APPENDIX: ARCHAEOLOGY INTO THE 1990s

Critique and the new archaeology

Our work together in *Re-Constructing Archaeology (RCA)* and *Social Theory and Archae-ology (STA)* began because of a feeling of unease and dissatisfaction with archaeological theory and practice as it had developed during the 1960s and 1970s. The development of theory and new orientations in archaeology during this period was stimulating and arousing, yet after an initial period of intense debate, archaeology appeared to be slumbering once more, even regressing, with the advocacy of so-called 'middle range theory', back to the kinds of asocial explanatory frameworks and disciplinary nihilism it had so desperately tried to escape *(RCA:* Chapter 2). We perceived much of the new archaeology as an uncritical proliferation of eclectic borrowings from other social sciences, sometimes based on a rather narrow and superficial reading of secondary literature. Despite these borrowings the aim was paradoxically to reinstate the disciplinary independence and autonomy of archaeology. Meanwhile the traditional archaeology of sceptical empiricism remained firm in institutional structures, adopting only cosmetic changes such as problem orientation. New archaeology reinforced the deep-rooted empiricism of traditional archaeology, while in a contradictory way its emphasis on theory was a radical challenge. All too often, however, theory became identified with the provision of new methodologies *(STA:* Chapter 1).

We took as our first object the articulation of criticisms of basic orientations and philosophical positions present but not explored in new and processual archaeologies. These were naturalism and scientism, phenomenalism and empiricism *(RCA:* Chapters 2 and 5). We criticized naturalism as reducing the social world to a second nature, assimilating social practices to simple material behaviours. This reduction involved an unacceptable rejection of meaning and agency in social analysis. It is also associated with the accreditation of 'scientific' method and explanation: scientism. While questioning the definition of scientific method as based on procedures of quantification, testing, and falsification of hypotheses, we were concerned to raise the issue of value freedom and to show the notion of an impartial, value-free observer and scientist to be a dangerous myth *(RCA:* Chapter 3; *STA:* Chapter 7). We strongly attacked phenomenalism - the doctrine that certainly lies in the physical senses - and the associated emphasis on unmediated experience of material fact as the guarantor of truth. Instead, we stressed the creation of facts and the necessary interplay of theory with the practice of archaeological analysis.

In both books we used various philosophical positions and theoretical frameworks to counter the technicist emphases arising in the new archaeology in particular, in order to develop a critique of empiricist method. Rather than emphasizing theory as a con-

templative refinement of method we intended to rearticulate it as something active and cntical, a practice that was not merely incidental or in a 'superstructural' relationship to the real business of archaeology. Part of this process was to break down a divide erected in the new archaeology between theory and practice the presentation of a theoretical position followed by a series of 'applications' aimed either at demonstrating the validity of the position adopted or at 'testing' its worth and its relevance. We attempted to emphasize theory *as* a practice, as a process indelibly linking the archaeologist and that which he or she constructs and re-constructs. Such a position puts an end to theory viewed as something essentially divorced from and standing beyond the practice of actually doing archaeology What we were working towards was a theory *of* and *in* practice, the notion that all archaeology is theoretical practice.

On the one hand we concerned ourselves with epistemology - how we might gain knowledge of the past - and this resulted in the critique, via hermeneutics and dialectical thought, of grounding philosophies such as positivism *(RCA:* Chapter 5). Here a decisive point of departure was a move away from the mechanistic procedures of so-called scientific or objective analysis to a discussion of the interplay or dialectic between the subject and object of an interpretative practice. Our consideration of epistemology led us away from it to consider the grounding of interpretative practice in subjectivity and the manner in which subjects of different kinds are created within a determinate social field of interpretative practices *(STA* Chapter 3). An emphasis on hermeneutics or the process of interpretation leads us to understand that the entire world is always already a vast field of interpretative networks. We cannot escape interpretation via some application of method, but what we can do is to make choices and insert ourselves within a particular interpretative field while undermining and challenging other interpretative practices which appear to be inadequate or unhelpful. In relation to this last point we drew *(RCA:* Chapters 3 and 5) on the devastating attacks on positivist empiricism and scientism delivered by Cntical Theory - Marxists such as Adorno, Horkheimer, and Habermas (in his early work) who produced a sophisticated cultural critique of capitalism We conceived both *RCA* and *STA* as part of an assault on a whole system of social and cultural and academic *values* embedded within both traditional and new archaeology

It was Cntical Theory in particular, but conjoined with aspects of post-structuralist cntical practice, that brought us to consider matters which we might term meta-theoretical the problem of theory itself and its relation to the practice of archaeology *(STA.* Chapter 1); the idea of value freedom in academic work *(RCA* Chapters 1 and 3); the politics of theory *(STA:* Chapter 7) and its relation with the present as well as the past. Here we emphasized the insertion of archaeology as a cultural practice within late capitalism in the West. This required looking reflexively at the social conditions, interests, and structures within which archaeological practices, meanings, and explanations arise.

Ontological and epistemological questions
The major criticisms made of us are

(1) That we reject objectivity and stress an unfettered subjectivity in the process of gaining knowledge of the past.

(2) This means we advocate a hopeless relativism, a never-ending proliferation of equally valid pasts that become incommensurable and beyond cntical evaluation

(3) That we cannot, by the very logic of our own approach, distinguish between fictional and real (scientific) pasts

(4) The end result is an impotency in which archaeological investigation becomes pointless and meaningless Confidence is sapped, the discipline destroyed

We approach the question of archaeologists and the object world which they investigate with the aim of developing a thoroughly *materialist* understanding of the manner in which archaeological knowledges become attained and established This materialism extends to archaeologists themselves (issues of the constitution of subjectivity), the object world being studied (material culture) and the linguistic forms (archaeological texts, verbal discussions) in which these knowledges are expressed and physically embodied Advocacy of this materialism has a number of important consequences While we might talk of the relationship between epistemological subject and object, we wish to avoid an idealist tendency of regarding such an issue as a philosophical abstraction a purely philosophical quest which can be sorted out solely on the basis of a series of disembodied abstractions We try to shift the arena of discussion over to one of real concrete archaeologists confronting a material past now and in history

Our main purpose is to avoid these errors which result from too radical a separation of the archaeologist and the objects studied One error found in much archaeology supposes a contemplative and passive attitude towards objects of study The aim of archaeological investigation becomes simply to mirror the past in a mimetic fashion The mirror is, of course, clouded darkly, but the aim is gradually to dispel the shadows The archaeologist remains in *subjection* to a primary object world providing simultaneously both absolute foundation and measure of validity An independent definable reality 'out there' is somehow to be absorbed by a receptive consciousness which is itself conceived as unrestrained, disembodied, universal and non-material

Research programmes involving hypothesis formation, prediction, testing, falsification may be adopted, and the role of expectation and theory in knowledge accepted But we feel that vital philosophical and social questions of the theory dependence of 'data', the relation of observation languages to consciousness, the senses and the object world, are glossed over in the archaeological literature in general, and the comments made on our work in particular The key question is not whether objectivity exists, but what it *is* What is the relationship of the 'objectivity' to our practice[5]

A notion of objectivity cannot be grounded in common sense This merely begs the question and presupposes that we already know, and can intersubjectively agree, without any discussion or debate, what 'it' is at the outset What happens when a notion of objectivity remains unproblematic, as is usually the case in archaeological work, is that *in practice* an instrumentalist relation is adopted towards a supposedly finished and completed past that itself becomes constituted as objectivity Far from being passive and detached, archaeological consciousness manipulates the object past with assumptions, a priori conceptions and methodologies, while remaining insufficiently reflective of the *relation* of the archaeologist who actively investigates the object past

A second error involves an investigating archaeological subjectivity which is too active, actually constituting or making up an object past, while remaining unresponsive to its materiality This is the error of idealism which considers objectivity as entirely dependent on the thinking subject This is intimately linked to another error that of relativism and historicism whereby knowledges become entirely collapsed in terms of the contemporary or historical context of the investigating archaeologist Different aspects of the object past become mobilized by archaeologists in these contexts producing incommensurable but valid knowledges The important issue here is not a denial that knowledges are context-bound, which they undoubtedly are, but that context dependence provides a necessary and *sufficient* explication

We wish to stress that our concern is, and has been, to work with the question of archaeological knowledge in a manner which takes account of both the objects studied and the fact that archaeologists actively ask questions of that objectivity which remains a raw and unconstituted past without the actively interpreting archaeologist We want to go beyond a narrow philosophical epistemology and ontology to reach out and embrace a material and social praxis - real archaeologists digging up and thinking about a real past - which is a very different matter from thinking through the medium of abstractions such as 'hypotheses', 'subjectivity', 'objectivity', 'theory', 'data' These terms, as commonly employed, require the kind of deconstruction we attempted in *RCA* and *STA* because they systematically lead us away from any sophisticated understanding of what is actually involved in doing archaeology

In accordance with our materialism we wish to do away with an entirely abstracted, universalist and idealist notion of objectivity We replace this with a particular and contingent objectivity While real, objects of archaeological knowledge are nevertheless meaningless in themselves They are raw matter which require completion to turn them into discursive objects It is at this point they become meaningful, can be discussed, be known For all our purposes, objects can only exist in relation with the excavating, observing, photographing, writing, questioning archaeologist There is no *independently definable* reality or past as far as we are all concerned The unknown cemetery we have just discovered was not independently defining itself prior to our discovery It is, of course, part of a real past nevertheless It becomes part of our present when we do discover it and call the collection of material traces a cemetery The object is translated into meaningful existence in the particular and contingent moment of archaeological practice and interpretation This is partly what we refer to when we talk of capturing the object in its particularity And, of course, interpretation is not an innocent act but informed the object world, always already organized, creates thoughts in us We have proposed that it is better to regard objects as a network of resistances to theoretical appropriation than as abstract objectivity Why' Because this conception emphasizes the materiality involved in the process of gaining knowledge, the materiality of ourselves as subjective agents and the materiality of the object past It should be clear that this approach is very far removed from the rampant subjectivism of which we are accused The archaeologist must respect and deal with the material nature of the object past It is also important to realize that as real people archaeologists are also part and parcel of the object world, we may thus speak of *the final primacy of objectivity*

However, the object world is not left unchanged for the very reason that the process of understanding it is a *material* one Artifacts and their associations are not static data In a simple sense everything we know is discovered, excavated, measured, displayed and these are by no means automatic and unproblematic processes Beyond all this there is a dynamic relation of archaeological practice into which archaeological data inevitably enter - a complex of meanings, discourses, representations, powers Our purpose was, and is, to investigate this dynamic constitution of the past involving archaeologist and past object in a relation of mediated non-identity It hinges on an active archaeological practice which makes the objects of which it speaks, while recognizing the primacy of concrete material objectivity to which any discourse must relate

We cannot write the past without reading its material traces first The question becomes what are the most fruitful strategies for this reading and writing As we have been at pains to point out, varieties of empiricism do not form an appropriate medium for a materialist practice because they all result in an idealism of the object which either supposedly 'speaks to us', and the more objects speaking the better, or simply refutes or falsifies what *we* have to say removing from us a burden of choice in an unmediated and non-materialist fashion The point is that the materialism of the object, its meaning and its material inscription, goes far beyond surface appearances Varieties of empiricism cannot adequately capture material *differences* and *relations* and this, of course, includes the relation between the archaeologist and that studied

We wish to dispel abstract epistemologies involving absolute subject/object dichotomies, an unfortunate and particularly tenacious weed of Enlightenment thought, to consider the nature of real sensuous practice For us this involves three areas of concern

(1) *Experience* Archaeologists are individuals inevitably constituted today in terms of a modernist sense of self-identity which involves acting in and on the world The problem is that this Western modernist identity has not been sufficiently explored in the process of how we acquire knowledge   hermeneutically making meaning of an object world Archaeological experience comes into existence through autobiographic experience Our personal sense of identity is not pure, tree, radically unique It is rather a contingent and conjunctural combinational *bricoluge* of self-experiences involving how we have lived, what we have read, what we remember and what we forget, who we have spoken to, what we have done, and what has been done to us We refer to all this to underline the somatic dimension to knowledge our sensuous receptivity and sensibility to a world beyond ourselves So, there is a need for a phenomenology of archaeological experience and knowledge - an investigation of the character of the experiences

(2) *Intersubjectivity* We repeat here the necessity of considering archaeology as a *social* practice which takes place here and now, in this text, as dialogue about material objects, and how we create meaning out of a meaninglessness Here it is necessary to remind ourselves that an interest in the past is never disinterested History and myth are not radically opposed in so far as they are structurally necessary, the former to a modernist sense of self-understanding and identity, the latter to small-scale societies that have no need of history We cannot evade

a sense of history and the materiality of that history. We write history but that history is simultaneously that which creates pain, limits desire, mediates and bounds our own practice. We inscribe history, it scarifies us.

(3) *Coping strategies.* We refer here to the active relation of archaeologist and object past and the responsibilities this entails. These are the issues of representation and writing, making as opposed to finding knowledges, awareness of language and textuality. In the context of this 'epistemological' discussion we might refer to a crucial distinction between a true empirical archaeology, to which we adhere, and the formal and abstract application of empirical methodologies. The distinction is between being empirical and being empiricist, between an informational past constituted by predefined methods, and an understanding of the dynamic between empirical past and interpreting archaeologist.

Truth does not reside in the past, nor does falsity. Our aim is the construction of material truths forged out of a mediation between the activities of object-subjects (archaeologists) and subject-objects (the traces of the past). We reject fictional and scientific (in the sense of the 'new' archaeology) pasts because these are idealist pasts. Those arguing for a properly scientific archaeology consistently tend to reify science. It is not understood as the activity of a particular form of reasoning, or as a social practice. It becomes some *thing* to be used, some *thing* with an inherent intangible essence giving it power; it has a definite status. Against this status our efforts are to be measured. Science is that *thing* that is possessed, standing apart supposedly from social relations and modes of being in the world.

Material culture

On the other hand we found stimulating those bodies of thought which we felt helped us focus on what we saw as the object of any archaeology - the relationship between contextually situated social practices and material culture. We considered this missing in its essentials from the predominantly functionalist social archaeologies *(STA:* Chapter 2) of the 1970s and early 1980s. Structuralism crucially provided a different ontological basis for understanding both material culture and social practices and their relations. A basic premise here, running counter to all forms of empiricism, is that what cannot be observed determines the world of appearances, that which we do see. Consequently, any analysis needs to go beyond the surfaces of the empirical world to uncover underlying structures constituted by rules and principles which help to constitute meaning and significance. Analysis shifts from the things themselves (axes, pots, and so on) to relations between them. We also viewed a structuralist perspective as important in asserting the mediation of nature by culture (hence no simple environmental determinism is possible) and the individual by society *(STA:* Chapters 3 and 4; *RCA:* Chapters 6 and 7). Perhaps more important was that an understanding of structuralism opened the way to an understanding of material culture as being in some senses analogous to a text, a meaningful signifying system to be 'read' and interpreted. Semiology provided a parallel source of inspiration with its emphasis on the endowment of all social practices with patterns of signification. There can be no innocent fact or sign. 'Facts' speak to their

culturally conditioned audiences in determinate ways Culture becomes viewed as a kind of speech with underlying codes The job of the investigator is to decode the various cultural messages The general point is that the whole of human culture can be viewed as a vast web of messages which communicate This helps to create the cultural construction of reality Material culture, in which archaeologists have their main interest, becomes part of the way in which social reality becomes constituted It must therefore be seen as an active element in society, not as a passive reflection of social process

Our consideration of structuralism was informed and modified by two major lines of cntical influence First, progressive Marxist sociologies and anthropologies laid important emphasis on totality - the context of a particular social practice or artifact, on the ubiquity of the political and relations of power, on society having no preordained hierarchy of determination (such as economy over religion), on the importance and materiality of ideology, on the need for a genuine theory of history, with no artificial split between the synchronic and the diachronic, between static analysis and the dynamics of social change

Second, there were various forms of post-structuralist critique On the one hand there was the attempt by Bourdieu, Giddens, and others to link a theory of structure to one of social action involving considerations of agency, power, ideology, material praxis, and the symbolic On the other hand there were the various discourse perspectives advocated principally by Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault *(RCA* Chapters 6 and 7, *STA* Chapters 3 and 4) Rather than advocating a search for universal structures in material culture in a Levi-Straussian manner, we stressed that it should be regarded as having the following general characteristics

(1) being subject to multiple transformations in form and meaning content,

(2) that its meaning must be regarded as contingent and contextually (I e , historically and socially) dependent,

(3) that it does not necessarily reflect social reality There may be various relations of ideological inversion Material culture is charged with power relations,

(4) that it forms a framing and communicative medium in, for, and of social practice,

(5) that like a text it requires interpretation but that such an interpretative process can never end there are no final answers,

(6) that it forms a channel of reified and objectified 'expression', both being structured and structuring in a manner analogous to a language,

(7) that it is a social, not an individual production The individual agent should be regarded as being structured through language and material culture,

(8) that the meaning of the archaeological record is irreducible to the elements that go to make it up,

(9) that the primary importance of material culture is not so much its practical functions (to say that a chair is for sitting on tells us virtually nothing about it) but its symbolic exchange values as part of the social construction of reality, and

(10) that it is polysemous the meaning of an artifact alters according to (l) who uses

it; (ii) where it is used, its social and material location; (iii) where and in what circumstances the interpretation takes place; (iv) who does the interpretation; (v) why they are bothering to interpret in the first place and in relation to what expected audience.

From reading to writing the past

The above perspective on material culture leads us significantly away from any kind of analysis which claims that it is a simple matter of reading off the way the past really was from its present traces occurring in the archaeological record. Any attempt to mirror a real past is insufficiently self-reflexive. In *RCA* (Chapters 1 and 5) and *STA* (Chapter 4) we questioned the notion of a real past and set out to demonstrate that any attempt to recover or reconstruct such a past was both impossible (we would never know when we were there) and suspect in view of the polysemous nature of material culture, which we characterized as consisting of a series of *metacritical* rather than *diacritical* signs. In the latter notion (advocated by Saussure), meaning is fixed through the difference between signs in an overall system; in the former, meaning is regarded as slippery, as sliding through shifting frames of reference, something which cannot be pinned down once and for all (Derrida). The effect of these critiques of the notion of a real past and meaning as stable was to emphasize interpretation as a contemporary act which does not attempt to recover original meaning. The consequences, some of which we have already touched upon above, are that studying the past must be regarded as an act requiring self-reflexive discourse. The meaning of the past does not belong to the past but to the present. A corollary is that the primary event of archaeology is not the event of the past but the event of archaeology itself: discourse, writing, excavation. Archaeology is not, then, so much a reading of the signs of the past, but a process in which these signs are *written* into the present. And writing, of course, transforms. There is a fundamental gap between words and things. We move from a material culture 'text' to an archaeological text backing up our arguments and statements by 'quoting' with artifacts. This is a process involving both resistance (the material record does constrain what we can write in various ways) and transformation (the movement from things to words) (see figure on p. 255).

Such a process of writing and analysis is in principle no different from reading works of literature and backing up interpretative argumentative structures by quoting the words of authors. Archaeology may then be said to bear a far closer resemblance to literary criticism than, say, to nineteenth-century conceptions of physics usually referred to, or implied in the arguments used to suggest it is, or should become, a 'hard' science.

It is important to appreciate that there is a gap between theory and reality. This means that we cannot resolve, except in an imaginary way, real contradictions in thought; nor is a concept identical with the reality it represents. This is why we have stressed questions of representation, style, textuality and writing. These are again questions involving the real material practice of archaeology - that it textually inscribes and translates objects. At the root of all this is the need, we feel, for a critical attitude: archaeological texts are not innocent mirrors of an object world, nor are they to be conceived simply in terms of authorial intention. There is a

MATERIAL CULTURE (a multidimensional 'text' with a plurality of meaning)

resistance

transformation
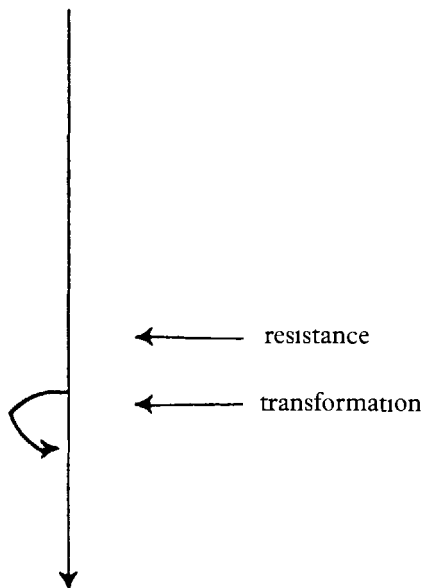
ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEXT (argumentative structure with material 'quotations')

Relations between artifact and text

problem of the adequacy of concepts and there exists the question of what constitutes a realist representation.

Much of our writing in *RCA* and *STA* is deliberately polemical and provocative and we have stressed the importance of rhetoric as a strategic device We regard this strategy as part and parcel of what we have already been stressing- the tension between past and present We wanted to draw attention to our work as text, as transformation of the past of which we speak This may, of course, be infuriating to some but seems preferable to the con-texts pretending to be a mirror image of the past rather than its linguistically mediated transformation

We have also tried to avoid the commodification of concepts. By this we mean abstraction - the definition of concepts in themselves, identity - the identification of concept with reality, and reification - treating concepts as things. All involve a collapse of the dialectic between concept and reality and the loss of particularity This is the point of our criticism of 'prestige goods economy', for example Not the validity of the political and material relations it might represent, but its a priori specification and wholesale application It needs to be stressed that concept and reality form a material relation which cannot be resolved in theory.

We would argue that we might take a tentative and faltering approach to the object past, avoiding clearly denned premises, abstract theories applied from the top down.

The attempt to define and redefine concepts to obtain an absolute purity is to be avoided. We need concepts such as power, ideology, contradiction, but these need to be worked and reworked in relation to the specificity of that being studied. We begin any work with the establishment of theoretical objects that we appropriate further and link in to an ever-broadening discursive network. Here we are suggesting again mediated resistances involving the subjectivity of the archaeologist and his or her relation to the object world.

The relation of past and present

Archaeology is a making of a past in a present. We argued this dialectic at length in *RCA* (Chapters 1 and 5) and *STA* (Chapter 5). We have been concerned to relate concepts of past and present to the material practice of archaeology, referring in particular to Heidegger's seminal concept of 'presencing' (later taken up in Gadamer's hermeneutics): 'an historic present, mutual reaching out and opening up of future, past and present, holding them together in their difference, a relational nexus' *(STA,* p. 127). We have also argued in *STA* that we must choose between alternative pasts on political grounds. This is not to be taken in a grossly literal reading of the phrase to suggest, for example, that we forget about empirical objects altogether. The phrase (and many others) was employed by us to deconstruct empiricist oppositions between facts and values, to break the spell of past over present, in the process of understanding the past and in evaluating archaeological discourses.

So the past is real, it did happen, it is not just our fiction, and can be used in and against the present, *in its difference.* We make four points here:

(1) The past does not just have one meaning. In this respect at least it does mirror the present. The truth of the past in the present is not an illusion, it has a material basis in institutions. It is necessary to reject a legalistic notion that unless we have the whole truth and nothing but this whole truth, we have no truth at all. A contextualization of truth in terms of the manner in which it is created in the academy helps us to understand this truth better, *materially* as forming part of a nexus of power relations. This is another aspect of the particularism we advocate.

(2) The past is read from the present and its reality may have different pertinent meanings in different historical circumstances.

(3) This reading of the past from the present is an advocacy of reading real and relevant trajectories in a practical relation where past is 'non-identical' with the present.

(4) The past relates to the archaeologist as a 'network of material resistances'.

To clarify, we intend this term to encompass a range of meanings:

(i) it implies an active interpretative relation;

(ii) it makes reference to archaeological entities as theory-laden rather than theory-determined (in *RCA* Chapter 5 we termed these entities 'theoretical objects');

(lll) it refers to a past actively resisting attempts to appropriate it theoretically in such a manner as to ignore its materiality,

(IV) it implies opposition the past may be forgotten or obscured because it threatens a *valued* framework,

(v) it implies difference,

(vi) it implies a surplus, an empirical redundancy in the past, we can never encompass all the details of the past, and much is lost anyway

The relationship of the archaeologist to her or his object of study is a dialectical one involving a notion of two entities (let us say the archaeologist and objects of archaeological study) which form part of each other, help to constitute each other, but do not collapse into each other The dialectic is not just a fancy term We inevitably live it in our material practice The theory-data relation is one of continual mediated modification The appropriate starting point, in a social archaeology, is to conceptualize the past as precisely that - a social construction Evolutionary principles, of whatever form, or the a priori use of social typologies, do not appear useful in this regard Theory and data do not exist in an external relation to each other This relation has to be conceived as a very specific one Every data set (whatever might be precisely meant by that term) should have its own specific theoretical orientation In other words, we reject the idea of an abstracted body of theory which just has to be applied wherever or whenever necessary Our dialectical approach means that theoretical structures become part of data structures and vice versa, held in a relation of tension The technique involved is a spiralling one in which theoretical structures are dropped or transformed in order to accommodate data resistances There is no end to this process We can never theoretically appropriate the entire data set, nor can such a process be simplified in a cook-book fashion as it inevitably involves different subjectivities and different objectivities Evaluation of the results of study is dialogic involving what we know, what we want to know, and discussion of the particular interpretative choices we have made along the way, and the manner in which we have written what we have done

We wish to make some further comments about critique and pluralism We are criticized for supporting a relativist pluralism, for apparently arguing that validity depends simply on the present, for being nihilistic, negative and political This amounts to a stultification of any meaningful conditions under which archaeological practice might be undertaken It is interesting in this context to consider the reactions to our work, as expressed in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 22 A number of the commentators appear to be broadly in agreement with most, or some, of what we have written (Bender, Herschend, Hodder, Nordbladh and Olsen) Renfrew, Trigger and Wenke are in profound disagreement with almost everything It is interesting to note the relationship of these responses to the socio-political conditions in which they arise From Canada and the United States, condemnation, from Britain a mixed reaction, from Scandinavia a generally sympathetic response All the authors, of course, work within capitalist nation-states but within very different material circumstances ranging from the most imperialist, to Britain riddled with deep-rooted class division, to the more muted and socially softer forms of Scandinavian capitalist-socialism The geographical shift of opinion is rather

intriguing and it may indicate something of significance about the conditions in which critical work takes place and the responses it may engender, in a conservative discipline.

Our purpose in theorizing pluralism is not to defend absolute provisionality. It is to encourage the development of different pasts, new and valid pasts, new truths, to pose questions, to examine doubt and uncertainty. We wish to create space for challenge and debate, to challenge hegemonic pasts, to create conditions for the expression of minority[1] pasts. We make no claim to intellectual authority other than as a challenge to established and orthodox archaeologies, an opposition to dogmatism.

Politics and the new right

Our project crystallized in political experience of the early 1980s. We witnessed a masterful display of the mobilization of the past in the ideological service of the present, with assumptions and basic outlooks of new and traditional archaeologies easily written into a new hegemonic culture of the right. In Britain the Thatcher solution involved a populist invocation of common sense understanding providing simple remedies to a Britain in decline and their mechanical and resolute application. Fundamentally anti-intellectual and irrational, it raised mythical and demagogic imageries of heritage, lost transcendent values, national collective identities, and traditions. And at the heart was a consumerist individualism - free wills exercising free choice in the market of history.

So we saw archaeology's adherence to a supposed objectivity of fact as irrational, ignoring the basic nature of such a claim: subjective idealism, i.e, an idealism arising out of a contradiction between objective essence received by attuned subjectivities. What this amounted to was an irrational acceptance of values such as efficiency and optimization regarded as transcendent, but which were in reality the values of capitalist economic practices projected back into the past. The origin of these abstract values in the present was lost. The mechanistic logics of culture process and evolutionary sequences involved a loss of socio-cultural specificity in the momentum of generalities. Above all, scientific archaeology was formulaic and authoritarian, applying general methodologies and algorithms, universal remedies for world histories.

Traditional archaeology is at its roots anti-intellectual, sceptical of 'new' approaches, celebrating its common sense categories, home-spun truths. Its object-based and unique pasts fitted well with the modern past of traditional customs, folk museums, and craft shops. There was also a sceptical complacency and resignation providing no serious answers to challenges made either to its past or to its practices. It remains apparently sure of itself with a belief in an enshrined and unexamined conservation ethic, and in a sacred past.

We considered that this was a loss of the past. The past was becoming alien and unintelligible. Scientific and traditional archaeology and the culture of the new right offered no vital lifeworld for a past. The present was instantaneity, available to instant experience, consumption; the past was everywhere, a palimpsest of 'heritage', and similarly instantaneous, locked into its immediate present. The past through cultural resource management had become marketable, open to the 'public'. Historicity, our historical agency, was being purposefully forgotten.

Reconstituting archaeology

In the context of this experience our aim became wider to institute an investigation of the basics of any genuine social archaeology, to supersede the fixed categories, predefined social schemes and universal histories of established archaeologies

We considered that essentialism and reductionism, two disabling orientations, permeated the social archaeologies of the 1970s and 1980s Essentialism is the notion that there is an essential meaning or substance to the past the archaeological record becomes the manifestation of predefined entities or units and their interaction *(RCA Chapter 6)* Social typologies (band, tribe, chiefdom, state, and so on) and the mechanics of functionalist social archaeology (economy-environment-population-technology, and so on, in interaction) are clearly essentialist Reductionism is closely linked to essentialism This is the notion that the particularity of the archaeological record can be reduced to overarching generalizations, subsuming social or other processes A millennium of particularity may be reduced to the analytical process 'prestige goods economy' It was in the light of essentialism and reductionism that we undertook a substantial critique of theories of social and cultural evolution *(STA Chapter 6)*

We were concerned not to substitute an alternative definition of 'society' or whatever, a new and better essential object of archaeology We wished to avoid hierarchies of determination with the relegation of substantial and substantive areas of social experience to irrelevancy We aimed instead to elucidate a set of concepts which would enable a grasp of aspects or fragments of the past in their particularity within a flexible mediatory totality, a set of concepts which would make no pretence to being a representation of a complete past, but would enable fertile interpretation of material culture in a non-determimstic and dynamic engagement between past and present *(RCA Chapters 5 7, STA Chapters 2-5, Chapter 6, pp 176-86)*

In particular we aimed to overcome the occlusion of the individual in conventional social archaeologies, to overcome the split between individual and society Our focus was the decentred subject a subject located within structures conceived as both the medium and outcome of intentional practice As will be clear from the above discussion, the concept of structure carries a heavy theoretical burden We linked structure to practice through power, focusing on strategies and technologies of domination and subordination The dynamic of structure and practice thus involves issues of legitimation and ideology, contradiction and historical conjuncture the politics of social reproduction and change Our consideration of the event of change related to a theorization of time in archeology, time too is structured, and is not a neutral context or background dimension to 'measure' change Like space it forms a medium and outcome of human praxis Abstract date and chronology are subordinate to our historical plot and to political conjuncture

A programme for the 1990s

The aims of any progressive archaeology should now, we consider, contain the following

(1) The refinement and extension of a reflexive and mediatory conceptual apparatus such as that mentioned above Particular attention needs to be paid to a fresh

consideration of ecological context and economic practices, areas largely omitted from *RCA* and *STA*

(2) A continuing investigation of the relation of theory to practice

(3) The development of a democratic politics of archaeology, a questioning of institutions, decision-making, and values

(4) A rediscovery and refinement of the subjective, rooting archaeology in an examination of basic and ordinary experiences of the past the development of a politics of subjective identity and its relation to the past

(5) Experimentation with fresh ways of producing the past and relating it to the present, in the contexts of excavation strategies, museum displays, and writing texts

(6) Detailed cntical analyses of the nature of archaeological discourses and their relations to a capitalist present

(7) The full realization of archaeology as a strategic intervention in the present through a focus on (l) archaeology itself as constituting a micropolitical field, (n) an adequate theorization of the relation between material culture and social structures both within contemporary society and in the past, (in) using the *difference* of the past to challenge established economic and social strategies, categorizations, epistemologies, rationalities, modes of living, and relating to others

Our work continues with the following issues

Making sense of historicity

Archaeology is a making of a past in a present In order to forge an acceptable practice of archaeology this means that we need to take history *seriously* Taking the past seriously involves recognizing its otherness not as a matter of exoticism but as a means of undercutting and relativizing the legitimacy of the present The new archaeology and various forms of evolutionary theory fail precisely because of the attempt to reduce history to a set of ahistoncal processes, ahistoncal because these generalities are sup posedly always present Taking history seriously also requires that we recognize the importance of discontinuity Such a recognition implies that representations of the social in material or other forms, simply cannot be the same across time A renewed sense of historicity also demands inclusion and consideration of ourselves The past is not a fetish in the mud, it is not simply found or observed in an arresting backward glance As archaeologists we engage the past in subjective experience For too long this subjectivity has been occluded - and that means ourselves - in a valorization of rationalized experience and a systematic analytics Instead we seek a re-enchantment of the past, not in the sense of a mysticism centred on a new subjectivism, but as a serious examination of the relation of archaeologist to the material past, an examination of ourselves as positioned and decentred subjects

At the root of all this is our relation to time personal and social *(STA* Chapter 5) We need to think of time and its meaning to us, its social valuation in capitalism If we are to rediscover historicity   our involvement in past and future, our social agency (and

this is to talk of democratic values) - then time must be reassociated with lifeworld, realized as substantial, not abstract So we do not look back into the past and hope to find its truths - truth is not to be found in history, history is to be found in the truth Archaeology thus loses its dependency on an object past, becomes our involvement in a material world (and in a 'post-modern' world of style and signification archaeology is ever-more relevant) Archaeology becomes future-orientated, a project

A poetics of archaeology

In *RCA* and *STA* we abandoned any attempt to create a privileged or foundational discourse which would suggest that it is 'in the true' by virtue of internal logical coherency or by means of reference to, or correspondence with, realities standing outside discourse (as in the phenomenalist premise that we must take our theories to an external physical reality of 'hard' data which will then pass judgement on (test) their validity)

Language use does not merely imitate reality, rather, it *helps to constitute* it This means that we must shift attention away from the notion that we gain knowledge through supposedly objective testing to a position which suggests that an epistemological and ontological basis for gaining knowledge and truth resides within the confines of different and competing language games which play with and represent 'reality' in different forms What we are proposing is a communicative epistemology[7] stressing the production of the past and present as a dialogue taking place between persons, groups, and different interpretative communities Such a position embraces the importance of both empirical description and observation, it is deeply empirical while being hostile to empiricism

Our project must of necessity include a poetics of archaeology If we are to consider archaeology as a social practice, a mediation between past and present, a translation, then we must look to the media of the past's creation and transformation We must ask the questions of an archaeological stylistics and rhetoric what is the adequacy of an inventory of finds[5] What is the meaning of an 'objective' account[5] What is the use of a measured floor plan in a historical narrative[5]

It is important to experiment with ways of writing, ways of seeing, ways of presenting It is equally important to resist appropriation and incorporation into the sterility of a hegemonic culture which translates everything into its own terms and makes other expression unintelligible Consequently our strategies should be those of polemic and provocation, challenging orthodoxy, working with the unfamiliar In this we are not erecting an alternative authority on the past, seeking ultimate truths For the archaeological past such truths do not exist We aim at a pluralist and democratic exploration of the past, fragmented, provisional, negotiated Here we must express dissatisfaction with the conventions of archaeological discourse The canons of third-person narrative, informative and unambiguous cataloguing in a site report, for example, are only valid in terms of an *authoritarian* pronouncement on the past and only have relevance in terms of power structures in the discipline including funding opportunities and so on

We need to recognize the difficulty of language use and deny the validity of empiricist notions Within archaeology one hegemony reigns based on an empiricist theory of reading and writing Discourse becomes a mere medium, as, the mode in which the non-discursive, the ideas or mental conceptions of the individual archaeologist, become

realized; or alternatively, the ways in which knowledges of the 'real' (archaeological data) are set down and recorded Discourse becomes reduced to either a record of the thought patterns of the thinker or the manner in which the real may be reproduced in a text Reading an archaeological text is therefore deemed (ideally) to be a kind of activity as obvious as eating, drinking, or sleeping The call is to make the text as simple, clear, concise, and transparently obvious (thus instantly available for consumption) as inhumanly possible. Any text which might require interpretation or uses 'difficult' language is really quite shameful 'Why can they not say it more simply' is the usual cry from the empiricist reader who wishes implicitly to separate our statements, concepts, and positions from their conditions of textual production, the demand to read 'simple' rather than 'complex' texts is merely a valorization of anti-intellectualism. Any notion that the 'complex' can be translated or put into the 'simple' is immediately *deconstructive* If the complex could be put into the simple then of course it could not have been very complex in the first place On the other hand if the simple is to perform the requirement to be an adequate medium of complexity it cannot be simple any longer A 'simple' form of expression or writing cannot but destroy any complexity and vice versa. One does not simply translate back into the other We are not calling for all texts to be 'complex'; what we are suggesting is that a plurality of discursive forms needs to be recognized without any necessary possibility of mutual transference or passage from one to the other.

As an illustration consider the essay 'The Present Past' *(RCA:* Chapter 1). Any archaeological writing is immediately ironic and metaphorical. The traces of the past are obliterated in their moment of supposed preservation. They must be recreated in different form, in text: identity in difference The chapter in question attempted to work with these basic notions. Interrogating our experience of archaeology, it superimposed images and metaphors: tense and time; distance and the past, memory and rhetoric, narrative truth and time; destruction and preservation, judgement and loss; observation and experience. These were related to complex cultural images of an emergent Western rationalism in Archaic and Classical Greece The purpose of the essay was kaleidoscopic and suggestive, recovering to discussion diffuse background issues We attempted to employ similar textual strategies in other contexts, for example, the discussion of sub-jectivity in *STA,* whilst elsewhere deliberately conforming to accepted (or rather unques-tioned, unchallenged) modes of writing.

We are now focusing on the meaning of narrative; on illustration and images of the past, developing an expanded visual vocabulary; on more creative use of technology, on stretching language into different directions, looking into the potential of control over writing and presentation as well as more conventional data manipulation and processing (Tilley 1989b, 1990a, 1991b, Shanks 1992).

A basic tenet underlying this work is that archaeology, instead of seeking to efface its own discursivity, needs to consider itself as a set of strategies for establishing interventions in our present, interventions which will prove their validity through their effects rather than relying on prior epistemological grounding We cannot any more secure the validity of what we say by attempting to locate our discourse as a knowledge relation to the past involving correspondence, coherence, or whatever We aim to dispel such nineteenth-century theologies, philosophies and ideologies of science. We are seeking instead to

disrupt and to render dishevelled prevailing contemporary archaeological discourses in order to foster fresh discourses and new pasts, socially and politically relevant pasts

Discourse and power

This brings us to the question of the connection between discourse and power Foucault has taught the lesson well that discourse - structures enabling the production of know-ledges - is permeated with relations of power We intend to develop further *(RCA* Chapter 4, *STA* Chapter 7) a cntical sociology of archaeology examining power and discourse, examining structures of oligarchic orthodoxy with its centralized provision of public pasts and marginalization of others Central questions to be asked here are who produces the past and why[5] For whom exactly is this production taking place[5] In what circumstances[5] Who has the right to speak and expect to have their statements considered as worthy of attention and comment[5] In developing such an archaeology we intend to destroy the myth that archaeological practices and archaeological communities are essentially benign and apolitical, 'only' having a serious and disinterested interest in the past We must examine corridor and coffee-room talk (the unpublished as well as the published), networking of references, acknowledgements, citations, who gets grants and for what and who does not, who gets employed and who does not, who gets promotion and who does not, who gets read and who gets ignored No doubt we can expect such work to be extremely unpopular and particularly difficult, especially in Britain with its labyrinth of secret committees accountable to no one except themselves Such an analysis will also challenge the cult of professionalism in archaeology which is growing in strength daily and which threatens drastically to restrict our scope of thought and action so that what is deemed to be properly archaeological becomes more and more severely restricted This is a matter of dissolving rather than reinforcing disciplinary boundaries by constantly asking the question *just what is archaeological about archaeology**

The aim is to establish a different Socio-politics of archaeology, not one that will evade power but will use it in emancipatory ways Established institutional frameworks must be challenged as the correct or only places to do serious archaeology, the notion that archaeology is only concerned with the past must be challenged more seriously than at present, power hierarchies in academia and without need to be impugned, above all we need to escape from the cloistral seclusion of archaeology from real political processes Archaeology as a disciplinary ghetto must be destroyed

Another important area that needs consideration is the widespread ideology of indi-vidual authorship that exists in academia Genuine co-operation would, of course, strike at the heart of current academic hierarchies depending on signing and owning texts Almost the first question we get asked, often in a somewhat suspicious manner, is who wrote what and how much[5] What we do not understand is why such a question *should* have any importance or relevance When writing *RCA* and *STA* we considered producing them either as authorless texts or creating pseudonyms This is not to evade responsibility for having produced something, it is to assert that it is ideas that matter, not the names proprietorially stamped over them

Democratic pluralism

In *RCA* and *STA* we were effectively arguing for a radical pluralism in archaeological theory and practice and paid particular attention to four major contemporary lines of thought, hermeneutics, structuralism and post-structuralism, Cntical Theory; and dialectical materialism We do not seek for a final all-embracing theoretical structure that might, for example, attempt to integrate these different perspectives into a totalizing framework The very notion of a unified theory with a place for everything, and everything in its place, is both essentialist and reductionist Rather than a totalizing theoretical structure, what we propose is one that is *detotalizing* A totalizing framework either ignores that which it cannot subsume or marginalizes it either as an anomaly or as something eventually to be incorporated at a future date *(RCA* Chapter 6, *STA* Chapters 1 and 2) The effects are either the coercive inclusion of everything into a total order or an exclusionary strategy denying the relevance or validity of that which is left out It is important to recognize that many of the grounding presuppositions involved in, say, hermeneutics and post-structuralist thought *are* incompatible Rather than attempting to develop a coherent unity out of these frameworks we suggest that their relationship should be seen as one of shifting frames of reference that allow us in various ways to develop a truly self-reflexive and mature social archaeology

Now any advocacy of shifting frames of reference, different ways of seeing and thinking, entails that a static imagery of the past is less than adequate Predetermined social schemes are at variance with our effort to refine a set of conceptual apparatuses capable of producing a heterogeneous and complex past, an archaeology which does justice to the particularity of material culture, and to the fact that any archaeology always creates a present-past

We need to realize a genuine pluralism. Not different approaches, the latest intellectual fashion from the continent, but a cntical appreciation of different pasts And the cntical element is to deny a disabling relativism - not just anything goes

It should be clear that we are not proposing a new particularism - objects locked into their particular cultural milieux This would beg the question of understanding and is a lapse into the ideology of the unique aura of an artifact. There *are* regularities in the past, but these are not the simple schemes of social evolution or the static concepts of conventional social analysis They are, if you like, plots or sequences charged with a contemporary political purpose. We might say with Adorno that there is no universal history which leads from savagery to civilization, but there is one that leads from the slingshot to the plutonium bomb

Interpretative politics

It is important that archaeology shifts from instituting a series of judgements on the past, attempting to locate a supposed inner essence or essential core of meaning and significance, to becoming a form of 'counter memory', aiming to challenge current modes of truth, justice, rationality, and social and economic organization In other words archaeology should be helping us to understand and change the present by inserting it in a new relation to the past. Those who claim that such a perspective is misguided or irrelevant are of course those who have no use or need for it.

We inhabit the cellars of a crumbling archaeological edifice which we wish to topple and reconstruct This may entail being buried and suffocated in the process but there is an even greater danger - that of becoming simply archaeologists who write for other archaeologists who write for other archaeologists We need to escape from the attitude that when all has been said and done archaeology still remains *just* archaeology, isolated by an immense gulf from current social and political issues A counter memory aims at combating the onset of such an archaeological amnesia and sense of hopelessness We need to acknowledge archaeology as a micropolitical practice and take seriously its location as a culture practice in a capitalist society

Gramsci's analysis of hegemony has laid the basis for understanding the field of culture, and especially education (what is archaeology if it does not have an educative goal?) as not merely a superstructural reflection of economic and social relations, but a means through which those relations are created, reinforced, reproduced or challenged and transformed Cntical Theory has furthermore provided major insights into the culture industry as a means of social domination and control As archaeology clearly lacks any autonomy from society, the effects of archaeological discourse pervade the entire cultural fabric of our times It is important to analyse just what these effects are and how they may be altered or enhanced This entails analysis of the mass media, popular and fictional writing about the past, museum presentations, and the rapidly growing heritage industry It also means intervening in all these sectors, taking power, taking control An oppositional discourse will be less than pointless until it begins to work in these areas

The current movement of archaeology into contemporary material culture studies *(RCA Chapter 8)* is thus another vital component of developing a politics of interpretation and this also has to be regarded in the light of a political challenge to the notion that archaeology is *only* (hopelessly[5]) concerned with the past, and the more distant this past the better To work in the present should be to challenge that present either through an analysis of the material world we inhabit or through the presentation of the past

Even the dead aren't safe
The culture of the new right and the heritage industry that it has spawned hardly constitute a will to preserve a disinterested academic past Pluralism is only tolerated so long as it creates no authentic opposition that cannot be neutralized (in a diversity of equally 'true' views) or otherwise contained Its populist imagery, slogans, and set formulae go hand in hand with its attacks on research in the humanities, silencing of informed debate, and creation of unaccountable committees Market values meanwhile propagate an entrepreneurial past in the publishing and media industries

The obviously political attempts we have witnessed to provide a coherent critique to this hegemonic success have been inadequate With others we feel a challenge to a socialist political imagination, a challenge which while necessarily rooted in our experience in Britain, applies to a Western world of renewed capitalism Our aim is a pragmatic rethinking and exploration, a refusal to accept the past as a guarantee for a conservative present We embrace a contradictory and fluid past which, even if not simple, will be intelligible