posthumanism

(art in the anthropocene)

The aim of this lecture is to provide an introduction to posthumanism and its relation to art-making practices in the age of the anthropocene.

Rob Jones

Ways of Thinking

what is **posthumanism**?

(a new philosophy for the age of the anthropocene?)

(Renaissance) humanism – (Post)humanism

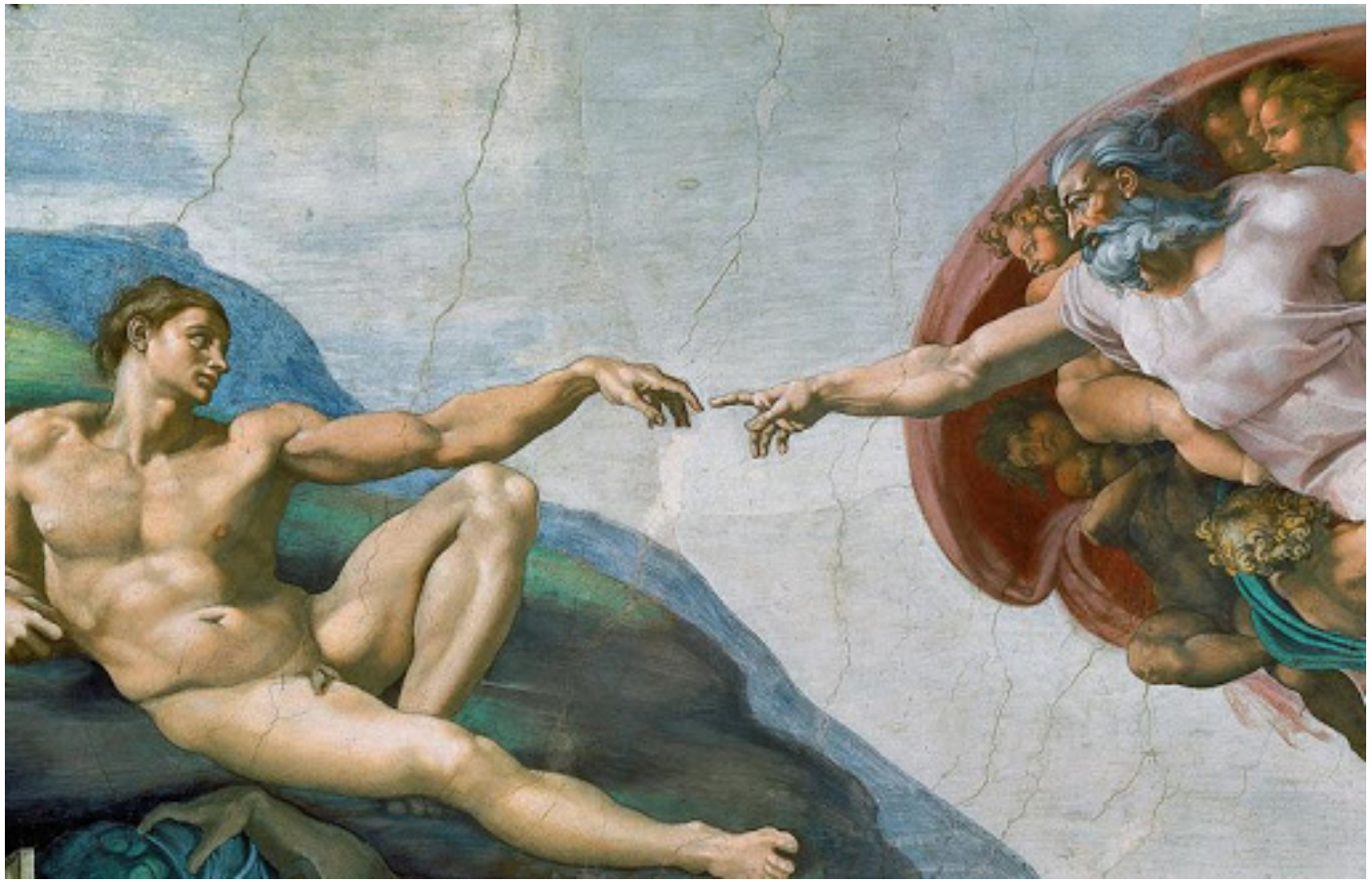
The birth of the human ‘project’…

…what is the future for the human project ?

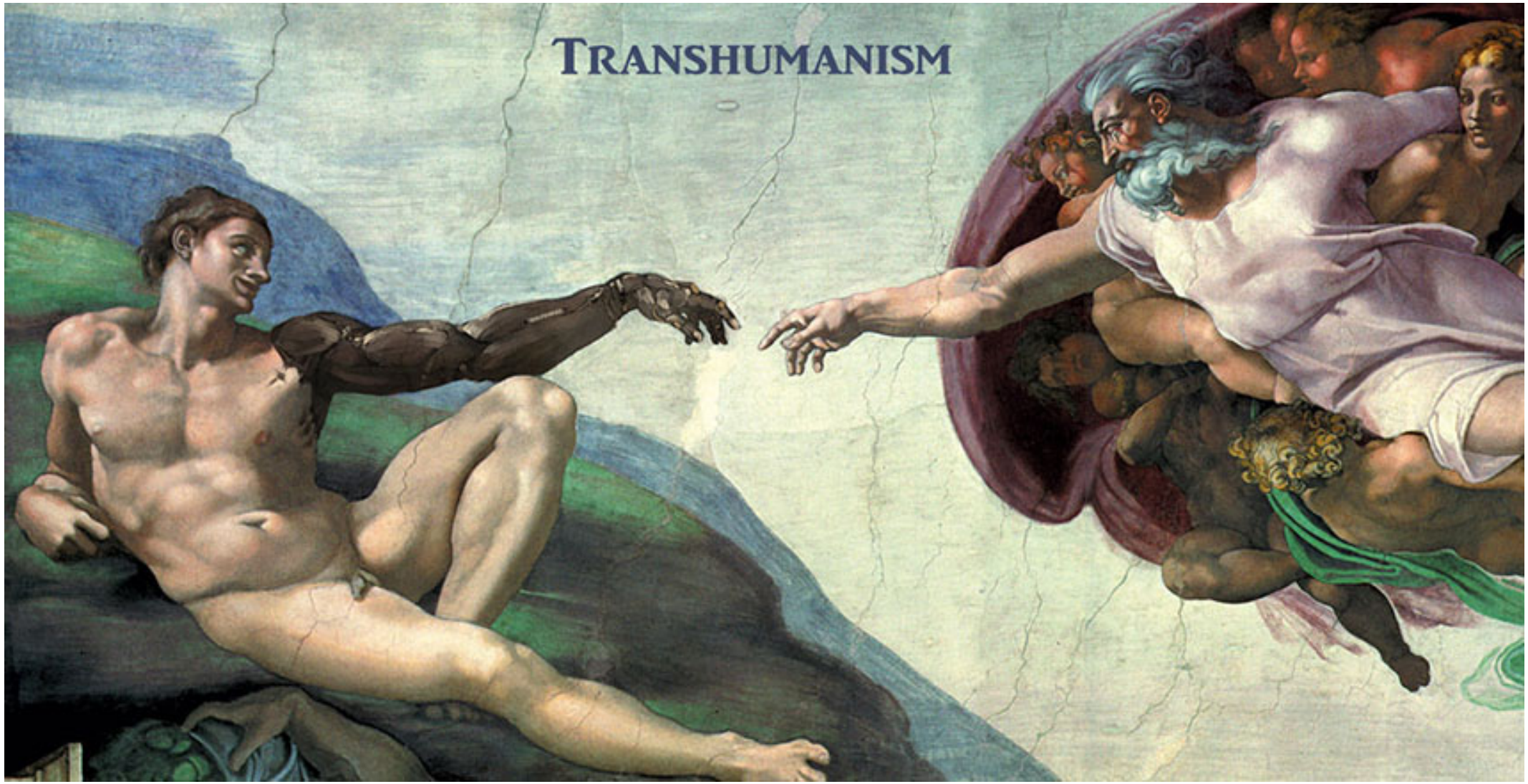
THE HUMAN PROJECT

when did we become ‘human’ ?

themes
and Ideas



The Creation of Adam (1508-1512) Michelangelo

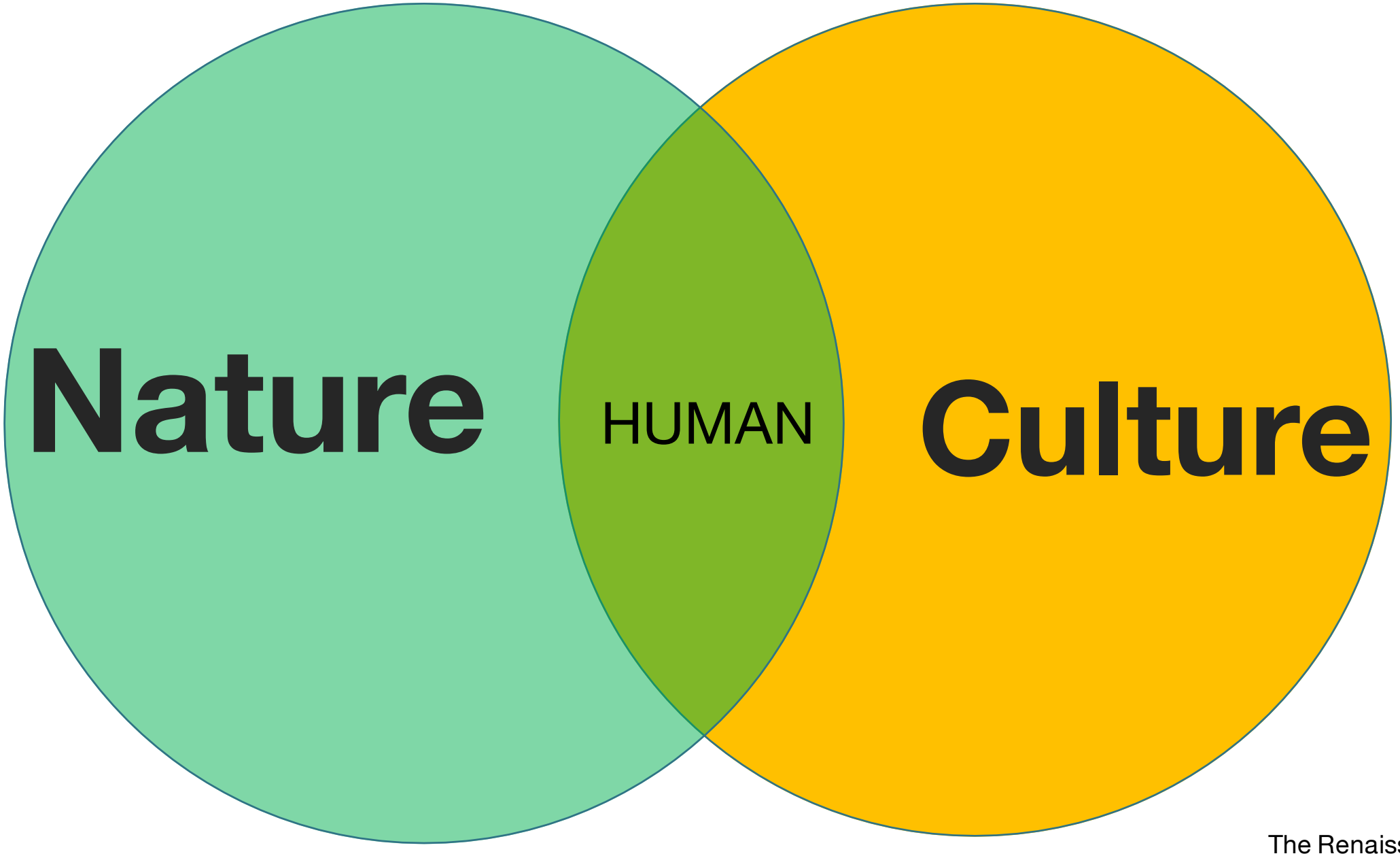

TRANSHUMANISM

The Cartesian subject (after Descartes)

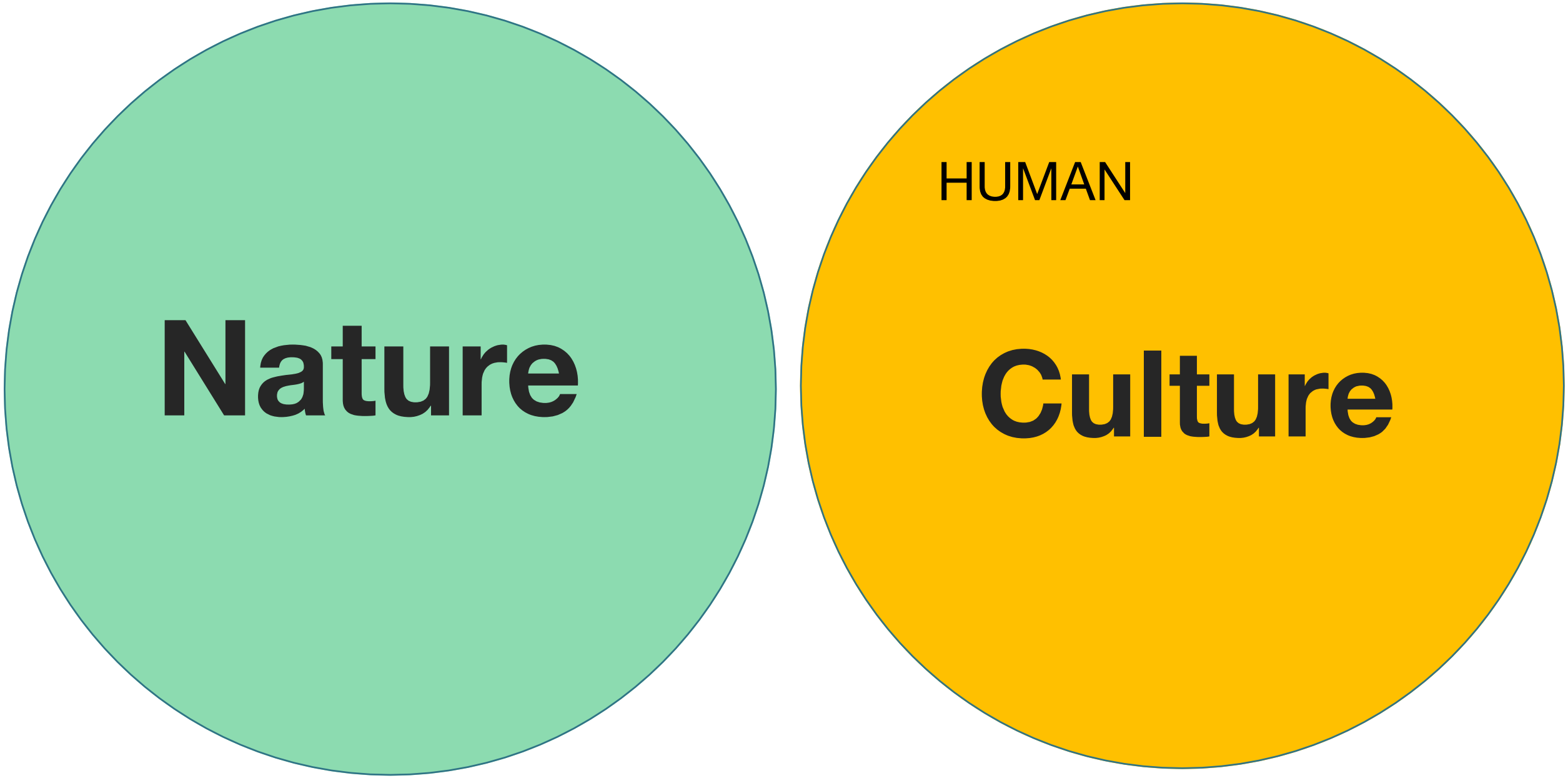
‘The **Cartesian subject** of the cogito, the **Kantian** “community of reasonable beings”, or, in more sociological terms, the subject as citizen, rights-holder, property-owner, and so on…’ (**Cary Wolfe, 2010**).

Wolfe, C., 2010. What is posthumanism? (Vol. 8). U of Minnesota Press.

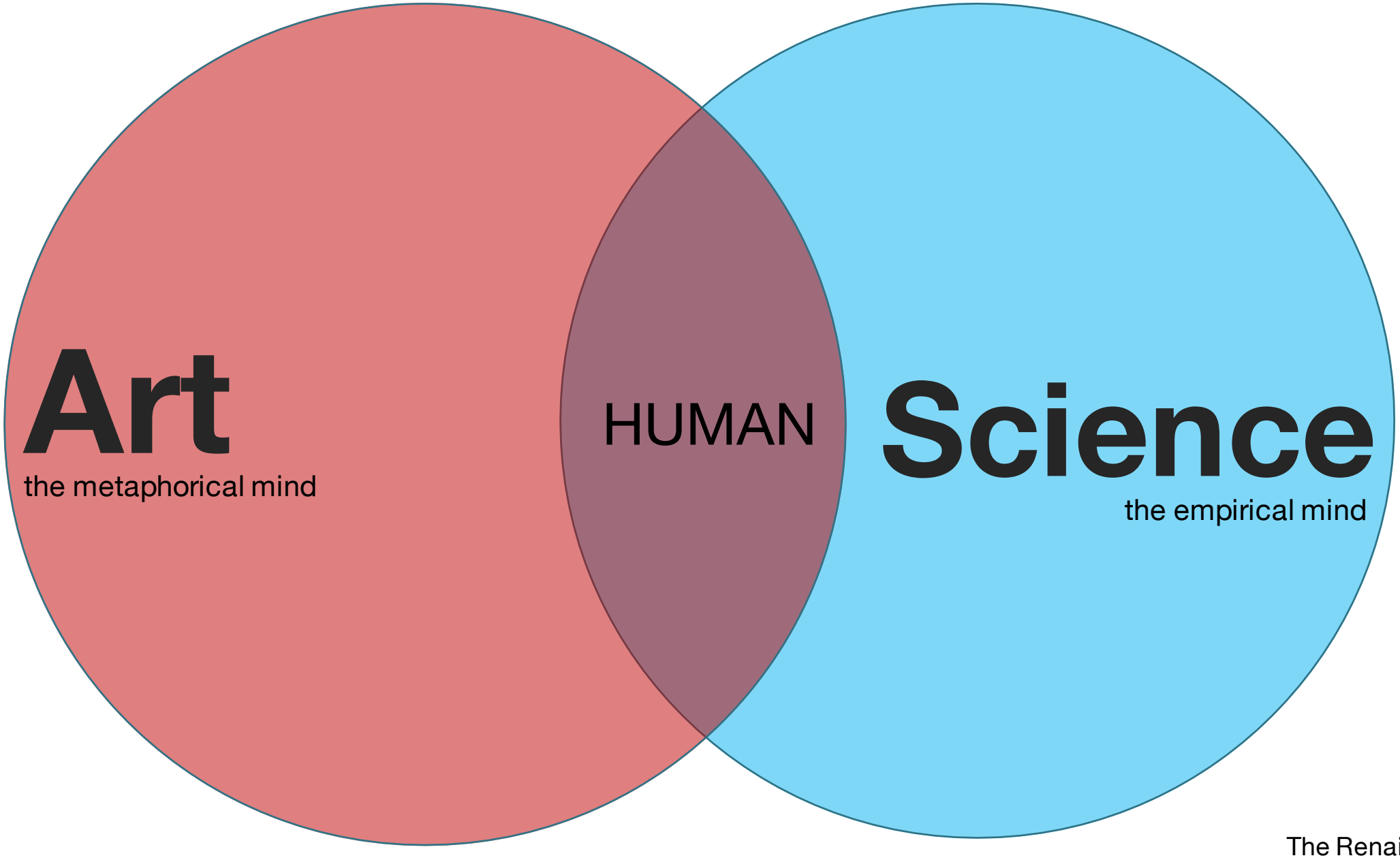
mind-body dualism



The Renaissance Mind



THE CONTEMPORARY CONDITION



The Renaissance Mind

Art

the metaphorical mind

Science

the empirical mind

20th Century

‘The Two Cultures’

C.P. Snow & F.R. Leavis

PLATO

virtual

abstract

ARISTOTLE

physical

real

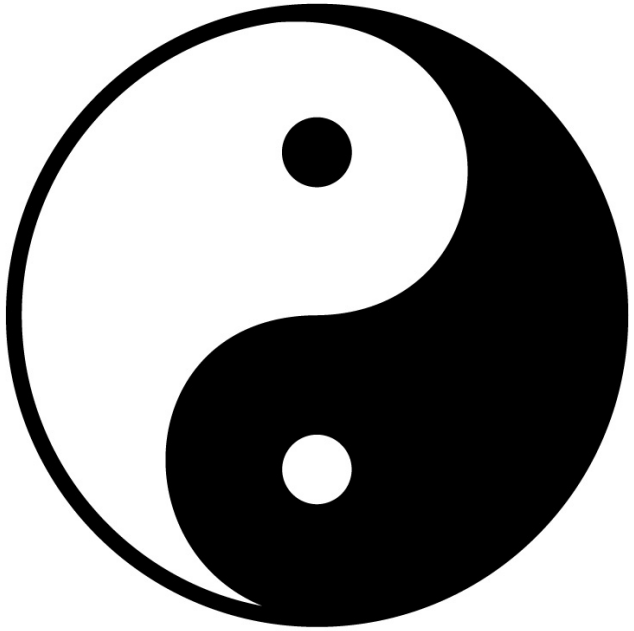
APOLLONIAN	DIONYSIAN
ORDER	CHAOS
IDEAS	EMOTIONS
RATIONAL	IRRATIONAL
LOGIC	INSTINCT
MIND	BODY

The yin yang symbol — order and chaos

Known

Yang

Order
Masculinity
Day
The known
Authoritarianism
Fascism



Unknown

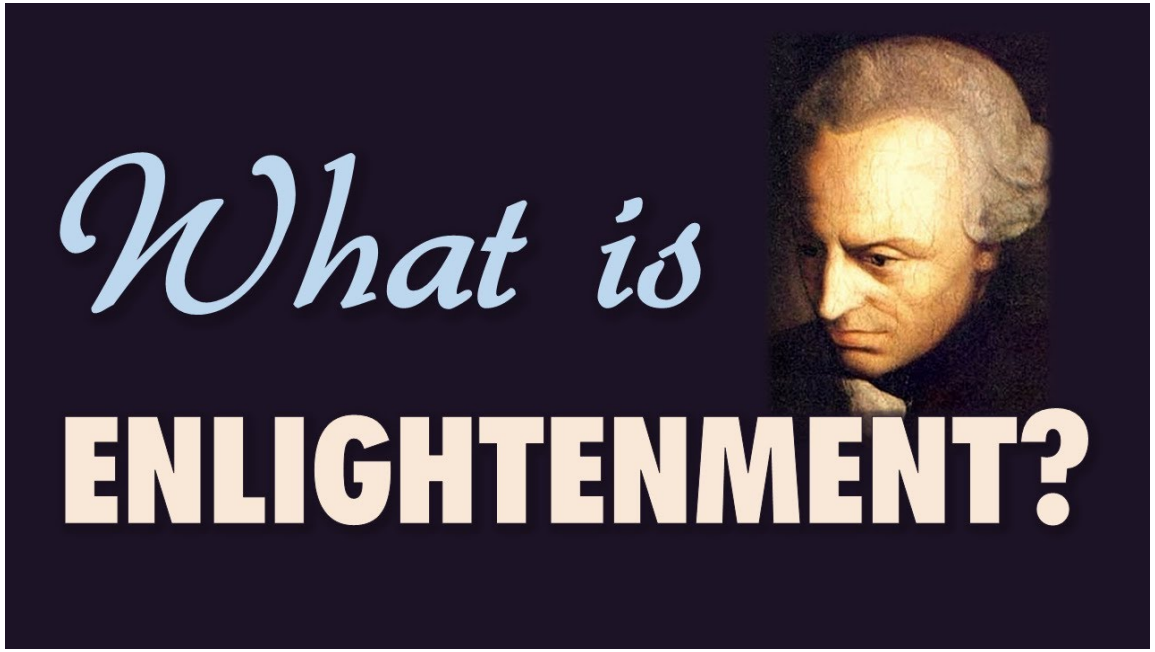
Yin

Chaos
Femininity
Night
The unknown
Decadence
Nihilism

In Ancient Chinese philosophy, **yin and yang is the idea of dualism**, that seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world.

The Age of **Enlightenment**

The **Enlightenment**, also known as **the Age** of Reason, was a philosophical movement that took place primarily in Europe and, later, in North America, during the late 17th and early 18th century. Its participants thought they were illuminating human intellect and culture after the "dark" Middle **Ages**.



- Renes Descartes (1596-1650) – “I think therefore I am”
- The Scientific Revolution – Isaac Newton
- French Revolution – Politics and Ideology
- The Industrial Revolution – James Watt…steam engine
- The ‘Death of God’ – The Age of Rationalism, Skepticism
- Theory of Evolution – Charles Darwin

In his essay 'What Is Enlightenment?' (1784), the German philosopher **Immanuel Kant** summed up the era's motto in the following terms:

'Dare to know! Have courage to use your own reason!'

WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?

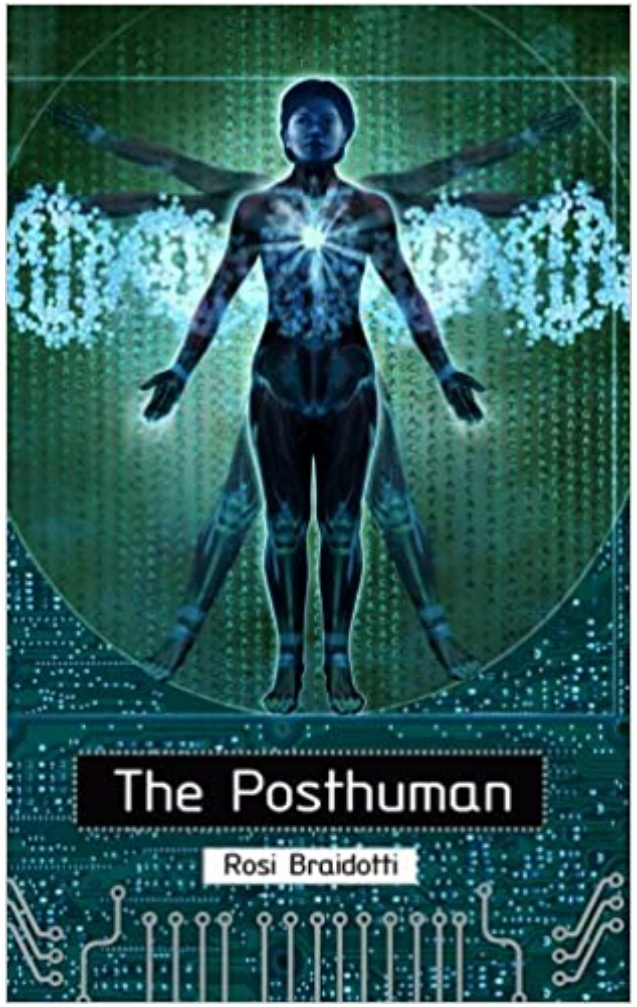
humanism

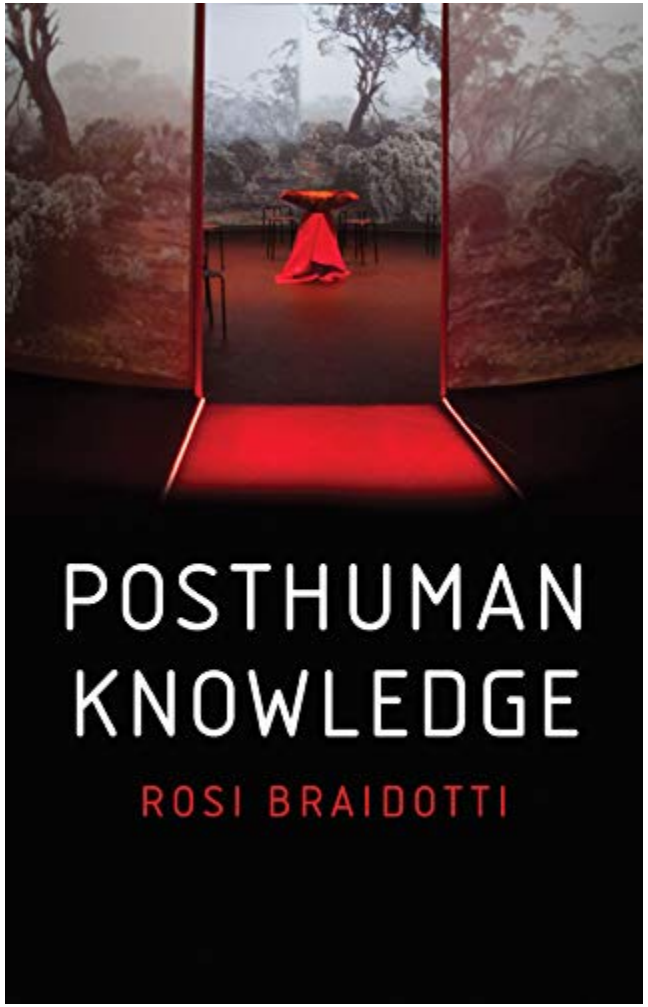
human
(being)

post-humanism

Rosi Braidotti

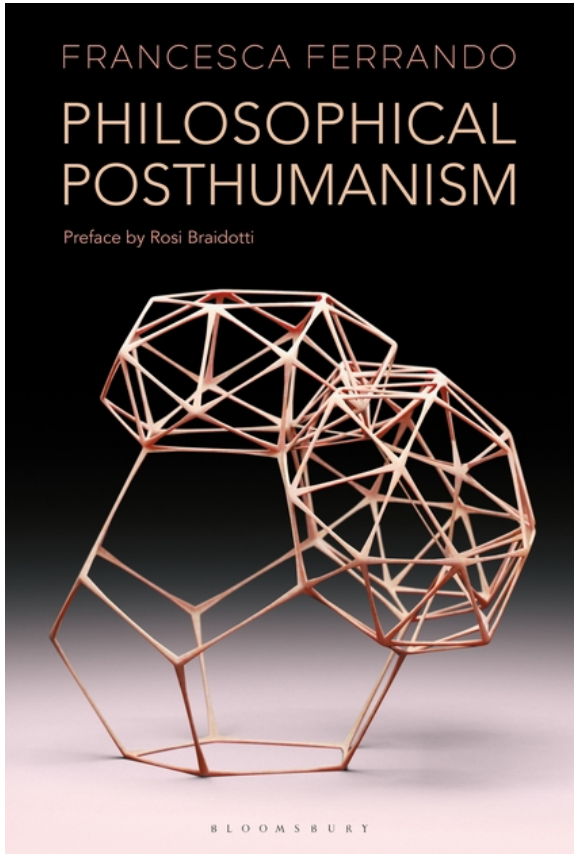
What is the Human in the Humanities Today?





being (ontology) and **knowledge** (epistemology)

post-humanism

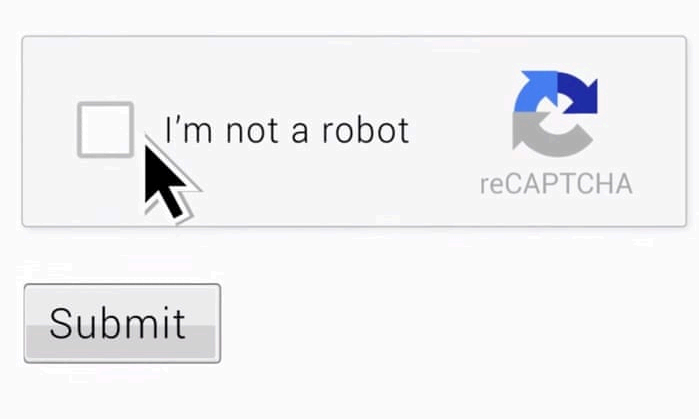


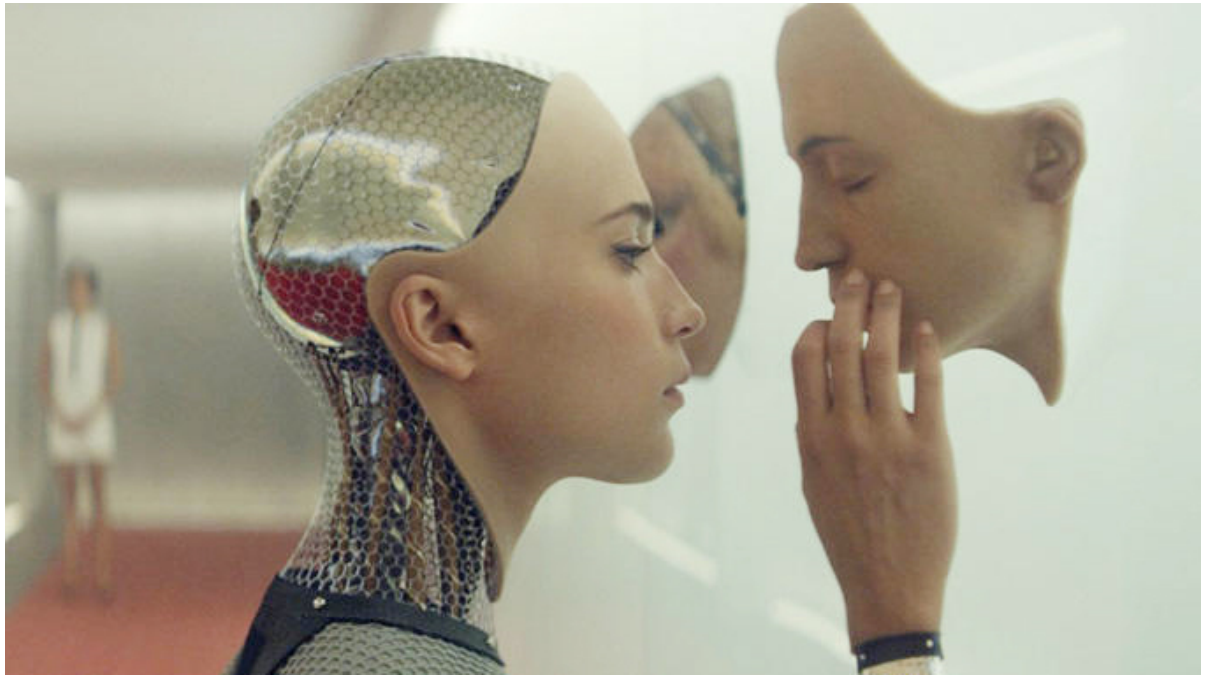
Posthumanism or post-humanism (meaning **"after humanism"** or **"beyond humanism"**) is a term with at least seven definitions according to philosopher **Francesca Ferrando**

1. Anti-humanism
2. Cultural posthumanism
3. Philosophical posthumanism
4. Posthuman condition
5. Transhumanism
6. AI takeover
7. Voluntary Human Extinction

transhumanism

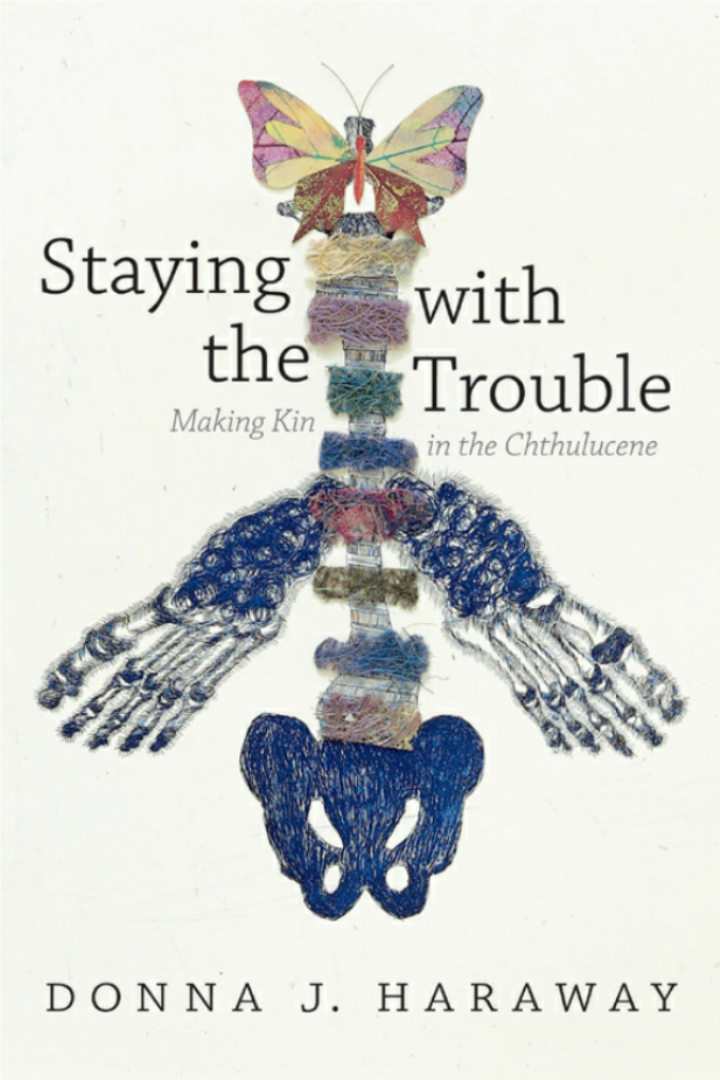
human enhancement



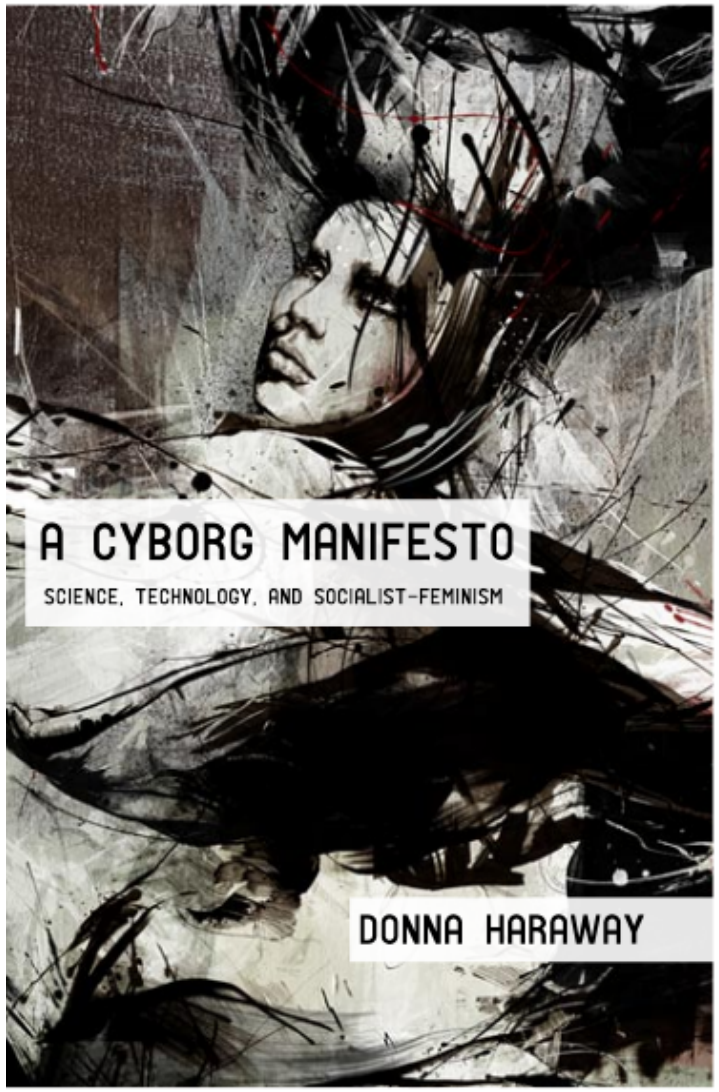


Ex Machina (2014), Dir. Alex Garland

Donna Haraway



Haraway, D.J., 2016. *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.



Haraway, D., 1990. A manifesto for cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s. *Feminism/postmodernism*, pp.190-233.

the **posthuman**
in the
anthropocene

The Posthuman Predicament

Anthropocene Revisited

- anthropocentric v ecocentric
- Custodian approach over nature
- Nature as resource

The Age of the Anthropocene

Anthropocene – A Geological Epoch – The Age of the Humans

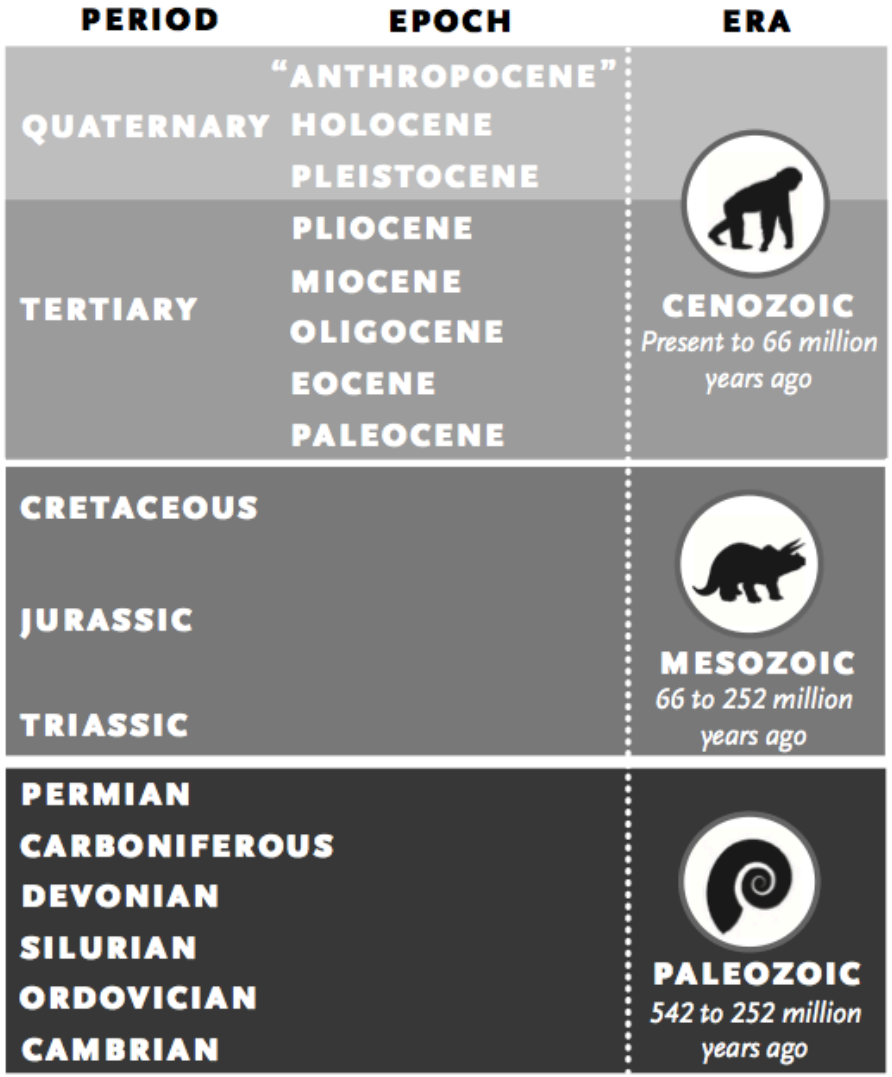
- **Human** ('Man') Versus **Nature**
- The Age of the **Enlightenment**

Humanity's impact on the Earth is now so profound that a new geological epoch – the Anthropocene…

The current epoch, the **Holocene**, is the 12,000 years of stable climate since the last ice age during which all human civilization developed.

But the striking acceleration since the mid-20th century of **carbon dioxide emissions** and **sea level rise**, the **global mass extinction of species**, and the **transformation of land by deforestation** and development mark the end of that slice of geological time.

The Earth is so profoundly changed that the Holocene must give way to the Anthropocene.



The Great Acceleration

Accelerationism and the Anthropocene

Accelerationism may also refer more broadly, and usually pejoratively, to support for the deepening of capitalism in the belief that this will hasten its **self-destructive tendencies** and ultimately lead to its collapse

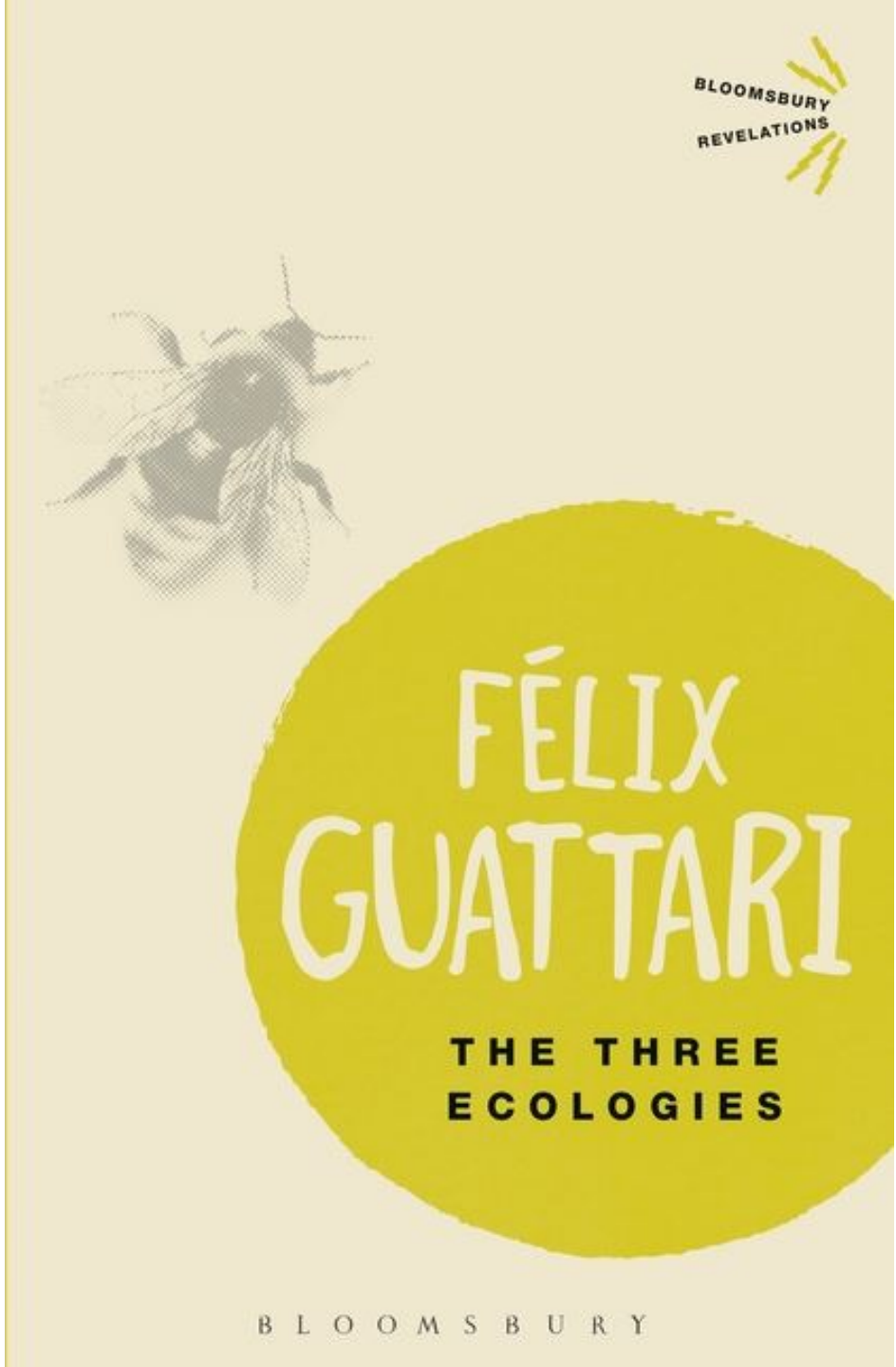
The Three Ecologies

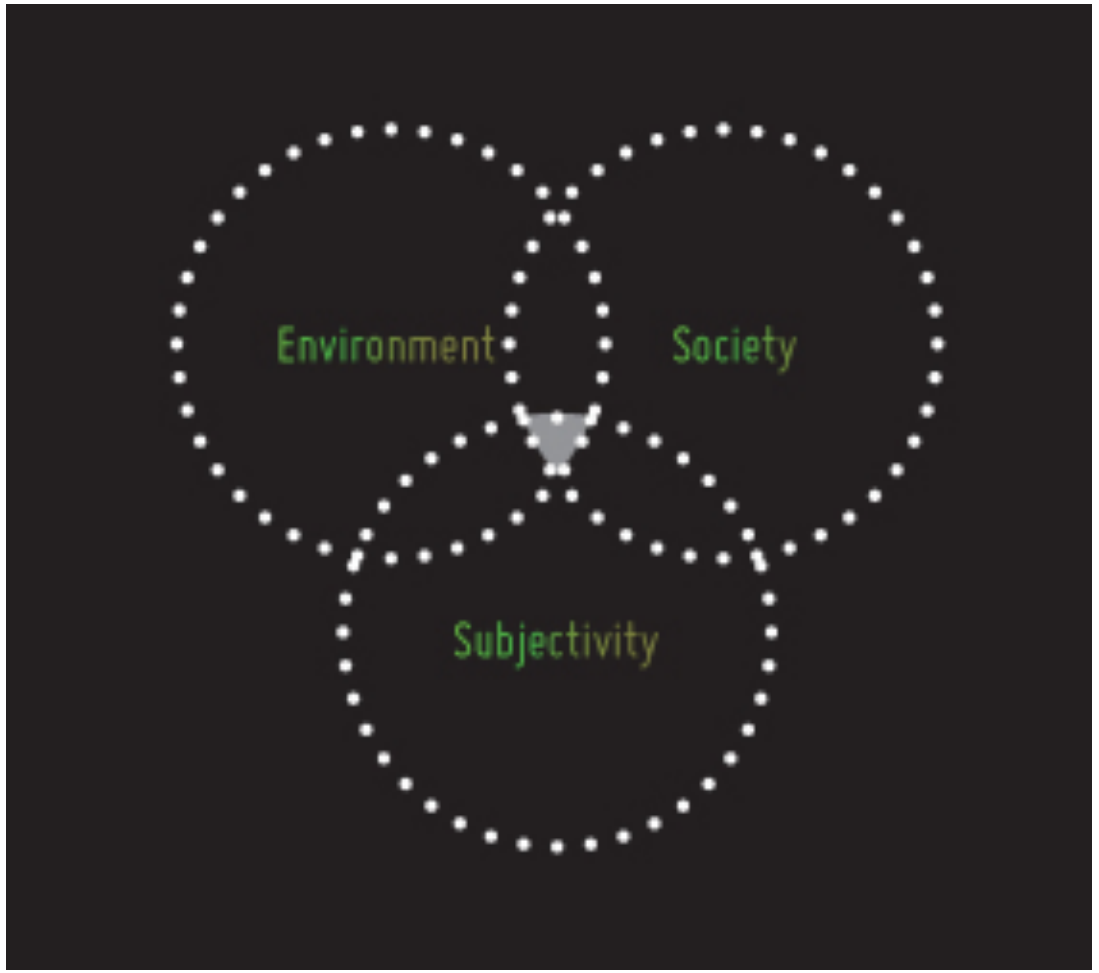
Felix Guattari

Even though ***The Three Ecologies*** was published in 1989, and offers some approaches to the global ecological crisis, most of the problems it highlights still continue today, some have even become more amplified as we persist to collectively commit *ecocide* as a species.

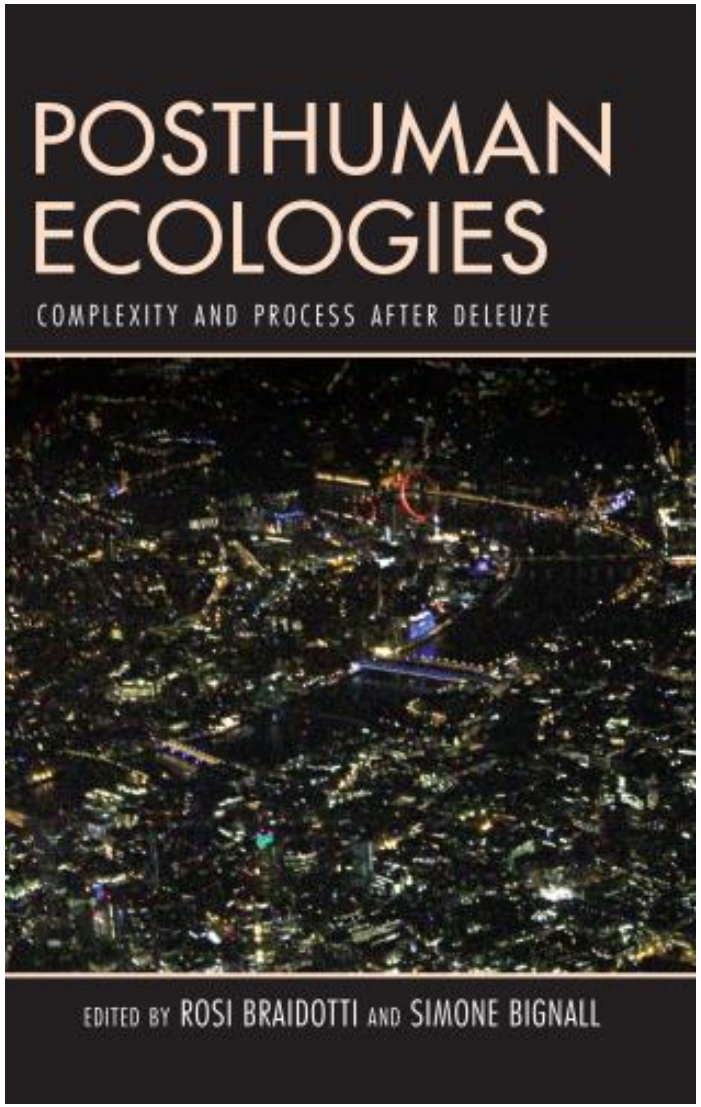
Felix Guattari re-defines the dictionary meaning of the word **ecology**, traditionally limited to the natural world, and extends its meaning to include **human subjective ecologies and socio-political ecologies.**

The main problem with the crisis of our era he asserts lies in the separation of these three registers.





Ecosophical perspective as articulated by Félix Guattari, at the intersection of environmental, social and subjective (mind) domains. The ecosophical concept envisions ‘a reconstruction of social and individual practices’ through both scientific and aesthetic embodiment.



We are in this together – Rosi Braidotti

The Posthuman Condition

The End of Man

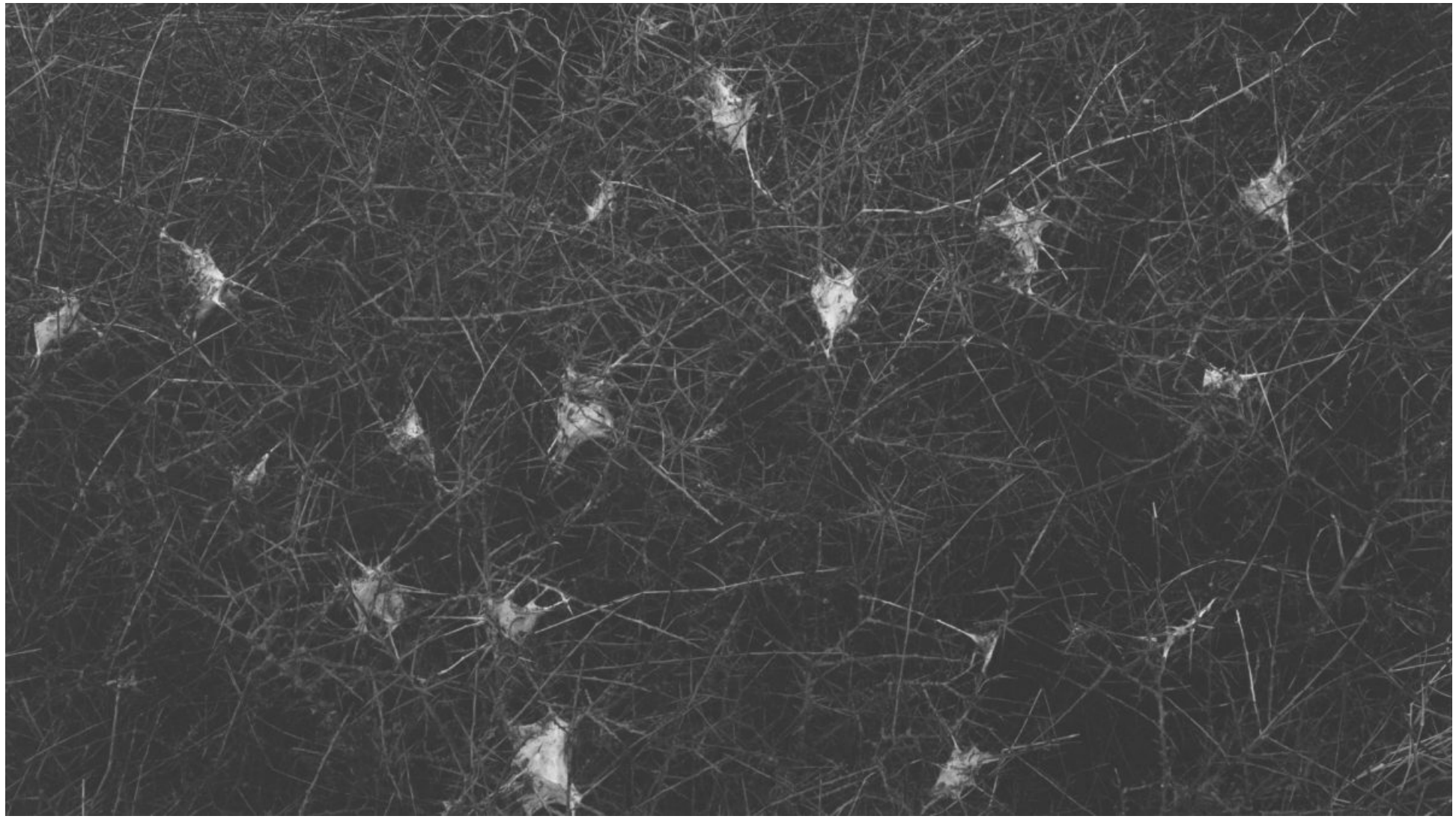
A Feminist Counterapocalypse

Joanna Zylinska

“We need a new way of seeing the Anthropocene”

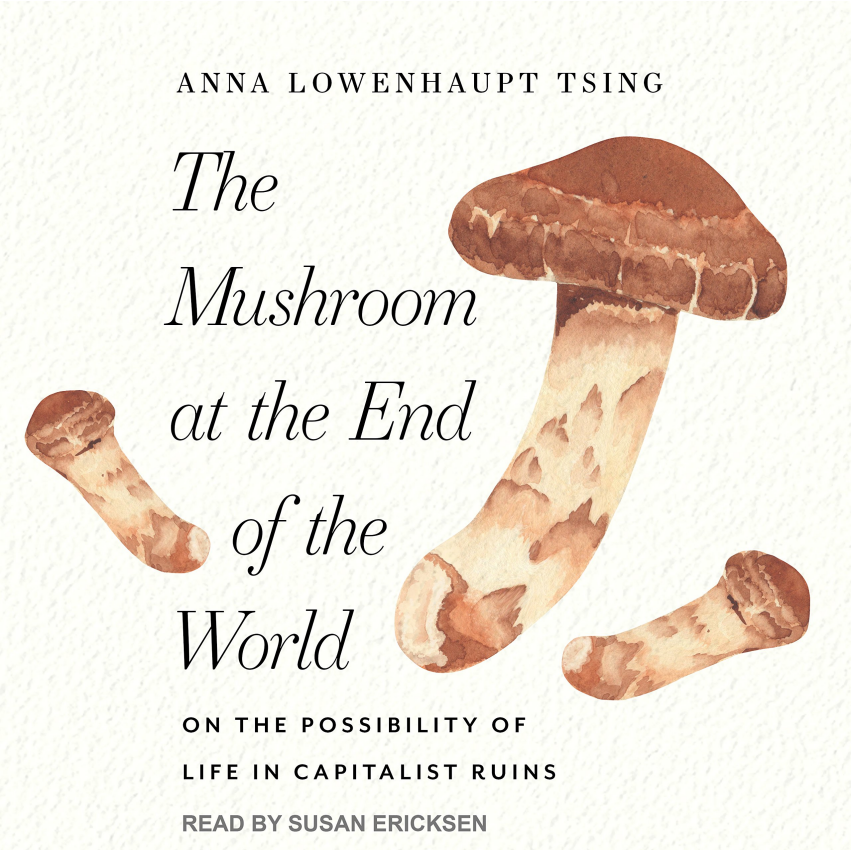
EXIT MAN

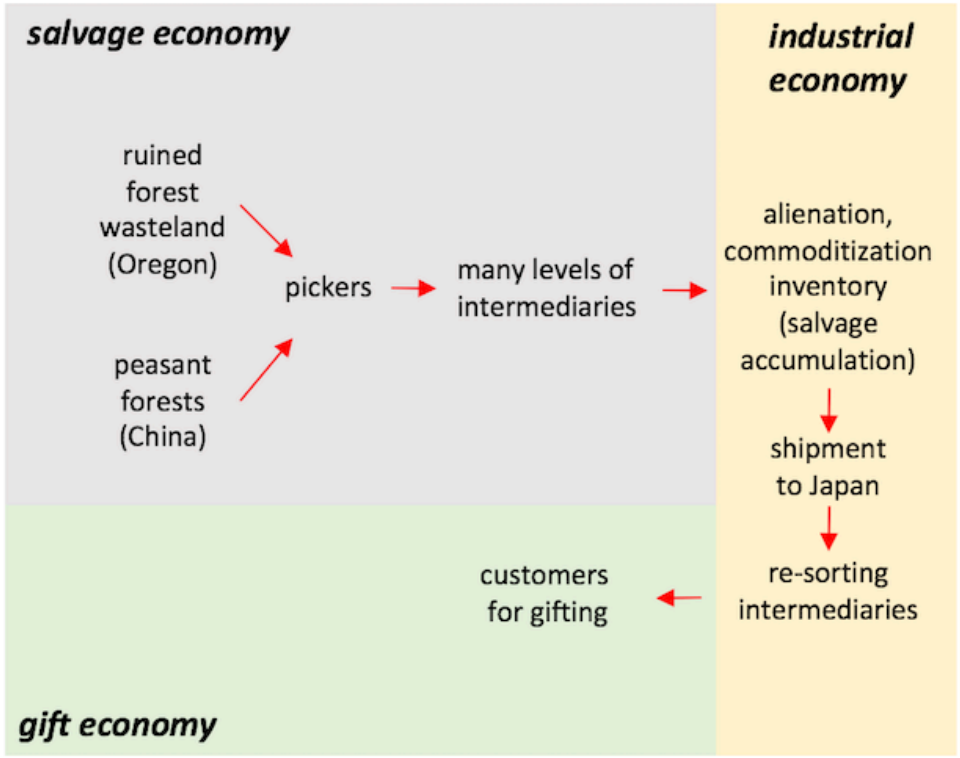
TOWARDS PHOTOGRAPHY WITHOUT MAN?



Capturing the End of the World

The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist





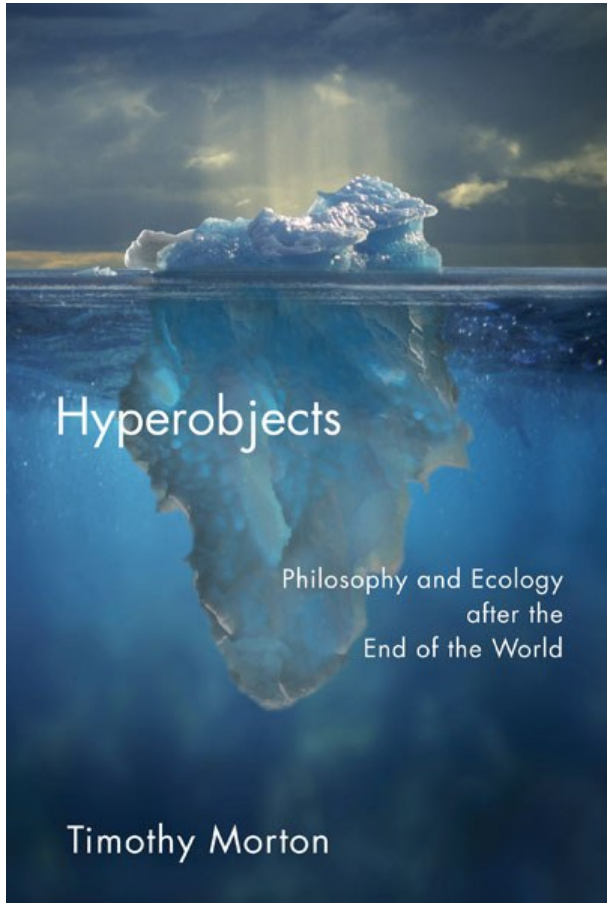
some key assemblages in the movement of matsutake

Aluna
The Mamas and Younger Brother

The Kogi People, Columbia

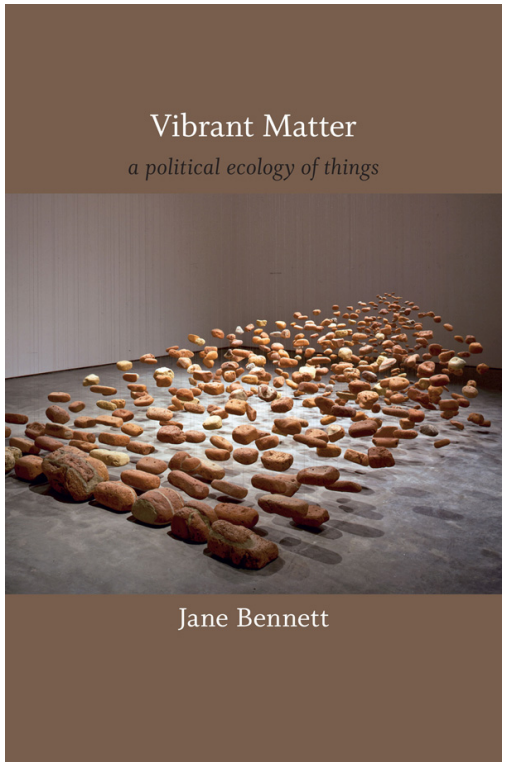
A Kogi Indian in a scene from *Aluna*

hyperobjects
timothy morton

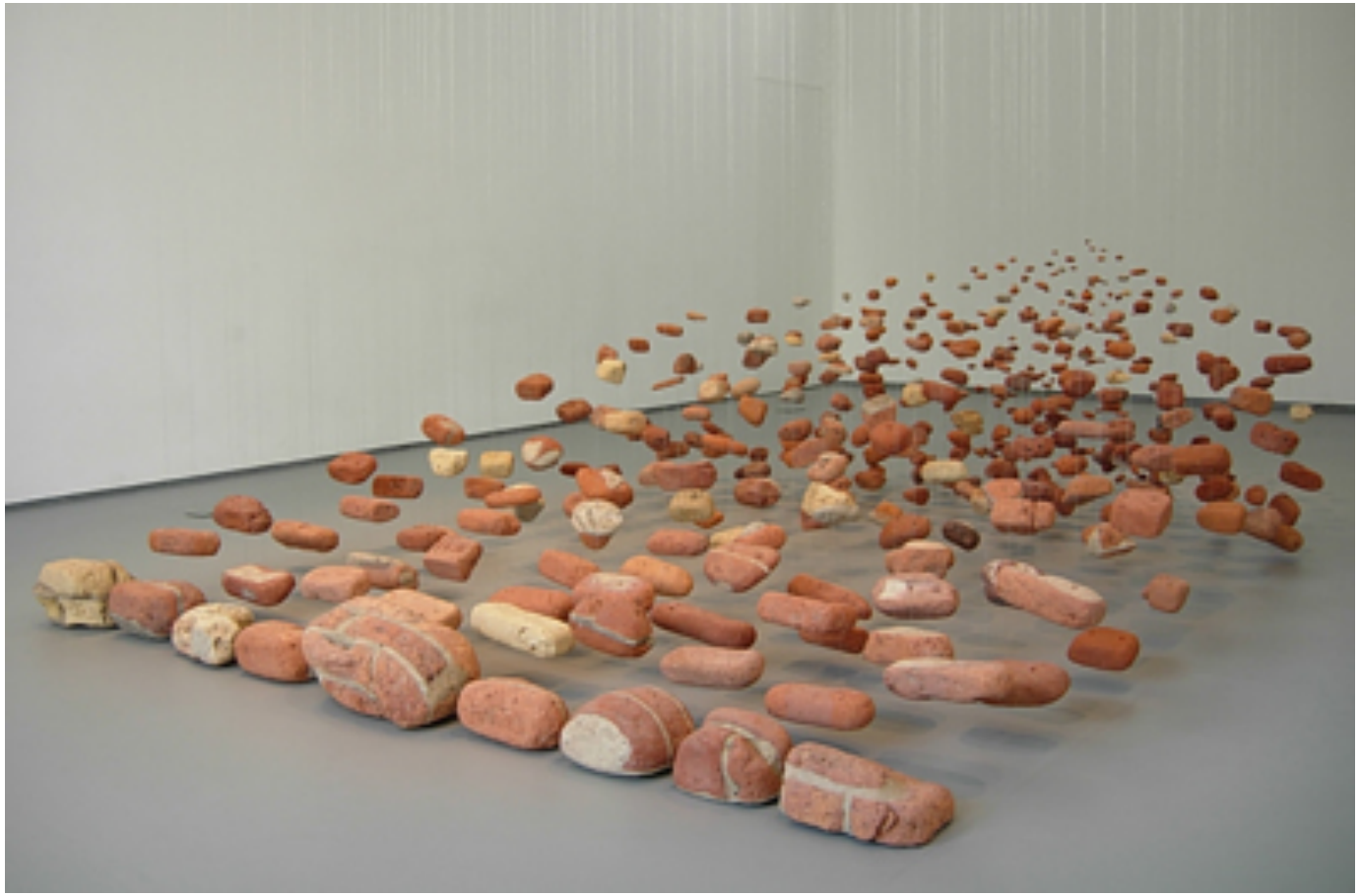


Tara Donovan

New Materialism



"Vibrant Matter"



Neither From Nor Towards (1992) – Cornelia Parker

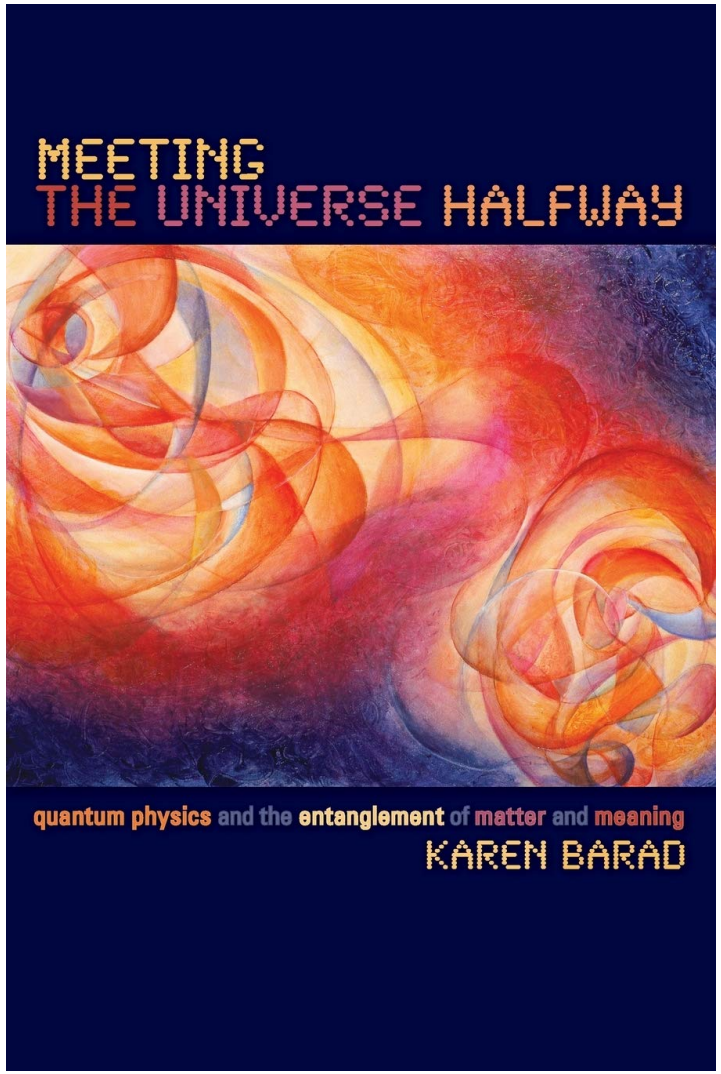
Karen Barad
Meeting the Universe Halfway

Entanglements that Matter

Diffractions and Differences

“The very nature of materiality is an entanglement…”

“Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers”



Anicka Yi

on
nonhuman ecologies
and
embodied machines

Biologizing the Machine (tentacular trouble), Anicka Yi, Biennale 2019

Anicka Yi

Biologizing the Machine
(terra incognita), 2019.

Installed at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

Biologizing the Machine (terra incognita), Anicka Yi, Biennale 2019

‘Becoming Plant’ - *Annihilation (2018), Dir. Alex Garland* – conceptual mutations of real-life Hox Genes into Sci-fi Horror

Posthumanism

Posthuman or post-human is a concept originating in the fields of **science fiction, futurology, contemporary art, and philosophy** that literally means a person or entity that exists in a state beyond being human.

- post-humanism – after *humanism*…
- de-centering of **M**an
- convergence of humans and technology
- contrast with **transhumanism**

WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?