

JUDITH BUTLER QUESTIONS

The inorganic body in the early Marx. A limit-concept of anthropocentrism.

- How best to re-approach, today, Marx's 1844 Manuscripts in order to take up the question of whether the young Marx is anthropocentric?
- What prompts me to ask this question is a famous, but very enigmatic paragraph in those manuscripts that refers to nature as man's 'inorganic body'.
- The question of whether Marx's views were compatible with an ecological perspective, and which in turn prompted a series of inquiries into how best to understand Marx's theory of nature.
- It does raise questions about how we understand labour and the labouring body, the human and its relation to nature and other living processes.
- How we conceive of this relation has implications for answering the question of just how anthropocentric are the early manuscripts, or whether there is a largely unexamined critique of anthropocentrism to be found within their pages?
- How does that distinction inform our interpretation of what is going on with this phrase, nature as 'inorganic body', and with the broader question of whether Marx in his early manuscripts proposes an anthropocentric account of nature?
- The question of whether Marx's views are compatible with ecological thinking. Some asked the question: is the claim that 'nature is man's inorganic body' an ecological claim? Is it the case that humans should act, or are naturally disposed to act, as if their own bodies were in some sense coextensive with nature?