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Abstract:

Hegel's Dialectic of Determinism in the Neolithic Sonorous

Through the framing of drawing as a form of extraction and home as an assumed space of connection that is permanently influx. This proposal reflects on my own research regarding the sonorous animism of Neolithic stone circle sites across the UK. The paper will aim to frame these findings within the context of Hegel's dialectical concept of determinism and indeterminism by way of Jean Luc Nancy and Bill Brown. The paper will additionally reference cultural spiritual beliefs concerning the animism of insentient objects and sites.

Archaeoacoustics research has primarily focused upon structural audio resonance examining how sound vibrates toward us. My research draws upon resonances originating from the stones themselves including field recordings made at sixteen stone circle sites dated between 2000-4500 years old.

These sites are now popular tourist destinations whether for leisure or the desire to encounter a higher purpose. Žižek emphasises how our recurring fantasy of the past manifests as biased nostalgia a notion that could easily be applied to our experience of 'home'. This familial framing is as such an indication of our unwillingness to accept what Martin Herbert describes as 'the uncertainty principle'. Herbert explains that when attempting to establish meaning from an artwork, we find that each work is contradictory, informed by negation through ambivalence.

From similar periods of time, located on elevated plateaus, geographic basins, or sloped hillsides we find varying arrangements and sequences of stones, geographic locations, circumferences. Archaeological research has revealed that these sites came from arable farming communities as opposed to nomadic tribes in a landscape topographically little changed in 4500 years. Professor Vicki Cummings reminds us that we can easily imagine the physical challenge of accessing these sites.

Through myth and sacred belief there is a desire to imagine a situated homeliness though these sites are more unsettling in atmosphere and location. We know that with the advent of Christianity these circles were viewed as signs of paganistic ritual leading to their destruction alongside the expansion of farmland. Whilst they are still contemporary destinations for revivalist witchcraft or neo-pagan rituals, this only demonstrates our human need to colonise the uncertainty principle.

As pre-history monuments, they elude classification. As stated previously, in the absence of evidence we have applied spiritual, cosmological, ritual and healing properties, applying thought experiments for insentient objects that act. Archaeological research concludes that any function associated with these sites is presumptive. Gatherings, either ritual or communal may be associated with Bronze Age

ancestors appropriating these stones as opposed to any indication of Neolithic purpose. Purpose here is important to consider, 'purpose' is our need to establish what Hegel calls determinism, that these circles must be situated within causality. Historically and within cultures we hear of the sentient potential of inanimate objects. Aztec culture, Indonesian, Sami; Finnish shamanism and within the Japanese Shinto system of belief stones and rocks are seen as objects of animism. Shinto faith explains that insentient objects and sites such as rivers, mountains or rocks knowingly conceal the spirits of the dead. In other words, these insentient locations are living, emotional and animate. Throughout the northern hemisphere, any such attitudes are reserved for folkloric tales classifying coordinated arrangements of stones. The most popular of these is the consistent view that these stone configurations are beings frozen in place by punishment, unfortunates who were turned to stone by some unknown enchantment. We see this within the post-Neolithic naming of sites e.g. 'The Hurlers' or 'Long Meg and her daughters'. There is throughout an emphasis upon externality, an imagined outer cause, a notional magic.

My research was as the result of what some would label supernatural. One afternoon in January I visited Swinside, a 4500-year-old stone circle in the Southern Lake District. Surrounded by thick fog and resting against a stone I heard audible clicking sounds from within the circle of stones. My initial thought was that this was not some spectral event, but that the stone circle had demonstrated an agency. Ambient field recordings followed at another site failing to replicate Swinside. This led to recording directly from the stones themselves. These recordings have been consistent across sites, with knocks, thumps and clicks from the surface and from the base continuous organic sounds interrupted by clicks and knocks. When considering the composition and physicality of the stones these resonances demonstrate animism beyond appearance, a dialectical stasis.

These field recordings are in essence drawing, drawing as a form of extraction. Once excavated from the subject these sounds, as with all drawing, become nomadic, at a distance from their origin. Though these recordings may seemingly represent something spectral, their resonance through forms of knocking, gurgling and clicks presents us with a sense of mutuality, a sense of home, the familiar within the unfamiliar. As such we may experience another form of stasis on hearing these nomadic digitised extractions, that of an unexpected connectedness.

Jean Luc Nancy when writing on the subject of resonance states that '...there is no static, stable or permanent reality, that is not traversed, shaped, or transported by a play of vibrations...the real is oscillatory.'. Nancy goes on to explain that resonance belongs to a phenomenality engineered sense of - to appear, to show, manifest or reveal. Opposing the notion of a vibration that arrives to meet us, Nancy contends that this is an oscillation of the world and of the world to us, a mutuality.

Bill Brown argues that objects have unique qualities, properties, and ways of interacting with other objects. Emphasising autonomy, objects are viewed as independent of human interaction, challenging the notion they are solely defined by their relationship to utility. Lacan writes of the undead partial object within, constantly moving and desiring, Zizek interprets this as a repulsive expression.

Home within the context of this proposal is a Hegelian determinate, a collective sense of connection to an ancestral space, yet one that is disrupted by an indeterminate agent (object animism) forcing a dialectical tension that may fail to resolve itself remaining in stasis.

- Sonorous
- Dialectical
- Resonance
- Indeterminism
- Determinism

Happy to be included in future publications related to the event.