

# **“I Like to Keep my Archaeology Dead”. Alienation and Othering of the Past as an Ethical Problem**

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Article abstract

As archaeologists, we have to deal with the dead, and as David Clarke once said, we like to keep our archaeology dead. From an epistemological perspective, alienation from the dead seems almost inevitable; otherwise, we would only project today's conditions onto the past. Therefore, the past must be, and must remain, a foreign country. These alienating processes have ethical implications, however, especially when it comes to the study of human remains. In this article, we analyze the structures within the scientific discipline of archaeology that normalize practices, such as the labeling of human bone material during excavations and the object-like display of skeletons in museums. We argue that archaeologists have an – often rejected – ethical responsibility towards subjects from the past. We, therefore, seek to open up a debate concerning alternative strategies for the treatment of the dead.

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## ARTICLE (ÉVALUÉ PAR LES PAIRS / PEER-REVIEWED)

# “I Like to Keep my Archaeology Dead”. Alienation and Othering of the Past as an Ethical Problem

Stefan Schreiber<sup>a,b</sup>, Sabine Neumann<sup>c</sup>, Vera Egbers<sup>d,e</sup>**Résumé**

En tant qu'archéologues, nous avons affaire à la mort. Et, pour reprendre les mots de David Clarke, nous aimons garder notre archéologie morte. D'un point de vue épistémologique, l'aliénation des morts semble être presque inévitable. Sinon, nous ne ferions que projeter les conditions d'aujourd'hui sur celles d'hier. Ainsi, le passé doit être et rester une terre étrangère. Ces processus d'aliénation ont toutefois des implications éthiques, en particulier lorsqu'il s'agit de l'étude des restes humains. Dans cet article, nous analysons les structures dans le domaine scientifique de l'archéologie qui normalisent des pratiques telles que l'étiquetage du matériel osseux humain pendant les fouilles ou l'exposition de squelettes, tels des objets, dans les vitrines de musées. Nous soutenons que les archéologues ont une responsabilité éthique – souvent niée – envers les sujets du passé et souhaitons ouvrir le débat sur l'adoption de stratégies alternatives dans le “traitement” des morts.

**Mots-clés**

épistémologie, archéologie, restes humains, subjectivation, aliénation, altérisation

**Abstract**

As archaeologists, we have to deal with the dead, and as David Clarke once said, we like to keep our archaeology dead. From an epistemological perspective, alienation from the dead seems almost inevitable; otherwise, we would only project today's conditions onto the past. Therefore, the past must be, and must remain, a foreign country. These alienating processes have ethical implications, however, especially when it comes to the study of human remains. In this article, we analyze the structures within the scientific discipline of archaeology that normalize practices, such as the labeling of human bone material during excavations and the object-like display of skeletons in museums. We argue that archaeologists have an – often rejected – ethical responsibility towards subjects from the past. We, therefore, seek to open up a debate concerning alternative strategies for the treatment of the dead.

**Keywords**

epistemology, archaeology, human remains, subjectification, alienation, othering

*This article is based on a presentation given at the “Archaeo-Ethics” conference, available in [English](#) and [French](#).*

## Introduction

As archaeologists we have to deal with the dead, and as David Clarke once said [1], we like to keep our archaeology dead. This is especially true and still the case for the archaeological field in many countries, and possibly other European archaeologies. Unlike in Northern America, New Zealand, Australia or other countries, in German archaeological practice, human remains found during excavations are even today usually treated like all other finds. Bones are numbered and labeled, and after they have been scientifically analyzed, they are stored in archival cardboard boxes. Some skeletal remains also end up on display in museum exhibitions. From an epistemological perspective, alienation from the dead seems an inevitable necessity. There are a large number of strategies and practices of alienation that are already taught at universities and, therefore, socialized into an archaeological education.

In November 2015, a group of German archaeologists (including the authors) gathered for a workshop in Kassel, where the practices of alienation in the archaeological field and their often subtle ethical meanings were discussed [2]. We came to the conclusion that there are a variety of issues connected to this topic that require a more focused and ethically informed discussion. Questions that were addressed at the workshop, for instance, included: To whom do we actually hold an ethical responsibility? Is this responsibility to subjects from the past – as we certainly would like to believe, or is it more about us [3,4]? What are the moral and religious ideals that we should be taking into account: those of the dead or those of the living who feel connected to the dead [5]? Or even future generations? Can there be an empathy with the suffering experienced by the people of the past [6]? Or is the sense of responsibility to past subjects an illusion, since they are already dead and cannot be discriminated against or offended [7,8]? In other words: Who cares?

This article is based on a paper presented at the conference *Colloque Archéo-Ethique* which was held at the Institut National de l'Art in Paris, Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, May 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> 2017. We were invited to give insight into the Central-European – and more precisely German – current state of ethical discourse. This is why we decided to start by presenting the status quo. Since the latter is characterized by an apparent lack of both indigenous as well as postcolonial critical voices and views, we focus on describing those scientific gaps in the Central-European/German academic community. As with many other (former) colonial powers, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany has constituted and used continuities from the past as a way of nation building. Therefore, the installment of continuities to (pre)historic people are less to be understood as an expression of indigenous emancipation or empowerment than as a resource of populist and nationalist constructs of the new ultra-right. A politics of recognition and repatriation initiated by indigenous and other activists, as seen for instance in NAGPRA or the Alberta First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act in North America [9-11], is hence presumably doomed to fail in Germany. This paper is thus first and foremost focused on a philosophical perspective on the subject. Although an array of ‘Codes of Ethics’ exist in Germany (EAA, DGUF, etc.), it is necessary to first establish an understanding for and critical discussion about the stated issues, as this has yet to be done in a systematic fashion. We critically analyze the current scientific practices along the analytical terms ‘epistemological alienation’, ‘subjectification’ and ‘othering’. In the subsequent discussion, we explicitly do not develop any further codes of ethics, as this would run the risk of the establishment of an unquestioned new pragmatic approach to dealing with the dead.

Rather, we offer several perspectives to help continue and scientifically justify the discussion, but without concluding this discussion or proposing a privileged position.

## The Legal *Status Quo* of the Dead and Archaeological Codes of Ethics in Germany

The legal situation in Germany is generally regulated by Section 168 of the German Criminal Code (§168 StGB – Strafgesetzbuch): “Desecration of graves etc.: 1) Whosoever unlawfully takes away the body or parts of the body of a deceased person, a dead fetus or parts thereof or the ashes of a deceased person from the custody of the person entitled thereto or whosoever commits defamatory mischief on them, shall be liable to imprisonment not exceeding three years or a fine” [12]. But in the official commentaries to this section, the legal protection ends after decay of the corpse (Munich Commentary on the Criminal Code [13 recital 8] and Leipzig Commentary on the Criminal Code [14, recital 35]). The deceased become an inalienable ‘object’ (*Sache*) when the so-called “residue of personality” has passed away due to decomposition or fire (see on the legal situation and the concept of the “residue of the personality” [15]). Deceased persons found in archaeological contexts therefore usually have no legal rights and are not protected by law [16]. Additionally, there are usually no living family members who would be committed to the protection of the tomb or skeleton.

There are a few cases, however, where the aforementioned preconditions seem to be challenged. We present here two very different examples in order to clarify the extremes of behaviour.

The first is a Christian cemetery in Marburg, a city in south-western Germany. The cemetery that was abandoned in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was excavated in the area of the famous St. Elizabeth’s Church. After the completion of the archaeological investigation, members of the Protestant Church initiated a re-burial of the excavated corpses [17]. Due to the Christian context, a restitution according to Christian custom was performed. The continuity of the church building since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the existence of the associated cemetery was used as an argument for the re-burial. Certainly, the buried people were baptized, otherwise they would not have been buried there. However, whether they were actually Protestant Christians in their self-conception can only be assumed. This shows that despite the lack of legal protection, a religious stewardship was established.

A rather different example from Germany is the recent finding of skeletal remains close to the campus of the Free University in Berlin [6,18]. During construction work in July 2014 human skeletal remains from at least 15 individuals were found. Quickly, the suspicion arose that these were the remains of victims of the National Socialists, as from 1927 to 1945 the nearby University buildings hosted the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik (Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics). Here, among others, Josef Mengele – the infamous SS-officer and physician in the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II – was active. He had regularly sent body parts from the victims of his human experiments to the institute for further ‘investigation’ or rather mutilation. Despite the suspicion about the dark origins of the remains, soon after the recovery the bones were cremated and anonymously buried. It looked as though these anonymous people were once again objectified and to a certain extent de-humanized. In the aftermath of the cremation public criticism grew, culminating in an archaeological re-examination of the area undertaken by the Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology of the Free University Berlin and the Landesdenkmalamt (Berlin Monument Authority). Simultaneously, a memorial service was held at the site and a commemorative plaque was installed for those anonymous people.

Neither the legal nor the archaeological status of the buried is clearly regulated in Germany. This is, on the one hand, because of the federal organization of historic preservation laws as well, while on the other hand, due to a lack of consideration of the treatment of the dead in any of the Codes of Ethics. The current German “ethical principles for archaeological disciplines” (Ethischen Grundsätze für archäologische Fächer) of the Western and Southern German Association for Ancient Studies (West- und Süddeutscher Verbands für Altertumsforschung) and the German Society for Pre- and Protohistory (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ur- und Frühgeschichte e.V.) do not mention this topic at all [19]. Within the Code of Ethics of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA), the topic is only briefly touched upon in the Publication Ethics Policy of the European Journals of Archaeology: “Work dealing with human remains must have been undertaken according to national legislation and informed by professional standards. In line with BABAO’s Code of Ethics (6), we request that ‘Where applicable, images of human remains should not be published without consideration to the views of any demonstrated genealogical descendants or affiliated cultural communities’” [20].

The only existing guideline for the treatment of the dead from archaeological contexts in the German speaking community is the Code of Ethics of the German Museum Association (Deutscher Museumsbund e.V.). This text strictly differentiates between scientific and religious or other orders of knowledge and thereby reveals its origin from a colonial scientific landscape in Europe. Nevertheless, the Code of Ethics seems helpful for a first approximation to understand scientific practices in Germany. In addition, the archaeological museum landscape can hardly be separated from archaeological research practice, since 1) provincial museums are operated in conjunction with the state monuments offices (Landesdenkmalämter), 2) a number of research museums conduct their own research, and 3) there are personnel overlaps in the hiring of archaeologists for museum jobs.

The German Museum Association recommends that when dealing with human remains in museums: “[t]he corpse must be treated in a manner consistent with the protection of human dignity guaranteed by the Basic Law, and in particular it must not be degraded to the status of an object. This means that the corpse must not be treated simply as dead matter, i.e. it may not, for example, be used for industrial purposes or commercialised” [21, §3.4.A.1.a]. The study of human remains plays an important role in archaeological research. Human remains can be studied to provide data about living conditions, population density, palaeodemographic population, and burial traditions [21, §3.2] via invasive or non-invasive methods (for example, surface scanning, computed tomography, and magnetic resonance imaging). In archaeology, the studied human remains usually come from excavation contexts, and the investigations follow scientific standards. However, it should not be forgotten that research on human remains might be in conflict with the religious views and value systems of the studied subjects.

Regarding the aforementioned unequal treatment of the deceased, we ask ourselves, why is it that we treat long-deceased persons differently from those who are more recently deceased? Are we treating them irreverently? Is this due only to their status of being dead for a long time and no longer having living relatives or others who are interested in how they are treated? In what ways can we treat human remains respectfully? Is the way we produce data about the deceased unethical? And who owns both the data as well as the human remains? Is it possible to reconcile the rights of the deceased and the scientific interest of gaining knowledge? Or, is the concept of using the term ‘human remains’ itself already unethical, as it is more reminiscent of the distinction of historical sources in ‘traditions’ and ‘remains’ by Johann Gustav Droysen and Ernst Bernheim [22]?

Following this line of thought, the question that needs to be stressed is: Who is responsible for the protection of the rights of those who have no lobby acting on behalf of their interests? We believe that it is us, as scientists, who are obliged to deal with this sensitive topic. We think that in archaeology a number of interrelated phenomena have to be taken into account when addressing such questions. For the study of these phenomena we analyze three categories in order to be able to both examine and critically question the present archaeological practices as conducted from a European and German perspective. Those categories are: 1) epistemological alienation, 2) subjectification, and 3) the ‘othering’ of the past.

## Epistemological Alienation

Our first observations regard knowledge production and acquisition in western science. Modern western science is based on analytical, subdivided thinking. Regardless of whether a deductive, inductive, or interpretative approach is chosen, there is a perpetual underlying logic of being able to grasp (our conception) *reality* through fragmentation. Starting from the logic of Aristotle, the goal of analytic thinking is usually the identification of individual elements in order to understand or explain a connection or an interaction. Hence, analysis is always a decomposition to look at the underlying principles or components. Emergent effects and associations are, therefore, invisible; speculations and metaphysical assumptions are considered to be inappropriate ways of thinking [23]. The latter holds true, especially in archaeology.

The very first, mostly subconscious, analytical step is usually the division of the subject that does the research (that is, the researcher) from the object that is to be studied [24]. This division serves as a basis for every further categorization or subdivision. We, therefore, call this initial division ‘epistemological alienation’. It is inherent in almost every scientific tradition developed in the western academic world [25]. Put simply, it means that there is, and *there always has to be*, a distance established between the studying subject (‘us’) and the research object (‘the other’).

As Paul Graves-Brown noted: “The job of archaeologists and anthropologists, then, is to make the familiar unfamiliar, to break with the subsidiary frame of experience and find otherness in the ordinary. [...] In most archaeological practice, temporal distance seems to offer a guarantee of otherness, that the remote past is necessarily outside the frame of the everyday. Hence it might appear that in the quotidian world we must make our own distance” [26, p.131-132]. In the western tradition of archaeological research – unlike in anthropology and challenged through contemporary and indigenous archaeology—this alienation between ‘us’ as researchers and the object of study is generally twofold. It is the science of both the temporal and cultural Other, as David Lowenthal in his book *The Past is a Foreign Country* [27] (already) aptly noted. We consider this alienation as epistemological, not ontological, since it is generated only for the acquisition of knowledge.

This becomes particularly evident when we think about archaeological excavations [28-30]. Here, a site is selected and thereby created, becoming, as such, the object of study. As archaeologists, we install ourselves as the subjects that excavate and study the site. Every decision we make thereafter is a further subdivision of the study objects. We define what is dirt and what is a good flotation sample. We use our trowels for pottery sherds and brushes for ancient bone material. The photographing, drawing, measuring, and labeling that is an inherent part of any excavation ultimately generates data and archival material that is later used for further research. The practice of excavation is always one of epistemological alienation; while often unspoken, it is a part of becoming an archaeologist to learn how to distance yourself from the “object” of study.

## Subjectification

Epistemological alienation is a part of alienation processes in general. As noted in the *Entäußerung* by Hegel and *Entfremdung* by Marx, alienation processes are closely connected to subjectification and objectification [26,31]. That is to

say, subjects and objects themselves are never stable, clearly defined entities but are rather in a constant flow of re-creation. To focus on subjects, the continuous negotiation of what a subject could be, and when, consists of a dialectic process of 'technologies of power' and 'technologies of the self', following Michel Foucault [32]. Technologies of power tend to create rigid, disciplined subject positions. Individuals are forced to take and accept certain subject positions through interpellation and subjugation [33]. Norms, prohibitions, punishments, and structural and physical violence regulate what is considered the subject and which subject positions are rejected. Technologies of power go hand-in-hand with alienation processes. At the same time, technologies of the self fulfill but also alter, defy, or even subvert the available subject positions. The governance of the body and soul of the individual does not just react to discipline, but the individual governs themselves by placing themselves in a specific relationship with themselves and their social environment; power enacts subjects [34].

In traditional Western science, this ongoing process not only defines who and what the subject is, but also the object, the human, and the non-human. It is, in other words, a power struggle over what is graced with the classification of being something that has a socially relevant existence (the subject) and something that is seen as 'pure matter' without any legal-moral protection (the object) [35].

While this might not seem significant to some of us, for example, when we think about objectifying a cooking pot found at an excavation, the ethical impact of this subjectification – or in this case the objectification – process becomes clearer when we talk about human remains. From a philosophical point of view there is a very thin line between what is a dead object or a living subject, and the shifting of this line is of great ethical consequence. This thin line was, and always is, (re-)negotiated and changed. In different times and contexts, 'entities' like slaves, women, pets and the like have also been denied a subject status and thus been excluded from society. Their subject status was rejected; they become 'objects'. The concept of objects derives from Julia Kristeva, who summarizes under this term all entities that evoke disgust and are outcast [36]. Objects are not objects, but 'subjects-in-between' or 'objects-in-between'. They are, according to Judith Butler, zones of social life that are 'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable', but densely populated by all those entities necessary to consecrate the subjects in their autonomy [37]. In western societies, dead people can be understood as objects whose subject status has been rejected in death. As for our example of deceased persons in an archaeological context, it can be said that those people lost their subject status during the excavation, or rather, we as archaeologists mostly reject their once held subject status unreflectively, allowing or forcing them to become objects, or even objects in a second step.

## The Othering of the Past

The third, and in this discussion last, aspect that shapes the way we treat the dead is the othering of the past. The concept of othering was primarily developed by post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said [38], Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak [39], and Johannes Fabian [40]. Alienness is always a relative concept and related to something that is 'own'. The alien and the own are intermingled in a continued redefinition. To be distinguished from 'alien', there must be the 'Other'. 'Other' is always constitutively excluded from one's own; ultimately it is the dualistic counter-concept to 'self'. Alienness mediates between the poles of difference and self by emphasizing or blurring differences. Something can be considered as own and at the same time alien, different but nevertheless familiar. Alienness is therefore a relational evaluation of one's own in the world.

As mentioned before, subjectification processes often evoke the production of an 'Other' through abjection. An 'Other' can be understood as something or someone that has to be excluded and stands in opposition to the self. The 'Other' serves as a way to strengthen the value and meaning of the 'self'. Therefore, 'othering' is a political process and a specific form of alienation. Certain subjects are denied any participation and autonomy through processes of segregation and devaluation and are deliberately excluded from the hegemonic order. According to Spivak, these individuals make up the subaltern [41].

Archaeology is inherently based on principles of othering. It is not only about the generation of knowledge about the past, but it is, in itself, an entire economy dealing with the past that is colonial and expansionist. Nicholas and Hollowell argued that: "[a] major feature of scientific colonialism is claiming an unlimited right of access to data extracted from a 'colony'. Another is the export of data (or people) to one's own territory for processing into profitable goods such as articles, books or PhDs" [42, p.61; 43, p.51]. As in historical colonial settings, the exploitation of the past is a unidirectional endeavour: from colonies (of the past) to centres of (modern) civilizations. The subjects of the past that archaeologists are studying are at the same time dead and alien. Regardless of their former status, as an object of study, they are transformed into a cultural and academic resource as the 'Other'. While today's deceased still have a certain degree of post-mortem power over their treatment through their last will and testaments, or religion, subjects of the past do not.

Archaeology, therefore, plays a decisive role in today's biopolitics [44-46]. Biopolitics as "the entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of knowledge and power, into the sphere of political techniques" [44, p.141-142] refers to the "emergence of a specific political knowledge and new disciplines such as statistics, demography, epidemiology, and biology to analyze processes of life on the level of populations and to "govern" individuals and collectives by practices of correction, exclusion, normalization, disciplining, therapeutics, and optimization" [47, p.5]. One could also speak of archaeology as part of necropolitics [48]. Necropolitics can be understood as part of governmental technologies of power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die [48]. It seems to be marked by a 'denial of subjectness' (in addition to Fabian's 'denial of coevalness' [40,49]). The 'Others' are denied a coexistence in our present-day temporality. This denial of coevalness in archaeology, different from anthropology, is founded not only in a cultural, evolutionist

perspective, but also in an ontological one: the others of the past are dead and not, as we are, alive; therefore, they cannot be equal subjects.

On the one hand, such a view disregards the multi-temporality of past subjects. They are not only living subjects in the past and dead objects in the present. Instead, as entities, they unfold and enact their effects in many different time frames [50]; they are multi-temporal in the sense that they are entities (not always subjects or always objects) of the past, the present, and also the future. In other words, there is no definite time in which entities exist, only specific transformations that enact time as an effect of such transformations and entanglements with other entities [51,52]. Their co-presence may affect many more subjects today than at other times (think of the attention the Iceman enjoys).

On the other hand, the negotiation of the boundary between life and death is itself a part of (modern) bio- or necropolitics [45,48]. However, this boundary is based on an understanding of life as 'qualified life' (*bíos*), which is subdivided taxonomically according to activities and properties. *Bíos* thus takes regulated, definable forms and draws a boundary between life and death. There are also forms of life that can be understood as 'bare life' (*zoe*), however. These are wild, unpredictable, entangled, and creative: "Zoe is mindlessly material and the idea of life carrying on independently of agency and even regardless of rational control is the dubious privilege attributed to the non-humans. These cover all the classical 'others' of classical visions of the subject, namely the sexual other (woman), the ethnic other (the native) and the naturalized other (earth, plants and animals). Zoe is impersonal and inhuman in the monstrous, animal sense of radical alterity, whereas classical philosophy is logo-centric" [53, p.138]. Zoe creates no ontological separation into living and dead, subject and object, we and the other; it is focused on a constant coexistence and transformation of companion species, regardless of whether they are dead or alive [54,55].

## Discussion

When does othering in archaeological practices and theories begin? Is the transformation of human remains into scientific data an epistemological alienation or already an othering of past subjects? Do we have the same responsibility for the use of scientific data (3D data, photos, and aDNA data), as immaterial human remains, as we do for material human remains (bones, hairs, nails, etc.)? Or can we share it with the public without hesitation? What does such sharing (museum, Facebook, and souvenirs) involve? Are epistemological alienation, subjectification, and the othering of the past necessary and unavoidable processes that help us to understand and deal with our own death? Considering these three highly problematic phenomena (epistemological alienation, subjectification, and the othering of the past) that shape the treatment of the dead in archaeological research, we now present some ideas about what could be done in order to change our habits in order to encourage a more ethically informed engagement with the past.

### Different modes of engagement

One way could be to experiment with different modes of engagement. Epistemological alienation is just one possible form of obtaining knowledge. Instead of typifying and classifying our material, subdividing it further and thus producing hegemonic knowledge systems from the top down, we could establish more diverse associations; for example, using more anti-analytic modes of engagement that bring knowledge together rather than subdividing it. A possibility is to strengthen the association of archaeology with art and imagination [56-59]. This also includes the allowance of emotions instead of training them away during studies, for example, by suppressing ironic but also normalized behaviour towards past subjects. Instead, it should be permitted to also allow irritation, for example, and thus to stimulate reflection. Another example can be seen in the increasingly important field of alternative forms of writing in archaeology that was inspired by critiques of the language traditionally used in scientific discourse [60,61]. This not only questions the canonical narrative form through which a seemingly neutral omniscient perspective hides, i.e., a male-dominated standpoint, but also allows us to impart faces to the sites and epochs we study and emotionally engage with possible past subjects [62,63]. Research does not necessarily require an epistemological distance. We should involve ourselves more strongly, rather than pursue a distanced, "disembodied scientific objectivity" [64, p.576]. This requires not only a constant experimentation with closeness and distance, with emotion and affect, but also an ongoing reflection on our own situated and embodied epistemological, ontological, and ethical position [64-67]. By this we mean not only different written forms of the representation of archaeological data. For instance, during the excavation of a World War II forced laborer camp on the former Tempelhof airfield in the center of Berlin, conducted by the Landesdenkmalamt and the Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology of the Free University Berlin, the students were encouraged to write diaries throughout the field season, to document and reflect upon their emotions and thoughts while working on a tragic-laden site such as this.

### The complex process of subjectification

Instead of turning the dead into abjects or objects, we should think about the complex process of subjectification. This includes being aware of how we ourselves create and become subjects and what strategies have existed in the past; which entities were subjectified, which were marginalized, and which reified? However, since these are processes and not states, it is not necessary to solve uncertainties and tensions in the cognitive process; it is important to keep them active, to recognize and regularly discuss them. The past subjectifications have not passed away, but continue to be multi-temporal even today, and are part of our current necropolitics. This does not mean that we should treat all potential subjectifications as today's subjects. This practice would only extend, continue, and reproduce the logics of *bíos* into necropolitics. Instead, it would be

important to discuss the necessity of deliberately excavating necropolises. Furthermore, we should think about the possibility of re-burials of individuals exhumed in the course of rescue excavations or coincidental discoveries of such people that underwent subjectification processes partially visible through their burial practices. In a subsequent step, the 'secondary use' of skeletons as museum exhibits, bog bodies or mummies should be reconsidered. As current political debates show, the personal rights of living people do not end at the boundary of the body. Therefore, it is important to discuss how aDNA data, photos, 3D scans, etc. of past subjects may be considered personal data and hence subject to data protection guidelines. We need multiple ontologies of the dead to imagine different positions [69]. It might be helpful to look at the many developments and transformations of the zoe in order to recognize connections and entanglements. 'Making kin' with companion species [55] could lead to a new kind of ethics, which also affirmatively includes the 'deceased living' [53].

## Dialogue with past subjectifications

We should enter into dialogue with past subjectifications, raising awareness that at the core of our scientific research stand subjectified people who continue to be subjectivized. Simultaneously, those past subjects influence our own subjectification. With this approach, we could (ideally) encounter the past subjectifications on an equal footing. Instead of a colonial, "conquering gaze from nowhere" [64, p.581], we should ask ourselves, in the words of Donna Haraway, "[w]ith whose blood were my eyes crafted?" [64, p.585]. The past and its subjectifications should not be understood as a resource for the self-production of our own superiority. Multitemporal subjectifications are never completed. The 'denial of subjectness' could be overcome by entering into a conversation or dialogue with those who have been subjectified. Recently, Reinhard Bernbeck outlined a theory of 'diachronic recognition' [18,70,71], in which he argues for a radical opening towards the past, with the goal of entering into a relationship of diachronic recognition that he sees as key to historical responsibility. One major condition for this relation is the acceptance of the other as being coessential (*wesensgleich*) but alien (*fremd*) at the same time, with the same rights to justice [18]. In a similar way, however, from the point of departure of an entanglement of the zoe, Haraway also argues for a dialogue. She understands responsibility as a 'response-ability' and pleads for entering into common stories with other entities:

My multispecies storytelling is about recuperation in complex histories that are as full of dying as living, as full of endings, even genocides, as beginnings. In the face of unrelenting historically specific surplus suffering in companion species knottings, I am not interested in reconciliation or restoration, but I am deeply committed to the more modest possibilities of partial recuperation and getting on together. Call that staying with the trouble. And so I look for real stories that are also speculative fabulations and speculative realisms. These are stories in which multispecies players, who are enmeshed in partial and flawed translations across difference, redo ways of living and dying attuned to still possible finite flourishing, still possible recuperation. [55, p.10]

Both approaches, in spite of their conflicting starting points, have in common the belief that dialogue is never clear, complete, innocent, or completely free of conflict. It is about the ability to "stay with the heterogeneity of the moment" [25, p.108], of the encounter between the recent and the subject of the past. Instead, it is only speculative, possible and always permeated with power. At the same time, it creates space for irritation, resistance, and humour [64]. Maybe we could be the others of the past, the subaltern, which could be haunted by the subjects of the past. Or, we could conceptualize the dialogue as an interview in which we face the questions of subjects of the past and justify our interest. What exactly such a dialogue might look like in the case of archaeology is still unclear, yet we think it is worth discussing [53,59].

## Epistemological and ontological notions of the world

We should not separate ethical questions as being independent of our epistemological and ontological notions of the world. Otherwise, ethical guidelines will remain unquestioned, system-preserving practices that can be exploited. Instead, epistemological alienation, subjectification processes, and the othering of the past should be understood as three sides of the same complex field. "[W]hat we need is something like an *ethico-onto-epistem-ology* – an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being – since each intra-action matters, since the possibilities for what the world may become call out in the pause that precedes each breath before a moment comes into being and the world is remade again, because the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter" [51, p.185]. None of the three aspects works independently of the others. A change in one aspect always leads to the disturbance of the other two. Therefore, we should always discuss the entire 'ethico-onto-epistem-ological' field.

## Conclusion

In an archaeology that takes ethical challenges seriously, the fact that we deal with past subjects not just as dead objects should be brought back to our attention. We believe that the ethical dilemma of alienation and othering outlined here cannot be fully resolved. Only in the recognition of their diversity and their transformations can past subjects be adequately treated. However, for this purpose it is necessary to regularly engage in ongoing discussions. The writing of fixed global ethical guidelines for the treatment of past people is not a solution. To come back to Clarke's quote: we would like to keep our archaeology alive.



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## Conflits d'intérêts

Aucun à déclarer

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None to declare

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