America, legislation regarding monumental and heritage sites restricts the use of geographical coordinates in order to protect the archaeological remains.

In *Grounding the Past*, Alexander Geurds contributes to the growing debate of ethics in archaeological fieldwork. He discusses the position of archaeology in the matter of public needs and demands rather than purely for academic research development; in his words: "the issue of who gets to interpret whose history is a contentious one." He criticises the concept of community archaeology arguing, in chapter 5, that reflexivity is not only part of the archaeological excavation process but also crucial for the communicative aspects of local participants as part of the archaeological fieldwork. In so doing, he takes a step forward in reaching consensus and generating new methods for collaborating with local communities.

Of most interest for me was that Geurds incorporated oral tradition in his approach to participatory archaeology and, in this context, discussed the concept of landscape because it was narrated and embedded in both archaeology and the local community for generating knowledge regarding local history. In this sense, he argues that landscape is conceptualised as a recursive relationship from precolonial to contemporary times, concluding that the construction of local heritage in Monte Negro and Apoala is linked to landscape features including archaeological sites and natural places without material culture. Therefore, he incorporates something I would refer to as "places of memory," which are local indigenous perceptions of history. Thus, his research aims for "grounding the past" of the Mixteca Alta area building on contemporary local knowledge which is something more archaeological projects today strive to achieve.

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When Moral Conviction Breaks Down

a review of

The Ethics of Archaeology:
Philosophical Perspectives on Archaeological Practice

Edited by Chris Scarre and Geoffrey Scarre
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 330 pp. ISBN 978-0521549424 (paper). $40. 2006.

From the green revolution to the products we consume, it is clear that we are living in an overtly "ethicized" world. The rhetoric of moral conviction has come to permeate political, professional, and public spheres to such an extent that it often blurs the boundaries between the ethics we preach and the nature of conduct that actually ensues. Over the last fifteen years of embroiled debate with indigenous peoples, issues of material ownership, and the responsibilities of Science, archaeologists have become increasingly aware of the wide gulf that often separates their profession's daily practice from the looming ideals of its formalized ethical codes. While the recent discipline has witnessed a verbosely sincere process of ethical re-branding, many archaeologists continue to insist that an adherence to codified 'Rights and Wrongs' only detracts attention from ground-level dilemmas and the complexities of researching the past in the modern day world.

When I was first introduced to Chris and Geoffrey Scarre's 2006 co-edited volume, *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archaeological Practice*, I admittedly braced myself for boredom. Having spent a significant portion of my academic career studying the evolution of archaeology's professional ethics, I anticipated a familiar formula of arguments espousing stewardship, accountability, and the common heritage of humanity. While these seemingly omnipresent themes are indeed what I found, I was pleasantly surprised by the unconventional manner in which they were approached. At face value, the issues explored throughout the book's fifteen chapters are almost indistinguishable from those addressed by most of archaeology's professional ethical codes—looting, artifact commercialization, and the responsibilities of archaeological "caretakers" to both the human and material record. Rather than being promoted as epitomes of a professional standard, the themes are demoted to a status of inherent logical dysfunction. As the editors clearly point out in the book's introduction, readers "will be left not with solutions but with a series of questions."

The format of *The Ethics of Archaeology* is wisely chosen as one of loosely bound thematic sections, the divisions of which the editors themselves admit are "to some extent arbitrary." Rather than detracting from the book's legibility, the overlapping

Contents of *The Ethics of Archaeology*

of content between numerous chapters and sections serves to compliment the text's frequent allusions to holism and the need for "big picture" considerations of what are all-too-often isolated dilemmas. The book begins with a series of essays on the topic of cultural objects and ownership. Over the course of four articles, the issue of ownership is pared down to a series of fundamental questions regarding the potential of multiple-proprietorship, the relevance of private property law, and the legal/moral right of indigenous groups to financially exploit their own past as a non-sustainable resource.

The second and third sections of the book respectively examine the responsibility of archaeologists to the living and to the dead. Throughout these chapters, discussions of legislated obligation are juxtaposed with those of personal morality, asking how the two are to be reconciled in the interpretations and process of archaeology in such a manner as to mutually benefit all parties involved. Perhaps most interesting in this section, are the various attempts by the authors to morally translate the beliefs of individuals, religion, and science into what they feel is a suitable hierarchy of interest.

The final section of the book engages the issue of "non-ownership," with authors outlining a position for the common heritage of all humankind. The dilemmas posed by such a stance are manifold: Under what conditions and criteria are the world's important cultural and historical sites chosen? Are archaeologists the proper group to manage global resources? Is ubiquitous relevance even possible? The authors' various arguments for the notion of "common good" serve to simultaneously resolve and problematize the issue of World Heritage.

As its primary goal, *The Ethics of Archaeology* seeks to broaden the dialogue surrounding various moral controversies posed by the practice of archaeology as a contemporary discipline. The twenty authors are drawn together through their recognition that the ability to evaluate and resolve archaeological dilemmas is not the private reserve of the discipline's own practitioners. Any considerations for managing culture, history, and responsibility, they insist, demands involvement from the multitude of competing voices and interest groups holding an equivalent moral investment in the management and ownership of history. In an attempt to pay homage to this diversity, the book moves beyond an exclusively scientific gaze and includes the perspectives of cultural anthropologists and philosophers alongside those of archaeologist authors. The result is a refreshing departure from the potential tediousness of a single discipline's self-reflection. The cross-section of opinions contributes flexibility and imagination to what have often become tired and static debates surrounding historical ownership and commodification.

Perhaps my only critique of this book is that its objective of inclusiveness has not been fully met. While *The Ethics of Archaeology* promotes contrasting views held within a broad sector of academia, the voices of the non-scholarly groups implicated in archaeological controversy remain curiously mute. However, there is a valiant effort by many of the book's authors to act as mediums for the concerns of people on the other side of the "academic fence." In her article on subsistence digging, Julie Hollowell successfully manages to "peel away the layers" of morality and artifact commercialization to reveal how the non-sanctioned unearthing and sale of artifacts can only be considered as a balance between harm and survival for local populations. Douglas Lackey assumes a similarly emic approach in his philosophical pondering on the legitimacy of demands made by Science and Indigenous Peoples in regards to repatriation and reburial of human remains. He concludes—as do most of the authors in this book—that a "magic ethical formula" is conspicuously absent from the daily practice of archaeology.

While this book is essential reading for individuals with a personal interest in the contemporary processes of archaeology and cultural heritage, the chapters' clinical deconstruction and dissection of ethical codes and interest-specific ideas might prove tedious to an audience with little at stake in the controversies of the past. A note of caution must also be issued for archaeological readers who take comfort in a vision of science as an ethically straightforward and objective practice. In the heart of this book's narrative lies a veritable "funhouse" of logic, in which the archaeological tradition's fundamental principles are reflected back at the reader in a dizzying array of distorted possibility, ranging from the enlightening to the mildly grotesque. To pick up *The Ethics of Archaeology* is to have one's eyes opened to a nebulous world of debate—one chances never again being able to approach the past with any degree of moral certitude.

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