

Roundtable: ENTANGLEMENT OF MATTER AND DISCIPLINES

Time, Place: Saturday, 24 June, 11.00-13.00, University Main Building, Lecture Hall 001

Chair: Manuela Rossini, University of Basel

Speakers: [Ed Constable](#), Chemistry, Vice-Rector for Research, University of Basel; [Jens Hauser](#), Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen; [Aura Heydenreich](#), German Lit., and [Klaus Mecke](#) Physics, co-directors of [ELINAS](#) (Centre for Literature and Natural Sciences), University of Erlangen; [Jakob Zinsstag](#), Medicine, University of Basel, [Dominik Zumbühl](#), Physics, University of Basel.

Roundtable description

Having its roots in physics to describe the mutual influence of our universe's particles even across vast distances, entanglement is an appropriate metaphor for the co-constitution of supposedly separate identities through relationality and dynamic interactions (or "intra-actions" rather) between and within systems across spacetime. Self and other, human and nonhuman, nature and culture are interdependent agents rather than autonomous entities. By the same token, knowledge and meaning is co-produced by different academic fields and expertise outside academia as well as by animals, machines and other nonhuman participants in a world-creating dance.

The roundtable enlists "entanglement" as a travelling or nomadic concept (Bal, Stengers) and starts from the premise that entanglements of matter and disciplines necessitate and create a 'fellow feeling' and almost 'telepathic' reaction to the other as being the same while also sharpening a sense of difference and acute awareness of the limits of 'true' understanding and empathy.

The roundtable chair will take her cue from the poem "Entanglement" by Jane Hirshfield (see next page). So might the other participants who will predominantly speak from their disciplinary perspective (physics, chemistry, literature, art, sociology, cultural studies) and individual standpoint, demonstrating how "entanglement" manifests itself in specific contexts, while at the same time letting themselves be entangled in the net of inter- and transdisciplinary exchange.



"Entanglement" by Jane Hirshfield

A librarian in Calcutta and an entomologist in Prague
sign their moon-faced illicit emails,
"ton entanglée."

No one can explain it.
The strange charm between border collie and sheep,
leaf and wind, the two distant electrons.

There is, too, the matter of a horse race.
Each person shouts for his own horse louder,
confident in the rising din
past whip, past mud,
the horse will hear his own name in his own quickened ear.

Desire is different:
desire is the moment before the race is run.

Has an electron never refused
the invitation to change direction,
sent in no knowable envelope, with no knowable ring?

A story told often: after the lecture, the widow
insisting the universe rests on the back of a turtle.
And what, the physicist
asks, does the turtle rest on?

Very clever, young man, she replies, very clever,
but it's turtles all the way down.

And so a woman in Beijing buys for her love,
who practices turtle geometry in Boston, a metal trinket
from a night-market street stall.

On the back of a turtle, at rest on its shell,
a turtle.
Inside that green-painted shell, another, still smaller.

This continues for many turtles,
until finally, too small to see
or to lift up by its curious, preacherly head
a single un-green electron
waits the width of a world for some weightless message
sent into the din of existence for it alone.

Murmur of all that is claspable, clabberable, clamberable,
against all that is not:

You are there. I am here. I remember.