extremely competent or a true masochist. I am neither particularly competent nor a masochist. More humbly, I would like to present a discourse composed by a series of extremely simplified and probably inadequate arguments, which are divided into paragraphs by suggesting possible links between the Marxian thought and its use in archaeology in different academic traditions.

Firstly, I will be questioning the role of Marxian ideas in the present society and the extent to which they are still operating in the philosophical and theoretical panorama. Secondly, I will describe what Marxism as a system meant to Marx, Engels, and their early followers, especially in the archaeological context, with an evaluation of the current manifestations of Marxism in archaeology, from a historical perspective. Subsequently, I will survey what Marxism presently means to neo-Marxist archaeologists, with an attempt to draw a comparison between the Italian and the Anglo-American way of conceiving Marx's thought in the wider context of their own philosophical, theoretical and political backgrounds and of examining tensions and contradictions that beset current applications of Marxism to archaeology. Finally, I will consider what these tensions and contradictions may foreshadow for the future of Marxism as a tool of archaeological analysis.

Marx's Ghost and Recrudescence

Why re-read Marx today? What remains of Marx today? How useful can his thought be? Which parts of his work may be most fertile for stimulating the critique of our times? How can one go 'beyond Marx, with Marx' (Negri 1991; Carling and Wetherly 2006)? How can we face the Ghost of Marx, that long-standing elephant in the room (Derrida 1993)? These

are some of the questions with answers that are anything but unanimous. If there is something certain about the contemporary renaissance of Marx, it is precisely the discontinuity with respect to a past that was characterized by monolithic orthodoxies that have dominated and profoundly conditioned the interpretation of this philosopher (Saitta 2005).

It is a matter of fact, recognized by several scholars, that Marx was the first to analyze the logic of Capitalism from an economic, social and historical point of view. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote, ‘Marx did not say the last word, far from it, but surely he did say the first word, and we are obliged to continue the discourse he inaugurated’ (Hobsbawm 1997: 168). The last few years have been characterized by an inverted ‘millennarianism’, in which premonitions of the future, either catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that (the end of ideology; history; social democracy, or the welfare state, and so on): taken together, all these stances constitute what is more and more often called ‘postmodernism’ (Lyotard 1979; Fukuyama 1992). The case for the existence of postmodernism depends on the hypothesis of some radical epistemological break or *coupure*, generally traced back to the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s (Balibar 1991). As the word *post-modernism* itself suggests, this break is most often related to the notion of decline – or even extinction – of the hundred-year-old modern movement (or to its ideological and aesthetic repudiation). Such theories have the obvious ideological mission of demonstrating, to their own relief, that the new social formation in question no longer obeys the laws of classical capitalism, namely the primacy of industrial production and the omnipresence of class struggle (Appadurai 1990; Amin 1994; Cvetkovich and Kellner 1997).

As argued by Fredric Jameson, post-modernism is probably a *puer* stage of multinational capitalism (Jameson 1998; Homer and Kellner 2014). Bauman’s preference for liquid modernity, instead, can be seen as part of a general response to the recent decline of postmodernism as a theoretical concept (Bauman 1992, 2000). This decline can be attributed to the failure of postmodernism to go beyond the critique of foundationalism (Lee 2005). Others, as Bruno Latour, have tried to resolve the chronological *impasse* by pointing out that we have never been modern at all. In other words modernity is a concept that corresponds to a logic of transformation. Furthermore it is a metaphor, an attitude of a society towards its past (Latour 1991; White 2013).

Despite the proliferation of alarms about the end of the age of Capital, this type of mode of production remains real, as does its material basis (Banaji 1977). So we have to face Capitalist society’s ability to adapt to changes and reckon its eclecticism and capacity to reproduce itself. After all, the revolution that took place at the end of the sixties of the last century throughout the Europe was, in the end, anti-bourgeois and not anti-capitalist (Fusaro 2012: 198–202).

The incapacity of the old paradigms (Marxism included) to explain the radical changes of the globalized capitalist society marked a shift from strong conceptual frameworks towards what has been called the ‘weak thought’ (Zabala 2007; Vattimo and Rovatti 2012) or, in other words, the abdication from the task of creating great explanations and narratives (Gargani 1979; Rorty 1992). There is a philosophical concern in these theories in terms of subject-object relation and theory-practice mediation and, finally, a problem in periodization, or even an incapacity to produce useful paradigms designed to understand reality (Alexander 1995).

Re-assessing and Re-introducing Marxism to the Wider Public

Due to theoretical conflicts or political events, scholars' interest in Marx's work has never been consistent and, from the beginning, it has experienced indisputable moments of decline. From the 'crisis of Marxism' to the dissolution of the Second International, from the discussions about the limits of the theory of surplus value to the tragedy of Soviet communism, criticisms of the ideas of Marx always seemed to go beyond its conceptual horizon (Musto 2007: 495). There has always been, however, a 'return to Marx'. Nevertheless, having been unanimously declared as 'disappeared', suddenly Marx reappeared on the stage of history (Bratich 2011).

The rediscovery of Marx is based on his persistent capacity to explain the present – he remains an indispensable instrument for understanding it and for being able to transform it. Thus, Jacques Derrida's affirmation, that 'it will always be an error not to read, re-read and discuss Marx' (Derrida 1993: 35), which only a few years ago seemed to be an isolated provocation, has nowadays found increasing approval. An analogous consensus is enjoyed by journals open to contributions discussing Marx and the various Marxisms, just as there are now international conferences, university courses, and seminars dedicated to this author. The success of Marx's thought is not exclusively limited to specialists (due to the publication on the *MEGA-Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe* critic edition of his entire works), but it seems to have penetrated into the wider public (Bellofiore and Fineschi 2006; Mazzone 2002; especially Musto 2007). In the USA, John Cassidy published an article in *The New Yorker* that announced 'The Return of Karl Marx'. In the UK, BBC Radio 4 devoted a series of episodes to Marx and conferred him the crown of the greatest thinker of the millennium, declaring Marx as the philosopher most admired by British listeners. In France, the weekly magazine *Nouvel Observateur* defined Karl Marx 'le penseur du troisième millénaire'. Soon after, Germany paid its tribute to the man once forced into exile for 40 years: in 2004, more than 500,000 viewers of the national television station ZDF voted Marx the third most important German personality of all time (he was first in the category 'contemporary relevance'), and during the last political elections, the famous magazine *Der Spiegel* carried on its cover an image of Marx making the 'victory' gesture, under the title '*Ein Gespenst kehrt zurück*' (A Spectre is Back). In Italy, the publication of *MEGA* has aroused enthusiastic reactions (Mazzone 2007; Fusaro 2009), culminating in a declaration by philosopher G. Vattimo that the time has arrived to become again what we were (cfr. *communist*, Vattimo 2007). Finally, a new demand for Marx is also being registered in political terms – though timidly and often in somewhat confused forms – from Latin America to Europe, passing through the alternative globalization movement (Fernández Buey 2004–2005).

Misunderstanding and Sandblasting Marx

One of the most powerful arguments brought forward by the defenders of the Capital's author is the common *leit motiv* that Marx's ideas have been affected by misconceptions, whence the explanation of why they have not triumphed against Capitalism (Habjan and Whyte 2014). In other words, it was not the ideas themselves that were weak or wrong but, very much the

contrary, it was the political use (and abuse) of Marx's theories that distorted those ideas and, consequently, defused their revolutionary power (Bratich 2011). This risk was immediately evident to the authors of the Manifesto of Communist Party themselves. As Friedrich Engels admitted in a letter of 5 June 1890, 'the materialist method is converted into its opposite if, instead of being used as a guiding thread in historical research, it is made to serve a ready-cut pattern on which to tailor historical facts' (Marx and Engels 1953: 493). The process of corruption of Marx's thought was given its most definitive manifestation with Stalin's 1938 booklet 'On Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism', which enjoyed wide distribution and fixed the essential elements of this doctrine. The scientific structure of Marx's method, based on scrupulous and coherent theoretical criteria, was replaced by methodologies of the natural sciences in which no contradiction was involved. Finally, the superstition of the objectivity of historical laws, according to which these operate like laws of nature independently of men's will, was affirmed. So, at the end, Karl Marx would be a misunderstood author, the victim of a profound and often reiterated incomprehension that was the cause of his lack of success among the wider society. However, this is only partly true.

The original incompleteness of Marx's critical work forced numerous epigones, as for instance Kautsky, to produce a systematization of his theories, in order to find those answers that Marx did not give. His work was subjected to a recalibration, which meant, inexorably, a de-naturation of his thought until it was obliterated and turned into its manifest negation.

In view of the many contradictory things that Marxism has been interpreted to mean in recent decades, establishing what classical or primitive Marxism stood for requires a vigorous program of demystification (Bowman 2007).

What Marx Really Said...

Marxism is preeminently a materialist philosophy, which maintains that to understand human beings one must begin by examining the means by which they sustain life. In the preface to his 'Critique of Political Economy', Marx stated that 'the mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and intellectual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of human beings that determines their existence; it is on the contrary their social existence that determines their consciousness' (Marx 1859 from Marx and Engels 1962: 1, 362-63).

The crucial factor that Marx identified as shaping social systems was the economic base, which consists of the forces and relations of production (Trigger 2008: 331; Roberts 2010). The economic structure is seen as playing a powerful role in shaping other aspects of society. Nonetheless, Marx did not deny that superstructure factors, such as entrenched political hierarchies or powerful religious beliefs, can be of great importance, but he maintained that this is only insofar as they are able to prevent change (Trigger 2008: 331-334).

Furthermore, every society is the product of its own separated history and therefore responds to economic changes in its own distinctive fashion. Because of this, it is impossible to formulate general laws to explain all of the concrete reality of cultural change in a predictive fashion (Panayotakis 2004). For these reasons, we have to reject the accusation to Marx formulated in Popper's *Poverty of Historicism* (Popper 1957).

To a certain degree, Marx practiced a multilinear evolutionism and not a determinist view of social change, in which societies increase in complexity. As V.G. Childe understood, the unilinear cultural evolutionism, as well as the inevitability of progress that characterized many vulgarized versions of Marxism, has to be rejected (Gathercole 1971; Thomas 1982; Macguire 2006; about unilinear and multilinear evolution see Sahlins and Service 1988).

The distinction between infrastructure and superstructure is nothing but a distinction within a hierarchy of functions and structural causalities that guarantee the conditions of a society's reproduction as such. This was the elegant solution found by structural Marxism in order to link ideology to materiality and reaffirm the logic of the system's functioning instead of the primacy of infrastructure (Godelier 1984; Berger 2015).

It thus becomes clear that criticisms of Marxist ideas were mainly political and ideological, due to the catastrophe of the Marxian project of revolution and to the failure to identify the proletariat as the main force of the new socialism (Shumway 2006). The Frankfurt school and the critical theory analyzed the reasons of this new historical scenario by studying the mass culture and its crucial role in integrating the working class into existing capitalist societies, concluding that a new consumer and media culture were forming a new mode of capitalist hegemony (Horkheimer and Adorno 1947; Kellner 1989; Jay 1996). The Frankfurt school stressed the role of individuals and their *praxis* in mediating with the reality, in a sort of agency theory *ante litteram*, which was later on developed by Giddens and Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1972; Giddens 1992). It is also fair to note that Marx scarcely considered the individual in his theory, preferring to emphasize the role of the social form, because the single human being is contradictory with respect to the cycle of production-distribution and consumption and represents an exception in the capitalist mode of production. This appeared clear in the Notebook M of the *Grundrisse*.

Marx has been accused of conceiving a paradigm of historical necessity of changing in the shadow of Hegelian dialectic logic together with the inevitability of progress and the evolution of society from synchronic equilibrium to diachronic evolution (Ijsseling 1966; Passeron 1986). As the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci observed, we should not confuse the operative logic of changing with its historical necessity (Gramsci 2014: 2178). For Gramsci the differences between the Hegelian tradition of historical necessity and the new perspective brought by the historical materialism of Marx by 'reversing Hegel' was absolutely clear, especially in discussing, among others, the position of Sorel on the idea of history (Bravo 1997). The crisis of a system comes about the clash of incompatible processes of reproduction. As David McLellan has pointed out, 'It simply is not true ... that Marx ever described the historical process as a movement of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis' (McLellan 1975: xi; Callinicos 1996).

Marxism and Archaeology: A Brief Overview

Matthew Spriggs (1984: 7) correctly points out that, with the noteworthy exception of V. Gordon Childe, it is only in the last decade and a half that Western archaeologists have explicitly used Marxism as a philosophical system (MacGuire 2006). The influence of Marxism on archaeology depends in part on these factors, but more importantly, it is contingent upon

the institutional setting of archaeology, the political saliency of the academy in the national life, and the role of Marxism and leftist political forces in the politics of the nation. Marxist archaeologists have argued that modern archaeology is primarily a middle-class pursuit and that it most commonly expresses the ideology of that class (Kristiansen 1981; Patterson 1986; Matthews 2005; Trigger 2008: 15; Guidi 2016). Importantly, by ‘middle class’ these scholars do not mean ‘middle-income class’. In the Marxist usage, the middle class is composed of those individuals that stand between the owners of the means of production and the workers; these are the managers, administrators, professionals, and small business owners. These scholars seek to understand the history of archaeology in terms of the development of a middle-class ideology and in terms of the conflict between different factions of that class in this development.

A more traditional Marxist approach to archaeology is based on the belief that technology directly determines the nature of societies and belief systems. Archaeologists were called on not only to describe their findings but also to reconstruct the societies that produced them. This involves defining the mode of production of these societies and explaining as much as possible about their technology, social organization and ideological concepts.

The Italian Perspective

In the history of Italian archaeology, and especially classical archaeology, the main theoretical debates originated in the left-wing intellectual environment, characterized by the elaboration of a Marxist approach to archaeology. This was the case of the *Archaeological Dialogues* group, founded in 1967 by a great scholar of art history, Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli (Pucci 1979). In its 25 years of life, the circle of *Dialoghi di Archeologia* remained the avant-garde of Italian archaeology. The Marxist theories penetrated through the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci which, as recalled by Carandini, read through the philosopher Benedetto Croce, always labelled as idealist (Carandini 1979: 34–35). Nonetheless, Croce practiced a critique of positivism rather than a pure idealist philosophy – the latter being more suitable for describing the fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile.

Actual radical transformations only began to take place in the 1970s (on this argument Guidi 2002; 2016), as the Marxian interest in material culture finally prompted substantial improvements in the quality of the collection of data. For example, excavation and survey techniques were considerably improved by those who were looking for material traces of production modes and trade markets (Carandini 1979), while in this same period, a seminar on Roman Italy was organized by the *Istituto Gramsci* – the cultural institution of the Italian Communist Party. Thus, field archaeology appeared as the means through which the Roman Empire could be studied in its economic and social dimensions (Giardina and Schiavone 1981). At long last, the idealist Marxism of the 1950s was replaced by a truly materialistic approach. This involved the wider questioning of whether it was possible to use the Marxist analysis of capitalism for the study of the ancient economy. The opposition was not one between modernists and ‘primitivists’ but one between ‘substantivists’ and formalists.

The Marxists explicitly stigmatized the New Archaeology as being deeply reactionary and anti-Marxist (the two adjectives were actually used as if they were synonymous) or, at

best, a mere scientism (e.g. Coarelli 1994; Terrenato 2002), but they were not against the use of natural science or statistics in archaeology. Yet they were suspicious about the reductionism and mechanical approach implicit in exact sciences. When post-processual ideas began to circulate in Italy (Cuzzo 1996), they soon received a remarkable amount of attention, as they were seen as being closer to the great idealistic and Gramscian tradition. They must have gone something like: ‘at last, these Anglo-Saxons are making some sense’, or ‘we knew they would have to come back to history sooner or later’, or even ‘they have finally reinvented the wheel’ (Terrenato 2005: 41).

According to Nicola Terrenato (2005), the truth was that, for the chosen few who found it nice to have a theoretical affiliation, post-processualism became a convenient new label to stick on the same old idealist historicism and a reassuring justification for skipping the positivistic phase altogether once again, just as they had done at the turn of the century. Post-processualism is slowly gaining a larger foothold (especially among the younger classical archaeologists), and against it the rebellious processualists have been – and still are – ‘plotting a revolution that will never come’. The persistence of idealism and the practice of historicism in Italian Marxist archaeology would mark absence of another key ingredient of processualism: the comparative approaches; the inherent historicist stance that has been the default theoretical framework for classical archaeology. Because of that, comparative and evolutionary approaches have always had problems when adopted for Mediterranean complex cultures in general (Terrenato 2002; Bietti Sestieri *et al.* 2002; Terrenato 2005).

I think that this is an extremely ungenerous picture of Italian and Roman archaeology. First, because there are many types of historicism (German, Italian, and so on), and second, because the legacy of idealism is not just a simple, all in all, these philosophies do not completely deny the comparison method. What historicism advocates is rather the possibility to compare what is comparable, in other words, the possibility to apply a morphological comparison between similar socio-economic systems in time and space. As pointed out by the French historian Marcel Detienne, there are no right things to compare but rather a good or a bad comparative method (Detienne 2000). Furthermore, during the 1980s the vivid debate around the conjectural semiotic paradigm and microhistory elaborated by Carlo Ginzburg involved among historians, philosophers and semiotics as Umberto Eco (Eco 1980), less modestly some Marxist archaeologists as Andrea Carandini and Giuseppe Pucci (Pucci 1979; Carandini 1980). As Daniele Manacorda said, the Mediterranean (and Italian) historical-anthropological archaeology may have something to say in the theoretical debate (Manacorda 2008: 45; Pasquinelli 1983).

The Anglo-American Perspective

Although the Marxist thought has had a significant impact on Anglo-American archaeology throughout this century, an explicitly Marxist archaeology is a recent phenomenon (Davies 1991; Bowman 2007). Those scholars who have sought to define an explicitly Marxist archaeology have had no clear route to their goal and no well-known intellectual lineage to build upon. Most current Marxist archaeologists came to their Marxist theory outside of archaeology and then tried to reconcile the two. In the 1980s, Marxist theory played a central

role in the Anglo-Saxon countries. In 1976 M. Spriggs organized an international conference in Cambridge that marked an awakening of interest on the part of English-speaking archaeologists using a Marxist approach. This was the first of a series of congresses with other European and North American colleagues that culminated in the collective work on Marxist perspectives in Archaeology. In this period we assisted to a flourishing of theories rooted in the neo-Marxist and structural Marxist currents of thought and the application of Immanuel Wallerstein's 'World Systems Analysis'. At the same time, the post-processual school chose to use various Marxist-derived theories, but never considered Marx as an explicit ancestor. As is well-known, Hodder's contextual archaeology claimed the idealist historian Collingwood as its master. In the 1970s, Marxism remained a concern of only a handful of individuals in U.S. archaeology. In 1974, when Philip Kohl and Antonio Gilman tried to organize a session on Marxist archaeology at the American Anthropological Association meetings, they had a hard time identifying U.S. archaeologists who were Marxists (Gilman 1989: 63). After the end of the Cold War, one of the most curious consequences of the new political and cultural climate, dominated by the neo-liberalist ideology, was the strengthening of the Marxist approach to archaeology in the United States (Wood 1985). This is further evidence of the importance of critical theories of globalized capitalism, as Edward Said played a key role in the US intellectual environment (Davies 1991).

Douglas Kellner has spoken of a '*lack of articulation*' between the Frankfurt school and the critical theory of the British Marxists, especially in British cultural studies, that provided a place on the cusp of what became known as 'post-Fordism' and a more variegated and conflicted cultural formation (Kellner 1989; 2002; 2005). The forms of culture described by the earliest phase of British cultural studies in the 1950s and early 1960s articulated conditions in an era in which there were still significant tensions in England and much of Europe between an older working-class-based culture and the newer mass-produced culture whose models and exemplars were the products of the American cultural industry. The initial project of cultural studies developed by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E.P. Thompson attempted to preserve the working class culture against the onslaughts of the mass culture produced by the cultural industry. Thompson's historical inquiries into the history of British working class institutions and struggles, the defenses of working class culture by Hoggart and Williams, and their attacks on mass culture were part of a socialist and working-class-oriented project that assumed that the industrial working class was a force of progressive social change and that it could be mobilized and organized to struggle against the inequalities of the existing capitalist societies and for a more egalitarian, socialist one. While in the 1980s other disciplines had been much less parochial than previously, the intellectual insularity of 'British History' has been remarkable. Conservative history was at the root of this situation, with its 'fetishisation' of contingency and its distrust of theory. This cultural atmosphere of the 1980s has been a further reason for the slow progress of postmodernism, explaining why, when it has taken hold, it has tended to replay arguments and borrow concepts from other disciplines. Obviously, there was a whole cultural/ideological agenda behind such a scientific attitude, one that can only be hinted to here, namely the differential history of intellectual and extra-intellectual changes across disciplines.

This lack of articulation between Marxism and British cultural studies has brought a vacuum between history and theory. As Thompson argued against Althusserian Marxism in his essay *The Poverty of Theory* (Thompson 1978; Palmer 1993), theory is now history. Far from refusing theory, the historical materialism is poised at the fruitful juncture of conceptualization *and* empirical explorations of the admittedly problematic evidence generated out of the past, a practice that demands the integration of structure and agency, being and consciousness, past and present, subject and interpretation, and the self-reflective elaboration of the relationships among these linked processes (Palmer 1996: 79).

After decades of Thatcherism ('Society? There is no such thing' – Margaret once claimed), the eclipse of the working-class and social democracy and the rise of the New Labour Party at the mid-1990s marked the victory of neoliberal ideology. The words pronounced by Tony Blair at the foundation congress represented a shock for the left intellectuals in Britain. In Blair's words 'there is no overriding reason for preferring the public provision of goods and services. Then the presumption should be that economic activity is best left to the private sector, with market forces being fully encouraged to operate ... New Labour is now the party of business' (Tony Blair, speech, Corn Exchange, London, 7 April 1997; Blair and Schröder 2000: 166–167; Wickham-Jones 2003: 37).

In Italy, after years of domination of the left in intellectual circles and universities due to the support of the greatest communist party in Europe after the Second World War, a delay of 25 years then saw its counterpart in the renewed major left party – the Democratic Party. As announced by Antony Giddens book, *beyond the Left and the Right* (Giddens 1994), or rather, *beyond the Left through (or well inside) the Right*.

Philosophical Explanations of Different Traditions

Despite the different political premises in Britain and Italy, we might try to analyze some peculiarities in the fortune of Marx's thought in the light of philosophical traditions. In a very oversimplified genealogy, we might suggest that a philosophical linkage exists in Britain that begins with Descartes and brings to neo-Kantian philosophy, via the empiricism, formalism and comparison. In the Cartesian creation of a formalistic and abstract subject, completely disentangled from the social being, the philosophical truth corresponds entirely to the coherence of the subject. In this perspective, reality is just recognizable and not modifiable (*adequatio rei et intellectus*). Thus, the development of an abstract and formalist subject was developed by British empiricists like Locke, Hobbes and Hume; with Hume, the subject undergoes a dissolution, and is no longer capable of understanding the real, but is just 'a bundle or collection of different perceptions'. After that, Adam Smith founded the anthropological *homo oeconomicus* and released reality and Capitalism in a position to justify itself with its ontology. Later on, the neo-Kantian *Kritik* would attempt to root reality in the transcendental subject through the equation between the logic of mind and the Newtonian laws of nature, in a sort of pure nominalism and scientism.

By contrast, the German idealism, represented by Fichte, Hegel, and partly Marx (which deeply influenced the Italian tradition), was essentially anti-Kantian, as it professed the inseparability of object and subject, world and mind, theory and practice (it is the position

of Fichte: *Objekt ohne Subjekt*). The reality is not an external fact but the product of the social. The subject is an active factor either in the historical process or in producing knowledge of it. When Marx began to be questioned in the 1960s, the focus was on the proximity of his materialism to Hegel's dialectic. This was the debate in France among Althusser, who would separate the reactionary thoughts of Hegel in terms of Absolut State from the revolutionary Marx, and Jean Hyppolite, who stressed the genealogy between the Hegelian materialism and alienation with Marx concepts.

Marx's philosophy is all but entangled in the purist splits typical of the Kantian thought and the empiricist method in stressing on substantivism and historicism. Recently, Patrick Murray has rejected this criticism by talking of a peculiar redoubled empiricism practiced by Marx (Murray 1997).

Some Conclusions?

The well-known diatribe between processual and post-processual archaeology, particularly fervid in the Anglo-American academia, has dominated the theoretical debate in archaeology. The New Archaeology burst on the scene in the 1960s and the publication of *New Perspectives in Archeology* (Binford and Binford 1968) and *Analytical Archaeology* (Clarke 1978) marked the consolidation of its hegemonic position in Anglophone archaeology. The views of the New Archaeology practitioners share a number of important features. One of these is a methodological objectivism that distinguishes a pre-given 'out there' (object) from the observer (subject) and accepts the existence of a permanent frame of reference for determining truth, rationality, or reality. The challenge to the hegemony of processual archaeological theory arose mainly outside the United States. Their proponents are engaged in a dialogue with each other, with the processual archaeologists, with Marxists and with phenomenologists. Thomas Patterson has distinguished three post-processual archaeologies, conceptually distinct but inter-related, with significant areas of overlap and divergence (Patterson 1986; Patterson 2003: 102–112). One, championed by Ian Hodder, who cites the works of Anthony Giddens, Clifford Geertz, Pierre Bourdieu, and Paul Ricoeur, claims the English philosopher Robin Collingwood as his intellectual ancestor but dissociates himself from Collingwood's neo-Hegelian idealism. A second strand resonates more consciously with phenomenology and post-structuralism. Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley (Shanks and Tilley 1992), two of its leading advocates, employ the insights of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Anthony Giddens, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as critical theorists like Walter Benjamin or Jürgen Habermas. The third post-processual archaeology, elaborated by Mark Leone and others, acknowledges the importance of Louis Althusser's insights on ideology and ideological state apparatuses as well as those of Georg Lukacs, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Ricoeur, Jürgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School. The three post-processual archaeologies borrow different elements from structuralism, phenomenology, post-structuralism, and critical theory and, at least, they enlarge various strands of Marxist social thought (McGuire 2002, 2006).

The first strand, in its current manifestations, touches realist, materialist, culturalism Marxist, anti-positivist, and possibly neo-Weberian views, depending on how the issues of

structure, agency, and contingency are ultimately resolved. The second current articulates realist, Marxist, phenomenological and poststructuralist (specifically Michel Foucault's) concerns. The third strand builds on realist foundations; the tension among structural Marxism, humanist Marxism, and Marxist phenomenology; and a notion of totality that is absent or weakly developed in the other strands (Preucel 1995).

If clarification, resolution, and synthesis are the goals of the archaeological/scientific/philosophical endeavor, then (i) a continued uncritical appropriation of ideas, (ii) eclecticism, or (iii) an unacknowledged elimination of elements from the various analytical frameworks do not appear to be useful strategies for achieving them. A more appropriate approach, I believe, entails theoretically informed and coherent explorations of the different perspectives and critical assessments of their assets, liabilities, and implications for the constitution of different sets of historically specified social relations and conditions (McGuire *et al.* 2005; McGuire 2012).

This debate is no longer at the center of the theoretical agenda. Why is this so? While there exists a general agreement that theory is neither a neutral category nor a neutral practice, but represents present concerns, interests and discourses, there has been surprisingly little interest in analyzing this struggle in a historical perspective (Bintliff and Pearce 2011; Thomas 2015). I just want to point out that this theoretical debate has been long overestimated and misunderstood, while in fact it belongs to a wider philosophical context concerning the strategies of interpretation and the history of western thought. The critical position assumed by the post-modern philosophers regards essentially the possibility to reconstruct a real event with causes and consequences, both in the past and in the present. Epistemologically, it means the possibility to interpret the past as a whole, exclusively with the tools elaborated autonomously inside the discipline. Binford and others after him have claimed that archaeology either is anthropology, or is nothing to solve the tensions between the immobility of the past society and its material culture and the dynamicity of the present archaeological and subjective enquiry.

Kristiansen has described long-term changes in archaeological/anthropological paradigms in the early 1990s as a sinusoid: a continuous alternation of rationalism and romanticism (Kristiansen 2008). Periods of romanticism favored the particular in local and national histories, micro-context-analysis, while periods of rationalism stimulate generalizing interpretations, often on a larger scale. Although highly simplified, as all models, it does not explain how and why changes take place as we move from one position to the next. No dialogue is possible between researchers situated at the two opposing poles of the cycle and, furthermore, no epistemological reconciliation is possible. Romanticism and rationalism are not useful categories to describe the oscillation. Obviously, it is not a mere question of different time/space scales rather than competitive explanation strategies. The true opposition that triggers the changes in the cycle is about the nature of the object of enquiry: it is the difference between subject and object, theory and praxis, idealism and materialism, the logic of historical change that Marx tried to face throughout all his life. Furthermore, the logic of paradigmatic revolution in archaeology is not similar to the scientific revolutions described by T. Kuhn (Kuhn 1962). In archaeology as a social science, a non-Popperian space of argumentation persists which is dominated by hardly falsifiable rhetoric and tradition (Passeron 2006).

Symmetrical archaeology proposed that such dualities should be overcome by using the Heideggerian phenomenology and the post-human attitude of Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and Jude Law (Callon and Law 1997; Latour 2005). Epistemologically, it links object and subject in a unique materiality and, hermeneutically, it uses the media (digital books, images composed by pixels, TV programs and so on) as a real space of reconciliation (between reality and ideas, past and present, theory and practice), in attempting to *visualize* epistemological processes and *visually* recompose conflicts (Cochrane and Russell 2007). This procedure it seems similar to that adopted during the linguistic turn, when the material field was represented by the text (Derrida said there is nothing outside the text). M. Leone might accuse these scholars of crypto-Marxism. In any case, I am somewhat skeptical about Shanks' claim that symmetrical archaeology upholds such a methodological impartiality (Shanks 2007; Witmore 2007).

In this scenario, classical archaeology is no longer the leader over other archaeologies, but it seems quite excluded from the debate (Morris 2004). When David Clarke eventually announces that the emperor has no clothes, those who would rather avoid unpleasant revelations have been getting ready to leave the party for a generation or so (Clarke 1973). Why can't classicists join in in the exciting wholesale redefinition of the discipline? Why do they remain out of the passionate debate (to use a euphemism) to sit on a pile of *CIL* volumes and wonder what all that noise is all about as in the famous cartoon of Paul Bahn (Bahn 1996)? A few years later Matthew Johnson depicted a more fragmented and separated theoretical archaeological dialogue (Johnson 1999). The overall scenario is changed, but not for classical archaeology claimed more classical archaeology.

Antony Snodgrass reminds us that the health of a discipline depends on its ability to keep a balanced and bilateral relationship with other fields, which at first sight might appear as entirely different (Snodgrass 2002). Not without difficulties, classical archaeology has been able to establish such a relationship. The agenda for the near future is to build up similar connections with history, prehistory and anthropology. The renewal of classical archaeology depends on a greater openness to the present trends of archaeology itself. Classical archaeology has become a part of archaeology. The *Altertumswissenschaft*'s self-criticism ends up in a confrontation between classical archaeology and archaeology as a whole. In the archaeological practice (be it the use of historical or anthropological models), in the acquisition of data by excavation and survey or analytical procedures, there should be no difference between classical archaeology and archaeology tout court. The tension between art history and archaeology is still there, but this can be considered as a primary source of knowledge in a disciplinary field relying on written texts as well as on material evidence. The future of classical archaeology is not confined to the study of landscape, funerary practices, or production techniques – it comprises a new approach to its own traditional topographic, architectural, and iconographic sources. Indeed, the laicization of the *Altertumswissenschaft* is an achievement that by no means should imply its abandonment (Schnapp 2002: 432; Morris 2004).

After the end of the history proclaimed by Francis Fukuyama and the beginning of the post-modern (Fukuyama 1992), we are now clearly in a phase of theoretical, political, social and economic stagnation. Turbo-capitalism has changed the socio-economic structure of the

present extremely fast and the old paradigms are unable to explain the actual situation. Reality is certainly re-constructed as a narrative by researchers, and surely the narrations are not totally independent from the constraints imposed by reality. If no theoretical space is offered where differences can be reconciled or new paradigms to explain reality and history can be created, rather than groping in the dark guided only by common sense, we may perhaps propose 'the landscape' as a material space to exercise theoretical and methodological strategies. In such a view, the landscape is the real platform within which symmetrical perspectives and forces are at play. The symmetry here does not concern the neo-Heideggerian vision according to which the object (the real) exists thanks to the coherence of the subject, but should be conceived of as equality of object and subject in the historical processes.

Past and present are physically, not only ideally, in contact. Materiality represents one term of the landscape just as the phenomenology implies the space as manifested to human consciousness. With hermeneutic considerations in archaeology, interpretation is locked in a dialectical dance between the interpreter (always human) and the 'context' of the object considered. We have to consider both the subject as interpreter and the human agent in the past as historical factors in the narratives. From the perspective of historical ecology, landscape is understood as the historical result of complex interactions between humans and nature. The opposition between human and nature, environmental and social history is recomposed in a symmetrical way, and notwithstanding things and subjects are constantly involved in co-evolution processes, sometimes we need to forget the human being behind the material culture to free archaeology (Boëda 2005).

In the middle of the new reflexive anthropology, with its celebration of the impossibility of systematically understanding the elusive 'Other', a different kind of ethnographic prose has been developing more quietly, almost without our knowing we were speaking it, and certainly without so much epistemological anxiety. The only anthropology is that of the modern societies, completely globalized and standardized. As Marshall Sahlins has pointed out, we have to say goodbye to Tristes Tropes of Levi Straussian *memoire* (Sahlins 1993). Without its primary subject, represented by the primitive societies, anthropology is forced to turn from culture and social reconstruction to the 'objet', towards the materiality of the past societies. In other words anthropology must turn into archaeology or it is nothing. During the long trajectory to find its own theoretical background, archaeology has been assimilated to several disciplines: in Britain and Mediterranean archaeology mainly with sociology and history (Klejn 1970; Wickham 2007), while in the American academia essentially with anthropology (Binford 1963). As Kent Flannery declared 'there's only anthropological theory. Archaeologists have their own methodology and ethnologists have theirs; but when it comes to theory, we all ought to sound like anthropologists' (Flannery 1982: 269–270). Finally Ian Hodder claimed for an archaeology as archaeology (Hodder 1986) but I think that the moment has arrived to push forward the role of archaeology as a discipline by reversing the hierarchy with the others (history, sociology, and anthropology). Even more important the archaeological practice must be treated as intellectual activity in the contemporary society, and the archaeologists may have inherited the role of new *savants* (Hamilakis 1999; Wylie 2002) in order to produce general paradigms for interpreting the whole reality with its polit-

ical and social implications (El-Ojeili 2010). In the new millennium, Marxist theory remains one of the best candidates for connecting theory and practice, subject and object in European archaeology. We do not have to reject Marxist ideas because they have broken up, but rather, we should hold on to their best fragments.

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