

# BETWEEN THE SPECIES

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## **The Phenomenology of Bigfoot**

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### **I. Introduction: Humans, Animals, and Monsters**

The world is filled with monsters. The Yeti, Sasquatch, Mono Grande, Big Foot. It is filled, at least, with accounts of such monsters; for although we have witnesses and photographs and documented accounts, few believe that such creatures are more than constructs of the imagination. This strong denial is interesting from a sociological perspective, but it also says much about our concepts of human and animal as well. If such creatures exist or are even imagined to exist, the boundary between the human and the animal is eroded.

It is not important—at least not for the particular task of this investigation—whether or not they do exist. Like most, I imagine that there are better explanations for the reported sightings than maintaining the existence of reclusive monsters. I, too, am a slave to the scientific paradigm of the world. But I see no reason not to allow for the possibility of such creatures.

Regardless, this is not the crucial matter, for it is merely our experience of the possibility of such Others that I want to investigate. How do we make sense of our given humanity in a world where such creatures *might* exist? How do we know what is human and what is animal if we admit the possibility of a creature described as neither or as both? How might the comfortable, constructed moral boundaries of our community be called into question? And what do the stories of encounters—stories that are reported as truth—say

about us and our understanding of the world? Let us begin with this last question, and, if the reader will indulge me, a story of one such encounter—a story chosen from thousands of others, mirroring, in many key respects, the archetypes and emotions found in similar stories told in nearly every culture and on every continent. Ours begins, romantically enough, with a European Count and an archeological quest.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. Los Monos Grandes de Colombia**

Count Pino Turolla is the stuff Indiana Jones' dreams are made of. Practicing archeology as an adventure rather than an academic discipline, the Italian Count began exploring the jungles of South America (and particularly the Upper Amazon) in the early 1960's in an attempt to find traces of a pre-Columbian culture—a culture dating back much more than the conservative estimation of 5,000 years—which he believes accounts for the common heritage of most indigenous peoples. Turolla has encountered puzzling artifacts—ancient stone figurines of elephants, camels, and other animals never thought to have walked the jungles and mountains of South America—but his most startling encounters have not been with objects but with animals. At least perhaps they were animals, for that is, after all, the whole question.

Known in various parts of the continent as Los Monos Grandes (the Giant Apes), Turolla speculates that the South American race of Bigfeet possesses a culture, uses tools, and perhaps provides the key to unlocking the mystery of the birth of South American civilization in general. He feels that the creatures are not human. Neither are they fully animal. And such a mysterious essence and lineage only adds to the intrigue—and the anxiety when they are near.

Late in 1970, Turolla had a particularly intriguing adventure—an encounter (there is no other word)—in the Guacamayo Range between Ecuador and Colombia. The land is the territory of the Aucas, an indigenous people who tell stories of beasts in the jungle and

whose tribal shaman told Turolla and his assistant Oswaldo of a cave that might help them in their quest.

They left early in the morning, following the directions of the shaman, passing through a canyon. With each hour, the foliage grew deeper and by early afternoon the rain came so heavily that any sign of a trail disappeared. The two men stopped with their horses in an area they hoped was near the cave. They ate sardines, rested, and then continued their search on foot. At 3:30pm they discovered the cave just as the shaman had described it. It was one hundred feet above them, and they began their ascent of the cliff wall with great anticipation.

When they finally reached the mouth they noticed something strange. The opening, it appeared, had been carved—constructed rather than naturally formed—in a trapezoidal shape with straight smooth lines. The opening was smaller at the top than at the bottom, but it was still large and at least twenty feet high. The light fell into the cave for about fifty feet but it was clear that it was much deeper. Luckily, the men had their flashlights and thus decided to enter.

Passing from the light to the dark, the cave was silent. Not even the sound of the rain filled the space, and it now become apparent that what they had thought to be a cave was actually a tunnel. One hundred and fifty feet deep into the mountain, the rock walls became smooth. The flashlights strained to illuminate more of the passageway, but their bulbs were nearly overcome by the darkness. Pushing a few feet ahead, things began to change. Dim tracks appeared in the dirt, heavy impressions along the ground. A thick scent filled the passageway, a smell of animals. And the tunnel forked, with a passage to the right leading off into shadows, taller and wider than the main tunnel straight ahead.

Oswaldo broke the silence and began muttering to himself. They could no longer see the sunlight or sense any trace of the outside world. Turolla took the lead, turning to the right, and with his hand touching the smooth wall he continued a slow walk deeper into the mountain.

They traveled another two hundred and fifty feet and the passageway forked again. This time the main tunnel continued only a few more steps and emptied into a large chamber while a second tunnel split off to the left and again disappeared in the darkness. Turolla entered the chamber and Oswaldo followed. The ceiling was not visible—the flashlights could not illuminate the distant rock—and the men knew that they had reached a point to rest and collect their thoughts. Apprehensive, they smoked a cigarette and for the first time began talking about their experience. The anxiety slowly turned to calmness.

It was then that the screaming began. From high above them—and at the same instance from all around them—a shriek, a scream, a roar enveloped the men, bouncing off the walls of the cave and growing in intensity. They dropped their flashlights and cigarettes and slowly backed toward the passageway through which they had entered a few minutes before. Oswaldo grabbed Turolla's arm just as a boulder fell from the ceiling smashing into the ground where their cigarettes lay. Now several boulders began falling, as if someone were throwing them from high up in the cavern. The men were frozen—statues of fear—when across the beams of the still shining flashlights a large figure crossed. A creature—perhaps several—rushed toward the men. Turolla jumped into the passageway, grabbing loose stones on the ground, perhaps with instinctual hopes of protecting himself. Oswaldo was still in the chamber, but the shadowy image of the huge creature rushing toward him had brought him to life and he fired his rifle out and up into the cavern. The roaring echoed, punctuated by the sound of the boulders as they fell to the floor, close now to where the flashlights lay and where Oswaldo stood. Turolla struggled to his feet and began running out, wishing for daylight. Oswaldo followed, aimlessly firing the last of his rounds behind him as he rushed through the passageway. The screaming continued; the pursuit continued. The men could feel the presence of the creatures behind them in relentless chase. It was unclear whether their hearts had stopped beating or whether they were beating so hard and fast that there were no separate beats to be felt. Their hands stretched before them in the

darkness as they stumbled and ran through the tunnel—whatever was behind them was closing in.

And then the men reached the entrance to the cave, emerged into the light, and as suddenly as it had begun, the sound of the boulders and roars subsided. The creatures did not continue their chase beyond the mouth of the cave. To be safe, Turolla and Oswaldo hurried down the cliff to their horses and raced away. Turolla glanced at his watch and noted that it had been fifty-five minutes since they had first discovered the tunnel.

Nearly three hours later the men slowed their horses and ended their retreat. Oswaldo's dark hair had turned white and his eyes were scarred with fear. Turolla realized that he still had hold of one of the loose rocks that he had grabbed after falling to the cavern floor, and when they stopped, he unclenched his fist and discovered that what had felt like a rock was actually a carved stone—an amulet in the shape of an ornamental ax with a face formed in the center.<sup>2</sup>

Later, Oswaldo finally showed signs of calming down as all night long Turolla told him stories of similar encounters he had had throughout the continent and even up into the United States and Canada. Together, they wondered aloud about the nature of the carved stone. The men neither slept nor ate, and at daybreak Oswaldo announced that he would accompany the Count back to the cave if he so desired. The Count, still recovering from the intense mixture of his own fear and amazement, agreed that they would return—another day.

### **III. Science Encounters the Familiar Other**

Count Pino Turolla has made it his business to confront the familiar Other, but there are thousands more with tales of equally disturbing and intriguing isolated encounters. The majority of Native American cultures include stories of such creatures, and white settlers have been reporting sightings since they first arrived on the continent. Sasquatch, or “Bigfoot” as he has come to be known in the last few decades, is part of our story.

But how can we decide his nature? Is Bigfoot human, animal, or neither? What do such encounters tell us?

For some, the solution must be scientific, and many reputable (and irreputable) scientists have turned their attention to the subject in recent years. Indeed, when one begins to gather the literature and compile Bigfoot's bibliography what is most striking is the amount of scientific discussion on the subject as opposed to wild ramblings or simple descriptions of encounters. True, most scientists are eager to disprove the existence of Bigfoot. Some, though, are open to the possibility but skeptical of the reality. Their methods are curious and often entertaining. They study photographs and film<sup>3</sup> in order to uncover bone structure and joint mechanics ("Could this be a human in a costume? Could a human knee bend in such a way at this point in mid-stride? What are the similarities with an ape's body and movements?"). They investigate audio recordings of screams and roars thought to be of Bigfoot origin ("Could a human throat produce such a noise? What must the larynx look like to make this vibration and is such a shape a human-like shape?").<sup>4</sup> They speculate on the Bigfoot diet and sleeping habits; they catalog and make casts of Bigfoot-prints; they even analyze hair and feces of "questionable" origin. The results are typically unsatisfactory and inconclusive—even given a sympathetic scientist.

In this spirit, anthropologist George W. Gill writes:

[T]he following alternate hypotheses must be listed as the two possible explanations for our results:

1. That the most complex and sophisticated hoax in the history of anthropology has continued for centuries without being exposed;
2. That the most manlike (and largest) non-human primate on earth...remains undiscovered by modern science.

Either conclusion appears totally preposterous in light of the problem-solving capability of modern science; yet, one of these two possible conclusions must be true.<sup>5</sup>

And Bigfoot investigators Kirlin and Hertel conclude:

Both typical human whistles and some abnormal types of whistles were found....These whistles could either have been produced with some kind of a musical instrument or by the creature using only part of its vocal tract.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, publisher and Bigfoot enthusiast John Green sums up the scientific controversy thus:

In short, if upright posture is what makes an animal a human, then the reports describe a human, but if it is his brain that distinguishes Homo sapien from his animal relatives, then the Sasquatch is an animal,...nothing more.<sup>7</sup>

Inevitably, the scientific debate ends with such wisdom: either it exists or it does not exist; and if it exists it is either human or non-human. The obvious problem is the degree of question-begging built in to such experiments. What is a “man-like non-human primate”? What is a “typical human whistle” as opposed to an abnormal whistle? And do we define “human” in terms of posture or brain size or neither? Green’s use of the brain as the distinguishing factor is particularly intriguing, especially given that we have never had the opportunity to compare a human and a Bigfoot brain. We can only assume that Green is assuming that animal brains cause animals to live in the wild, while human brains are smarter, thus leading us to live in cities, surrounded by our technological cocoons. Since the Bigfoot is constantly “roughing-it,” he must possess an animal brain. How startling the unquestioned presuppositions and assumptions at work here; how much they tell us about our constructed distinction between human and animal.

Species identity is another constant focus of the scientific debate, and the Bigfoot has been thought to be everything from the missing link to a distant cousin of Asian apes (and thus humans). Ultimately, appeals to species membership solve nothing in terms of separating human from animal or in terms of finding a home for Bigfoot. The fact that

species is a social construct and not a “natural” classification is something, I believe, philosophical analysis bears out. As R. I. M. Dunbar argues,

The biological reality is that all classifications are artificial. They force a certain order on to the rather chaotic mess of the natural world. Species, as we describe them, are matters of convenience rather than biological reality.<sup>8</sup>

On this point, however, there is not general agreement. Stephen R. L. Clark argues that species is a real phenomenon and that it is best understood as a successful breeding group: gorillas, for instance, constitute a species because they are linked by birth and because they interbreed. (The concept is similar to Kant’s notion of a *Realgattung*—also defined as an interbreeding population.) There are three key elements here: (1) group membership being partially constituted by heredity; (2) the importance of restricted and successful interbreeding; and (3) the unimportance of physical similarity or other related traits. It is difficult to analyze each element separately since they are so interconnected. Consider Clark’s use of the metaphor of *family* in his discussion and defense of species:

I am a member of the Clark family: but not because I resemble other Clarks, nor yet because there is a way that Clarks will naturally live that is unlike the way that others live. Even if Clarks were more inbred than they are (and so approximated the condition of a species) they need not always resemble each other. There might be atavisms, sports, changelings or disabled Clarks, but they would all be Clarks....<sup>9</sup>

The point that this misses is that such an argument only works if we already assume a biological definition of family—assume, in essence, what Clark is trying to prove. “Family” can mean different things for different reasons. Were Clark to discover that he was adopted, would he no longer consider himself a member of the family? In what sense is Clark’s mother truly a Clark since she is not related to any Clark ancestor, but instead joined the family through marriage? How will modern technologies such as surrogate motherhood and cloning change the definition of family and possible future Clarks? And why should we believe that there is anything “natural” about this definition of family—especially since we



have cultural anthropologists and other scholars providing us with a history of the changing notion of family as well as various and differing cultural models in our own time? Indeed, family is as much about marriage, commitment, physical resemblance, and shared history as it is about heredity and genetics. Clark's proposed parallel with *species* thus serves to undermine his own position rather than support it. Like family, species is not just about who your genetic parents were.

It is interbreeding, though, that supposedly created this heredity. Leaving aside, for the moment, the question of whether or not sex with Bigfoot smacks of bestiality, is it possible that we are part of an interbreeding group?

Some argue that the Kantian *Realgattung* should be updated to the *Formenkreis* (typically translated as "ring species"). Richard Dawkins explains:<sup>10</sup>

The best-known case is herring gull versus lesser black-backed gull. In Britain these are clearly distinct species, quite different in colour. Anybody can tell them apart. But if you follow the population of herring gulls westward round the North Pole to North America, then via Alaska across Siberia and back to Europe again, you will notice a curious fact. The "herring gulls" gradually become less and less like herring gulls and more and more like lesser black-backed gulls until it turns out that our European lesser black-backed gulls actually are the other end of a ring that started out as herring gulls. At every stage around the ring, the birds are sufficiently similar to their neighbours to interbreed with them. Until, that is, the ends of the continuum are reached....

Dawkins suggests that chimps and humans might be part of the same ring, but they are deemed to be two different species today because the intermediary steps are extinct. If *Pan*, *Pongo*, *Gorilla*, *Homo*, and whatever a Bigfoot might be are each links in a ringed chain, then the importance of the so-called "missing link" is clear—not in the familiar linear sense of the term, but in the more circular ringed sense.

Finding bones, though, might not be enough. It is the existence of the living intermediary gulls that makes the herring gulls of Britain joined in a species. This does not fit easily with common sense. Either humans and chimps are the same species or they are not; how could the existence of a third type of creature fundamentally alter the nature of the

first two? Something seems inappropriate. But it is just such a conclusion we are forced to draw. Consequently, a lot is at stake for the notion of humanity in the search for Bigfoot.

As Dawkins remarks:<sup>11</sup>

Remember the song, “I’ve danced with a man, who’s danced with a girl, who’s danced with the Prince of Wales”? We can’t (quite) interbreed with modern chimpanzees, but we’d need only a handful of intermediate types to be able to sing: “I’ve bred with a man, who’s bred with a girl, who’s bred with a chimpanzee.” It is sheer luck that this handful of intermediaries no longer exists....But for this chance, our laws and our morals would be very different. We need only discover a single survivor, say a relict *Australopithecus* in the Budongo Forest, and our precious system of norms and ethics would come crashing about our ears. The boundaries with which we segregate our world would be shot to pieces.

As a respected scientist, Dawkins does not comment on the role of Bigfoot, nor does he hold out hope of finding that missing-ring-link. But it should be clear that the notion of a ring species is something somewhat radical and anti-establishment itself, admitting to a greater interconnection among forms of life than most modern classification systems allow. Of course, as that interconnection is acknowledged, the concept of a species is widened, becoming less capable of picking out a *small* group of creatures. “We” gets bigger and more inclusive.

There is an inherent circularity in all of this ring business, however. Suppose we were to find a Bigfoot. To see if it might be part of our ring, we would need to establish its species identity. But of course, its species identity is just what is in question. In other words, to see if it belongs in our ring we would have to test the creature—no doubt resorting to analyzing its hair, screams, genes, etc. Either that, or we would have to try to mate with it to test our interbreeding abilities.

Regardless of the prurient possibilities, there is a more important point to be made here. All of this science is not the typical method for determining humanity. When a new family moves into the neighborhood we do not question their species. We do not attempt to breed with them in the name of science. We do not record and study the sounds emanating from their house, film and scrutinize them as they walk across their lawn, and analyze their

various waste products to determine if they are human. We just know. The same goes for our encounters with squirrels in the park, birds at the feeder, and dogs in the street. Supposedly, we just know that they are not human. Do the folks who have had encounters “just know” whether or not the Bigfoot is human?

One of the problems with relying on selected individual instincts is that those instincts could be quite wrong or at least not fit the instincts of the rest of the community. The other problem is that in the case of Bigfoot, no two instincts are quite the same.

The creature, explains Grover S. Krantz, “is not human, nor even semihuman, and its legal status would be that of an animal if and when a specimen is taken. The fact that it would be classified in the human family of Hominidae does not alter this....Most people who see these creatures have an immediate, gut-level reaction to identify them as animals.”<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, argues John A. Keel, several “armed hunters have declared that they could not bring themselves to fire their weapons...because [t]he creatures seem too human to kill. ‘It would be like killing a man in cold blood,’ many have said.”<sup>13</sup>

We should not be surprised by the conflicting instincts—feral children (children raised in the wild by animals) have presented the same problem.<sup>14</sup> This question of shooting a Bigfoot is interesting, though. The quasi-human form of such feral children as Amala and Kamala—the wolf girls of India—caused their discoverer and “benefactor” Reverend Singh to hold his fire when he first encountered them in the Indian jungle, but does the form of the Bigfoot provide a similar imperative?

Here, too, there is controversy. Some argue that killing a Bigfoot would be akin to murder. Some argue that erring on the side of caution is the proper thing to do. Others suggest that killing a Bigfoot is the first best step to understanding him. In this latter vein, Krantz advocates and advises using a weapon of sufficient strength: “[it] should be more powerful than a deer rifle; something good enough to bring down a big grizzly bear or an elk should suffice.”<sup>15</sup> For Krantz, Bigfoot’s “semihuman appearance” constitutes merely an “effective built-in disguise” aiding the creature in his escape from the hunt.<sup>16</sup>

As can be seen, the body of the Bigfoot plays an important role in our definition of its nature. When does looking human make a creature human, and when does it constitute only a “built-in disguise”? How do we know that our neighbor across the street is human and is not merely using a disguise to aid in a search for affordable housing?

The answer to the latter question is simple. Indeed, the question itself is silly. We need not make such judgments about Others because they simply appear to us *as human*. Such a question has echoes of the problem of Other minds and the search for a proof that everyone else is not a person but actually a robot—questions philosophy should have moved beyond long ago. Our experiences of Bigfoot creatures are intriguing precisely because these individuals are not experienced as human. If not, why not? That is the question.

#### **IV. Phenomenological Judgments and Identity**

I can be wrong in my experience of other humans. I can see a form across a room which I take (without judgment) to be a human; but upon closer inspection I realize it was a mannequin. In phenomenological terms, I emptily intended the Other and my expectations were not filled. (A *position-taking* stands out against the *passive synthesis* responsible for my experience of the mannequin as a human, and I judge the form to be a mannequin.) The “gut-level” reaction of which Krantz speaks is a result of the passive synthesis, but the synthesis was not always passive. In the burgeoning consciousness of the infant, “human” is an achievement. Furthermore, we learn something about the being of mannequins. Their being is such that they can appear to be human.

When I experience a house I do not experience merely the side appearing to me now. Rather, I experience the whole house as given to me from this angle. This is how things are known; this is how consciousness works. Things are given in profiles—one profile is perceived while the others are apperceived. What makes science worthwhile is that there are always more profiles to be uncovered. To think that a mannequin is a human is to learn that one of the profiles of a mannequin—part of the Being of the mannequin—is that it can

appear to be a human. What, then, does it mean for the being of humans and animals that the Bigfoot can appear as both?

I have argued elsewhere that the concept of human arises as a result of the simultaneous coming to sense of the Ego, the Other, and the complex community of which we are a part.<sup>17</sup> Whether the Bigfoot is experienced “gut-level” as animal or human in an adult encounter must depend on the context. Perhaps if the outline of the distant form and the movement of the body are most prominent, he appears as human, but if the mass of fur or the roar first calls one’s attention, he appears as animal. The important point is that the passively constructed identity is always called into question and a judgment must occur: True, X is taken *as* Y, but *is* X a Y?

For those of us who have never had personal encounters, the experience is still parallel. Listening to the story of Count Turolla we first take the creatures as animals and then, most probably, question whether they *are* animals. Thinking back on the precise architecture of the cave, the controlled and even strategic nature of the defensive attack, and of course the jadeite amulet, we are not content to let our original experience stand unchecked—we are forced to take a position, make a judgment.

Now, someone might argue that all of this says nothing about our concepts of human and animal and that we have accomplished little with such phenomenological analysis. If we overturn the passively constructed identity of the Bigfoot with a judgment, on what grounds did we base that judgment? Does a beaver become a human when we note her architectural skills? Does a pack of wolves become a human clan when we admire the cunning and group precision of the hunt? Is the song bird’s song ever a work of art and if so would this make her human?

It is true that we have not uncovered a set of criteria for being human, but important work has been done. Bigfoot requires a judgment, and he represents a crisis in our categorization of the world. This is because our normal conscious engagement with the world relies very little on acts of judgment. Once identities are set and categories are

instilled, the scissors (to take a favorite example of Edmund Husserl's) are perceived *as* scissors—we need not make a judgment as to their being a tool or being for cutting; i.e., their being scissors. The same holds true for our neighbors in the campground, our fellow backpackers, the birds in the trees, and the deer up ahead in the clearing. They are taken as humans and as animals. But that shadowy figure behind the grove of Redwoods? The set of eyes we realize has been fixed on us for the last several minutes since we stopped on this rock to rest? That sound, that smell, those monstrously large tracks in the mud? Who made them? What do we take him as?

Claude Lévi-Strauss has argued that monsters serve as boundaries for human society—defining who we are by saying who we are not.<sup>18</sup> Archaeologist Grant R. Keddie similarly maintains that “[o]ne device for [defining humanity]...is to create a clearly nonhuman foil which seems at first glance to be an image of a person but lacks the essential element which make [sic] one human.”<sup>19</sup> And Jay Miller, a Native American Culture scholar, speaks of monsters actually threatening “the *American* definition of humanness,”<sup>20</sup> and consequently offering a picture of the ideal modern human as the anti-monster. Such arguments seem to be dealing with the proper issues, but drawing the wrong conclusions. It is not the case that the Bigfoot ultimately defines who we are in a negative way. He does not draw a circle around us by constructing a perimeter in which to live. On the contrary, Bigfoot serves only to erode such boundaries and call such definitions into question. By forcing a judgment, he directs us to realize that the senses of human and animal have been constructed *without any clear criteria*. He does not define who we are, but rather calls into question who we assume ourselves to be. His monstrous, furry body *pairs*—in the sense Husserl describes in his *Cartesian Meditations*—with our body, and a transfer of sense occurs. The size is threatening (note how we never fear or are forced to question our own nature by a *small* creature of unknown origin)—this Other looms above us, capable of crushing our body and our uniqueness. He is familiar, yet enigmatic. And standing beside him we see the familiarity of our bodies and yet the enigmatic way in which we define them

as human. This monster does not live at the boundary of the human community, but rather destroys the comfortable fiction of such a boundary: if we differ so little from him, then how do we differ from those creatures we have labeled “animals” and have excluded from “us”? “Human” suddenly means much more by meaning much less.

And it is thus that the creature represents a crisis and a discovery. Count Turolla understandably retreats in fear—the world has changed and he is not what he has thought himself to be.

### **V. Conclusion: Telling Our Story**

Perhaps we are the only animals to define ourselves in such a way as to insist on our uniqueness. Perhaps this is a mad pursuit. Yet, crossing the line between human and animal, we are taught in countless ways, can only result in tragedy.

This is the lesson, I take it, of the vampire and the werewolf in our mythology. Here, the human becomes animal—in body and spirit—and nasty things begin to happen. The context of the transformation is one of evil and suffering, and the consequence is always death—death for the human victims and ultimately death for the monster as well. The stories warn us to maintain our human identities, for an animal nature brings forth an animal body which in turn leads to death.<sup>21</sup> There is no fine line to walk. To be animal is to act like an animal, to have the body of an animal, and to die as an animal. The vampires and the werewolves of our nightmares transform, abandon their humanity, and become the Other.

But we know that this alterity is a construct without clear criteria, though it is a difficult lesson. We approach the Other with anxiety and fear. We complete his transformation into an animal when his ambiguity threatens us, constructing him body and soul. Bigfoot confronts us with all that we are and all that we are not, forcing us to see our bodies and our natures in a new way.

Emmanuel Levinas was concerned that Husserl’s argument for intersubjectivity made the Other a modification of the Self, thus stripping the former of his true alterity. The

transcendence, the radical otherness of the Other seemed lost—subsumed under the known, the familiar, the Self. One might have similar worries as the boundary between human and animal is eroded. One might fear that we are anthropomorphizing in a philosophically dangerous way, finding enough humanity in a gorilla, a Bigfoot, even a dog, for instance, to bring these creatures into the fold. But the work we have been doing here should show how this need not be the case. If anything, it is the Self that runs the risk of collapsing into the Other, not vice versa. Even some scientists who cling to the notion of species are recognizing that what we call humans are really best understood as the third chimpanzee species under the genus *Homo*—that there are thus common chimpanzees (*Homo troglodytes*), pygmy chimpanzees (*Homo paniscus*), and human chimpanzees (*Homo sapiens*).<sup>22</sup> Such categorization still misses the point, but it is interesting to note the way in which it misses the point. Levinas's worry was never about discovering his own alterity, never about collapsing the Self into the Other. That this may happen is not the ultimate goal of our questioning the boundaries, but it may be a sign that we are on the right path.

We cast ourselves in an ambiguous role in the story we are telling. In fact, this “we” clearly needs reevaluating, for such a story concerns the whole of the living world regardless of how we dole out the parts. And if there are conclusions to be drawn, then we know that the concepts of humanity and animality need not be abandoned, yet they must not be thought of as natural or isolating characteristics either. To be human is not to be separated from the rest of the living community, but to be immersed in it. It is a world in which all that is living is tied together—our goods intertwined and enmeshed. Categorization is an attempt to unscramble the jumble, but it carries with it unspoken values that lead to real crises of ethical conduct. Some categorization is more conducive to living well (i.e., living morally) than others. Some native peoples, for instance, have categories that point out the ties between us rather than obscure and deny them. Yet the possibility of refusing to classify and categorize life according to its usefulness to humanity, according to its ancestral relation to humanity, according to what makes sense to humanity has disappeared: the choice to



refuse categorization is no longer a live one. So the world is a jumble—let there be chaos! Let there be mysterious ties that refuse breaking! Let there be monsters!

Grover Krantz mockingly has written that if a Bigfoot were ever caught or killed—if we had the body before us—there would “be profound statements from many...philosophers...and from all of the lunatic fringe.”<sup>23</sup> He is probably right. But as we explore who and what we are it makes little sense to silence the voices that question what we have traditionally thought ourselves to be. The power of the narrative pen is great, and the “we” behind “our story” is richer and more complex than some may wish to believe. Within this “we” lives a multitude of subjects—the “human” and the “animal,” the familiar Other and the monstrous Selves of our collective experiences. Unpacking the “we” is telling a story—a new chapter in an old tale of a brave new world that has such creatures in it.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Most of what follows is taken from Michael Grumley's *There are Giants in the Earth* (NY: Doubleday, 1974), 25-36.

<sup>2</sup>The stone became known as the jadeite amulet, and Turolla has since exhibited and published photographs of it. He believes it to have been carved by the creatures he encountered in the cave—yet further evidence that this race of *Monos Grandes* possess culture, tool skills, symbolic expression, and intelligence, and that they hold the key to pre-history and perhaps our very humanity.

<sup>3</sup>The famous Patterson film has been dissected *ad nauseum!* See, for instance, chapters 4 and 5 of *The Sasquatch and Other Unknown Hominoids*, Vladimir Markotic and Grover Krantz, eds. (Calgary: Western Publishers, 1984). Here the film is analyzed frame by frame, and Dimitri Bayanov suggests that the creature's lack of a chin separates her from humanity (see p. 224).

<sup>4</sup>My personal favorite is R. Lynn Kirlin's and Lasse Hertel's vocal tract length estimator,

$$L_3 = \frac{35300 (k^2/o_k^2 + 1/o_\phi^2)}{4? Kf_k/o_k^2 + f_\phi/o_\phi^2}$$

which, I take on faith, says something about vowel pronunciation and the probability that a recording made by Alan Berry is actually of a beast of unknown origin. (See *Manlike Monsters on Trial*. Halpin and Ames, eds. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 289). I do not mean any disrespect to the authors (the work, as I understand it, is based on Hertel's master's thesis at the University of Wyoming), I merely refer to the massive equation as a symbol of science's confrontation with Bigfoot and its losing battle to define our distinct humanity.

<sup>5</sup>Halpin and Ames, 272.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 288.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 243. And all of this without ever seeing a Sasquatch brain.

<sup>8</sup>R. I. M. Dunbar, "What's in a Classification?" in *The Great Ape Project*, eds. Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 110.

<sup>9</sup>Stephen R. L. Clark, "Apes and the Idea of Kindred" in *The Great Ape Project*, eds. Cavalieri and Singer, 118.

<sup>10</sup>Richard Dawkins, "Gaps in the Mind" in *The Great Ape Project*, eds. Cavalieri and Singer, 82.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 85.

<sup>12</sup>Grover S. Krantz. *Big Foot-Prints* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1992), 173.

<sup>13</sup>John A. Keel. *Strange Creatures from Time and Space* (London: Neville Spearman, 1975).

<sup>14</sup>I have dealt with the question of feral children in my "Life at the Human/Animal Boundary: The Case of Feral Children," presented at the SSEA meeting in conjunction with the Pacific APA Meeting 1997 (Berkeley, CA). (Forthcoming in *Between the Species*).

<sup>15</sup>Markotic and Krantz, 144.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>17</sup>Cf., especially, my *Founding Community: A Phenomenological-Ethical Inquiry* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998).

<sup>18</sup>Cf. e.g., Claude Lévi-Strauss. *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>19</sup>Marcotic and Krantz, 23.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 17. (italics added).

<sup>21</sup>This is a fascinating subject. Note also that werewolves and vampires reproduce by penetrating the bodies of humans—by biting other people. Again there is the theme of body purity and uniqueness.

<sup>22</sup>See, for instance, Jared Diamond. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Chimpanzee* (NY: Harper Collins, 1991).

<sup>23</sup>Krantz, 273.