society (Parker Pearson 1999: 22). Other anthropologists, such as Mary Douglas, have focused on issues of pollution and purity and how these practices relate to death and burial (Douglas 1966; Parker Pearson 1999: 24).

Globally archaeologists are also interested in issues related to death, burial, and commemoration and have a long tradition of studying the same (Childe 1945; Binford 1971; Chapman, Kinnes, and Randsborg 1981; Parker Pearson 1999). Human remains have much to reveal about the lives of past individuals, with the potential to provide information about stature, sex, diet, nutrition, habitual activities, injuries, disease, and many other topics (Larsen 1997: 2). Indeed, Ivor Noël Hume, the doyen of American historical archaeology, has written, "The archaeologist's concern for the preservation of human life is probably matched only by his enthusiasm for its mortal remains!" (Noël Hume 1975: 158, 160).

The rise of the New Archaeology in the 1970s saw archaeologists searching for scientific laws that would enable them to better understand human behavior. Lewis Binford, building on the work of Arthur Saxe (1970), argued that one could infer the social status of the deceased and their place within the society from the grave goods found with them (Binford 1971). Working with data from forty different societies, garnered from the Human Relations Area files, Binford tested his hypotheses and found that individuals' identities are reflected in diverse ways in burial practices (Binford 1971; Parker Pearson 1999). Other scholars have come to similar conclusions and built upon and refined the work of Saxe and Binford (Winters 1968; Ucko 1969; Brown 1971; Tainter 1978; Carr 1995). In essence, these scholars believe that differences in burial treatment accord with asymmetries once present in the living society (Peebles and Kus 1977: 421–48; Brenner 1988: 148). With the rise of postprocessual archaeology, new interpretations of mortuary remains and commemorative processes have emerged, which rather than seeing direct correlations between status and commemorative elaboration have focused on the variability of social roles across time and space. Some scholars see ideological systems as determining the expressions that are evidenced in mortuary rites (Shanks and Tilley 1982: 129; Brenner 1988: 148). One of these scholars, Ian Hodder, sees several different scenarios that may play out in mortuary rituals:

1. A naturalizing strategy where political inequalities are symbolically expressed as an integral and inherently necessary part of the hierarchical order attributed to the natural world.