As a qualification of the most radical interpretations of Habermas's thesis about knowledge-constituting interests, the epistemological stance adopted by Handelman and Leone is similar to a reformulation of critical theory proposed by Keat in the Political Society Theory (1985). Keat argues that given a human capacity for reflective self-criticism, methods developed in the empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic sciences can be used for emancipatory purposes; informed by an interest in critical self-understanding, they can expose and correct the errors that arise from other (uncritical) interests. On Keat's account, the recognition that interests may distort knowledge claims serves to direct attention to new sources of error, not to derail critical inquiry, by no means are knowledge claims so tightly tied to interests that they are impervious to rational, empirical criticism. It follows, then, that a commitment to an emancipatory interest in research does not reduce theory choice and theory evaluation to pragmatic considerations, nor does it require the development of a new and unique methodology (e.g., one derived from psychoanalysis, as recommended by Habermas).

Transported to an archaeological context, this principle suggests that the substantive core of the revolution instituted by the New Archaeology should be extended to incorporate an explicitly self-critical dimension. The testing practices advocated by the New Archaeologists should be used to systematically evaluate the underlying assumptions that structure unself-conscious appropriations of the past at all levels of abstraction, from the interpretation of archaeological data as evidence to the formulation of explanatory models that can be tested against that evidence. It is important to note, however, that these practices cannot be expected to conform to the requirements of a positivist hypothetico-deductive (H-D) model of confirmation. They are typically structured not by a deductive logic of subsumption and instantiation but by a closely controlled inductive logic of analogy, by which information about better-known source contexts is used, selectively, as a basis for building models of the inaccessible features of past contexts (see chapter 9). As Leone observes, "we know artifacts never speak for themselves: we have to give them meaning" (1985a: 1); and this process of giving artifacts meaning depends on what we think we understand about familiar forms of production, social organization, and kinship or economic relations. Critical self-consciousness about the interested nature of archaeological inquiry focuses attention on the assumptions that inform this transposition of familiar to unfamiliar; its central goal is to "raise hidden assumptions to the surface" (Leone 1985a: 14). In particular, given the analogical structure of archaeological inference, this critical stance focuses attention on the assumptions of relevance that justify the transposition of information from particular contemporary sources to particular archaeological subjects: assumptions about underlying determining structures that (may) ensure similarities in the association of attributes beyond those that can be compared, source to subject. Leone and Handerman make it clear that these submerged premises, and not just the interpretive conclusions they support, should be the object of rational, empirical investigation. Only when archaeology is practiced with this degree of self-consciousness can it become a basis for criticism in the second sense: critical commentary on the social, ideological forms that have informed the reconstruction of a "past" past essential for our self-definition" (Leone 1985a: 12).

CARTESSIAN ANXIETIES Archaeologists wrestle with what Drey describes as "a certain metaphysical anxiety . . . about the task of coming to know what literally does not exist" (1985b: 29); as often as they champion methodological strategies for meeting this anxiety, they express deep pessimism, even wholesale skepticism, about the prospects for ever establishing credible knowledge of the cultural past. There are a number of striking parallels between this localized pattern of debate and an opposition, described by Bernstein, between objectivist and relativist positivists that exist across philosophical and empirical fields of inquiry. Despite clear indications that "absolutism . . . is no longer a live option," he finds objectivists unmoven in their conviction that there must be "objective foundations for philosophy, knowledge, or language" (Bernstein 1981: 12). If certainty and "absolute constraints" cannot be secured, they argue, we face the threat of "madness and chaos where nothing is fixed" (1981); and because this is an intolerable conclusion—it undermines the authority of all knowledge claims—the premises that lead to it must be mistaken. The threat of unmitigated Cartesian anxiety stands as a reductio ad absurdum of relativist critiques. Relativists are equally unmoved in their conviction that the "quest for some fixed point, some stable rock upon which we can secure our lives" (8) is manifestly bankrupt: unrealizable and in important respects undesirable. The result is an impasse in which the counterposed positions harden into rigid opposition. Bernstein holds that there are options beyond objectivism and relativism that have been obscured by contemporary debate, but his argument for this thesis turns on a terminological ambiguity. His first characterizes relativism as any position that challenges the claims of the objectivist. The "essential claim" of the relativist is that "there can be no higher appeal than to a given conceptual scheme, language game, set of social practices, or historical epoch" (for the relativist there is "no substantive overarching framework or single metalanguage by which we can rationally adjudicate or univocally evaluate competing claims of alternative paradigms" (1981, 28, 8). This definition of relativism suggests a continuum of positions, ranging from moderate critiques that leave open the possibility of reformulating objectivist ideals to the kind of uncompromising antirealism according to which subjectivism and epistemica chaos is inescapable. In other contexts, however, Bernstein identifies relativism exclusively with positions at the radical end of this continuum. It consists of just those critiques of objectivism that entail the threat of cognitive anarchism to which
objectivity reduct: the threat evoked by Descartes's "allusions to madness, darkness, the dread of walk-
in from a self-deceptive dream world" (76, 77) by-
Feyerabend's antireductionist dictum that "anything goes." Bernstein's thesis is that the abandonment of objectivism, which he considers unavoidable, does not necessarily force one to embrace uncongenial relativism of the second sort; there re-
mains considerable scope for understanding and critically, rationally assessing knowledge claims to appeal to any single "ultimate grid." The options he recom-
mands are, then, ones that escape the opposition be-
tween unambiguously absolutist forms of objective-
ism and relativism in the second, narrow sense.

In arguing this thesis, Bernstein has as his central objective the goal of challenging the as-
sumption that objectivism and relativism in the sec-
ond sense are exclusive, exhaustive epistemic alter-
atives. He reject's the skeletal presupposi-
ition that "unless we achieve finality we have not achieved anything" (1984: 59), and he objects that those who brand Kuhn, Feyerabend, and Winch as relativists misunderstand their central argu-
ments: "the herculean, the attacks on Kuhn is in the wake of the grip of the Cartesian ideology (or)
(60), according to which any critic of objectivist ideals (relativism in the first sense) is construed as a denial of the rationality of the enterprise as a whole (relativism in the second sense). In the pro-
cess, antirelativists miss important construct-
ive insights about the hermeneutic dimensions of scientific reasoning that allow researchers to proceed, often very effectively, without the benefit of any unitary, clear-cut "grid" of commemor-
ating standards.

In Bernstein's project compelling but I also find it necessary to disambiguate the pivotal con-
cept of "relativism." On his initial, broad defini-
tion of relativism, Kuhn, Feyerabend, and Winch, and Bernstein himself are all relativists; relativism just is the rejection of objectivism. In that case, what Bernstein argues for is not an escape from relativism as an absolute but the recovery of viable options like along a continuum of posi-
tions, all of which are relativist in this generic (first) sense; what he defends are various forms of mitigated relativism. This point has more than antih-
reductionist significance. By constructing the prob-
lem in this way — where the mistake to be rec-
nounced is the assumption that any critique of objec-
tivism necessarily entails the extreme forms of ep-
stematic positivism and anarchism associated with
Kuhn and Winch's accounts in the narrow, pejorative sense — Bernstein commits himself to exploring more palat-
able, less corrosive relativisms rather than more plausible, realistic forms of relativism. Improv-
iment insights are lost in the process, accounting, I
will argue, for his inability to move very far be-
Y the assertion that options exist beyond objec-
tivism and relativism.

**ARCHEOLOGICAL AND THE OPTIONS BEYOND**

Bernstein argues that the epistemic options he defends are to be glimpsed in the sorts of inquiry described by such critics of objectivism in the social and natural sciences as Feyereabend, Kuhn, and Winch. They consider episodes in the history of science and research traditions in the social sciences in which researchers have had to find ways of comprehending forms of life, or evalu-
ating incommensurable theories, when they lack any common (stable, ahistorical, transcendent) standards to which they can appeal. Although it is a long step from the generalities of Bernstein's discussion to the particulars of practice in a field like archaeology, I suggest that the way ar-
cheologists handle reconstructive inference is an illuminating example of the methodological op-
tions to which Bernstein directs our attention. I offer an account of one of Bernstein's core insights about these options and then elaborate the details with reference to archaeological practice.

**BERNSTEIN'S MODEL**

Bernstein's account of the alternatives to objec-
tivism and relativism depends on a metaphor in-
spired by Peirce's suggestion that scientific argu-
ments are more like cables than chains. When researchers grapple with incommensurable the-
ories, Bernstein argues, they do not (indeed, they cannot) proceed by "a linear movement from
premises to conclusions or from individual 'facts' to generalizations"; they must exploit "multi-
ple strands and diverse types of evidence, data,
data, and arguments to support a scientific hypo-
theses or theory" (1984: 63). As the cable metaphor suggests, even when there is no single commensurating ground for judgment — no one line of argument that is sufficient on its own to en-
courage an explanatory or interpretive conclusion —
the cumulative weight of disparate, multidimen-
sional considerations of (evidence, data, reasons, and arguments can be rationally decisive" (74). The relativist position that "anything goes" does not follow from the fact that no one set of consider-
ations is fundamental across the board, no one strand of argument conclusive.

When Bernstein considers Kuhn's and Winch's accounts of cable-style argumentation, further di-
mensions of complexity emerge that raise new the-
question of how (or even whether) arguments in pluralistic contexts can even yield "rationally compelling" conclusions (1985: 20—30). Kuhn's analysis of re-
novationary theory change in the nat-
ural sciences makes it clear that the assessment of competing theories depends on considerations that are not just diverse but also internally com-
plex and unstable: the strands that make up a cable are not equal. Evaluative argument may conflict with one another even when researchers share cri-
teria of adequacy they may apply them differ-
ently, yielding incomparable judgments about the relative strength of alternative theories; and the cri-
teria are themselves open to revision as research traditions evolve (Bernstein 1985: 35). The work of weighing of factual, conceptual, logical, and prag-
matic considerations typical of "the frontiers of inquiry" is therefore inevitably dynamic and inter-
active. It is a process in which the grounds for epistemic and judgment are themselves essentially contested, so that they not only balance but also reshapen one another.

These complexities multiply when Bernstein considers the incommensurability with which so-
cial scientists grapple. In his analysis of social in-
quiry (1990), Winch focuses attention on prob-
lems of interpretation that arise between forms of life, generalizing what came to be known as Kuhn-
ian insights (Bernstein 1985: 57). In these cases inter-
locutors struggle not just with differences be-
tween particular scientific (or economic, or politi-
cal) worlds but with a much deeper disjunc-
tion that calls into question the very possession of
such views. To understand the practices that med-
iate these differences, Bernstein appeals to an account Geertz gives us of how anthrop-
ologists actually do (or can) avoid the pitfalls of tak-
ing either their own framework or that of their sub-
jects as foundational. Geertz suggests that al-
though anthropologists must grasp the system of "experience-near" concepts in terms of which members of a culture ordinarily understand and represent their own actions are reliable, ethno-
graphic understanding requires that they also de-
ploy interpretive, explanatory "experience-distant" concepts that may diverge sharply from internal understandings (1979: 1975-228). As Bern-
stein puts this point, "experience-near concepts must be balanced by the appropriate experience-
distant concepts, concepts that are not necessarily familiar to the people being studied but that . . . make intelligible the symbolic forms [of their cul-
ture]" (1985: 59). The aim of ethnographic inquiry is thus to construct an account of how abstract, di
distant concepts (like the concept of a person) are
actualized in the experience-near concepts and prac-
tices of particular subject cultures. And the pro-
cess by which this aim is accomplished is an exam-
ple of "dialectical talking back and forth" (Geertz 1979: 1975: 219).

This Geertian image of dialectical talking serves as a succinct second metaphor for the forms of practice described by Bernstein in which loc-
al comparisons are used to produce the multiple strands of argument captured by the cable-
phor. In the passages Bernstein cites, Geertz de-
scribes tacking primarily as a movement between the distant — theoretical, abstract — concepts that ethnographers draw from their culture of origin and the concrete, experience-embedded concepts that they encounter in the study of cultures that differ from their own. Drawing on an account of interpretive practice developed by Gadamer, Bern-
stein later describes Geertz's ethnographic tacking as a hermeneutic process that involves a move-
ment between "parts" and the "whole," a "dialec-
tical interplay between our own preunderstand-
ings and the forms of life that we are seeking to under-
stand" (1975: 131, 273). Conceived as a dial-
egonal task, the dimensions traversed in cross-cultural understanding are, on the one hand, abstract-to-
concrete and, on the other, familiar-to-alien. The process of cross-framework inquiry is necessarily more complex than this diagonal traversal, however. There are at least two additional dimen-
sions on which interpretive tacking occurs: taken together, they illuminate what the cable metaphor leaves out, capturing the dynamic of inference by which diverse strands of evaluative argument are constructed.
First, our own experience-distinct concepts do not emerge in a cultural vacuum. To produce them, some form of dialectical tacking must occur on a vertical axis within the reference context of the investigator. The categories and presuppositions that make familiar experience intelligible must be analytically refined—we must grasp the general contours of our own symbolic, cultural life—and this analysis requires reflection on the experience-near concepts and practices, the present standings, that constitute this context. This is just to say that before anthropologists can enter the process described by Geertz, they must engage in something akin to the leap of sociological imagination as made famous by C. Wright Mills (1959).

In addition, as Bernstein argues with reference to Winch, it is naive to assume that reflective, experience-distinct understanding is the sole province of the observing anthropologist. Anthropological subjects can be expected to have conceptual schemes of their own that order and explain their cultural practice at various levels of abstraction; in Geertzian terms, they have a repertoire of experience-distinct concepts, and in their own internal process of vertical tacking to experience-near understanding. Thus the aim of ethnographic tacking cannot simply be to establish how the experience-distinct concepts of the ethnographer are instantiated in the experience-near practice of those to whom they are foreign. Ethnographers must also be concerned with grasping the experience-near self-understanding that informs those practices, considered both as part of the explanation and, crucially, as a rival or complementary explication.

The process of tacking between near and distant concepts is further complicated by the fact that it must proceed inferentially, usually by way of a suppressed analogy. To understand others (near or distant) we typically draw on a repertoire of both practical knowledge and general theories about the human motivations, beliefs, and capabilities that can give rise to the sorts of action we observe, and we then formulate various levels of abstraction, about the concepts (distant and near) that may constitute the animating worldview of those we seek to understand. If we are to avoid arbitrary impositions, the reflective tacking between our hypotheses and the practices of those we hope to understand must incorporate a critical dimension. It is important to ask directly (if possible) if experience-distinct hypotheses drawn from one concept capture the form and practices rooted in quite different contexts, and otherwise, or in addition, to seek evidence that members of the culture represented engage in other practices or hold aligned beliefs that could—only if the experience-distinct model in question is more or less right in what it posits about the concepts that inform their action. In short, the ethnographers' model must be responsive to evidence—experience-near or distant—and its explanatory and empirical adequacy.

Finally, inferential tacking is an interactive process on all dimensions. In Gadianorean terms, when it succeeds, hermeneutic tacking realizes a fusion of horizons in which "our own horizon is enlarged and extended" (Bernstein 1985:144). The ethnographers' work is not just a matter of grasping the conceptual schemes internal to the subject community; ethnographers should be prepared to rethink their own experience-distinct concepts as they compare them with those instantiated in other contexts, and to reassess their own experience-near beliefs and practices in light of what they learn. For better or worse the process of negotiating cross-context understanding has the potential to extend and rationalize conceptual resources on both sides, including the criteria of adequacy that determine for each what will count as a better account.

The tacking process is thus at least three-dimensional (vertical, horizontal, and diagonal) and is bidirectional on all dimensions. The experience-distinct concepts that inform cross-context analysis must be refined from the researchers' own experiences; a process that requires vertical tacking between practice and its symbolic, explanatory representation in their home contexts. These concepts then serve as an initial guide for grasping the experience-distinct concepts that inform unfamiliar practices, a process that requires horizontal and diagonal tacking between our own concepts and those we seek to understand (near level of both reflective [diagonal] and experiential, practical [near] understanding). The comparative, reconstructive arguments formulated on each of these dimensions are subject to the same evaluative criteria as bear on the adjudication of competing (incommensurable) theories within a research tradition or form of life; and in all cases, the dialectical process of exchange stands to transform each of the conceptual schemes that are brought into play. The tacking metaphor thus suggests that incommensurability between theories or worldviews is mediated (when and if it is) by a concatenation of cables of arguments, each woven in meaningful interconnections.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TACKING

While this unpacking of the tacking metaphor offers, in broad outline, the structure of an answer to the question of how researchers proceed when they confront incommensurable theories or forms of life, it also raises a number of more specific questions about how we assess the credibility of the local inferences that constitute the various strands of the arguments by which, on Bernstein's account, rational decisions to judge the articulate beliefs of cultural subjects who "literally do not exist," they must make explicit a range of assumptions and inferential steps that are often suppressed when it is possible to negotiate directly with those who participate in the unfamiliar forms of life we wish to understand.

Whatever its specific aims, archaeological interpretation depends on background knowledge of contemporary contexts; usually it proceeds by means of ethnographic and other forms of analytic inference (see chapter 9). It is therefore explicitly and heavily dependent on vertical tacking arguments within the source contexts (broadly construed) on which the ethnographer relies to develop both the experience-nearist concepts—theories about cultural development, differentiation, interaction, and adaptation—and the experience-near models of cultural practice that they use to interpret the archaeological record as evidence of past forms of life. These source-side arguments bring into play a number of empirical and conceptual constraints that are suggested by the tacking metaphor but are not discussed in any detail by Bernstein or Geertz. Archaeologists also exploit a diagonal tack from the categories of analysis and interpretive principles that they draw from source contexts to the observable, material consequences of the past practices that constitute the subject of inquiry. I will consider these two components of the research process in turn.

In practice, archaeological data often raise a series of initial questions: How, when, by whom, or as a consequence of what type of culture process was this material record produced, and what do we tell us about antecedent forms of cultural life? These questions direct researchers to a particular range of background information about source contexts that then serves as the basis for reconstructive inference: information from ethnohistoric, sociological, and psychological sources, as well as from the natural and life sciences (providing the ecological and physical conditions of human, cultural life). The weaknesses as much as the strengths of the examples I have discussed in previous chapters illustrate the constraints that (should) bear on the initial tack from familiar sources to interpretive models. In his classic interpretation of the Menocalithic village Star Carr (1954a), J. Graham Clark drew on the best evidence available for the geography for an analogical model of prehistoric subsistence practices and social organization, given evidence that similar resources were exploited using comparable tools in both contexts. Current (1977) likewise argued on the basis of comprehensive formal similarity, that spratula-shaped stone gorgets should be interpreted as porter's tools, and Hill (1966) ascribed specific functions to prehistoric pebble rooms in the U.S. Southwest on the basis of their similarities in size and shape to ethnohistoric and contemporary pueblos. Longacre (1966, 1968), a colleague of Hill's, developed the further argument that clusters of these rooms represent social units—extended, matrilocal, and matrilineal family units—building on an additional comparison. He found that distinctive sets of ceramic design elements co-occur in spatially discrete areas within prehistoric pueblos, and he interpreted these in light of the ethnohistoric observation that pueblo women potters often work together in family-defined workshops, sharing and influencing one another's repertoire of designs.

In each of these cases, a combination of vertical and diagonal tacks carries the interpretive inference from a comparison between the material records of practice in source and subject contexts to the conclusion that the concepts and conditions that organize prehistoric practice. And in each case, these inferences hinge on an argument of relevance that identify in the source, and implicate to the subject, "determining structures" (Weidenfeld 1984).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CARDS AND TACKING

CRISIS ARGUMENTS IN THE NEW ARCHAEOLOGY

164
that account for the function of artifacts and architecture, and that structure social relations of production and reproduction. Clark invokes a weak principle of ecological determinism when he assumes that environmental constraints are the crucial determinants of group size and subsistence regime, while Curren and Hill assume that a similar nexus of material constraint and functional consideration must have determined the ultimate size, and distribution of the artifacts themselves. An interpretation of the available evidence contradicts Curren's hypothesis that they served as priors to the extent that the record suggests that prehistoric Plains Indians were nomadic hunters, like those groups found in the Plains at the time of contact. The evidence of cultural change in prehistoric contexts, and of close cultural connections between prehistoric Plains cultures and displaced (contact period) agricultural groups, serves to undermine not only conventional prehistorical interpretations of Plains prehistory but also the assumptions about determining structures that informed them: specifically, the assumption that Native Americans lacked the technical skills and initiative to have been successful agriculturalists in the Plains environment (see chapter 1). Hill's archaeological test of his hypothesis about room function further illustrates how the diagonal and horizontal lines of interpretation to archaeological evidence can serve not only to express a belief but also to constructively redirect interpretive theorizing (this aspect of Hill's study is discussed in more detail in chapter 13). In the process of testing for specific correlations of activity-related artifacts and plant remains, he noted a puzzling preponderance of wild plant remains. This suggested that the subsistence strategies of prehistoric pueblo groups were more diversified and flexible than previously recognized, thereby calling into question the assumption that because pueblo communities were sedentary, they must have been exclusively dependent on agricultural resources. In some of these cases, testing procedures are decisive because an especially telling line of archaeological evidence was recovered that could unambiguously disprove entrenched interpretive claims and assumptions: more often questions about the adequacy of an interpretive hypothesis are settled when independently consistent lines of evidence converge either in supporting or refuting the central claims about particular past practices. In all cases, however, interpretive conclusions depend on a number of different lines of argument that are developed on a vertical tack within sources, and on horizontal or diagonal tacks between source and subject. Their strength therefore derives not just from the diversity of the lines of evidence that lead them support but from the convergence made by the constituent strands of different ranges of background knowledge to interpret different dimensions of the archaeological record; they are compelling, taken together, insofar as it is implausible that they could all incorporate compensatory errors.

These features of archaeological practice suggest a general strategy of response to the metaphorical and epistemological anxieties born of antirealist critiques that extend well beyond archaeology: offer further insight into the nature of the "options beyond" defended by Bernstein. There are certainly no such things as factual givens or contextual factors that can serve as a transcendent grid capable of stabilizing the interpretation of unfamiliar cultural beliefs and practices or of grounding the adjudication of claims made by competing theories. Even so, the concepts we start with, near or distant, do not determine what we will find when we make the tack from source to subject. The orienting concepts we draw from familiar sources may be significantly reshaped, empirically and conceptually, by a series of vertical tacks, and their applications to new (subject) contexts are often sharply constrained by evidence brought to bear by diagonal and horizontal tacks between source and subject. None of these tasks is rationally decisive on its own, but together they cannot be ignored in reaching a conclusion about what is (or what must be) the case in unfamiliar contexts, even in archaeological contexts in which the subjects of inquiry are at best indiscernibly accessible. The case I have considered make it clear that despite the vagaries of interpretation in contexts in which evidence is itself a contentious and unstable interpretive subject, it is not true that "anything goes." Objectivists of a narrowly empiricist stripe presume that these empirical constraints reveal a unitary ground and source of legitimate (contingent, independent, objective) knowledge. Clearly things are not as simply simple; but the common error of relativist responses that cluster at the radical end of the continuum is either to ignore the role of empirical constraints altogether or to assimilate them to a seamless and self-contained network of belief, making those concepts an (arbitrary) artifact of the concepts that inform their interpretation as evidence. The insights of a mitigated objectivism have a great deal to offer in rebalancing the debate over objectivism and relativism, explaining how it is that rationally decisive judgments (always defeasible) can be realized even in the absence of stable epistemic foundations. My thesis is that Bernstein's "options beyond"—the options he finds immanent in convergent lines of moderate relativist critique—depend on two loci of empirical constraints that are especially clear in archaeological tacking: constraints on the formulation of interpretive models that operate within source contexts, and constraints deployed in the process of testing the applicability of a model to subject contexts that may be incommensurably different from the sources on which it was based.