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Johannes Siapkas 2018. Negotiated Positivism: The disregarded epistemology of Arne Furumark

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Referee 1

Anonymous

Negotiated Positivism: The Disregarded Epistemology of Arne Furumark

This article argues that Furumark's framework for the analysis of pottery from the Greek Late Bronze Age, which was introduced in his most well-known work *Mycenaean Pottery*, was influenced by contemporary philosophy and in particular owed much to logical positivism. A subsidiary aim is to counter the commonly-held assumption that Classical Archaeology has not been theoretically innovative in comparison with other branches of archaeology.

This is an interesting article as far as it goes, which, in my opinion, is not all that far — it's a bit "and so what?". The author's arguments are based on a comparison between Furumark's statements concerning his methodological approach in *Mycenaean Pottery* and the views of the Vienna Circle. The author claims that *Mycenaean Pottery* represents a clear departure from the traditional culture-historical approach which characterises his other publications. However, the differences in approach could be more clearly brought out and the level of argumentation is overall quite general. Although it seems quite possible that Furumark may have been directly inspired by logical positivism, this is stated rather than argued and the reader remains uncertain about whether it really matters all that much if he was.

In conclusion, in my view, the author does not entirely succeed in making the case that "Furumark was inspired by contemporary logical positivism when he constructed his analytical model". Nor can I really see that the discussion in this article does very much to redeem the reputation of Classical Archaeology with regard to theoretical sophistication. I think the article could be improved by a tightening of the argumentation and a more sustained focus on how *Mycenaean Pottery* reflects logical positivism and the extent to which this is significant to the development of theory in Classical Archaeology. As it stands, it is difficult for the reader to decide whether or not to be convinced by the author's conclusions.

Referee 2

Frands Herschend

Negotiated Positivism: The disregarded epistemology of Arne Furumark is an interesting case study in the history of Classical Archaeology. Moreover, it has affinities with the history of Archaeology in general.

I think that several similar case studies could be written about archaeologists who acquired their intellectual platform and theoretical attitude to empirically base knowledge before WWII and had to proceed their career even after the war. This wasn't easy given that historical knowledge had been usurped by researchers with reasonable methods combined with appalling epistemological ideas. In an Uppsala perspective in addition to Furumark, one may point to Hans Henning von der Osten and Bertil Almgren.

World War II as a watershed in archeology is worth more research perhaps under the title *Tractatus: Practicus Triumphans* ☺ .

Furumark's generation obviously couldn't allow themselves the arrogant «we can't be blamed nor bothered» post-war theoretical attitude. In Sweden, this attitude allowed Mats Malmer among others to side step Furumark by confessing that reading Furumark Malmer wasn't able to know for sure whether one of Furumark's 20 years old marginal points referred to a point Malmer had resently made himself (Malmer 1963:28.29, note 42). Thanks to this derivative manoeuvre Malmer avoided admitting that he and Furumark shared the most important point when it comes to understanding the morphology of material culture. *Negotiated Positivism* puts it like this: «The gradual and slow pace of change in material culture — morphological similarities — are explained as a result of human “inertia” and “conservatism” (Furumark 1972a:3-4)» (NP: 3).

“Inertia” and “conservatism” are exactly the explanations Malmer himself refers to when it comes to morphological similarities (Malmer 1963:29).

In my opinion *Negotiated Positivism* is an important article well in line with the purpose of JAAH.

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The arguments put forward in *Negotiated Positivism* are most convincing and the methodological grip – checking Furumark's personal archeives at the University library in Uppsala – turns out to be a great point, which elucidates the predicament of Furumark's epistemology and its relation with the archaeology of his day and age as well as his understanding of positivism and his less conscious relation with the Vienna Circle of logical positivism. This predicament is well explained and understood in the article, which is very pedagogical in its approach to positivistic thinking.

Apart from a few typos the text is clear, well-disposed and easy to understand. Most readers even within Classical Archaeology will have increased their *Bildung* concerning archaeology and its relation with history when they have read the article.

After proof reading it, the article may be published in its present form.

References

Malmer, Mats P. 1963. *Metodproblem inom järnålderns konsthistoria*. Lund Gleerups.

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Frands Herschend

Author's comments

First, let me express my gratitude to both reviewers for pointing out features in my article that I did not anticipate myself. They have both contributed to the improvement of *Negotiated Positivism*. Nevertheless, the review by *Anonymous* begs some questions that I will address below.

Anonymous and I understand epistemology in profoundly different ways. My intention was never to argue that *Mycenaean Pottery* “reflects logical positivism” but rather to bring to the fore an illustrative example of how theories are negotiated in everyday practices by academics.

Furumark's epistemology oscillated between traditional and logical positivism. Positivism — traditional or logical — is not a fixed entity for anyone to merely employ. Indeed, the thrust of *Negotiated Positivism*, like in several other of my publications, is against the misconception that there are fixed paradigms which scholars completely adhere to, or not. In contrast, I argue, that features of various, sometimes even contradicting, theories are often merged by scholars in their research. We should expect to find contradictions and conflicts on a theoretical level in the scholarly production of individual scholars. Accordingly, my argument is that Furumark was inspired by logical positivism in the introduction of *Mycenaean Pottery*, and to a lesser extent in other parts of this publication, but for some reason he never implemented logical positivism to the full extent, neither in *Mycenaean Pottery* nor throughout his scholarship but rather perpetuated traditional positivism. In other words, Furumark's epistemology was negotiated between various forms of positivism.

Anonymous asks: “and so what?” Well, this is important if you — like me — find that theories of classical studies deserve our attention. In order to uphold the misconception that classical studies are lagging behind theoretically we need to conceptualize epistemology as something that consists of clear-cut paradigms, which replace each other chronologically. This article serves to put this kind of reasoning into question. I have, doubtless, not managed “to redeem the reputation of Classical Archaeology with regard to theoretical sophistication” since I do not show how “theoretical innovative” it has been. However, this was never my intention.