



Terra Critica Intensive Workshop 13 and 14 January 2017

@ Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf

The Ends of Being Human? Or what if
Culture was Nature all along?

workshop programme

organizers:

Reinhold Görling (Media and Culture Studies, HHU)

Birgit M Kaiser (Comparative Literature, UU)

Kathrin Thiele (Graduate Gender Programme, UU)

Stephan Trinkaus (Media and Culture Studies, HHU)

C r i t i c a

The workshop is funded by the *Aspasia Fund, Utrecht University*
and the *Institut für Medien und Kulturwissenschaft, Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf*
in Kooperation mit der *Kunstakademie Düsseldorf* und dem *Atelier für poetische und ökologische
Praktiken des Wissens*

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The Ends of Being Human? Or what if Culture was Nature all along?

The workshop asks the two questions in its title back to back: What are the ends of being human, when the onto-epistemological shifts recently effected by critical theories, Radical Black and feminist/queer scholarship and new materialisms are thought through to their end? And how can the question of humanicity be asked today in meaningful ways, if culture was nature all along? That is, how can the question be asked after centuries of Eurocentric humanism and its manifold critiques, how can it be informed by the legacies of decolonial and poststructuralist work and insist on questioning the nature-culture divide which has been at the bottom of the figure of the human as 'we' know it? How to re-turn to the human while affirming the move towards the posthuman (Barad, Braidotti), the posthumous (Haraway), as creatures of the Anthropocene (Colebrook, Tsing) or in times of extinction? For good reasons, the figure of the human – delineated by European humanism as 'Man' (Wynter) – seems to be abandoned by today's critical discourses. Resonating with this set of questions, the workshop is part of a wider research project which brings these diverse angles into conversation (forthcoming as special issue on "The Ends of Being Human? Re-turning (to) the Question" with *PhiloSOPHIA* in 2018).

During the workshop itself, we want to concretely focus on possible new openings to the *questions* of the human and of humanicity, so as not to abandon anything – neither humanism(s), antihumanism(s) or posthumanism(s), and yet "to open the question of the human, and writing, as if for the first time" (Kirby 2011, 21). What can we *not* afford to not think regarding 'humanicity'? How to inhabit the question of the human (that also includes its post- or in-human dimensions) in ways inspired by feminist, new materialist perspectives? We will center our discussions around the work of Vicki Kirby, especially also her forthcoming publication *What if Culture was Nature all along?* (Edinburgh UP 2017), and related work.

Workshop Programme

Friday, 13 January 2017

time 14.45-18.00

location Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Eiskellerstraße 1, 1. Stock, Raum 104

Saturday, 14 January 2017

time 10.00-16.30

location Haus der Universität, Schadowplatz 14, 2. Stock, Raum 2

for directions to the locations, see attached maps

Critica

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Friday, 13 January 2017

14.45-15.00

Welcome by the organizers

15.00-18.00 Session 1

***What if Culture was Nature all along?* (moderation: K. Thiele)**

Our discussion will be based on these readings:

- Vicki Kirby, "Forword" (viii-xiii) in *What if Culture was Nature All Along?* edited by Vicki Kirby, Edinburgh Press 2017.
- Vicki Kirby, "Chapter 1: Matter out of Place: 'New Materialism' in Review" (1-38) in *What if Culture was Nature All Along?* edited by Vicki Kirby, Edinburgh Press 2017.

Introductory statements: Reinhold Görling und Maximilian Linsenmeier

18.30

Dinner

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Saturday, 14 January 2017

10.00-12.30 Session 2

***Un/limiting Ecologies* (moderation: Birgit M. Kaiser)**

Our discussion will be based on these readings:

- Vinciane Despret, "The Body We Care For: Figures of Anthro-zoo-genesis" *Body & Society* vol. 10, no. 2-3 (2004): 111-134.
- Monica Gagliano, Michael Renton, Martial Depczynski and Stefano Mancuso, "Experience teaches plants to learn faster and forget slower in environments where it matters" *Oecologia* 175 (2014): 63-72. DOI 10.1007/s00442-013-2873-7
- Vicki Kirby, "Un/limited Ecologies" (81-98), in *Eco-Deconstruction Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, edited by Matthias Fritsch, Philippe Lynes and David Wood, Fordham UP (forthcoming).

Introductory statements: Lisa Handel und Stephan Trinkaus

12.30-14.00

Lunch break

14.00-16.30 Session 3

***Staying with the Trouble* (moderation: Reinhold Görling)**

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Our discussion will be based on this reading:

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) 58-98

Introductory statements: Birgit M. Kaiser und Kathrin Thiele

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