

Essay: discussion on the nature and direction of your chosen discipline and their relationship within the wider range of humanities

My Discipline of Archaeology

In this essay I will take a deeper look into my chosen discipline of archaeology, through looking at the humanities, coming to understand both them, and introducing the world of archaeology, and its nature. I will not only look at archaeologies relationship within the world of humanities, but also how it mends with the sciences. By the end of this essay I hope to have a clear understanding of my discipline of archaeology and the direction of which the subject itself and I am going.

Exploring the Humanities

To understand the humanities you must first know its history, which you can find at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/humanities, they claim that through many reliable sources, that the humanities can be traced back to ancient Greece, where they were first introduced to the public through the initial forming of the education system. When the Romans took power, the seven liberal arts were introduced, evolving into Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Music, which nowadays many of these things would be thought of as a science and not a part of the humanities. Even though people at the time did in fact practice these liberal arts, they were not taught in further education, which only changed in the 15th century with what is now called the Renaissance humanism, which made it not only possible to learn it in school, but also made it socially acceptable.

Looking forward from the history of our humanities predecessors and thinking of now, the humanities themselves have changed allot, and as previously mentioned many past liberal arts are not thought to be a part of the humanities any longer, these include; Arithmetic, Geometry and Astronomy, which are now known as sciences. Others that were mentioned like Logic, Rhetoric and Grammar are not considered humanities themselves anymore but are still fundamental parts of many different core subjects within the humanities that we see today, of which still includes Music (the soul survivor of the seven liberal arts of Rome), and now also include philosophy, religion, history, archaeology, and many different arts like language, performing and visual.

Introduction to Archaeology

As previously stated Archaeology is now a core part of the humanities, and although archaeology itself has existed for thousands of years, it has only come into the broad human interests through the 18th to the 19th centuries. This is something that I will talk about now, to truly understand archaeology (similarly to the humanities) you must first understand its history, specifically its major points and people of interests.

Although to put an exact timestamp on when archaeology was first truly thought of is impossible, we do know that the first major archaeological dig and restorations of ancient ruins was done under the order of King Nabonidus of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in the 6th century BCE.

Jumping forward 2,000 years into the 15th century we arrive at the Renaissance, and as previously mentioned the time of the Renaissance humanism, which although introduced humanities to schools, did not do the same for archaeology, although many people (mostly rich) would collect valuables and collectables of the ancient past, specifically Greek and Roman. Later in the 17th and 18th centuries, treasure hunting became something many people did, under the guise of archaeology people would go to places like Egypt and loot anything that remotely seemed like treasure, although this time was not great for the infrastructure of ancient sites (mostly due to TNT dynamite), some good things did come from it, the mapping of said ancient sites, the relocation of lost towns and valuables, and public exposure to the idea of archaeology (even if it was bad).

All of these events kinda culminated in the birth of scientific archaeology in the 19th century, as the University of Edinburgh was the first school / university to teach archaeology, having it as a chosen course, like any other subject. And ever since then Archaeology has been taken more seriously, with guides, rules and direct ways to excavate and handle ancient ruins, artifacts and even study.

The Nature of Archaeology

Now having a core understanding of the history of archaeology, explaining its nature will not be as tough. Defining archaeology is something that I can not put into words, which is why I'll let other scholars define it for me "the study of humans past using the surviving material remains of human behaviour" this is a quote by the archaeological author Brian Fagan that I found on steemit.com, which is a site that will help me greatly with expanding on archaeology's nature, this quote by Mr. Fagans I believe sums up the nature of archaeology perfectly, but to add to it Archaeology's true nature, is studying humans, their past, their previous and or lost cultures, inventions, understanding of things and even studying their everyday life, within ancient cities, towns or even caves, these things allow us to understand people, how they lived and allows us to immerse ourselves in these ancient pasts of our ancestors.

Archaeology's Relationship within the world of Humanities

Archaeology's relationship to the humanities is complicated and not as streamlined as other members of the said humanities, although to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David Archaeology is considered to be solely a member of the humanities, as we share lecturers, classes and modules with others in history, and religion, which in its own makes sense, but we also learn alongside philosophers, creative writers and others along those lines, but the truth about archaeology is not that simple, yes

archaeology in itself fits perfectly in the humanities due to its basis around people, but it also fits into the theme of sciences, most notably social and natural sciences, so how does archaeology fit into the world of humanities? Well to start off Archaeology prides itself on reconstructing the human story by investigating past lives, stories, cultures, and art of which can blend nicely with other humanity courses, like religious studies on the account that different cultures usually have differentiating gods to one another. Archaeology also fills in the holes of forgotten or lost history, and as previously mentioned archaeology takes and borrows from other humanity courses to do its studying as well as work in general.

Archaeology truly fascinates me when truly looking deeper into how it intertwines itself with other courses, and subjects within the humanities, for instance when it comes to philosophy archaeology constantly seeks philosophers help, as they can truly help each other coming to understand unanswered questions within their fields, as when archaeologists dig something up with no reputable function, philosophers might be able to help them out through their understanding of the human brain and how it thinks. Religion is one that I have touched up on before, as previously mentioned that with archaeology being the study of the human past, and bringing everything together, many cultures discovered by said archaeologists might have different gods to other cultures, which directly ties into religious studies, and how they are taught about the differentiating religions of the world. History is quite an easy one, when you think about it, both archaeology and history are studies that focus on the past, but can also bring light into what could happen in the future, as well as archaeology helps fill in the blanks of history, things that needed knowing, can be learnt through excavating old sites, and learning new things that can then help historians truly understand the past, whereas historians can also help archaeologists through fact-checking and dating archaeological items 100% correctly. Language Arts like literature and grammar for example can be seen as core aspects of archaeology, and truly as core aspects of any subject that needs to be written down, and with archaeology being pretty 50/50 through the excavating and the actual writings of findings (for work), essays (like im doing now), and articles (for enjoyment and enlightenment) it can be safe to say that archaeology truly needs language arts to be sustainable and proper. Performing and Visual Arts can be put together here as through music, art history, acting and many other practices, they are quite similar, which is the same for when you talk about how archaeology mixes with these subjects, as archaeology can bring light onto the history of art pieces (art history), onto how musicians and artists had lived their daily lives (music & art), and even acting, though probably rarer as they would need to find either an old opera house, or even a script for an old play so that they could help one another, it is still possible. And so looking back at this behemoth of a chapter (lowkey bloated it up) I can say that I truly do believe that archaeology has its space within the home of humanities, as it not only centers around the core fundamentals of humanities, which is the study of exploring human culture, thought and values, but also intermixes with literally every single other subject within the humanities in one way or another, but what about the other side?

Archaeology Vs. the Sciences

It is stated that Archaeology is considered to be a “bridge discipline” due to its overlapping uses of humanities and sciences, which is something I briefly touched on in the last chapter, as archaeology usually uses both social and natural sciences to its advantage, but they are not only used as something to help them, but are a core feature, and rooted into the discipline of archaeology.

Firstly what is the difference between the humanities and the sciences, well there is no definitive difference between the two, only that there are many ideas, some are that the lack of experimentation in science, and the use of it in the humanities, another is that one is far more complicated than the other, three other potential ideas can be seen on theseedsofscience.pub. But the one I'd like to highlight is “Reading The Classics” where the author of this article states that this is their probable answer as they see flaws in the others, and that in a nutshell humanities subject read more of the classics, and truly understand the history of their subject whereas the sciences just tend to understand their basics of the past and not delve deeper into reading the classics.

So where does archaeology fit into science, well chemistry is used through carbon dating, X-Rays and GPR (which I will talk about more later) is used to dig things up more effectively, basic geology is used throughout archaeology, genetics, as well as environmental considerations take into play.

Conclusion - direction

Whilst looking back up at some of my many different points on archaeology and my overall explanation, it's quite easy to understand the direction archaeology is taking as it continues to grow with younger audiences, as well as growing in the business sense, and moving on with the future, that direction is that although fundamentally archaeology is a social subject, that focuses on the core aspects of the humanities, archaeology is starting to use more and more of its scientific side. For instance field work has started to use more and more groundbreaking technologies to stop progressing the already regressing climate, through using Ground-Penetrating Radars, Magnetometry and other technologies / techniques shown by Dr. Smiti Nathan in her youtube video titled “Archaeologist Explains How We Know Where To Dig” that help archaeologists see what is underneath the ground before they excavate and destroy local land (where nothing could be buried), and this is only the beginning of this as more and more scientific research and tools makes it way into archaeology. But does that truly mean anything, as the humanities aspect of Archaeology will still thrive due to the nature of it being of human research, so where do I believe archaeology is directing itself towards, and what is the subject's overall relationships with the other humanities? I believe that Archaeology is the perfect middle ground between the humanities and the sciences, as it uses both of their core aspects to its advantage, and overall I believe many other humanities and sciences could learn from it, and to adapt to use more of each other's disciplines in their own.

Word count: 2,033

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