European Journal of Archaeology 24 (2) 2021, 266–291

Book Reviews

Philip Tonner. *Dwelling. Heidegger, Archaeology, Mortality* (London & New York: Routledge, 2018, 171pp., 12 b/w illustr., pbk, ISBN 978-0-367-88763-6)

Archaeology has incorporated phenomenological approaches for almost three decades now. For example, landscape is examined as meaningfully experienced and an active constituent of past societies. The human body is considered the locus of experience and, thus, both a medium and outcome of past social interaction. Archaeologists are now comfortable with the idea that people engage with their environs in both a practical and meaningful manner, and research frequently sets out to understand the dynamic relations between human agency and the material conditions that afforded such agency during different periods of (pre)history.

As a result, Philip Tonner has made a welcome contribution to a long-established research approach, with a special focus upon *dwelling*, a term coined by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger to describe the practical embeddedness of people in their surroundings. This focus has a twofold aim. On the one hand, the author wishes to modify Heidegger's restricted attribution of the dwelling capacity to anatomically fully modern human beings. On the other hand, he argues that Palaeolithic hominins were more human than usually considered and, hence, able to dwell in their surroundings. Tonner thus steers discussion of human evolution away from the development of cognition and towards the ability of practical sense-making.

The Introduction of the book outlines the above aim, although most of it is devoted to the definition of the main terms that are borrowed from Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy. According to his conceptual frame, the human ability to achieve the state of *Dasein* (being-there-here-now), to dwell this world (*wohnen* = dwelling), and care for it (*Sorge* = care) hinges upon a fundamental sense of finitude. This, always according to Heidegger, distinguishes human beings who die from animals that simply perish. Tonner manages to deconstruct this division but retains both the dwelling perspective and its link to death awareness. The latter is arguably observed at the Palaeolithic site of Sima de los Huesos (i.e. 'Pit of Bones'), a 13-metre-deep shaft in northern Spain. The high number of hominin remains found there is taken to suggest a remarkably early care for the dead. Furthermore, the deposit is characterized in the book as a *heterotopia*, a concept coined by the French philosopher Michel Foucault to denote places that societies deliberately position outside the geography of daily activities.

Chapter 2 is a philosophical and archaeological reflection upon the dwelling perspective with emphasis on landscape phenomenology and the experiential dimension of human cognition. Through continuous references to Heidegger and other phenomenological thinkers, Tonner demonstrates that both the above fields of archaeological research are related to the concept of dwelling. The author then turns to phenomenological approaches to the Palaeolithic. Clive Gamble's (1999) work is singled out because it proposes a dynamic relation between early hominins as agents and their world.

Chapter 3 treats the sense of mortality among the early hominins as a feature that

doi:10.1017/eaa.2021.8

defines humanness and, hence, affords the development of a dwelling perspective. The author discusses these issues mostly at the philosophical, and more generally theoretical, level. He then switches to a cognitive rather than phenomenological approach so as to connect the early stages of the development of the human mind with consciousness and death awareness. This link paves the way for an appreciation of the earliest indications of hominin interest in and treatment of the dead, such as body caching in deliberately designated areas. These practices are interpreted as signs of a belief system about humanness and mortality, which may be combined with the earliest tool manufacturing. The combination testifies to self and world awareness and, thus, to the adoption of a dwelling perspective by early hominins.

Chapter 4 further explores the relationship between dwelling and mortality. It notes that Heidegger may have argued that only human beings dwell, but he nonetheless accepted that animals create a zone of disinhibition or possibilities around them. For Tonner, this ability may be considered to be a predecessor to an archaic form of dwelling (*Palaeo-Dasein*), which is found in early hominins. Palaeo-Dasein is placed in between the ability of anatomically fully modern humans and animals to meaningfully interact with their surroundings respectively. Palaeolithic funerary caching and stone tools are repeatedly interpreted as signs of the Heideggerian *Sorge*, namely practical coping in while caring for the world.

Chapter 5 further examines the similarities and differences between early hominins and modern humans. Arguing back and forth between a philosophical reflection upon Heidegger's thoughts and archaeological evidence on Paleolithic mourning allows Tonner to suggest that the people at Sima de los Huesos were not identical to, but in the process of becoming us. The argument is further buttressed by designating the funerary caching area of the site as a Palaeolithic *heterotopia*, which allowed early hominins to experience the difference between life and death and, thus, become better aware of their place in the world in a similar but not the same way as *Homo sapiens*.

The rest of the chapter makes a thematic turn towards the importance of context for the dwelling perspective. Tonner argues that a phenomenological approach allows us to sense the meaningfulness of an artefact through its associations with other artefacts and its practical involvement in human interaction with the world. Experimental archaeology and the use of analogy with modern and other past similar artefacts may also be helpful to this aim. The chapter ends by turning again to the relationship between early hominins and modern humans to argue that, despite their anatomical and cognitive differences, they may be seen as joined by their common ability to dwell in the world.

The Conclusions chapter briefly recapitulates the main points of the previous chapters. It is also argued that a dwelling perspective may offer a nexus between us and past ways of life by people long gone. The phenomenological emphasis of such an approach upon the practical embeddedness of past people in the world affords a meticulous appreciation of tool making and place-making that goes beyond the intellectual competence of early hominins. This appreciation may be shared by us today despite the anatomical, cognitive, temporal, and cultural gap between us and our Palaeolithic ancestors.

The final chapter also admits the main shortcoming of the book, which is the lack of archaeological analysis. It is essentially based on the single case-study of Sima de los Huesos and the argument boils down to the deliberate caching of dead bodies in a specially designated area of the pit. As much as the author's aim is the

https://doi.org/10.1017/eaa.2021.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

demonstration of the applicability of phenomenological analysis rather than a full discussion of the Palaeolithic, an archaeologist reader inevitably wonders whether a journal paper or a book chapter would suffice for such an argument.

In addition, archaeological research is well acquainted with several of the ideas that Tonner puts forward. For example, the importance of practical and non-discursive engagement of people with material culture and with their environs has already been analyzed and highlighted by Tim Ingold, Chris Gosden, Chris Tilley, and Julian Thomas, whose work is extensively referenced by the author. John Barrett (1994) introduced the 'archaeology of inhabitation', which is almost identical to the 'dwelling perspective' that the book proposes. Burial sites have been examined as Foucauldian *heterotopias* in prehistoric Crete (Vavouranakis, 2007), Classical Greece (Dimakis, 2015), and Roman Asia Minor (Cormack, 2004). Barrett (2013) has also suggested that the early development of human cognition hinged upon non-discursive social interaction.

Another problem of the book is the way in which its aims are pursued. In its attempt to strike a balance between a redefinition of Heidegger's dwelling perspective and a reflection upon early hominin humanness, the argument has resulted in a constant back and forth between philosophical and archaeological perspectives. This feature entails a considerable amount of repetition. For example, the approach of funerary areas as *heterotopias* is almost pre-empted in the Introduction, while the idea of death awareness as a sign of humanness is repeated time and again in almost every chapter. The many and extensive endnotes further accentuate this impression, as they prompt the reader to follow the argument in a rather meandering manner. Perhaps this style of writing comes from the author's primary academic background in philosophy, and it is better suited to discussions of pure concepts, where arguments need to be reiterated so as to fully explore their conceptual ramifications. By contrast, it does not serve the requirements of archaeological argumentation, which is relatively linear, albeit not unilinear or along a straight line.

A final point to be raised is also about the relation between phenomenological philosophy and archaeology that this book attempts to promote. The extensive discussion of Heidegger's terminology frequently ends in its direct employment in the analysis and interpretation of past material remains. For example, *Dasein* and *Palaeo-Dasein* are ways of being, while the book almost equates them with Palaeolithic people as agents. *Sorge* (care) is again a way of action, but it is employed to characterize funerary caching acts. As much as the author has argued for the employment of these terms in detail, there is always the danger of conflating ontological with analytical categories. The former allow us to rethink our understandings of past ways of life, while the latter guide the analysis of the record and, to a certain extent, the reconstitution of specific actions and habits in the past. This entails a high risk of producing over-generalized narratives about the past, a point of critique that has already been directed at post-processual archaeologists influenced by phenomenology.

Nonetheless, the bold combination of phenomenological reflection and archaeological analysis is also the most important merit of the book reviewed here. It reinforces the theoretical armature of archaeology and promotes its discourse through meticulous reflection. It achieves a balance between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric approaches and outlines the necessary steps in a phenomenological approach to archaeology. Most importantly,

https://doi.org/10.1017/eaa.2021.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

it engages with Martin Heidegger's thought, which is an almost inevitable choice for a phenomenological approach to archaeology and it demonstrates that the basic concepts of the German philosopher may be kept safely distant from his abominable political choices.

In conclusion, Philip Tonner's *Dwelling. Heidegger, Archaeology, Mortality*, is a very useful book as regards interdisciplinary research between philosophy and archaeology. Although it lacks an extensive and detailed archaeological analysis of material remains, and despite all its aforementioned shortcomings, it succeeds in promoting theoretical reflection upon key-features of humanness and the ways in which such features may be sought in the archaeological record of the early hominins. As a result, it demonstrates that humanness should be seen as a process of continuous becoming, well embedded in the dynamic interaction between human beings and their environs. Such a dynamic and relational view of being human is not only in accord with current archaeological research trends, but also has the potential of widening their scope.

References

Barrett, J.C. 1994. *Fragments from Antiquity: An Archaeology of Social Life in Britain, 2900–1200 BC*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Barrett, J.C. 2013. The Archaeology of Mind: It's Not What You Think. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 23: 1–17. doi: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959774313000012

Cormack, S. 2004. *The Space of Death in Roman Asia Minor* (Wiener Forschungen zur Archäologie, 6). Wien: Phoibos.

Dimakis, N. 2015. Ancient Greek Deathscapes. *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies*, 3(1): 27–41. doi: https://doi.org/10.5325/jeasmedarcherstu.3.1.0027

Gamble, C. 1999. *The Palaeolithic Societies of Europe* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vavouranakis, G. 2007. *Funerary Landscapes East of Lasithi, Crete, in the Bronze Age* (British Archaeological Reports International Series 1606). Oxford: Archaeopress.

GIORGOS VAVOURANAKIS
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Carlos Rodríguez-Rellán, Ben Nelson and Ramón Fábregas-Valcarce, eds. *A Taste for Green: A Global Perspective on Ancient Jade, Turquoise, and Variscite Exchange* (Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2020, 180pp., 82figs figs., ISBN 978-1-78925-275-0)

Several aspects have contributed to the current and standardized image of the Neolithic in Europe. Communities who were previously seen as passive receivers of great innovations coming from the Near East, are now considered active agents within highly connected worlds that were deeply rooted in the Upper Palaeolithic. The quality of craftsmanship, together with the demography of different European regions, cannot be understood nowadays without reference to pre-existing craft production (i.e. Palaeolithic ceramics, developed lithic technologies, symbolic language), or even economic practices (i.e. bread, alcohol, animal control). One of these activities is mining, which required not only skill and exhaustive geological knowledge of territories and their potential for exploitation, but also the movement of raw materials and exchange.

The green stones used as ornaments or as raw material for spectacular polished objects in Neolithic Europe not only

https://doi.org/10.1017/eaa.2021.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press