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REPLY TO SOLLI, BURSTRÖM, MUURIMÄKI AND LAVENTO

Let me first begin with the comments from Brit Solli. I really do not recognise any of my paper here, so much so that I am led to ask – has Solli read the article? I do recognise a standard rhetorical pose often struck by those who feel uneasy with something which invites questioning or reflection – the author is saying nothing new. Another related comment is – we all know this already. Yet I often find little cited support or careful argument for either response. And so too here. It really is laughable to think, as Solli does, that Binford would hold with any of this. I point out in the paper that site formation processes, for example, are, of course, standard part of the archaeological field. But Solli gives no references. Please direct us to the publications where Binford relates site formation processes to a relativist epistemology! And with respect to the implications of some of the arguments, I point again to the article from the Lampeter Archaeology Workshop on relativism, published, with wide-ranging discussion, in a recent issue (1997) of *Archaeological Dialogues*. Burström, Muurimäki and Lavento pick out other key matters of theory and I will turn to these in a moment. It is important, however, to deal further with the comment from Solli, because I believe it points to a deep malaise in our discipline.

Solli's comment comes to rely upon *ad hominem* invective, with sniping comments, words put into my mouth, and gross misrepresentations of previous work of mine. No comment is supported by citation. We are presented with what I suggest is a self-indulgent reference to an album cover and a personal experience or memory of little relevance to scholarly debate. For this, surely, is the sadness referred to by Solli. I ask – is this what is meant to pass for scholarly comment in our archaeological community? It is this shoddy writing, for it is not scholarship, which goaded me into my own attempts to raise archaeology's standards of debate.

This is what is wrong with archaeology.

I am embarrassed to have had to deal with this in such detail. Let me pass on to some most perceptive points from the other commentators.

Muurimäki focuses upon the distinction between art and science, preferring to uphold the distinction. It is a difficult issue, of course, and we cannot hope to present a resolution here. But the debate should continue and most profitably in a discipline like ours, so wide and inter-disciplinary, a fertile testing ground for propositions on the issue. Perhaps I hope too much for a holistic resolution, but I do see it as a reasonable task to try to move beyond the opposition between understanding and explanation, *verstehen* and *erklären*. I ask, for example – how do we integrate the duality of society rooted in people who are part objects, part agent? What of the implications of our new age of technological interventions and the real prospect of cyborgs and intelligent machines? And the paper was not meant to be science, nor a novel – why does it have to be one or the other?

Lavento offers another reflection upon the the science/humanities relation and gives some very relevant contexts. Particularly interesting is another opposition, this time between essence and existence. Perhaps, as archaeologists, we should know our place and leave the issues to philosophers. But surely our broad discipline requires us to reflect upon what we are doing for, as Burström rightly says, these are ethical issues. These are crucial questions at the heart of the archaeological project and they do profoundly affect the way the past is treated and perceived.

I do not think that his is a case of anthropomorphic analogy, as Lavento does. It is more about the character of the social fabric, both human and thing-like at the same time. This duality is the source of the ethical problem.

Burström outlines another context of this debate – the growing research field dealing with the consumption and reception of monuments. To his references I add the recently completed thesis, monumental in its own way, presented by Cornelius Holtorf in hypertext (Holtorf 1998).

In considering the character of material culture and our interpretations of it Burström is absolutely right also in picking out the importance of material resistance in any hermeneutic encounter. This is the fundamental point about our interpretive freedom and agency as archaeological scientists.

Burström's illustrations also pick out the long-standing connection between the ideologies of classicism, romantic loss and ruin, and modalities of power in modernity – the context of archaeology's growth as a

discipline. There is much to be done here on the history of the discipline (I find much stimulating discussion and account in Alain Schnapp's history of archaeology up to the nineteenth century – *La Conquête du Passé*).

REFERENCES

- Holtorf, C. 1998. *Monumental Past: Interpreting the Meanings of Ancient Monuments in Later Prehistoric Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany)*. Dissertation presented to the University of Wales for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. (Available also under www.lamp.ac.uk/archaeology.)
- Schnapp, A. 1993. *La Conquête du Passé: aux Origines de l'Archéologie*. Paris.