

# Terra Critica Intensive Workshop January 13-14, 2017

@ Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf

The Ends of Being Human, or What if  
Culture was Nature all Along?

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, UzK)

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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 with the *Kunstakademie Düsseldorf*  
and the *Institut für poetische und ökologische Praktiken des Wissens*



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

The workshop engages the two questions in the title back to back: What are the ends of being human when the onto-epistemological shifts effectuated by critical theories, radical Black and feminist/queer scholarship, and new materialisms are thought through to their ends? And how can the question of humanicity be asked in meaningful ways if – with Vicki Kirby – we ask ‘what if culture was nature all along’? In our discussion we aim to inquire how the question of the human after centuries of Eurocentric humanism and its manifold critiques can be informed by the legacies of poststructuralist and posthuman/posthumous work that insist on questioning the nature-culture divide that has been at the bottom of the figure of the human as ‘we’ know it? 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, 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 and 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

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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: Kathrin Thiele)**

Our discussion will be based on these readings:

- Vicki Kirby, "Forword", in *What if Culture was Nature All Along?* edited by Vicki Kirby, Edinburgh Press 2017, viii-xii.
- Vicki Kirby, "Matter out of Place: 'New Materialism' in Review", in *What if Culture was Nature All Along?* edited by Vicki Kirby, Edinburgh Press 2017, 1-25.

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", in *Eco-Deconstruction Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, edited by Matthias Fritsch, Philippe Lynes and David Wood, Fordham UP (forthcoming), 81-98.

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Introductory statements: Lisa Handel und Kathrin Thiele

**12.30-14.00**

Lunch break

**14.00-16.30 Session 3**

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

- Donna Haraway, "Sympoiesis: Symbiogenesis and the Lively Arts of Staying with the Trouble", in *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Duke UP 2016, 58-98.

Introductory statements: Birgit M. Kaiser und Stephan Trinkaus

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