

## On the Past and Contemporary Character of Classical Archaeology

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Classical archaeology is one of the first and oldest branches of archaeology practised in Europe. Although its roots are usually believed to lie in the exceptional fascination for antiquities in the period of the Renaissance, they actually reach much deeper. Interest in the relics of ancient civilisations is deeply inscribed in the self-identification of various peoples of Europe, in the grounds of their cultural identity. The Romans appreciated the Greek works of art, appropriating and copying them on a massive scale, and this process of recognition of the Greek cultural heritage as theirs, defined and legitimised their own cultural domination. Then, the expansion of Christianity played a unique role in the consolidation of the importance of ancient traditions in Europe, and its central position in the process of exposing Greek and Roman antiquities stems from the fact that both Latin and eastern orthodox Christianity acknowledged these traditions as their own and incorporated into their own history.<sup>1</sup> Christianity was simply based on the enormous cultural achievements of Antiquity and using its vivid and inspiring presence.

I should mention here a much wider problem concerning the “living antiquity” observed in the history of Europe in general and the causes of such vitality which is the reason why we spoke and most often still speak of the Greco-Roman foundations of European civilisation, albeit some argue that such an approach to Antiquity has already declined.<sup>2</sup> This issue is very extensive and complex, and moreover only to some extent overlaps with the question of the development and history of classical archaeology, thus I will only mention it here briefly.

It is a known fact that the splendour of Greece shone also on the Roman world but it seems that it happened not only by way of appropriation of cultural achievements. Despite the sometimes difficult Roman-Greek relationship and often exploitative Roman attitude to the Greek cultural heritage, to some extent

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<sup>1</sup> Millett 2007, 31–33.

<sup>2</sup> Morris 2004, 256.

cultural exchange took place on the basis of reciprocity. What's more, it is ultimately through the mediation of the Romans that the Hellenic culture flourished on various areas of their huge empire and was thus passed to subsequent periods of history. You could say that already in antiquity the first synthesis of complex achievements of the ancient culture took place on a great scale. It would then influence the medieval and Renaissance Europe, and from modern times each epoch would create its own model of antiquity and make further interpretations and syntheses of its sophisticated achievements.<sup>3</sup>

In the Renaissance we observe a beginning of a genuine enthusiasm for specific areas of the Greco-Roman antiquity, with particular emphasis on architecture, sculpture, painting and crafts. People began to notice the possibility of relating these relics to the then written sources, which resulted in developing certain rules of conduct. In later times they gave rise to research methods and enabled the development of classical archaeology and they certainly distinguish it from all other areas of archaeology. Therefore, it should be noted that the term "classical archaeology" neither refers directly only to a region or a section of chronology, as it happens in a number of other archaeologies, nor just to the material sources (mostly art) that have acquired the status of "classic". This is archaeology related to a broader concept, a concept which constituted during the development of the so-called classical studies on the broadly defined "classical world", certainly a very capacious term. "The Classical World" is above all the world which produced literary sources, sources which acquired the status of "classic" in Western civilisation. The term classical archaeology mainly refers to such a world. However, it has also got some time-space, historical boundaries; most researchers tend to consider them as areas dominated by the Greeks and Romans between the eighth century BC and fourth century AD. Some scholars pinpoint the exceptional conventionality and problems with such extensive caesurae.<sup>4</sup> Classical archaeology is the archaeology of such a world.<sup>5</sup>

To return to the history of classical archaeology and the Renaissance, it should be noted that it was then that a common perception of both Greece and Rome originated. It resulted from the conviction, born at the time and consolidated in later times, of the uniqueness of the Roman and Greek world in European history, the world which, along with other works of art, left over a unique number of texts of their own culture. Starting from the time of the Renaissance it was clearly noticed and widely recognised in Europe that the level of intellectual development,

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<sup>3</sup> Lecture of Professor T. Kotula "Starożytność wiecznie żywa" [Antiquity Alive], delivered during the ceremony of honouring Him with Doctor Honoris Causa of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, on 13 March 2007. Source: website of the Department of Ancient History Societies at the Institute of History of AMU; [http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~zhsa/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=85](http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~zhsa/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=85) [April 2011].

<sup>4</sup> Morris 2004, 257–258.

<sup>5</sup> Osborne and Alcock 2007, 1.

as well as the degree of conceptualizing the world, achieved in antiquity, is the foundation of the civilised life. Undoubtedly this, with the rise of Christianity, began to be seen as the foundation of Western civilisation, but to some extent was also used by Western imperialism, based on the idea of the timeless significance of these achievements (which is sometimes synonymous with the term “classic”), thus on the evaluative belief of the superiority of this world.<sup>6</sup> Hence, inter alia, negative, or at least ambivalent assessment of classical archaeology appearing from time to time, as its history is in some way intertwined with the perception of the unique role of the classical world in the history of European civilisation. As archaeology was to have been based on such a conviction, it is believed to have contributed to the perpetuation of the traditional order.<sup>7</sup> It was also a reason why classical archaeology adopted new theoretical and methodological approaches in science to a lesser extent, not to mention opening to current discourses within the humanities and social sciences, which have more strongly influenced prehistoric archaeology.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted here that within some contemporary scientific discourses (postmodernism, postcolonial studies), that sometimes represent a radically critical approach (in my opinion often too unilateral, simplifying and not making efforts to go deeper into the complexity of the criticised phenomena), traditional and valuating terms such as “civilisation” and “classic” are regarded as pejorative, and which, in this sense, should be rejected.<sup>9</sup>

Going back to the complex history of classical archaeology, only upon a deeper reflection can we understand what it was and what it is today. I must emphasise that this is undoubtedly the archaeology not only of the places and material remains discovered in the classical world, functioning during its historical development, but also archaeology regarding the meaning of these places, continuously updated in the history of Europe. These material relics (not to mention written sources), especially the architecture and art, have been endowed in the history of the Western culture with unique values that have exerted a lasting influence on the development of the Western sensibility and perception of the world.

We are therefore entitled to state that the classic legacy is a common past of the whole Europe (thus classical archaeology is all European countries’ own archaeology), regardless of the extent to which the prehistory also creates the past, and to what extent it is formed by archaeologies of the regions and peoples,

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<sup>6</sup> Dyson 2006, XIV; Osborne and Alcock 2007, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Whitley 2001, 10; Morris 2004, 256.

<sup>8</sup> Renfrew 1980, 290–295; Snodgrass 1985, 31–37; Dyson 1993, 195–196; Whitley 2001, 12–16. The latter strongly emphasizes that although long after World War II classical archaeology did not accept new theoretical trends that prehistoric archaeology adopted, it surely was never a science lacking strong theoretical foundations and its basic, fully-defined theoretical paradigm was the one that can be described as “Hellenism”, Whitley 2001, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Harris 2006, 51–54 compare the definition of terms *civilisation*, *civilised*, *civilising*, *civil*, *civilian*, *uncivil* and *classical/ class, classic, classy*.

who in vast majority lived outside the classical world.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, classical archaeology held an exceptionally privileged position for a long time (which is not the case nowadays, when all disciplines are treated equally and research assume a pluralistic approach), because, to some extent, similar to classical studies, it not only dealt with exploring the ancient past, but was to read the values developed in the ancient world and communicate them to next generations.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, these values were drawn from the concept of “Hellenism”, developed already in the eighteenth century, continued in nineteenth, which idealised this unique, classic Greek past which was believed to have been the almost exclusive roots of “Europeanism”.<sup>12</sup>

However, there are two factors that seem to be the main reasons of the independent development of classical archaeology in relation to other branches of archaeology and of its specific character. On the one hand, it is a huge amount of ancient works of art, as well as iconographic representations, temples and other buildings, which preserved to modern times. This legacy – or rather its magnitude and aesthetic qualities – contributed to focusing on the study of art and architecture in classic archaeology, and at the same time lack of interest and underestimation of all other relics of ancient material culture and believing them unworthy of study. On the other hand, a huge number of ancient written sources, including primarily the numerous inscriptions, set classical archaeology in a privileged position in relation to archaeology of prehistoric societies. Written sources, always regarded as more important than material remains, only “illustrating” the former, were almost uncritically considered for a long time a “real” insight into the ancient world.

To continue the reflection on the history of classical archaeology, I must emphasize the fact, significant in the context of what has been said above, that both archaeology and art history have common origins. Both began to slowly emerge in the eighteenth century, as a part of the same process of replacing the tradition of antiquarian amateur research – collecting, knowledge and different types of studies on antiquity – to eventually establish itself as modern, academic disciplines in the last decades of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century, basing on the classification and chronological (the former) and stylistic (the latter) paradigm. The key figure of that change in the eighteenth century was J.J. Winckelmann, who related the ancient literary sources regarding the development of ancient sculpture to relics that were preserved in Rome. The world of ancient art was hitherto perceived as a monolith, without a historical per-

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<sup>10</sup> Osborne and Alcock 2007, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Whitley 2001, 11–12.

<sup>12</sup> Ian Morris spoke most critically on the idea of “Hellenism”, born mainly in the circle of German science and widespread throughout Europe, and even in the United States, and on its negative impact on the archaeology of Greece, see Morris 1994, 8–47; 2004.

spective that Winckelmann gave it. He was more interested in the works than artists' biographies, and asking about the reasons for the diversity of styles, he gave comprehensive responses, taking into account the technical skills, historical and geographical conditions, expressed meanings, and even the moral attitudes of recipients. He even started to use the concept of style, characterising it due to the historical volatility. However, the parabolic model, which he suggested (archaic style, sophisticated, beautiful and decadent), strongly influenced the perception of the development of art in general, as it regarded the classical Greek art a model and standard and raised it to the rank of the absolute, thus mythologizing and excluding it from the historical process. For Winckelmann, the zenith of human artistic achievements was connected with a period characterised by development of freedom and democracy, and the uniqueness of the Greeks manifested itself in the ability to choose and adopt the most perfect forms of nature, according to the imitative scheme, and creating perfect entities out of them.<sup>13</sup>

On the grounds of classical archaeology, which started to function to a large extent as a history of ancient art, archaeologists began to distinguish between works of art relevant to the discussion on the aesthetics, and the usual artefacts that did not deserve closer attention. The distinction was made on the basis of the technical level of works, their aesthetic impact and artistic value, that were to reveal the peculiar features of the Greek, Roman and Egyptian imagination. According to this model, an ancient vase was raised to the rank of a work of art, especially when it was marked with signatures of potters and painters. Moreover, the depicted scenes, and above all their style, started to serve as a source of knowledge of the unpreserved ancient monumental painting described in the ancient texts.

Specific research methods originated, mainly connoisseur ones, like attributive method — the close study of works of art with a view to attributing them to an individual artist or workshop, extensively developed in case of A. Furtwängler, and his study of gems and above all sculpture, as well as J.D. Beazley and the study of vase painting.<sup>14</sup> Relationship between classical archaeology and art history became numerous, and among common research orientations, the issues of formal and stylistic analysis and iconographic-iconological method proved to be the most important and enduring,<sup>15</sup> although other, more recent research approaches have also found their place in classical archaeology and are successfully practised.<sup>16</sup>

With time, there appeared discrepancies in the research procedures of classical archaeologists and art historians, partly rooted in a different kind of sources

<sup>13</sup> Bianchi Bandinelli 1988, 36–52; Potts 1994, *passim*; Sichtermann 1996, 80–106.

<sup>14</sup> Snodgrass 1987, 16–17; 2007, 19–23; Whitley 2001, 36–41.

<sup>15</sup> Lang 2002, 168–250.

<sup>16</sup> Hölscher 2000, 147–165; Bergmann 2000, 166–188.

traditionally studied by representatives of these disciplines, and resulting from different contemporary attitude of art historians and archaeologists to the world of works and artefacts remaining outside the academic study. It is a fact that many art historians have got numerous links with the art market and all expertise activities in this field. What's more, connoisseur profiles are sometimes promoted in education. Most frequently it does not go beyond the moral standards of practice of the profession and does not cause the loss of historic value of works. In case of archaeology and trade of antiquities it is usually the opposite, and such activities, mostly illegal, lead to the destruction of sites, their looting and irretrievable loss of source data for science. Hence, the present especially negative approach to relating assumptions connected with the meanings and the messages inherent in the modern concept of art, which remains an autonomous sphere of aesthetic contemplation or expression of creative imagination of individuals, to archaeological sources. The museums have been particularly heavily criticised, as their antique collections are generally created on the basis of aesthetic qualities of the collected items, treated as works of art completely emancipated from the cultural contexts in which they were formed and functioned. Opinions appeared that archaeologists should play a key role in the attempts to comprehend and interpret the ancient material sources, which ancient works of art are, in order to remove them from the framework in which the aesthetic and market value plays a leading role.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, these very complex relations of classical archaeology and art history, as well as the criticised domination of the former by long-time studies on these special artefacts that in modern European culture acquired the status of works of art, was the reason why modern classical archaeology, rightly reformulating its research areas, sometimes unnecessarily abandons its tremendous achievements in the study of ancient art. It should be emphasised that thereby archaeology resigns from accomplishments built up over decades of its functioning by a variety of intellectual traditions of many nations that practiced it.<sup>18</sup> I think therefore, in accordance with major figures of contemporary classical archaeology, that it is a completely unnecessary deprivation of an inspirational source of great tradition.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, resigning from such research is even more incomprehensible today, in a situation where art history, cultural anthropology or the so called visual studies, cope with the contemporary globalisation of the world of images, and emphasising the trans-cultural community in the human relations with images, each in a different way attempts to reach the meanings of

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<sup>17</sup> Scott 2006, 628–629; Dyson 2006, 224–228.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. a textbook on classical archaeology (Alcock and Osborne [ed.] 2007), cited in this paper, written recently by a large group of eminent specialists, in which there is no separate chapter on the study of ancient art/visual culture.

<sup>19</sup> Whitley 1987, 9–15; 1993, 7–33.

the visual artefacts of other eras and cultures. Classical archaeology should not abandon this field. I believe that the identification of classical archaeology with art history, which was to have been a reason, among others, of its “backwardness” and low susceptibility to applying theories eagerly adopted by prehistoric archaeology, it is not legitimate. This problem is complex and will not be further addressed, but considering the above discussed issue of the connections between archaeology and art history, I would just like to mention that the latter is involved in ongoing theoretical debates, drawing inspiration from them, and applying in their studies.<sup>20</sup> It seems that at some point in its development classical archaeology unnecessarily separated itself too radically from art history (just like from history), while at the beginning of its development, studies inspired by theoretical reflection, namely a kind of phenomenology of art or histories of human achievements, together with interpretations of these, were its determinant, as is emphasised by A. Schnapp in his works.<sup>21</sup> Most likely, classical archaeology began to focus too much attention on the study of preserved elite ancient texts. In addition, researchers engaged themselves almost exclusively in huge excavations on important sites in the Mediterranean world, requiring excellent organisation. This entailed a necessity to describe and catalogue a vast quantity of discoveries and findings and resulted in narrow specialisations as well as fragmentation of the research and activities. A view began to dominate that making generalisations and addressing new research problems can be made on the basis of specialised compendia of sources, on the ground of solid and systematic collections, which was probably still the aftermath of the Enlightenment ideas straight from the onset of the discipline, later reinforced by positivistic attitude to science. Hence there has been little interest in new trends and reflection on conceptualizing knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, classical archaeology for a long time remained focused solely on objects. It was archaeology ruled by various types and classes of artefacts and works of art, not archaeology focused on addressing problems. This has been changing lately. More than one hundred years of tradition of such research has led to extraordinary knowledge of material sources, artefacts, developed in a connoisseur way — researchers generally have no problem to determine what the item is, where it comes from, how it was made and how to date it. However, carrying out research means formulating problems, not describing artefacts, even if we recognise the phase of source study as valid and necessary. Today, classical

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<sup>20</sup> Literature in this area is huge, I recommend reading the work of Mariusz Bryl (2008), thoroughly discussing the problem of embedding the history of art in various theoretical currents and debates of contemporary humanities.

<sup>21</sup> The author cites, among others, such books as C.O. Müller, 1830, *Handbuch der Archäologie der Kunst*, Breslau and C.B. Strack, 1880, *Systematik und Geschichte der Archäologie der Kunst*, Leipzig — cf. a paper by Schnapp 2002, 134–135 and a wider reflection on the issue in an earlier book — Schnapp 1998, *passim*.

<sup>22</sup> Snodgrass 1987, 1–35; Dyson 1993, 195; Carstens 2004, 13.

archaeology asks what patterns of human behaviour are represented in the artefacts and the excavated sites, how to read the sources as witnesses of the social, religious and political life of the ancient societies of Greece and Rome, how we can explain the distribution of various products, what was the reason of diffusion of artistic styles, fashions and ways of making works of art, etc.<sup>23</sup>

After the above observations, briefly showing very complex relationships between classical archaeology and art history, I would like to refer to several other, in my view equally important issues related to the history and development of classical archaeology.

I should mention that ancient culture, especially its classical period, was a major source of ideas in modern Europe for centuries. Over time in many countries it began to function as a basis for ideal humanistic education, which was particularly widespread in the nineteenth century. These phenomena assumed a particular form in Germany,<sup>24</sup> where admiration for the classical culture, especially Greek, was reflected e.g. in the trend called “neohumanism”. Its distinguished representatives, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, even promoted a reform of education, starting from the secondary level, in order to generally introduce the so-called humanistic gymnasium. The objectives of the reform were certainly very noble, and education was understood as a mission of forming human beings. Nevertheless, the focus of education primarily on the classical culture and Greek art (that is, the way it was perceived and interpreted at the time), accompanied by pushing teaching practical skills into the background, together with an interest in contemporary culture and art, led to the detachment of education from the relations with the then social practice.<sup>25</sup> Undoubtedly, Humboldt’s much greater merit, permanently inscribed in the organisation of the academic life in Germany, and actually of a large part of Europe, was preparing a conceptual framework and the actual opening of a university in Berlin in 1810, with the supreme ideas of academic freedom, and above all the unity of education and research necessary at the university level.<sup>26</sup>

To make a general comment on what has been mentioned above in terms of Germany and its approach to classical culture in education, I have to mention that especially since the nineteenth century the classical culture remained for a long time a basis for the education of the elite and an integral part of social life in many other countries, and even became a part of political life in this era, which

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<sup>23</sup> Osborne and Alcock 2007, 3.

<sup>24</sup> During the nineteenth century German scholars actually reformed classical studies: former amateur classes for the clergy and aristocrats became professional studies, set in university structures – *Altertumswissenschaft*. At the time the leading role of the German researchers in the field of classical studies, including archaeology, was unquestionable – cf. Whitley 2001, 32–36.

<sup>25</sup> Andrzejewski 1989, 113–114.

<sup>26</sup> Andrzejewski 1989, 241.

certainly ennobled and privileged classical studies. Development of interest in classical archaeology (and generally in classical culture) in Europe in the nineteenth century, still vivid in the first decades of the twentieth century, went hand in hand with the growing political and national identity. This is especially true in case of Greece, which freed itself from the Ottoman rule, to completely turn to the age of Pericles.<sup>27</sup> Another example is Italy, although it made use of its classical past in an exceptionally extreme way in the 1920s and 1930s of the twentieth century, when the Roman history, especially during the reign of Augustus, raised to the rank of the ideal, became central to the construction of political ideology at the time of Mussolini.<sup>28</sup>

However, the problem of using the classical past did not refer only to countries, which territories were occupied by ancient Greek and Romans. The development of classical archaeology in the nineteenth century was also motivated by the cultural rivalry between the major forces in Europe and the United States. Therefore in this century classical education was still the essential element of the education of a ruling elite in general. This international competition stood also to some extent behind the significant development of museum collections, making private collections public and popularising them as well as behind the sponsorship of major excavations. For example, Olympia quickly became a symbol of German interests, Delphi of the French and Knossos of the British interests.<sup>29</sup>

We can repeat after Ian Morris that during that period prehistoric archaeology, also remaining in some way “in the services” of different nation states, offered the societies the knowledge of what lies at the heart of being a Dane, a German or a Frenchman, but classical archaeology communicated to them all what it meant to be human, in fact a human who embodies the best qualities.<sup>30</sup> Classical antiquity remained an exemplary era in the history of Europe for a long time, although this statement certainly simplifies, for the purposes of this review, a much more complex picture of the perception and use of the past in general as well as of acquiring knowledge about it. At least since the Enlightenment we witness a slow affirmation of distinct epochs and ethnic characters. In certain cases it gradually led to challenging a universally acknowledged force of the ancient pattern and directed the interest to other achievements, for example, to the art of the Middle Ages. These processes have considerably deepened with time.<sup>31</sup> Coming back to general propositions attempting to succinctly recognise the trends behind the development of archaeology, we may pinpoint Bruce

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<sup>27</sup> Whitley 2001, 30; further discussed problem of relations of Greece, also today's, with its past, can be found in deep and nuanced book of Yannis Hamilakis (2007).

<sup>28</sup> Zanker 1999, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Millett 2007, 34–35.

<sup>30</sup> Morris 2004, 261.

<sup>31</sup> Pomian 1996, 145–146.

Trigger's proposal that defines different traditions of archaeological research in the world as on the one hand, "nationalist" (first of all prehistories of particular states, constructing their national identity, which has been the case, e.g. in Europe since the Napoleonic period), then the "colonial" (research developed by settlers in areas where local communities were almost completely replaced by immigrants, mainly Europeans), and finally the "imperial" (research on a world scale, conducted by a small number of countries, such as the UK, which ruled huge areas of our planet).<sup>32</sup> To this classification I. Morris adds classical archaeology, describing it as "continentalist", thus archaeology providing foundations for the cultural identity of entire Europe and displaying its ancient Greco-Roman roots.<sup>33</sup>

After World War II, classical studies, including classical archaeology, lost its unique position and it happened differently in Europe and the United States. This process is very complex, conditioned by a number of social, political and economic factors. Undoubtedly, one of the principal factor is a kind of social revolution that has happened in many countries. Moreover, the post-war reconstruction and the development of investments in many areas of Europe, caused an increase in local excavations, especially rescue excavations. Emphasis was placed on the development of widely understood education, often providing students with practical skills, and addressed to groups of young people from different backgrounds. In a sense, classical studies have become democratic.<sup>34</sup>

Classical archaeology certainly began to increasingly move away from the former knowledge of the artefacts, concentrated solely on the works of art often viewed as an autonomous world, excluded from the context of its production, functioning and perception. It also started to retreat from the fascination with the philological data. Yielding to serious transformations, which occurred in the last decades of the twentieth century, classical archaeology began also to significantly expand the scope of its interests and verify the hitherto adopted research approaches, which led to its today's diversity and change of character. Hence, contemporary classical archaeology is a rapidly evolving science, which re-formulates its research fields and opens up to cooperation with many other disciplines. It means that it undertakes a wide range of issues, inter alia, studies on the ecology of the ancient world, on the space and landscape, the processes of urbanisation and state-formation, studies on the household and its resources, on the worship and ritual, creation and expression of identity, perception of self and

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<sup>32</sup> Trigger 1984, 355–370.

<sup>33</sup> Morris 1994, 11; 2004, 259.

<sup>34</sup> Millett 2007, 38–39.

the other, etc.<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting here that among disciplines studying the past, archaeology still remains to some extent unique, owing to its ongoing opportunity of discovering new sources and data in the course of field work (including the growing number of non-invasive surveys), as well as due to the contact with artefacts. Nowadays, the possibility of application of new technologies in the research opens up very promising prospects.<sup>36</sup>

I believe that archaeology, as well as other disciplines, attempts to preserve a character of a sovereign discipline with a precise research field. It is directed towards specific phenomena of the past cultural and social life, examined primarily through available material remains. However, by opening up more and more for collaboration with other disciplines, it also gets rid of its limitations and total dependence on one controlling humanistic discipline, which is important for classical archaeology regarding its strong connections with classical philology and art history. Nevertheless, I would say that this should not mean distancing itself and giving up this huge and great tradition – on the contrary, it should be rethought and included again in today’s research. The authority of science lies in its achievements, jointly produced by scholars, namely the tradition, which is also subject to continuous development and change. The authority of a well-understood tradition does not stand in opposition to the freedom of undertaking new research. In case of archaeology, as one of the disciplines studying the past, we must realise that all questions about the past are asked from the position of the present, therefore, these are questions not only about the past itself, but also about contemporary people, thinking about the past from a particular cultural perspective. The way of thinking about the past is thus in this case a form of communicating the researchers’ own choices of values and thus an informed and open to others form of participating in a culture in which they are positioned.<sup>37</sup> Let me reiterate the opinion stated already at the beginning of this text that our era, like the previous ones, creates its own model of antiquity and makes its own interpretations of its numerous achievements.

To end up, I would like to mention again the question of the “living presence” of antiquity in our culture, or to put it in different way, an idea anchored exceptionally deeply in the history of Europe, perceiving antiquity as the foundation of European civilisation, as repeated recently by Leszek Mrozewicz: “It is a widely recognised truth that the civilisation of Europe is based on three major pillars: Greek thought and art, the achievements of the Romans in the field of law and the organisation of state, and Christianity, originating from the Judaism and the

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. interpretations of the above issues in the already cited in this paper synthetic monographs about classical archaeology written in the circle of the German (Borbein, Hölscher, Zanker eds. 2000) and Anglo-Saxon (Alcock and Osborne [eds.] 2007) traditions.

<sup>36</sup> Millett 2007, 46–47.

<sup>37</sup> Mamzer 2004, cf. especially chapter 3 of the book, p. 174 and final remarks, pp. 235–239.

Greco-Roman culture, which provided Europe with religion and morals”.<sup>38</sup> This still widespread belief concerning the antiquity, which can be supported by a myriad of examples and data, is interesting today mainly in connection with the reflection on the role of antiquity in contemporary world and the need to learn about it. Concluding the above-cited speech on this subject, inaugurating the academic year 2008–2009 at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, L. Mrozewicz states that “The inspirational power of antiquity, experienced in a particular way in every epoch, have been igniting the minds of generations that in this period, its culture and history, have been looking for motivation to act and process the reality around us”.<sup>39</sup> We should hope that classical archaeology will show such an inspiring role of antiquity also in our times, as it functions with full knowledge that preserved texts, ideas, representations, as well as material culture of ancient Greece and Rome, for a very long time remained key for the Western world in the process of adaptation of the past in order to authenticate the present. Modern scholars, however, must take into consideration both the recognized use and abuse of the past. Hence, today’s classical archaeology significantly broadens its field of research trying to describe the “social life”, the roles and importance of ancient material culture in the contemporary socio-cultural context. In so doing, it takes into account the reflections on the concept of the social agency of things, the strength of their impact, not only knowledge of them, recorded in the social memory. It also considers the influence of ancient artefacts on the senses of the recipient, with all their properties, such as visibility and tangibility, which gives them the ability of ongoing production and materialisation of time and place, of embodying the past.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Mrozewicz 2008, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Mrozewicz 2008, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Hamilakis 2007, 9.

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