

Saturday, 9.9.2023

**Panel 4: New Ethics**

(Chair: Julia Straub & Oliver Krüger)

- 9:00 – 9:45 Janina Loh: How and Why Robot Ethics, AI, Critical Posthumanism, and Queer Feminism is Interconnected: The Examples of Sex Robots and Dating Apps
- 9:45 – 10:30 Friederike Zenker: Alle Tiere sind verschieden, aber manche sind verschiedener? Individualität bei Mensch und Tier
- 10:30 – 10:45 Coffee Break
- 10:45 – 11:30 Cary Wolfe: Posthumanism: Unavoidably Environmental
- 11:30 – 12:30: Interactive exchange
- 12:30 – 13:30 Lunch and Farewells

**Participants**

- ▷ *Dr. Hannes Bajohr*  
Lecturer in Media Studies, University of Basel (CH)
- ▷ *Dr. Anna Jobin*  
Senior Lecturer and Researcher,  
University of Fribourg
- ▷ *Prof. N. Katherine Hayles*  
James B. Duke Distinguished Professor Emerita  
of Literature, Duke University (USA)
- ▷ *Reinhard Heil, M.A.*  
Scientific collaborator at ITAS  
(Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems  
Analysis, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology) (D)

- ▷ *Janina Kölbng*  
Ph.D. student in the Study of Religions, Basel (CH)
- ▷ *Dr. Janina Loh*  
Philosopher and ethicist at the Liebenau Foundation,  
Meckenbeuren (D)
- ▷ *Dr. Melike Şahinol*  
Senior Research Fellow at the Orient Institute  
Istanbul (TUR)
- ▷ *Dr. Caroline Schuster*  
Vice-directrice, Musée d'art et d'histoire Fribourg (CH)
- ▷ *Prof. Cary Wolfe*  
Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English,  
Rice University (USA)
- ▷ *Dr. Friederike Zenker*  
Scientific Collaborator at eikones: Center for the  
Theory and History of the Image  
University of Basel (D)

**Conference hosts at Fribourg University**

- ▷ *Prof. Sabine Haupt*  
(Comparative Literature)
- ▷ *Prof. Oliver Krüger*  
(Study of Religions)
- ▷ *Prof. Julia Straub*  
(Modern English Literature)

Keynote: *Prof. N. Katherine Hayles*, James B. Duke  
Distinguished Professor Emerita of Literature,  
Duke University (USA)

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UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG  
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# Towards a new humanity, and beyond – debating post-human perspectives

07.09.2023 to 09.09.2023  
Fribourg University, Switzerland

## 7.–9. September 2023

**Keynote lecture by N. Katherine Hayles**  
University of California, Los Angeles

**«Cognizing Others: Human Futures with  
Our Nonhuman Symbionts»**

17:30 – 18.30, 7. September 2023

Université de Fribourg,  
«Espace Guggi»,  
MIS 08 Salle 0101, rue de Rome 6



[Conference Programme](#)

Institut de Littérature générale et comparée  
Department of English  
Social Sciences Department (Study of Religions)  
University of Fribourg

 **Swiss National  
Science Foundation**

The future of human life has been envisioned in manifold ways since the European Enlightenment. These visions rested on the belief that the future will be changed by social and technological progress. The rise of evolutionary theory in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also placed «matter», i.e., the material substance of humans, center-stage, with the promise of human perfection beckoning.

It is at that moment in time that social utopias begin to concur with the expectation of a «new human», superior to its old version in terms of strength, intellect, emotion or even race. In addition to purely materialist worldviews, as provided by Marxism or Monism in the vein of Haeckel's works, vitalist and neognostic doctrines came into being, opposing rationalism (like e.g., American Transcendentalism) or seeking to overcome the gulf between religion and science (like e.g., theosophy). Marxism provided not the only intellectual context for such advances meant to completely overhaul anthropological science. Various biopolitical utopias developed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: in Russia, for example, so-called «cosmism» was based on Nikolai Fjodorov's ideas and drew on Christian and scientific models for its imagination of humanity's salvation.

Prior to the New Age movement of the 1960s and 1970s and its proclamation of a new era of harmony and love, eugenics and racial ideologies had impacted European and North American societies. Genetic engineering and pre-natal diagnostics catapulted visions of a new, improved human to the threshold of a new millennium, enabling pre-natal selections based mainly on a preferred sex. Technological posthumanism is positioned at the cusp of this development with its calls for an abandonment of the mortal and vulnerable human given the inevitable superiority of AI and robots which put notions of human perfection to shame.

Visions of a new human and a new humanity have been put to discussion across many social spheres. They touch upon the natural and medical sciences, literature, the creative and performative arts, history, religion, law, politics and philosophy and also inhabit their interstices. More often than not, artists and writers such as Mary Shelley and Stanisław Lem, or Stelarc and ORLAN, had busied themselves with the ethical and philosophical implications of technical innovations long before they actually emerged.

This planned interdisciplinary conference at the University of Fribourg will connect such historical aspects with contemporary discussions of the potentially new human.

While literary and cultural studies and religious studies are the central disciplines – given the academic background of the organizers – our choice of speakers will add distinct thematic nuances. Speakers will be encouraged to give their papers in either English, German or French. The organizers thus wish to underline the bilingual character of the University of Fribourg.

## Towards a new humanity, and beyond – debating post-human perspectives

07.09.2023 to 09.09.2023 Fribourg University, Switzerland

### Thursday, 7.9.2023

16:30 Arrivals and Registration

17:00 Conference opening

17:30 – 18:30 **Keynote lecture by N. Katherine Hayles:**  
Cognizing Others: Human Futures with Our Nonhuman Symbionts

18:30 – 19:15 Discussion with the audience

19:30 Drinks Reception / Apéro riche

▶ **Panel 2: (Post-)human(e) Literature**  
(Chair: Julia Straub)

13:15 – 14:00 *Hannes Bajohr:* Postartifizielles Schreiben: Autorschaft nach der künstlichen Intelligenz

14:00 – 14:45 *Sabine Haupt:* Voight Kampff-Tests für Bio-Adapter. Literarische Perspektiven eines kritischen «Biohumanismus»

14:45 – 15:00 Coffee Break

### Friday, 8.9.2023

9:00 Welcome & introduction

▶ **Panel 1: The Perfect Human**  
(Chair: Oliver Krüger)

9:15 – 10:00 *Caroline Schuster:* Jeunesse éternelle ou vieillesse rebelle: L'âge et le corps dans l'art du XIX au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle

10:00 – 10:45 *Janina Kölbinger:* From the Mirror of Narcissus to the Selfie of Narcissa. Augmented Reality as a Technology of Desubjectification

10:45 – 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 – 11:45 *Reinhard Heil:* Eine eugenische Utopie: Julian Huxleys Evolutionärer Humanismus

11:45 – 13:15 Lunch Break

▶ **Panel 3: Human and Non-Human Intelligence**  
(Chair: Sabine Haupt)

15:00 – 15:45 *Anna Jobin:* Semantic Practices and the Negotiation of Meaning with AI: An Empirical Study on (Post-) Human Interpretation of Words

15:45 – 16:30 *Melike Şahinol:* A Posthuman Perspective on Brain Computer Interfaces as Augmentative and Alternative Communication Device

18:30 Conference Dinner