

EDITORIAL

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At the very beginning of archeology—i.e., first years of the 19th century—this new science was facing an unexpected enemy: history. At that time the only real authority in the domain of distant past was the Bible. Excavations were already taking place, but for quite a while all archeological findings, however unlikely, were conforming to the worldview of the Old Testament: the Creation, the floods. The World itself was created in 4004 BC, according to the calculations of Archbishop Ussher. And so there was a curious moment when early archeologists were digging deep into the soil, discovering obscure flint weapons overlain by layers of sand containing shells and bones of extinct animals, when geologists were beginning to wonder about the immense timeframe of rock formation, and when the existing human culture simply did not have any coordinates for these new findings.

It is interesting to think about this. Technically speaking, the first archeological scientists who dared to contradict the Biblical past did not have a history to rely upon. What were they dealing with? The immediate answer would seem to be: the empirical stuff, the matter. But the distinction between matter and consciousness or between the objects experienced and the structures of experience does not hold in this case. The flint axes and rocks were themselves shaping a time and a world was not present, instead of being *in* existing world. The things early archeologists were dealing with were more like quasi-objects, to borrow the notion from Michel Serres and Bruno Latour. According to the latter, quasi-objects are hybrids that do not fit in the nature/culture divide. They are things like, for instance, scientific inventions or

ecological catastrophes that resonate tangibly in all domains of being (nature, economy, law, etc.) without coinciding with any of them and without having a proper place at all.

It is also interesting to think that early archeologists had to perform a tough epistemological exercise: instead of recognizing objects (and thus merely illustrating the Scriptures) they had to suspend their knowledge and expectations in a kind of “reversed cognition” where not even the perceiving self might be taken for granted. They had to be like astronauts of the past, not knowing the space and time they were floating in, but realizing that even the smallest particle might suddenly rearrange the cosmos completely. For them past (and together with it—all the existing things) was not something that had already happened.

This curve brings us somewhere relatively close to this first issue of *The Federal*. Not too close, of course.

In any case, everything you are about to read revolves around the *Compass* (pg. 17) by Gintaras Didžiapetris—the piece which has orchestrated this first edition of *The Federal*. The following *Federals* will be built in a very similar fashion: one piece at the center and some new texts surrounding it, not really interpreting the art work, but rather drawing energy, forms and themes from it. It’s a very simple idea, really. And now that you know it—please turn the page and enjoy what’s ahead!

(P.S. Dear Librarian, please don’t place this publication in the Archeology section. Thank you.)