



In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects (Archaeology in Society)

Bjørnar Olsen

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In much recent thinking, social and cultural realms are thought of as existing prior to or detached from things, materiality, and landscape. It is often assumed, for example, that things are entirely 'constructed' by social or cultural perceptions and have no existence in and of themselves. Bjørnar Olsen takes a different position. Drawing on a range of theories, especially phenomenology and actor-network-theory, Olsen claims that human life is fully mixed up with things and that humanity and human history emerge from such relationships. Things, moreover, possess unique qualities that are inherent in our cohabitation with them—qualities that help to facilitate existential security and memory of the past. This important work of archaeological theory challenges us to reconsider our ideas about the nature of things, past and present, demonstrating that objects themselves possess a dynamic presence that we must take into account if we are to understand the world we and they inhabit.

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