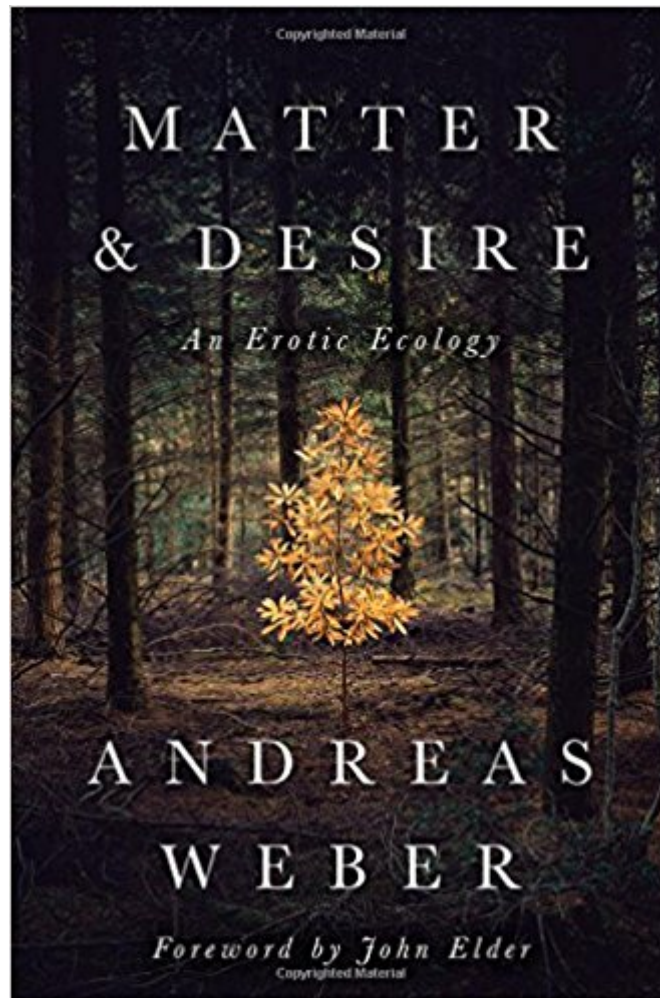




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Matter And Desire: An Erotic Ecology



Synopsis

In *Matter and Desire*, internationally renowned biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber rewrites ecology as a tender practice of forging relationships, of yearning for connections, and of expressing these desires through our bodies. Being alive is an erotic process – constantly transforming the self through contact with others, desiring ever more life. In clever and surprising ways, *Matter and Desire* recognizes that love – the impulse to establish connections, to intermingle, to weave our existence poetically together with that of other beings – is a foundational principle of reality. The fact that we disregard this principle lies at the core of a global crisis of meaning that plays out in the avalanche of species loss and in our belief that the world is a dead mechanism controlled through economic efficiency. Although rooted in scientific observation, *Matter and Desire* becomes a tender philosophy for the Anthropocene, a “poetic materialism” that closes the gap between mind and matter. Ultimately, Weber discovers, in order to save life on Earth and our own meaningful existence as human beings we must learn to love.

Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Chelsea Green Publishing (August 10, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1603586970

ISBN-13: 978-1603586979

Product Dimensions: 1 x 6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #154,460 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Evolutionary Psychology #310 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Consciousness & Thought #451 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Ecology

Customer Reviews

“The most powerful antidote to our pernicious culture of excessive material consumption is the creation and nurturing of communities, finding happiness in human relationships rather than seeking it in material possessions. At the very heart of community, at all levels of life, we find a fundamental impulse to establish connections. The author of this beautifully written book identifies

this yearning for connections with the essence of love. In his philosophical meditations, Andreas Weber deepens the recent scientific advances toward a new systemic understanding of life by investing them with a vital emotional dimension. While the experience of being fully alive is, for him, an erotic experience, it has also been recognized as the very essence of spirituality. An important and inspiring book!

—Fritjof Capra, author of *The Web of Life*; coauthor of *The Systems View of Life*

“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*

“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*

“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

“With a dazzling blend of biological rigor and poetic grace, Andreas Weber explains the principles of erotic connection that lie at the heart of life on Earth. It is a journey that transcends the reductionist taxonomies of modern science and explains the transformational role of desire, interdependence, and meaning in the glorious unfolding of natural ecosystems—and in our own lives. Be prepared for a bracing adventure!

—David Bollier, author of *Think Like a Commoner*

“When Andreas Weber looks on a meadow, he sees —œpart of our body, folded outward, ready to be strolled through. The ocean’s tides are —œthe way the Earth perceives the moon, and gravitation is —œthe Earth’s tender longing for us.

With such graceful, lucid lines, Weber —œ invites us to see a world filled with delight and one that yearns, as we do, for contact: the erotics of encounter. Part scientific reflection, part philosophical reverie, part lyrical benediction for the stones and swifts and plants and water ouzels of his beloved Ligurian countryside, *Matter and Desire* is a deeply felt book from a profoundly humane

writer. **•** Fred Bahnson, author of *Soil and Sacrament*; director, Food, Health, and Ecological Well-Being Program, Wake Forest University School of Divinity “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* “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* “A stunning piece of writing, as existential as it is experiential, *Matter and Desire* delves into the *science of the heart* in compelling prose that frequently dances on the edge of poetry. The book provides vivid depictions of a big love: a near-mystical practice of discovering who we are through the creative energies that surround us and dwell within us. Andreas Weber ably guides his readers on this relational journey, articulating ecological intuitions that may have gone unnoticed yet were always on the tips of our tongues. From the forces of desire within molecules to the mistle thrush’s song vibrating in the evening air, Weber offers a bold and convincing case for the physicality of feeling and the *biology of love*. The result is a profound meditation that bravely explores the subjectivity of a living biosphere and our particular relations within it. If philosophy literally means the love of wisdom, then in *Matter and Desire*, Weber presents the wisdom of love, a reflective account of his intentional free-fall into the embrace of matter. **•** Gavin Van Horn, director, Cultures of Conservation, Center for Humans and Nature “If what Andreas says is anything to go by that love permeates all things so intrusively that the world can only be conceived in terms of relationship then holding this

book in your hand is an outrageous act of lovemaking, the breadth and depth of which you will never know! This is a gasp of a book. — Bayo Akomolafe, author of *These Wilds Beyond our Fences*

Andreas Weber is a Berlin-based philosopher, biologist, and writer. He holds degrees in marine biology and cultural studies, and has collaborated with brain researcher and philosopher Francisco Varela. 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. Weber has two children, fifteen and seventeen. He lives in Berlin and Italy.

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