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**0.1 AZTEC METAPHYSICS**

The indigenous peoples of what is now Mexico enjoy long and rich traditions of philosophical reflection dating back centuries before being characterized by their European “discoverers” as “barbarians” or “primitives” incapable of or unmotivated to think rationally, abstractly, or philosophically.<sup>1</sup> Pre-Columbian societies contained individuals who reflected systematically upon the nature of reality, human existence, knowledge, right conduct, and goodness. The Nahuatl-speaking peoples of Central Mexico – including those residing in Mexico-Tenochtitlan known today as the “Aztecs” – were no exception. Nahua societies included individuals called *tlamatinime* (“knowers of things,” “sages,” or “philosophers”; sing. *tlamatini*) given to puzzling over such questions as, what is the nature of things? where did we come from? what is the proper path for us to follow? and what are we able to know?

Nahua metaphysics served as the backdrop of Nahua religious, theological, and philosophical thought (including moral, political, epistemological, and aesthetic thought) as well as Nahua ritual praxis.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, I argue one cannot adequately understand the latter without first understanding the former. More prosaic, everyday practices such as weaving, farming, hunting, and childrearing likewise presupposed (albeit perhaps only tacitly) metaphysical views. What is metaphysics? Metaphysics investigates the nature, structure, and constitution of reality at the broadest, most comprehensive, and most synoptic level.<sup>3</sup> It aims to advance our understanding of the nature of things broadly construed. Questions concerning the nature of reality, existence, being qua being, causality, time, space, personal

identity, the self, God, free will, mind, and body are among the questions traditionally assigned to metaphysics by Western philosophers. Nahua metaphysics thus consists of the Nahuas' understanding of the nature, structure, and constitution of reality.<sup>4</sup>

Because one cannot adequately understand Nahua theology, religion, and ritual as well as ethical, political, epistemological, and aesthetic thinking and activity without first understanding Nahua metaphysics, I devote this work to Nahua metaphysics. Nahua ethics, epistemology, political philosophy, and aesthetics will be the focus of a later work. This work's conclusion sketches in broad outlines how Nahua metaphysics shapes these latter areas of inquiry.

I aim to approximate Nahua views about the nature, structure, and ultimate constituents of reality at the time of the Conquest. Given its greater name recognition, I adopt the term *Aztec* in place of *Nahua* with the caution that it is both clumsy and inaccurate. *Aztec* refers specifically to the Nahuatl-speaking residents of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the Mexica-Tenocha, but not to the Nahuatl-speaking residents of Chalco, Cholula, or Tlaxcala, for example. The term's use also imposes an artificial unity upon Mexica-Tenocha thinking. Views about the nature of things were fragmented since they obviously differed between nobility and commoners; priests, warriors, merchants, artisans, and farmers; men and women; dominant and subordinate city-states; regional and ethnic subgroups; and finally, even between individuals themselves.<sup>5</sup> They were contested and resisted by various groups in various ways and in varying degrees. What's more, metaphysical views are living works in progress and thus are continually changing over time. Some scholars contend, for example, that at the time of the Conquest Aztec philosophy was becoming more hierarchical, militaristic, and masculinist – as evidenced by the increasing prominence of Huitzilopochtli (the Sun-War God) in Aztec religious affairs – due to the increasingly hierarchical social and political stratification of Aztec society, the emergence of a hereditary ruling elite, and the ruling elite's greater emphasis upon war and military conquest.<sup>6</sup> This contention notwithstanding, I submit that the central concepts and organizing metaphors employed by Aztec philosophers in thinking about the nature of things were rooted squarely in ordinary ways of thinking and speaking about everyday activities such as living, dying, eating, weaving, farming, hunting, sexual reproduction, and warfare. Therefore, while I consider the metaphysical views presented here as an approximation of the more or less shared understanding of the upper elite of Aztec priests, scholars, and educated nobility, I nevertheless maintain that these views were firmly anchored in non-elite views about the nature and way of things. The former group simply had more opportunity to refine and articulate their views

than did the latter. Their views accordingly differed in degree of refinement, not in substance.

Our current scholarly understanding of Aztec thought and culture is the product of a rich and sophisticated interdisciplinary conversation between anthropologists, archaeologists, archaeoastronomers, art historians, historians, linguists, literary theorists, and religionists. This book draws deeply and openly from this ongoing conversation. Noticeably absent from this conversation, however, is the voice of academic philosophy. This study seeks to fill this absence. How then does it differ from existing scholarship?

I come to Aztec metaphysics as someone trained in contemporary academic Anglo-American analytic philosophy, history of Western philosophy, and comparative world philosophy. What makes mine a *philosophical* rather than a historical, religionist, or anthropological examination and interpretation is the fact that I bring to bear upon our understanding of Aztec metaphysics the analytical tools, concepts, hermeneutical strategies, lessons, and insights of these areas of academic philosophy. Doing so, I hope, enables me to shed new light upon the Aztecs' views about the nature, constitution, and structure of reality. This project *reconstructs* Aztec metaphysics in the sense of presenting and explicating the concepts and claims of Aztec metaphysics in a manner not necessarily identical with the Aztecs' manner of presentation. Doing so inevitably involves highlighting and making explicit certain aspects of Aztec metaphysics at the expense of others. What's more, many of the terms and concepts I employ – beginning with the concept of metaphysics itself – are alien to Aztec thought. This is unavoidable in any explication that involves interpreting and translating one way of thinking about things into an alien system of thinking about things. Although alien, my hope is that the terms and concepts I employ are not hostile to and do minimal violence to Aztec metaphysics. I will let my critics determine the degree of violence my interpretative translation of Aztec metaphysics into non-Aztec metaphysics wreaks upon Aztec metaphysics.

I approach Aztec metaphysics as a systematic, unified, and coherent corpus of thought, worthy of consideration in its own terms and for its own sake (quite apart from what contemporary Western readers may find instructive or valuable in it). I accordingly aim to understand the internal logic and structure of Aztec metaphysics – that is, how its claims, concepts, metaphors, and arguments fit together – rather than *causally explain* Aztec metaphysics in terms such as genes, memes, collective unconsciousness, dietary needs, social-political function, mode of production, or physical environment. Before explaining causally *why* the Aztecs believed as they did, one must *first* correctly apprehend *what* they believed. I examine the internal logic of Aztec metaphysics in the

same manner that Euro-American academic philosophers engaged in “normal” (in the Kuhnian sense<sup>7</sup>) history of philosophy routinely examine the internal logic of the metaphysics of Plato, Spinoza, Hegel, or Russell. The project is cut from the same cloth as these projects; it is no more and no less a history of philosophy – or anthropology or intellectual history, for that matter – than are they.

Approaching Aztec metaphysics in this manner does not commit one to an idealist view of philosophy that sees philosophers and their views as operating autonomously from the exigencies of history, politics, economics, culture, and natural environment. Aztec philosophy, like all philosophies, emerges in response to everyday life problems and challenges and admits of naturalistic explanation in terms of these. However, naturalistic explanations of philosophies advanced by anthropologists and sociologists of knowledge, neuroscientists, intellectual historians, and evolutionary psychologists remain a thoroughly Western scientific project. And by forcing Aztec and other non-Western philosophies upon the Procrustean bed of Western metaphysical and epistemological assumptions in this manner, such naturalistic explanations inevitably privilege Western metaphysical and epistemological assumptions to the detriment of non-Western philosophies. Yet such privileging of the Western is a priori unwarranted and question-begging. By parity of reasoning we must be willing to give equal consideration to non-Western (e.g., Aztec or Daoist) explanations of Western philosophies.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, this study focuses upon what I consider to be the central tenets and concepts of Aztec metaphysics. It does not purport to be exhaustive. I see it as complementing the closely related and often times overlapping work of other scholars in the field.

## 0.2 AZTEC THOUGHT AS PHILOSOPHY

Contemporary Anglo-American and European academic philosophers routinely distinguish *having* a philosophy, in the sense of holding an implicit worldview, ideology, or “*cosmovisión*,” from *doing* philosophy, in the sense of self-consciously and critically reflecting upon and speculating about the nature, structure, and constitution of reality, the nature of truth, the nature of right and wrong, the possibility of human knowledge, the meaning of life, and so on. They contend that while all cultures *have* a philosophy, not all cultures contain individuals who think philosophically and thus *do* philosophy. The former emerges haphazardly and un-self-consciously without systematic or sustained critical reflection. In contrast, doing philosophy – that is, philosophy *properly speaking* – is the sole invention and possession of Western culture beginning with

Socratics and the Sophists. As though channeling sixteenth-century European “discoverers,” these modern-day schoolmen argue that non-Western peoples are in effect unreasoning, philosophical sleepwalkers. This view is crisply articulated by prominent Western philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, who claimed that the expression *Western philosophy* is tautologous while the expression *non-Western philosophy* is oxymoronic;<sup>9</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, who once remarked, “I always say – but in private – that the Greeks and the Bible are all that is serious in humanity. Everything else is dancing”;<sup>10</sup> and Richard Rorty who claimed that looking for philosophy outside of the West is “pointless” since philosophy is unique to Western culture.<sup>11</sup> According to Robert Bernasconi, “Western philosophy traps [non-Western philosophy] in a double bind: either [non-Western philosophy] is so similar to Western philosophy that it makes no distinctive contribution and effectively disappears; or it is so different that its credentials to be genuine philosophy will always be in doubt.”<sup>12</sup> Either way, Western philosophers think and speak for all humanity. This view is not confined to academic philosophers, of course. Western anthropologists, religionists, and historians of ideas also commonly contend that while non-Western peoples are capable of religious and mythopoeic thought, they are clearly incapable of philosophical thought.<sup>13</sup>

In his groundbreaking 1956 book, *La filosofía náhuatl*, Miguel León-Portilla argued that Nahua culture included individuals who were every bit as philosophical as Socrates and the Sophists.<sup>14</sup> Nezahualcoyotl, Tochiuhuitzin Coyolchiuhqui, Ayocuan Cuetzpaltzin, and other Nahuas reflected self-consciously, critically, and generally upon the nature of existence, truth, knowledge, and the reigning mythical-religious views of their day. By attacking the dominant orthodoxy among Western academic philosophers and their epigones regarding the West’s monopoly on philosophical activity, León-Portilla brought upon himself a firestorm of calumny and condemnation. In *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* Benjamin Keen, for example, scathingly upbraids León-Portilla for comparing “the highest thought achieved by an Upper Stone Age people” with the “climactic intellectual achievements” of the ancient Greeks.<sup>15</sup> Presumably under pressure from its North American publisher, the book’s 1963 English title, *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind*, backed away from this controversy and steered the book toward university courses in anthropology and history. Judging from the English title, León-Portilla’s book was no longer a study of Aztec philosophy. It was now conceived more appropriately as a study of Aztec “thought.” Fortunately, however, the text itself remained steadfast in its commitment to the heterodoxy that the Aztecs *did* philosophy.

Why does this issue generate so much heat? Why does it matter who is, and who is not, deemed a philosopher? As countless scholars have argued,

philosophy plays a vital role in the modern West's conception of itself and of the non-Western *Other*.<sup>16</sup> What is at stake here is nothing less than the modern West's self-image as rational, self-conscious, civilized, cultured, human, disciplined, modern, and masculine in contrast with the non-West as irrational, appetitive, emotional, instinctive, uncivilized, savage, primitive, nonhuman, undisciplined, backward, feminine, and closer to nature. Philosophy, "the queen of the sciences," as Aristotle so marvelously characterized it, represents the pinnacle of humanity's intellectual and rational achievement. For the European Enlightenment, philosophy represents the intellect's emancipation from the fantasies of myth and shackles of religious dogma. Western culture's philosophy versus nonphilosophy binary is thus a social-historical tool constructed to celebrate and legitimize the West and its imperial hegemony while at the same time denigrating "the Rest" and legitimizing its heteronomy.

The reaction to León-Portilla together with the West's attitude toward the philosophical capabilities of non-Western peoples is all the more puzzling in light of the fact that Western academic philosophers are unable to agree among themselves upon a suitable definition of philosophy. All they seem to be able to agree upon is that non-Western thinkers do not (cannot) do it! Even self-styled, antiphilosophical establishment rebels such as Richard Rorty who maintain that philosophy has no essence nevertheless join the chauvinistic chorus denying membership in Club Philosophy to non-Western thinkers.<sup>17</sup> Upon inspection, however, philosophy turns out to be infuriatingly difficult, if not impossible, to define. Indeed, defining philosophy is itself a *philosophical* issue: the sort Western philosophers call a "metaphilosophical problem." Is philosophy to be defined in terms of its aims, subject matter, origin, or method? Is philosophy even the sort of thing that even admits of definition? How do we decide? And more to the point, who gets to decide? Whose definitions and answers count, and why? Whose standards govern the discussion? Who is included and who is excluded from the discussion, and on what grounds? Equally crucially, who poses and entertains as worthwhile questions such as, Are non-Western people philosophical? And why do they pose them? In short, it is far from clear that this issue can be resolved in a non-ethnocentric and noncircular way.

This is obviously not the place to resolve this issue. However, it would seem that those traditionally excluded from Club Philosophy may pursue either of two strategies. They may seek admission into the club by arguing that what they do sufficiently resembles what bona fide club members do. León-Portilla pursues this strategy on behalf of the Aztecs. Or they may reject the philosophy versus nonphilosophy binary – along with the entire debate – as a now discredited,

self-serving relic of Western colonialism (racism, modernism, paternalism, etc.), not worry about whether or not what they do qualifies as “real” philosophy, and continue doing what they have always been doing.

I reject the rational-civilized-masculine versus irrational-savage-feminine binary yet also refuse to cede philosophical inquiry to the West. Like León-Portilla, I maintain the Aztecs not only had a philosophy but also *did* philosophy. They engaged in self-consciously reflective and critical endeavors that satisfy the definition of philosophy advanced by North American philosopher Wilfred Sellars: “The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term.”<sup>18</sup> Their endeavors likewise satisfy William James’ definition of philosophy as “the unusually stubborn attempt to think clearly.”<sup>19</sup> Indigenous North American philosophers Thurman Lee Hester Jr. and Dennis McPherson claim the thought systems of indigenous North American peoples satisfy the basic definition of philosophy lying at the roots of the Euro-American tradition: “a thoughtful interaction with the world.” Every culture has people who give themselves to reflecting upon the world in this manner. “These are their philosophers.”<sup>20</sup> Granted, the Aztecs’ philosophical journey took a different form and took them to a different set of answers.<sup>21</sup> Yet this is irrelevant. As John Dewey once noted, “I think it shows a remarkable deadness of imagination to suppose that philosophy [must] revolve within the scope of the problems and systems that two thousand years of European history have bequeathed to us.”<sup>22</sup> Aztec and European philosophies represent two alternative philosophical orientations and trajectories rooted in two alternative forms of life or ways of being human in the world. Aztec philosophy need not ape European philosophy in order to count as “real” philosophy. There is no law of reason, thought, or culture requiring that all peoples think alike or follow the same path of philosophical development.

It is also sometimes argued that the Aztecs’ religiosity precluded their thinking philosophically. Philosophy, as the West’s self-narrative often goes, begins where religion ends. This view assumes, however, that religion and philosophy are mutually exclusive. The Aztecs’ religiosity no more precluded their doing philosophy than did the religiosity of St. Augustine, Maimonides, St. Aquinas, Ockham, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, or Whitehead (to name only a few bona fide philosophers by Western lights). What’s more, the possibility that Aztec metaphysical speculation operated within the bounds of Aztec religion and served as its “handmaiden” (to borrow Locke’s telling phrase) no more disqualifies it as “real” philosophy than does the fact that the lion’s share

of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy operates within the bounds of science and serves as *its* “handmaiden” disqualifies it as “real” philosophy.

Finally, the cogency of the interpretation of Aztec metaphysics advanced here does not hinge upon one’s accepting the thesis that the Aztecs *did* philosophy. Regardless of one’s view on this matter, it is undeniable that the Aztecs *had* a metaphysics, that is, a systematic and coherent understanding of how things in the broadest possible sense hang together.

### 0.3 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN INTERPRETING AZTEC METAPHYSICS

Metaphysical views about the nature, constitution, and structure of reality are by their very nature highly general, abstract, and theoretical. They seem far removed from what we like to think of as the pushes and pulls of everyday immediate experience and people’s practical beliefs concerning farming, house-building, weaving, and cooking. And this distance, it seems, makes them all the more difficult to access.<sup>23</sup> How then does one access the Aztecs’ metaphysical views, and how does one justify one’s interpretation of them? Let’s begin by taking a short stroll through recent Anglo-American philosophy of science.

The late North American philosopher of science, language, and logic, W.V.O. Quine, proposed that we think of the structure of what he called “total science” (including logic, mathematics, and the natural and human sciences) as a “man-made fabric” or “field of force.”<sup>24</sup> Sense experience impinges upon this grand *web of belief* only along the edges. Our beliefs about the contents of our sense experiences also occur along the web’s edge. More-general theoretical speculation and belief occur further within the interior of the web. The principles of logic (such as the law of excluded middle) and theoretical-speculative metaphysical beliefs about the world (such as those concerning quarks and dark matter, gravitational fields, and the relativistic nature of space-time) occur in the interior-most portion of the web, far removed from the concrete sense experiences we customarily associate with scientific testing and experimentation. What’s more, no particular sense experiences are directly linked with any particular beliefs in the web’s interior. They are linked only indirectly by means of considerations of “equilibrium” affecting the web as a whole. Conflicts with experience “occasion,” as Quine puts it, readjustments within the interior of the web. Beliefs about sensory experiences, beliefs about physical objects, and beliefs about quarks, quantum phenomena, and the nature of causality all contribute to the makeup of the total web. As such they occur along an epistemological continuum. No in-principle epistemological distinction divides them.

Theory and data are united epistemologically within one and the same overall web of belief.

Quine's conception of total science as a web of belief has, to one degree or another, become widely accepted by contemporary Anglo-American philosophers of science.<sup>25</sup> Also universally accepted by philosophers of science is another key tenet of Quine's philosophy of science: the underdetermination of theory by sense experience. Following the late nineteenth-century French philosopher of science Pierre Duhem, Quine argues that empirical evidence does not uniquely determine theory. Faced with unacceptable empirical consequences, scientists have a choice regarding how to respond. "The total field is so underdetermined by its boundary conditions, experience, that there is much latitude of choice as to what statements to reevaluate in the light of a single contrary experience."<sup>26</sup> Empirical adequacy alone does not therefore suffice as an epistemological criterion in scientific decision-making. "The edge of the system must be squared with experience," writes Quine, "the rest, with all its elaborate myths or fictions, has as its objective the simplicity of laws."<sup>27</sup> Scientists accordingly appeal to non-empirical criteria when choosing between rival theories.

On what additional grounds do scientists choose between alternative scientific theories and webs of belief? On what additional grounds do they choose, for example, between alternative logics (e.g., two-valued as opposed to three-valued), alternative theories of space-time (e.g., relational as opposed to substantive), alternative conceptions of natural laws (e.g., deterministic as opposed to irreducibly probabilistic), or alternative theories of causality (e.g., allowing as opposed to not allowing causation backward in time)? The current consensus among philosophers of science maintains that scientists appeal to a variety of competing, non-algorithmically ordered values when making such decisions: empirical adequacy (how well does the theory capture the sense experience?); logical consistency; simplicity (Occam's razor, or to what extent does the theory provide a unified and common treatment of diverse phenomena as opposed to treating each phenomena separately and independently?); conservatism (how well does the theory preserve existing views?); unification (how well does it unify our beliefs into a coherent whole by bringing together apparently diverse phenomena under a single account?); generality; fecundity (how productive of new areas of inquiry is it? What new problems does it enable us to solve?); and explanatory power (how well does it explain why things happen as they do?).<sup>28</sup>

Let's focus on the explanatory role of theory. Theory explains and makes intelligible empirical data. Theory without empirical data is, of course, empty, but empirical data without theory are blind. Whether a given sensory experience counts as information (data) and hence is evidentially significant, as opposed to

mere noise, depends upon whether or not the sense experience may be incorporated within a theory. All information is thus theory laden since theory cuts all the way down. Empirical input is not epistemologically self-standing.

As we saw, one criterion for selecting theories is explanatory power. Philosophers of science such as Richard Boyd defend what they call the principle of inference to the best explanation.<sup>29</sup> Given a choice between two competing theories, one is justified in adopting the theory that offers us the best explanation of the empirical data. For example, we are justified in adopting theories that posit the existence of unobservable (so-called theoretical) entities or forces such as quarks, antimatter, gravity, or even more humble middle-sized physical objects (such as rocks, skyscrapers, and trees) and hence justified in believing that these unobservables exist to the degree that the relevant theories offer us a better explanation of the relevant sense experiences than do those competing theories that do not posit their existence. Consider the prosaic example of middle-sized physical objects. We are justified in positing the existence of middle-sized physical objects (such as mountains, insects, and houses) and thus believing that middle-sized physical objects exist if doing so better explains the relevant phenomena (our sense experiences) than do rival theories such as that which posits the existence of a Cartesian-style, omnipotent, and malevolent devil who causes these experiences, or that which claims all our sense experiences are the products of dreams or hallucinations. Such an explanation, argue Boyd and others, increases the coherence and unification of our entire system of belief and thus increases our understanding of the phenomena.

How does this detour through contemporary philosophy of science bear upon justifying an interpretation of Aztec metaphysics? Given the general, abstract, and theoretical speculative nature of metaphysical views, we should expect Aztec views about the nature, structure, and ultimate constituents of reality to be abstract, general, and theoretical-speculative. Consequently, we should not expect them to be immediately apparent from the empirical evidence available to contemporary researchers.<sup>30</sup> We should not expect them to appear on the surface of what is immediately observable. As students of Aztec metaphysics we must therefore recognize the necessity of having to theorize about the Aztecs' theorizing on the basis of the available evidence. And what is our available evidence?

Generally speaking, our understanding of Aztec philosophy, religion, and culture is constrained by the fact that we lack pre-Contact Aztec primary sources written in Nahuatl. Reconstructing Aztec metaphysics therefore requires triangulating from a host of alternative sources. First, we have the ethnohistories and dictionaries of early Spanish and mestizo chroniclers such as Bernardino

de Sahagún, Diego Durán, Toribio de Benavente (Motolinía), Alonso de Molina, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Gerónimo Mendieta, Hernando Alvarado Tezozomoc, and Juan de Torquemada. Second, we have Aztec and other Conquest-era indigenous pictorial histories, ritual calendars, maps, and tribute records. Third, we have archaeological evidence such as architecture, statues, pottery, weaving tools, jewelry, tools, and human remains. Fourth, we have the correlations between ancient and modern astronomies culled by contemporary ethnoastronomers. And finally, we have ethnographies of contemporary Nahuatl-speaking and other non-Nahuatl-speaking indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica.<sup>31</sup> I avail myself of all these in constructing my interpretation of Aztec metaphysics.

How do we assess the evidential credentials of alternative interpretations of Aztec metaphysics? Our detour through contemporary philosophy of science suggests that we assess theoretical interpretations of Aztec metaphysics in such terms as empirical adequacy, conservatism, simplicity, internal coherence, unification, fecundity, and explanatory power.<sup>32</sup> We should expect a scholarly interpretation of Aztec metaphysics to capture as much of the empirical data as possible; to preserve as much previously established scholarship as possible; to suggest new questions and avenues of research; to be consistent in the sense of maximizing the internal, logical consistency of Aztec metaphysical beliefs; to be simple in the sense of providing a unified, common treatment of different phenomena; and to be coherent in the sense of attributing to the Aztecs an intelligible metaphysics, that is, one that makes sense of itself in its own terms. Finally, we should expect an interpretation of Aztec metaphysics to offer us an explanation of Aztec behavior broadly construed, that is, their ritual, religious, cultural, social, and, yes, even their agricultural, military, and craft practices.

Consequently, although there is admittedly no direct empirical evidence for our interpretive claims about Aztec metaphysics (just as there is no direct empirical evidence for our theoretical claims concerning, quarks, black holes, or curved space-time), there is nevertheless (as contemporary philosophers of science argue) indirect evidence for deciding between better and worse interpretations relative to the foregoing criteria of theory choice. The absence of direct empirical evidence should no more deter us from theorizing about the contents of Aztec metaphysics than it should deter physicists from theorizing about the nature of elementary forces, the Big Bang, and the deep structure of the universe.

It is therefore in the light of the aforementioned evidential criteria that we need to ask, to which did Aztec metaphysics subscribe: polytheism or pantheism? Ontological monism or pluralism? Constitutional monism or dualism?

Substantial or relational conception of time and space? Which of these offers us a better theoretical account of Aztec metaphysics? Which offers us a better explanation and understanding of Aztec practices broadly construed? Which provides a unified, common treatment of different phenomena? Which attributes to the Aztecs a metaphysics that makes sense of itself in its own terms? I contend the interpretation of Aztec metaphysics advanced here is justified by the foregoing evidential criteria.

#### 0.4 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Aztecs advanced a systematic, coherent, and sophisticated metaphysics. Chapter 1 argues that at the heart of Aztec metaphysics stands the ontological thesis that there exists at bottom just one thing: dynamic, vivifying, eternally self-generating and self-regenerating sacred power, force, or energy. The Aztecs referred to this power as *teotl*. Reality and thus the cosmos and all its inhabitants are identical with and consist of *teotl*. Since *teotl* is constitutionally uniform, reality consists ultimately of just one kind of stuff: energy. Aztec metaphysics thus embraces an ontological and constitutional monism. Since only *teotl* exists and *teotl* is constitutionally uniform, it follows that Aztec philosophy also embraces a nonhierarchical metaphysics, that is, one that denies any principled metaphysical distinction between transcendent and immanent, higher and lower, or supernatural and natural realities, degrees of being, or kinds of stuff.

Process, movement, change, and transformation define *teotl*. That which is real is that which becomes, changes, and moves. Reality is characterized by *becoming* – not by *being* or “is-ness.” To exist – to be real – is to become, to move, to change. *Teotl* and hence reality, cosmos, and all existing things are defined in terms of becoming. They are essentially dynamic: always moving, always changing. Aztec philosophy thus embraces what Western philosophers call a *process metaphysics*. Process metaphysics holds that processes rather than perduring objects, entities, or substances are ontologically fundamental. Lastly, chapter 1 anticipates and responds to several possible objections to this interpretation.

Chapter 2 contends Aztec metaphysics is better understood as pantheistic rather than polytheistic. Everything that exists constitutes a single, all-inclusive, and interrelated unity. This single all-encompassing unity is substantively constituted by *teotl* and is ontologically identical with *teotl*. It is genealogically unified by *teotl* since it emerges from *teotl*. *Teotl* is not the “creator” *ex nihilo* of the cosmos in a theistic sense but rather the immanent engenderer of the cosmos. *Teotl* is not a minded or intentional agent, being, or deity. The history of the cosmos is nothing more than the self-unfolding and self-presenting of

teotl. This single, all-inclusive unity is sacred because teotl is sacred. Chapter 2 also anticipates and responds to several possible objections to this view.

Teotl's ceaseless becoming and self-transforming are characterized by what I call *agonistic inamic unity*. Chapter 3 explores this notion. An *inamic* is a power, force, or influence that is by definition matched or paired with a second power, force, or influence. Each is conceived as the complementary polar opposite of the other. Each is the inamic of the other. Together, the two constitute an inamic pair, or set of paired *inamichuan* (plural of inamic). Male and female, for example, are each other's inamic. Male is the inamic of female; female the inamic of male. Each is the inamic partner of the other. Since the concept of inamic is relational (e.g., like sisterhood), nothing can be an inamic by itself. Inamichuan by definition come in pairs. Other inamic pairs include life/death, dry/wet, hot/cold, being/nonbeing, and order/disorder. Each inamic is mutually arising, interdependent, and complementary as well as mutually competitive (antagonistic) with its partner inamic. What's more, each pair of inamichuan forms a unity, albeit an unstable one. Paired inamic forces perpetually struggle against one another. Because paired inamichuan coexist alongside one another, they are properly understood neither as contraries nor as contradictories as these relationships are standardly defined by Western philosophy. The transformation and becoming of reality and cosmos consist of the nonteleological struggle (agon) between inamic partners as well as the alternating dominance of each inamic over its partner. All existing things (e.g., suns, humans, trees, and corn) are constituted by the agonistic unity of inamic partners and consequently constitutionally unstable and ambiguous. Indeed, reality itself is irreducibly ambiguous. In keeping with Aztec philosophy's ontological and constitutional monism, inamic partners represent *dual aspects of teotl* – not two metaphysically distinct substances.

Inamic partners struggle against one another and unite with one another in three principal ways: *olin*, *malinalli*, and *nepantla*. These represent three different patterns of motion and change or what I call *motion-change* (seeing as how Aztec metaphysics regards qualitative change as a species of motion broadly construed). They define the dynamics of reality and cosmos. Teotl's sacred energy and agonistic inamic forces circulate throughout the cosmos in these three ways. I devote chapters 4, 5, and 6 to each (respectively). Olin is curving, swaying, oscillating, pulsating, and centering motion-change. It is exemplified by bouncing balls, pulsating hearts, respiring chests, earthquakes, labor contractions, and the daily movement of the Fifth Sun. Olin is also the motion-change of fourfold cyclical completion and transformation *within* and *across* olin-defined life-death cycles. Since all things in the Fifth Age are alive, all things are

defined by a four-phased olin-defined life-death cycle. As the defining pattern of motion-change in the Fifth Age, olin constitutes the biorhythm of the Fifth Sun, the Fifth Age, and all inhabitants of the Fifth Age. Malinalli is twisting, spinning, gyrating, coiling, whirling, and spiraling motion-change. It is exemplified by spinning fiber into thread, cooking and digesting food, blowing life into things, drilling fire, burning incense, and ritual music, speech, and song (*in xochitl in cuicatl*). Malinalli is the motion-change involved in energy transmission between olin-defined life-death cycles of different things (e.g., from sun to grass to rabbit to human to sun, and so on), between vertical layers of the cosmos, and between different conditions of the same thing (e.g., raw cotton into spun thread). Malinalli motion-change initiates, nourishes, and feeds olin-defined life-death cycles. It is also the energy-conveying, life-sustaining bloodstream and foodstream of the Fifth Age. Nepantla is middling, intermixing, and mutually reciprocating motion-change. It binds together inamic pairs in the simultaneously creative-and-destructive agonistic tension of transformation. Nepantla motion-change is exemplified by mixing and shaking things together, weaving (interlacing), and sexual commingling. Nepantla is metaphysically speaking the most fundamental of the three. It cosmogonically precedes and incorporates olin and malinalli. Nepantla motion-change defines and explains teotl's – and hence reality's – continual self-generation, self-regeneration, and self-transformation. Nepantla holds the key to understanding Aztec metaphysics.

Chapter 7 argues that Aztec metaphysics conceives time and space as a single, seamless unity: what I call *time-place*. Time-place is a pattern in the modus operandi of teotl's continual becoming, processing, and moving-changing. Time-place is a matter of *how* teotl moves and is therefore relational, not substantive. The *tonalpohualli* (or 260-day calendar count), *xiuhpohualli* (or 360+5-day calendar count), and *xiuhmolpilli* (52-year calendar count) represent patterns in the unfolding of teotl.

Finally, chapter 8 argues that Aztec metaphysics conceives teotl as a grand cosmic weaver who by means of nepantla motion-change generates and regenerates reality, the cosmos, the Five Ages of the cosmos, and all existing things. *Teotl is the weaver, the weaving, and the woven*. The cosmos per se is a grand weaving in progress. Weaving serves as one of the principal organizing metaphors of Aztec metaphysics. Aztec metaphysics conceives the Fifth Age in particular as a grand weaving in progress and conceives teotl as its grand cosmic weaver. Aztec metaphysics models the continuing generation and regeneration of the Fifth Age upon backstrap weaving. Because weaving is an instance of nepantla motion-change, it follows that Aztec metaphysics conceives the Fifth Age as a grand nepantla-defined weaving in progress and conceives teotl as a

grand cosmic weaver who, by means of nepantla motion-change, generates and regenerates the Fifth Age and all its inhabitants. Nepantla motion-change constitutes the creative interlacing of warp and weft into the agonistic inamic unity that is reality. Nepantla motion-change generates as well as defines the fabric of the cosmos. As such, weaving (nepantla motion-change) is the fundamental and all-encompassing, creative, and transformative motion-change of the Fifth Age. How do olin and malinalli figure into the weaving of the Fifth Age? Weaving fabric involves interlacing weft (horizontal) and warp (vertical) fibers. Olin motion-change constitutes the horizontal weft-related activities that contribute to the weaving the Fifth Age. It functions as the Fifth Age's weft. The wefting of the Fifth Age is carried out by the Fifth Sun's olin-defined oscillating path about the earth. Malinalli motion-change, in turn, constitutes the vertical warp-related activities that contribute to the weaving of the Fifth Age. Malinalli motion-change thus functions as the Fifth Age's warp. The tonalpohualli, xiuhpohualli, and xiuhmolpilli represent warp patterns in teotl's weaving of the Fifth Age.

I conclude by suggesting that nepantla holds the key not only to understanding Aztec metaphysics but also to Aztec philosophy generally. Aztec tlamatime defined the human existential condition in terms of nepantla, and accordingly fleshed out what Western philosophers call wisdom, moral philosophy, social and political philosophy, epistemology, and aesthetics in terms of nepantla.

## NOTES

1. See Anthony Pagden (*The Fall of Natural Man* [Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1982]) and Benjamin Keen (*The Aztec Image in Western Thought* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971]) for discussion of European attitudes toward the indigenous peoples of Europe's "New World."

2. It is not obvious that these categories apply to Aztec thought. They reflect, after all, our way of thinking about things, not necessarily the Aztecs'.

3. As with all matters philosophical, the definition of metaphysics is itself controversial. For discussion, see Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa, eds., *A Companion to Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Nicholas Rescher, *Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 8.

4. Metaphysics is more abstract than the notion of *cosmovisión* employed by scholars such as Johanna Broda, "Astronomy, *Cosmovisión*, and Ideology in Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica," in *Ethnoastronomy and Archaeoastronomy in the American Tropics*, ed. Anthony

Aveni and Gary Urton, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, No. 38 (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1982), 81–110; Broda, “Astronomical Knowledge, Calendrics, and Sacred Geography in Ancient Mesoamerica,” in *Astronomies and Cultures*, ed. Clive N. Ruggles and Nicholas J. Saunders (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1993), 253–95; Alfredo López Austin, *The Human Body and Ideology: Concepts of the Ancient Nahuas*, 2 vols., trans. Thelma Ortiz de Montellano and Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988); López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan: Places of Mist*, trans. Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997); López Austin, “Cosmovision,” trans. Scott Sessions, in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures: The Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*, ed. David Carrasco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1: 268–74; David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica: Cosmovision and Ceremonial Centers* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990); and Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

5. See Elizabeth M. Brumfiel, “Huitzilopochtli’s Conquest: Aztec Ideology in the Archaeological Record,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 8, no. 1 (1998): 3–13; Inga Clendinnen, *Aztecs: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Nancy Gonlin and Jon C. Lohse, eds., *Commoner Ritual and Ideology in Ancient Mesoamerica* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007); López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*; López Austin, *The Rabbit on the Face of the Moon: Mythology in the Mesoamerican Tradition*, trans. Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996), 112–13; Kay A. Read, *Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); and more generally James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), for discussion of demographic differences in beliefs. Miguel León-Portilla (*Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963]) argues official Aztec philosophy changed over time under the influence of different *tlatoani* or speaker-ruler-kings. Alfonso Caso (*The Aztecs: People of the Sun*, trans. Lowell Dunham [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958], 7), León-Portilla (*Aztec Thought and Culture*), and J. Jorge Klor de Alva (“Christianity and the Aztecs,” *San Jose Studies* 5 [1979]: 7–21) argue polytheism was embraced by the masses but not by the elite. Their argument rests upon the assumption that common folk are insufficiently intelligent and abstract-minded to grasp pantheism and are consequently capable of holding only a more simple-minded polytheism. This assumption is challenged by Alan Sandstrom (*Corn Is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991]), Viola Cordova (“The European Concept of *Usen*: An American Aboriginal Text,” in *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, ed. Jace Weaver [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998], 26–32), and Brian Yazzie Burkhart (“The Physics of the Spirit: The

Indigenous Continuity of Science and Religion,” in *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Science*, ed. James W. Hagg, Gregory R. Peterson, and Michael L. Spezio [New York: Routledge, 2011], 34–42). I believe both commoners and elite embraced pantheism to the same extent.

6. For example: León-Portilla (*Aztec Thought and Culture*); Brenda Rosenbaum (“Women and Gender in Mesoamerica,” in *The Legacy of Mesoamerica: History and Culture of a Native American Civilization*, ed. Robert Carmack, Janine Gasco, and Gary H. Gossen [Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996], 325–26); and Alan Sandstrom (personal correspondence).

7. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

8. For further discussion, see James Maffie, “‘Whatever Happens, We Have the Gatlin Gun, and They Have Not’: Future Prospects for Indigenous Knowledges,” special issue, *Futures: The Journal of Policy and Planning, and Future Studies* 41 (2009): 53–65; Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994); and Laurie Ann Whitt, “Indigenous Peoples and the Cultural Politics of Knowledge,” in *Issues in Native American Cultural Identity*, ed. Michael K. Green (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 223–71. Many indigenous thinkers claim scientific-style explanations of indigenous philosophies perpetuate the West’s colonization of indigenous philosophies. See Cecil King, “Here Come the Anthros,” in *Indians and Anthropologists: Vine Deloria, Jr., and the Critique of Anthropology*, ed. Thomas Biolsi and Larry J. Zimmerman (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1997), 115–19; and Huanani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai’i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999).

9. Quoted in Bina Gupta and J. N. Mohanty, eds., *Philosophical Questions East and West* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), xi.

10. Quoted in Robert Bernasconi, “African Philosophy’s Challenge to Continental Philosophy,” in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwadi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 185.

11. Quoted in Barry Hallen, “‘Philosophy Doesn’t Translate’: Richard Rorty and Multiculturalism,” *SAPINA* 8, no. 3 (1995): 17.

12. Bernasconi, “African Philosophy’s Challenge,” 188, brackets mine. For their part, Western social scientists and philosophers construct various conceptual dichotomies such as rational versus irrational, intellectualist versus symbolist, logical versus mythopoetic, linear versus non-linear, traditional versus modern, and open versus closed – into which they try to force non-Western thinking. For discussion, see David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987); Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998); Brian Morris, *Anthropological Studies*

of Religion: An Introductory Text (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Hallen, "Philosophy Doesn't Translate"; Donald Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Thomas Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy* (Buffalo: SUNY Press, 2010); Burkhardt, "The Physics of the Spirit"; Cordova, "The European Concept of *Usen*"; and Deloria, *God Is Red*.

13. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (*How Natives Think*, trans. Lilian A. Clare with an introduction by Ruth L. Bunzel [New York: Washington Square Press, 1966]), Henri Frankfort and H. A. Frankfort ("Myth and Reality" and "The Emancipation of Thought from Myth," in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. Henri Frankfort, H.A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, and William A. Irwin [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977], 3–30, 363–88), and Keen (*Aztec Image in Western Thought*) advance such a view.

14. Miguel León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl: Estudiada en sus fuentes con nuevo apéndice*, new ed., prologue by Angel María Garibay K. (México, DF: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2001 [1956]); León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*; León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

15. Keen, *Aztec Image in Western Thought*, 40. Keen does not hazard an explanation of the putative connection between technological and philosophical sophistication.

16. As the late Standing Rock Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr. writes, "Tribal peoples have traditionally been understood by Westerners as the last remnants of a . . . 'primitive stage' of human development . . . [T]he stereotype of primitive peoples anchors the whole edifice of Western social thought" (Vine Deloria Jr., "Philosophy and the Tribal Peoples," in *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters [Oxford: Blackwell, 2004], 3). See also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Bernasconi, "African Philosophy's Challenge"; Walter D. Mignolo, "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference," in *Latin American Philosophy*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000); Hallen, "Philosophy Doesn't Translate"; James Maffie, "Ethnoepistemology," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2005, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethno-ep/>); Maffie, "Whatever Happens"; and Maffie, "In *Huehue Tlamaniliztli* and *la Verdad*: Nahuatl and European Philosophies in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana*," *Inter-America Journal of Philosophy* 3 (June 2012): 1–33.

17. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Rorty, "A Pragmatist View of Rationality and Cultural Difference," *Philosophy East and West* 42 (1992): 581–89; Rorty, "Stories of Difference: A Conversation

with Richard Rorty,” ed. Gaurav Desai, *SAPINA Bulletin* 2–3 (1993): 23–45. For critical discussion, see Hallen, “Philosophy Doesn’t Translate.”

18. Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 1.

19. Quoted in Hall and Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, 68.

20. Thurman Lee Hester Jr. and Dennis McPherson, “Editorial: The Euro-American Philosophical Tradition and Its Ability to Examine Indigenous Philosophy,” *Ayaang-waamizin: The International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy* 1 (1997): 9. See also Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place*; Burkhart, “The Physics of the Spirit”; Henry, *Caliban’s Reason*; Viola Cordova, “Approaches to Native American Philosophy,” in *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 27–33; Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (New York: Dover Publications, 1957); Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta, eds., *Spirit and Reason: A Vine Deloria Jr. Reader* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishers, 1999); and Hallen, “Philosophy Doesn’t Translate.” Alejandro Santana (in “Did the Aztecs Do Philosophy?,” *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 8, no. 1 [2008]: 2–9), presents a marvelous review of definitions of philosophy culled from recent introductory philosophy college textbooks. He argues Aztec theorizing satisfies all these criteria and so handily qualifies as “real” philosophy by these standards.

21. I argue (in Maffie, “Ethnoepistemology”; Maffie, “Whatever Happens”; and Maffie, “In Huehue Tlamaniliztli and la Verdad”) that the Aztecs conceived philosophy as a way-seeking enterprise while Euro-American philosophers overwhelmingly conceive philosophy as a truth-seeking enterprise.

22. L. A. Hickman and T. A. Alexander, eds., *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 21.

23. In this respect metaphysics resembles religion and theology.

24. See W.V.O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd ed., rev. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 42–46; see also W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960). See W. H. Newton-Smith, ed., *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), for discussion.

25. For discussion of these issues see Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*; Philip Kitcher, *Abusing Science: The Case against Scientific Creationism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982); and Newton-Smith, *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science*.

26. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, 42–43.

27. *Ibid.*, 45.

28. See Quine, *Word and Object*; Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*; Kitcher, *Abusing Science*; Alison Wylie, *Thinking from Things: Essays in the Philosophy of Archaeology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Newton-Smith, *Companion to the Philosophy of Science*, for further discussion.

29. Richard Boyd, "The Current Status of Scientific Realism," in *Scientific Realism*, ed. Jarrett Leplin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). See Newton-Smith, *Companion to the Philosophy of Science*, for discussion.

30. See Quine, *Word and Object*.

31. For further discussion of available sources, see David Carrasco, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures: The Civilizations of Mexico and Central America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*; López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan*; and Michael E. Smith, *The Aztecs* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

32. I see no in-principle epistemological distinction between the natural and social sciences. For further discussion of the epistemology of the social sciences, see Brian Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*; Quine, *Word and Object*; and Newton-Smith, *Companion to the Philosophy of Science*. Alison Wylie (*Thinking from Things*) applies these lessons from contemporary epistemology of science to archaeology.