See It Feelingly

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Annie Dillard once wrote, “I think that the dying pray at the last not ‘please,’ but ‘thank you,’ as a guest thanks his host at the door.” Finishing this sort of book has been a little bit like dying, and I, too, wish to thank my gracious hosts: DJ, Tito, Jamie, Dora, Eugenie, and Temple. What a dinner party of ideas they each put on! Their remarkable generosity gave life to this project. What I did with it—well, that’s my responsibility, not theirs. I hope, at the very least, that I have honored their participation by foregrounding their own words and by dramatizing repeatedly the intractable problem of any anthropological endeavor. Mistakes are inevitable, but interpretive humility is not.

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Finally, since this is a book about teaching—autistics teaching me, me (sort of) teaching autistics—I’ll conclude with a short list of teachers who made a difference in my life. From middle school and high school: Charles Campbell, Tad Cavuoti, Bill Doswell, Rod Dulany, Gail Nields, Ed Sundt, Peter Swineheart, and Fred Zirm. From college: George Creeger, Annie Dillard, Sherman Hawkins, Gertrude Hughes, Priscilla Meyer, John Paoletti, F. D. Reeve, Richard Stamelman, and John Tivenan. From graduate school: Don Ault, Marsha Bryant, Michael Hofmann, David Leverenz, John Murchek, Robert Ray, Robert Rothstein, Stephanie Smith, and Phil Wegner. These teachers showed me what a life of the mind (and body) could be.

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