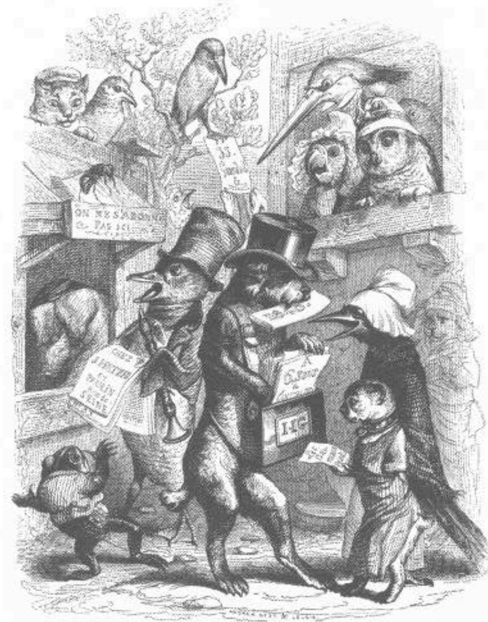
PAUL SHEPARD

The Others

How Animals Made Us Human



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For Firenze Rosa

of something both mundane and astonishing, embodiments of acceptance in the face of alteration and uncertainty. Like them we are each immersed in a personal becoming, evident in the physical aging of our bodies, and must cross "a shore" or "a river" into death, an underworld grave or a heavenly home.

Like the inhabitants of the savanna—where forest and grassland intergrade—all border forms stitch antitheses with their tracks and trails. We are the seamstress who makes sense of the fox at the fringe of the woods. Edge animals ourselves, we are our own most difficult task. As apes, dog-heads, yetis, fallen angels, diverse races, and emergent androids lurk in the margins of our identity, our species is beset with a problem of the categorical imagination.

PART III

Identity

The question at the center of "myself" and "ourself" is "Who?" Our identity is shaped not only by our differences from the Others but in the alchemy by which assimilating them informs the genesis of self. They are both the reciprocal and the constituents of our consciousness. Their own belonging is like an anatomy of membership: the image for us of our own social union.

5 The Self as Menagerie

We are Mosaics, forgive me, I think this wiser
than the emulation of Zeus, or the harsh-axed
Vikings in their Valhalla.
I have found animals in me when I stroll in the forest.
I hesitate before a large dragonfly, I step
like a cat in the night, I have felt something
lift along my neck
when a wolf howls . . .

LOREN EISELEY

MY FATHER USED to sing into the mirror as he shaved in the morning when I was small:

Oh, I went to the Animal Fair,
The birds and the beasts were there,
The old baboon, by the light of the moon,
Was combing her auburn hair.
Oh, the monkey, he got drunk,

And sat on the elephant's trunk.
The elephant sneezed, and fell to his knees,
And that was the end of the monk . . .

I was enthralled by the bizarre figures of a coiffured baboon, a drunk monkey, and a sneezing elephant that were part of an animal fair. I felt the ambience of that fair, as if it were a playground or a zoo, the scratch of the comb and the warmth of "auburn," the comic dizziness of a boy's idea of drunkenness, and the momentary loss of balance when you sneeze. Much later I came to think of such images as mocking our certainty about our own identity, but I never completely lost the sense of having joined that circus of my father's song. Like the owl and the pussycat in their pea-green boat, birds, cats, people, and animals all play out the contradictions we feel in their humanlike animality and our animal-like humanity. Each species seems whimsical, as if it were an increment of our personal, multiple self. Of each species we can say, "I am not that—and yet, just in this one respect, it is like a part of me," and so on, as though with every "I am not that one" we keep some bit of them. We take in the animal, disgorge part of it, discover who we are and are not.

Distanced for centuries from the wild world, we now speak of our identity as choices of "lifestyle" and tastes, distinctions of vocation, race, political loyalty, formal education, religious affiliation, national geography, and chosen memberships. By disdaining the beast in us, we grow away from the world instead of into it. Yet the ambiguity of kinship, likeness with a difference, presents itself with great force, inescapably revealed by bodily analogies.

Some societies still affirm such similarities, formally acknowledging that animals play a physical role in the sense of self. The Ajamaat Diola of southern Senegal, for example, believe that persons produce an animal from their feces, a kind of "double" that runs off and seeks shelter in the house of a female relative, as though a "birth" has taken place. This "fecal animal" might be a monkey, antelope, snake, leopard, or some other mammal, though it does not exactly duplicate the everyday wild form. It is bigger than normal, with a stubby tail, acts strangely, and lives unusually close to people, as though somewhat domestic. The person and his animal share the same soul. If the fecal animal, or *siwuum*, is injured or sick the human feels the effects. When the individual ceases to see his *siwuum* it is thought to have died and is replaced in a ceremony in which the person mimics copulation with a goat, thus reaffirming a mythic kinship with the animals based on a marriage with them at the beginning of time.[1]

Animals born of the body, such as the *siwuum*, suggest a preexisting presence there as aspects of the self. A modern therapist, Eligio Stephen Gallegos, has developed a form of meditation in which a conversation takes place with one's inner animals. The idea came to him when he was walking one day among the carved Tlingit totem poles in the park at Sitka, Alaska. Familiar with the Jungian concept of seven energy centers of the spine from the fundament to the top of the head and the parallel Indian theory of Tantric chakras, Gallegos was struck by the thought that the totem pole was a physical presentation of the mythic animal "speakers" positioned along a vertical axis in both concepts. To the American Indians the figures on the poles are those about whom traditional stories are told. They are not only components of a visible structure but players in a heard tale. Gallegos speculated that the animals associated with each chakra might correspond to Jung's symbolic animals of each neural center and to the totem-pole imagery. From this he developed a form of guided meditation in which the troubled subject visualizes entry into his own body along his central axis and imagines an encounter and conversation with an animal occupant of one or more of his own energy centers. In successive interviews, he invites the animal from each center to come forth for a conciliatory exchange. The creature is addressed in a friendly way with an offer of help if needed. Its concerns refer to its own domain—spirit at the top of the head, intellect behind the eyes, communication in the throat, compassion in the heart, power in the solar plexus, emotion in the gut, and connectedness at the base of the spine. The animal who "comes out" reveals some aspect of the center to which it belongs. The condition of the center is indicated by the particular kind of animal, its condition, and its circumstances. It may be robust and bold or small and shy. It may be caged, injured, or malnourished. Sometimes the strength and stability of one chakra is at the expense of the others. The animal is invited to tell of its concerns. The meditation continues in successive sessions, the patient addressing each center in turn under the therapist's guidance. When all the chakra animals have been reached they are brought together in a communal council.

As his technique developed, Gallegos went on to foster conversations between his patients and the animals of the senses: eyes, ears, smell, taste, and touch. At first testing it on himself with the aid of a friend, he says: "I closed my eyes and relaxed and following her guidance went to meet these animals.

In each of my eyes there was an eagle and these two eagles flew in tandem at high speeds. My ears were a single rabbit, sitting quietly, listening to all that went on around him. My animal for the sense of smell was an elephant probing the world around with his trunk."[2] Animals of the chakras, he decided, were modes of action and power; those of the senses were modes of reception. This meditation on animal speakers of the centers and organs of the body reveals wounds or issues which the person has not adequately faced, perhaps cannot solely on his own, but can do so when supported by an "animal" intermediary. As the dialogues continue the animals improve in health, change in form, and reconcile their differences: "The individual feels a growing harmony and centeredness in his or her own life and the inner support of the chakra animals is deeply and richly felt."

Gallegos' concept may seem at first to smell of New Age fantasies, but I see in it an approach to a firm foundation in the human perception of the self. There is no way of articulating our inmost circumstances—lively and vital—without reference to something concrete. Even when we understand our deepest thoughts as programs and circuits in memory banks, we refer to the external world of machines. But the animal is like an ambassador in a way that no clever machine can ever be, though they may correspond in some extended metaphor to the ionic and mineral aspect of the self. The animals—and perhaps the plants—within us are like the beings of a larger and older reality. They exist within us in much the same sense that our parents and our ancestors are in us, not as ghosts but as shared form, a continuum of which we are only the present expression.

DREAMT ANIMALS, FOR example, are about natural events otherwise unembodied or lacking the visible or audible features that we associate with coherence and intent, vague potentialities such as earthquakes, floods, and storms, or about the human drama in which the identities must remain hidden because it is too painful to face them.[3] Dreams, in the words of James Hillman, are "congruences in sets of associations within and across domains." In one domain are animals in children's dreams connecting the dreamer to the domain of society and family. The animals may be people or situations in disguise, masked participants in the daily lives of the dreamer. Among small children a self does not exist in animal dreams. David Foulkes observes: "Stories which name an animal as a character at the beginning may end by assuming that the child himself is the animal. . . . The essential continuity seems to lie in the action rather than in the nature of the character."

The child's absence from its own dream is part of normal unselfconsciousness, without the "self," "you," or "they." The child is said sometimes to be frightened by such dreams but not frightened in them.[4] What can we make of a dream with animals, sometimes frightening, in which there is no self to participate or be a victim?

These dreamt animals may be, very early in life, the dispersed elements of the unknown self—the body's sounds, contractions, upheavals, secretions—and then also disguises of familiar people in stressful circumstances of ordinary experience. The evidence that the animals refer to people is from studies of the dreamers' socialization. At ages three to five, 61 percent of children's dreams contain animals, slightly more in boys than girls; at seven to nine, 36 percent; at twelve to fourteen, 20 percent; at sixteen, 9 percent; and beyond that they stabilize at about 7 percent.[5] As the child gets older, animal dreams diminish and a self emerges more frequently, as do familiar faces. By age thirteen, animal dreams are different in quality, more oriented to fantasy than behaviorally expressive. It may be concluded that animals are an eclipsed content having to do with something other than themselves—for instance, problems that children have with other people.

Dreaming is categorical work; the animals are a cast of surrogates and vehicles for riding out a problem. They substitute for actual humans in dreams, especially parents or other relatives, who are too necessary to the dreamer's well-being to accept as ambivalent or threatening. Perhaps the dream scenarios bring an issue to a crisis that can then be resolved. In this way the child works on relationships to playmates, siblings, parents, strangers, other kinfolk, and the endless procession of semifamiliar people as an internal narrative. Anxiety is thwarted in order to cope with uncertainties about others. That the animal disguise should screen the true situation in a friendly way seems odd in a society like ours with its mythology of dangerous wild beasts as the antithesis of human security. But the child's "work" does not require knowledge of the behavior of wild animals, only the comforting sense of order in categories themselves, already experienced in the naming of the animals in the development of speech. Normally the animals in dreams gradually disappear and the masks drop away. Children who lag behaviorally and socially, however, continue to have a high frequency of animal dreams as though stuck on social barriers. Throughout our lives animals in dreams may continue to signify unresolved concerns, intolerable truth, or interpersonal uncertainty.[6] They are not a random choice of symbolic vehicles of the unconscious mind but a continuation of the maturing processes

of humankind. They are nurturant among small children because animals are already synonymous with the mind's drive to find order and the heart's desire to affirm given reality.

A "FAUNA," NO less internal, animates the fairy tale. Like the animal-masked people of dreams, here too is a theater of representations. The fairy tale dramatizes intrinsic childhood worries which the youthful listener unconsciously interprets as his own story and his own inner self. Bruno Bettelheim defines these tales of death, decapitation, monsters, and transformation as stories with happy endings, profoundly consoling despite their harsh details. Their message is that special skills, often the powers represented by different animal species, will come to the rescue, solve the problem, save the day, and guarantee a happy lifetime if we will but trust them.

Bettelheim believes the problems to be universal, having to do with protection from malicious relatives, the uncertain intentions of strangers, one's verbal or physical limitations such as the skills of speech or strength, the bodily changes and functions associated with growth, frightening dreams, fear of the dark, oedipal feelings, sibling rivalry, jealousy and envy, and the child's sense of limited intelligence, information, or techniques which adults already possess. The skills are often those that come with ordinary maturing: strength, coordination, size, understanding, a place in the world. Every story is a magic prophecy of personal transcendence, like a promise to the listener, who typically ruminates on its contents and then selects and fashions its meaning according to need. Various humans in fairy tales are allegorical with respect to the social milieu; the animals tend to represent aspects of mind and body, the inborn capacities that will unfold with age. The child is invited to place its faith in its own organic substratum and timetable. The quest in the fairy tale is for abilities foreshadowed in the organic world, personified as animals.[7] It is as if the story says to the child: "As sure as the tadpole will become a frog, you will grow into a strong, attractive, keen adult, provided you have the faith of the princess who marries the enchanted frog"—as though there were in us, as in life, rabbits, toads, doves, wolves, and eagles who, besides being themselves, are incarnations of kinesthetic and nebulous realities, both threatening and saving. "Both dangerous and helpful animals," says Bettelheim, "stand for our animal nature."[8] The different animals tend to be all-devouring or all-helpful, like feelings of love and hate or happiness and sadness. They portend threats to both a growing integration and, alternatively, a nascent maturity, sense of place, kinship to

fellow-creatures, healing, the integration of one's personality, and the natural unfolding of one's own role in the world.

According to Bettelheim, fairy tales often help the listener sort out one's human status from the more general animal one. In "Hans, My Hedgehog," for instance, a half-hedgehog boy proves his humanity when treated kindly in bed by a princess. Likewise, the enchanted prince in "The Frog King" recovers his royal human status because the princess, who has been forced to marry him, endures his gross nature in bed and her own sexual experience grows from disgust to happiness. In another tale of this sort, "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," the groom, who looks like a bear, becomes a prince when the princess endures him. A slightly different interpretation may be made of "Beauty and the Beast," in which the monstrous groom, part human and part beast, is healed of the animal/mind duality by the unifying effects of the woman's patience and true love. Goldilocks, in "The Three Bears," tries out three familial roles as baby, mother, and father—then flees because she intruded on her own natural developmental schedule, which would in time resolve her childish confusion about being the baby, the mother, or the father. In the story of "Queen Bee," a simple and innocent brother wins the hand of a princess by the help of the ants, ducks, and bees he had befriended during his wandering, each representing a resource within himself. In "Brother and Sister" she dissuades him from drinking at streams which would have made him a were-tiger or werewolf. He drinks instead from waters which transform him into a deer and is captured by the king's hunters, a high achievement. A young man in "Two Brothers" spares the lives of the hare, fox, wolf, bear, and lion, who later work together for him at tasks which are analogous to the integration of his own personality. The "stupid" son in "Three Languages" can learn only "what the birds sing, the dogs bark, and the frogs croak," in contrast to his academically educated brothers. His exasperated father drives him from home for failing after three attempts at schooling. When a village is terrified by a pack of wild dogs, the boy is able to mediate peace between the animals and the people because, understanding the dogs' speech, he can explain their anger. The croaking of frogs later informs him that he should go to Rome, where he eventually is chosen pope, and the murmuring of doves gives him the words he must say at his first mass. In another of the "three sons" genre, the kind and honest son befriends a toad and later has his wishes granted by it, thus surpassing his mean siblings.[9]

Dogs are earthy, connected with practical necessity and friendship, mat-

ters of the ego. Frogs are aquatic, associated with evolution, transformation, and the unreflective magic of the id. The earthbound frogs, lizards, and snakes embody basic biological processes, while the birds connect with matters of mind and soul, with air and spirit, with high goals and the aura of the superego. The bird's purity and flight lend themselves to esthetic, intellectual, and religious ideas. The keen, watchful raven seems to be consciousness itself, the laconic owl is wisdom, the murmuring dove is love. Together these three birds represent aspects of the mature self in the story of "Snow White."

Together the animals represent the wisdom of the body and the necessary faith in our organic being in spite of its peculiar manifestations and temporary limitations. For children the stories are consoling; for adults they give meaning to their past and inspire their sense of purpose as storytellers.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF personal identity associated with animals is practiced by the Nuba of Africa. These part-time horticulturists were hunter/gatherers until recently and remain keen observers.[10] The Nuba paint natural forms on their bodies, mostly animals. Different kinds are not prescribed, but the design features follow rules. There are conventions of style, form, and color that define species, so that the animals are a kind of code. Paintings vary as one might expect in "an artistic tradition that is chiefly motivated by aesthetic and decorative factors."[11] The painting is purely body-enhancing, without connection to cosmology, totemism, particular powers, or special relationship to the animal depicted. The major factor in choosing which species to represent is whether the surface features of the animal appear esthetically appealing and worthy of imitation. Such designs are therefore highly individualized, reflecting the taste and skill of the painter and painted and thereby enhancing their presence in a society that values esthetic competence. The plastic surface of the human body is followed—as when the biceps become the bulge representing the tortoise's shell. In its most abstract form, only spare features such as eye stripes for antelope or leg stripes for jackal are employed, congruent with human anatomy, so that the stripes are, placed, respectively, over the eyes or on the legs. Sometimes whole body designs are matched to the human body. Although the examples of the Ajamaat Diola and the Nuba are very different—one profoundly spiritual, the other entirely esthetic—the animal abstractions arise in a creative insight, are employed in the distinctions made in human individuality, and commit the individuals throughout their lives to a studious, esthetic enjoyment and playful observation of the animals themselves.

Adornment of the human body is very widespread—not only stylizing animals but employing their bodies. Feathers, shells, teeth, skins, claws, bones, and other parts of small organisms are widely worn throughout the world, following fashion and custom but with individual touches. Like all cosmetics, coiffures, and jewelry, such embellishment "makes a statement" rather than simply denoting the individual, perhaps one not fully understood by the wearer who may never examine the impulse for animal signatures. It makes visible an equilibrium between the given and the made, the animal and the human, conformity and creativity, in which cultural practices are given a kind of natural vindication. From Papuan elders, wearing the arm bones of birds through their noses, to babies photographed on bear-skin rugs, to dapper men flaunting lizard-skin shoes, animals provide the distinctions by which we conceive and announce ourselves.

Along with the fur coat and gloves, the twentieth-century person adds "accessories" such as pearl earrings, animal brooches, pins, bracelets, barrettes, and wallets or belts from bone, ivory, or metal, and jewels in the form of an animal. Such "access" is an appeal to a larger world of living things even if it only appeals to an ancient and primal root of esthetics itself, though more often bearing half-forgotten associations and qualities. Tribal distinctions between the wearers of ermine and those of hare are like the modern distinction between rare and common furs, insignia of rarity and class, signs of rank, privilege, and success. Within each group the effigies or parts of animals are given personal touches in the pattern of feathers in the hair, beads on a string, and perfumes mixed from the musk of animals as signatures of our own rhythm and style, marking us as uniquely associated and differentiated by the way we compound the detached elements of a fauna. The self emerges from this extraordinary correspondence of inner and outer worlds, linking us to those unlike us in shared respect for our differences, reflected and magnified as species.

Perhaps putting on the mammalian fur and lizard boot not only defines us according to common models but truly incorporates us, a physical connection to the animals. Wearing the bits of animals as signs is a mnemonic, a recollection that they are already part of us. The human mind depends on a brain composed of layers of an evolutionary past which may recall itself in unknown ways. Perhaps that layering is why we "experience the real chaos of the brain,"[12] which is composed of a newer, outermost, primate neocortex that creates the visual consciousness of self, the middle mammalian stratum shared with all mammals, the heritage of a kind of smelly, antediluvian antiquity, and a still deeper core of tactile archaism of our forgotten lives as fish

and reptiles. No wonder our thought travels among animal images, as the human brain represents a fair share of the animal kingdom.

"Internal animals" have appeared again and again in the foregoing: in dreams, in the spinal cord and organs, as the spokesmen of chakras or energy centers, in the emotions embodied in creatures in fairy tales, as the art we exercise in representing ourselves to the eye and nose. We are strangely composed of animals who flesh out our being, a diverse zoology of the self. They are more like indigenous inhabitants than casual symbols, more essential than decorative. To be conscious of our feelings does not require an image, but to name them does, and the first names of things are animals. The forms of liveliness of different species seem to correspond and be reflected in an equally rich inner experience. When they became objects in the external world—by being named—their existence in us was duplicated.

Identity precedes the usual social markers, skills, memberships, family name, age, and gender. It tickles me that each animal lives along the spine, where body posture and movement start, and I tend to imitate or to feel its look, in my neck the stretch of the giraffe, the tug on the arms of the swinging ape, the shade as the cool immersion of the diving turtle. Loren Eiseley, while watching the pigeons swirl up from the city streets at dawn, observed: "the muscles of my hands were already making little premonitory lunges."[13] Or as D. H. Lawrence puts it: "Nonhuman Nature is the outward and visible expression of the mystery which confronts us when we look into the depths of our own being."[14]

6 Aping the Others

If neurosis is sin, and not disease, then the only thing which can "cure" it is a world-view, some kind of affirmative collective ideology in which the person can perform the living drama of his acceptance as a creature.

ERNEST BECKER

PLAY HAS MANY meanings: the frolic of children, performance on a stage, games, the whirl of cosmic energy, our use of a musical instrument, or easing fish on a line. A thread of common meaning among them is enactment—the joining of performer with a counterplayer according to rules in a rhythm of necessity and chance. Our play, whatever it may be, feels like an extension of some larger reality. It links a sequence of acts, a range of emotion or personality, or accidents and chance. The drama, the forces of nature, the games of childhood, the musician's and even the fisherman's experience, share the idea of a whole with many parts. In it there is a special place for the imitation of animals, which, however capricious, lays the groundwork for understanding ourselves as being: as actors.

Since we are "flesh and blood," it is not surprising that other players, the counterplayers, are lively, too, even when they are as impersonal as the gravity against whom we swing or teeter; it pulls. We are born prepared to as-

sume that opposing forces are "others," and to feel the give and tug of a fish or the musical instrument quicken in our hands as if it were a conscious counterplayer.

Games with rules are among the earliest forms of patterned play, helping us know that whatever the play there are constraints. One of the most common features of children's games is the naming of games and players after familiar animals, which the children emulate in a kind of shorthand. There is something about the perception of animals which tells the child that, for a few minutes or forever, life is a game.

Despite our modernity, we are embedded in a venatic, evolutionary past with its foraging and the hunting of game. The "game" animals are those subject to the chase. In them we can see that to "be game" is to be willing to risk—to accept the possibility of losing in a play of forces with uncertain outcome. The success of the chase is not entirely a matter of chance, however, but also a question of each "side" understanding the ways of the Others. The lives of animals are ruled by what, to humans, appears to be a code of interaction with one another and with the landscapes in which they live. The "rules" of the game animals include those intractable forces and unbreakable bonds of their own natures and the natural world. Yet because the world is complex and creative, the outcome of the chase cannot be foreseen. The venatic faith is that knowledge improves one's chances, but also that losing is eventually inevitable and necessary, as the whole is greater than any of its players who are only temporary participants in something eternal. Like playing the cosmic and ecological game—participating in the nature of the game animals—playing human games is an access to an orderly world.

Beginning in infancy with gruff nuzzling and rowdy bearhugs by a snorting parent, tumble-bugging of somersaults and leapfrog, the child goes on to making silhouettes, or the finger games of "ten little squirrels" and "itsy-bitsy spider." There are crab walks, duck waddles, and song games like "farmer in the dell" and "old buzzard." There are "piggyback" rides and "chicken fights" and organized games such as "sharks" and "pom-pom-pullaway." "Horns" is played like "Simple Simon," along with "snail" and "sardine." Every country has its own children's games based on the imitation of animals: "hare and hounds" in England, "fighting cocks" in the Philippines, "cat that wanders by night" in China, "gecko gecko" in Australia, "badger the sun" in Japan, "wild horses" in the African Sahara, "lynx and rabbit" in boreal America, "follow the reindeer" in Lapland, and "fox is the warner" in Southern Europe.[1]

In snow country there are many forms of "fox and geese," in which two

large, concentric paths are tramped out in the snow and connected with radial lines, creating a mandala pattern upon whose paths the players must stay. The game is a form of tag in which a single "fox" chases any "goose." When caught the tagged goose becomes the fox and the fox becomes another goose. The metaphor of assimilation and reconstruction suggests a balance of creation and destruction in which the fox seeks to catch (eat) and become the goose, and the goose, being eaten, rises to its foxdom in an endless cycle. There is no escape from the closed universe of the circles, no fixed duration, and the lone fox and many geese testify to the rule of numbers that regulates the lines of flow in the world of life.

The representation of a universe in small may not be the game's only function in the education of the child. Like the game itself we are individually composite. Each of us is an ocean of motives, emotions, and ideas. Each animal in play reveals a certain trait or feeling exhibited in its behavior. Each kind of animal gives concrete representation to an ephemeral and intangible element of the human self such as assertion, intimidation, affection, doubt, determination, kindness, anger, hope, irritation, yearning, wisdom, cunning, anticipation, fear, and initiative. Only when these feelings are discovered outside the self and then performed can such intense but elusive "things" be made one's own.

The game, recounted later as a story, is composed of enactments of feelings in the name of the animal which gives them substance and thus allows them to be affirmed in oneself—not taken in as though the feelings do not already exist in us, but given shape. Playing the fox does not create my foxiness. It helps me to discern it. It is endorsed by the social agreement of the players and the natural being which it reflects. Of course, animals in nature are also complex beings, not one-dimensional shadows of feeling, but the reality of their complex natural history comes later in our lives, after childhood, belonging to the adult's world of ambiguity, not the child's of definition.

The lively world of our emotions, fears, and responses is like a great forest with its fauna. We experience those feelings as though they were wild animals bolting through the foliage of our thick being, timidly peering out in alarm or slyly slinking and cunningly stalking, linking us and our unknown selves, as though they were at home in an impenetrable wilderness, bearing the gift of themselves as mitigators of our inchoateness.

Why must we see these aspects of ourselves in animals instead of other people? Certainly the whole range of feelings is visible in other humans, but in them the enactment is diffuse or sometimes concealed or deliberately dis-

torted. People, even our mothers, are contradictory models, plural, uncertain, undependably changeable. Being human is the problem to which aping the animals in play is a partial solution in the shared acceptance of brief enactments. Only as they get around to learning that human society has roles that we must play do children begin to play house or office or cowboy or nurse. Before that we apparently must perceive what we feel in a brief mime of the animal's behavior accompanied by the implicit declaration that I am "now" the fox. It is not the roles in life that are being learned but the more fundamental lesson that there are roles, and these, because we are a poetic species, are best grasped indirectly.

The miming of animals in play does not animalize the child, since it does not teach us to live in holes, run on all fours, or catch mice in our mouths. Nor does it humanize the fox, as even the child knows in its heart that the whole matter is "just a story." It is important as a joint adventure by children, part of the biology and culture of childhood, in "capturing the Other" in order to constitute a self.[2]

ANIMAL GAMES ENRICH our inner life. We watch the animals as cues to our own feelings, even when we are not engaged in formal play. Transforming them into an inner plenitude encourages our curiosity, watchfulness, wonder, and admiration. The child's spontaneous interest in animals arises in encounters with easily identifiable, external expressions of our impulses to beg, present, invite, appease, conciliate, displace, facilitate, appeal, threaten, defend, search, and avoid. Once these actions have been associated with specific animals, they may be represented by the names of the animals or by horns, antlers, feathers, beaks, teeth, face marks, rump patches, wings, hooves, fins, songs, and calls.

Accounts in the media of yesterday's athletic events remind us that games translate easily into narrative. Dramatic play-by-play accounts heighten the event to a degree that the purely visual media lose—an excitement that even the original event may not have had for those who participated. Against the grain of our picture-book culture, stories without pictures prosper. Play is drama before it is told, or a story coming into being.

The kitten chasing the ball prefigures something central to the adult life of cats, something of which the kitten has no actual experience. Chase games under the auspices of predation are a "capture," each of the other. Separation merges into identity in the assertion that I am at this moment the fox, in mimesis of cunning pursuit. I am "it." I pursue and take the prey; the goose now becomes the fox and I become the goose. In action, in my foxing, identification is realized; merely latent in the noun, it is truly realized in

the fox as verb. Since I am finally not a fox, the assertion that "I am the fox" is helpful to my selfhood only if I then become something else. Changing roles safeguards against too close a unity. The same is true of "being" the goose. I am that honking, panicked being, in flight, only until replaced by the fox.

At the game's end, both vanish, assimilated in the abyssal self, each having become some part of what I am becoming. In games the child is engaged in a thrilling and somewhat frightening shift among identities, from which he or she may withdraw at any time, like swimming underwater. It is this flexible back and forth between self and asserted identity that gives confidence in a world in which people and things move and change, the turbulent, mercurial nature of being human. As anthropologist James Fernandez puts it: "The reality for all of us is that we live with a variety of categories, converging upon us, to which we must relate and in which we must find some identification. . . . We are all of us in constant passage, in reality or in imagination, between categories."[3]

The declaration that "I am a fox" or that "you are a goose" is the predication of an animal on a pronoun which is more or less amorphous and helps to teach the art of metaphor. Just as I may be foxy in strategy I can be a tree in my rootedness or a rock in stolidity. Such multiple ritual assertions are a kaleidoscope of successive, shared domains that define me ever more precisely. My identity is not simply human as opposed to animal. It is a series of nested categories. These shifts in domain are like the alternation of solo instruments in a piece of music. Paradoxically, the difference between me and the fox begins with a claim of unity. But that claim really does allude to common ground which remains even after the separation—when I become a goose and, finally, when I become a whole zoo. I am foxy in part because the fox and I, both mammals, share a common heritage, and because our ecology converges in our hunter's kenning. Children do not understand the statement "I am a fox" as a metaphor. One does not explain it to them. The pretending of play is an act of mimicry, not one of theoretical comprehension.

Like the other primates we humans are obsessed with the relentless question of status, the pronoun inquiry: who are you, we, they, and I myself? An adult might say that I am a lion, Clara is a parrot, you are a fox, we are sheep, and they are snakes. We know that physical resemblance is not intended: Clara does not look at all like a bird. This shifting of Clara toward the parrot domain is a leap in the work of language and image.[4]

Playfully stalking each other, the lion cubs participate in an unspoken pretense that "I am an adult lion hunting gemsbok" and "I am a gemsbok." Cubs and adult lions seem to know that the serious hunt and the gemsboks are a fiction. The child's assertion that "I am a lion" in play is an untruth

with perhaps some of the same function of the lion's play—as practice—with the additional purpose of laying the foundation for a succession of ritual avowals of identity that coalesce in an inner nature.

Ritual acts are mimic pretensions based on the suspension of disbelief, performed "as if." They are enactments of metaphoric assertions. Childhood play is predication in anticipation of any conscious awareness of such metaphors, the first step in an individual "ontogeny of ritualization."[5] Mimic play at being animals is an inherent activity, keyed to the calendar of individual development, essential as a precursor to the adult capacity to engage in rites and ceremonies. Drama as a stage play emerges historically from Greek and Oriental ritual performance. In an evolutionary perspective, ritual has its roots in the imitative play of immature human mammals, goes on to the declared pretense of interspecies impersonation in child's play, and ultimately makes the play the thing. That both ritual and the earliest drama are sprinkled with animal masks suggests a link in this sequence of connections, a sequence in which we never quite lose the original animal idiom. Nor should it be lost, because it infuses our all-too-serious roles with humor and the mellowing ingredient of ironic participation in life as a fiction. It reassures us that roles are natural to us and provides the infinite complexity of the multitude of species and the inexhaustible subtleties of each—stereotyped and one-dimensional at first but inexhaustible as we study the animals all our lives.

Personal identity is not so much a matter of disentangling the self or "the human" from nature as it is a farrago of selected correspondences in which aspects of the self are projected into the dense, external world where they are discovered among a variety of animals who are both similar and different from us. Aspects of the animal are then reintrojected into our psyches by a wonderful chemistry of imitation. When we observe this unlikely agency at a distance, animals seem like mediators, appearing in music, story, song, narration, dance, and mime as participants in the narrative.

The emphasis on what the animal does has influenced language. Speech itself may have emerged in concert with sounds for actions borrowed from the names of animals. We verb the animals not only in games but in ordinary speech. We duck our heads, crane our necks, clam up, crab at one another, carp, rat, crow, or grouse vocally. We cow, quail, toady, lionize, and fawn in servility, admiration, and fear. We fish for compliments, hog what should be shared, wolf it down, skunk others in total defeat, and hawk our wares. We outfox and buffalo those whom we dupe; we bug and badger in harassment. We hound or dog in pursuit, bear our burdens, lark and horse around in

frolic. We bull, ram, or worm our way, monkey with things, weasel, and chicken out. We know loan sharks, possum players, and bullshitters.

If indeed such animal verbing derives from the earliest emergence of human speech, perhaps the distinction between noun and verb did not exist—as it still does not in some languages such as Hopi, lacking separation of the thing and its action. What is now a convention, absorbed in the individual acquisition of speech in childhood, may once have been the remarkable discovery of the most erudite and mature: the discovery that one might convey the intention of a certain action or a done task by vocal reference to an animal not present. Even though this use of animal names as verbs has become one of the routines of learning to talk, modern writers, poets, storytellers, dancers, and other artists continue to plumb their creative resources for such images. Perhaps the reason why there are no more incisive or efficient ways of describing action is because the human mind was organized this way in its genesis.

KONRAD LORENZ HAS observed that all mammals learn by rote memorizing. A mouse learns a maze by running it over and over, because memory and enactment are combined. Human learning is commonly said to have three stages or "modes of representation": enactive, iconic, and symbolic. Children are committed to the first stage, acting out what they feel; they learn to walk like mice learning to run a maze. By first hiding an object and then looking repeatedly they are able, at a certain age, to know that it continues to exist while hidden beneath a blanket. Manual skills are not taught but learned by watching and imitating. Other large mammals do this also. The human repertoire seems peculiar, though, in that children imitate not only other people but other species, a characteristic of our own kind of consciousness. It has long been a truism among humanists that individuals start life as animal-like and graduate slowly into the full human condition. But being an animal and acting the animal are not the same. Enactments are transformative traits of our humanity. And we do not rise above them; the skills of categorical thought by means of the taxonomy of other species is never completely put by, and we continue as adults to extend our knowledge of the nomenclature of plants and animals. The emulation of animals in childhood games is translated into dance and ceremonial performance in adult life.

The second "mode of representation," the iconic stage, blooms in middle childhood, when many children are charmed with drawing and pictures. Iconic refers to images in the mind's eye and in art as simulations of things

tangible. It includes the personification of animals in ways much wider than games and is profoundly related to mythic narration and performance. Some scientists, unaware of the functional role of pretending that animals talk and wear clothes, argue that "anthropomorphism," being fictitious, makes it more difficult for a youth to understand the true lives of animals. The moralistic idea that it reduces humanity to animality and rationality to instinct, or elevates brutes to human status, is equally shortsighted. The stories of talking animals are joyfully accepted not only by small children but also by juveniles—indulged by parents who sense that the illusion has its own ring of truth. The mistake made by the critics of anthropomorphism is the supposition that it is an end in itself; they judge it without regard to its function in childhood as a precursor to poetry and other metaphor. Bruno Bettelheim remarks: "If we do not understand what rocks and trees and animals have to tell us, the reason is that we are not sufficiently attuned to them. . . . A child is convinced that the animal understands and feels with him, even though it does not show it openly."[6] Despite the pretense of games and stories, children know that the different species are not a society with a single language, traditions, roles, or ceremonies. Like kittens in a play mode or chimpanzees who are said to "put on a play face," we are conscious of the pretense. Yet it is this make-believe that keeps before the child an unspecified meaningfulness of animals.

Fantasies of animals wearing clothes and building houses, what may seem a too-close similarity between them and people, create excesses of common ground, stored for late adolescence when disjunction almost swamps the ego. The imaginary continuity between animals' lives and our own reinforces a profound and enduring metonymy, a lifelong shield against alienation. Especially at the end of puberty, the end of innocence, we begin a lifelong work of differentiating ourselves from them. But this grows from an earlier, unbreakable foundation of contiguity. Alternatively, a rigorous insistence of ourselves simply as different denies the shared underpinnings and destroys a deeper sense of cohesion that sustains our sanity and keeps our world from disintegrating. Anthropomorphism binds our continuity with the rest of the natural world. It generates our desire to identify them and learn their natural history, even though it is motivated by a fantasy that they are no different from ourselves. We enjoy animals so much because we are laying up the basis for a language of analogy, the terms for the abstractions of cosmology and poetry—though the purpose is no more revealed to us as children than the outcome of a healthy diet.

The second form of representation—iconic—alludes to images and the

older child's capacity to imagine. Juvenile life is a potential trap in platitudes of literalness because its purpose, from the standpoint of human evolution, is to become fully acquainted with real forms. Beginning in adolescence and continuing throughout life, the third form of representation—metaphor and symbol in poetry and song as well as all other arts and myth—results in the intellectual realization that things have more than a face value. Guiding the young adult in this work is the cultus, with all of its exercises in tutorial, myth, ceremony, and test, traditionally employed to open the doors into maturity. A rich, literal knowledge of animal life is fundamental to this process, generating a respect for the natural community as a higher language, as clues toward wisdom in the immense panoply of nonhuman life, to which mature adults will look for the terms with which to describe a cosmology. Failure to nurture childhood enthusiasm for animals produces adults bereft of diverse living forms as the metaphorical basis of religious conceptions and values.[7] Such a society fails to honor the underlying unity of diversity because it lacks experience of it, is blind to the humor and irony of the human/animal juxtaposition, and projects human cruelty, murder, tyranny, and enslavement into the ecology of animals, thereby justifying concentration on "higher" things and the reconstruction of animal life according to an ethics suited to the worst aspects of our own species. That poetry should have its roots in anthropomorphism's illusory consanguinity and juvenile emphasis on iconic representation at a time—childhood—when the taxonomy of nature is still a major preoccupation may seem strange. Elizabeth Sewell, arguing for the primacy of organic metaphor, writes: "Morphology and taxonomy are postlogical and consequently nearly related to poetry, which is in its turn morphological and taxonomic in character."[8]

Florence Krall suggests that there is a fourth type of representation beyond psychology's conventional three of enactive, iconic, and symbolic. After the symbolic divisions, she says, where things at first thought to be the same are discovered to be analogous, there should be a culmination in the recovery of literal connection where we and the animals meet as kin.[9] In this sense the early play at being an animal, with its interiorizing of a morphology of feelings—giving species names to acts and emotions—leads to a clearer self-definition. The biological kingdom, Animalia, is composed of many species, but psychologically it is we who are composed of animals. Despite modern usage, as in "humans or animals," we are not part of a binary duo nor elements of a simple juxtaposition with them. However we may define ourselves as a species, the final act is to recover our animalhood, to see all taxonomy for what it is: a means, not an end, to thought.

story	*game*	*object*	*life stage*	*capacity*	*focus*	*animal*	*economy*
fairy tale	tag	skill	child	motor	self	frog	city
folktale	checkers	strategy	juvenile	image	society	fox	village
myth	dice	chance	adult	symbol	cosmos	snake	band

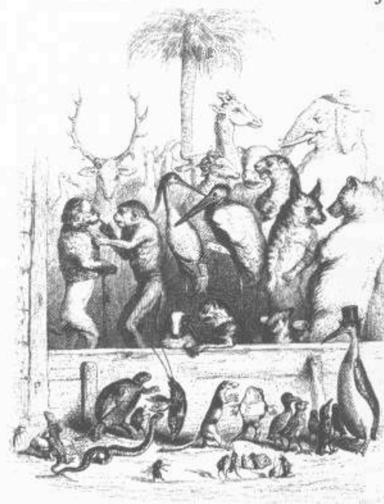
This table associates the life cycle of the individual with widening horizons on the world. Despite the levels of meaning and sequential ordering, the three types of narration and game continue to figure throughout the individual's lifetime. None of the categories in the table, either vertically or horizontally, is intended to be exclusive or necessarily to wholly define a way of life. Their relative emphasis depends on the culture's attitudes toward the natural world in different economic and ideological systems (which in reality are often hybrids). Eclectic, modern urban society tends to blend all three and blur their distinctions. Although the animals in modern stories remain, they burlesque more often and are marginalized wherever cultures are dominated by otherworldly religions or metaphysics of subatomic micro-events and celestial matters described in light-years. But in all cases, the scramble for certainty is more frenetic in a world without the assurance and mediation of the Others and their examples of repose and resolution in an otherwise baffling universe. The table, moreover, has an overarching implication: as a philosophy the myth line is clearly associated with maturity, the folktale line with thwarted development along juvenile lines of literal absolutes, and the fairy-tale line with therapy in societies where an elemental confidence in the self as an organism has gone awry in childhood.

Narratives in which animals are protagonists are not necessarily better than other stories, but they occur in all kinds of societies and in different forms at three stages of the life of the individual. Humans intuit the essential wisdom that animal figures are necessary to thought and communication (just as they are physically necessary to the health of the natural community or ecosystem), that their efficacy is related to the accessibility of humans to wild animals, and that even in societies stuck in the juvenile absolutes of folklore animal images are shields against madness and despair.

8 Membership

People are intensely interested in the animals that live around them, and along with that interest and fascination comes the desire to make other living things participants in what the humans are doing . . . through the metaphoric process.

J. CHRISTOPHER CROCKER



THAT TO WHICH we belong, of which we are part, is as important to our sense of self-identity as our personal beliefs and attitudes. We "play out" our lives creating a self as though driven by a restless demon whose whisper is the unfinished "I am ——." Its closure is postponed all our lives by accretion from two directions: an inner or subjective meditation on one's feelings and choices and an outer positioning by belonging to something larger than ourselves. From one perspective, membership is part of a taxonomy of selfhood. As we saw in Chapter 3 on the skills of cognition, animals were among the first objects of classificatory thinking. It follows that interspecies concepts became the model for our social definitions.

Perhaps it all began with a distinctive primate intensity. Anyone watching a troop of terrestrial monkeys notices that each individual occupies a place in a social constellation and changes places in that group, aware of its own position as it moves through perennial patterns of social structure

which themselves are as impersonal as the stars overhead. How important is this to the monkeys? Status is charged with emotional furor, the abrasions of capricious mateship, contingent status in peck orders, and conflicts of kinship and precedence, all reflected in the animal's behavior as the troop travels and its members orient to food and danger, genuflect to tyrants, punish transgressors, and escape from danger.

Then there is the distinction between one group and another—that shared identity despite personal differences by which the members know themselves as apart from the others. Membership has this dual quality. There is the role within with its microdifferentiations—the leaders, the future leaders, the new mothers, the virgins, the babies, the deposed elders, and so on—and then the macrodifferentiation between groups one, two, and three and between this group of groups and that other association of groups.

Our deep needs are demonstrated by our simian cousins. Their social slew of attachment, confrontation, affiliation, subordination, and the random play of daily circumstances is acted out in monkeys, as it is among ourselves, while in us also it is given names which signify belonging, symbols of our membership. Since animals seem to demonstrate intragroup roles and intergroup differences, they provide categorical models—the names and imagery—for thinking about and referring to ourselves, totems by which we individually are conscious of this aspect of our own identity.

Such membership distinctions have a visual prehistory. Appearance is everything in these matters, because primates depend mostly on sight—especially on body size and proportions and patterns of facial hair. The role of color is crucial if we are to understand ourselves. Primates have little color variation in their bodies except for muzzles and rear ends. Color vision, lost among ancient, nocturnal mammals, was recovered in tropical jungles by our arboreal monkey forebears as part of their sunlit search for insects, flowers, and fruits. As though by the hand of the god of impressionism, they regained what their whisker-, nose-, and ear-oriented ancestors had forsaken.

But it was not reinvented for the sake of art or for discerning differences among ourselves by color as do butterflies and fish. Mammalian body colors have never caught up with our chromatic vision and social desire. We inherited that primate eye which allows us jolts of pleasure in the presence of rainbows and sunsets. Most mammals with their tan, tawny, buff, and brown pelages are disappointing to our color-livened minds. In our own sight we too are lackluster, less beautiful than flowers or lizards. Even allowing for blushing, paling, tanning, and the variations of skin, hair, and iris pigmentation,

we are dull compared to the fishes of a coral reef.[1] Our eye's versatility, disappointed by human uniformity, quickens our envy of iridescent scales and gaudy plumage. Birds, butterflies, tropical fish, and the rest of the vibrant world all seem splendid in ways that we are not. Their superiority is twice blessed—making them not only more pleasing but also more easily identifiable.

This cleavage between the pallid and the prismatic would be unimportant were it not that culture and consciousness have escalated our inherent primate concern about identity. Differences of dialect and custom are responses to an old furor: the unrequited need for personal and social particulars that could be signaled and recognized as effectively as we differentiate by a glance the parrots at a water hole.

To recreate the origins of this disappointment we may imagine our distant forebears as they first ventured into open country, emigrants onto the ground from a sea of foliage, vicarious newcomers in the edges of the savannas, peeking into the neighbor's world. What they saw there, as information, was as fragmented as if they were commuters glancing at others' newspapers. In time, as they entered more seriously in the game of savanna ecology, they awoke to a world of signs unlike anything in the canopy of the old leafy world from which they had descended. Yet what they brought from their forest background was a social existence in which all signals from the world at large were translated into the provincial vanity of the group obsession with itself.

It seems probable that our kind of self-consciousness began with the conceit of the monkey mind that everything shapes itself about "us"—that is, whatever we see and hear is assumed to be a sign. This assumption took a great shock with the ambiguity of our lives after we left the social womb, the deep forest. On the ground, hairless, bipedal, we were like an ape and yet not one, carnivore and yet also herbivore, edge creature between forest and grassland. Our sense of ourselves as a species became immensely more difficult. There would be overlap everywhere, making us composites in our own minds. In open country it could all be seen at once, all the others in motion, as though the landscape itself, peopled by a great spectacle of contesting and cooperating life-forms, were somehow what we had become.

As our ancestors became grassland omnivores and their attention sharpened, both to the variety of life and to intragroup confrontations, they watched the social displays of other species. They saw ritual among the different animals, signals to each other by means of stylized movement, the parade of horns and antlers, the flourish of brilliant feathers and correspond-

ing calls. Early humans would graft onto their own poorly differentiated bodies and groups paraphrases of these displays of other species. The mating foot-drumming of grouse could be mimicked as a dance of courtship, the ritualized combat of horned animals as a language of conflict.[2] Particular calls and animal skins could be appropriated to identify human subgroups denoted by age, sex, and marital status. Fragments of animals became insignia, ritually assigned in ceremony, that established or heralded human membership by translations from the zoological realm.

Claude Lévi-Strauss has observed: "The diversity of species provides the most available intuitive picture and direct manifestation of ultimate discontinuity of reality: the sensed expression of objective coding."[3] Nature is not only a storehouse of names and a logical model of differentiation but an encyclopedia of behavior. He says: "The animal world and that of plant life are not utilized merely because they are there, but because they suggest a mode of thought. The connection between the relation of man to nature and the characterization of social groups, which Boas thought to be contingent and arbitrary, only seems so because the real link between the two orders is indirect, passing through the mind. This postulates a homology, not so much within the system of denotation, but between differential features existing, on the one hand, between species and, on the other, between clan a and clan b."[4] And he adds: "An individual, in his social capacity, combines multiple roles, each of which corresponds to an aspect of a function of the society. . . . He is continually confronted by problems of orientation and selection. . . . As a member of a large clan a man is related to common and distant ancestors, symbolized by sacred animals; as a member of a lineage, to closer ancestors symbolized by a totem; and lastly, as an individual, he is connected with particular ancestors who reveal his personal fate and who may appear to him through an intermediary such as a domestic animal or certain wild game."[5] Such animal eponyms of social entities are therefore not based on a similarity between animal types and human types but rather on an idea by which two sets of relationships are bound. The key to this kind of thinking is the similarity of the systems of differences.[6] "Totemism," Lévi-Strauss says, "is a particular way of formulating a general problem: how to make opposition serve integration."[7]

When we think about it, social place or rank is an abstraction that cannot be easily imagined. Animals are concrete; their system is a categorical grid on which human roles can be fitted with name and ensign. Human identities are elaborated and performed—sung and danced—by the human participants who may also be costumed, masked, tonsured, tattooed, and painted.

Unlike the physical changes early in life, as their social roles and their ages change, adults lack dramatic differences that mark these phases of life. Many cultures make the most of the physical changes of childhood—such as tooth eruption and loss, hair growth, voice pitch, breast enlargement, and menstruation—as keys to the timing of new designations and formal attention to new roles and responsibilities or separation from parents. But as they get older, changes in individual roles within groups overtake their changes in appearance. Individuals are repositioned with such "bodily" changes as hairdress, costume, and tattooing, all coded by a variety of animal monograms which reflect categorical types.

People perceive themselves not only in terms of things but actions. "Being," as in "human being," is a gerund. It encompasses the donning of badges. The blurring of human difference is remedied by signs that tell of "my being" and "our membership." Labeling human goups with natural forms is evidence of the intuition that a great, invisible mind—Nature, the Cosmos, the Creator—really knows who we are or what we are "meant" to be, and that we will find signals in the natural world which can be adapted to each new becoming by narration and performance.

To be urban—to live in mass society at a distance from wild diversity—is to share a heightened angst about the pronominal enigma: the identity of I, we, you, it, and they. As if to deny our poverty of wild things, we declare a cultural superiority over such "primitive" reference. It was said by "civilized" people until recently that "savages" suffered from "congregational unself-consciousness," a kind of communal daze. Our schizoid alienation from the animals has led us to project the frightening confusion of our urban grayness upon them. Personhood among tribal peoples is no less volatile and relentlessly scrutinized than it is among ourselves, though with less inverted Christian and Jewish anxiety, less psychoanalytic guilt and introspective soul-searching, which seem to aggravate our concerns.

Individuals in primal societies, maturing into an ever-richer wild world of metaphoric signs, seem to become more confident rather than less. Their repose reflects the sensibility of the fully individuated person. Wisdom for them is comprised of a lifelong expansion in the perception of natural signs, while for us it is the abstract extension of a limited number of signs into an alphabet. Primal thought opens out into a frontier of new experience in the exploration of the natural world, as opposed to the mirrored hall of urban cognition. The loss has haunted civilized humankind since the first cities replaced the natural plenitude of the ancient river valleys of the Euphrates, Indus, and Nile.

ROCK ART ON the walls of Old World caves may mark the emergence of animal signifiers in a system of human social grouping. The great Pleistocene mammals depicted were central to human life and thought. As signs their figures are etched, sculpted, and painted in a lost language, a legacy of thirty thousand years of the imagination in signifying something human and social by animal species, perhaps as tribal totem animals from which came the widespread binary division of local human groups and membership in linked clans.

Why does the savage, asks Jane Ellen Harrison, "persistently reaffirm that he is a bear, an opossum, a witchity grub, when he quite well knows that he is not? Because . . . to know is first and foremost to distinguish, to note differences and classify."[8] Alfred Radcliffe-Brown adds: "The resemblances and differences of animal species are translated into terms of friendship and conflict, solidarity and opposition. In other words the world of animal life is represented in terms of social relations similar to those of human society."[9]

No single species could model all the guises needed for the human repertoire. What was required was a reading of ecological diversity as if it were a society. Skins and feathers could be used in mixtures, as though the variety of pelage and plumage were made for human use in a perpetual drama of self-becoming and the juxtaposition of ideas in mythic tales. The choice of certain plumes to mark a particular social group was probably made at first entirely by esthetic chance—the way chimpanzees decorate themselves with bits of colored material—then later given its logic and mythic explanations. In time the decoration would be accompanied by narration or performance, fantastic mystery plays or dances in which the analogy, from ecological to social, was justified by myths averring that, in the early days of the world, the natural world was social, plants and animals sharing the customs and language of a single culture.

Most human societies are composed of subgroups such as clans. Dividing society into clans in many tribal societies includes the use of animal species' traits as clan emblems and then explores the symbiotic relations between species as logical analogies of human social subgroups. The discovery of this metaphorical leap was one of the profound ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss. It requires a good knowledge of natural history, especially the relationships between species. The primary bond is the food chain—perceived in the mythic sense as a dialogue between eater and eaten about optimizing sunshine and its trickle through the living community. Studying nature has a practical aspect: the whole idea of stalking game may have come from watching the great cats as they hunt; the notion of digging edible roots may have come from observing the wild pig. But the cultural translation is unpredictable: are the men in a "lion" clan those who will stalk or those who will be prohibited from stalking, those who will teach neophytes, or those who will pacify the souls of lions? Badges of identity such as buffalo horns and eagle pinions were appropriated in a logic of distance rather than replication. It is as though we accepted a code provided by a thoughtful cosmos under the condition that we not confuse it with a literal assertion.

When the Swazi of southern Africa commemorate the annual, national *ncwala* festival with rite and dance, marking male, female, and the hierarchic ranks of king, priests, princes, warriors, queen, king's mother, married daughters, and so on, in costumed regalia with distinct kinds and numbers of feathers and pelts, the dress also refers to wild/domestic, predator/prey, land/water, or other binary sets of the larger natural system. Pelt differences define human roles—as when the Swazi chiefs alone wear lion skins and the women wear only the leathers of domestic animals, warriors only those of wild. Although the celebration has astrological, seasonal, and mythic aspects, its sophistication depends on a detailed knowledge of the animals, "concretizing intangibles" which correspond to the range of cosmic powers.[10] Other peoples, in interior New Guinea, prefer plumes to skins. Most mammal pelts are not brightly colored and the hair eventually falls off. Feathers last longer, have more color, and can be individually arranged in a way that the fur cannot. They can be used in their original patterns or they can be separately mixed and matched. Indeed, feathers have probably exceeded any other adornment in defining ourselves as richly and beautifully as the most esthetic group of beings in the world. As codes for social difference, or as the means of personal expression, feathers have no limit.

A SPECIES KEY to social rules is made more concrete where the animals are also classed by their edibility and distribution. In rural Thailand, for example, the use of animals as food and their place in the farmstead correspond to degrees of marriageability of individual humans. As the anthropologist S. J. Tambiah says in a now classic paper: "The system of marriage rules made themselves felt in the system of rules about touching and eating animals."[11] Animals are lodged or range at distances that correspond to social distance. Those living in the house, such as dogs and cats, are inedible. Oxen and buffalos, housed under certain rooms of the stilted structure, are eaten only ceremonially. Pigs and ducks, sheltered away from the house, are ideal foods. Boars, civets, deer, and wolves, out in the forest, are normally palatable. Ele-

phants, tigers, and bears, inhabitants of the deep wilderness, are not eaten. In a parallel series, the marriage of brother and sister is not tolerated any more than the eating of a household cat. Cousins are conditionally marriageable just as oxen and buffalo may be eaten. Marriage between members of nearby villages, often second cousins, are ideal like the meal of pig and duck. Inhabitants of more distant villages have about the same limited matrimonial valence as deer and wild dog have as cuisine. Finally, marriage with the absolute stranger is regarded with the same revulsion as eating an elephant. It is stipulated, moreover, that siblings have separate sleeping quarters, marriageable kin may stay only in the guest room, first cousins may enter but not sleep in the house, more distantly related people with whom marriage is possible must cleanse their feet before entering the house, and outsiders are not invited in. There are yet more subtle distinctions—ambivalence about the habits of the household pets, edibility in terms of ceremonial feasts or daily meals, sacrificial rites, taboos, power species, mythic forms, and so on.

This system of references and equivalences seems to embrace a universe of possibilities, going full circle from prohibition to ideal to prohibition. When it comes to monkeys, however, the analogical system crumbles in horror. As both an animal and a degenerate human, the monkey is both too intimate and too remote; its edibility borders on cannibalism and marriage with it is unthinkable.[12] In brief the marriage/edibility/spatial code can be seen in a table:

distance	*kinship*	*animal*	*marriage/food*
intimate	sister	dog	prohibited
close	cousin	castrated ox	qualified
adjacent	distant kin	pig	ideal
distant	known	deer	acceptable
remote	stranger	elephant	prohibited

This looks like a complicated way of doing something otherwise simple. Why link habitat, species, and edibility to marriage rules? Apparently marriage categories are too important and yet too abstract to be left to language alone. The correspondence of human groups to animals, their location and edibility, is both a tangible and a taxonomic means of memorializing rules among people who do not have printed statutes. Books enable one to forget such mnemonic signs (and the intellectual discipline which they imply) or to reduce them to alphabetic ciphers. But reference to the visible world of daily life is a way of teaching and remembering. It is more than a convenience among illiterate peoples. It reflects a larger philosophy of compliance and subordination to systems beyond those created by humankind—not in the sense of a dumb bowing down but as a stimulus to inquiry and observation. The actual use of marriage rules, like all conventions, is frequently tested and bent in individual cases. Animals are a constantly novel presence whose natural history fertilizes the conventional wisdom. Social rules may work in the ordinary course of things. But in complex situations or punishment for violations, the reservoir of natural history provides an unlimited tool for deliberating on the means and consequences for resolving such situations by creative, analogical extension.

The correlation of food, sex, and space exploits an appropriate parallel of scale. Embedded in the code is the fundamental dyad of sex and death—marrying and eating (by killing something). Both are consummations in the cycle of life: assimilation is linked to renewal. The connection of the two appeals to our sense of symmetry and order, to prelogical understanding, and to the poetry at the heart of meaning, justified by old stories, sometimes forgotten or lost, that refer to common origins, as though both the people and the animals shared a single rule in the beginning.

ANCHORING THE CODE in a distant time is sometimes made explicit. The Eastern Tukanoan Indians of Colombia speak of their ancestors as "tapirs" (a large, native, South American jungle pig). They call the tapir the "old man" of the forest or "father-in-law," using the word *behkara*.[13] Tukanoans refer to the nearby Arawakan Indians as "tapirs." This reveals ambivalence about the similarity and yet difference between themselves and the Arawakans and ambivalence about humankind as like and yet not like animals. Tukanoans call their own ancestors "tapir people" and "deer people." A myth tells that the deer and tapir once intermarried to produce the Tukanoans, who have deer-mothers-in-law and tapir-fathers-in-law. This tradition is elaborated in star constellations, seasonal festivals, and food laws.

Individual differences among the animals are noticed: their color, sex, age, marks, wounds, or parasites. The forest animals are perceived as members of a household of regeneration from which all the different game animals are sent by a powerful master, as food for humans, and to which the spirits of the dead game return, circulating as both food animals and souls.[14]

The tapir and the deer are said each to be like a different human personal-

ity trait, and therefore rather odd mirrors of humanity. The tapir is large, heavy, and fast, sometimes appearing clumsy as it rushes in panic through dense underbrush. With its conspicuous genitals it is regarded as sexually very active and an eater of foods which increase fertility. Like other pigs it gives birth to large litters. Tukanoans ridicule the tapir as "big testicle" and "big ear," but there is envy in their remarks. To this end they have a horn ceremony simulating the tapir's voice, which is said to make pollen fall, fertilizing the blossoms of forest fruits.

Any tapir encountered in the forest may be a transformed person or simply a tapir. Though good to eat, tapirs are clearly souls as well, and therefore not to be treated casually. They are hunted with cautious respect during an annual hunt in which the death of tapirs is said to balance the loss of human souls by infant death during the hard, dry summer, making the hunt "an ecological stock-taking and a balancing of books." Food prohibitions at the time of the annual hunt and their own human renewal and descent from these sexual animals draw together the two forms of consummation, sex and death, toward a dream of that moment in the beginning when the terms of a metaphor lose their separation. Behind metaphor is the still more profound state of consanguinity, as though the distancing necessary to the rational analogy were merely a temporary fabrication.

THE DECLARATION THAT a person "is" such and such an animal need not, however, be rationalized as an origin myth. Men of the Bororo Indians of central Brazil say "We are red macaws," which sounds to outsiders as if they minimize their humanity or oversimplify their circumstances by calling themselves parrots—that they hope to become parrots after death or think of themselves as descended from parrots. Instead, they are making a familiar and ironic comment on their own social circumstances by means of reference to the macaw's situation.

Red macaws are the only pets kept by the Bororos. There are other domestic animals—chickens, dogs, and pigs—but the people show no affection for them. The macaws are the property of women. They are admired, well fed, groomed, given proper names from the owner's matrilineage, taken on trips, and become part of an estate. Allowed to wander freely in the village, they are regarded with indulgent pleasure and protective care. They are never punished or eaten, seldom sold, and mourned when they die. The macaws are "serious personal property," however free they may seem.

As wild species living in the penumbra between forest and human settlement, their status is dual. They are regarded as part soul and part body, liminal beings in whom are joined radically distinct physical and mystical parts.

As pets they embody opposite principles, since the birds are free yet captive, wild yet tame. In no sense is any macaw, wild or tame, seen as "merely" an animal in the sense of being an object. All macaws are believed to be sentient and sometimes inhabited by spirits who cannot enjoy sex and food unless embodied. These spirits, the *aroe*, temporarily occupy bodies in order to be incarnate and participate in physical pleasure. People also perform these spirits in rituals having to do with naming. In the ritualized presence of the *aroe*, opposing moieties or other social entities convene, bringing together what is normally separate.

The Bororo reference to their "macaw" identity grows from the custom that newly married men move from their mother's house to that of the wife's uncle, presided over by females of the wife's family. Each man feels himself to be an intruder in this female-dominated household—to be free yet constrained. By controlling food and procreation, the women bind masculine loyalties and fetter their freedom just as surely as they domesticate macaws. Yet the man does escape in the course of the ritual enactment of the totemic spirits, when he wanders from his body, just as the *aroe* or spirit can leave the body of the parrot. During these ceremonies the spirit can also enter the men. But the existential dilemma they share returns in ordinary life. Indeed, the conflicting constraints of their birth and marriage are seen as analogous to the captive parrots.

The nuances of this "parrot code" sift through the details of parrot life, their behavior, taxonomy, natural history, and appearance. To "be" such a bird is to say: "I, my mother's brother, my sister's sons, and all other members of the *aroe* (the spirit of the macaw) clan share a cosmological and social status, which is reflected in the red-breasted macaw's pure form."

Life for Bororo men who call themselves "red macaws" has many more subtleties that bear on the traditional binary division of the people into two groups or moieties: the ceremonies in which the men may become the *aroe*, the presence in the forest of three species of macaw, the shifting details of the relationship of men to women as they grow older, analogies to the macaws' mythic relationships to other animals, and variations on the theme resulting from individual circumstances and personalities. The implications carry over into daily life in diet, clan membership, decorative styles, roles in ritual sacrifice, and other connotations.

SMALL-SCALE, EGALITARIAN societies, like the Bororo, tend to explore single-species metaphors with greater freedom than do more centralized regimes. An odd but persistent association of political structure and the use of animal metonyms seems to separate authoritarian from egalitarian systems.

And it results in a subversion similar to that just mentioned. In highly centralized, dictatorial societies a one-dimensional allusion controls the metaphor. The elephant offers a good example.

In Africa the elephant has been a major focus of cosmic and social meditation for many centuries. In a recent traveling exhibition, arranged by modern art museums, a large number of very beautiful objects, made from ivory or other parts of elephants or representations of them, show their extraordinary prominence in tribal cultures. But examined in the context of their purposes in the cultures, rather than their quality in the eyes of the connoisseur, the objects reveal a radical difference of meanings, depending on whether the society from which they come is a political state shaped by "obedience" or a less centralized people. In small-scale, egalitarian groups the sacred and totemic place of the elephant is paramount. Here the object's allusions tend to be cosmic—to illustrate mythic roots in the whole community of life and place. By contrast, among groups centered on hierarchic chiefdoms and monarchies, with their chains of command and the privileges of royal lineage, such objects seem constructed to celebrate and transfer power among the human ranks. Here the elephant symbolizes force and superiority. Instead of a cosmic avatar it has become one more ministerial device, conscripting all the elephant's awful integrity as a free and spectacular being into rites of subordination. Rather than invoking the spirit of the elephant as a holy presence, the head of state sits in his throne of tusks to hold sway, controlling the people just as the elephant is said to dominate the other animals. As in Mogul India, where absolute rulers and generals rode elephants over their enemies, the animal is subordinated to the human dictator, although African elephants were not tamed and ridden.

IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETIES the sexual roles of men and women have a rich animal reference along similarly ranked lines. Such a typology requires a legacy of stories and widespread common observation and beliefs about the sexuality of the different animals.[15] In India an elaborate sexual code denotes individual men as hare, bull, or stallion and women as deer, mare, and elephant. Partners whose sexuality is balanced are the stallion and elephant, bull and mare, and hare and deer. According to the *Kamasutra*, other mixtures throw sexual relations out of kilter.

Although such metaphors are highly durable, their edges can wear off in time and they become crude, or turn into literary tropes. In the Mediterranean region, for example, the contrast between goats and sheep has long been employed among peoples from one end of the sea to the other. In ancient Greece rams were sacrificed to gods or goddesses to show gratitude for a bounteous season, whereas a goat was sacrificed to appease wrath—the original scapegoat. The distinction is based on differences in the animals: the sheep docile, pure, enduring, and noble, associated with verdant pasture; the goat devilish, sensual, cunning, stinking, noisy, making pasture unfit for sheep. The ram is virile, strong, and fierce, defending its harem and its territory against rivals. The goat, its inverse, tolerates access to females by other males in its domain. The ram gathers and keeps its wives by formal combat and never permits betrayal and promiscuity; the billy is both betrayed and betrayer. The difference can be reduced to right and left, honor and shame. From Spain to Persia, women have been regarded, like both ewes and nannies, as morally weak, more vulnerable than men to uncontrolled sensuality. Because of woman's supposed "natural" carnality, it was assumed they would yield to temptation. In rural Italy their honor is traditionally placed in the hands of their husbands, brothers, and fathers. In some places only men care for the sheep, only women the goats, as if to say that women are naturally associated with promiscuous animals, being of a similar degree of carnality. In Spain and Portugal a man who tolerates the seduction or adultery of his wife by another is a billygoat or *cornute*, the wearer of horns. It is implied that such a man who tacitly consents to his wife's looseness is himself without honor. The cuckold is dominated and defeated by another man through the seduction of his wife. He is not only deceived and dishonored but of dubious virility. He is equivalent to a castrate among the goats. Unable to face others (suffering a "loss of face"), he finally cannot even appear in public.[16]

Analogies to the distinction between sheep and goats arise in pastoral, patriarchal societies where there is probably an underlying admiration of the goat's sly "horniness" by men, although, in its more puritanical expression, the distinction is absolute, as in a 1662 poem by Michael Wigglesworth:

> At Christ's right hand the Sheep do stand,
> his holy Martyrs, who
> For his dear Name suffering shame,
> calamity and woe,
> At Christ's left hand the Goats do stand,
> all whining hypocrites
> Who for self-ends did seem Christ's friends,
> but fostered guileful sprites.[17]

In more recent times, class distinctions have assumed the convenience and logic of animal symbolism. As the bourgeoisie set out to define itself from both peasants and nobility, it employed animal associates among domestic

forms that had long signified status. In seventeenth-century Sweden, a family horse was handsomely kept for going to church in order to make a good public impression. Kindness to animals became part of this distinction. Except for pets, who were given personal names and were not eaten, "animals were something you read about or looked at, rather than things you handled in everyday life."[18] The new middle class separated its groomed and housebroken pets from farm animals in the same way they saw themselves separated from peasants and laborers, controlling impulse and instinct in their animals and themselves, and, in the process, the animals came to represent the classes with which they were associated.

In the bourgeois world birds were clean, refined in their sexuality, devoted as mates and parents, homebodies, singing, industrious. They were felt to be refined "paragons of bourgeois virtues," members of nuclear families of their own, natural symbols of middle-class virtues. Bad birds, predators and scavengers, were like the occasional criminal; the grubby sparrows in the streets were a lower class. The birds' instinctive behavior was one side of a tension profoundly experienced in proper society between indulgence and restraint. The clean and virtuous side of birds was a Victorian moral example, while their defects confirmed the superiority of ourselves to animals, or at least our opportunity to become so. Birds became a veritable catalog of human traits within the new mercantile economy, represented in the vernacular by projections of role and personality onto persons as vultures, old hens, cocks of the walk, parrots, hawks, lovebirds, geese, magpies, turtle doves, or cuckoos. Cheating in business or marriage, avarice, the hidden vices of a decorous society, were evidence of the natural self hidden beneath the plumage of acceptable housebroken animality.

In the twentieth century pets continued to signify status and class, evident in advertisements in which high-bred dogs and horses, or exotic lions and eagles, connect social status with choice brands of automobiles and other commodities.[19] Abstract categories in human thought continue to require concrete reference. The species model implies an imaginary, ecosystem-like superstructure. Such names embrace activity and color and are a vivid counter to the reduction and stylization of categorical signs in museum art, the tendency to become hieroglyphs. Groups tend not only to equal species taxonomy but to borrow it for the names of clubs, genders, corporations, political parties, age groups, or teams (bulls, timberwolves, hornets, bucks, broncos, dolphins, cardinals, rams, eagles, buffalos, tigers, panthers, blue jays, hawks, orioles, sharks). There are Lions Clubs and lodges of the Elks and Moose, loan sharks, hawkers of goods, militant hawks and pacific doves, colonels wearing eagles on their shoulders, squadrons of flying tigers, an immense, self-typing of pet-keepers, boy scouts belonging to wolf and beaver dens. All inherit the idea of making groups visible by an identity with species of animals. Thousands of athletic teams are named for animals—not only because the "panthers" are synonyms for ferocity, but because the taxonomic system creates the cognitive facade of difference. That there are more "hornets" than "banana slugs" and more "lions" than "anteaters" attests to the poverty of social/ecological analogies and to the deracinated, modern appeal to the raw strength of animals.

The modern world of work roles, professions, and mix of religious, political, psychological, and economic classes opens unlimited possibilities for the cloak of animal species—extending on the one hand the skin-wearing distinctions among Swazi aristocrats and Renaissance European merchants and, on the other, the totalitarian obsession with sheer animal power. "Does not society turn man," wrote Balzac, "according to the settings in which he deploys his activity, into as many different men as there are varieties in zoology? The differences between a soldier, a workman, an administrator, a lawyer, an idler, a scholar, a statesman, a merchant, a sailor, a poet, a pauper and a priest, are just as great—although more difficult to grasp—as those between a wolf, a lion, a donkey, a raven, a shark, a sea-cow, a sheep, etc. There always have been, and there always will be, Social species as there are Zoological species."[20]

Clothing still signifies social or economic status, sometimes with leather, feathers, and skins as well as animal pins and jewelry, as it has perhaps from the beginning of human society. Until recently the sable collar marked the bishop among the clergy as it now separates the affluent from the poor. Costume adds to our own native pelage—or our naked absence of it. The derivation from the animal is indicated in fashion's "coordinate" sense. Only in a society rebelling against traditional signification does one mix the parts of one symbolic attire with parts of another—beaver-skin top hats with bullskin sandals or the lion's pelt with the belt of cowhide. Yet the chosen act of disarray emphasizes the power of the signs. Worn by humans, the pelt or feather ceases to resemble the animal from which it came and persists as an abbreviation, as in the yellow and black football uniforms of the "tigers" and red of "cardinals," or as logotypes, stylized forms, ideograms, and, finally, letters of the alphabet. The eventual form of the badge is not important. What matters is that it represents a species idiom, a means of belonging in the world. Clothing and other adornment based on animals became the mark of social difference because it is the most efficacious way

ever discovered of representing the gaps so obsessively desired by society with its bone-deep primate heritage. Nothing else in the given world lends itself so perfectly to stressing disjunctions in a series and representing the perfect embodiment of typology.

The true richness of these social/natural metaphors depends on knowledge of the natural behavior of the animals themselves, on the diversity and complexity of those animals, a habit of watching we have lost by stages. We disavowed the animal mind and soul three centuries ago, reduced the beasts to representations of the appetites twenty centuries ago, replaced the wild forms in our environment with simpler domestic animals of fewer species sixty centuries ago.

Like wild herbs in cooking and medicine, notions of tapir ancestors and parrot paradigms have the quaint air of rustic stories. The species system of animals as images of their own social rules may seem far indeed from our own habits of thought.[21] Yet in a time of deeply felt loss of "nature," which we mistakenly think of as a kind of pastoral anodyne, we may wonder about the necessity of "thinking" animals. Terence Turner observes: "That human (cultural) beings should . . . represent social and cultural phenomena to themselves through the symbolic medium of animals . . . raises a number of questions. . . . The 'nature' incarnated in animal symbols is not simply the biological domain of animal species, adopted as a convenient metaphor for human social patterns. . . . It consists of aspects of human society that are rendered inaccessible to social consciousness as a result of their incompatibility with the dominant social framework. These alienated aspects of the human (social) being, which may include the most fundamental principles of social and personal existence, are therefore mediated by symbols of an ostensibly asocial, or 'natural,' character."[22]

It seems to follow that there are political and social adjustments which would make us less alienated from the "most fundamental principles" and reduce the need for animal metaphors. But there is another interpretation: that the alienation of which he speaks is a result of the burden of self-consciousness, of the human condition, our being what Neil Everenden has called "the natural alien." If this is true, no philosophy will end it, and we may freely accept and affirm our peculiar use of animal terms for social membership as part of the ecology of mind. It is one small bit of cement that helps keep us connected to our animal kin while other aspects of our culture drive us away.

PART IV

Change

As vicarious models of our own inner state, and ourselves, the Others are the concrete expression of a dialogue between the internal and the external. But more, they represent the art of becoming. In their metamorphoses and their movement through the penumbra of places and form, we see them as masters of transformation. In dancing to the rhythms of change they become our own guides, healing and mediating our own passages.