

Preface

As with all academic work, my debts are more numerous than I can list. The essays in this collection were all written while I was Director of the ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society (Egenis), and I am deeply indebted to the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council, UK) for this very generous support. I have also received major support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Leverhulme Trust, both of which have made crucial contributions to making this work possible.

Directing a Research Centre has given me the great privilege of working day-to-day with a team of people with both shared interests and diverse expertise, something that I have found indispensable in trying to get to grips with the complexities of contemporary biology. A particular pleasure has been working with the original co-Directors of Egenis, Barry Barnes and Steve Hughes. Providing, respectively, the insights of a pioneer and leader in the sociology of science, and the insider knowledge of a scientist with a lifetime's experience at the forefront of genomics, these two colleagues and friends were essential to the intellectual environment and success of the centre. With Barry I also had the pleasure of co-authoring a book on genomics (Barnes and Dupré 2008), a project that taught me a lot about molecular biology, but also gave me a much better understanding of Barry's distinctive and important insights into science in general.

Another obvious debt is to Maureen O'Malley, with whom I co-authored three of the papers here reprinted. Among many talents, Maureen has a unique capacity for absorbing and synthesizing scientific ideas. She came to Egenis after three years in the laboratory of the leading microbiologist Ford Doolittle in Dalhousie (to whom I am also thereby indebted), and brought with her an extraordinary grasp of the state of several areas of current biology, including microbiology. Her collaboration made it possible for me to make something of a long-held but inchoate suspicion that attention to microbes could transform the philosophy of biology. I must also make special mention of Christine Hauskeller, a founder member of Egenis, now replacing Barry Barnes as co-Director. Among her many contributions, she has sometimes had occasion to remind me—in the face of ever more fascinating engagements with contemporary biology—that there is more to philosophy of science than science. Other present and past colleagues at Egenis from whom I have learned much include Jane Calvert, Paul Griffiths, Susan Kelly, Sabina Leonelli, Staffan Müller-Wille, and Paula Saukko.

Egenis has been fortunate to have had a stream of fine PhD students passing through and on to other, if not greater, things, and many of them have also left marks on my

thinking. I would particularly mention Ann Barwich, Adam Bostanci, Jonathan Davies, Trijsje Fransen, Richard Holdsworth, Ingrid Holme, Pierre-Olivier Methot, Mila Petrova, Alex Powell, and Kai Wang. And I must apologize for not mentioning a number of other students with whom I did not work closely personally, but who contributed in many ways to the intellectual and social life of the centre.

Mentioning the staff and students of Egenis is the relatively easy part, though even here I fear that there may be egregious omissions. But we have also been fortunate to be able to host a good number of conferences and workshops, visitors over various periods of time, and an almost weekly series of seminar speakers. On top of this, I have had the opportunity to present parts of this work at conferences, seminars, and lecture series in many parts of the world. Consequently I have benefited from interactions with far more people than I could possibly recall to give proper thanks. I started to write a list, but after the first dozen or so names, I realized the task was hopeless; I have been in the academic world too long to count my debts or, more happily, to list my friendships. But thanks to all; I hope you know who you are. Some specific debts are mentioned in footnotes to individual chapters.

A major determinant of whether life is a pleasure or a burden as a Centre Director is the administrative staff, and here I have been very fortunate. Very special thanks go to Cheryl Sutton, the perfect research administrator. Cheryl effectively ran the Centre for seven years, shielding me from vast quantities of administrative routine and annoyance and thereby doing more than anyone to allow me to write. Her successor, Sue Harding, has an impossible act to follow, but has made a good start. And special thanks to Alex Powell for his splendid work on the index. Egenis and I have also been splendidly served by Annalisa Macnamara, Sarah Silverman, Saira Kidangan, and Laura Dobb; and by our communications officers, Ginny Russell (subsequently a PhD student and Research Fellow here) and Claire Packman.

Finally, as always, my greatest debt is to my partner, Regenia Gagnier. Not only has she had to put up with my occasional stress and cover for my domestic absences as various demands of research directing spilled into my home life, but she has remained my most reliable and insightful critic and commentator. That her work is not more cited in these essays reflects the depth of her involvement in it, which makes specific contributions impossible to identify. The book is dedicated to our collaboration on the processes of life, our sons Gabriel and Julian Gagnier Dupré.