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It is difficult to compose acknowledgments for a collection of essays that were written over the past twenty-five years without lapsing into some kind of semi-biographical account. Obviously, the number of friends and colleagues who have supported this writer and his writings are numerous by now, even though, as it seems at times of delusion, never numerous enough.

If given the space and the time, I would gladly contemplate the full diversity of these communicative bonds, the manifest and latent dialogues over shorter or lengthier periods of time, over sometimes considerable distances, both spatial-geographic and temporal-generational. Or I would talk about the peculiar differences among debts of gratitude: some were incurred in brief encounters and others have grown over a quarter of a century.

Among the brief encounters—and I might as well begin with them, since they make up one crucial part of my daily professional life—are the numerous exchanges with students in lectures and in the seminar room, or in the discussion of dissertation work. A question or a response can suddenly reveal a shared concern, a problem, or a newly discovered object or a challenging theoretical problem, and thereby signal and sustain the dialogic transformations of seeing, thinking, and writing, giving evidence of the partial success of the often dubious project of pedagogy.