

22. | A Parochial Primer: The New Dissonance As Seen from the Midcontinental United States

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Preface

Thanks to the conference, I have been instructed at first hand in the virtues of adversity, adversariness, and radical pluralism—and I have enjoyed the privilege of widening my personal network among scholars who are deeply concerned with and doing something about archaeological theory. One of the most promising trends highly visible at this conference is the varied nature of the accommodations between processualist and postprocessualist archaeology that belies the sharp dichotomy partially implied in the conference title, "The Processual/Postprocessual Debate."

The discussion I present here does not contain a clear, overt statement about my own position, but perhaps that can be conveyed by a brief, self-reflective account. The papers and discussion in Session One sent my thoughts back to some of the highest moments in my archaeological career. Two of them came to mind. The first was being told back in 1976 by the paleoethnobotanists who had been examining charred plant material retrieved in a massive flotation campaign at the Carlston Annis site, west-central Kentucky, that there were two or three tiny fragments of charred *Cucurbita pepo* rind amongst all the hickory nutshell and wood fragments, but *no* sumpweed, chenopod, sunflower, or other indigenous Eastern Woodlands cultigens. That was a very exhilarating moment of pure, refutationist, Popperian ecstasy because it meant our working hypothesis was totally, unequivocally *wrong*. The archaeological record had spoken.

The second experience of a personal archaeological high happened about the same time in 1976 but was of a very different nature. Cavers who had been mapping a big Tennessee cave found undisturbed archaeological material in one rather remote passage. We went there with appropriate

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