

Editor's Note

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The pandemic COVID-19 proved that humans are as earthbound as nonhumans, and bodies are equally vulnerable to the changes in the ecosystem. All bodies exist not alone but coevolve in an entangled network of relations: the agency is distributional across the divide of human or nonhuman, mind or body. The body is the power of affecting and being affected by others, rather than as things or entities. Then the question is how to locate, identify, characterize, and render visible those affective bodies without falling into the binary logic of humanism prioritizing mind over matter, culture over nature. The body is the mind as much as nature is culture. We need to undo dualism, though, without erasing their differences. We must open space for the human and nonhuman shared agency and their mutual transformations. Living in the age of the Anthropocene, when climate changes threaten our survival, academic activity is asked to be more ethical and practical than before. How can we create an ethical and political space for future human and nonhuman coexistence? How can we reconfigure a new ethical life that will guarantee continuing coevolution of all bodies?

Body designates a common lot of both humans and non-humans and the fact of their shared vulnerability at which nature and culture converge. The enlightenment project sets humans apart from the non-human nature and the body from the mind. In such a process, humans become disembodied and denaturalized, and their body is relegated to the realm of the non-humans, the material objects whose secrets the thinking mind has to unlock. Nevertheless, the philosophical attempt to fix the boundary between the mind and body, nature and culture, has never been successful, provoking questions more than silencing them. The mind, the supposed master of the body, finds its obscure truth in the

body; they turn out to be accomplices, not opponents. Such a body and mind dualism, though discursive, has not been with real consequences. The history of modernity has been the history of turning nature into natural resources and manipulating them, and humiliating the body.

Concepts differentiating nature and culture, mind and body, human and non-human, signs and referents represent discursive attempts to signify the world we live in. Without such a conceptual schema, we would not know what we experience, not to mention its meanings. Meanings are effect of differences. But all differences do not stabilize into workable and coherent meanings. Nature is one of the most intractable and ambiguous concepts in English, to such a degree that we make it mean almost whatever we want to say. For example, nature can mean the totality of material things, either including or excluding humans, Gaia, essence, and principle, to name a few, and its mode can be naturans or naturans, subject or object. If we couple nature with essence (as in Lucretius's *De rerum natura*), it is decoupled from material things, thus becoming immaterial. Moreover, we can understand a nature and culture binary either as a regulative or a constitutive principle. Depending on perspectives, nature can be continuous with culture and humans with non-humans. Of course, many questions still remain to be answered, such as whether natural things are flat or hierarchical, whether all things are bodily, or how indeterminate beings become individuated.

The lesson the climate changes teach is that nothing in the ecosystem exists in isolation, and everything is connected to and intertwined with everything else. Beings are not substantial, relational, and metastable, always in the process of becoming and interacting with others; their boundaries are temporal and virtual, if there are any. Nature not only reproduces but also cultivates and transforms itself, alternatively disrupting and letting something new emerge out of the old order. Here the body is cultural as natural, individual as much as collective, for it is not closed in itself but is open to other bodies.

Anthropocene opens a rebirth of a grand narrative, whose death postmodernism welcomed with joy. The spirit of ontological separation of mind and body, humans and non-humans, organic and inorganic, had characterized the modern grand narrative, emphasizing individualism and

autonomy at the expense of the premodern enchanted worldview. The collapse of the grand narrative meant fragmentation of disciplines, the incommensurability of language games, and the loss of the real, seasoned with professional cynicism. Now it happened that Anthropocene put an end to such a postmodern esprit: it was a hit upon the hard rock of the real, reference, *ding an sich*, which was believed to be lost with the commencement of language or culture. If Anthropocene has any meaning, it is this sense of recovered real, now discourse being anchored into the real. Culture, of course, academic discourses included, is as material as global warming, plastic islands, and species extinction. The realms, severed by modernity, are now joined together. Not only matter matters but the immaterial matters as well. Charles Baudelaire, the exemplary modernist who hated unadorned bare nature, wrote "Correspondence," observing the affective exchanges between the corporeal and incorporeal, mind and body, and nature and culture.

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laisent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Baudelaire lays down magical cosmology, intuited at the moment of epiphany, in which microcosm coincides with macrocosm and words materialize into things. Nature, not dumb, whispers with symbols, and the matter is spiritual. However, it does not mean that such a correspondence is ideal, logical, or causal. It is rather aleatory and singular.

If I did not believe in the performative and material power of language, I would not have ventured to publish this International Journal of Body, Nature, and Culture (JBNC). It is committed to the conception of the body not as an entity with a stable boundary but as a materializing process intertwined with other bodies, both human and non-human. Body boundary, which guarantees individual identity and subjectivity, is porous, unstable, and temporal. With this ethical commitment and theoretical openness, JBNC invites academic articles from a broad range of scholars in body studies, ecocriticism, Anthropocene, and many others. The Institute of Body & Culture, which I founded with colleagues of diverse disciplines in 2007, has launched cultural studies

on the body and the facts of embodiment and published more than 30 books, all in Koeran. I hope this journal creates a new discursive space for studying the relation between body, nature, and culture.