

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is about entanglements. To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some external measure of space and of time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future.

What does it mean therefore to write an acknowledgment, to acknowledge or recognize contributors and contributions that help make something happen? Writing an acknowledgment cannot be a matter of simply committing to paper key moments and key individuals identified and selected from various scans through the book of memories written into and preserved in the mind of an author. Memory does not reside in the folds of individual brains; rather, memory is the enfoldings of space-time-matter written into the universe, or better, the enfolded articulations of the universe in its mattering. Memory is not a record of a fixed past that can ever be fully or simply erased, written over, or recovered (that is, taken away or taken back into one's possession, as if it were a thing that can be owned). And remembering is not a replay of a string of moments, but an enlivening and reconfiguring of past and future that is larger than any individual. Remembering and re-cognizing do not take care of, or satisfy, or in any other way reduce one's responsibilities; rather, like all intra-actions, they extend the entanglements and responsibilities of which one is a part. The past is never finished. It cannot be wrapped up like a package, or a scrapbook, or an acknowledgment; we never leave it and it never leaves us behind.

So this acknowledgment does not follow (and does not not follow) the tradition of an author reminiscing about the long process of writing a book and naming supporters along the way that made the journey possible. There is no singular point in time that marks the beginning of this book, nor is there an "I" who saw the project through from beginning to end, nor is writing a process that any individual "I" or even group of "I's" can claim credit for. In an important sense, it is not so much that I have written this

book, as that it has written me. Or rather, “we” have “intra-actively” written each other (“intra-actively” rather than the usual “interactively” since writing is not a unidirectional practice of creation that flows from author to page, but rather the practice of writing is an iterative and mutually constitutive working out, and reworking, of “book” and “author”). Which is not to deny my own agency (as it were) but to call into question the nature of agency and its presumed localization within individuals (whether human or nonhuman). Furthermore, entanglements are not isolated binary co-productions as the example of an author-book pair might suggest. Friends, colleagues, students, and family members, multiple academic institutions, departments, and disciplines, the forests, streams, and beaches of the eastern and western coasts, the awesome peace and clarity of early morning hours, and much more were a part of what helped constitute both this “book” and its “author.”

I smile at the thought of imagining my mother reading this and thinking that I have made things unnecessarily complicated once again; that I have been thinking too much, and that anyone else would have just gotten to the point and said their thank-you’s in a manner that all the people who have helped along the way could understand. On the one hand, she’s right of course: what good is there in offering recognition that can’t be recognized? But it is precisely because of the passionate yearning for justice enfolded into the core of my being—a passion and a yearning inherited from and actively nurtured by my mother—that I cannot simply say what needs to be said (as if that were a given) and be done with it. Justice, which entails acknowledgment, recognition, and loving attention, is not a state that can be achieved once and for all. There are no solutions; there is only the ongoing practice of being open and alive to each meeting, each intra-action, so that we might use our ability to respond, our responsibility, to help awaken, to breathe life into ever new possibilities for living justly. The world and its possibilities for becoming are remade in each meeting. How then shall we understand our role in helping constitute who and what come to matter? How to understand what is entailed in the practice of meeting that might help keep the possibility of justice alive in a world that seems to thrive on death? How to be alive to each being’s suffering, including those who have died and those not yet born? How to disrupt patterns of thinking that see the past as finished and the future as not ours or only ours? How to understand the matter of mattering, the nature of matter, space, and time? These questions and concerns are not a luxury made of esoteric musings. Mattering and its possibili-

ties and impossibilities for justice are integral parts of the universe in its becoming; an invitation to live justly is written into the very matter of being. How to respond to that invitation is as much a question about the nature of response and responsibility as it is about the nature of matter. The yearning for justice, a yearning larger than any individual or sets of individuals, is the driving force behind this work, which is therefore necessarily about our connections and responsibilities to one another—that is, entanglements.

I have been fortunate beyond measure to be entangled with many remarkable beings who have sustained and nourished me, and who have offered gifts of friendship, kindness, warmth, humor, love, encouragement, inspiration, patience, the joy of intellectual engagement, invaluable feedback, vigorous challenge, attentiveness to detail, and love of ideas. My gratitude encompasses more beings than can be listed on any number of sheets of paper. Lists simply cannot do justice to entanglements. I can only hope that anyone (from my past or future, known to me or perhaps not) who looks for her or his name in this acknowledgment and is disappointed not to find it will understand that she or he is nonetheless written into the living and changing phenomenon that rightly deserves the name “book,” which is surely not the simple object one can hold in one’s hands.

First of all, I want to thank my students at Barnard College, Pomona College, Rutgers University, Mount Holyoke College, and the University of California at Santa Cruz. I have learned more from you and you have given more to me than you’ll ever know.

I am indebted to Elisabeth (Jay) Friedman and Temma Kaplan for accompanying me on those early forays into newly charted territories. Who knew? In creating an extraordinary history of physics laboratory at Barnard College, physicist Samuel Devons (who was a student of Ernest Rutherford) unknowingly opened up a new world for me. Teaching in that laboratory, preparing experiments, and negotiating with magnificent pieces of old equipment, I began to develop an appreciation for the physicality of apparatuses and the ideas they embody. No part of my formal training in (theoretical) physics had given me any sense of that, although my ongoing independent and self-directed studies of Niels Bohr’s philosophy-physics no doubt helped prepare me to take in this particularly Bohrian insight. Some of the greatest debts we have are to those who live in different times and spaces (at least according to the wholly inadequate conception that there are such external measures of absolute difference); although we never met in the flesh, I would be seriously remiss if I did not thank Niels Bohr, who has been a most wonderful interlocutor over the years.

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