Tema T Higher Seminar

Fake meat and it Relations

26 April 2017, 13.15-15.00 at Lethe

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National University of Singapore

What does it mean to relate to something as a fake? This talk will explore the curious case of fake meat: wheat-, soy- or mushroom-based products that allow consumers to ‘have it both ways’ by explicitly representing meat and non-meat at the same time. Starting from social-science literature on fake meat as a meat substitute, and philosophical works on the ethics of eating fake meat, I develop an analysis of how people negotiate ‘fakeness’ as part of their engagement with and appreciation of this type of food. Based on observations, informal interviews and stories about fake meat in multiple countries (particularly in Singapore), we will see how notions of make-belief and the ‘as if’, resemblance, inferiority, pleasure, transgression and suspicion are mobilized in people’s eating (or avoiding) of fake meat. I will end by asking what this ‘fakes’-angle offers existing debates on fake meat, and how it provides a possibility for rehabilitating questions of ‘representation’ in STS.

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