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ARTICLE

Times the living make the dead live

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ABSTRACT

The concept of time has often been (over)looked at through the narrow spectrum of processual and positivist approaches to *archaeological science*. Researchers are still oblivious to the many vectors and planes of existence on which different experiences of time are being placed. Furthermore, they are not taking into consideration time's phenomenological quality, through which it is experienced, *lived*, and not simply *calculated* and *placed*. Consequently, the directions and strata in which time can be exposed and addressed are many and not necessarily metaphorical. This paper will explore different methodological approaches towards the many biases involved in the process of phenomenologically studying simultaneous, distinct time experiences for archaeologists and *in* archaeology.

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Introduction

When delving into the many biases involved in the process of phenomenologically approaching the notion of simultaneous, distinct time experiences that can be addressed *by* archaeologists and *in* archaeology, one must try to answer an obvious question, what does phenomenology have to offer to the process of reflecting about both our own temporal experiences, and those *lived* by past subjectivities?, but also the equally obvious question of how phenomenology can help to bridge what appears to be trace evidence for a potentially apprehended experiential knowledge within past societies, and the factual (although clearly situated) knowledge upon which we have based archaeological, anthropological and historical research, regarding our own epistemological grounds and model of rationality. The answer to these questions should be addressed as follows.

Archaeology as a phenomenology of time

While, generally speaking, phenomenology has been linked to a way to access experiences through a certain notion of subjectivity, ever since Martin Heidegger (1962), Del Moral (2001) published his well-known reflections on

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how phenomenology operated at an epistemological level, this school of thought has been understood as a useful tool to access the *phenomena* that shaped specific, factual forms of human lives (and, one may daresay, *ways of living*). Considering this, and following Alfredo González-Ruibal (2006), there are few disciplines other than archaeology fit to offer an exhaustive recording on these specific, factual phenomena that constitute an essential part of human lives and experiences. As archaeology is supposed to provide access to all the material phenomena that shape the archaeological record, it also represents a unique approach to the phenomenical experiences of materiality, making it able to study and reflect how these affected people in the past, as well as researchers dealing with them in every present lived.

Considering this, we should ask ourselves where the main difficulties lie when deciding the legitimacy of a phenomenological approach in archaeological methodologies, in order to research and approach the experiential information on past experiences from the present. From an epistemological point of view, one could argue that, historiographically, archaeologists have been organizing their research around the 'wrong' kinds of questions, which are mainly linked to both the historical-cultural and processual traditions, and their heir narratives, active today and traversed by a neo-positivism that strives to constitute itself into the main research paradigm in our discipline. These trends have traditionally led archaeological enquiry to focus on the research of past societies through an artificially set and studied group of *absolutes*, constituting grandiloquent metaphors for a constructed, abstract world, far apart from the past reality we could ever hope to approach and try to understand. This fixation with what could initially have been the study of Weberian ideal types ('Idealtypus' – Weber 1993) has vitiated archaeological knowledge to turn these types into apparently cognoscible realities that have become the main goal of a major part of the research activity.

Instead, an archaeology that provides a legitimate methodological and epistemological approach out of phenomenology is able to provide information about the historicity of experiences on these human, concise and distinct lives, taking a special interest in the study of different *modes* of being-in-the-world, and relations between the body, the world and otherness, and ultimately, in what constitutes the several manifestations of what it means to be human. But foremost, archaeology may be in conditions of addressing these *through* time, and most importantly, through different notions of time through history and prehistory.

Notions of time and temporality

With all this, two important questions pop up: what could possibly be the relevance of studying the several experiences on time and temporality for archaeological knowledge? And furthermore, how can we possibly approach an abstract domain like time and temporality through a specifically material-oriented

discipline? To answer these questions, it is important to briefly remind ourselves of what some of the most important phenomenologists have said about time.

For Heidegger (1962), Del Moral (2001), who proposed a tripartite (past, present, future), unified vision of time, the *Ekstase*, or the reflection outside oneself about each of these temporal features, was what constituted our specific way of being-in-the-world. This would be primarily focused on the past, building up the *Gewesenheit* (some sort of having-been-ness), which led Heidegger to postulate the main idea that we *are* time (and, in this sense, *history*).

This idea is strongly linked to the previous research by Edmund Husserl (1991) regarding the importance of tracking the self-consciousness (rooted in intersubjectivity), and both the ways in which things appeared to us as *temporal* and *how* we experience time. This makes it possible not only for a unified perception of objects (we could here place our archaeological objects), but also subjects, to occur and be placed through successive moments in history.

Lastly, it is also important to highlight Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (2011) considerations, a synthetic vision based on Heidegger's and Husserl's phenomenology that postulated the *subject* as *time* itself. Thus, time would no longer be an *object* to our knowledge, but rather the essential dimension of our *being*. This may be a valid answer to the first question, as one of the ultimate goals in archaeological research is to understand the very notion of what the *praxis* of being *human* has consisted of throughout history and prehistory, but it also sets some guidelines when facing the answer to the second question.

In this process, it is relevant as well to remind ourselves what the hermeneutic tradition (now accepted within the field of theoretical archaeology) has to say regarding this matter. For Hans-Georg Gadamer and Parada (2001), the concept of historicity had a special relevance, as it worked in two simultaneous ways. Firstly, regarding our object (and subject) of study (time), it helped to think about how and why it is interesting to study temporality in our present. Secondly, hermeneutics could help to explore ways in which to access a certain episteme and the place of our object/subject in the past – what Foucault (2015, 2001) called *historical a prioris*.

To Gadamer's hermeneutics we must add what appears to be a helpful contribution from Reinhart Koselleck, through his so-called *Historik* (1993, 2001), which in English can be translated as 'historiology'. Both authors considered time and space as inherently coexistent and intrinsic to human experience, as well as the most important conditionalities for the experience of human *praxis*. Though almost contemporaneous, both hermeneutics and the *Historik* may be bridged together as complementary, filling some gaps in each other. On the one hand, hermeneutics considered that historical concepts were *historical* because they had always been

associated with an *effectual history* (history of effects). That is to say, a concept is not only the concept in the moment of its initial baptism, but an accumulation of practices since it started being interpreted. Whereas to Koselleck, these concepts are over-conditioned by temporal experiences. To be within the conditions to make an analysis of historical concepts that allows us to experience historical changes through conceptual changes, we should then not only be able to track their historicity through the historiography of our discipline, but also try to relate their meanings through time with the specific contexts of emergence or change of *meaning*.

What Koselleck meant by this was that the fact that these changes occur does not give us subjective experiences, nor access to these experiences. They could only be approached through other latent dimensions, such as the interpretation and historical conditions of the context in which the concepts were raised. And here is where archaeology can prove to be a useful discipline when we reach our historical limits for direct interpretation: the limits of modernity and the interpretative traditions that followed this period into our modern times. Koselleck postulated a bipartite division in the modern period, with the second part being what he called the 'Sattelzeit', a period that organized a new temporality under what constituted a semantic and conceptual event: the great singularizations of modernity, which would phrase or give form to the specifically modern time. These singularizations, which we can easily expose in the archaeological and historical discourses, usually refer to categories (easily mistaken for Weberian ideal types), that have erased all traces of plurality in the understanding of concepts such as the following (Figure 1):

How can we start doing it in archaeology?

In order to overcome the dominance of being oblivious to the plurality of expressions in which all these concepts and many others are dealt with in archaeological research, resulting in the nonrepresentation of other subaltern realities, carrying out some kind of reverse phenomenological *epoché* appears to be imperative. Rather than just emptying every apparent bias from our

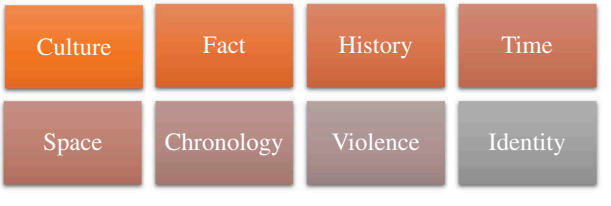

Figure 1. Author's depiction of some of the concepts that have most evidently suffered the singularizations of Sattelzeit's Modernity.

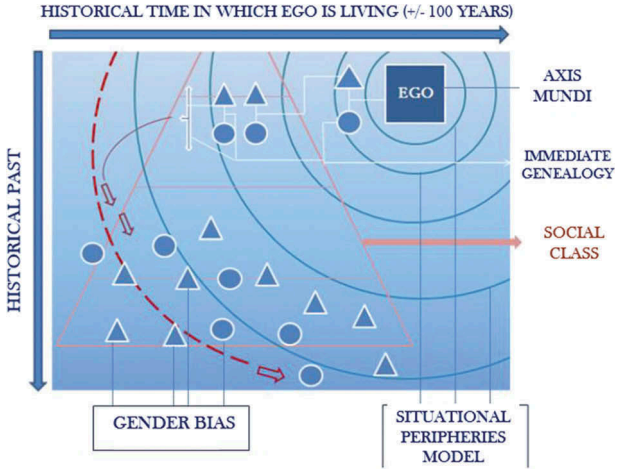

Figure 2. Author's depiction of the way in which the modern-day researcher places subjects regarding several biases through which she distances herself from past subjectivities.

research *topoi*, we should hold account of *where* and *when* we are directing our inquiry *from* and *towards* -the placing of concepts and subjects-, as can be seen in Figure 2.

Archaeological approaches like (feminist) gender and queer, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, as well as landscape archaeologies, are of special relevance when considering how we place historical subjects in relation to our (inter)subjective notion of time and temporality, as I will try to illustrate in a moment. Separating time and space, we participate in the process of the creation of otherness, so approaches that engage with spatial relations regarding the body (corporality) and its relation with the world are the main tool we can count on when retelling these narratives.

There is a final approach that can help shed light onto why this is all so closely related to archaeology. Lera Boroditsky's Metaphoric Structuring View, although belonging to the field of philosophy of language, is particularly interesting, as it proposes a working model for the understanding of how we are able to picture, understand and study abstract domains – time and temporality, in this case. Boroditsky's (2000) proposal suggests that, while there are certain domains that appear to us with a direct phenomenological experience of the world (e.g. space), there are certain *abstract* domains, such as time, that lack the specific and direct world experience to make them obvious and easy to refer to. The former are expressed in their own terms, while the latter need to borrow from these a metaphorical structure to make them cognoscible (knowable). In the case of time, it is proposed that it borrows its relational constituting

structure from spatial experiences, evidenced by the large number of examples in which several cultures refer to time and temporal experiences through spatial, physical metaphors. This process, referred to as metaphorical mapping, is said to be settled down with a continuous and frequent use within the abstract domain of time. As a consequence, thinking about time no longer necessarily requires direct access to a spatial schema. But this does not mean that spatial schemas are completely erased from the very structure of how time is referred to. On the contrary, it could potentially leave a historical print, in language analysis, change and evolution, that is also permeable and affects several spheres of materiality, thus being possibly traceable in the archaeological record, when approached through the right perspective and methodological proceedings. Hence, landscape analysis, as well as *ways of walking*, map making, and representations of the world and its many planes of existence, of the body as an *axis mundus*, or the very role of personhood and its spatial-temporal coordinates in different epistemes of the past, could help us to gain a better understanding of *when* and *where* we were and are today.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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