Touching tactfully: The impossible community

Abstract: Whenever and wherever we find ourselves, we are already a being-in-the-world, in the very midst of it, surrounded by other things. In being confronted by these others we are confronted with a question of how to be with the other. Specifically, we are confronted with the question of ethics. Ethics, in this sense, is not understood in normative terms, but instead as radical exposure—as being exposed to, and confronted with, the reality of all things. In being confronted, I become aware of my responsibility—of the need to respond. How do I respond to the more-than-human other with whom I have almost nothing in common? In this chapter, I suggest that part of the answer to this question lies in touch, or rather, in *touching tactfully*. In developing this argument, I draw on the work of Lingis, Nancy, and Derrida on the notion of touch—specifically, what Derrida calls the law of tact. Touching, in the manner Derrida suggests, is knowing how to touch without touching too much—indeed, where touching is already too much. I will explore this 'law of tact' in terms of how it might be an impossible possibility to enact an ethics of things.

> *What is touched remains compellingly exterior, so that touch is a contact without possession, without belonging, in difference. It remains an approach, a nearing, a contact without possibility for satisfaction and rest. Nonmediated, pervasive, vulnerable, touch constitutes for mortals the possibility to enter that place of an encounter with things that takes the name of an ethics of things*. (Benso 2000, p. 163)

Allow me to start this chapter by relaying my encounter with a particular bolt. Our lives crossed paths when I stepped on it in the road, walking. It impressed itself on my foot, and thus called for my attention. I picked it up without much attention and deposited it in my pocket. At home, whilst working, I took it out and placed it on my desk, beside my keyboard. There it sat, passively, but not quite. Occasionally I would pick it up, to fiddle with it, or to study it intently, feel its contours, the coolness of the steel, and then I'd set it down again. Over time, I became strangely affected by this bolt, in ways that are difficult to express. It was not just its beauty or the fact that it was discarded, as such. It was something more and something less. In some vague sense, it acted as a mirror, revealing me—as one that picks up things in the street. The bolt afforded me a reflection not only on myself, but also on us humans more generally—as ones that organise things in the world to be available for our purposes (Heidegger 1977)—and much more besides. In being there, it seemed to be posing all sorts of questions, silently and unassumingly: questions such as the sort of being that we humans are when we relate to discarded things like it, and to other-than-human others in the way that we do. In being-with this bolt, I felt in some sense questioned, implicated in something that was difficult to express. I became increasingly aware of our relationships with things—not as tools, or as things that we use for practical purposes. Rather, I

became aware of our relationships with things, beyond, or despite, their usefulness to us. Our relationship with things, *qua* things, one might say. Importantly, this is not really a question of what ethics becomes (for us humans) if we somehow add the other-than-human to our ethical calculus (Verbeek 2008). It is rather the question of ethics in which such distinctions do not hold or are not taken as valid. It is a question of ethics towards all others that are other-than-me, whatsoever (Introna 2009).

When considering things, we must start by acknowledging that whenever we find ourselves in the flow of everyday life we are already a being-in-the-world, in the very midst of it, already there, surrounded by things that are other than us. Or, perhaps more precisely, we are already entangled with other things—in a world that is more than human. Sometimes things seem, from where we are, passive, friendly, and so forth, and sometimes they seem aggressive, threatening us, pushing against us, and so on. Whatever the case, we never find ourselves alone and self-contained. We seem to be the beings that we are, by being always and already in relation with others. In other words, whenever we take note of ourselves, we find ourselves always and already confronted with the other, somehow. That is, we are confronted with a question of how to be with the other: the question, one might say, of ethics (and, of course, politics). Ethics here is understood not in normative terms, of being good or bad, or right or wrong, but rather, in the Levinasian (1999) sense as *exposure*. What this entails is an ethics that is always and already exposed to, and confronted with, the concrete and weighty reality of all things, in their very thingingness, weighing down on us, somehow (Benso 1996, p. 134). Things, in their being-there, call for our attention, for a response, one way or another. This calling for our attention is not a scream-out-loud call. Rather, it seems to be a very faint, almost indiscernible murmur in the background—almost nothing, easy to miss in the busyness of everyday life. Nevertheless, it is unmistakably present in our peripheral awareness, quietly unsettling us, even if we mostly ignore it.

In being faced with this quiet yet unsettling call, I find myself (not as a self-certain 'I' but rather as an 'I' that is in some sense always and already implicated) in some way needing to respond (Levinas 1989). Not only to the human other, as Levinas would insist, but also for the other-than-human other as Benso (1996) has argued. That is, the otherness of the human and the other-than-human other has already called me into question, quietly disrupting my already assumed right to be. Faced with this faint but incessant questioning, I can do my best to ignore it, to occupy myself with the busyness of daily life, acting as if this voice that calls me into question is not there or does not matter. Of course, we all do it (it is the rational thing to do). Alternatively, I can expose myself to this call. I can respond by saying, here I am. I am always and already implicated—in some way I am already your hostage (Levinas 1989). This responding 'I' is not a pre-existing sovereign 'I.' Rather, this 'I' becomes constituted out of the ether of this encounter with, or exposure to, the other as *the one* that is always and already responsible. In this ethical encounter, my singularity is constituted by the fact that no other can respond on my behalf or take my place in responding. I am not a representative of humanity (or some social category). Rather, I, as the I that emerges from this encounter, am the *one* that is singularly responsible—that is, ethical obligation as the original ground of all being (or, as Levinas would say, ethics is first philosophy). This obsessive experience of responsibility, in a sense, always and continuously 'persecutes me with its sheer weight,' to use Simon Critchley's (2007, p. 61) words.

How do I respond to this weightiness, to the other-than-human facing me, and to the many others that equally surround me? Indeed, especially towards those other-than-human others that seem so utterly other, with whom I seem to have nothing in common—yet, who seem to question me in some way. More specifically, how do I respond without simply turning the other-than-human other into the economy of the same (for example by transforming the other into a category in the traffic of language or reason)? That is, how do I respond, or commune with the other, *ethically*? Not just theoretically (in the intellectual discourse of academia) but also practically, in being with the multitude of others (human and the other-than-human alike)? This is a question that preoccupies me in the flow of everyday life, when holding the bolt in my hand, when opening my desk drawer, which contains my no-longer useful eye glasses going back many years, or my old broken watches. Why do I keep them? Am I just a hoarder? Perhaps, but it also seems that these things have some sort of a hold on me. In some sense, they are also questioning me. In some way, they are questioning my right to be the 'I' that I already assume I am. How shall I respond, ethically? This is the question that I would like to explore (or at least start to explore) in this chapter.
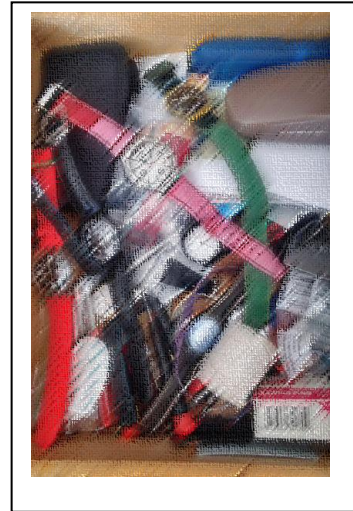
On the community of those that have nothing in common, or, being-with others outside of identity

It is possible to suggest that I can in some way imagine my ethical obligations to the human other, since they are like me, but what about the other-than-human other? Can there be any sort of ethical communion—understood as exposure—between those who have nothing in common? For Alphonso Lingis (1994), we enter—or become members of—the rational community by expressing ourselves in terms of an institutionally defined 'rational discourse.' One can imagine here the ideas of Foucault (1998), when he talks about discourses as constitutive of regimes of truth (and associated subject positions). For example, when we speak as a scientist, we need to speak in, and through, the discourse of science, and all that that implies. Through our participation in such a discourse, we become enacted as a particular kind of subject (a scientist, in this case). Thus, the rational community affords individuals a way into communication, but this affordance is constituted in a very precise manner. That is , it is a communion that "depersonalizes one's visions and insights, formulates them in terms of the common rational discourse, and speaks as a representative, a spokesperson, equivalent and interchangeable with others, of what has to be said" (Lingis 1994, p. 116). Such participation in the rational discourse gives one a voice, but only a representative voice. The rational community affords us the opportunity to speak, but only on the terms of that particular community—its language, its reasons, its logic. In this form of speaking, it might matter what we say, but it does not really matter who is saying it. In the rational community, all speakers are, in a sense, identical or interchangeable. It is the communality, continuity, and resilience of the rational discourse community that creates the sense of immortality, something that transcends the limits of the individual finitude. In our relations with the other-than-human things, the rational discourse (and communion) is mostly one *of use and utility.* For example, William Morris, a big figure in the Arts and Crafts movement, said "If you want a golden rule that will fit everything, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful." This exemplifies the rational community of the more-than-human: it either must be useful (serve our utilitarian purposes) or beautiful (serve our aesthetic purposes)—and even more so if it can be both.

In such a rational community of use and utility—in the world of 'fast' and mass production—things are essentially identical, that is, interchangeable. Their singularity is utterly irrelevant; replacement always seems possible. It is what they can do for us that matters (Introna 2009)—be it simple utility, virtue signalling, identity work, and so on. If they are no longer useful (or they break) we 'dump' them, they literally become taken as waste. Is the rational community the only form of communion available to us? Can we speak of a community of *those who have nothing in common,* a community of radically singular others—others that are absolutely other? How do we commune with, or become exposed to, those singular others (human and other-than-human alike) with whom we have absolutely nothing in common?

To explore this question, Lingis (1994) considers a number of limit cases of communion—where the rational community seems to evaporate. The one I will focus on here is the case in which we are with someone who is dying. What can be said in such a situation? It would seem that anything that one might try to say would be ill-conceived. In some sense, one might suggest that to say anything—to somehow suggest that we have something meaningful to say—is itself absurd. Nevertheless, we typically find ourselves fumbling through sentences, desperately trying to speak, to acknowledge the singularity of the event in some way. Lingis suggests that in this situation it does not matter what we say, as such. What matters most is that one speaks. However, in trying to speak one discovers "that language itself does not have the powers" (Lingis 1994, p. 108). It is feeble in the face of death. What do we do? We stretch out our hand, we feel compelled to touch, to hold the dying. The touch of this extended hand,

> ... communicates no information and brings no relief and knows no hope, is there only to accompany the other in his or her dying, to suffer and to die with him or her. And in this hand there is perhaps an understanding more profound than all apprehension and all comprehension, a force stronger than every efficiency and a compassion beyond and beneath every virtue… (Lingis 1996, p. 10).

 In touching the dying other I am not a representative of the rational community. I am instead a finite material being, an earthling, as Lingis (1994) would say, "[o]ne whose flesh is made of earth—dust that shall return to dust…" (p. 117). The community that has nothing in common does not come about by working together, sharing an identity, a common language, a common culture, and so forth. Rather, it is produced by exposing oneself, through touch, to the one who is always and already dying, and with whom one has nothing in common. This exposure reveals our finite being, our mortal existence. The community of those that have nothing in common is a finite community of strangers who are, touchingly, dying together.   Of course, Lingis reminds us that we should not see the rational community and the community of those that have nothing in common as two separate communities. These are not two options that we can choose from. Rather, "this [second] communication is other than and prior to, and it doubles up our communication as representatives of the rational community." It "troubles the rational community, as its double or its shadow" (Lingis 1994, p. 10).

When thinking about the communion of community, Jean-Luc Nancy (2000, 2008) starts differently. For him, community is more primordial than personhood (individual subjectivity): "[t]*hat Being is being-with, absolutely, this is what we must think* (Nancy 2000, p. 61). Our personhood is itself only a derivative form of our original community. Our being is that of always and already being-in-common. Thus, a community is not formed by bringing or adding together independent and self-sufficient beings in order to form some sort of collective. Rather, our original relatedness is already constitutive of who we are prior to becoming an individual.   Significantly, however, this community (or relationality) does not have an identity. That is, something *immanent* in it that needs to be

brought out and put to work. According to Nancy, such thinking of community—as having something in common, an immanent identity, that must be put to work—is totalitarian (and shared by all totalitarian thought) (Nancy 2000). Such thinking is in effect the closure of the very possibility of an ethical encounter. It assigns to community a common being, an essence, which needs to be brought out by what he calls *subject-work*—or perhaps what one might call *identity work*. We can think of the many violent things being done in the name of identity-work (be it humanity, religion, nation, people, self-affirmation, common good, justice, even ethics). Indeed, identity work has become a major preoccupation for the post-modern subject and late capitalism—mostly in search of transcendence, or as an attempt to cover over the unbearable finitude of our existence.

In opposition to this notion of community, based on identity, Nancy proposes a notion of community based on finitude—"finitude, or the infinite lack of infinite identity, if we can risk such a formulation, is what makes community. That is, community is made or formed by the retreat or subtraction of something…" (Nancy 2000, p. 18/19). This finitude—or one might say un-working of identity—does not allow us to contain either the world or ourselves—to be a self-sufficient subject, identical to ourselves. Instead, we are lost in a condition of plurality—our always and already being-withness, one might say. The essence of community is this plurality—that we are always and already different from one another. This difference, or heterogeneity, is something we share, something that makes sharing possible as such—it is what we have in common (Nancy 2000, Watkin 2007). This difference, this singularity, is *embodied and ecstatic*. As such, it is exposed and vulnerable to the other. It is always and already affected, touched, and in a sense invaded by the other. This radical openness of the body compels the subject into relations with others, as an already entangled being. This porous, always open horizon—of embodied beings—is where singularities touch, and are touched. It is as singular bodies that community (and ethics) becomes possible. Bodies are 'earthlings' in Lingis' idiom—they have weight and edges. Bodies in-the-world are singular in that no two bodies can occupy the same space (or one might rather say place, in Malpas' (2008) terms). I cannot take the other's place, I cannot speak (or listen) for her. My body is the limit of what can be known. The moment I touch another body I am reminded of this limit. Yet, the touch also allows for exposure, for the possibility of an ethical encounter (Lingis 1994, Benso 2000, Nancy 2000).

I want to suggest, with Lingis, Nancy and Benso, that touch is, in some sense, the condition of possibility of an ethics for those who have nothing in common. Not just the human other, but also all other-than-human others—with whom we have absolutely and utterly nothing in common. As finite singular beings we are all already dying together (that is what we share). The universe as it expands and cools down, the tree as it withers away, the bolt as it corrodes, my body as it slowly shuts down—we are all finite 'earthlings' dying together. What can we do? Not reason it out, not cover it over with desperate identity work (of self and others). We can reach out and touch each other, touchingly. In touch there exists the condition of possibility for ethics to become possible—but it is also fragile, very fragile indeed, and perhaps impossible.

Touching (tactfully) as an ethical encounter with the other, as other

What is touch? How can we understand it? For the traditional Newtonian physicist, touch is nothing other than electromagnetic interactions. What we feel when we touch a tree, a desk, a dog, or another's face is merely the effect of *electromagnetic repulsion*. Indeed, all we really feel is an electromagnetic force pushing us away rather than the stranger whose contact we might seek—in a sense, the other is repulsed by us (as we are by it). However, this is not the case when we consider touch in terms of quantum physics. In quantum wave theory, as Barad (2012) suggests, touching is a

very different matter altogether. In some sense, touching is not repulsion but rather hypersensitive-touching:

> All touching entails an infinite alterity, so that touching the Other is touching all Others, including the "self," and touching the "self" entails touching the strangers within. Even the smallest bits of matter are an unfathomable multitude. Each "individual" always already includes all possible intra-actions with "itself" through all the virtual Others, including those that are noncontemporaneous with "itself." That is, every finite being is always already threaded through with an infinite alterity diffracted through being and time. (p. 214)

Thus, it seems that, in the language of quantum physics, touch is the state of being entangled (always threaded through with alterity) and of withdrawing at the same time—simultaneous proximity and distance, as the quantum entanglement suggests. This is something that Nancy would certainly agree with. Perhaps this condition of always being entangled with an infinite alterity already touching us is the murmur in the background that Lingis (1994) refers to? How can we think this?

Touch, unlike other senses, involves a proximity and an exposure. For example, sight and hearing are the senses for grasping those objects that are given as coming from elsewhere. I can hear and see at a distance. I cannot touch at a distance. Touch involves the proximity of the body. Touch requires contact, an exposure. The body is given, or made real in some sense, in contact. It has to risk itself in some way. In addition, when I touch, I also feel myself being touched by some other thing or being—there is a certain doubling at work. In touching, we experience the boundary, border, or limit of ourselves. In a sense, touching is what recalls our finitude. It shows up the fact that I am not infinitely extended. I am instead a fragile, finite, and singular being. Thus, touch is always in some sense a limit experience. It can approach the boundary of the other, but it cannot properly go beyond it, even if it is entangled with it. Derrida (2005) expresses this limit of touching as follows:

> It is touching that touches upon the limit, its own "proper-improper" limit, that is to say, on the untouchable on whose border it touches... To touch is to touch a border, however deeply one may penetrate, and it is thus to touch by approaching indefinitely the Inaccessible of whatever remains beyond the border, on the other side. (p. 297)

In touching, the singular reality of the other, 'on the other side', is also given to me, albeit in some ambiguous way. Aristotle (in On Physics and on the Soul) suggested that touching is in itself nothing other than the very experience of heterogeneity. This encounter with heterogeneity is the very experience of being exposed—we feel in touch with something, but also exposed to the edges of an uncertain body, touching us back. In short: I am affected. As a body in touch with the world—affected by it—I become a lived body—touching the world and being touched by it. Or, more precisely, I am a lived body because I am always and already touched or affected by the other, already "threaded through with an infinite alterity". It is perhaps the acknowledgement of this irreducible double sense of touch—of the simultaneity of touching and being touched—that is behind our use of the word 'touching' or 'being touched' to describe the experience of being already affected. However, it is an affectedness where the source of the affection itself is not given, a sort of tactful contact.

In considering the work of Nancy, Derrida (2005) suggests that in touch there is also something else at stake—what he calls the law of tact:

> For there is a law of tact. Perhaps the law is always a law of tact. *And one should understand tact, not in the common sense of the tactile, but in the sense of knowing how to touch without touching, without touching too much, where touching is already too much. Tact touches on the origin of the law. Just barely. At the limit*. (Derrida 2005, p. 67 emphasis added)

For Derrida, there is always a counter-movement involved in touching. Touching is not just a way of making contact, it is also a mode of distancing contemporaneous with the very touch. Nancy proposes that between bodies there is always a contiguity—we are always and already bodies touching other bodies, indeed, already bodies because of this very touch—but there is not continuity. This extreme proximity to others, of touching, however, simultaneously reveals a profound distance—a distant horizon that never seems to come closer no matter how vigorously we approach it. In spite of this, the other bodies touch us back. Thus, Nancy suggests that "[a]ll of being is in touch with all of being, but the law of touching is separation; moreover, it is the heterogeneity of surfaces that touch each other. Con*tact* is beyond fullness and emptiness, beyond connection and disconnection" (Nancy 2000, p. 5 emphasis added).

Let us explore further these two moments (or one might say movements) of touch—what we might call *touch as contact* and *touch as tact*. It would not be controversial to say that touch as contact is fundamental to the production of knowledge, that is, to epistemology. The only way to know something is to touch it, we know through contact. However, what does this contact do? Touching as contact, in its touching of other bodies, aims to register differences (to make distinctions). The cyberneticist Gregory Bateson (1979), in his book *Mind and Nature*, suggested that in cybernetics *information is a difference that make a difference*. The touch must not just register—or, more properly said, bring to presence—differences (is it hard, soft, cold, wet, positive, negative, or just different, etc.). These differences must also make a difference. That is, they must become, in some sense, relevant differences within a set of propositions, a theory, a cosmology, and so forth. Why? So that they might confirm the self-certainty of the subject (or the rational community, more broadly). To touch, epistemologically, is an attempt to know the stranger by subsuming her into the categories of the same—touch as contact. It is a logic that attempts to place the other in the order of knowledge, precisely. That is, to confer on her a more or less exact identity that would render her body knowable and orderable as either significant or insignificant. In its extreme form, touch as contact will attempt to push forward against every boundary, and invent increasingly complex technologies of touch, in pursuit of bringing to presence these differences that make a difference—think of the Large Hadron Collider, for example. Moreover, in epistemological contact, there should ideally not be any exposure to the other. The scientist must protect herself and actively withdraw herself (anything specific to her, her own singularity) in order to not contaminate, or be contaminated by, the touch of contact. In this contact, we are compelled—if at all possible—to silence the interpellations of the law of tact. Of course, what this notion of contact fails to appreciate is that it is conditioned by something more primordial, the touch of tact.

Touching as tact is different. I would suggest, with Derrida and Nancy, that touch as tact functions by touching without touching, or touching tactfully (or with tenderness, Benso (2000) might say). Such touching does not seek to register differences, but rather withdraws, or steps back, in the very moment of contact. It hesitates and it acknowledges that in touching the other there is always something irreducible which cannot be touched. This stepping back is indeed necessary to touch the other in a truly touching way. This touching touch is acutely aware of the limit inherent in touching (and its potential for violence]. Touch as tact, as Derrida reminds us, is "to break with immediacy, with the immediate given wrongly associated with touch and on which all bets are always

placed…"(Derrida 2005, p. 293). To touch tactfully is *to be utterly indifferent to differences*—a complete passivity. Tactful touching suspends the desire to register differences – it seeks (if it seeks at all) absolutely to not be informed. On the contrary, it resolves to be exposed, to be vulnerable to the possibility of being touched by the other—in some way, beyond the registers of consciousness, of contact, of connection. Indeed, beyond everything that might be brought to present in the touch itself. In the tact of almost touching (but not quite), the other's body offers itself as a weighty matter "without anything to articulate, without anything to discourse about, without anything to add to them" (Nancy 1994, p. 197). Weighty, not in the sense of gravitational force but rather as an ethical force—not to be resisted but purely to be exposed to, silently. Lingis suggests "And in the ethical relationship that makes contact with the other's vulnerability and mortality…tact is made of silence" (Lingis 2007, p. 5). We should also note, before moving on, that it is indeed possible to touch tactfully with our other senses, as Derrida (2005) suggests. We can see and hear tactfully. In being tactful we become affected, questioned, disturbed, less secure, and as such open to the interpellations of the other, as exactly other.

I would suggest that the radical openness (and ethical weightiness) of tact—as an ethos of dwelling or being-with the other—is further implied in the fact that the least valued in society are often referred to as *untouchables* (think of the Hindu cast system or the waste sites at the edges of our cities). They are believed to be untouchable because touching them would defile or pollute the one that touches. However, perhaps they are deemed to be untouchable because touching them would expose the one touching to the violent injustice (even horror) of their assumed identity (as more or less worthless reality, as waste). Does such untouchability not acknowledge that something is given through touch, something that is irreducible to the immediately given of the contact—and is perhaps too much to endure? In this irreducible exposure, of the tactfulness of any and all touch, there is an ethical murmur in the background, haunting us, even if we desperately try to ignore it—by designating some things as untouchable. To shield us from this disturbing touch of the other we limit our touch—we simply do not touch, except purposefully, that which is knowable, useful, or beautiful (as suggested by William Morris). The rest, it seems, is untouchable—and when we touch them, we touch them tactlessly, preferably with gloves on. Having said that, we need to acknowledge that when we take the gloves off, when we touch touchingly, we are exposed, at risk. For ethics to be a true being-with (an ethos) the 'I' needs to be at risk—always and already at risk, exposed to its own finitude. Indeed, this is what gives ethics its urgency, what makes it more than 'just hanging around' with the other. As Lingis suggests "community forms when one exposes oneself to the naked one, the destitute one, the outcast, the dying one. One enters into community not by affirming oneself and one's forces but by exposing oneself to expenditure at a loss, to sacrifice" (Lingis 1994, p. 11/2).

Concluding comments

Where does this discussion leave us, practically? Somewhere and nowhere, one might suggest. Can we be ethically with all other others, also the other-than-human others—truly, with all of those with whom we have nothing in common? Can we become attuned to the murmur in the background already touching us tactfully? Indeed, I would suggest that we might. I would suggest that the conditions of possibility for an ethical encounter (or exposure) is given in tactful touching—touching and being touched, tactfully, perhaps. Was that what the bolt already touching me was suggesting,

ever so silently, as it lay there passively next to my keyboard? Was it the tactful touching of the old watches and the old eyeglasses in my desk drawers that made me want to hold onto them, to touch them tactfully? Were they, in touching me, exposing me to the community of the dying, recalling in some strange way our shared finitude? But this tactful touching is almost imperceptible, so fragile. We can so easily miss it in the busyness of everyday life. It calls for an attunement outside of reason, knowledge, and so forth.   Our ethical challenge is to live tactfully with all others, without the certainty of the rational community, or of contact. It is a radical exposure that is almost too much, and where I am always and already at risk. Having said this, we must also acknowledge that this would be impossible. The sheer weightiness of my being-in-the-world would be unbearable, and my existence would be very precarious—an impossible possibility as Derrida would say. But that is the point. Perhaps the discarded bolt, in touching me tactfully—not as this or that particular thing (it being a bolt is irrelevant)—was exposing me to the faint and indistinct background murmur already there. A faint murmur that recalled the fact that I am always already tactfully entangled with all others—and that this entanglement is finite, fragile and always at risk. A murmur that questions my assumed authority and self-certainty, radically. That allows me to somehow risk myself as one that is always and already dying—not alone, but with all those very many strangers with whom I have nothing in common, already touching me, tactfully. This seems to me to be the ethics of dwelling with all others, human and more-than-human alike, an impossible possibility. But that is all we have.

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