



Matter and Desire

An Erotic Ecology

Andreas Weber

foreword by John Elder

\$20.00 • Paperback

6 × 9 • 256 pages

ISBN 978-1-60358-697-9

Pub Date: September 4, 2017

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“Andreas Weber is an indispensable voice in ecological and philosophical thought. . . . *Matter and Desire* composes the symphonic grand design of desire, relationships, the metaphysics of the body—and much more. . . . This is a timeless yet urgent, and splendid book.”

—**HOWARD NORMAN**, author of *I Hate to Leave This Beautiful Place*

There’s no road through life that doesn’t lead to death. And though organic life is fragile, and death is inextricable from life, there are moments of connection in the natural world that offer larger perspective—connections that we ignore with our unfounded faith in a model of relentless progress and technological optimism.

In *Matter and Desire*, internationally renowned biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber explores these connections and, in the process, rewrites ecology as a tender practice of forging relationships. As a biologist, Weber delves deep into the continuity between our bodies and those of all living beings. The human experience of desire and satisfaction, he argues, is the key. Contact and connectedness with the outside world will amplify our own self-awareness. Weber’s exploration, then, becomes “the values that *motivate* individuals and societies to adopt more just, generous, and compassionate practices, and in doing so transcend a narrow understanding of self-interest,” as John Elder says in the foreword.

Rooted in scientific observations and brought to life with his personal encounters in the natural world, Andreas Weber builds on the work of a handful of visionary scientists and philosophers—such as Erich Fromm, Rollo May, and Abraham Maslow. And in the tradition of John Muir, Rachel Carson, and David Abram, he weaves together personal narrative, lyrical description, and dense discussion of ecology and psychology to offer a new—and necessary—way to move through the world.



Andreas Weber is a Berlin-based philosopher, biologist, and writer. He holds degrees in marine biology and cultural studies, and his books in English include: *Enlivenment: Towards a Fundamental Shift in the Concepts of Nature, Culture, and Politics* (2013); *The Biology of Wonder: Aliveness, Feeling, and the Metamorphosis of Science* (2016); and *Biopoetics: Towards an Existential Ecology* (2016). Weber regularly contributes to major newspapers and magazines, such as *National Geographic*, *GEO*, and *Die Zeit*, and has won a number of awards for his writing. He teaches philosophy at Leuphana University, Lüneburg and at the University of Fine Arts, Berlin.

<http://media.chelseagreen.com/matter-and-desire>

MATTER & DESIRE

An Erotic Ecology

PRAISE

“Every page of Weber’s deeply illuminating new book is a passionate journey into the experience of being alive and in relationship. As an emergent ‘erotic ecology,’ this book is urgently needed medicine for a planet suffering from a shortage of love.”

—**DAVID LUKAS**, author of
Language Making Nature

“Two hundred years ago, John Keats complained that modern science would ‘unweave a rainbow.’ This visionary and poetic discourse by Andreas Weber achieves the near-miraculous task of reweaving the stunning beauty of the natural world back into the realm of science. Transcending conventional barriers between categories of Western thought, with a style reminiscent of Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Weber explores some profound implications of modern biology and physics, presenting his vision of biology as the erotic science with the recognition that to truly experience love, we need to be fully connected to the creativity of life.”

—**JEREMY LENT**, author of
The Patterning Instinct

“A slow tidal wave of change is gathering force and will take us beyond the mechanistic world of Newton toward one of becoming. Andreas Weber’s *Matter and Desire* is a passionate evocation of intermingled life surging. He writes with the poetry, care, and insight that urges us forward.”

—**STUART KAUFFMAN**,
professor emeritus,
biochemistry and biophysics,
University of Pennsylvania,
and MacArthur Fellow

“Andreas Weber is an indispensable voice in ecological and philosophical thought. With fearless probity and autobiographical intimacy, *Matter and Desire* composes the symphonic grand design of desire, relationships, the metaphysics of the body—and much more—as page by page we experience Weber’s elegant subversion of all convenient ways of looking at the natural world. This is a timeless yet urgent, and splendid book.”

—**HOWARD NORMAN**, author of
I Hate To Leave This Beautiful Place

“To read this marvellous book is to enter a secret garden where you’ll discover a natural world far more alive, sentient, and meaningful than science has so far dared suppose. With luminous prose Weber’s ‘erotic ecology’ charts a path into a new scientific understanding in which atoms, organisms, and entire ecosystems overflow with purpose, interiority, and psyche, lighting up your life, helping you experience reality with freshness and depth of vision. A masterpiece.”

—**DR. STEPHAN HARDING**, author of
Animate Earth

“Andreas Weber offers us the best medicine I know for a culture benumbed by dead-end pursuits. Pulsing with life, his work delivers us from the centuries-long dichotomies between mind and matter that have robbed us of vitality, joy, and true purpose. It brings us home to the fertile reciprocities that link us with all forms and levels of life; in so doing, it reflects and reinforces great spiritual teachings of our planet.”

—**JOANNA MACY**, author of
Coming Back to Life