

In the end, the eastern Peloponnese emerges as an object that is both nuanced and multifaceted. It is, moreover, something that defies oversimplification. It is the objects encountered along its varied paths that complicates the narrative. And this is achieved in numerous ways, with myriad things—such as a storied topos or mythological figure, the grave of a famous archaeologist, a fence barring access to a site, the tobacco plants or lemons or Jerusalem sage found along the way, or the ceramics and bone on the surface of a site. What the volume does achieve very beautifully is to view the transition from an agrarian world rooted in the Neolithic to urban styles of life, with all the baggage that this transformation entails, from communications to movement within a landscape that is both modern and ancient. The result is a highly original long-term habitation of a place, the sort of archaeological narrative that every region deserves.

Archaeological Theory in Dialogue: Situating Relationality, Ontology, Posthumanism, and Indigenous Paradigms. RACHEL J. CRELLIN, CRAIG N. CIPOLLA, LINDSAY M. MONTGOMERY, OLIVER J. T. HARRIS, and SOPHIE V. MOORE. 2021. Routledge, London. xiv + 235 pp. \$155.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-36713-545-4. \$44.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-36713-547-8.

Reviewed by Eleanor Harrison-Buck, University of New Hampshire

This book takes on a formidable task, distilling various branches of contemporary theory variously described as “ontological realism,” “posthumanism,” and “new materialism.” This massive body of theory is far from cohesive, and the contributors do an excellent job of making these otherwise complex concepts more accessible to the “uninitiated” reader, who may feel perplexed by it all. The introduction summarizes the four main themes of the book—relationality, ontology, posthumanism, and Indigenous paradigms. These are beefy subjects, and the intellectual history is glossed over pretty quickly. For this reason, this book is more appropriate for a reader at or above the graduate level who is already familiar with processualism, post-processualism, phenomenology, and other core theory in archaeology.

The five authors conduct archaeology in Europe and North America. Because the primary focus of the volume is theory, geographic case studies receive more limited treatment, used mostly to ground the abstract concepts being presented. An introduction and conclusion bookend 10 chapters, five written by individual

contributors paired with five multiauthored chapters. The latter aim “to open up theory to dialogue, to capture something of its ongoing and shifting becoming” (p. 2). In this way, the book is a kind of Deleuzian thought experiment—in the mode of the late French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, whose work is highly influential to the new materialists, emphasizing emergent relations that are always in a “process of becoming” (p. 20). Yet, the dialogue and short biographies in the introduction also hearken back to the self-reflexivity of post-processualism, providing a window into the authors’ “sensibilities and situatedness” (p. 166). At times, the dialogue becomes a little overly (self-)consumed with decolonizing one’s own Western “metaontology” (pp. 176–183), and it could have benefited from further consideration of Indigenous alterity and the very real challenges of “living in two worlds” that Lindsay Montgomery describes (p. 178). Overall, however, the discussions are beneficial in problematizing knowledge production and the politics and ethics of intellectual hierarchies that persist in archaeology.

Both Oliver Harris (Chapter 2) and Craig Cipolla (Chapter 10) are concerned with categorizing the different ways in which archaeologists use terms such as “relationality” and “ontology.” Harris defines three approaches to relations: epistemology (to reconstruct past worldviews), methodology (to reconstruct networks of relationships), and metaphysics (to reconstruct how the underlying world operates outside of human thought). Cipolla outlines four categories that overlap to some extent (pp. 169–171). In the intervening dialogue in Chapters 3 and 11, these “categories” of relations are critiqued. Although heuristically useful, they resemble essentialized and reductionistic “typologies” that are seemingly at odds with scholarship advocating (Deleuzian) flows and fluid processes. The differences in relational approaches seem to hinge on whether the field of ongoing relations in the world embody conscious or unconscious agents (pp. 17–19). The implicit assumption here is that thinking (as knowing subject) and doing (as bodily experience) somehow operate separately. Elsewhere, I argue that this kind of discursive (cognitive) versus nondiscursive (bodily) separation embodies a more radical theory of ontological alterity that risks perpetuating a mind/body separation (Harrison-Buck, Chapter 11 in *Relational Identities and Other-Than-Human Agency in Archaeology*, 2018).

An ontological reality that is not anthropocentric, static, or prefigured foregrounds the posthumanist perspective discussed by Sophie Moore (Chapter 6) and Rachel Crellin (Chapter 8). Humans are not privileged in this “post-anthropocentric” approach, and the subject/object divide is collapsed into a “flat ontology”

(pp. 121–125). Some readers may find the dialogue in the intervening Chapters 7 and 9 somewhat abstruse, parsing posthumanist theory and endlessly debating what constitutes “new materialism.” In short, new materialism encompasses posthumanism and meta-physical or relations-centered approaches (Chapters 2 and 10) and emphasizes the complex “meshwork” of vibrant matter (soil, rocks, bodies, and countless other phenomena) as emergent and continually changing. The new materialist approach is favored among European archaeologists, perhaps because it sidesteps the problematic (mis)appropriation of Indigenous philosophies (Chapter 5, p. 71). Yet, as Benjamin Alberti notes in his essay, “Archaeologies of Ontology” (*Annual Review of Anthropology* 45:163–179, 2016), the “painstaking work of developing new archaeological metaphysics on the basis of an alternative Western intellectual tradition brings us no closer to grappling with the ontological difference presented to us anthropologically.”

Alberti’s point is particularly relevant for archaeologists working in the Americas (presumably most readers of *American Antiquity*). Why would one not rely on Indigenous knowledge—not only as supporting evidence but as theory itself? This is what Lindsay Montgomery is advocating in Chapter 4. Scholars engaging in Indigenous ontologies should pay particular attention to this chapter and her keen observations throughout the book. Additionally, Cipolla (Chapter 10) offers a valuable discussion of collaborative Indigenous archaeology—not just as decolonized practice but as “shared ontological spaces”—what the Anishinaabe refer to elsewhere as “braided knowledge,” which weaves together complementary ways of knowing.

Importantly, contributors echo the sentiments of Métis scholar Zoe Todd (“An Indigenous Feminist’s Take on the Ontological Turn: ‘Ontology’ Is Just Another Word for Colonialism,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29:4–22, 2016), who observes that most anthropological theory regarding relational ontologies derives from Indigenous knowledge, but Western intellectuals often fail to properly acknowledge Indigenous thinkers. This is what Cipolla might refer to as “creeping colonialism” (p. 173) and what Montgomery would call “epistemological injustice . . . [where] dominant systems of knowledge production shape the ways in which collaborative knowledge is evaluated, validated, and incorporated” (p. 174). Here, the dialogue (especially in Chapters 5, 11, and 12) is particularly effective in “dwelling longer in [the] discomfort” (p. 81) of our discipline’s colonial baggage, addressing how the dominant Western perspective creates a divide in social theory and archaeological praxis, and perpetuates social divides between the

disfranchised and the privileged. Rather than seeking a neat and tidy singular (dominant) perspective, the authors of this book move the ontological project forward by advocating for more “openness” (p. 202), calling for greater inclusion, diversification, and decolonization of the field.

The Organization of Ancient Economies: A Global Perspective. KENNETH HIRTH. 2020. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. xvii + 441 pp. \$39.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-108494700. \$32.00 (e-book), ISBN 978-1-1088-59707.

Reviewed by Gary M. Feinman, Field Museum of Natural History

Decades removed from scholarly declarations that the polarizing formalist-substantive debate was over, the niche for a book-length treatment of premodern economies that both takes stock and outlines analytical paths forward remains open. Explicitly comparative, aimed at both general readers and disciplinary experts, and rich in empirical examples drawn from archaeology, history, and anthropology, this volume grounds the reader in assembled knowledge of the economic past. With chapters devoted to the domestic economy, the informal institutions that link households, the ties between domestic units and formal institutions, the financing of institutions, resource mobilization/taxation, merchants and trade, craft production, and markets and marketplaces (bookended by introductory and concluding chapters), the text features basic interpersonal and institutional units relevant to premodern economic practice.

By focusing a largely bottom-up lens on households and other fundamental components of the economy, Kenneth Hirth is able to describe rich variation in ancient and premodern economies (with examples drawn from prehispanic Mesoamerica, the classical Mediterranean world, Late Imperial China, Sumer, and many more contexts) while building an empirically grounded case to critique and eschew the categorical, stage-based monolithic models that have long dominated studies of humankind’s economic past. By illustrating the variability of premodern economies and defining the basic units that he considers essential to their study, the aims the author states for the book are largely met. The bibliography is an impressive resource, and the glossary is an important pedagogical tool. But, more to the point, how and where does this leave the investigation of the documented variation in premodern economies across time and space?