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**Beyond the Human: Catastrophe and Ethical Transformation in *Parable of the Sower* and *Animal's People***

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**Abstract:** This paper examines how Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* challenge liberal humanist conceptions of the autonomous, rational subject by representing catastrophe as an enduring condition rather than an exceptional rupture. Drawing on posthumanist frameworks, the analysis argues that both texts expose the instability of the category of the "human," showing how recognition as fully human depends upon historically contingent assumptions regarding bodily integrity, agency, and social legibility. Butler's portrayal of Lauren Olamina's hyperempathy complicates ideals of rational autonomy by foregrounding vulnerability and relational dependence as central to ethical subjectivity.

Similarly, Sinha's depiction of *Animal's* bodily transformation reveals how normative standards of embodiment regulate access to dignity, belonging, and political recognition within contexts shaped by environmental and industrial violence. Both novels situate catastrophe as a structural condition that reshapes ethical possibility, imagining adaptive frameworks grounded in interdependence and transformation. Through Lauren's Earthseed philosophy and *Animal's* refusal of normative embodiment, the texts suggest that survival under conditions of ecological precarity requires relational modes of ethical life rather than the preservation of traditional humanist ideals.

**Keywords:** *Posthumanism, Liberal Humanism, Environmental Catastrophe, Octavia Butler, Indra Sinha, Vulnerability, Ethics*

Liberal humanism has historically imagined the human subject as autonomous, rational, and protected by stable social and political institutions. Yet contemporary literature increasingly questions whether such a subject has ever truly existed, particularly in contexts shaped by environmental collapse, industrial disaster, and systemic inequality. *Parable of the Sower* and *Animal's People* depict worlds in which catastrophe is not a temporary rupture but an enduring condition structuring everyday existence. In these novels, crisis does not simply threaten human life; it reveals the instability of the category “human” itself.

The liberal humanist conception of the human as a rational, self-governing subject is itself historically recent, emerging alongside Enlightenment traditions that privileged individual autonomy and moral self-determination. Thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau associated human development with the capacity for reflective reasoning, yet also acknowledged that reason emerges from more fundamental human needs and desires. As Rousseau writes, “Reason develops through the activity of the passions; we seek to know only because we wish to enjoy, and it is inconceivable that a man who had neither fears nor desires would bother to reason. The passions, in turn, originate in our needs and owe their progress to our knowledge, for we can desire or fear things only if we can form some ideas of them in our mind or through a simple impulse of nature. The savage, lacking any sort of enlightenment, experiences passions only of the latter kind; his desires do not go beyond his physical needs,” (Rousseau et. Coleman 75). Rousseau’s formulation suggests that rational reflection develops gradually through changing material and social conditions rather than existing as a fully formed universal human trait.

Rousseau’s argument complicates Enlightenment faith in continuous progress, suggesting that the expansion of human knowledge and social complexity does not necessarily produce greater moral equality. Once human development extends beyond immediate needs, new forms of comparison, competition, and hierarchy may emerge, producing inequalities justified through perceived differences between individuals or groups. The assumption that progress naturally fosters shared humanity is unstable, as historical conditions repeatedly demonstrate that material advancement can intensify exclusion as easily as it can encourage cooperation.

For much of human history, the conditions required for autonomy, such as political stability, material security, and freedom from coercion, have been unevenly distributed. The exercise of rational agency depends not only upon intellectual capacity but upon the availability of time, security, and social recognition that allow reflective thought to occur. Liberal humanism frequently assumes such conditions as universal, yet they remain historically contingent and unevenly accessible across different social contexts.

Through protagonists whose bodies resist normative definitions of humanity, such as Lauren Olamina's hyperempathic embodiment and *Animal's* physically altered form, Butler and Sinha expose the exclusionary assumptions underlying liberal humanism's claims to universality. Rather than portraying survival as the restoration of a stable human identity, both texts imagine adaptive ethical frameworks grounded in vulnerability, relationality, and transformation. *Parable of the Sower* and *Animal's People* ultimately challenge liberal humanism by depicting catastrophe not as an exception to human life but as a condition that reveals the instability of the category "human," suggesting that ethical survival depends not on preserving traditional human identity but on adapting beyond it.

Lauren's departure from her father's worldview does not reflect a rejection of religion itself but a rejection of interpretive assumptions that presume continuity between past and future social conditions. Although her father recognizes the dangers posed by social collapse, he continues to understand crisis within a moral narrative oriented toward endurance and eventual restoration. His theology assumes that instability is temporary and that moral persistence will ultimately allow the community to recover a recognizable form of social order.

After his disappearance and presumed death, Lauren delivers one of the final sermons prior to the collapse of the neighbourhood, adopting the language of communal persistence that structured his ethical outlook: "We have God and we have each other. We have our island community, fragile, and yet a fortress. Sometimes it seems too small and too weak to survive... But also like the widow, it persists. We persist. This is our place, no matter what" (Butler 135). Lauren's decision to recite the sermon reflects not only filial continuity but an awareness of the stabilizing role her father played within the community. As the primary moral and spiritual authority, Reverend Olamina functioned as a symbolic pillar whose presence sustained collective morale during periods of uncertainty. His disappearance threatens not only emotional security but the shared interpretive framework through which suffering could be understood and endured, particularly following recent deaths that have already weakened communal confidence. By temporarily occupying her father's rhetorical position, Lauren attempts to preserve cohesion at a moment when instability risks dissolving the fragile bonds that have enabled the neighbourhood's survival.

At the same time, the narrative suggests that such belief performs an essential psychological function, as hope provides the motivation necessary to endure conditions that might otherwise appear unlivable. Early in the novel, the suicide of Mrs. Simms illustrates the consequences of losing such orientation toward the future, suggesting that the collapse of meaning can precede the collapse of life itself, "I'm not like Mrs. Sims. I'm not some kind of potential Job, long suffering, stiff necked, then at last, either humble before an all-knowing almighty, or destroyed. My God doesn't love me or hate me or watch over me or know me at all, and I feel no love for or loyalty to my God. My God just is,"

(Butler 23). Mrs. Simms' despair reflects not only the erosion of an eschatological expectation that suffering will ultimately be rendered intelligible through divine justice, but also a more immediate crisis of personal meaning. Her rejection of the figure of Job suggests an unwillingness to endure suffering without the assurance that it serves a larger moral purpose, revealing the extent to which her capacity for endurance depends upon a belief system that affirms her suffering as meaningful. Within a Christian interpretive framework, hardship can be endured insofar as it participates in a moral order that promises eventual restoration or recompense; however, when such assurances lose credibility at the level of individual experience, suffering risks appearing arbitrary rather than purposeful, and endurance itself becomes increasingly difficult to justify.

The compassion extended by neighbours provides material and emotional support, but cannot compensate for the apparent absence of transcendent accountability capable of transforming suffering into meaningful sacrifice. Without the expectation that present hardship contributes to a coherent moral narrative, endurance itself becomes difficult to justify. Her death suggests that communal solidarity, while ethically significant, may be insufficient when belief in a future capable of redeeming suffering has lost credibility. Yet Lauren's repetition of her father's language simultaneously reveals its limitations; even as she speaks the rhetoric of preservation, she recognizes that the material conditions sustaining the community have already begun to disintegrate. Instability is no longer a temporary disruption but a structural condition of existence, requiring not the expectation of restoration but the development of an ethical framework oriented toward adaptation. Earthseed emerges not from a rejection of hope, but from the recognition that survival depends upon transforming the narratives through which the future can be imagined.

A similar destabilization of the liberal humanist subject emerges in *Animal's People*, where industrial catastrophe demonstrates that autonomy, rational self-determination, and security are materially contingent rather than inherent human qualities. Liberal humanism assumes that individuals possess the capacity to make meaningful choices; however, such choices depend upon political, environmental, and social structures that make agency possible in the first place. When these structures are compromised, the ability to act as an autonomous subject becomes significantly constrained. One of the women who encounters Dr. Elli describes the pervasive effects of contamination: "Our wells are full of poison. It's in the soil, water, in our blood, it's in our milk. Everything here is poisoned" (Sinha 108). The crisis extends beyond bodily injury to the environmental and political systems that structure everyday life, demonstrating that meaningful recovery requires structural transformation rather than individual remedy.

Elli's position within the narrative highlights the limits of liberal humanism's assumption that ethical intention is sufficient to alleviate suffering. Coming from a context in which institutional

protections such as medical infrastructure, legal recourse, and environmental regulation are relatively stable, Elli initially approaches the crisis through a framework oriented toward treatment and recovery. Her empathy is genuine, yet it is shaped by an understanding of suffering as temporary and resolvable through humanitarian intervention. The conditions of Khaufpur challenge this assumption, revealing that the damage produced by the Kampani cannot be addressed solely through technical expertise or individual care. As Rimjhim Bhattacharjee observes, Elli must “unlearn her methodologies from the ‘modern,’ ‘developed’ world” and learn to recognize the Khaufpuri community on its own terms rather than imposing external models of cure (Bhattacharjee 4). Her presence exposes the limitations of ethical frameworks that presume universal applicability, demonstrating how Western models of progress and recovery may fail to account for forms of harm embedded within long-term structural inequality.

The suspicion with which Elli is received further reflects the community’s awareness that, despite her compassion, she remains connected to the same global system that produced their suffering. Although she distinguishes herself from the Kampani executives through her willingness to engage directly with those affected, she nonetheless arrives from the same geopolitical context in which their lives have been rendered expendable. For the people of Khaufpur, the distinction between empathetic humanitarian and corporate authority is unstable, as both emerge from a world that has historically benefited from their marginalization while avoiding responsibility for its consequences. The novel suggests that empathy alone cannot overcome structural distrust, particularly when those offering assistance remain materially insulated from the conditions they seek to address. *Catastrophe* exposes not only the vulnerability of human bodies but the limitations of liberal humanism’s assumption that shared humanity is sufficient to bridge profound inequalities in power, knowledge, and lived experience.

*Catastrophe* in *Animal’s People* is not a singular historical event but an ongoing condition that shapes biological and social existence, demonstrating that human life is inseparable from environmental and political forces. The liberal humanist ideal of the independent subject presumes that individuals develop within relatively stable familial and institutional structures; yet *Animal’s* orphanhood, itself a consequence of environmental violence, disrupts the intergenerational transmission of knowledge that would otherwise enable social participation and self-determination. His experience reveals that the capacity to act autonomously depends upon material conditions that sustain bodily integrity, community continuity, and social recognition.

The instability of these conditions is further reflected in the ways *Animal’s* embodiment complicates his participation in normative social relations, reinforcing the extent to which recognition as fully human depends upon conformity to bodily expectations produced within particular historical

contexts. As he observes, “Hatred of the self, deep and harsh I feel, loathing for all the dreadful things I've done. Claim to love Nisha yet spy on her and go to bed with a prostitute. Elli's my friend yet I secretly gloat that I have seen her grace?” (Sinha 245). Animal’s internal conflict reflects the extent to which normative models of relational and ethical behaviour presuppose forms of socialization that environmental catastrophe has rendered unstable. Deprived of the continuity typically provided by family structures, his understanding of intimacy is shaped by contradiction, uncertainty, and self-reproach, revealing how exclusion from stable developmental conditions produces not only social marginalization but internalized instability.

As Rimjhim Bhattacharjee argues, “Animal’s yearning for an upright body is not about physical comfort or conformity to ablebodiedness per se; it is about the belief that sexual desirability requires normative embodiment” (Bhattacharjee 5). Although Animal outwardly embraces his status as singular and anomalous, his desire for romantic and emotional connection reveals the persistence of relational needs that liberal humanism presumes to be universally accessible. His relationship with Anjali complicates the assumption that recognition depends upon normative embodiment; when Anjali expresses desire for him, “I always liked you, I used to wonder what it would be like to do it with you” (Sinha 241). The narrative suggests that intimacy grounded in shared marginality can produce alternative modes of belonging that do not rely upon conformity to dominant models of the human. Yet Animal’s continued preoccupation with whether he can be loved reveals the enduring force of the liberal humanist expectation that individuals must secure their own legitimacy.

This individualized struggle for recognition mirrors the broader fragmentation produced by catastrophe, as material insecurity restricts the capacity for collective political action. As Animal explains, chronic hunger narrows the temporal horizon of survival: “Hope dies in places like this, because hope lives in the future and there’s no future here, how can you think about tomorrow when all your strength is used up trying to get through today? Zafar says this is why the people don’t rise up and rebel” (Sinha 185). When survival becomes a matter of immediate necessity rather than long-term possibility, collective resistance becomes increasingly difficult to sustain, rendering Khaufpur more vulnerable to the authority of the state, the police, and corporate actors such as the Kampani. Self-interest, while understandable within conditions of material insecurity, inadvertently reinforces the very structures of power that perpetuate the community’s marginalization.

Through Lauren’s hyperempathy, *Parable of the Sower* demonstrates that the category of the “human” is structured through exclusion, revealing the instability of liberal humanism’s claim to universality. Liberal humanism frequently assumes that the human subject is rational, morally self-regulating, and capable of ethical behaviour by virtue of being human; however, Butler complicates this assumption through Lauren’s recognition that biological humanity does not necessarily produce

humane action. Reflecting on her half-brother Keith, she describes him as “the most sociopathic person I’ve ever been close to. He would have been a monster if he had been allowed to grow up. Maybe he was one already. He never cared what he did. If he wanted to do something and it wouldn’t cause him immediate physical pain, he did it, fuck the earth” (Butler 115). The phrase “fuck the earth” is particularly revealing, as it collapses the distinction between harm directed at individuals and harm directed at the broader ecological conditions that sustain life, reinforcing the novel’s rejection of human exceptionalism. Keith’s behaviour demonstrates that cruelty and exploitation are not external to humanity but exist within it, destabilizing the assumption that rational subjects naturally act ethically. Rather than indicating a lack of intelligence, Keith’s actions reveal that intelligence itself is ethically indeterminate, capable of serving either cooperative or exploitative ends depending upon the values that structure its use. By interpreting empathy as weakness, Keith distances himself from individuals such as Lauren and Marcus whose relational orientation might otherwise provide reciprocal forms of support, isolating himself within social environments structured primarily by calculation rather than trust.

Lauren’s hyperempathy further complicates the liberal humanist ideal of the autonomous individual by blurring the boundary between self and other; her involuntary experience of others’ suffering introduces an embodied constraint upon action, suggesting that ethical behaviour emerges not solely from rational deliberation but from forms of relational dependence that limit the possibility of purely self-interested decision-making. Butler challenges the liberal humanist tendency to equate rationality with moral reliability, showing instead that ethical life may depend upon the recognition of vulnerability as a shared condition rather than an individual attribute.

Similarly, in *Animal's People*, the protagonist’s bodily transformation exposes how the category of the human depends upon conformity to normative physical standards. Animal’s spine, permanently altered by chemical exposure, leads others to perceive him as less fully human, revealing that recognition as human is mediated through bodily legibility. As he observes, “If I agree to be a human being I’ll also have to agree that I’m wrong-shaped and abnormal,” highlighting how the category of the human implicitly excludes those whose bodies deviate from dominant expectations (Sinha 207–208). The novel demonstrates that recognition as fully human is not simply biological but socially constructed through historically contingent standards of bodily normalcy.

Animal’s resistance to Zafar further illustrates the tension between universalizing claims about human dignity and the lived realities of those shaped by environmental catastrophe. Although Zafar advocates for disability rights and encourages Animal to reject the identity of “Animal,” his position reflects a liberal humanist belief that recognition as fully human enables political legitimacy and social protection. From this perspective, identifying as human becomes a strategic claim intended to render

suffering legible within global discourses of rights and justice. However, such a framework risks overlooking the ways Khaufpur has already been treated as implicitly expendable within narratives of industrial progress, recalling Jean-Jacques Rousseau's critique that claims of improvement often obscure the unequal distribution of harm. The community's reduced autonomy is not the cause of their marginalization but its consequence, as environmental devastation limits the very conditions required for rational self-determination that liberal humanism presumes to be universal.

In this sense, Khaufpur occupies a position comparable to the sacrificed figure in *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*, in which collective prosperity is sustained through the suffering of those rendered socially peripheral. As Alexander Keller Hirsch argues, Le Guin's narrative stages the difficulty of attempting to "create a viable life in a world that is unpredictable and structurally unjust," foregrounding the ethical impasse faced by subjects whose well-being depends upon systems that simultaneously produce harm (Hirsch 1). The suffering child of Omelas is not merely an allegorical victim but a structural necessity within the logic of the society's prosperity, revealing how moral responsibility persists even when meaningful alternatives appear foreclosed. Similarly, the environmental devastation of Khaufpur exposes the extent to which global systems of technological progress and economic expansion rely upon forms of suffering that remain geographically and politically marginalized. While well-intentioned, Zafar's insistence that Animal embrace a normative conception of humanity risks reproducing a paternalistic dynamic in which legitimacy depends upon conformity to externally defined standards of personhood rather than transforming the conditions that produced exclusion in the first place. Animal's discomfort with Zafar extends beyond romantic rivalry with Nisha, reflecting skepticism toward interpretive frameworks that seek to restore him to a category of the human that has historically failed to recognize or protect individuals like him. The novel repeatedly demonstrates that ethical awareness does not depend upon normative embodiment; rather, Animal's reflections expose the instability of the boundary between human and animal, suggesting that moral capacity cannot be determined by bodily normativity alone.

Rather than presenting survival as a return to stable or normative forms of human identity, both *Parable of the Sower* and *Animal's People* imagine adaptive ethical frameworks that enable meaning within conditions of instability. In *Parable of the Sower*, Lauren's development of Earthseed reflects a decisive break from traditional religious structures grounded in fixed authority. When her companions question how a religion without a conventional deity could be worthy of belief, Lauren explains that "Earthseed deals with ongoing reality, not with supernatural authority figures. Worship is no good without action. With action, it's only useful if it steadies you, focuses your efforts, eases your mind" (Butler 219). Earthseed does not promise transcendence or rescue from catastrophe; instead, it functions as a pragmatic ethical orientation that enables purposeful action within conditions of

uncertainty. Belief becomes a tool for navigating instability rather than a guarantee of restored order, demonstrating how Butler reconceives ethical life as adaptive rather than grounded in permanence.

The formation of the Acorn community demonstrates that adaptation is not an automatic consequence of shared vulnerability but a process that must be consciously negotiated. As Gabriela Bruschini Grecca argues, empathy within Acorn is not immediate but must be continually “built and renegotiated” among individuals whose histories and assumptions do not easily align (Grecca 1). This negotiated interdependence contrasts sharply with Lauren’s childhood community of Robledo, where social cohesion depends upon the suppression rather than the resolution of difference. From the beginning of the novel, fractures within the neighborhood are evident, such as Mrs. Sims’s racism toward the Hsu family, yet these tensions remain largely unaddressed because open conflict threatens collective survival. Robledo’s stability relies upon strategic silence, requiring residents to suspend ideological antagonisms in order to preserve the defensive integrity of the neighborhood. Social belonging depends not upon genuine ethical agreement but upon maintaining the appearance of cohesion, as exclusion from the community exposes individuals to the lethal precarity of the world beyond its walls. The necessity of preserving this fragile order discourages interpretive divergence, compelling individuals to conform outwardly to inherited moral frameworks even when those frameworks no longer correspond to material conditions.

By contrast, the formation of Acorn requires the explicit articulation of difference, as instability renders inherited structures insufficient for survival. Lauren’s willingness to disclose Earthseed, despite the risk of alienating both Zahra and Harry, reflects her recognition that adaptive ethical frameworks must be openly negotiated if they are to sustain collective life under conditions of ongoing catastrophe. Unlike Harry, whose disposition Lauren understands through years of shared community life, Zahra represents a more uncertain case, as Lauren initially knows her primarily through her association with Richard Moss rather than through deep personal familiarity. Lauren does not assume ideological agreement from the outset but instead recognizes that Zahra’s sudden isolation as a woman without protection creates material incentives for cooperation. Shared precarity produces provisional alignment, allowing collaboration to precede doctrinal compatibility. As Lauren and Zahra travel together, however, continued exposure to danger and mutual reliance gradually reveal deeper compatibilities in outlook, suggesting that ideological agreement emerges through lived experience rather than preceding it. Harry’s sense of betrayal upon discovering that Lauren had long withheld her beliefs reveals the destabilizing force of such disclosure: “No one is who we think they are, that’s what we get for not being telepathic. But you’ve trusted me so far — and I’ve trusted you. I’ve just put my life into your hands” (Butler 193). The crisis of trust generated by this revelation demonstrates that instability, while destructive, also creates the conditions under which previously suppressed differences

must be confronted rather than concealed, allowing adaptive ethical frameworks to emerge through negotiation rather than assumption.

A similar reconfiguration of human identity occurs in *Animal's People*, where the protagonist gradually rejects the assumption that dignity depends upon conformity to normative bodily standards. Initially, Animal perceives his physical difference as a barrier to belonging, particularly in relation to intimacy and social recognition. However, as the novel progresses, he comes to understand that even surgical “correction” would not erase the lived experience of difference that shapes his identity. Reflecting on the practical consequences of surgery, he observes, “I reckon if I have this operation, I will be upright, true, but to walk I will need the help of sticks. I might have a wheelchair, but how far will that get me in the gullis of Khaufpur? Right now I can run and hop and carry kids on my back, I can climb trees, I’ve gone up mountains, roamed in jungles” (Sinha 366). Rather than restoring an imagined normative embodiment, surgical intervention would introduce new forms of dependency, revealing that bodily capacity is shaped not by abstract standards of normality but by the specific environmental conditions in which one must live.

Within the terrain of Khaufpur, Animal’s form enables modes of mobility and resilience that a medically “corrected” body might diminish, exposing the instability of the distinction between normal and abnormal when bodily value is measured against lived conditions rather than abstract ideals. Significantly, Animal ultimately chooses to direct the money intended for surgery toward securing Anjali’s freedom, privileging relational responsibility over the pursuit of bodily normalization. This decision disrupts the assumption that dignity must be achieved through assimilation into dominant models of the human, suggesting instead that ethical agency emerges through the capacity to transform the conditions that produce vulnerability in others. In this sense, Animal’s refusal of surgical correction parallels Lauren’s rejection of theological narratives that promise restoration of a stable social order; both characters recognize that survival depends not upon recovering an imagined prior state of wholeness, but upon developing adaptive frameworks capable of sustaining meaning within conditions of ongoing catastrophe. Because environmental devastation has affected multiple members of the Khaufpur community, bodily difference becomes increasingly normalized, revealing that what appears as individual deviation is part of a broader condition produced by structural violence.

Throughout the novel, Animal and the Khaufpur community resist the authority of the Kampani, whose negligence produced the environmental devastation that continues to structure their lives. Having witnessed the consequences of human decision-making organized around profit, efficiency, and technological progress, Animal’s resistance to normative humanity is shaped not only by bodily difference but also by disillusionment with forms of rationality that have enabled large-scale harm. The industrial catastrophe demonstrates how the rational capacities often used to distinguish

humans from animals may facilitate exploitation when detached from ethical accountability. In this context, identification with the animal becomes symbolically significant, as animals are commonly understood to act according to immediate need rather than abstract systems of accumulation that permit distant suffering. Animal's provocative embrace of this identity reflects not a romanticization of nonhuman life but a rejection of a model of humanity associated with environmental destruction and structural inequality.

Having fought against systems that deny the full humanity of the Khaufpur community, it would be contradictory for Animal to seek validation through conformity to the norms imposed by those same structures. Both *Parable of the Sower* and *Animal's People* imagine ethical frameworks capable of sustaining life within instability, suggesting that survival depends not on preserving traditional models of the human but on adapting to conditions in which identity itself must remain open to transformation.

*Parable of the Sower* and *Animal's People* demonstrate that catastrophe does not simply threaten human life but exposes the instability of the category of the "human" upon which liberal humanism depends. By depicting worlds structured by environmental collapse, industrial violence, and social fragmentation, Butler and Sinha challenge the assumption that individuals exist as autonomous, rational, and secure subjects whose moral capacities remain independent of material conditions. Through Lauren's hyperempathy and Animal's bodily transformation, both novels reveal how recognition as fully human relies upon historically contingent assumptions regarding bodily integrity, cognitive independence, and social legibility, exposing the exclusions that sustain claims to universality. Rather than presenting this instability as purely destructive, these texts imagine ethical possibilities that emerge precisely from conditions of vulnerability and uncertainty. Lauren's *Earthseed* and Animal's refusal of normative embodiment suggest that survival does not depend upon restoring a stable human identity, but upon cultivating relational and adaptive frameworks capable of responding to ongoing transformation. Butler and Sinha move beyond critique, showing that ethical life does not require the preservation of a fixed conception of the human, but instead depends upon acknowledging that identity is continually shaped through changing material, social, and ecological conditions. In this sense, catastrophe does not mark the end of the human so much as the beginning of a more flexible understanding of what being human might mean.

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