The Times of Archaeology and Archaeologies of Time

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The subject matter of archaeology as a discipline is explicitly structured by time, and 'time-travel' is a common feature of popular discourses about the study of the past. Yet archaeology is also the discipline which, amongst its other theoretical shortcomings, has singularly failed to develop any theory *of* time. Chronology is ever-present as a measuring tool, but only in rare cases has there been any consideration of this as but one, culturally-specific kind of temporality among many others experienced by people in their daily lives. In this paper, I will discuss various perspectives on archaeological times, including more sophisticated approaches developed since the later 1980s, and argue for an abandoning of the dualism between 'measured' and 'experienced' times which has emerged in some of these more critical attempts to grapple with the issue. Time is fundamental to archaeology, but not just because we 'use' dates. Rather, archaeologists should be able to contribute to wider discussions of time from their understandings of the materialized temporalities of past human agents, and to develop perspectives on the importance of these to the very nature of human social agency as a form of engagement with the world.

Introduction: Archaeology as Time-Travel

Time is one of the key elements in most attempts to define archaeology's disciplinary distinctiveness. Other people may study human societies, but along with the unique emphasis on material culture it is 'time-depth' that makes archaeological perspectives singular and, arguably, capable of contributing something to debates in other social sciences (e.g. Binford 1962, 219; Hodder 1991, 191-92). Time is an all-pervading theme in what archaeologists do, insofar as chronology and dating underpin comparative and interpretative statements about contemporaneity or sequence, and thus change and continuity. This temporal preoccupation also informs popular discourses of archaeology as 'time-travel', or of archaeologists as 'time detectives' (e.g. Fagan 1995; Lewis *et al*. 2000). It is perhaps, therefore, unsurprising that such a fundamental issue has been taken for granted, and largely escaped the growing attention that archaeologists, since the early 1960s, have directed against their base assumptions. While the last decade has certainly seen significant developments in evaluating the conceptual underpinnings of archaeology, including those concerning time, this particular 'dimension' remains for many either a landscape of dates within which to situate artefacts, sites or cultures, or a misty barrier to the act of communion with ancient people. In both cases, time is effectively reduced to space.

Indeed, this 'spatial' view of time constituted the focal point of some of the early criticisms of existing time-concepts in archaeology (Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 118-36; 1992, 7-16; cf. Bailey 1983, 170-1; Fabian 1983, 16). These critiques were well-founded and effective in unmasking the dominance of one particular version of temporality over potentially diverse alternatives. However, as we will see below, they have led to the establishment of something of a dichotomy between different kinds of time – measured/abstract/natural versus experienced/subjective/social – which is a central theme of this paper. In discussing the way in which this dualism has been put forward, I will argue that, while usefully exposing the blindness of previous scholar-

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ship to anything other than 'clock time', such oppositions must be dissolved in order to progress with the development of an understanding of time – or rather tim*ing*, as an activity and not an object – that cuts right to the heart of the nature of human agency (Adam 1990, 44-5; Elias 1992, 42-4). Both 'types' of time can be regarded simply as mutually-dependent aspects of timing, which, as we will see below, is a fundamental feature of the relationship between humans and the world around them.

This brings archaeologists face-to-face not only with long-standing debates about the character of time which have taken place in many other disciplines, including anthropology, physics and philosophy, but also with the task of overcoming the dichotomy between nature and culture which has pervaded the Western world-view since the Enlightenment (Thomas 1996, 11). In confronting these issues, archaeologists might begin to make more of both of the defining features of their discipline, as mentioned above, by exploring some of the ways in which time can be understood not as a thing – neither river, arrow, cycle or line – but rather as an aspect of human practice, and by tackling the relationship between people and material culture in generating such temporality. We can begin to move towards such an understanding by reviewing earlier approaches to time in archaeology.

Traditional and Processual Times

Generally speaking, the dominant time-concept in traditional and processual archaeologies from the beginning of the 20th century to at least the 1970s has been that of measured chronology, implicitly assumed to be Time itself. From the cultural sequences of V.G. Childe to the cost-benefit time-zones of the palaeoeconomists' site catchment analyses (Champion 1980, 118-19; Trigger 1989, 170-72), time was a container for human action, a universal dimension which could be divided into uniform units (like geometric space), and used thus as a tool for archaeological inquiry, and as a way of understanding past behaviour (Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 118-19). This idea of time essentially owes much to that of classical physics, and particularly the work of Newton. Absolute Time is here the frame within which the laws of motion work, and though itself quantifiable and measurable, it is placed outside of the action, being "unaffected by the transformation it describes" (Adam 1990, 50). This is the kind of time that archaeologists use when they refer to processes or events happening within the particular framework of calendar years established in the Western world, in statements such as 'this type of pottery was produced between the 80s and 120s CE', or 'Britain underwent a major transition during the fifth century CE'. The time of the calendar is not impacted upon in any way by the social processes it is used to describe.

However, such abstract, 'natural' time has actually only become established as such by virtue of social convention. Newton himself only *assumed* that time was an absolute dimension, and many subsequent developments in physics have challenged the universal validity of this assumption (Prigogine 1980, 3-4; Adam 1990, 51). Nonetheless, such a theoretical abstraction worked in the context of industrialization, through the clocks which have ever since been used to measure out time in industrial societies. While the measurement of time *per se* is by no means a unique feature of such societies (nor the only way of conceptualising time in them; Adam 1994), its standardization and commodification is historically specific. Greenwich Mean Time

was adopted as a national standard in Britain in the 1840s, primarily in the interests of synchronizing railway timetables; before this point, local times were commonly divergent (Urry 2000, 111). 19th century employment legislation equally reflects the struggle between employers and factory workers over the regulation and commodification of work-time (Rule 1999).

Within archaeology, we can also trace the construction of the 'natural' Time which became the uncriticized norm for much of the 20th century, from the extension of antiquity beyond the chronology of the Bible, during the 19th century, to the radiocarbon revolution and the subsequent use of different scientific 'measuring sticks', with different degrees of accuracy and different applicabilities (e.g. to organic or inorganic materials). As long as such times – like those of historical sources or of traditional style chronologies – are simply calibrated to the BC/AD (BCE/CE) timeline, temporality in the past remains unexplored. Moreover, the treatment of this time-line as the objective reality within which human action takes place is simply a reification of what might actually be seen as the most socially-constructed form of time (Adam 1990, 154). While more recent post-processual and cognitive-processual studies (e.g. Hodder 1993; Gosden 1994; Renfrew 1994, 7; Thomas 1996) have brought variant temporalities more centrally into focus, and *Annales*-influenced archaeologists (e.g. Bintliff (ed.) 1991) have also tried to work with different timescales appropriate to different tempos of change (cf. Bailey 1987), the relationship between 'social' and 'natural' times remains problematic; this is the subject of the next section.

Dualisms of Time: 'Natural' and 'Social'

The reliance on chronological time as 'real' Time in traditional and processual archaeologies was based upon an implicit acceptance of the orthodoxy of the classical natural sciences. However, early attempts to criticize the universality of such an understanding – and contrast it with the time of experience (Shanks and Tilley 1987a: 128; 1987b, 35-6) – have also inadvertently reinforced a dualism, between natural and social times, of long-standing in philosophy and the social sciences, which is worth exploring in some depth. An appropriate point from which to begin to illustrate this dichotomy is the influential distinction between A- and B-series times made by John McTaggart, writing in the early 20th century (Adam 1990, 20-2; Gell 1992, 149-74). McTaggart was mainly interested in time as a logical problem, and tried to construct an argument to prove that time is not a real quality of the universe. This argument need not detain us here; suffice it to say that the two kinds of time McTaggart attempted to differentiate were 'time as a fixed chain of events' (the B-series), and 'time as past, present and future' (the A-series) (fig. 1).

The former is more readily associated with abstracted, measured time, being the unchanging before/after relationship between unique events: the 5th of June 2001 will always be *before* the 20th of June 2001, and *after* the 25th of May 2001, regardless of which day it is when we talk about these events. In contrast, the temporal character of the A-series is one of constant change, and tends to be linked to the human experience of events as moving between future, present and past. Thus the 5th of June 2001 has moved from my future, through the present and into the past; it may also be recalled into the present through memory, while a future 5th June may be anticipated.

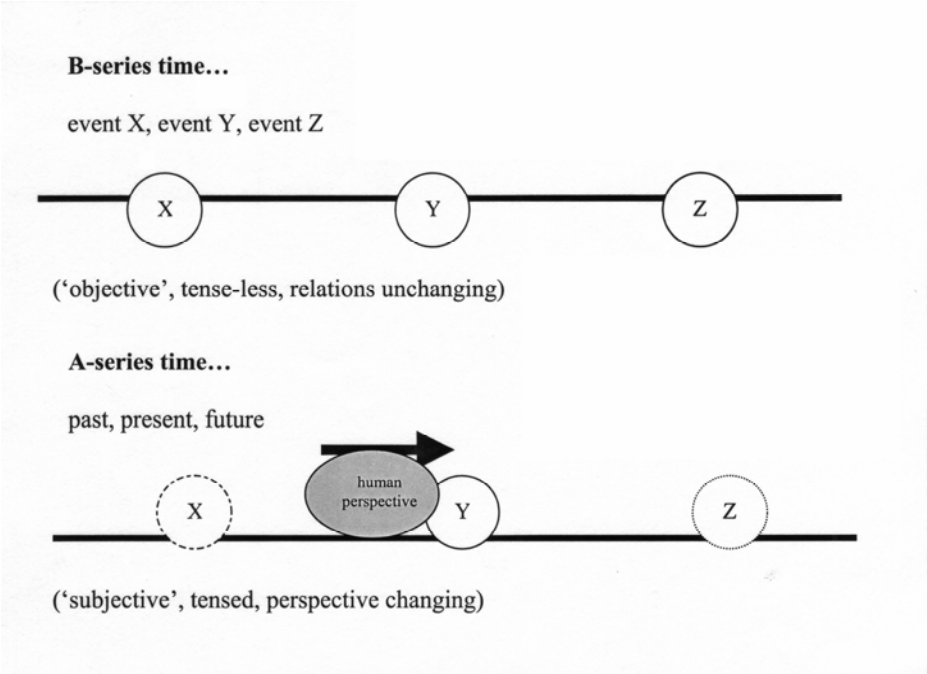

Figure 1. The principal differences between B-series and A-series time.

As we will see below, this dichotomy is based upon a flawed understanding of the nature of the interaction of social beings with the world. Nonetheless, not only has this specific conception of dualistic time informed many of the attempts of Analytic philosophers (interested in the logical/linguistic aspects of McTaggart's problem) to grapple with the issue (Turetzky 1998, 126-27), but the general perspective permeates many major approaches to time within the social sciences, including anthropology and sociology. Some of these have provided inspiration for recent manifestations of the measured/marked time distinction in archaeology.

One version of this opposition is that between 'irreversible' or linear time and 'reversible', cyclical time, a formulation initiated by the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and subsequently incorporated within the influential social theory of Anthony Giddens (Giddens 1984, 35-6; Adam 1990, 25-8; Gell 1992, 23-9). Lévi-Strauss was interested in making a distinction between 'cold' and 'hot' societies (i.e., 'primitive' and Modern), with the former trapped in an ever-lasting present, upon which past and future were focused through the maintenance of tradition, involving the enactment of rituals on a cyclical basis. 'Hot' societies, in contrast, are open to change and more conscious of their position in an abstract, linear flow of history and fixed events (Adam 1990, 27-9; Gell 1992, 23-5, 286-93). Although critical of certain aspects of Lévi-Strauss' work (1979, 24-8), and developing important innovations in temporal understandings in sociology in other respects (e.g. 1984, 132-39), Giddens has made some use of the ideas of cold and hot societies (1984, 199) and reversible and irreversible time (1984, 35), the latter to describe the difference between the time-scales of daily routine (as repetitive and cyclical) and of the

individual human lifetime (as successive and linear). Of course, the description of routine activities as bound in 'reversible' time is problematic (Adam 1990, 26-9): no two actions are actually the same because aspects of their context (including, minimally, the age of the person performing them) have changed. This is significant because, while routine is vitally important to the continuance of social life in all societies, it is equally critical (by virtue of being 'irreversible' and thus open to differentiation) to social change. All social life can thus be characterized in terms of a complex balance between tradition and change or mobility (Gardner 2001, 272-3), with routines always being enacted in new contexts with new conditions of possibility.

A different approach which has been influential in some social theory (including, again, the work of Giddens e.g. 1984, 110-19) and indeed in certain aspects of archaeology (e.g. Laurence 1994, 122-32) is the more explicitly B-series dominated 'Time-geography' of Torsten Hägerstrand and the Lund School of social geographers. This is a way of understanding the movements of people through time and space, and the opportunities or constraints that these movements afford them for social interaction, using temporal maps (fig. 2). It can thus underpin interpretations of the structural qualities of social life, illuminating the 'choreography' of activities such as schooling, work, or domestic arrangements (Gell 1992, 190-205). In a context like Roman Pompeii, this can be translated into an analysis of the way the lives of the senatorial class, structured around movements (at certain times of the day) between home, forum and baths, differed from those of other social groups within the city (Laurence 1994, 122-32).

It is undoubtedly vital to incorporate both time and space into any analysis of human action, and time-geography may, therefore, represent a useful modification to the typically static view of society embedded in much social theory (Adam 1990, 13; cf. May and Thrift (eds.) 2001, for more recent developments). However, this example also illustrates the limitations of focusing upon one side of the A-/B-series dichotomy. The characteristic method of 'map' representation in this approach is classically B-series, with time reduced to another dimension of space and possessing no unique qualities – once again, a *container for*, rather than a *product of*, human action. Closely related to time-geography, and suffering from the same fundamental problem, is sociological and anthropological work on 'time-budgeting', within which we might include the 'optimal foraging theory' which has had some influence in archaeology (Smith 1983; Mithen 1990; Gell 1992, 206-16). This attempt to understand how people make 'best' use of their time, particularly in terms of resource acquisition, takes us back to the implicit acceptance of B-series time as natural Time, rendering impossible any opportunity for individual or cultural variation with respect to temporal engagement.

The dualistic approaches to time that these few examples illustrate in other disciplines can also be seen to be latent in some of the more recent attempts to deal with time in archaeology. As noted above, Shanks and Tilley (1987a, 118-36) were – characteristically – in the forefront of raising questions about archaeological time-concepts. They identified the weaknesses in the prevailing traditional/processual position, with its unquestioning reliance on abstract Time, divorced from human practices and treated much like geometric space. They also pinpointed problems in

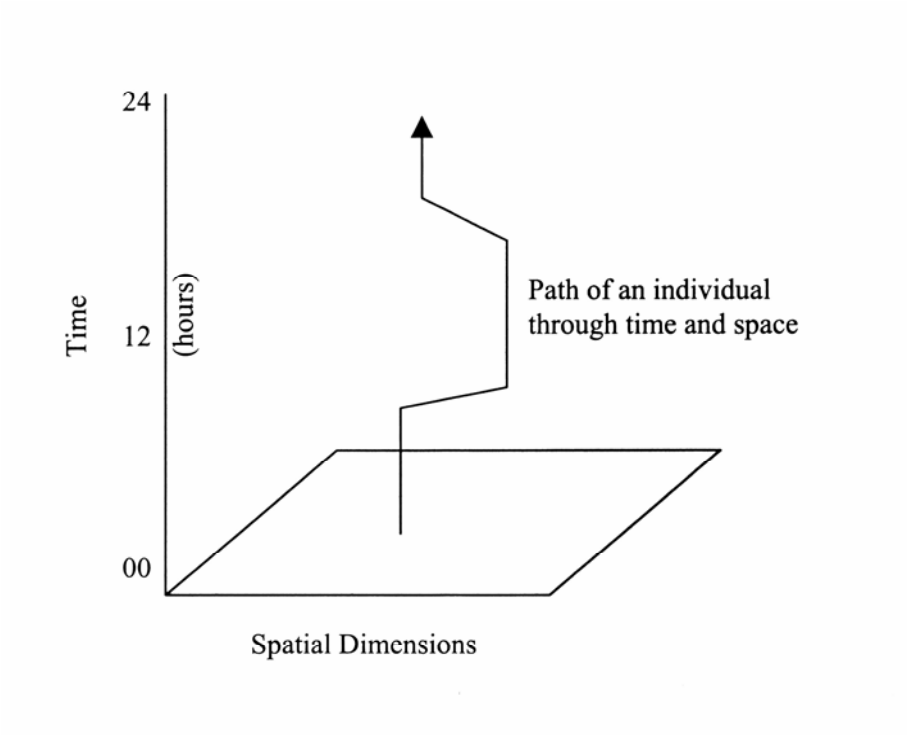

Figure 2. Example of the kind of 'time map' produced in time-geographical approaches (cf. Gell 1992: 190-205)

the more elaborate and multi-scalar 'time-perspectivist' approach of Geoff Bailey, whose arguments actually tended to emphasise the long-term as the 'proper' preserve of archaeology, at the expense of a concern with smaller-scale practices (e.g. 1987, 8). Even so, they were led in to a distinction between chronological, measured time (fundamentally associated for them with the capitalist mode of production) and subjective, 'marked' time (1987, 127-29; cf. Zvelebil and Jordan 1999, 104). There are certainly culturally-specific attitudes to temporality, one of which is the commodification of time characteristic of capitalist societies. These should not, however, be forced into a dualistic scheme which perpetuates the natural/social distinction – even if the 'natural' time is recognized as an ideological construct (cf. Bailey 1983, 168-9, where natural time is treated as objective). This runs the risk of asserting that social time is the dominant side of the dualism, which in turn undermines the importance of recursive human engagement *in the world* (i.e. with material as well as social forces, through embodied Being) as the source of temporalities.

Individuals and social groups experience temporality in many different ways (and this has certainly not been eradicated by the Modern commodification of time; Adam 1994; Millard 2000). To note, as Shanks and Tilley do (1987a, 129) that "they [marked and measured time] are not mutually exclusive: we can understand the time of the peasant, just as the peasant can understand chronology" does not go far

enough. To enslave Modern social agency to the factory clock, or pre-Modern social agency to the weight of tradition, does both a disservice and diminishes the importance of structuration – social transformation through social reproduction – in societies of all kinds (Giddens 1979, 114). The fundamental character of human temporality (which does, indeed, share features with the times of other species) seamlessly combines both 'marked' and 'measured' features, depending both upon cyclical repetition (which Lévi-Strauss mistakenly labelled 'reversible' time) and linear succession as elements of social Being-in-the-world, in which 'social' and 'natural' spheres are mutually implicated to the extent of dissolving this distinction (cf. Ingold 1986, 165; Adam 1990, 154-55; Murray 1999, 3; Urry 2000, 200-05).

These themes do appear, in different guises, in the two major strands of more recent work on time in archaeology. One of these strands is the attempt to draw upon 'chaos theory' and non-linear dynamics to model complex, multi-temporal aspects of change, operating at levels greater than – but connected to – human agency (McGlade 1987; McGlade and van der Leeuw 1997; cf. Mizoguchi 2000). While bearing important connections to certain developments in physics (see below), and drawing attention to the problematic issue of scale, such systems-based approaches can still tend to spatialize time as a container for activity, rather than as a mutually-constitutive element of it. Indeed, it is this latter understanding that the other major group of recent time-studies in archaeology has addressed (Gosden 1994; Thomas 1996; Karlsson 2001). This has involved the explicit adoption of a very different approach to temporality than those discussed above, drawing upon the ontology (theory of being) of Martin Heidegger. It will be argued here that this perspective is an essential element in the dissolution of the dichotomy between natural and social times, though it is not without limitations when it comes to understanding some of the communal aspects of Being (the process through which beings exist) in pre-Modern societies (Gosden 1994, 114; Dobres 2000, 84; cf. Dreyfus 1991, 141-51; Mulhall 1996, 62-74).

Without going in to the details of what is a complex and shifting philosophy (see Thomas 1996, 1-91 and Karlsson 1998, 17-86 for summaries of Heidegger's early and late phases of thought discussed within an archaeological context), Heidegger's understanding of human Being (described by the specialist term *Dasein*) stresses involvement or dwelling in the world (mediated through the material equipment of everyday practice) and temporality as fundamental features of that Being. With regard to time, it is the inevitability of death that defines *Dasein*'s temporal character, and shapes past, present and future. 'Time' is thus created in the actions of *Dasein*'s movement towards death, generated in the ongoing process of its 'coming to be' (Adam 1990, 30-1; Gosden 1994, 112; Turetzky 1998, 103-4; Urry 2000, 114-5). While this perspective (which bears similarities to Elias' (1992, 43) substitution of the activity of timing for the concept of Time, and Mead's (1932) emphasis on the constitutive nature of the present) has been labelled as essentially A-series and 'human' (Gell 1992, 264-5), such a designation rests on the assumption that B-series time is 'natural'. This is not the case, as we will see in the next section.

Beyond the Dualism: Time and Agency

The linkage between what have hitherto been regarded as 'culture' and 'nature' contained in the concept of Being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962, 78-9) is appropriate to the task of reconceptualizing the relationship between 'social' and 'natural' times (cf. Giddens 1979, 3-4). The three themes which cross the boundary inherent in this dualism, and which are essential to developing a theory of human agency in a way underpinned by an understanding of Being, are *temporality*, *materiality* and *sociality*. Given the subject of this paper, I will focus on developing the first of these in more depth than the others, but certainly cannot exclude them entirely, as together they can be seen as constituting the meaningful dimensions of space from which temporality, in turn, cannot be divorced (cf. Ingold 1993).

To summarise the position developed on temporality in this paper thus far, archaeology has moved from an implicit acceptance of chronological time as 'natural' Time, through a critical opposition of 'measured' time with 'experienced' time, and only recently to attempts to bind these in terms of multiple scales and tempos or, more fundamentally, of human involvement with 'the world'. While at each stage we have seen links with theories of time developed in other disciplines, whether physics, philosophy, anthropology or sociology, recent developments in some of these disciplines (effectively summarized in Adam 1990) allow us to elaborate a little further on the nature of this involvement, and to specify more clearly how the times of nature and culture, of cycle and arrow, can be regarded as a unified field of temporality which, in its varied facets, must be a key focus of archaeological research. Potential problems that this creates in the method of such research will be considered in the concluding section.

Repetition and change are both features of the world with which we engage on a daily basis. Regardless of how repetitive a particular practice is, it is never actually repeated identically; nonetheless, such routine actions fill our lives, and we depend upon them for our ongoing ontological security (Giddens 1984, 60-4; cf. Baert 1992, 119-28). Such actions are critical to understanding temporality as an aspect of, rather than a container for, human agency. It can be argued that time is created in the actions, through the ongoing flow of *doing*, rather than existing as an abstract box which actions may or may not fill (Adam 1990, 30). As noted above, this might be regarded as an A-series, context-dependent understanding of time – and therefore 'social' – were it not the case that 'natural' time is increasingly comprehended in similar ways, rather than as being essentially B-series.

Certainly, the lives of animals exhibit similar combinations of routine and transformation to humans, both in terms of biological processes (metabolism, ageing) and in terms of memory and anticipation of actions (Adam 1990, 70-90). The clock time of the industrialized world is, in origin, no more than an abstraction from these processes, integrating the repetition of the hours of the day with the progress of calendar years (concepts both present in many pre-Modern societies). As such, it only partly corresponds to the Newtonian ideal of absolute time, an ideal which is, in any case, no longer the only 'time' of physics. Relativity and Quantum Theory have, first, made time context-dependent and, second, linked time to energy in the definition of sub-atomic particles as units of action, within which past (as history), present and

future (as probability) are all embedded features (Einstein 1954 [2001]: 23-29; Prigogine and Stengers 1984, 213-32, 291-313; Adam 1990, 48-69). These developments have rarely been considered in archaeology (cf. McGlade 1999, 148), but bring the times of 'nature', in certain key respects, closer to the times of humans, even if there is great variety in rhythm and tempo (cf. Urry 2000, 157-60). This means that temporality, as action – tim*ing*, not Time – can be regarded as a fundamental feature of 'Being-in-the-world', emergent from the properties of both 'Being' and 'the world'. It also renders arguments about *whether* A- *or* B-series time is more 'real' somewhat meaningless.

Building upon this argument, materiality and sociality are critical to 'Being-in-', and here we can employ further insights from current social theory. Material culture is clearly of great importance in *Dasein*'s involvement with the world and with others. Indeed, many dimensions of identification (as an aspect of sociality) can be regarded as involving the hybridisation of embodied humans with material technologies, mutually constitutive of ethnic, gender or other statuses (Urry 2000, 77-8). Material cultures are also fundamental to the human experience of temporality, extending actions and interactions outwards from the present. Equally important to agency, however, is the existence of other humans who, in conjunction with the material world, define the rules and resources (Giddens 1984, 17) which enable or constrain action. No understanding of *Dasein* can be complete without considering the role that learning from others, or the institutionalisation of identities, has on 'Being-with-others' (an important but under-developed element in *Being and Time*, dealing with the social dimensions of Being; Dreyfus 1991, 143). As indeed with temporality and materiality, sociality is critical to the constitution of human agency, but is variable across and within different social groups. It is through the elucidation of such variability that archaeologists have such an important contribution to make to other social sciences.

Conclusions: Archaeological Times and Archaeologies of Temporality

The theoretical exegesis which has comprised the bulk of this paper has addressed the history of time-concepts in archaeology, the links between these and other disciplinary traditions, and the development of an ontological approach which binds 'social' and 'natural' time within the focal point of human agency. Three key fields have been identified in the constitution of the latter – temporality, materiality, and sociality – which agency, as power to act in the world (cf. Barrett 2001), is dependent upon. It is appropriate now to consider how such an approach impacts upon archaeology as a practice itself, and some of the problems it raises. For the purposes of this discussion, the goal of archaeological research will be treated as the translation and understanding of other modes of social agency or *Dasein* than those constructed in the Modern world (cf. Shanks and Tilley 1992, 114-15), with a view not to 'reconstructing' the past – that is, in essence, impossible – but to criticising the present.

Insofar as such a task cannot begin without some pre-understanding of how to proceed, the general ontological position outlined above can be elaborated further. The key to exploring the ongoing constitution of past social lives is *practice*. An archaeology of temporality, materiality and sociality is necessarily an archaeology of prac-

tices – the ways people *do* – encompassing everything that has been falsely divided into technological and ideational, or natural and cultural spheres (Dobres 2000, 10-69). Such an inclusive approach must equally be multi-faceted with respect to the kinds of archaeological data which are of interest. Of course, many biases against the recording of certain kinds of material, such as 'environmental' finds, have long been discarded, but the problem of integration remains pernicious so long as, for example, animal bones and ceramics are treated separately in excavation publications, even though both relate to food (Hawkes 1999). This integration becomes much less of a problem if we think in terms of practices – many of which will be routine, but which are always potentially open to discursive consideration and to change (Barrett 2001, 150-51) – which cross-cut material-based divisions. In my own research (Gardner 2001, 219-29), I have developed an interpretation of a range of significant fields of practice which structure the archaeological data for Britain in the fourth century CE. These include dwelling, appearing, eating, exchanging and working.

With respect to timing, changing temporalities of some of these practices are discernible from different aspects of the material cultures used through this period. For example, analysis of the relationship between the numbers of coins deposited at different points through the century, in conjunction with other stratigraphic information concerning the composition of layers, indicates that coins were more rapidly lost – or even discarded – in the later part of the fourth century (Gardner 2001, 110-17). This relates in part to an increase in the availability of coinage, and probably to more widespread participation in practices of exchanging, but also represents a change in the temporal relations between people and things – coins which had hitherto been long-lived objects stretching back into history, like the empire which sanctioned their production, were now readily discarded. This example also illustrates how an archaeology of practices must deal with the intersection of *different fields* of practice, thus drawing in many strands of temporality, materiality and sociality. Thus, the pattern noted above is also partly to be accounted for in terms of changes in practices of dwelling, particularly the way in which certain kinds of building – again, often ones associated with state institutions – were given over to refuse disposal in the later fourth century. The abandonment of one set of routine practices for another aptly illustrates the tensions, between different kinds of tradition and different kinds of transformation, which a temporal analysis of this period bring to the fore.

This in turn leads to interpretations of the relationships between individuals and institutions, and therefore of different forms of sociality, which there is not space to address here. Two problems are, however, raised through this example. The first is that, once we discard the notion of trying to *explain* past social activity in terms of closed, timeless systems (cf. Barrett 2001, 155), hindsight becomes more of a hindrance than a help. If, in accordance with the perspective outlined in this paper, we rather seek to *understand* something of past modes of Being, we must attempt to comprehend them in their becoming, not in what they became. Secondly, and more significantly, we need to be sensitive to the implications of simultaneously *situating* chronology as a particular understanding of temporality, grounded in Modernism, and *using* it as a tool for understanding other temporalities. This, indeed, emphasizes the contradiction at the heart of archaeology (Shanks and Tilley 1992, 28, 110-15).

As with excavation itself, we obliterate what we seek to understand. In interpreting temporal relationships of other times we are forced to use our own temporal understandings, of days or years or lifetimes, of short or long timespans. However, not only does a general understanding of the centrality of temporality to Being enable us to say *something* about it in varied contexts, but the irreconcilable conflict between categories of timing is in itself symptomatic of the constant movement – the hermeneutic spiralling – which is to be welcomed as the defining feature of a self-critical archaeology.

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