

**PERSONS, THINGS AND ARCHAEOLOGY:  
CONTRASTING WORLD-VIEWS OF MINDS, BODIES AND DEATH**

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The rather grand title of my paper reflects my purpose to explore the philosophical framework for the whole of the day. If that sounds a bit pompous, what it actually comes down to is the relationship between individuals: how and why different people, including archaeologists, conceptualise the world, particularly the significance of dead bodies, and how these different world-views lead to fundamental misunderstandings between people. To ground this in reality, I want to start by recounting to you a real conversation I overheard recently. In fact, I have heard many different variants of this conversation, and most of you probably have too, and what this conversation reveals is at the heart of why we are here today.

The scene is an excavated Iron Age grave in England. I've changed the names. John, an archaeologist and museum curator, is talking with Janet, a visitor who has expressed interest in the fate of the burial:

Janet: What will you do with the body?

John: It's going to the museum store.

Janet: Are you going to rebury him?

John: No, it's too important, it has great research potential.

Janet: So what research are you going to do?

John: Actually there's no funding for research at the moment.

Janet: So how long will you keep him in store, waiting for funding? Do you keep him indefinitely?

John: Well, yes.

Janet: Are you aware how unnatural that feels? Don't you have any instinct that he should go back in the earth?

John: No, not really. There is so much information we can get from it.

Janet: Like what? Even if he were your great-great-grandfather?

What we have here are two fundamentally different approaches to the significance of a dead body and its burial. In what sense do these two people regard the burial of a dead body differently? John sees a body that is 'dead', that no longer has personhood or intrinsic value, that can and should be used to further scientific knowledge. Janet

sees a body that continues to be connected to the community and land, that has value, that is still a person.

How do they see the world differently, and why? And for John, is there something in his training as an archaeologist and museum curator that makes him view the dead body in a particular way?

The key point is that their attitude to a human body – especially a dead body – is determined by how they conceive of Mind, or consciousness, and how it relates to the body. For John, there is no consciousness in the body or in the burial; for Janet, consciousness is pervasive. What is central to this conference and the whole human remains debate, is that how they – or we – conceptualise this relationship between Body and Mind also determines how we view the world around us, the relationship between ourselves as individuals, and the material or phenomenal world of Nature, even, in a sense, our concepts of ‘life’ and ‘death’. The relationship between Body and Mind lies at the core of different world-views.

Essentially, there are only four choices of how Mind and Body can be related, and they have been endlessly debated by philosophers since at least the time of the ancient Greeks.

1. Mind and Body are two separate substances
2. Only Body, or Matter, exists
3. Only Mind exists, everything else in an illusion
4. Mind and Matter always go together: Matter is intrinsically sentient.

One or another of these lies at the heart of different world-views and different religions, or the lack of a religious belief. In terms of our relationship with the world, these are the most fundamental ideas that we cling to, either unconsciously, in that we are unaware that we hold these beliefs, we assume that this is just the way the world is; or we have a clear, articulated opinion about the ‘rightness’ of our particular view. This is what philosophers call a metaphysical question, one for which there is no empirical evidence or proof. We cannot know for certain which of these positions is true. But in choosing one, and in building a world-view upon it, even unconsciously, we are choosing one metaphysical position over another.

Strictly speaking, these four positions are bounded and incompatible, but human life and understanding are complex, and there is a sense in which the positions can co-exist or overlap, as individual humans move between professional, institutional, private and religious worlds, or between fixed theology and popular religion. But the ideas tend to become fixed and polarised when we need to find a basis on which to make decisions.

In this way, these four concepts of Body and Mind lie at the core of what philosophers have identified as four fundamental world-views: four different foundational assumptions about the fundamental nature of the world. The names given to these positions are: dualism, materialism, idealism, and panpsychism (or animism). I reiterate: they are all legitimate and potentially valid, they cannot be disproved empirically although each has been heavily criticised and equally heavily defended; and they are, theoretically at least, incompatible.

So let's look at these four world-views in general, before we consider how they affect concepts of the dead body.

### *Dualism*

Dualism refers to the view that human beings are made up of two radically distinct constituents: body, constituted by matter like other natural objects; and an immaterial mind or soul. Matter and mind are different substances and exist separately. Dualism was particularly expounded by the seventeenth-century French philosopher Rene Descartes, whose main purpose was to prove empirically the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. He concluded that he himself was simply a thinking being: his body, though attached in some way to his soul or self, was not a part of his thinking self, but a distinct physical mechanism.

Humans were effectively separate from their bodies and from matter generally, and therefore they could be relied upon to be objective observers, searching impartially for verifiable truths. Only material things which they could perceive and measure were real; if something could not be perceived or measured then it was not real or significant. In this sense, we can see how Descartes' rational approach leading to certain and reliable knowledge came to be the philosophical foundation of Enlightenment knowledge and of the practice of 'Science' from the seventeenth century on. This was also the emergence of archaeology and of museums, since the philosophy and practice of archaeology and museology were made possible by the rigid order, measurement and objectification of the scientific approach. I'll come back to this point later.

### *Materialism*

Materialism is the theory that matter alone exists: there are only material objects, their states, properties and relations. In many ways, ever since Descartes, western philosophy had struggled with the mind-body problem, and how a 'mind' that has no space and occupies no mass could interact with matter which has mass and occupies space. Certainly by the 1960s, if not earlier, philosophy and science had become largely materialist, and continue to be so today. It was axiomatic that 'mind' was just a fiction, a physical property of the material brain, since it could not be found anywhere as a separate substance.

### *Idealism*

Idealism, sometimes referred to as immaterialism, is the view that only minds, mental representations, consciousness or spirit exist: material objects and their properties are reduced to mind and states of mind. Although idealism is largely ignored by contemporary western philosophy and science, it is a world-view found in many eastern religious traditions. Matter is either an illusion or an emanation from spirit. This philosophical system continues to be the majority Hindu belief today.

### *Panpsychism*

Derived from the Greek for 'all soul' or 'all mind', panpsychism is the view that a mental element – sentience, consciousness, spirit, mind – is present in everything that

exists. An alternative term is ‘animism’, from the Latin for ‘breath’, ‘soul’, ‘spirit’, which tends to be used by researchers in religion and anthropology, and by animists themselves, and for that reason I will use that term today.

Animism has a long history, from the ancient Greeks to the present. Philosophically, its fundamental assumption is that it is inconceivable that sentience or consciousness could ever emerge or evolve from completely insentient physical matter; thus, if consciousness and matter exist now, they must always have existed in some form. The central tenet of animism is that matter is intrinsically sentient: matter and consciousness are not separate, but always go together. This underpins the beliefs of many contemporary cultures – Australian Aborigines, New Zealand Maori, Native Americans, and modern Pagans and Eco-Pagans (defined as nature-celebrating religions and spiritualities). Common to all these is a belief that consciousness is inherent in Nature, and that humanity is nothing special, simply a part of Nature.

You can see that at the core of these different world-views are different ideas about how mind and body or mind and matter are related; in effect, what mind is, what consciousness is, what sentience is. We don’t know which is correct. Indeed, some philosophers of mind argue that as humans we are constitutionally incapable of finding the answer to this fundamental question about ourselves and how we relate to the world. Because consciousness is so central to different ideas about the dead human body, I just want to focus on this issue briefly, to explain why it is so central and yet so intransigent, and to assess where the academic discourse on consciousness is currently heading.

‘Mind’ or ‘Consciousness’ is notoriously difficult to define. The words are used in many different ways in philosophy, in science, in psychology, in spirituality, and in common discourse. The American philosopher Christian de Quincey has listed attributes which characterise consciousness and distinguish it from non-conscious entities. To be a being with consciousness means to be a being that possesses any or all of these characteristics:

1. sentience/feeling (capacity to experience)
2. subjectivity (capacity for having a unique point of view)
3. knowledge (capacity for knowing anything)
4. intentionality (ability to refer to, or be about, something else)
5. choice (capacity to move itself internally)
6. self-agency (capacity to move itself externally)
7. purpose (capacity to aim at a goal)
8. meaning (capacity to be ‘for itself’)
9. value (capacity for intrinsic worth)

How can we know if another being has consciousness or not? As the philosopher Thomas Nagel says:

Ordinarily we believe that other human beings are conscious, and almost everyone believes that other mammals and birds are conscious too. But people differ over whether fish are conscious, or insects, worms, and jellyfish. They are still more doubtful about whether one-celled animals like amoebae and paramecia have conscious experiences, even though such creatures react conspicuously to stimuli of various kinds. Most people believe that plants

aren't conscious; and almost no one believes that rocks are conscious, or kleenex, or automobiles, or mountain lakes, or cigarettes. And to take another biological example, most of us would say, if we thought about it, that the individual cells of which our bodies are composed do not have any conscious experiences.

The materialist view of the mind-body problem is that consciousness – ‘mind’ – is produced by the brain. Consciousness ‘emerges’ in suitably organised biological systems. In the contemporary field of the philosophy of mind, many researchers start with the presumption that materialism is true. This turns the problem of consciousness into the problem of fitting consciousness into the material world, explaining it as a brain event. That’s what a lot of research has focused on. But recently this assumption has come under increasing attack by scientists and philosophers who argue that consciousness cannot rely solely on the brain, because many aspects of consciousness simply cannot be explained if we equate it with the brain. One of the biggest areas of debate is how a material brain can create such phenomena as sensations, images, perceptions, emotions, memories and expectations, desires, beliefs, thoughts, imaginings, and intentions. In this sense, consciousness is argued as something qualitatively different that must be added to the collections of insentient particles or molecules. In one prominent example, the American theoretical physicist and systems theorist, Fritjof Capra, has argued that Science is already undergoing a fundamental reappraisal of the core assumptions about human consciousness, precipitated by revolutions within science itself, especially those associated with quantum theory. These new ideas call into question some of the basic principles underlying Newtonian physics and the whole mechanistic world-view, and reject the materialism and dualism of the old model. Scientists like Capra and others, who are willing to engage with fundamental metaphysical ideas, do not see materialism as self-evident, and propose instead a holistic model in which nature is a constant flux and flow of energy transformations which cannot be reduced to the activity of discrete particles, and where human consciousness can no longer be separated out into a distinct compartment of reality. A point to be stressed is that far from such ideas about consciousness being in any way incompatible with the discoveries of science, their argument is that they provide a better explanation for phenomena observed by scientists than does materialism.

In contrast, too many proponents of different world-views invariably take it as axiomatic that their own world-view is self-evident, the only one possible, an *a priori* truth. This is particularly true, and notoriously so, of the rational, scientific, materialist approach, which denies that mind exists other than a brain event, and which has a metaphysical objection to causation that cannot be measured and explained by our current understanding of physical laws. As the moral philosopher Mary Midgley puts it in her critique of the scientific approach, scientists tend to think that people who don't use their ideas are ‘simply unenlightened, ‘primitive’, misinformed, misguided, wicked or extremely stupid’.

This is precisely what was happening in the conversation I related to you earlier: John rejected Janet's attitude to the dead body as romantic and unenlightened, because he didn't believe in that sort of thing, because the materialist principles that he did believe in made it look impossible. John was not in fact aware that he had a particular world-view; his own was transparent to him. His world-view rejected any other,

including Janet's, unless it was couched in the scientific language of his own world-view; and yet, the essential basis of the difference between Janet and John is a different understanding of consciousness and its relation to body and matter. In the early years of the repatriation debate in North America and Australasia, 10 or 15 years ago, John's dismissive attitude was typical of that of many archaeologists and museum curators, and we still encounter it today.

Let's move on then to explore how the different world-views affect understanding of the human body. What is a human body? What value does it have? And does that value change depending on whether the body is alive or dead?

I focus essentially on dualistic, materialistic and animist concepts of the body. Idealistic conceptualisations of the body, and of death, are not really relevant to us today. For example, in Hindu philosophy, the body is a cosmic illusion. Furthermore, at death most Hindu bodies are cremated and usually deposited in sacred rivers, so cannot be exhumed through archaeology and put in museums.

In Cartesian dualism, the body is simply a mechanism, to which the soul or self is somehow attached during life. It is the soul that is immortal, not the body. The dualistic dead body is a mechanism, devoid of meaning, a resource, a 'thing' to be used. In this sense, the dead body is no longer a 'person'. In every way except one, the materialist view of the body is identical: the single exception is that materialism recognises no separate mind or soul which survives – everything is a biological mechanism, which at death ceases to have value or personhood.

This idea of 'personhood', and the lack of it, is important. The idea of a 'person' largely used within western ethics today is the one worked out by the philosopher Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century. Kant's person is a rational being, capable of choice, endowed with dignity, worthy of respect, having rights, and to be regarded always as an end in itself, and not as a means to the ends of others. This definition deals with rational qualities and makes no mention of human form or descent, and the spirit behind it would not allow us to exclude intelligent aliens or disembodied spirits. But, in the dualistic/materialistic world-view, it does exclude the dead as persons, which means that the dead body must, logically, be a 'thing', according to the stark antithesis between persons and things which Kant originated. 'Things' can legitimately be used as means to human ends in a way in which 'persons' cannot. 'Things' have no aims of their own; they are not subjects but objects. Archaeology, as an archetypal dualist/materialist practice, treats dead bodies as 'things', for its own ends. And so, on the whole, do museums.

In animism, there is no separation between mind and body within a human: they are one. Sentience, or consciousness, is everywhere: within Nature, within individual, cohesive humans, and even human cells communicate with each other according to their own purposes, without conscious choice on the part of the human individual. We can call this 'the integrated body'.

At death, in the animist world-view, there is no separation between 'spirit', or 'consciousness', and 'matter'. In a world-view which does not separate anything, in which even the notion of the 'individual' is inaccurate, in which everything is connected, what remains is the totality of their experience and of their relationships. It

remains in the shared consciousness of the community, their heritage, the land, and in the corpse. When a person dies, part of the community dies, but not all of it. The dead body is still integrated, still a person.

There is therefore a stark polarisation between the dualist/materialist view of the dead body as a mechanism, no longer a person, just a 'thing' to be used, and the animist view of the dead body as continuing to be an individual's consciousness, of continuing value, still a person.

I have been flinging about the terms 'life' and 'death' quite freely, as if they are self-evident and not open for debate. But things are not so simple. Within dualism, materialism and animism, what is life, and what is death? Are they separate? Is the distinction biological and measurable, or is it merely a human construct?

Descartes was fundamentally concerned with proving the existence of God and the immortality of Man. In that sense, his philosophy is both embedded within a Christian world-view, and has ever since acted as its principal philosophical foundation. Thus, in Cartesian dualism, the death, or dissolution, of the body is self-evident and unproblematic; but the soul, or spirit, does not die, it survives and goes to Heaven. The earthly body has served its purpose and returns to the earth from which it came: 'dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return'.

For the dualist, the critical issue concerning death is the one raised by Pope Pius XII in 1957, addressing an international congress of anaesthetists: at what point, in the intensive care unit, does the soul actually leave the body?

In materialism, there is no 'soul' or 'spirit' to muddy the waters of life and death. The human life that you have now is all there is, all there ever will be. The death of a human being is the end of the human being: it is absolute nothingness, an existence without thought, the end of consciousness and of all experience. Materialism attempts to measure the process of death precisely and merely debates how to define clinical death.

In an animist world-view, the death of the integrated body is not a final cessation, but a transformation, and animist cultures have many different explanations of that transformation, whether into disembodied spirit(s), 'ghosts', animals, decay and regeneration, energy or spirit beyond the limitations of human time and space, or the dissipation of consciousness into subatomic particles. The person's consciousness does not vanish but remains as an animating force in the dead body, in the landscape and in the community.

In some ways, it is perhaps inappropriate within animism to use two such radically polarised terms as 'life' and 'death'. They are not so distinctly separate: life, or perhaps a better word is 'being', is recognisable in many forms, processes and actions. In that sense, death is not a fixed state opposed to life, but a transformation of the living and their relationships. Consciousness continues, but in different ways. In most if not all animist cultures, the death of a person merely transforms the nature of the relationship with the living. The fact that they are 'dead' is the least important aspect: mourning, contact and connection continue through different mechanisms such as myth, ritual, and shamanistic mediation. The dead, as 'ancestors', continue to be part

of the community, they continue to have value, their songs are sacred: they are still *persons*.

And so we turn to the meaning of burial within the different world-views. But, I want to ask a very restricted question: how important is the continued coherence, or 'sanctity', of the burial?

Within a dualistic Christian framework, the fate of the burial, and of the remains of the deceased, have no impact at all on the resurrection of the soul. The burial place itself is a memorial. In contemporary dualistic Christianity, the body can be either interred or cremated, and other than a general feeling that human remains should be treated with respect and reverence, the fate of the body is theologically irrelevant. Indeed, the Church of England acknowledges that the excavation and study of human remains is an important source of scientific information, although it restricts this to graves over 100 years old: that concern is for the sensibilities of surviving close family members, and not for the fate of the deceased.

Shorn of the need for theological meaning and resurrection, a materialist burial is simply a memorial for a human being who does not exist any more in any sense. It functions as a mark of respect for the deceased, but perhaps more as spiritual comfort for the still living. The exhumation of a materialist burial has no effect on the fate of the dead who has ceased to exist. It affects the still living, who often identify with the fate of the exhumed body, and tend to express a preference that the same thing doesn't happen to them.

The integrated body, in the animist world-view, is still connected with the community and with the land. Through burial, he seeps back into the earth, dissolving cell by cell – either through inhumation, or by cremation is released back into spirit, breath and wind. Each body, and each bone, tooth or heap of ash, contains the stories not only of the individual, but of a people and its landscape. They are the heritage and ancestral treasure of the community that must be allowed to release back into the earth.

It is important to stress here the attachment of the dead to their community and to their land. The exhumation of a dead person, or any part of the dead person, or the earth into which his spirit has dissolved, is a desecration and disturbance of the dead person, and a violation of an ancestor felt by the whole community. For this reason Australian Aborigines, New Zealand Maori, and Native Americans in recent years have felt so deeply the need to repatriate and rebury the remains of their ancestors held in western museums: those dead are still persons, and they belong back in their community, as an integral part of that community, dissolving into their ancestral lands. Yet it is vital to acknowledge that such beliefs are not confined to so-called 'exotic' cultures that we in the west feel somehow honour-bound to placate in apology for previous colonial exploitation: animism is a philosophically legitimate world-view held by many in the west today, who experience just as strongly the disturbance of those whom they regard as their ancestors.

Understanding this tension between world-views is important, because museums and archaeology are effectively set up on dualist/materialist foundations: they objectify 'things', including dead bodies, and treat them as evidence and as museum specimens and displays. Like John at the beginning, they often tend to refer to a body,

revealingly, as ‘it’. This attitude is inherent in archaeological and museological training and practice.

The Cartesian development of ‘objective’ Science made possible the development of archaeology as a discipline from the eighteenth century on. Archaeology, as a form of scientific, rational enquiry, was supposed to be context-free, objective, involving causes and effects, fixed in linear time, creating new knowledge from the observation and measurement of material things.

Right from the beginning, whether in plundering Egyptian tombs and amassing collections of mummies, or excavating prehistoric barrows in England, archaeologists and museum curators have treated human remains as an archaeological object, depersonalised, ‘a thing’ to be excavated, studied, analysed, dismembered, displayed in a show-case with an explanatory label, or put in a box in a museum storeroom with a number, like other ‘things’, and with other ‘things’. This is a perfect reflection of the Cartesian dualism from which archaeology sprang, and, with the development of the ‘New Archaeology’ in the 1960s, based on the materialistic philosophy of logical positivism, archaeology again perfectly reflected the materialistic world-view of its time.

Reflecting this dualist/materialist world-view, archaeology sees it as unproblematic to excavate burials, and disturb burial sites. In its pursuit of objective, documented ‘knowledge’, it keeps human remains indefinitely just in case future research questions make their continuing availability and analysis useful. ‘Research potential’ takes precedence over ethical recognition of the intentions of past human beings. The idea that ancient burials and funerary remains were usually deliberately deposited with a presumed intention not to be disturbed is an issue that is occasionally raised theoretically, but with no resulting practical change. As in the Church of England guidelines, as long as the remains are ‘ancient’ (i.e. more than 100 years old), and their excavation does not affect living relatives, they can be treated as ‘things’ and appropriated by archaeology.

Increasingly, though, these expectations of archaeologists can be frustrated – for example in the Middle East, with growing tensions and controls over the excavation of Muslim or Jewish burials; with the repatriation of indigenous human remains from western museums for reburial in their originating communities; and more recently with Pagan communities in the United Kingdom advocating for the reburial of ancient pre-Christian human remains. A frequent reaction of archaeologists is to reject those communities as ‘unrepresentative’ and ‘biased’, to brand them as ‘romanticised’, and to accuse them of being against academic research and of preventing legitimate access to archaeological evidence.

Such reactions and accusations only have validity from within an archaeological world-view of dualism or materialism, which objectifies knowledge and depersonalises human remains and their connections to contemporary communities. This is a clear and obvious example of the tensions and misunderstandings created with the clash of polarised world-views: in this case, I would suggest, with archaeology, as a discipline, being so embedded in its dualist/materialist world-view that it regards it as self-evidently axiomatic, and rejects all other views as frustrating its legitimate access to ‘evidence’. But times are changing, and certainly within

theoretical and academic archaeology and anthropology, the pursuit of archaeological knowledge is no longer regarded as being intrinsically more valuable than the interests of the dead themselves, or the living communities for whom those dead are 'ancestors'. We are seeing a slow shift within archaeology and anthropology to accept that by holding on to material evidence indefinitely, particularly human remains, archaeologists are in a sense themselves 'romanticising' the scientific paradigm, privileging the archaeological record above all other concerns. But this shift in ethical archaeological thinking has not yet made a demonstrable impact in field archaeology, in scientific archaeology, in heritage organisations, or even in most museums, which tend still to retreat into a materialistic bunker when confronted with alternative world-views.

We are all aware that in recent years there has been a change in the ethical climate on the treatment of human remains, kick-started by Australian Aboriginal requests for repatriation. This led, in this country, to the 2003 *Report of the Working Group on Human Remains* and the 2005 *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums*. In parallel, scandals about the use of body parts of dead children for research without the knowledge of their relatives led to the 2004 Human Tissue Act, which strictly regulates the research use of human body parts less than 100 years old. The new regulatory body, the Human Tissue Authority, is producing a series of codes of practice which effectively control what can be done with human remains and by whom, in areas such as research, storage, display and so on.

At the heart of these recent regulatory documents are two key, underpinning ethical concepts: consent and consultation. There must be explicit consent, and evidence of that consent, from the deceased or their close relatives for the removal, storage and use of their body parts, organs and tissue for approved medical research; there must be consultation with groups who have a claim for the return of human remains in museums, and there are guidelines about how to judge whether a group's claim is valid.

One of the reasons for holding this conference is that Pagan groups in the United Kingdom are increasingly advocating with museums and archaeologists to be consulted when ancient burials are chosen for excavation, for more respectful treatment of ancient human remains in museums, and, in some cases, reburial of those remains. There are several such groups, some more radical and uncompromising than others. What is common to them is an animist concept of the dead. While some museums and archaeologists are receptive to dialogue and consultation, showing that there is indeed potential for collaboration and mutual understanding, others are more dismissive and unwilling to accept that such groups have any 'right' to advocate for those remains. This museum, for example, has received heavy criticism from archaeological and heritage bodies for even organising this conference, for allowing the issues to be debated. Yet, the grounds for such dismissal are exclusively embedded within a dualist/materialist world-view, which assumes the right of archaeology to have excavated the remains in the first place, and now seeks 'scientific' proof of genealogy, cultural or ethnic connection to allow a community group to advocate on their behalf. Archaeology requires groups to provide evidence of their links to human remains on its own, materialist terms, in the classificatory, taxonomic language of science: genealogy, culture, ethnicity, in which the age of the remains is crucial. It does not accept the dead as continuing to be persons in their own

right, nor does it accept the animist concept of connection with ancestors, neither of which notions are couched in the language of dualism or materialism. It's a classic Catch 22 situation: you must provide evidence of your connection to the remains, but we reject all evidence you provide as outside our world-view.

Conceptually, there is still a barrier to be overcome. I want to conclude by reiterating a very simple point.

In archaeological exhumation, and the use of ancient human remains in scientific study and in museums, the deceased is no longer regarded as a person: his moral status has changed. As a leading bioethicist, John Harris, has explained, it is 'persons' that matter morally. It is not 'life' that is important, but personhood (defined as any being capable of valuing its own existence). At death, the being ceases to be a person, and loses its moral significance. And that is how archaeology treats the dead.

In the animist world-view, the moral status of the dead person continues, he is still part of the community, part of the land, an ancestor, his song is sacred.

And that is the conceptual gulf we have to overcome, and from which most of the misunderstandings flow. In archaeology and museums, the dead are 'things', retained for exploitation for the production of knowledge and for display. For animist communities, the dead are still 'persons', still connected.

Going back to the conversation I started with... Janet and John had fundamentally different understandings of consciousness and its relation to body and matter. Their different understandings had implications for how each experienced the dead body and whether it had continuing value. John, as an archaeologist and museum curator, did not understand Janet's animist view, but it is unacceptable for him to reject her view as 'wrong' or 'romanticised'. That betrays ignorance about the basis of his own world-view, and arrogance that his world-view is self-evidently true, when in fact it is based on a metaphysical assumption or choice about mind and matter.

What is the logical conclusion of materialist archaeology accepting and respecting the legitimacy of an animist world-view? Does it mean that no bodies can ever be excavated, that no scientific analysis can ever be undertaken for any reason, that all ancient bodies in museums must automatically be reburied? No, in my view it does not mean that. Mutual respect means accepting the legitimacy of another metaphysical position, and engaging in dialogue about the balance of priorities, needs and real benefits. It means creating an ongoing relationship, in which incompatible views can be presented and heard with respect, non-judgmentally. It means deciding together, on a case-by-case basis, with each individual dead body and ancient burial, what it is best and most honourable to do, given the circumstances, and the requirements and beliefs of all parties involved. It means not necessarily getting what you want all the time, and being prepared to negotiate and concede, even if you disagree with the alternative. That is what is meant by 'respect'.