

⇒ Simon Reiners

(Re-)configuring Forms of Life »after the End of the World«. Encountering Rahel Jaeggi's Nature/Culture Dualism in the Anthropocene

⇒ 1 Introduction¹

Since the end of the last glacial period about 20,000 years ago, the climatic equilibrium on Earth has remained relatively stable. The period since then has developed life on Earth as we know it today. Most of human-cultural being has evolved. During this time of assumable steadiness, the complex social and cultural ensembles of shared practices and institutions we know at present have flourished. They have adapted and evolved through various transformations and crises. Today, however, events like the rapid melting of glaciers and polar ice

caps lead to a crisis of human forms of life on a different scale: it is no longer a question of adaptation but of their extinction as such. Only now is the stabilizing power of nature inevitably being recognized. Through its appearance in the visibility of our existence is this crisis experienced in its specific non-social dimension.

However, critical social-theoretical perspectives, defined as diagnoses of crises of their times (Horkheimer 1988 [1937]), have so far failed to integrate those non-human events and entities. For long they were regarded as passive, mute and unchanging, hence, not necessary to be recog-

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nized for critique. Adapting social theories to this shared and transforming world is not easy to accomplish but urgent.²

A terminologically promising approach is Rahel Jaeggi's immanent critique of forms of life. In the failure of singular forms of life, Jaeggi identifies immanent crisis and diagnoses its possible overcoming. She considers the immanent crises and the categories for good problem solving to be emerging as a result of failures of forms of life to perform their function, instead of seeking normative benchmarks from outside the form of life itself as a transcendental or utilitarianism social theory would do. Hence, the benchmarks of critique can only be derived from the structure of the crisis itself. Normativity, the justification of a »good« form of life, comes without affirmation or transcendence.

Jaeggi's approach is nonetheless reduced to social practice, human interaction and how they fail to perform their function. She does not ask who takes part in these failures. However, the dying glacier reveals that crises are concerned with more, namely that, who is part of a crisis of a form of life matters. They disclose that contemporary crises are not just about how human forms of life fail but that the failure consists heavily of the exclusion of what we call nature or matter. Classical critical theory regarded matter as having a passive, stabilizing function for social practices. Today, their appearance in the partition of the sensible brings about the failure of a form of life. Not only the form but life itself is in question. Reality is not only shared and split between social practices but in relation to the world in which we ourselves are involved.

In this paper, I will ask whether Jaeggi's concept of the critique of forms of life can be extended from *how* the crisis emerges to *who* takes part in the crisis. Not only the form of human action but the participation of newly emerging in the form of life as form of life is to be discussed. Only if we understand who takes part in crises of forms of life may we be able to deal with them today. A (re-)configuration of forms of life »after the end of the world« is necessary.³

(2) An extensive elaboration of this thesis can be found in Joanna Zylinska's work (Zylinska 2014). She approaches the challenge of the Frankfurt School for dealing with the Anthropocene in particular from the perspective of Adorno's *Minima Moralia* and his task to philosophy as »the teaching of the good life« especially »in the period of his decay.« (Adorno 2005, 14–16)

(3) This seemingly over-dramatic notion »after the end of the world« relates to a new materialist debate that sees the task in critically theorizing practices and life since the ecological crisis: *after* or *at* the end of the world as we humans lived it until today (e.g. Morton 2013; Barad 2019; Tsing 2015). A most recent and differentiated article has just been published by

On precisely this change of crisis appearances, a multiplicity of perspectives has developed. These so-called »New Materialisms« seek to encompass the critical dimension of human/nature relations during the contemporary climate crisis under the term Anthropocene. Drawing on the insights of quantum physics, complexity theory or chaos theory but also microbiology and computerization, they challenge the traditional perspective on matter as a passive substance. Taking from these natural sciences new materialisms seek to renew the understanding of materiality in social sciences and ethics as well (Coole/Frost 2010, 13). Theorists argue that matter can no longer be perceived as passive raw material in opposition to human authorship, discourse, and agency as it had been by traditional physics and historical materialism alike. Cutting across dualistic boundaries between social and natural worlds, living as such needs to be reevaluated. Hence, epistemological, ontological, ethical and, finally, political questions need to be reconsidered. New materialism is not just a new perspective on nature. All issues of justice, politics or morals need to be viewed differently. However, far from rejecting the insights of social theories into the contingency of language and meaning, new materialisms reveal where these theories fall short. Matter itself partakes in meaning formation of what matters. The contingency of meaning production is material-discursive rather than merely linguistic. Especially the important feminist current within new materialisms questions the understanding of the relation between social practices and materiality, as understood by historical materialism. Therefore, dualisms such as human/non-human, active/passive, discourse/matter, male/female and nature/culture must be abolished based on their power-stabilizing function (Alaimo/Hekman 2008; Dolphijn/van der Tuin 2012).

However, new materialisms themselves are at stake to lose the critical potential of analyses of the world's relation: If they mainly focus on the contingency of structures and dualisms, measuring the normativity of a produced world becomes difficult. Yet, since critical theories are based on a material dimension, a change in the understanding of matter would have to affect the modes and methods of critical theory (Meißner 2016; Coole 2013; Lettow 2017).⁴

Bargués/Chandler et al. (2023): *Hope after 'the end of the world': rethinking critique in the Anthropocene*. Despite heavy ontological differences the early Frankfurt School embraces a similar view: The world, as it was, had ended in Auschwitz (Adorno 2005, 38). What could possibly come after, since »there is still life«? (Ibid., 200)

(4) New materialisms are an explicit engagement with historical materialisms by pointing out the historicity of materiality, yet not only as a social or cultural relation (Coole/Frost 2010, 26).

As an initial point for my attempt to reevaluate the life-force of nature or matter within forms of life, Karen Barad has offered a forceful approach from the feminist new materialist's perspective. In the book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* from 2007, Barad argues that matter is not simply a product but part of the production of world/power relations. Furthermore, material-discursive practices affect human and non-human bodies alike. They constitute what counts as such. Finally, even causal relations do not pre-exist but are mutually (re-)configured. Hence, Barad can, on the one hand, offer a way to extend the understanding of forms of life from an anthropocentric to a more inclusive project. However, on the other hand, Barad reads matter not simply as a substance but as the driving force which constantly transforms the boundaries of world-making practices. This enables Barad also to offer a new understanding of the immanent potential for crises in a given materialization of the world: »the world kicks back.« (Barad 2007, 215)

Hereafter, in this paper, I will more precisely ask how a feminist new materialist (re-)configuration of the concept of forms of life and the immanent potential for crises and transformation can affiliate and extend Jaeggi's attempt to diagnose and overcome crises of forms of life under conditions of the Anthropocene. I will argue that not the immanent social inconsistency, but the ongoing (re-)configuration of boundaries, relations, identities, lives, subjects and objects is the immanent potential for crises and, hence, at the same time, the locus of its overcoming: By enriching forms of life not just by a new set of social practices but by recognizing the emergence of life. How to live needs first to ask who is living. The melting glacier, who initiates the crisis of all human forms of life, offers a striking opportunity for seeing and overcoming the Anthropocene. A shift in focus, hence in our relation to nature, may make new ways of caring for a shared but dying world visible.⁵

I start by introducing Rahel Jaeggi's immanent critique of forms of life (2). I will launch a second section, introducing the basic concept of Barad's so-called agential realism (3) to show how Jaeggi's anthropocentric understanding of forms of life can and needs to be extended (4.1). Subsequently, I am going to scrutinize how such a new understanding of forms of life would affect the understanding of problems and crises (4.2). At this point, I will briefly introduce Jane Bennett, who offers

(5) How care can be theorized beyond its common notion as ethical and political in a more-than-human understanding of the world has been powerfully demonstrated by María Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in more than Human Worlds*. Her appreciation of the world flows through my paper.

a more robust new materialistic reading of how the critically emerging new forms of lives serve to actualize the underlying crisis potential. I can conclude by showing how this encounter with Jaeggi's theory by new materialist insight can lead us to perceive an enriched and more lively understanding of a shared and endangered world (5).

⇒ 2 Rahel Jaeggi and the Quest of immanent Critique

A critical theory of society must start by defining the standpoint of the critic, who diagnoses the failures and possibilities of the good life (Adorno 2005 [1951], 14). Jaeggi argues that this question is always already answered within a system of social or cultural convictions as product and (re-)producer of our practices and institutional settings. These ensembles Jaeggi calls forms of life (Jaeggi 2009, 271). Forms of life understood as guidance for our acting and being are both: representations and reproducers of their own normativity. Hence, the critic is always part of the form of life he or she wants to analyze critically, and they cannot forestall what the »better« form of life could be. Critique has no reference to some outside truth or independent telos (Jaeggi 2009, 271). What she calls immanent critique is hence the perspective on how a form of life becomes critical and a form of life fails as form of life. Only then can a successfully learning process originate towards a good life.

To understand this immanent dealing with critical forms of life, I must answer three core questions: 1) What are forms of life? 2) What is the immanent structure of crises and failures of forms of life as forms of life? 3) How can this help to identify emancipatory instead of regressive learning processes? Only then can it be applied to theories that define life and hence the structure of their crises differently to successfully solve contemporary, more-than-human crises.

⇒ 2.1 Forms of Life

In the conventional understanding from Wittgenstein to Agamben, forms of life are generally referred to as organizing our self- and world-relations. They incorporate, limit and structure the everyday orientation, courses of action and sources of knowledge. Jaeggi furthers this understanding by describing forms of life as ensembles of social practices, which aim to solve constant problems of historical, contextual, and normative composition. They are an order of collective coexistence and hence structure what a collective of beings regards as possible,

comprehensible, and visible. Furthermore, forms of life, as a shared image of the world, are materialized in institutions which they enact. The materialization, in turn, reproduces and stabilizes the form of life (Jaeggi 2014, 77; 117). Jaeggi separates what she calls natural forms of life (organisms, bacteria et al.) from social forms of life. While both are not just random phenomena and emerge to solve a problem, social forms of life are the historical appropriation of the inner and outer nature of humans by humans. For Jaeggi, this separation between nature and culture is crucial because only if forms of life are not necessities, like natural phenomena, but historically formed, even if influenced by biological, technical or geographical constellations, they are changeable and can be subject to critique. She introduces the fundamental dualism by way of active society and passive nature. This dualism is the central divide between historical and new materialisms.

According to Jaeggi, to identify forms of life, it is necessary to identify associated ensembles of socio-historical practices. They are not singular actions by an individual but repeatedly appearing activities performed by multiple people to achieve certain, predetermined aims. Consequently, these ensembles possess relative stability and create expectations by those who use them as guiding actions. Jaeggi furthers that practices result not only from norms but reversely reproduce normativity: Misrecognition or misapplication of social practice is perceived as a norm violation (ibid., 94–100).

Finally, and most importantly, even if forms of life are not natural themselves but created, they appear as nature or as second nature to us. Originating to solve a problem, they seem necessary and sedimented through being permanently (re-)enacted. Though they are part of a socially constructed reality, they are neither contingent nor appear as an objective reality. Therefore, to be subject of critique, forms of life have to become visible as being constructed and lose their self-evidence and stabilizing function. According to Jaeggi, this can only happen in the form of an unexpected fault to perform its function. They have to lose their seeming necessity. Only during such events do forms of life lose their inherent stability and self-evidence to the group of people who share this form of life. Including the shared worldview, they become problematic and are open to reconfiguration (ibid., 130). On that account, the consequent question must be how such incidences appear to actually conclude in a transformation and not reestablish the previous form of life.

⇒ 2.2 Failures of Forms of Life as Forms of Life

As pictured earlier, Jaeggi holds it impossible for a critical theory of forms of life to identify a norm for the »good« life externally. The indicators for this are always already brought about by each form of life itself immanently. Instead, forms of life have been defined as strategies for solving a constant problem encountered. The judgment of whether a form of life as a form of life is good can only be measured by how it solves or overcomes the consecutive problem (Jaeggi 2005, 71). Critique, hence, focuses on the process of mastery of the problem. To do so, it must be defined how a form of life as a problem-solving strategy can itself become problematic and what the internal structure of such a crisis looks like. It is to be identified not as a crisis within a form of life but of the form of life as form of life.

Jaeggi's basic definition of a problem of a form of life is not an external moment or phenomenon which troubles it but an internal friction as a permanent existent but not necessarily present potential. Once present, it troubles the very structure of the form of life in its vindication. Therefore, on the one hand, the actualization of this internal friction means that the form of life stops performing its function for which it has come into being. It no longer meets its standard. On the other hand, she calls those problems »second-order problems« as they problematize a problem-solving strategy. This means the form of life does not possess any means to solve the problem, but as it derives from its very own structure, it must evolve into an overcoming of the troubled form of life (Jaeggi 2014, 200). This perspective offers two major aspects for describing second-order problems:

Based on Dewey, Jaeggi defines the first core aspect of second-order problems as the indeterminacy and, hence, the indecisiveness of a situation. Normally, a form of life claims to offer an answer to every possible situation. The order of the world seems to be absolutely covered. Yet, problems of problem-solving strategies as crises of forms of life expose the contingency of social practices by offering undetermined situations. First, second-order problems press on reciprocal activity between what has become the »world« and the agents within it. Second, the agents experience an undefined relation to their world and have to interpret a particular situation as indecisive. Third, this furthermore involves that a problem does not simply come out of nowhere; it is always in relation to what has existed before and challenges these historically and contextually formed worlds, elements, practices, and forms of life (ibid., 210; 240).

This leads to Jaeggi's second core aspect to define problems of forms of life as forms of life. She draws onto Hegel. Forms of life seem to fail as normative formations when they fail to realize the immanent norm into practice. Yet, this does not only mean, as Honneth analyses those failures, that the norm is not correctly realized (Honneth 2011, 20). For example, suppose the norm of gender equality in modern forms of life is not realized in the same payment for the same labour. In that case, it is indeed a failure to realize a norm but not necessarily a failure of the form of life as form of life. Changing this misconception would not change the norm of gender equality but simply realize this preexisting norm. Instead, according to Hegel and Jaeggi, norms can fail to perform themselves and not to be performed: The practices required by the normative claim *necessarily* fail to realize the norm. This is what can be called an immanent contradiction or paradox of the norm/practice relation rather than a failure (Jaeggi 2014, 356–357).

According to Hegel, the contradiction itself as an immanent part of a form of life is, in fact, the condition of possibility of action. The contradiction between claim and realization, norm and practice, is not simple oppositions but complementary. They negatively refer to one another. Hence, the internal contradiction is simultaneously included and excluded from a functioning form of life until it becomes realized (ibid. 382).

The remaining question is how a crisis of a form of life can finally become actualized. Jaeggi follows Hegel's definition that a crisis does not »happen« to a form of life but is an ever-existent potential that must be actualized (ibid., 390). Thereafter, she offers three ways for crises to appear to a form of life. A) As external, random events, such as natural events. According to Jaeggi, this first way does not apply to her case under investigation. For example, a drought does not visualize an immanent paradox. The solution to it can be found by the means of an existing form of life. However, B) such random events are not themselves the crisis, but they can be the trigger for an immanent paradox to become visible. For example, if the drought leads to an unexpected number of refugees, the tension between human rights and their realization as civil rights can become visible.⁶ In this case, the form of life is confronted with the indeterminacy of a situation. But C) the prime example for Jaeggi is the crisis of a form of life in its immanent

(6) This refers to an argument of Hannah Arendt where after human rights do, in fact, not exist other than as civil rights (Arendt 1949). Sadly enough, today, it does not need Arendt to see how this paradox has become crucially visible in political debates and decisions.

contradiction. Such contradictions always need self-reflexive agents already embedded in the form of life to make a conflict out of a contradiction, making it a problem for a form of life (ibid., 243–244).

To understand the crisis of the Anthropocene, it would need to be part of the third form of crises: an immanent contradiction. Since Jaeggi focuses on norms of social practices and how they are realized, she cannot see the failure of the form of life one may call Planet, Gaia, or life as such as a failure of a form of life – life itself – to perform its function. I will argue that a drought is not just an outside, random event but an internal friction to our shared form of life Planet, Gaia, or life as such.

⇒ 2.3 Learning Action-ability

Before investigating how matter or nature can become an integral aspect within and not exterior to forms of life, I will conclude by describing how Jaeggi thinks crises of forms of life can be dealt with. She argues that it is possible to analyze the overcoming of such crises by progressive *rational learning processes* rather than regressive ones.⁷ What is meant by a learning process to be rational and progressive? According to Jaeggi's critique of ideology, the dynamic of the immanent crisis itself is the only touchstone to identify what »rationality« can mean for (social) change. No telos can exist for the overcoming deficits of forms of life. In turn to regression, she writes: »The requirement for a philosophical account of regression (and progress) is to get past the teleological mode. This is what my problem-oriented approach is supposed to achieve.« (Jaeggi 2022, 529) What can be identified as a deficit or regression can only become visible in the moment of the occurrence of the crisis and not by looking into the future. Furthermore, a progressive learning process always includes the accretion of abilities to mastery of situations, hence, autonomy. For that reason, Jaeggi relies on self-reflexive subjects who intentionally and actively experience a crisis as a lack of *action-ability* (ibid., 520). As defined in accordance with Dewey, subjects experience a failure to interact with their environment, which had been set by the form of life. Therefore, the learning process can be

(7) Despite the current wide-ranging criticism of the concept of progress in critical theory, Jaeggi sticks to both concepts in her 2023 volume *Fortschritt und Regression* (Progress and Regression). Her focus remains on the processes of social transformation and the relationship between blockade and empowerment, rather than looking at the result. In this new project Jaeggi emphasizes the term regression as a critical concept while this term hardly appeared in her earlier book. But if this is the case, she argues that progress will remain an important term for critical theory as the necessary opposite of regress (Jaeggi 2023, 10).

said to be successful if they are emancipatory, and participation increasing. The validity of the standard follows from its genesis (Jaeggi 2014, 337; Jaeggi 2023, 66).

Following her definition of Dewey's understanding of a problem as indeterminacy and indecisiveness of a situation, a »good« learning process would be to transfer the indeterminacy into determinacy or the indecisiveness into certainty. The particular and visible problem has to be included in the whole (Jaeggi 2014, 214). Nevertheless, it is only a positive, not regressive, learning process if it is recognized as transforming instead of repressing or subduing the indeterminate particular. This is only possible if the whole is being enriched. Thereafter, as the problem appears as an obstacle to action because of its indecisiveness, »positive« learning processes can be identified as such, offering more participation and action options (Jaeggi 2022, 528). Freedom would then merely mean the accrual of something that has not been there before but which the crisis made necessary to come about (Jaeggi 2014, 443). »Making necessary« has a double meaning here: the deficit made the crisis itself necessary and actualized the potential. At the same time, the only progressive way of overcoming the crisis makes the accrual necessary. Freedom is finally the name for a motion of becoming, not a substance of being. It remains unstable and situated.

To conclude: In its very structure between Dewey and Hegel, a crisis demands enrichment through emancipation. Freedom as action-ability has become the benchmark for a »good« learning process without ever-present telos. This appeared as a result because problems were described as the lack of something, which leads to a lack of the ability to act within a given situation. As Jaeggi insinuated that the crisis, as an underlying potential, always needs agents to be realized and overcome, emancipation is extended as a practical enhancement of self-formed circumstances. (Self-)conscious subjects are needed to initiate and carry out this transformation. With this answer, Jaeggi once again remains in the crucial nature/culture dualism that makes it impossible to analyse the whole dimension of current crises. Jaeggi can only call the actors into action who already were able to act but now suffer action-ability – humans.⁸

(8) At this point another urgent problem of the Frankfurt School comes in view. What counts as human is a very much Western modernity centered understanding. The postcolonial and decolonial blind spot of Critical Theory is one more crucial aspect to be dealt with if the Frankfurt School wants to be part of contemporary debates (Bhambra 2021, 80).

In what follows, I will, however, introduce a notion of action that talks about the coming about of actors who have not been there before as part of the form of life but need to be recognized to overcome the crises they partake in. The notion of action-ability will finally shift to the feminist notion of *response-ability*. This is the ability to respond to the world, to be embedded in a shared world and from individual solving to constant collective caring (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 170).

⇒ 3 Karen Barad and the Becoming of Matter

In the previous chapter, I expounded Jaeggi's critique of forms of life. From there, I will argue that she offers a practical initial point to inscribe new materialist insights into critical thinking of world relations and not just human interaction. Jaeggi already shares some fundamental convictions that can lead to an enriched perspective on contemporary more-than-human crises and, hence, richer possibilities to face this crisis of our shared form of life.

Karen Barad, in their⁹ book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* from 2007, introduces their concept of »agential realism« and the idea of »intra-action« instead of interaction. This theory provides an especially good foundation for a new materialist reading of a critique of forms of life. By rethinking social practices radically as material-discursive boundary-making practices, Barad offers two things: 1) matter as involved in forms of life in 2) always body-world relation production. Barad does not simply evoke a vitality of objects (actants) which participate within a form of life.¹⁰ They does not simply add nature as an equally active participant in forms of life. In its place, through their feminist new materialist lens, Barad tries to describe the process of configuration and re-configuration of body-world relations beyond or rather »before« social practices. What is social or human is but a result of specific relation-building processes of a becoming to matter.

The question of social practices is not the primary question of what a form of life is but can only secondarily be recognized once the participants of the form of life are spatio-temporal present. In the following

(9) Karen Barad uses the pronouns they/them.

(10) Latour develops the notion of *actants* to ascribe agency to non-human and even inanimate entities. They can make a difference, produce effects, or alter courses of events (Latour 2005, 72). However, the notion of actants brings with it the implication that there are such entities, pre-existent, which possess these features. Instead, for Barad, it is more critical how these entities and their features emerge.

section, I will present Barad's agential realism by focusing on five interwoven concepts: phenomena, intra-action, agential cuts, apparatus, and material-discursive practices. Together, this changed perspective can extend an understanding of a shared, crises-driven world.

⇒ 3.1 Agential Realism

Agential realism signifies the attempt to elaborate the (re-)configuration of the world or reality as an ongoing, dynamic becoming. Thus, the reality and, with it, materiality are not understood as substantial and coherent entities but as produced and productive (Hoppe/Lemke 2015, 633).

Karen Barad, who is a trained physician and feminist theorist, bases their theory on Niels Bohr's contribution to quantum physics: not separate entities as in atomistic physics are the primary ontological unit but quantum entanglements (Barad 2012a, 207). Starting from this, not representation nor causality compose the (scientific) image of the world, but it is replaced by a radically relational constitution of reality before and beyond human intelligibility and action.¹¹ Barad labels the primary ontological units »phenomena«, which describe the *ontological inseparability between interacting components*. Phenomena are a non-dualistic whole of relations without relata (Barad 2007, 141). The question is how differences can come into existence and matter becomes to matter if based on the foundational indeterminacy of phenomena. This includes the question of which life live.

Initially, Barad draws back on Bohr's understanding of science to show that the observation of distinct entities performed in scientific research is impossible. According to Bohr, knower and known, observer and observed become indistinguishable (ibid., 196f.). In fact, he argues that measurements are only possible because who measures (the scientist) is not just »in the world, but rather of being of the world in its dynamic specificity« (ibid., 377), which he or she tries to capture. No external position, hence, no independent results are possible (Barad 2012b). That no external positions are available to the researcher, that he or she is always embedded in what is in focus is a conviction that Jaeggi

(11) New materialists criticize that representationalism and constructivism set language, hence words, as representation or the origination of »our« understanding of the world. They instead focus on the relationality within what becomes intelligible as the world (Folkers 2013, 17; Lemke 2015, 4; Coole/Frost 2010, 27).

shares. What she does not do is question what this relationality between subject and object of observation does to the researcher as an interwoven entity. That is where Barad starts.

As quantum physics doubts the pre-existence of entities with pre-existent properties, which either observe or are observed, know or are known, are active or passive, Barad replaces interaction of such entities by the neologism »intra-action« which *describes the mutual constitution of entangled objects and agencies within open-ended phenomena* (Barad 2007, 33). Hence, the mutual constitution of relata of relations in phenomena brings about distinct, though entangled, spatio-temporal entities. Intra-action is the way in which matter becomes to matter as being the process of materialization out of »nothingness« (Barad 2012b, 7). The researcher or critic is part of this entangled coming into being.

Therefore, while phenomena are to be understood as generally open-ended, indeterminate entities they non-senseless have »agential cuts« as elementary components. Agential cuts are the *boundaries or exteriorities within phenomena* which stand for the implementation of the world or the inclusion of an exclusion for matter to matter (Barad 2007, 140). It should hereafter become clear that for Barad, human activity is not the primary source of meaning production but a result of materialization processes or intra-action. Social practices emerge only secondly within a set of lives as agential cuts that constitute and transform an intra-actively emerged form of life. Intra-action precedes interaction. Forms of life as intra-actively (re-)configured relata preceded ensembles of (social) practices.

But that does not mean that the existence of forms of life lies outside the realm of practice. Based on Donna J. Haraway's term material-semiotic practices, Barad coins the term »material-discursive practices«. However, before understanding these, I will have to turn to Barad's alert understanding of the classical philosophical concept of »apparatus«. It is important in this portrayal of the process of mattering through intra-action and the enactment of agential cuts. Again, Barad borrows from Bohr, to whom an apparatus is an arrangement of measuring instruments through which the measured at first comes into being (ibid., 143). From Kant to Latour, the term apparatus labels the means for understanding the conditions of possibility for something to be intelligible. Althusser extends the concept and argues that they are no stable devices but themselves dependent on the society in which they are embedded. Following this, according to Barad, apparatuses cannot be

pre-existent to the production of matter but are themselves co-produced intra-actively. Barad writes:

»Apparatuses are not preexisting or fixed entities; they are themselves constituted through particular practices that are perpetually open to rearrangements, rearticulations, and other reworkings. (...) [They] are themselves material-discursive phenomena, materializing intra-action with other material-discursive apparatuses.« (Barad 2007, 203)

However, Barad emphasizes that other than for Kant or Althusser, apparatuses are not about »us«, socially embedded. Apparatuses are *the intra-actively originated boundary-making practices or material-discursive practices which enact the agential cuts in phenomena* (ibid., 142; 148). They are apparatuses of bodily production, of matter that comes to matter, of life and hence the boundary-making practices that constitute a form of life. Hence, material-discursive practices are part of forms of life in its becoming.

⇒ 3.2 (Re-)Configuration as Performance

The enactment of life by reading it through Barad, however, is permanently (re-)configured. Matter is not a being but a doing. Barad takes this notion from Butler's theory of performativity, by which she attempts to describe the becoming of bodies. Yet, material-discursive practices, unlike ensembles of social practices, are not developed around a norm to stabilize a given form of life, including its entities (humans). Material-discursive practices *are boundary-making practices of bodily production in an ontic yet only spatio-temporal, open-ended sense* (Barad 2003, 822). As a critique of Foucault's discursive practices, material-discursive practices illustrate that neither discourse nor matter can be ontologically prior but are co-produced by one another (Barad 2007, 153). Furthermore, they are prior to human or the human/non-human boundaries, as even they need to be intra-actively produced: What counts as a human living body is hence part of the world in its open-ended becoming and a certain space-time (re-)configuration. In this sense, Barad calls their theory a posthuman performativity. This deviates from the common understanding of posthuman, which once again attributes activity to non-human entities. Barad's post-humanist perspective draws on the conviction that what counts as human is not decided before but after performative practices (ibid. 151):

»What constitutes the human (and the non-human) is not a fixed or pre-given notion, but neither is it a free-floating ideality. (...) The differential constitution of the human (non-human) is always accompanied by particular exclusions and always open to contestation.« (ibid. 153)

To conclude: Materialization is an iterative intra-active process, whereby agential cuts or better, body/body-body/world relations are sedimented out of the ontologically inseparability of relata in phenomena. Boundaries are continuously actively (re-)configured through intra-action of multiple material-discursive apparatuses. What could be called a form of life is, hence, not an ensemble of social practices between interacting human beings. It is an assemblage of material-discursive boundary-making practices, open to (re-)configuration through the intra-active becoming of entities. Human and non-human are inseparably related in this open-ended process of becoming and decay of forms of life. The transformation of forms of life without a nature/culture dualism has become apparent. I will now elaborate how Barad can encounter Jaeggi and how their overlappings and interference can constitute patterns for a theory of forms of life in the Anthropocene.

⇒ 4 Encounters and Diffractions

In the following chapter, I argue that reading Jaeggi diffractively¹² through Barad does not suspend Jaeggi's concept, though it exposes profound shortcomings. Instead, Barad can extend and richly develop a critique of forms of life, which makes it not only look at the crises of social practices within forms of life but also reveals that contemporary failures of forms of life point beyond it: at the question of who

(12) In quantum physics, diffraction refers to the bending and expansion of waves after encountering obstacles, while interference refers to the superimposition of waves. First, Haraway and then Barad apply this metaphor to the method of feminist, scientific theorizing as opposed to reflection: »Diffraction, the production of difference patterns, might be a more useful metaphor for the needed work than reflexivity.« (Haraway 1997, 34) In more concrete terms, a diffractive reading of theories consists of reading them through each other rather than against each other, taking into account the relational differences and effects produced. Through the clash, views overlap, and unresolved tensions can erupt and develop into new amplitudes that do not result from simple addition (Barad 2014, 175). A feminist, critically diffractive examination of theories is a critical scientific practice that does not merely differentiate (κρίνειν) but makes differences (Barad 2007, 90).

takes part in what ensemble of worlding-practices that constitute, who partakes. This may offer a perspective of a shared world that is troubled between what counts as human and what is expelled from interacting with »us«. To accomplish this, I will first point out three convictions joining both theorists. Subsequently, I will scrutinize how agential realism interferes and develops patterns broadening the concept of forms of life, not simply by granting matter some sort of force or agency but by changing the understanding of how forms of life, matter and relations emerge. Matter or nature does not simply interact in the ensemble of practices that constitute a shared form of life. They take part and co-constitutively emerge and disappear within a form of life. This will set a different focus on the immanent potentials and elements of crises and transformation. Finally, by taking some revised aspects of Jane Bennett's vibrancy of matter into consideration, I will point out a productive new materialist understanding of how the immanent crisis potential in forms of life is activated and makes it possible to examine a normative dimension of transformation. At this point, I can finally introduce the feminist concept of response-ability as being *with and of* the world over action-ability of humans *in* the world. This forwards Barad's affirmative understanding of constant transformation through apparently neutral intra-action and offers an ethical as much as political dimension of care into a world at its lose.

⇒ 4.1 Matter that really matters

A first core aspect that overlaps between Jaeggi and Barad lies in their scientific perspective of the situatedness of the observer within the observed. Following Jaeggi, the critical theorist who analyses his or her society can never be independent of this world, its internal relations, norms, ideas and language. He or she is part of it (Jaeggi 2009, 271). Barad's application of quantum physics shares this perspective. Observer and observed are indistinguishably entangled. Being and knowing, ontology and epistemology, coincide (Barad 2007, 109). Hence, while Jaeggi takes an epistemology-critical perspective, Barad goes one step further by inscribing a critical onto-epistemological stand at the observer or critic as such. Not only social relations and situatedness but the very ontological understanding of the relationality and entanglement of social and material is at stake.

A second aspect is that both theorists share the idea of practices of (re-)producing a historically dependent or temporally configuration of world relations or forms of life. Reality is neither contingent nor

necessary but constantly changing. Barad forwards the traditional philosophical concept of the apparatus intra-acting through material-discursive practice. Apparatuses describe the practices which bring about the boundaries of participation and being. Hence, they enact what is visible, understood as possible or to be expected and finally what matters and therefore, normativity, too (ibid., 140).¹³ While Jaeggi does not use the term apparatus, her understanding of ideology relies on a similar understanding of practices permanently bringing about being and normativity, the boundaries for what is knowledgeable, visible, or doable (Jaeggi 2014, 26).

The third common conviction is that they focus on the importance of transformation and (re-)configuration of being as an integral part of the world. In Jaeggi's understanding, this happens when a form of life reaches its immanently necessary crisis. She uses this to understand benchmarks for a critical theory of »good« forms of life, hence a normativity that does not come from outside or above but is immanent. Barad sees transformation and (re-)configuration as a performative constitution of being as such. They does not take a normative or even critical stance towards transformation. This does not even allow an immanent evaluation at what point one transformation is »better« than possible others.

Despite all these similarities, the way in which Jaeggi understands world relations or forms of life as offering these relations is given a much wider range by Barad (Meißner 2013, 164). This will change the entire focus on what counts as world, life, and the modes of its becoming as forms of life. All questions of social and political sciences and ethics, not only on nature and climate, need to be revised if the very dualism between nature and culture, material and social, is indeed abolished. Barad transforms the entire field of what counts as »social« sciences and ethics.¹⁴

(13) Barad borrows this perspective on the formation of the meaning of being and bodies from Butler's book *Bodies that Matter*. What materiality is before the act of meaning production cannot be said in isolation. However, Barad also gives Butler's position a new materialist twist by clarifying the role of materiality in the performativity of matter and mattering beyond mere human, linguistic practices (Barad 2003, 821). In an interview with Vikki Bell, Butler defends herself against this critique of Barad and, on the contrary, agrees with Barad that matter is involved in the question of »what matters?« (Bell 2010, 151).

(14) It would be misleading to understand new materialisms only as a strain of theory that focuses on nature as opposed to human and thereby a question of for example climate politics or animal rights. Quite the opposite is the case. If the dualism between human and non-human

According to Jaeggi, forms of life were defined ensembles of social practices which emerge to solve an experienced problem within the world. Hence, they are reactions of human beings to give order to a (material) world and yet, the social practices reciprocal bring about what can be regarded as the world. Forms of life lay out direction to human coexistence by functioning as conducting, as sources of knowledge and materialization. Through ensembles of social practices, meaning, possibilities and matter get ordered around problem-solving, intentional human action.

A central section of Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* deals with a critique of the apparently anthropocentric shortcoming in Foucault's and, to some extent, Butler's theory of discursive practices and performativity. This critique lends itself to be an initial point for a reworking of Jaeggi's social practices and forms of life as well. Like discursive practices, Jaeggi placed forms of life at the origin of meaning production. As stated by Barad, Foucault and Butler restrict the working of power to the human domain. Materiality is only a product or artefact, and agency is solitary spread to the social. Hence, Foucault and Butler, as does Jaeggi, keep the binary between human and non-human as they do not query the boundary-making practices which constitute this dualism. These boundaries are taken as pre-existing with the ability of meaning production (Barad 2007, 145; 235). Instead, Barad argues that becoming to matter and, hence, the formation of forms of life has to be prior to humans. Not only what counts as practice but who is part of practices is called into question. Intra-action co-produces the human/non-human dichotomy and includes the materialization of all bodies. Social practices are a temporary result, not the driving force (ibid., 153). This reveals the core feminist conviction of Barad's critique of the

is indeed abandoned, then all other questions of social and political sciences and ethics would have to be viewed from a different perspective. According to new materialisms, contemporary theories and critiques of democracy, capitalism, poverty, human rights, or law fail precisely because they elevate (hu)man to the measure of all things instead of emphasizing his relationality to that which he is not. For example, not separating the impact of flooding and droughts from the human impact on poverty shifts the understanding and solution of certain injustices. The indistinguishability of society and what counts as non-human nature as an important change within social sciences and ethics becomes especially clear in the fact that new materialisms predominantly emerge in feminist or political theories (Alaimo/Hekman 2008, 7–9).

active/ passive dualism that is reproduced in the male/female and culture/nature dualism. Jaeggi fails to loosen these ties of domination.¹⁵

Taking this into the revision of Jaeggi, Barad does not simply add agency or some sort of »force« to inanimate things in order to equalize them to the social within forms of life. This is especially thought-provoking as the equalization of human and non-human participation could appear as a strategy to inscribe matter into meaning production in a Jaeggian sense: Humans and non-humans would co-produce the form of life and its normativity in facing a shared problem. However, this would fall short of Barad's agential realism, as it takes the binaries between active and passive as the point of origin for forms of life. In a Baradian sense, forms of life can only be understood as the enactment of the binaries themselves, hence, their intra-active mutual constitution and not the result of their interaction: Forms of life are the (re-)occurring answer to the question of what counts as life, nature or social. Hereafter, forms of life are the inscribed »exteriority-within-phenomena.« (ibid. 140)

Consequently, for Barad, transformation of forms of life is a (re-)configuration of exteriorities in phenomena. This makes transformation a necessary element for analyzing the world as a permanent becoming, yet in a different way than Jaeggi analyzed the transformation of social practices. At this point, a first conclusion becomes visible: World understood as world in its constant becoming does not (re-)configure *how* we are or ought to be but who this *we* is, that ensembles practices. Who lives, who counts as being, who is part of relations and entanglement is prior to its abilities of action. This is, for example, displayed when Barad discussed the intra-active becoming of what counts as human as »particular exclusions and always open to contestation.« (Ibid., 153) On this note, once more, transformation is not based on human action and social practices, but material-discursive practices produce differences in relationality and material configurations of the world.

Finally, Barad's reworked understanding of agency as enactment prior to capable entities and not as anyone's property changes the understanding of constructiveness, framing their adjustment and, with this, the comprehension of problem and crisis as cause for change.

(15) Ecofeminists, since the 1970s until new material feminists today, argue that the domination over nature and the domination over women is based on the same masculinist dualism between active and passive. Both ways of liberation belong together (Alaimo/Hekman 2008).

⇒ 4.2 Life as constant Becoming

Following Jaeggi, problems of forms of life as forms of life were understood as self-contained tensions in an appearing situation. Referring to Hegel, she sees them as an elementary part of a form of life and not as external moments. Their potentiality is constitutive for the problem-solving capacity. In what follows, I will attempt to show how Barad can keep a similar understanding of problems as immanent potential, necessary for the existence of a form of life, emerging out of the very structure of exteriorities in phenomena. Moreover, Barad's different perception of agency seems to be capable of explaining how those potentials become active without conscious human action. However, it will become clear that Barad remains numb or underdeveloped on how the stability is critically and not just affirmatively troubled through matter. Barad has great potential to describe transformation as more-than-human. It is difficult, however, to regard these enactments as crises. Their own idea of the »world's kicking back« has to be advanced by a revised reading of Jane Bennett's concept of »thing-power«. Of special importance will be Bennett's new materialist application of Jacques Rancière's understanding of the »partition of the sensible« through the appearance of new actors.¹⁶ This will help to foster a new materialist understanding of the emergence of transformation through matter becoming to matter or the »world's kicking back«: The melting glacier as an immanent part of the crisis of a form of life as form of life can then be considered without broadening the concept of actions to melting as a conscious activity.

To grasp the immanent potential for troubling and changing a form of life from a new materialist perspective, I suggest starting by focusing on Barad's idea of agential cuts. According to Barad, intra-action brings about the mutual constitutions of exteriorities within phenomena. Hence, the emerging boundaries are there, not as absolute distinction but as an interiority and always dependent and interrelated to the phenomena (Barad 2007, 140). Therefore, the boundaries are not stable, always fragile, and at stake to be overcome by new boundaries, relations or new entities which come to matter (ibid., 171; Coole 2013, 458). Conclusively, the materialization of a form or the intra-active emergence of living bodies does always point beyond the form or bodies themselves.

(16) I recognize the sharp differences between Barad and Bennett, especially on the substantiality of matter. However, I will focus on their shared conviction that matter can become to matter, whether fundamentally pre-existent (Bennett) or through its active reshaping of itself as matter (Barad).

Therefore, the reformulation of immanent contradictions of forms of life as forms of life from Jaeggi to Barad is not between norms underlying social practices and their mal-realization as the conditions of existence of a form of life. It is between phenomena or inseparability and agential cuts becoming alive. Matter, in its permanent becoming, is the irritating force which, on the one hand, constitutes forms of life and, on the other hand, kicks back and offers (re-)configurations. With Haraway, Barad reflects that situatedness is not self-evident but always critical. How something is built into the world, what and how it matters, is always unstable and changing as part of the world in its constant becoming (Barad 2007, 159).

As pointed out before, it is important for Jaeggi that the potential for problematizing forms of life is always there but needs articulation. Barad has reformulated agency independent from human action. Nevertheless, the mechanism of problematizing, though granted to non-humans, is not described but only a contingent, always present potential. Therefore, only if iterative intra-action can be described as a *critical* or troubling and not just mute, contingent potential is it possible to discuss the transformation not just as permanent dynamics of the world's becoming but to distinguish between critical and un-critical ones. Why can intra-action and the world's becoming be a critical, problematizing and not just necessary or eventive process?

⇒ 4.3 Critique of Emergence

Jane Bennett can offer such an understanding. In her book *Vibrant Matter. A political Ecology of Things* from 2010, she introduces a similar new materialist concept of agency of matter beyond human agency. According to her, humans are only one possible agent entangled with multiple others and indistinguishable. Bennett asks e.g.: Can the decision of a human being for a certain action be solemnly ascribed to that entity alone, or does the material relation to other entities, starting from microbiomes, take part in this, entangled within decision making? What would it mean for our self-understanding to open such perspectives and integrate other action-abilities as part of our actions? Hence, she seeks a more horizontal and relational understanding of agency which she calls thing-power. (Bennett 2010, 12). However, she falls short in her own attempt as she does not ask for the processes which constitute such materializations but seems to take certain formations of matter (e.g. microbiome/human) for granted. Bennett is not concerned with the historicity and origins of materiality as her work focuses on granting things a political agency, among others. From the perspective of critical

theories of domination, her ontology is highly problematic (Rudolph 2019).

Nonetheless, individual sections of Bennett's book can be re-read to include a critical understanding of the actions which contribute to the becoming of the world as a problematizing process built on an immanent potential of the world's entanglement: Building first on her reading of Adorno's concept of the non-identical, Bennett argues that a gap between representation and the represented, the general and the particular, in the end between entities and their entanglement is inscribed in the world. Boundary-making cut-offs suspend possible configurations. But the »forgotten« or non-identical is always necessarily related to the represented. The excluded is not absolute outside, and the established gap between concept and exterior is ineradicable. The non-identical can appear as a constant reminder and troubling force. It forms the immanent critical potential for problematizing a given situatedness. Adorno calls that force of the absent a »messianic promise«. Bennett reads it as the »power of things« (Bennett 2010, 16). »(A) philosophy of non-identity and a vital materialism (...) share an urge to cultivate a more careful attentiveness to the out-side.« (Ibid., 17) This is a reminder of Jaeggi's reflection on Hegel's dialectical movement within crises of forms of life.¹⁷

Borrowing further from the French philosopher Jacques Rancière's theorizing of the political, Bennett sees herself able to conceptualize or describe how the immanent potential of exclusions can be actualized by matter itself and problematize the status quo. Following Rancière, the »real« would be only one possible »partition or distribution of the sensible«; that is, a temporal formation of bodies, practices or properties. Political action for Rancière is the exposure of the contingency of such partitions through the emergence of new bodies which have not been part of it before (Rancière 1999, 22). Hence, the exposure is not just a response to an articulated problem. It is the problem itself, articulated by itself, as the exclusion of possible bodies. The conflict of their exclusion or absence becomes visible through their appearance, as Bennett reads it (Bennett 2010, 105). However, the emerging bodies are not simply misrecognized bodies. These would have a pre-existence. They emerge as new, unpredictable bodies out of »nothingness«.

(17) Hence, it does not come as a surprise that one of the best examples of such an immanent paradox is demonstrated in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Adorno and Horkheimer. The ideal of the free subject comes in contradiction with itself through domination and fails to be free (Horkheimer/Adorno 2002).

Their exclusion is necessary for the existence of a particular form of life (ibid., 106).

Hereafter, similar to Barad, the interruption of the boundaries within a political constitution or form of life consists not in a specific form of interaction of pre-existing but suppressed entities but an action as the material-discursive enactment of new agential cuts: new matter or bodies which can become to matter, which claim to be alive in the sense of a becoming part of a relation of practices, instead of just changing the practices. Hence, the not-just-human bodies irritate a given relation of bodies and practices and offer opportunities for transformation. This reading exceeds Bennett, who simply tried to show that non-human bodies can interrupt (ibid.: 108).

Another essential aspect of Rancière's theory, which Bennett overlooked, is that, according to him, the success of the interruption through newly materialized bodies is not guaranteed. Emancipation can fail if the emerging bodies do not come to life but instead disappear. That happens either by being integrated into the partition of the sensible without transforming the whole structure of the political form of life or by simply being neglected as new bodies (Rancière 1999, 29).¹⁸ This aspect of his political theory is important to describe failed or regressive transformation out of the appearance of new bodies. A second important note through Rancière, which is not easily found in Barad and makes her concept vague, is that the bodies which newly emerge are always related to the previous situation. They change by adding to it and not by offering a whole new world (ibid., 47). A critical intra-action could hence be perceived as one that stands in a not contingent but iterating relation to the previous apparatus as its »exteriority-within«.

To conclude: The problem of forms of life as forms of life from a new materialist perspective lies in its necessary exclusivity. The exclusion is not a result of social practices but the intra-active emergence of boundary-making practices which »decide«, cut what counts as social, living, dead, active, passive and so on. The problem of a form of life as a form of life is not activated from an absolute outside nor from self-reflexive human beings, but by the crisis potential, the »exteriority-within«, itself. It is new bodies, lives or matter that emerge out of phenomena with which each form of life remains entangled and is always open for contestation. These newly emerged agential cuts ask for

(18) This failure of emancipation through including the Demos into the existing structure becomes especially important in Rancière's discussion of what he calls postdemocracy: »Democracy *after* the Demos.« (Rancière 1999, 102)

participation or responsiveness. They appear as something that has not been there before and hence trouble not just the form of life's function, but it is being. Barad's ethical and political claim is that for a form of life to be consistent means to broaden the possibility to respond to the form of life as such. Not action-ability of pre-existent entities matters, but the response-ability of the newly emerging. Ontology, epistemology and ethics are inseparably interwoven with one another. No being without response-ability, no response-ability without situated knowledge, no knowledge without response-able practice.

⇒ 5 Conclusion

The all-embracing aim of this paper was an enhanced reading of Rahel Jaeggi's critique of forms of life through a new materialist understanding of life that becomes to matter. My question was how a feminist new materialist (re-)configuration of the concept of forms of life affiliates and extends Jaeggi's attempt to diagnose and overcome crises of forms of life under conditions of the Anthropocene. Jaeggi's critique of forms of life was chosen as an attempt of a critical theory which already recognizes the situatedness of the theorists within the object of critique. This ideology critical perspective has a sense for its limited latitude and hence focuses not on a critique of the existing but for its transformation, immanent though in the existing.

However, Jaeggi draws a sharp distinction between natural and social forms of life. While the first ones are considered necessary but passive, hence, not open for transformation, social forms of life are described as being historically emerged ensembles of social practices which answer to an experienced problem. Only thus are they open for active change and critique. This necessarily excludes all forms of crises that are not out of human-human relations but go beyond this horizon. It reduces the perspective onto a shared world and enacts the nature/culture dualism. This dualism, I argued, lies at the foundation of the current fundamental crisis of the form of life we call »our« world. (Re-)configuring the concept of critically analyzing forms of life is necessary but also becomes possible at the end of the world as we know it.

With Karen Barad, as a representative of new materialism, this distinction between nature and social has been dissolved: Forms of life are at first the boundary-making practices out of inseparability as the primary ontological unit. Those practices temporarily conclude what counts as social or natural and what matters more broadly. Hence, forms of life are about the re-occurring question of *who* or *what* counts as life and

not just *how* life is organized and troubled. Critique of forms of life is about the (re-)configuration of the world within which human forms of life are entangled, emerge and transform.

Furthermore, as the initial point for critique, Jaeggi assumes the immanent potentiality for a crisis, which she sees at hand as the condition of possibility of each form of life. According to her, forms of life emerge around an internal contradiction, which is hence necessary and at the same time at stake to trouble the form of life. However, these immanent crisis potentials lead to action inhibitions and indeterminacy for the actors in the functioning of a form of life. Thereafter, Jaeggi concludes that the benchmarks of critique can only be obtained from a progressive or rational overcoming of the crisis by which the mechanisms of crises are taken seriously: indeterminacy and inability must transfer into enrichment of action-abilities, for the subjects of a given form of life instead of regression. Regression »consists in *not being able* to tackle newly emerging problems within a history of attempts at problem-solving.« (Jaeggi 2022, 525, ital. SR)

Coming from Barad's enhanced understanding of forms of life, it appeared possible to keep this structure of crises as an immanent potential but reformulate it: the immanent conditions of possibility of a form of life that make it, on the one hand, possible and on the other hand fragile is not the tension between norm and their realization. The productive tension exists between inseparability and mattering as a result of iterative intra-action. This inscribed an exteriority within phenomena. Hence, the transformation of such tensions does not lie in restating *how* we are and what action-abilities we possess. It is about who this *we* is or, even more generally, what matters, what possesses the ability to react or respond to the world. For this, I argued that Barad accesses the concept of response-ability instead of action-ability.

The activation of this potential as a problematizing, critical process was fortified by bringing Bennett and Rancière into the discussion. The irritating force of a once intra-actively emerged form of life is always already present in the world's kicking back and becoming to matter. Hence, crises get articulated or emerge as such through bodies or matter that appear within a partition of the sensible or form of life. Only when it troubles its boundary-making practices and forwards them to completely different worlds is it a problematic process that needs to be observed by the critic.

I finally argue how it is possible to state from here that one form of (re-)configuration is better or rational as a learning process in the

superimposition of Jaeggi and Barad: The focus must be shifted to the boundary-making practices and the casualties that have been made through making matter to matter. The way in which the »differential constitution of the human (nonhuman) is always accompanied by particular exclusions and always open to contestation« (Barad 2007, 153), the same way every constitution produces matter and waste.

If, conclusively, a critical theory has to take the immanent potential for crises seriously, that is, the fragility, then indeed, the positive or progressive answer to it can only be enrichment, as Jaeggi concluded. However, it is an enrichment of a different kind than human participation and action-ability. The actors who could carry out the crisis have not been identified as humans but as »no-bodies«: those who do not matter and live. Rational learning processes resulting in good forms of life can, therefore, only consist in enrichment of mattering; hence, not action-abilities in an anthropocentric understanding, but once again, (re-)configuration needs response-ability. To be able to respond, that is to enter relations within the world emerges before the ability to act in the world. This makes for a richer world, not in the sense of richer practices but richer appearances. The entangled dependence between response-able entities can finally lead to a more caring co-living.

Unquestionably, this process can always only remain in deficit and susceptible to future crises. However, the established benchmark of emancipation of response-ability may make it possible to be applied to measure transformation processes as regressive or paradoxical against enriching. Regressive transformation would then be one that makes the lives and bodies which appear and activate the crisis disappear instead of resolving into new, care-full world-relations. This counts equally, for example, for refugees, which appear and make visible the insufficiency of Western legal systems, as it does for the melting glaciers, who makes ecological collapse visible, not only to humans. In both cases, it is not pre-existing lives that ask for a world's response and their own ability to respond within a shared reality. They are so far indeterminate lives. Overcoming these crises of our present forms of life can only consist in having them matter and (re-)configure into a new form of life. One that must accept the internal crisis of its dying as a form of life. Only the emergence of these new forms of life will be able to save life as such – after the end of the world we lived in.

»We« share our world not only between humans in our social practices, enacting this world. »Our« world is constantly (re-)configured and is today critically troubled by the nature/culture dualism. Consequently, a critical theory that questions not only social activity but the binary-

making practices of nature and social is urgently needed for a shared world at its lose. A more response-able world is one more cared for.

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