

**BOX**

**PEO OLSSON**

**Gradients**



**POSTHUMAN  
SHADOWS OF MODERNITY**

*Arno Böbler*

*Text from the forthcoming book "Umbra Hominis" by Peo Olsson and Sany.*

**BEYOND NATURE**

For a long time in the history of the human race people imagined themselves to be the Other of Nature. For them, becoming human meant becoming supernatural. Just think of Plato's idea that the first principle of being lies "beyond being", or the monotheistic conception of a transcendent God that rules and governs Nature without himself being a part of her. Modernity finally perceived the faculty of reason to be supernatural, insofar as it does not just follow the laws of Nature, but attempts to design, model, control and govern them.

## DISPLACED SUBJECTS

Since then, modern lives claim that they are, in principle, governed and ruled by reason and no more by the cellar regions of our animalistic human nature—namely, by the unconscious parts of our lives, driven by animalistic desires and instincts. The entire body of life-preserving operations at work in the souterrains of our bodies—operations like digesting, breathing, falling asleep, waking up again, being haunted by libidinous desires and the same—are consequently separated from our “authentic” rational human nature, banned into the basements of our lives to store them there safely in clean boxes, in a well ordered and registered scientific manner. AS IF the archives of our animalistic heritage were just a matter of a past that has faded away. AS IF the inorganic life of Nature did not haunt us anymore, neither in our daily lives nor on a global scale. AS IF pre-subjective life, operative in Nature, were not the thrilling shadow of modernity.



## **QUESTIONING AUTONOMY**

Displaced from the subject of modernity, the pre-subjective life of Nature, operative on its own, independently of our human intentions, longings, demands, teleological purposes and desires, consequently questions the very basis of the project of modernity: The conception of the autonomy of reason as a supernatural faculty able to control not only our human intentions, but as well our animalistic nature and even the inorganic life that shows up in the self-organization of matter.

## **POSTHUMANISM**

One day, when the human species will have disappeared, Nature will have shown that she, in fact, survives us. As there was a life of Nature before the human species appeared, there will be a life of Nature after humans will have disappeared. Even then, in the midst of a post-human culture, examples of humans maybe stored in the basements of their museums; as a trace of a past that has passed away, but still can be watched and studied scientifically as an external object, ready at hand to be used for their purposes.

This “last image” of a post-human world is in particular thought provoking, because it calls us, philosophers, to reconsider the relation of our human race to Nature. Will she not survive us all, us subjects of modernity? Is she in fact not the a priori ground of the animal rationale, the animal we are? And our human, all too human subjectivity, is it not just a finite, modal expression of her and her eternal becomings?

In Fragment 16 Heraclitus seems to question precisely this, when he says: ‘How could anyone hide from that which never ceases to exist?’ How could the human species have displaced the simple fact that it is itself a part of Nature, as long as it bodily endures?

Paradoxically, this matter can be revealed only from a post- or pre-human perspective. One has to imagine the absence of oneself and simulate one’s death before one is dead to face the uncanny truth that the skeleton of the human species, too, will once be found in the archives of time. Not now, but soon. Perhaps very soon—très bientôt! – – – Stored in the basement of a post-human culture, somewhere in the dark.

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## Peo Olsson

Peo Olsson är verksam i Lund/Malmö. Hans verk kretsar kring övergångsskeden, som landskapets gradvisa förändringar eller hur vi hanterar kunskap. Knappt märkbara metamorfoser; världsbilder som långsamt skrivs om eller närmiljön som förändras av utvecklingens framfart. Ofta med avstamp i arkivmaterial eller samlingar, undersöks minnet och dess omformningar, samt de kopplingar till tid och rum som dessa processer ger upphov till.

För mer information: [www.peoolsson.se](http://www.peoolsson.se)



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