

Introduction

Inasmuch as the essence of community is affectivity, the community is not limited to humans alone. It includes everything that is defined in itself by the primal suffering of life and thus by the possibility of suffering. We can suffer with everything that suffers. This pathos-with is the broadest form of every conceivable community.

—Michel Henry, *Material Phenomenology* (2008, 134)

The student of nature is concerned with all the works (*erga*) and affections (*pathē*) of a certain sort of body and a certain sort of material.

—Aristotle, *De anima* (II.1, 403b12)

Hence, the philosopher should be intrigued by this concretization of a depth that does not fear to place itself at the very limit, where the self joins together with (its) other [. . .], where the self also positions itself facing a universe that permeates it, and about which it is informed, thanks to sensorial (or transitional) mediation.

—François Dagognet, *La Peau Découverte* (1993,13)

The thick, heavy soil in which we bury our loved ones carries with it deep, affective resonance. As a regenerative body, the soil provides a sense of consolation related to, yet far different from, a memorial service. Where memorial services speak individual words and invoke distinct memories and affects as related to the unique person who is now dead, the soil touches us in a very different affective register, and draws us, even in or precisely by its concreteness, toward a wider living community of which we are all part.

The soil's distinct concreteness is what Aristotle might call—with a demonstrative—"some this" (*tode ti*): its particular density, its distinct feeling in one's hands and under one's feet, its smell, its weight, its texture.¹ For this reason, no burial is phenomenologically the same: even when occurring in the same place, even when involving the same burial ground or the same family grave, the soil's density, smell, weight, and texture vary in each case.

The figure of soil is an example of an interface that I investigate in this book, and its specific investigation occurs in the very last chapter. Like the other interfaces that I examine, soil offers me the opportunity to investigate the medium, the material in-between, the concrete interface where the main topic of this book—affectivity—lives and breathes. Soil, similar to the other interfaces I investigate, thus seeks to offer a localized, material place to engage affectivity, and simultaneously shows how every interface is not simply an existing place or surface, but a place of ontogenesis: always emerging, creative, porous, and fluid.

The benefit of focusing on the concrete interface is that the account of affectivity can be more flexible and faithful to the uniqueness of each concrete form of affectivity and can concretely show *how and where* ontogenesis takes place through affective responses. To exemplify: the material interface of a human living being (its skin) is not just the meeting place of exteriority and interiority, but a constantly emerging in-between where exteriority and interiority emerge and intersect. Every interface is material, but is also "more" than its current materiality in *co-creating* place, time, and being. For instance, the material genetic traces of previous generations (e.g., the cells of one's mother's mother) left behind by the placenta as organ of the in-between map collective time onto individual time and project beings accordingly into the future.

Contrasting soil, if only briefly, with the concept of "earth" may serve to explain what my account of interfaces and affectivity is trying to do in general and what it seeks to avoid. I seek to draw attention in this book to the concrete tangible interface that mediates and co-creates affective responses and emerging existences in ever new ways. In this, I seek to resist the tendency for certain forms of phenomenology to be overly anthropocentric or to overlook the concrete materiality—and related science—of the phenomena discussed. To illustrate: while my general phenomenological insights are indebted to Heidegger, what I am resisting in choosing soil over earth is Heidegger's focus on earth and his tendency to grasp earth along the lines of a native ground ("urgrund") or

“home”² specific to human culture, or to grasp it in quasi-mystical terms as the obscure ground of our abode: “the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing.”³ Such renditions of earth are to me both too provincial (in the political and also in the anthropocentric sense), and simultaneously too ecstatic and transcendent.⁴ It is for this reason that I focus on soil and its concrete, material, “messy” aspects: in being both local and global, in connecting the living and the nonliving, and in giving rise to a community of correlated beings rather than simply individuated beings, the focus on soil rather than earth allows for a different kind of philosophy of affectivity. It is an account of affectivity that stands at the interface, seeking to investigate how time and place and beings emerge as they are, concretely, being affected together.

As my initial account of the interface of soil here perhaps shows, my approach to affectivity through the figure of the material interface includes not only philosophy, but also science. This approach is in large part due to the three different, but ultimately converging, pathways that have inspired my intellectual career and this book. The first path—that of my interest in the topic “affectivity”—has the longest bearing in that it has been with me for nearly my entire adult life. It led as it were to my first academic “love”—the study of medicine—and my consequent training as an MD. Ranging from the most mundane and treatable diseases to the most unsettling ones, those pathologies shifted my life’s perspective and drove me inward toward reflection, seeking answers that the discipline of medicine could not offer, even if it provided sound treatments. Enter the second pathway: that of my formative years in graduate school in philosophy and a direct encounter with Aristotle, whose thoughts on *pathos* took me in and surprised me in terms of depth and breadth. His categorical distinctions, his phenomenal observations of particulars, and his endoxic approach enveloped me and became my world for many years. This second path could not have been as productive and rich in meaning had it not been for the third: my sustained immersion in Continental Thought, and especially the encounter with Heidegger’s early lecture courses and his ability to make Aristotle speak to so many actual phenomena and topics in continental philosophy today.

Eventually, these pathways cross-fertilized themselves, also sparked by a new attempt to find my own voice and immersion in recent publications on new materialism.⁵ I sought to make my continentally inspired reading of Aristotle relevant to contemporary scientific studies of plants, animals, pregnancy, and humans. Inspired by new materialism’s turn to

the intricacies of bodies, I recovered my passion for reading scientific studies in my attempt to uncover the various tiers and kinds of affectivity in living beings. Along the way, Aristotle's categories remained in sight, but a distinct need made itself pressing: to acquire distance from them, to read them more playfully and more deconstructively, and to use them with care and sensitivity. Thus was born a book whose title would no longer find its center of gravity in Aristotle (as envisioned in the work's original title, *Rethinking Affectivity with Aristotle*), but centrally turned to the matter, that is, *E-Co-Affectivity*, itself.

As I was pulled more and more to the phenomena themselves, I felt the distinct desire to address this topic not only on the level of conceptual analysis, but also on the level of personal affect, if only briefly, at the beginning of each chapter. The affective charge of such autobiography has many purposes: it announces the topic in a formulaic fashion, it reaches out to connect to the reader on a personal level, and it simultaneously emphasizes in its affective charge the very content of the book's topic: that affectivity can never be understood without this *felt* dimension, and that each interface and topic as I address it is also lived and made known in multiple ways.



The *title* of this book, *E-Co-Affectivity*, while fitting, still sits somewhat uneasily with me. The reason is that the term “affectivity” is too much associated with philosophical idiom, and does not have direct resonance and coinage in colloquial language: we may use associated nouns such as “liking” (or “affection”) or verbs such as “to affect,” but the broader cohesion and immediate, intuitive appeal that I seek in the term “affectivity” is absent.⁶ This is unfortunate, especially as this monograph draws on an immediately recognizable, central phenomenon of all lives: the fact that all living beings—including human beings—become who they are through interaction and reciprocity with that which affects them as mediated by the interface.

I use the term “affectivity” within a wide spectrum of meanings, similar to the Greek term *pathos*. In terms of etymology, our term *pathos* originates in the ancient Greek root πάθος (suffering, feeling, passion, illness, qualitative change) and παθ- is the stem of πάσχειν, to suffer (which is of unknown origin).⁷ I have often wondered: if we could only reinstate and reemploy the Ancient Greek term *pathos*⁸ and its verbal cognate *paschein*, then that would really capture the broad range within which I seek to grasp the fundamental *affectivity* operating in all forms of

life. Reaching in meaning from incidental change and emotion to illness and excruciating suffering, the term *pathos* covers an amazing array true to the dynamics of life's emergences and transformations. Unfortunately, however, *pathos* has lost its broad scope in our current use of the term, since as used now, *pathos* refers mostly to the (rhetorical) appeal to emotions such as pity and sadness.⁹ Still, *pathos* found its way into the subtitle of this book as a nod to the historical background and conceptual riches it provides to the concept of affectivity.

Thus, focusing on its definition, "affectivity" covers a broad terrain, similar to its Greek root *pathos*, and can include such things as illness, suffering, qualitative change, and emotion. Central to the concept of affectivity is a complex kind of causal relationship. *Instead of seeing affectivity merely in terms of the passive effect of a cause, the kind of affectivity I propose puts at its center stage the receptive, responsive power of living beings to react to what happens to them, which may include their ability to participate in, and shape, how they are affected.* Thus, this conception of affectivity can be understood as a kind of responsiveness or reactivity to the world. My account of affectivity speaks both to the ability to be affected and the ability to affect, and the complex relationship between the two.¹⁰ It recognizes that, on an organic level, living beings become who they are through mutual interaction with, and strategic affective responses to, that which affects them.¹¹

With the term "e-co-affectivity," I seek to emphasize that affectivity neither occurs in a vacuum nor pertains to singular, discrete entities: it implies a certain place or milieu (hence "eco," as in the Greek "oikos") and connection to others (hence "co"), whose mediation may have either destructive, or constructive, or ambiguous effects. The hyphenation I use speaks to the fact that the influence of place and community cannot be tightly distinguished from the happenings of affectivity as such: they are rather aspects of *one* phenomenon in which they participate: e-co-affectivity. And while in many chapters I provide a descriptive account of the effects of the milieu and community within which affectivity takes place, the fifth chapter adds to this a prescriptive, ethical lens in that it seeks to formulate a new epoch beyond the anthropocene that is sensitive to the larger ecological, communal concerns at stake.



In terms of *significance*, the turn to affectivity is important because it speaks to the fact that all living beings become who they are through

reciprocity with that which affects and moves them. We need only to think about processes of generation, of being born, of being fed, addressed, and cared for,¹² to instantly recognize this affective dimension of our lives.¹³ By turning to affectivity we acquire a fuller and deeper insight into the underpinnings of *how living beings are always in motion*, that is, how they come to be, grow, interact, react, suffer, and die. This focus is much needed to complement, if not strategically undermine, modern philosophy's focus on static and insular activity, autonomy, and disembodied freedom. And twentieth-century continental philosophers such as Heidegger, Levinas, and Butler have provided important conceptual tools—through concepts such as *Befindlichkeit*, thrownness, the face of the Other, radical passivity, and precarity—to break through modern philosophy's shortcomings in this respect.

Still, those conceptual tools can be sharpened and adjusted, and *E-Co-Affectivity* in that regard both builds on certain ideas of above-mentioned theorists and refines and adjusts others. For instance, while Heidegger prioritizes within his account of affectivity the question of being and the question this poses to individual Dasein, my account of affectivity emphasizes becoming over being, and points toward communal rather than individual becoming for its central focus of action. These shifts—from being to becoming, and from individual to community—hold ethical implications as well, in that they focus our attention on the emergent co-relationships between beings and ask for considerations of an e-co-political climate in which the various forms of affective lives and their interdependence are given a chance for transformation. This is in line with what Barad has called an *ethics of responsivity*, which concerns “responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part.”¹⁴ And, as Michel Henry conveys, the essence of community lies in a constitutive *pathos-with*:

Inasmuch as the essence of community is affectivity, the community is not limited to humans alone. It includes everything that is defined in itself by the primal suffering of life and thus by the possibility of suffering. We can suffer with everything that suffers. This pathos-with is the broadest form of every conceivable community.¹⁵

Following Barad's and Henry's insights, in this book I will try to show how community, which I define very broadly as “life in association with

human and non-human others,”¹⁶ is best to be grasped along the lines of co-affective-emergence as mediated by a material interface, and that our ethics should be responsive to the co-affectivity at the heart of this community.

While the articulation of the need to address the meaning of affectivity is all but new and has been integral to twentieth- and twenty-first-century continental thought and its so-called “affective turn,” what is innovative about this book is *thinking through the concrete, living places where affectivity happens*. In this, the book does not so much engage with the thoughts on affectivity by thinkers such as Butler, Heidegger, Irigaray, and Sloterdijk in their own right, but rather focuses on *the meaning and productive results of this engagement in the context of specific living beings*. Additionally, by drawing on a broader and deeper spectrum of affectivity in line with Aristotle’s usage and as applied to multiple forms of life, I move explicitly beyond a narrow, psychological interpretation of affect as passion, mood, feeling, and emotion. This allows me to seek intersections among various forms of affectivity and to place them within the larger context of ecological concerns, thereby allowing for a productive place to rethink and reconstitute the meaning of specific forms of affectivity within the larger context of e-co-affectivity.

Hence, the contribution of this book is to articulate and unlock the meaning, depth, and complexity of affectivity in living beings, ultimately focusing on the very materiality of the interfaces that co-generate and co-constitute those living beings. Interfaces separate, mix, and generate two universes as they meet “within.”¹⁷ Interfaces provide material conditions that generate certain forms of being; simultaneously, they are never static but prone to change, creativity, and (individual, species, and communal) engineering.¹⁸ For instance, in my account of human skin, I show that the sapience and sentience attributed to humans has been informed, from the earliest beginning, by the interaction of internally emergent and externally emergent factors in the changing interface that became human skin.

The benefits of such a *situated* focus on affective ontologies are many. For one, instead of a generic discourse on affectivity, the ontology I provide through mapping affective responses can be more flexible and faithful to the uniqueness of each concrete form of affectivity. Second, such a situated discourse can concretely show *how and where* form, abstraction, and choice emerge out of affective materiality (e.g., on the level of the individual, the species, the community, etc.). Third, this focus brings to the fore aspects of local ontogenesis and spatiotemporal synthesis

that crucially inform the work of affective interfaces. Fourth, this book seeks to think through different categories of affective change and tries to show how they may interact and contaminate each other on the local level. For instance: to what degree can incidental, qualitative change be distinguished from change on the level of the underlying substance, and to what degree can change on the level of *aisthēsis* be distinguished from qualitative change exactly?¹⁹ Thus, this book demonstrates both the need for using such categorical inventions and the need to “break them down.” This deconstruction is aimed so that, as Haraway puts it, “richer and more responsive invention, speculation and proposing—worlding—can go on.”²⁰ In short, I seek to use categorical distinctions that are not fixed but open to revision, aiming for a more refined grasp of phenomena productive not only on the level of theory, but also with regard to our ongoing practical interactions with human and nonhuman others.



The *structure* of the book follows the need for a situated focus on affective ontologies. Accordingly, it is divided in chapters, each of which analyzes different forms of affectivity in different life forms. The book begins by focusing on plants, moves on to discuss touch in bird feathers, considers next the ontogenetic boundary that is the human placenta, and uncovers the meaning of the skin as sapient and sentient interface crucial to human affectivity. While this movement from plants to nonhuman animals to human animals might suggest a *scala naturae*, this book seeks to disrupt such an ontological or ethical hierarchy. In each chapter, my goal is for my analysis to acquire complexity in its own terms, and to do justice to each form of life examined, with possible moments of intertwinement and cross-pollination with other analyses. And, by ending this book with the figure of soil as a messy, porous, un-grounding ground, I foreclose any avenues that could suggest a prioritization of human sapient affectivity; instead, soil serves the purpose of pointing to a broader material interface that emphasizes relationality and mediation among various forms of life as well as relationships to the inorganic, without prioritizing any.

In fact, precisely by *appearing* to be dedicated to hierarchized groupings as found in the Aristotelian tradition, while actually analyzing each form of life at the level of the concrete, material interface, this book is uniquely qualified to undermine the power of hierarchy and point at the equalizing power of matter, without giving up on agency,²¹ or on nuance

and distinctions²² among strata and falling back into pure *adequatio* among the various forms of life.²³ While we can distinguish certain similarities and differences in the affectivity of living interfaces, such as those of feather and human skin, the difference or complexity in strata can themselves not be evaluated in terms of better or worse.²⁴

The fifth, and final, chapter of this book is different from the previous four. It does not focus on one particular form of life, although it does highlight one particular material interface: soil. It seeks to sketch the outlines of a new and robust sense of *e-co-affectivity* that is both deep and broad in ethical and political appeal. If we take threats such as climate change seriously within our living, singular eco-sphere,²⁵ then a politics of *e-co-affectivity* needs to warn against the reduction of and threat to its symbiotic communities. Ultimately, I focus on the material interface of soil as a place to produce and engineer a new epoch beyond the anthropocene. The soil's ontogenetic powers and its complex inner workings provide the locale for us to engage with emergent potentialities and to create more porous and enduring ways to form new communities.



The *research questions* that drive the investigation of affectivity in this book focus on examining the kinds and modalities of affectivity, how they relate to each other, and whether—by interacting—there might be risks of (productive) contamination, conflation, and deconstruction. This means, for example, that the chapter devoted to plants (chapter 1) examines both the positive, affective force of growth, as well as the potentially negative affective force of illness and trauma. For the chapter on birds (chapter 2), this involves an investigation of sensitivity in the form of touch, and thinking through the ways in which touch is a unique form of affectivity yet also indicative of other forms of affectivity.

However, given that forms of affectivity can be modified, communicated, and shared, my analysis also seeks to move beyond an assessment of affectivity simply in terms of binary values, such as positive or negative, and incidental versus substantial. My analysis, rather, seeks to provide evidence for *categorical contamination* between kinds and modalities of affectivity, thereby uncovering not only further semantic complexity to the present but also providing alternative pathways for becoming anew.

Another research question turns on the need to capture affectivity beyond the passive-active bifurcation. In his *Categories*, Aristotle casts

motion in terms of the correlated categories *poiein* (“to act”) and *paschein* (“to be affected,” “to be acted upon”).²⁶ What would an alternative ontology of motion, one that is no longer subject- or action-oriented, and one that allows for dynamic and flexible ontogenesis, look like? Might the middle voice be an attractive alternative, and, if so, why and how might it be particularly productive for plants (chapter 1)? Would it allow us to move away from the centralized singular and allow us to cast affectivity in terms of polyphonic communal places that generate meaning? And what might be the weaknesses of the middle voice: might the “zone of indistinction” it suggests not all too easily lead to a flat ontology and ethics, contrary to the ethical and political e-co-affectivity that may be needed for a future beyond the anthropocene (chapter 5)?

When thinking through the *locality* of affectivity, the issue of the meaning of the boundary and the concrete place of the in-between come to the fore. This raises the following questions: What can interfaces such as the interstitial space between feathers (chapter 2), the placenta (chapter 3), and skin (chapter 4) tell us about affectivity and place- and time-making? How can living interfaces allow for the emergence of form and transcendence? And more generally: How does an account of affectivity articulate *the immanent unfolding of form and meaning through matter*?

When we further explore such interfaces, the following questions emerge: How can animal identity be born out of difference in mediation with this interstitial space? How can pain, trauma, and social, evolutionary, and intimate practices leave their traces in this space (chapter 2)? What can the placenta—if articulated correctly as the exemplary generative organ of the in-between—teach us about ontogenetic affectivity? And can we discern further material traces of its constitutional work, perhaps in our living physiology, pathology, and social relationships (chapter 3)? And what happens to our understanding of human affectivity if we zoom in on the uniquely human material interface of bare skin? In what way does this affective, sapient inter(sur)face (re)create our time, place, and being? How does it foreclose or open up future possibilities (chapter 4)?

Finally, given all these different forms of affectivity, how can we think of affectivity on a larger, ethical, and political level, one that aims beyond the here and now and that we may call (synthetically and provocatively) that of *e-co-affectivity beyond the anthropocene*? How may we think through the web of affective relationships without denying the uniquely human task to shift in affective response and act and feel differently in light of our current environmental predicaments (chapter 5)?²⁷



In terms of its *methodology*, *E-Co-Affectivity* makes use of concepts in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Continental Thought in conjunction with insights from Aristotle, but does not engage with those concepts on their own terms. Rather, borrowing categories and schematic abstractions from both Continental Thought and Aristotle, I seek to draw close to and clarify life's affective phenomena. Accordingly, each chapter needs to vary and experiment with such abstractions to speak to the specifics of the subject matter. By providing different analytic tools in each chapter, I seek to employ a flexible, conceptual apparatus that can do justice to what the *logos* of the phenomena demands.²⁸ Exemplifying, the chapter on the placenta will benefit most from conceptual accounts and critiques of mimesis and place-making, while the chapter on birds will benefit most from a deconstructive reading of Aristotle's account of *pathos* and *aisthēsis*. Thus, while weaving a story about affectivity in various life forms, this book seeks to prevent each chapter from being too quickly assimilated into a *general* story about affectivity as such, and seeks to outline the uniqueness of each account as far as possible toward what I call *provisional* ontologies—provisional insofar as the ontologies I describe are based on our access to the phenomena, and are changeable given the flux of reality and constant ontogenesis.

Given the need for each chapter to vary and experiment with abstractions as prompted by the subject matter, my engagement with sources in the phenomenological tradition will offer an eclectic selection, based in part on what each chapter, and each interface, appears to demand. This means, for instance, that for the chapter devoted to skin I incorporate less frequently cited thinkers such as Dagognet and Serres, over against more well-known accounts of “flesh” by Merleau-Ponty, to acquire depth and precision in analyzing skin. And for the chapter on soil, which seeks to engage the notion of compassion within a broader, material, ecological context, I pull from thinkers such as Haraway, Stengers, and Stiegler, rather than appealing to the more conventional phenomenological account of Heideggerian “earth.”²⁹

In relation to the field of “affect studies” or “affect theory,” my work on affectivity shows affinity with some of its approaches, especially where it turns to the body, such as Clough's emphasis on the body and emotion as part of what she dubbed the “affective turn,”³⁰ as well as her focus on “affectivity as a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic

responses, in excess of consciousness.”³¹ Similarly, I am sympathetic to Brian Massumi’s work *Parables for the Virtual*, which, in drawing on Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, offers a theory of affect that is explicitly embodied: he defines affects as “virtual synesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them.”³² Since my work draws toward the embodied concrete affectivity of various forms of life, my approach has less affinity with that strain of affect theory that turns to affect in the more narrow sense of emotion or feeling,³³ and specifically as felt by humans,³⁴ even as such theory speaks with nuance of the complex and “sticky” nature of affect, as Ahmed for instance does in defining affect as “what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects.”³⁵

Since this book investigates affective responses, and specifically as emerging in different kinds of living beings, it also invites comparison with theorists that draw on affect as embodiment and extend this thought to the broader ecological community. For their historical lineage, such theorists often follow “the line of thought from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari back through Baruch Spinoza and Henri Bergson.”³⁶ One recent instance of work that examines affect in Spinoza and connects it to the wider ecological community is Hasana Sharp’s *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization*. This book traces Spinoza’s thought on affect and the community of affects, and understands human vulnerability along the lines of vulnerability in beasts, rocks, and vegetables, aiming to facilitate “social harmony and political emancipation.”³⁷ In Sharp’s view, what follows from Spinoza’s account of action as affect is that “human action is not an individual exercise but the consequence of an enabling affective milieu, comprising infinitely many human and nonhuman forces.”³⁸

While my approach to the question of affectivity in different forms of life thus converges with aspects in affect theory that focus on the body and that trace its historical lineage through Spinoza scholarship, and aligns strategically with projects such as Sharp’s that analyze affects as part of a wider account of both human and nonhuman forces, my trajectory is distinct in that it takes its origin in Aristotle. Using Aristotle to conceptualize affectivity in various life forms is refreshing given the more prevalent usage of the Deleuze/Spinoza trajectory, and has various advantages, which I outline here.

First, in the figure of Aristotle we find a thinker who has always embraced the concrete phenomena of life. This is especially the case if we read Aristotle through the lens of Heidegger, who interprets Aristotle as a

thinker of life-in-motion.³⁹ For instance, in his 1924 summer lecture course *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger encourages us to trace the meaning of Aristotelian concepts back to their “indigenous ground” (their *Bodenständigkeit*) rather than through their formal definitions. This original ground is primarily not theoretical, but experiential, according to Heidegger, and lies “in the commerce of life with its world.”⁴⁰ This has made it possible to make Aristotle’s categories more conversant with phenomenological interests in the changeable nature of living beings, which allows us to move Aristotle’s philosophy in the direction of a more fluid ontogenetic metaphysics.⁴¹ Additionally, with Aristotle’s interest in concrete observations and science, we find good transition points to integrating science and concrete phenomena discussing all forms of life.

Second, my reading of Aristotle will seek to think with Aristotle against Aristotle (similarly to how Habermas has urged to “think with Heidegger against Heidegger”), so as to think along routes that have been inspired by Aristotle, but are not necessarily Aristotle’s. A return to Aristotle may help us in rethinking both some of the problematics at the root of the concept of affectivity as well as what, in its current reformulation, may have been forgotten and what may bring us forward. By reading Aristotle carefully and with nuance, through the method of “affirmative deconstruction,”⁴² as Bianchi proposes, we may reclaim some of Aristotle’s insights that are relevant and helpful for our current day (for instance, his account of the constitutive nature of touch, and his account of direct and indirect co-suffering), while problematizing others (such as his account of the active-passive distinction and the various hierarchical stratifications of affective change).

Notably, the conceptual turn I make in this work to Aristotle (and, to a lesser extent, Plato) not only functions to structure my engagement with contemporary questions, but also serves to *add* to the study of Aristotle and Plato, namely by showing their relevance and how contemporary questions can uncover forgotten or new aspects to their accounts. For instance, my discussion of the phenomenon of *aisthēsis* in chapter 2 relies on some of Aristotle’s pertinent ideas regarding the centrality of touch, but contemporary questions I ask also show problems in Aristotle’s analysis and the need for Aristotle scholarship to rethink categorical distinction along the lines of what I call *categorical contamination*.

Third, my account of affectivity addresses issues related to community, and I am using the term “community” here in the broad sense of “life in association with human and non-human others,” very much in the sense

of how ecology defines community: “a group of organisms growing or living together in natural conditions or occupying a specified area.”⁴³ To give fuller depth to this concept, Plato’s and Aristotle’s concepts of community (*koinōneia*) and the formation of a city-state (*polis*) are helpful, in particular because they access community not as an occurrence *after* the fact that individuals are constituted, but rather as a *constitutive relational* element of individuals’ lives. As Aristotle writes, the *polis* holds logical and ontological priority over the family and the individual (*Politics* 1253a18). While I seek to highlight a broader sense of community than merely Aristotle’s focus on the human community, and while I want to address the co-emergence of community and individuals rather than seeing the community as taking sole logical and ontological priority, I would like to hold on to Plato’s and Aristotle’s sense that individual life is dependent on communal life, and that we would do well to understand individual life as being informed by a broader communal form of life. In my view, Simondon’s account of collectivity as it forms the individual (in the form of a preindividuated reality) helpfully complements my reading of community in Aristotle and Plato.⁴⁴

Fourth, both Plato and Aristotle address issues of place, and since any discourse on community and affectivity will have to address place, their discourses on community and place-making are important. As Sallis writes in relation to the building of the city (*polis*) in *logos* in the *Republic* (369e): “the city involves not just an assembly of men, not just a community of associates (*koinōnoi*), but their assembly at a common dwelling place. The city is precisely this place where they live together.”⁴⁵ Place here is not simply an external element to the community, but a constitutive element. As we see articulated in Plato’s *Republic*, where the first two people to build the city engage the soil by cultivating and tilling it, “the constitution (*politeia*) of the city both determines and is determined by this location.”⁴⁶ Especially in chapter 3, I will address this issue of place-making and community and will invoke Plato to make my point. And, ultimately, in chapter 5, I will articulate that conceptualizing community and affectivity as emerging from a communal, mediating interface holds ethical and political implications, since it entails not only the ethical imperative of being attentive to the suffering of others, but the need to reconstitute the meaning and structure of ethics and politics.

As for its *methodology with regard to science*, when this book incorporates scientific discoveries into its train of thought, it does so by finding inspiration in Elizabeth Grosz’s work, which seeks to integrate and connect

ideas from fields such as biology and physics with postmodern thinkers such as Deleuze and Irigaray. For instance, Grosz's *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art*⁴⁷ offers a new account of life as openness, by carefully engaging with Darwin's evolution theory, and bringing that in conversation with ideas on determinism and freedom in Deleuze, Bergson, and Irigaray.

Similar to Grosz, I see science not just as a way of offering examples for my theory while also making the concepts immanent to the everyday, but I am using its explanations to *redefine* concepts. For instance, in the chapter on pregnancy and the placenta, recent discoveries speak to the fact that cells of the embryo do not reside only in the uterus, but can be found in the bloodstream, heart, brain, and lungs of the pregnant mother. Vice versa, cells of the mother become part of the fetus' body as well. Such microchimerism, as it is called, may both be involved in destruction of maternal tissue or rebuilding it after trauma. Thus, microchimerism urges us to reconsider the concept and meaning of hospitality, and how life is not lived individually, or even in community with others, but emerges and becomes with and through one another.

As this discussion of microchimerism shows, I seek to let my writing emerge from an *interdisciplinary space*, with horizontal, nonhierarchical relationships between the disciplines. The result, I hope, is an argument where concepts are not just hovering "above" everyday life, but where they are in fact immanently embodied in and emerging from the matter itself.