

## PREFACE TO THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Henri Bergson said that a philosopher has only one idea in his life. I always interpreted that to mean that she turns an inaugural intuition over and over, poking and plying it from every angle, until its fabric becomes bunchable into an indefinite number of conceptual shapes. The image this has always given me is of a dog in the corner happily worrying a chew toy, its eyes peeking over the sloppy object to survey the room with a wry look accenting its visible contentedness with an incongruously sheepish overlook. Rereading *Parables for the Virtual* in its entirety for the first time since it was published, in preparation for this preface, I felt cornered. I had the sheepish feeling that everything I had ever thought was already present in the first essay in the book, “The Autonomy of Affect,” written seven years before *Parables* appeared. Had I really done nothing but rechew my words—with increasing verbosity—ever since?

Then I remembered the feeling of anxiety and incompleteness that quickly replaced the excitement I felt as the ideas came together in the writing, as if by their own momentum. The feeling was acute enough that I actually apologized to the editor for the piece. Now looking at it from the outside, no longer immersed in the movement of thought that had carried me more than I had mastered it, I felt the essay to be impenetrable, unassimilable, a convoluted jawful of an intuition no one would ever be interested in reading. This judgment was in fact returned to me later on, bearing this time on the book as a whole, when the governing board of the top-tier university press that had originally contracted the project took the almost unprecedented step of rejecting it at the final sign-off stage. I was told in no uncertain terms that the book was impenetrable, unassimilable, and that no one would read it. I was given a second chance to completely rewrite it from word one in a more traditional form and “accessible” style. By this was meant traditionally

discursive: soberly describing the ideas as if they were somehow outside or behind the writing that shaped them, judiciously “situated” in a generally known topography of recognized notional landmarks, laying a defensible claim to a proprietary corner of it (no “parables” please; and especially, no getting carried away). I was dogged enough not to consider this. I was also blessed enough to quickly find an editor at another top-tier university press who saw something else, or something more, and was willing to give it a first chance. To Ken Wissoker and Duke University Press: thank you!

Now, upon rereading, the first essay and the book as a whole no longer seem impenetrable and unassimilable. I no longer have that feeling that they lie at the very edge of what I can think, slipping from my own grasp as I grope forward. Something has changed in the intervening twenty years: the limit must have shifted. I have to think further to totter at the edge, which (I hope) means that I have edged my thinking further. Perhaps now the incompleteness of that one idea is better incompleteness. It is thus always with philosophical concepts. They do not cry for closure. They lure for supplementing. The more they settle in, the further they stretch. Rather than get definitively filled in, they go indefinitely filling themselves out, adding new folds to their self-complicating shape.<sup>1</sup>

I may be wrong, but I also have the sense that others are less apt to find the book impenetrable now. This might indicate that something has also shifted around the book that has made it less unassimilable. Some, it turned out, did read the book. And the inaugural gesture of “The Autonomy of Affect” seems to have been read most, with the most impact. The essay is often credited with initiating, along with Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank’s “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold” (published, coincidentally, the same year, in 1995), what came in the 2010s to be called the “affective turn.”<sup>2</sup> It would seem plausible to suggest that the affective turn is what made the shift around the book that gave it more steady footing.

I’m not so sure that’s it. I fear sometimes that the proclamation of an affective turn and the establishment of the academic category of “affect studies” gave a certain surface legibility to the project that took form with *Parables*. These developments highlighted what was at stake in the project from one important angle but in doing so obscured others.

More seriously, they implied that the propelling problem, that one self-expanding idea, could be located in an *object* of thought (“affect”). This in turn implied that an academic discipline dedicated to that object was the logical, even necessary, way of continuing the thinking. All of this gave me pause, on more than one count.

For one thing, I have always considered academic disciplinarity to be more often inimical to thought than fertile for it. For another, I have never identified what I do as affect studies or identified myself as an affect theorist. The word “affect” does not appear in the majority of the chapters in *Parables* and does not figure in the recapitulatory introduction. In the title, it comes third of four terms, after “virtual” and “movement” and before “sensation.” While writing the book, I felt affect to be absolutely crucial, but it was not a sufficient moniker of the “one idea.” If pressed to say in one word what the book was about, I would have said “the virtual.” Over time, I came to realize that the idea it was after, as a philosophical idea, could not be encapsulated in an object of study, whether affect or the virtual. This coincided with the realization that it was indeed philosophy that I was endeavoring to do. Coming into the book, my frame of reference the then-bubbling domain of cultural studies, in its relations, by turns agonistic and mutually sustaining, with the vague interdisciplinary realm of what in the 1980s and 1990s went simply by the name of “theory” (often spelled with a capital “T” of disdain). Coming out of the book, I placed what I was doing with philosophy, and even began to embrace the term “metaphysics,” *bête noire* of the two preceding decades, doubly reviled evil twin of Theory.

What shifted, I think, was the increasing pull of A. N. Whitehead’s process philosophy, easing into synthesis with my native Deleuze-Guattarian orientation, and this against the background of a broader move in consonant directions in many quarters of interdisciplinary thinking (the “new materialism,” the “nonhuman turn,” the “ontological turn” in anthropology, and new interest in panpsychic and panexperientialist currents in philosophy that had long been dismissed as “animist”).<sup>3</sup> The final chapter of *Parables*, “Too-Blue: Color-Patch for an Expanded Empiricism,” returns to “The Autonomy of Affect” and takes it back up with a Whiteheadian lilt. The word “affect” comes back full force, and with it comes “process.” With process it becomes more apparent that what had

been at stake from the beginning was not the description of an object of knowledge but rather the instantiation of an *image of thought*: the bootstrapping of a mode of thought into what it can do, in a cycle of return and redeparture from its inaugural impulse. Process-oriented thinking diverges in crucial ways from object-oriented thought (both the classical empirical varieties and the speculative realism coeval with and rivalling the Whiteheadian renaissance). Although process thinking is most closely identified with Whitehead, if it is understood more broadly as a philosophy whose pivotal concepts are event and emergence, it easily extends to a motley congregation of thinkers, including C. S. Peirce, Henri Bergson, William James, Gilbert Simondon, Raymond Ruyer, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Isabelle Stengers, who with Whitehead form the core philosophical constellation swirling around *Parables* and subsequent books.

An image of thought is a problematic field: a set of conceptual tensions that beg for a mutual resolution but, when one arrives, are never exhausted by it. Instead, from any emergent resolution, there follows a reset and restart. The tensions beg their own question all over again, only further, more. This sets in motion an ongoing filling out of the inaugural intuition that is the philosopher's one idea. The one idea is in fact a multiple, a generative conceptual field with many moving pieces in tension, iteratively working out their differential to further effect: multiple and multiplying. It is more a self-questioning and self-renewing formula than a single word; a conceptual propulsion system more than an object of knowledge; as far as can be from a keyword, let alone a final word. Neither is it a question of a method or general approach, certainly not a general frame to be filled in with particulars. It is more like a crystal germ accreting new layers. The germ is a singular bundle of conceptual directions that intuitively call to one another: facets that seem to need each other to form any figure, or to figure anything—at the same time as their agglomeration is challengingly counterintuitive. Falling into uneasy proximity, they pose a productive conundrum. The longer they lie in restless proximity, the more they begin to lock onto each other, in a kind of conceptual amplexus. A case of solution to their tensions begins to take shape like an ill-begotten offspring. Ill-begotten, because it is already palpable that a solution will not be the solution. The

tensions will remain, in excess over any resolution, begging for another go. What makes an image of thought problematic is that any solution it figures is provisional, however motivated and necessary it had been, however adequate it proves to a given exercise of thinking. In a way, each resolution includes them all, in germ, reseeded.

The facets of the problem are more like bickering family members, by turns reconciling and falling out again, than they are like the structural building blocks of an enduring edifice. Something does build, but it's less like a stable abode than a conceptual clan always on the move, periodically reconstellating and recrystallizing. The image of thought is dynamic and inexhaustible. More precisely: it is serially self-exhausting. But no sooner is it exhausted than it gets a second wind. This cannot be summed up in an object, but it can be conveyed in a shorthand expression: in a formula.

If I were to articulate the formula running through *Parables* to its inheritors, I would have to say more of a mouthful than “affect.” Thinking back to what the germ of *Parables* was, I would probably phrase the conundrum in the terms already signposted by the title words. Questions concerning movement, set forth in the introduction, brought “virtual” and “sensation” into restive proximity. They are not accustomed to being in a family way. “Virtual” connotes the abstract, and “sensation” the body in the concrete. That leaves quite a rift, by traditional reckoning. Quite a tension. Containing many a sub-tension (like mind/body, mind/matter, subjective/objective, voluntary/involuntary, natural/cultural, individual/collective, language/prelinguistic, real/apparent, present/absent . . . the list could go on). Cozy the contrasted terms of any of these couplets too close to each other, and they spark, like bundles of live wires. What reconstellation of thought might that inflame? What recrystallization might capture the heat released, into the formation or transformation of a dynamic alliance?

The intuition was that the virtual and sensation *had to be* thinkable together, *productively*, or we would fall right back again into the sterile Cartesian oppositional schema that so many have tried so long to disable. If I were now, retrospectively, to articulate the formula for this thinking-together as it moved through *Parables* into subsequent projects, I might say something like: *the felt reality of the abstract*.

That could work. But then, it misses the dynamism. It misses the process and its iterativity: precisely, the productivity. Add, then: “as an emergent dimension of body/matter.” *The felt reality of the abstract as an emergent dimension of body/matter*. Closer. But it still misses the idea that a determinate form is provisionally achieved, laying the conditions for a reset and restart. So add: “determined to be determined.” *The felt reality of the abstract as an emergent dimension of body/matter, in its determination to be determined*. I said it would be a mouthful. But there is still something missing: the idea that the iterativity of the process is predicated on the multiple (a family of tensions) and that it multiplies (reconciliations). Whitehead’s famous dictum on process is handy here: “the many become one, and are increased by one.”<sup>4</sup> *The felt reality of the abstract as an emergent dimension of body/matter, in its determination to be determined, such that the many become one, and are increased by one*. Mouth crammed full. Spit it out. In the rapid discharge, the pressurized formula might sound a lot like: *becoming*.

In this preface, I won’t go much into how all of this plays out. That is what the book is for. And the one after that. And the one after the one after that. The conundral formula envelops further conundrums (such as the casual slash just used between body and matter) and a press of coming resolutions (each determined to determine a book). The inaugural formula evolves into iterative variations on itself. Yes, everything I have ever thought *was* already in *Parables*: fully incompletely (formulatically). It would just take a few thousand additional pages to fill out the incompleteness, following the formula’s imperative.

But one thing to note is that the “object” of thought in this formulation is homologous to the mode of thought. In other words, in the spinning out of a processual image of thought, there is no form/content division. The object, the content, what the thinking is about, is process. And the form of the content’s being-thought-about is also process. The form and content of the thinking are analogues of each other. Another way of saying this is that the form of the thinking performs its content, rather than reflecting upon it or representing it at a safe descriptive remove.<sup>5</sup> *Process says as process does*. This causes no small amount of consternation, giving some the impression that process thinking isn’t “about” anything at all—or, that it’s about everything all at once. I have

heard this thrown at Deleuze and Guattari as an accusation of a useless anything-goes approach.

I actually take this to be a reflection of the pragmatics of thinking. Thinking is not about going on about. It's about *doing* something in thought. That something doing is the working out of the consequences of an inaugural imperative. Spinning out in a movement of thought what *had to be* thought; what could not not be thought, from where one stirs. Useless, perhaps, if by utility is meant bringing an object into service, or servicing an object, in a disciplined way.<sup>6</sup> But it is really anything but anything goes. Process thinking is compelled. It is thought of necessity. It's not about any thing at all. It's about anything, as it moves under this necessity. The specificity is not in the object but in the forced movement governed from within its own momentum by a dynamizing formula that only fully incompletely appears in retrospect.

The necessity, for my own trajectory, is processually linked to intensity. What is a bundle of tensions pushing to play out productively, if not an intensity? And what does the academic institution most insistently subtract from thought? The same. So the necessity linked to intensity was, speaking on a personal level, a question of survival: how to inhabit the university without experiencing the vegetatively slow death of thought that leads inexorably to the buildup in the institution of the proverbial "dead wood," too moldy to spark. But if it were simply a question of survival, it could be construed as remaining in the realm of the useful. Beyond survival lies the question of life—the question life asks itself at every moment. It bears not on the fact of living but on the quality of the living: the liveliness. Not the whether or what but how (and how fully). Liveliness is the qualitative more-than of survival. Intensity, affectively registered, is nothing other than the sense of liveness accompanying every moment, and unique in each (what Daniel Stern terms "vitality affect," and Whitehead "zest").<sup>7</sup>

This question is not posed on the personal level without also being posed on the societal level. For as Simondon reminds us, the smallest unit of life is not the individual but the individual-milieu coupling (or more precisely, problematic fielding—composed as it is of bundles of live-wire tensions vying to resolve themselves productively while avoiding exhausting themselves in any one go). The milieu, of course,

includes others. This is particularly significant because, paraphrasing Deleuze, the other is the one's potential: an ambulant "possible world." A form of life that by its very difference from one's own life is exemplary of how differently life can be lived. The other is Sartre's hell existentially speaking—that is, speaking as one discrete *being* as against another, occupying the same closed space as a zero-sum game, in the register of the either/or. But processually speaking—as one *becoming* with another, sharing the same process as an ongoing proposition—the other is a wide-open horizon of potential forms of liveliness. All the more reason to think the virtual, allied as it is to the concept of potential, in connection to sensation, and in particular to what is at once the most intimate and far-reaching of all sensations—that of being alive to a world of relation.

During the period in which *Parables* was in gestation in the 1990s, the social dimension of sensation was suffering a perceived crisis. Fredric Jameson had announced the "waning of affect" as concomitant to the postmodern, which he glossed as the cultural condition of late capitalism. The late capitalism to which he was referring was the beginning of the rise of what we now know more currently under the name of neoliberalism. The sense was of an accelerated turnover of a proliferating panoply of products, blurring into one another at the speed of capital, losing any meaningful distinction for authentic feeling or considered thinking to attach to; an increasing penetration of an ever-widening array of media systems and technologies insinuating themselves into every cranny of the social, preemptively filling the space once reserved for personal thought and feeling; a sense that space itself, architecturally and in urbanism, was being crowded pell-mell with citation irrespective of source, scrambling the sense of history; intimating "the end of history," time itself imploding. All of this, a symptom of capitalism's hyperdrive: the faster the better, the more-and-more even better than that, with everything revolving around the blazing sun of the newest-new. Capitalism's intensification was precisely what was fueling the waning of affect, through an intensification of alienation.

While not contesting the assumption of an epochal shift in capitalism, *Parables* felt the need to problematize this paradigm, which reverberates with a broad range of approaches spanning from the Frankfurt

School to Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, and is still discernible in the currently commonplace critique of process thinking that its focus on intensity is fatally complicit with neoliberalism's speed addiction and the-more-the-better productivist glut and consumerist gluttony.

Intensity, *Parables* protested, is not a question of quantity. It's not about more stuff or speedier displacement. It's a qualitative question. The question bears on the degree of insistence of modes of life—life tendencies determined-to-be-determined, begging for expression. It bears on their insistence on their own quality as registered in their accompanying sense of liveliness, or unique vitality affect. Through the prism of what was just said about the other, that quality must be seen as integrally relational. The question is not quantitative but rather *qualitative-relational*, bearing on different modes of becoming-with as they emerge into new expressions, provisionally taking determinate form as part of a continuing process.

This does pertain to the new. But not the new thing. That is an object-oriented idea of the new. The process-oriented new is the newness of a mode of life's expression: its quality of eventness; the feeling of its happening, consubstantial with that happening. This is a more-than without count or quantity: a more of life quality. It is the not-entirely-exhaustedness of lively process as one new moment is superseded by the next, and bequeaths renascent potential to its successor event. It is the more-than—over any given expression in succession, over each eventful taking-determinate-form—of potential ongoing. This is not another added thing. It is a supplementation of process, by process, one with its movement of expression. It is not a question of authenticity or inauthenticity, for the question of expression is as much a question of consummate artifice as changing nature. Neither is it a question of alienation. It is a matter, rather, of qualitatively differing modes of the relational playing-out of potential.

In the course of the iterative, series-forming playing-out of process, ongoing across events, patterns emerge. Stratifications occur. Orders form. Formations of power set in, under the action of emergent mechanisms of consolidation and capture. These are just as much a part of process as the new. In fact, as patterns of reemergence—in other words, as renewed emergence—they are not without a certain degree of the

quality of eventness themselves. They are regularities in emergence, rather than enduring structures in existence. *Parables* grapples with intensity, as it pertains to qualitative-relational potential, from start to finish, always keeping one eye on capture and power in its many guises. Not all of power's guises are immediately recognized as political, as in the paradigmatic case for *Parables* of the capture of affect by emotion.

Affect, the intuition was, has not waned. Instead, its qualitative-relational cast has transformed in tandem with the transformations in society, and a new tool set of concepts is needed to grapple with that. The grappling continues. Problems of the interplay of emergence, pattern-formation, stratification, and capture, retooled as an alternative to the traditional ideological assumptions of enduring structure and underlying constants, compulsively return in subsequent works. The dominant focus shifts depending on the particular necessity governing the iteration in question. At times the focus is on art and aesthetics, at other times on economy and capitalism. Elsewhere, it falls squarely on the political, with special attention to the role of affect and intensity in both the emergence of mechanisms of consolidation and capture and resistance to them.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout, a refrain echoes. It is another formula, implicit in the one already given, functioning as a kind of signpost. *The emerged does not resemble its conditions of emergence*. This is a condensed statement of Simondon's "one idea," taken up by Deleuze, prefigured by Whitehead, and adopted in *Parables* (addressed most directly in chapter 3, "The Political Economy of Belonging").<sup>9</sup> This formula signposts the need for a different logic. On the level of what has emerged, determinate forms stand out from the flow of process, if only for a pulse. In their salience, they also stand apart from each other. On that level—that of the already-emerged; the determined; constituted form—relations are "external." This means that things stand in relief from the flow of process, outside and across, or over and above, each other. Their standing out allows them to be counted and to count for themselves: to assert their own standing. They seem to be locally independent, each in position vis-à-vis the others, relating across a distance separating them as discrete terms. If they act upon or influence each other, it is through mediating mechanisms that bridge the distance.<sup>10</sup> Or it is through part-to-part connections, such as impacts

transmitting a force. The force can be quantified, as can the distance, not to mention the contours of the forms in their discreteness. This is the regime where quantity reigns. It is the classically empirical realm. It is what, in everyday experience, passes for concrete.

The different logic called for does not replace this logic of external relations. It situates it in an expanded field, not unlike the way relativity resituated Newtonian physics in a larger field. The larger field is that of the conditions of emergence. These can be thought of as the preparatory movements that give rise to stand-out forms and rise into them—almost in the sense that yeast rises—without exhausting themselves (as if process always deducted a portion of the fermenting dough to be the “mother” for another bake). They rise and remain. They inform and fall-out. Remaindered, they subsist as an excess fed forward through the series of determinate takings-form. This is what *Parables* excessively returns to, baking it into the account as the level of “incipient action.” Incipient actions refers to the tendencies mentioned earlier that are determined-to-be-determined, begging for expression—and vying with each other for it. On their own level, they are in ferment, in indecision as to what precisely they will rise into, or as. They ferment, and foment, toward a provisional resolution. In this, they are not separate and discrete: they are in resonance and interference with each other, mutually modulating. Where these preparatory movements are, and where they remain at this level of process, is effectively *in each other*. They are actions acting upon each other, at no distance, all together in on the foment—regardless of the distance from each other that the resultant forms will assert after their constitutive tendencies have unfolded from each other enough to have standing. In a word, they are still in potential, acting as *formative forces* rather than having the standing of things formed. Their in-each-otherness is what is referred to as “‘internal’ relation.”

But that is a misnomer. The term gives rise to a great deal of misunderstanding. For there is in fact nothing internal about them. There is nothing in-which they are—except each other’s ferment (which is in potential). In other words, *they are each other’s in-which*. It is more precise to say that they are *immanent* (reciprocally enveloping) than to say that they are internal. This way of thinking about conditions of emergence

moves us back to the issue of the virtual, and the abstract. Since this in-each-otherness of formative forces is not in anything else, it cannot be positioned. It is nonlocal and, being nonlocal, qualifies as abstract: real but abstract (Deleuze's formula for the virtual). It is abstract-but-real in a way that cannot be quantified, which allies it to the qualitative (and fomentingly relational). This is an abstract that is not opposed to the concrete but more like the yeast-mother of it. In fact, the more-than of formative force, never entirely exhausted, will lead Whitehead to say that the in-each-otherness is *more concrete* than the discrete, classically empirical formed-forms it pleases us to call concrete in everyday parlance. Our habit of overlooking the difference between the conditions of emergence and the emerged, unmindful of the lack of resemblance between them, leads us to commit an egregious "*fallacy of misplaced concreteness*."<sup>11</sup>

This raises a passel of ongoing problems that *Parables*, and later works, try to tackle. For example, is virtuality really energetic, as implied here? Is there a difference between potential and the virtual? If the formative level of incipient action (called "bare activity" in later books) is not "in" anything, where is the in-each-otherness? Outside? Certainly not external (which has no meaning except in opposition to inside), but perhaps outside in a more radical sense not subject to the inside/outside dichotomy. Process thinking ends up scrambling our spatial categories. Falling back into them falsifies the process, but can we think precisely without falling back into them? And what does all this do to time? What strange spatiotemporal topology are we stumbling into? Not to mention, if something is abstract in the sense of nonlocally real, how is it felt? Is there an experience of the abstract as such, in its more-than-concrete formativity? What does this do to our notions of discrete sense-data, separate sense modes, and interior mental faculties? How does what is abstract in nature, appear in nature?<sup>12</sup>

For now, the important point is that process thinking requires us to double our logic. Actually, triple it. There is a level at which the logic of external relation holds provisional sway. This is the logic of the excluded middle: each thing determinately itself and not any other, acting locally as a function of its discrete positioning, standing at a safely mediated distance. This logic of mutual exclusion is doubled by a logic of *mutual in-*

clusion pertaining to the reciprocal immanence of formative movements in potential, carrying forward, through their determination-to-be-determined and its outcomes, the force of the virtual.

The logic of mutual inclusion requires a completely different set of conceptual tools honed to what Denise Ferreira da Silva has more recently called “difference without separability” and Karen Barad “intra-action” (although my own preference has always been for the prefix “infra-” to avoid any traditional connotation of inside-of-ness that might come with “intra-”).<sup>13</sup> I develop the logic of mutual inclusion most explicitly in *What Animals Teach Us about Politics*, but it is already under concerted construction in *Parables*, where the difference between the two logics begins to take shape in terms of a contrast between *interaction* and *relation*. “Interaction” corresponds to external relation, and “relation” to the in-each-otherness of mutual inclusion.<sup>14</sup> Of course, interaction is in most ways of thinking considered to be relation, and I have myself just used the term, with the qualifier “external,” to gloss it. It’s like concrete and abstract. There is a *fallacy of misplaced relation* afoot that has to be finessed. Just as the abstract, under the force of the virtual and in the movement of potential, is the *more* concrete—the more-than of concreteness—relation, as distinguished from interaction, is the *more* relational—the more-than of interaction. It’s not a simple either/or.

You can use a distinction like abstract/concrete, or interactive/relational, provided you deconstruct it while you’re using it so that it no longer holds water as a binary opposition. If you don’t do that, you cleave the two sides of process—the conditions of emergence and the emerged—from each other. This vivisects process. But if you content yourself just with deconstructing them, you lose the ability to generate precise, operative concepts. At every turn, you find yourself falling into aporia because both terms have been disqualified. This gets you nowhere processually. Or only so far. It paralyzes the movement of thought at the same point in every line of thinking. So you construe the two seemingly opposed terms as *qualitative degrees of each other*.<sup>15</sup> Because the world has both dimensions, the constituted and the constituent, the emerged and the emerging, the being and the becoming, the concrete and the abstract, interaction and relation. One makes no sense without the other. You

have to take them both as they come (together). Now you're on the way to constructing concepts for how they come together ("how?" being the process question par excellence). You're on the way to making what was a paralyzing aporia a productive paradox. You juggle the terms. You go back and forth between their respective logics. The focus shifts and the exploration moves between levels. You're always making sure to feed their rise and fall back and forward into each other—until they become one, mutually modulating co-movement. So that they relate (instead of interacting). In other words, you have not only to recognize but also to perform a primacy of relation. Mutual inclusion, the logic of relation, then loops around to encompass both itself and its "opposite"—which is now not its opposite but its processual correlate, riding it like a burr that has worked its way into the fabric.<sup>16</sup> This wrap-around logic is the third logic: that of the primacy of relation (the ultimateness of the more-than concreteness of the abstract—in case you hadn't noticed, this is where it gets metaphysical).

The logic of process per se is in this third logic: a juggling of the two logics of "internal" and external relation that retains them both, but asymmetrically, looping one around the other. No simple debunking. No simply resting on the laurels of the deconstruction of binaries. Instead, mutually modulating movement-between, with a complicating but productive twist (this strange topology of process is delved into in most detail in chapter 8, "Strange Horizon").

This yields a certain set of gestures that need to be repeated at each exercise of process thinking (without becoming so formalized as to become a method). At the more metaphysical end of things, the gesture is to posit a field of emergence, composed of co-active tendencies, that does not resemble the emerged. The tendencies are active (just barely) but not yet actions. They are germs of coming actions. In their incipency, they are not yet mature enough to exclude each other. They are more like differentials than separable differences.<sup>17</sup> They can be thought of as infrathin, minimal differences: inclinations toward unfolding just beginning to get a hold of themselves such that they can make themselves separatively felt (not unlike the *clinamen* of Lucretius).<sup>18</sup> The fact that each is agitated by a tendential orientation means that, even though they all come together, it is as a jostling crowd. There is not enough room in

the actual world of fully determined forms to hold all of their unfoldings in one go. So they have to vie, compete, combine, take turns, reciprocally inflect, some backgrounding others, or even silencing them for all intensive purposes. Their crowding self-resolves into an outcome. An event transpires, whose form will be the expression of the germinal ferment, which, having prepared that outcome, will effectively prove itself to have been the real potential for it.

At this incipient level, it is impossible to segregate “opposite” tendencies and their dedicated forms of expression from each other. Operative concepts have to be crafted to hold them together in thought as processual correlates in germinal embrace. For example, our thinking and feeling are inevitably shot through with the rationalist dichotomy, precisely, between thinking and feeling. Mounting an effective concept of “thinking-feeling” will become a necessary task.<sup>19</sup> Our thinking-feeling is itself shot through, still, after so many centuries and so many deconstructions and debunkings, with the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and matter, coinciding with the opposition between mind and body. A concept for their infrathin mutual inclusion in the field of emergence then becomes necessary. “Bare activity” is the way this mutual inclusion came to be formulated in my post-*Parables* work.

All of this is recognizing that the tendencies do unpack. They separate out enough that under many circumstances we can make not only a meaningful but an actionable distinction between what we think and what we feel, for example. The tendencies peak into expressions where the indecision or indeterminacy between binary alternatives is provisionally resolved to the benefit of one side or the other. One comes to define the dominant, or the major key. Yet even the most separative of unfoldings, ending in a tendency expressing itself in the most determinate manner, in a most fully determined event, taking a clear form of expression, will carry in some way or another a trace of its bare-active genealogy. It will remain in some way colored, however subtle or backgrounded, by the infrathin host it fraternized with at its just-beginnings, like a barely noticeable birthmark, or an afterimage. This, in some of my work, is called “semblance.” It is the idea that even though the conditions of emergence do not themselves emerge—something other, belonging to a different logic, emerges from them—they nonetheless make their

reality felt. They appear, without actually appearing as such. They are not felt as such, but, to repeat a phrase that occurs throughout *Parables*, they “cannot but be felt, in effect” (in the form of expression of that other that eventuates from them). This is another way of speaking about the more-than-concrete reality of the abstract. Process thinking needs to remain attentive to these expressions, because it is in actuality only through their complicating accompaniment of determinate forms that we have conscious access to the field of emergence.

In practice, the direction is usually the opposite. We start from determinate forms to which we are habituated and are called upon to recognize, and work back from their standing-out toward the field of emergence. The point made by process thinking is that in doing this, it is crucial to take special care not to project back onto the field of emergence the shadow of the constituted form that differentially arose from it. It is better to say “formations” than “forms,” because forms never come alone. They come in patterns and compositions, in alliance and antagonism. The field of the constituted is, in its own way, as crowded as the constituent field of emergence (only under the aegis of the logic of external relation). The task, working from this end of process, is, first, to analyze into its constituent tendencies the complex *mixture* the world throws at us. Then, second, to diagnose the *degree* to which any given tendency that has taken expression has managed to strike the dominant tone and make good on its determination-to-be-determined. This is a way of working backward to rejoin the field of emergence, “against the grain” of process, as Bergson liked to say, descending the path that process mounted.

At the mixed-up starting point of this movement, process thinking is in the closest proximity to classical empirical thinking that it gets. It is recognizing and taking stock of the order of external relations that takes hold through the mechanisms of consolidation and capture mentioned earlier. But it is at the same time going against the grain of classical empiricism, by genealogically returning external relation to its conditions of emergence—to relation, in the more adequate sense of mutual inclusion. That mutual inclusion is “superempirical,” in the sense that it is more-than concrete, and in excess over any determinate expression that comes to pass. “Radically empirical” is another word for it. James defined radical empiricism in terms of the primacy of relation, arguing

in classic process style that relation is “external” to its terms (there’s that processual “outside” again that is not subject to the internal/external dichotomy), and that the terms are the emergent product of the relation, rather than the relation being a question of their entering, fully formed, into interaction.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to the mixity of the “empirical” world, the stirring of a tendency (incipient action; germinal form or formation) in the field of emergence is *pure*. But don’t be misled by the word. In process terms, the “pure” is *more complex and more heterogeneous* than the merely mixed, because it contains the potential for all manner of mixing, in infinite differential.<sup>21</sup> Significantly, this potential also includes the potential *released* by tendencies’ coming to expression. For once a determinate form has eventuated, the potential for it to re-eventuate is forever in the world’s arisings. It has become an explicit possibility, and that reweights tendencies, modulating the force-lines of potential. In *Parables*, this is called “the feedback of higher forms” (or “higher functions”). This concept registers that the field of emergence is not “pure” in the sense of being a pristine origin or foundation, and its thinking-feeling is not a “raw,” uncultured slate for experience. The most elaborated of forms, including the most artficed, technologized, and socialized, feed potential back in. They loop back to inflect tendencies orienting themselves toward a next expression. They “prime” the next pulse of process.<sup>22</sup>

The overall result of these moves is that what usually separates itself out oppositionally is resituated on a *continuum* of degrees of expression and degrees of mixture. At its widest ambit, this is the *nature-culture* continuum (introduction, chapter 9). But then you could speak like Whitehead and just call it *nature* for short (because nature falls on the mutual-inclusion end, and that end loops around to encompass the other).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, you could choose to call attention to the fact that the logic of external relations governing constituted forms—say, social formations—makes no sense if it is applied to their field of emergence (see chapter 3). You could then, strategically, call the field of emergence “asocial” (which is sometimes done in *Parables*), even though you’re emphatically not reinstating dichotomies. Alternatively, you could call it “pure sociality” (as is done later, for example, in my book *Architectures of the Unforeseen* and in “Missed Conceptions,” below).

Either way, it's trouble. Nothing goes smoothly with process thinking (which tries to stay so faithful to the complexity of the world that it regularly ties itself up in knots). Either strategically evoking an opposition, or speaking in terms that are as loaded as "pure" not only metaphysically but politically, is a hazard. If the logic of process thinking has not registered—in particular, if its guideline that the emerged does not resemble the conditions of emergence has not been taken to heart—then the reader can easily misconstrue the entire project. They will not see the loopy interplay between mutual inclusion and mutual exclusion, between relation and interaction, between the classically and the radically empirical, between process and structure or system.<sup>24</sup> They may turn away in disgust at what they take to be an uncritical embrace of one side of a familiar duality. Oddly, this can be either side (depending on which part of the loop they miss). *Parables* has been roundly critiqued for reducing thought and experience to dumb matter and physiology. It has also been critiqued for being subjectivist, ignoring the empirical constraints of matter. It has seemed to some to deny volitional decision and to erase freedom, but to others to romantically exalt it. Many have been left with the impression that language—a key concern throughout—is simply ignored, in favor of the nonverbal or prelinguistic experience (raising the question of why anyone would do that in a book),<sup>25</sup> For others, the kind of thinking that *Parables* stages has no place for the social or the political. Another common impression, carried over from misreadings of Deleuze and Guattari, is that process thinking is a philosophy of pure flow, eliminating rupture and discontinuity in favor of unsullied continuity (as if such a thing were possible in a world of determination—a world where the “the many become one and are increased by one”).<sup>26</sup> Given the prominence of affect in the reception of the work, perhaps the most common criticism of all is the “irrationalism” of affirming feeling at the expense of thinking.

The only response to these readings is to keep on developing the process image of thought, in new iterations, illustrating along the way that this mode of thinking never comes down unambivalently on one side, and that it eliminates nothing. Its realism is anything but—and everything but—eliminative. It takes everything as it comes, subject to the evaluation of mixity through the diagnosis of the qualitative-relational

tenor of forms and formations. It affirms everything, but not any *how*. It is a philosophy of determination—the determination-to-be-determined of the bare actively indeterminate<sup>27</sup>—and it is not shy to follow the impetus of its inaugural intuition toward its own emergent ethical and political determinations. It takes everything as it comes—but not without mobilizing a desire that it all shake down differently the next time.<sup>28</sup> This is a part of its intensity. And it is a key to its pragmatism.

It was said earlier that process says what it does. It also does what it says. Its form loops back into its content, looping its inner folds out. What I mean is that you can't think process well without also practicing it. It is the kind of philosophy that compels experimentation. It requires something like a philosophical laboratory. Luckily, one is not hard to find: it's called the world. Process thinking loops back into the "outside" world as into its own conditions of emergence. Its "higher forms" feed back, as of their own accord, to mutually include themselves in the movements from which they arose. A concept, Deleuze said, must be lived. That is its vocation, and that is the master key to its own iterative reemergence, under a worldly compulsion to vary along with the world's ongoing variation. Process thinking's evaluations of mixity and its ethico-political diagnoses of the qualitative-relational tenor of the tendencies abroad in the world are made to make a difference. It is for this reason that I have also used the term "activist philosophy" for it. Determined-to-be-determined to make a difference is what qualifies process thinking as actively pragmatic. Pragmatically, the truth of a thought takes the emergent form of the consequences that follow from it. A thought is not true a priori or by rational validation. It is only true in effect. This, like everything in this image of thought, is a matter of degrees. There is true and truer. Truer is the iteration that gives thinking-feeling greater purchase on the world, for another and more effective experimental round. Process philosophy should claim no validity outside of its capacity to spin out into the wide-open world of nonphilosophy, and to take it, in all its complexity, as a laboratory to live in, to live all the more in. Which is to say, with intensity.<sup>29</sup>

I have come toward the end of what is perhaps an overly long preface to a book that says what it does in any case, only glancingly mentioning what it is widely reputed to be "about": affect. Affect is crucial to

the project, undeniably. It is central to this version of process thinking because, as what happens *between* a body and what impinges on it, and between a feeling body and what the body feels to be its mind, affect is directly relational. It also directly implicates becoming. The affective encounter registers a transformation, not only in the situation of encounter but in the body's ability to affect and be affected, which is carried through the encounter to a higher or lower power. Affect is a royal road to becoming in relation.

The formula infamously applied to it in *Parables*—that of the “autonomy of affect”—must, like all the concepts, be resituated in the image of thought profiled in this preface. Affect is emphatically not “autonomous” in the sense of being something discrete and separable, as an object would be. It is inextricably implicated in everything that an idea of it on the model of an independent thing would sever it from. Affect is an aspect of everything's becoming (contributing to the impression mentioned at the beginning that process isn't about any thing in particular at the same time as it's about everything all at once). Affect is not “autonomic” (a word applied to it frequently in *Parables*) in a sense that is simply the opposite of voluntary or involving thought. Ultimately, affect is another word for the thinking-feeling that agitates the field of emergence as it makes itself felt, in effect. Its “autonomy” is thoroughly relational, and replete with germinal thought. It pertains to the “more-than” of process that is potential, as discussed at length in this preface. It is this more-than playing out precisely as the movement of thought: the figuring of potential, in emergent effect. The autonomy of affect by this account is the very figure of freedom, as creative advance.<sup>30</sup> But there is a form of capture specifically tailored to affect, *Parables* argues, and that is emotion.

Emotion, the saying goes, is “qualified” affect. The notion of “quality” is invoked here in a different and narrower sense than in the “qualitative-relational” as pertaining to the field of emergence. In *Parables*, the word “quality” is sometimes used (confusingly, I must confess) as a synonym for “property,” as in the property of a thing. This is pointing to the level at which affect empirically appears, as *constituted*. Emotion is formed affect. It is affect thingified, at least to the extent that it becomes a narrative object and signifying referent. Emotion is affect's

process transformed into a formed content. The autonomy of affect is its processual tendency to escape this containment—to remainder an excess of potential that can feed back to repotentialize the field of emergence, priming it for a next determinate expression. Saying that the capture of affect consists in its transformation into a formed content is not to say that affect is formless, as some readers have assumed. That would be to misidentify what image of thought is operative here and how it plays dualities. Affect is not formless, as in the opposite of formed; it is superformed.<sup>31</sup> It carries the superempirical force of process's potential continuing. It is more-than formed: it carries formative forces. It is too reemergently heterogeneous, in its iterative belonging to the infinitely differential field of emergence, to fit in any container in the manner of a constituted thing. It is also too overspilling to be a container, in the sense of a structure. But don't get me wrong, it's not simply unstructured. . . .

This is starting to go in circles—for lack of looping. Suffice it to say, to offer a final formula, that affect is the artesian spring of intensity.

*Given the prominence of affect in the reception of Parables and in the debates surrounding the currents of thought with which it is allied, a recap may be in order. The following two texts offer a tour of orientation. The first, "Keywords for Affect," is an assemblage of passages drawn from Parables and subsequent works. The second is a corrective for common "Missed Conceptions" about affect as it can be understood from a process-oriented approach.<sup>32</sup>*