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Feral children:

Questioning the human-animal boundary from an anthropological perspective.

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Abstract

Human children who grew up solely in the care of animals for some time are referred to as feral children. There are many myths about them, but a few actual cases have been carefully documented as I will show in this paper. Kamala from India, Marcos from Spain and Oxana from Ukraine have all been living with wolves or dogs and adapted almost completely to their way of living. The effort to resocialize them into human society showed how profound their animal socialization had been. Especially communication and physical contact with the respective animals were essential to the children's development and imprint. Their relationship with nonhuman animals had a deep impact on their identity. The recognition, you become who you're with, suggests that traits are not genetically caused but to a great extent environmentally influenced. As the phenomenon of feral children shows, these traits are interchangeable. The existence of feral children questions the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals, and asks to reconsider our unique status within the animal kingdom.

Zusammenfassung

Menschenkinder, die für eine gewisse Zeit ausschließlich unter Tieren aufgewachsen sind, werden als Wolfskinder bezeichnet. Es gibt viele Mythen über sie, aber auch einige nachgewiesene Fälle, denen ich in meiner Arbeit nachgehe. Kamala aus Indien, Marcos aus Spanien und Oxana aus der Ukraine lebten jeweils mehrere Jahre in der Obhut von Wölfen bzw. Hunden und haben sich fast vollständig an deren Lebensweise angepasst. Der Versuch, sie in die menschliche Gesellschaft zu resozialisieren zeigt, wie tiefgreifend die tierische Sozialisierung war. Vor allem Kommunikation und Körperkontakt mit den jeweiligen Tieren waren wesentlich für ihre Entwicklung und Prägung. Die spätere Identität der Wolfskinder führte zurück auf den tiefgreifenden Einfluss ihrer nichtmenschlichen Eltern. Die Erkenntnis, man wird zu dem, der einen umgibt, zeigt, dass ein Großteil der eigenen Wesenszüge nicht genetisch sondern durch die Umgebung bedingt ist. Das Phänomen der Wolfskinder suggeriert, dass diese Eigenschaften austauschbar sind. Die Existenz von Wolfskindern hinterfragt die Grenze zwischen menschlichen und nichtmenschlichen Tieren und fordert eine Neubetrachtung unserer einzigartigen Position im Tierreich.

Die Autorin/ the author

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1. INTRODUCTION

¹A little boy is living in the woods. His survival depends on the friendship with a panther and a bear and the motherhood of a wolf... Many people know the famous tale of "Mowgli" written by Rudyard Kipling in 1894. However, it is not common to believe that such stories are based on true events rather than on myth. Over the last five hundred years many stories about children who were reared by animals have been told, and although there had always been doubt about these stories some of them are very well documented.

Children who were reared by animals and without human contact are called feral children. They usually cannot walk on two legs, they make sounds but are incapable of human speech, they eat raw meat, they are insensitive to changing temperatures, and they show no attachment to human beings. Whenever a feral child had been found it first had to be identified as such, because its hair had grown long and it had shown no or little human behavior. Thus, feral children raised many questions about the boundary between human and nonhuman animals. If these children live and behave entirely like other animals, what is it that makes us human? How do we differ from other animals? What is an animal? And how is identity created? So far in cultural anthropology nonhuman animals have hardly ever been subject of research rather than complementary object. An older request in the context of wolf-reared boys seems to make that long overdue,

"Es ist sehr zu wünschen, dass die Sache gründlich untersucht werden sollte, denn die Thatsachen, wenn wohl begründet, sind von grossem Interesse für die Anthropologie."
(Friedel, 1875: 352)

In this thesis I want to contribute to these questions and dismantle the boundary between humans and animals by discussing the animal aspects of feral children. I will first give an overview of the history of feral children, of the well-known cases, and of problems that occurred regarding traceability. Further, I will introduce the academic field of human-animal studies, a subject that focuses on relationships and boundaries between human and

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nonhuman animals, and with its scientific approach to question human uniqueness, is vital to the topic of my thesis. Mainly three selected cases of feral children on which I will build my work will then be discussed and supported by results of psychological and medical research to underline the arguments that are blurring the human – nonhuman boundary. They include Kamala and Amala, Marcos Rodríguez Pantoja, and Oxana Malaya. Important aspects will be the children’s socializations into both the animal and the human world to illustrate the transformation from animal to human and to emphasize the importance of language and child development. The issue of personhood and identity will also play a major role. I will reflect on the question about what defines us as human or nonhuman animals² and to what extent it is possible to become the respective other. Different approaches by Cora Diamond and Tim Ingold concerning a repeal of the ideas of species are important in this context because they manage to deconstruct the idea of an exclusive humanity. Chapter six will reflect upon the importance of interdisciplinarity among different scientific fields regarding topics like mine, as well as its chances for scholars of human-animal studies.

This thesis benefitted from interdisciplinary research and leads back into it. The anthropological aspect of what is human leads further with anthropologists like Ingold, who ask for what lies beyond humanity. It meets the concepts of human-animal studies (HAS) whose scholars strive to know what humans and other animals define. But I did not only approach the crossover of cultural anthropology and HAS, the work of many other fields were especially essential to my research. The discussion of feral children and their importance in the understanding of human-animal boundaries could not have been conducted without the scientific work of psychologists, philosophers, historians, linguistics, medics and neurologists. In combining different disciplines in itself, HAS is a good example for a subject that is already inter- and multidisciplinary. It enables the field to look at certain discourses with a more diverse perspective. Concerning human-animal relations, this could very well encourage a more frequent cooperation between humanities and natural sciences.

² Henceforth also referred to as *other animals* or for the sake of readability *animals*.

2. ABOUT THE MYTHS OF FERAL CHILDREN

2.1 Feral Children

Feral children or wild children are generally defined as human children who have been living in solitude and deprived of human contact (Newton, 2013: 2). The definition includes children who have lived in isolation because they had been locked away; the so-called children of nature who lived in the wilderness on their own; and children that had been reared by animals over some time (Newton, 2013: 355, 2). Another definition of *feral children* emerged within the last decade in an ongoing political debate in Great Britain that also referred to “underprivileged and criminal youths” (Berube, 2013). The term *feral child* is considered somewhat unfortunate because “It already implies that the child in question is more of a ‘beast’ than a human being.”, yet in regard to children that had been brought up by animals there does not seem to be an alternative term (Berube, 2013).

Many cases of feral children have surfaced throughout the centuries. Already Linnæus included them into his *Systema Naturae* (1735) under the term *Homo ferens* – the “wild man” (Newton, 2002: 38). He characterized *Homo ferens* as walking “on all fours”, being “dumb” and “covered with hair”, and listed case examples of children that “resemble” wolf, bear, sheep, and ox (Newton, 2002: 38).

The earliest among the most famous and better documented cases known today is Peter the Wild Boy who was found near Hameln, Germany, in 1724 by the hunters of King George I of England. The king took him to London, where he was supposed to receive education (Candland, 1993: 9 ff.). The first scientifically documented case is the one of Victor of Aveyron, who was found in 1798 in a forest near Caune in southern France. For a few years he was educated in social and language skills by physician Jean Marc Gaspard Itard who kept close account on Victor’s development (Itard, 1802: 13 ff.; Singh and Zingg, 1942: 241 ff.; Candland, 1993: 17 ff.; Newton, 2002: 98ff.). Victor’s case became known to a broader audience after the book “Les Enfants Sauvage” (Malson, 1964) and the movie “L’Enfant Sauvage” by François Truffaut (1970). Another case appeared in India in 1920,

when two infant girls were found living among wolves. The knowledge about them today benefits greatly from the detailed diary entries by their educator J.A.L. Singh (Singh and Zingg, 1942).

One of the more recent reports of feral children include the case of 19 year old Marcos Rodríguez Pantoja who was found in the southern Spanish mountains, in 1965, where he had lived twelve years among various animals. Another recently discovered feral child was the 13 year old girl known as *Genie* from Los Angeles. She was without speech after she had spent her life in a single room, being locked up by her parents until 1970 (Newton, 2002: 208 ff.). *Genie* became an interesting case for psychologists and neurologists during the 1970s who saw her as an example for the *forbidden experiment* – an experiment to examine a child who grew up isolated and without language, an experiment which cannot be artificially created on a legal basis (Weston, 2002).

The latest known case appeared in the Ukraine in 1992. Eight year old Oxana Malaya lived together with watchdogs for six years (Канал Украина (Channel Ukraine), 2016).

The existence of feral children has been doubted many times. For some cases it was claimed that caretakers used the illness or disability of their children to create a “hoax” in order to receive financial support from interested parties (Aroles, 2007: 10). It remains problematic that neither the past of many feral children is known to us nor the reason why they have associated themselves with animals in the first place (Dennis, 1941: 426).

2.2 Introducing Human Animal Studies

The possibility of feral children embodies the question of the boundary between humans and nonhuman animals, exactly which is a core issue within the interdisciplinary field of human-animal studies (HAS). It examines the interaction between humans and other animals in a holistic way (DeMello, 2012: 10). Different to cultural anthropology, which “traditionally excludes” (DeMello, 2012: 21-22) animals as subject and rather makes them object in their studies, human-animal studies discusses animals as subjects in the context of human society and culture including literature, arts, religion, human language, social

relations, agriculture, medicine, entertainment, and other professional areas (DeMello, 2012: 9). The term *animal* is mostly replaced with *nonhuman animal* because it is consensus within the field that humans belong to the animal kingdom and hence have to be set in relation (DeMello, 2012: 4) So, if humans can be linguistically distinguished from other animals at all it is through the terms *human animals* and *nonhuman animals* (Taylor, 2013: 1).

During its creation in the 1970s, human-animal studies were strongly connected to the feminist movement (DeMello, 2012: 7). In 1982 the organization Feminists for Animal Rights was founded and dedicated its work to “women, animals and the earth”. The organization declared that there is a “connection between the abuse of women and the abuse of animals” (DeMello, 2012: 263). Today this theoretical approach is known as *ecofeminism* (DeMello, 2012: 390). The reduction of women to their biology became eliminated by feminism, yet “that type of biological determinism” is still used for animals that are not seen as individuals but rather “representatives of their species” (DeMello, 2012: 353).

As a counterpart to *anthropocentrism* in cultural anthropology, which tends to define the “importance and interest of other animals” (Taylor, 2013: 4) according to human interests, human-animal studies face this concept with *ecocentrism* which in turn aims to “decenter humanity and instead recenter nature” (Taylor, 2013: 5). A related field to human-animal studies are critical animal studies (CAS) which work on “the abolition of animal exploitation, oppression, and domination” (DeMello, 2012: 5). A controversy between these fields demonstrates that there are different ideas about the work in animal studies: it should be either entirely descriptive, or using its “subversive potential” (Ferrari and Petrus, 2015: 10) to support animal rights and animal freedom. Critical animal studies hereto criticizes human-animal studies in creating a non-critical perspective on the current exploitation of animals (Ferrari and Petrus, 2015: 10). What generally combines the two disciplines, is to fundamentally question the boundaries between humans and other animals. They are not to be taken as part of ethology which focuses entirely on animal behavior (DeMello, 2012: 5).

An academic interest in animals grew after Peter Singer’s book “Animal Liberation” (1975)

and Tom Regan's "The Case for Animal Rights" (1983) (DeMello, 2012: 7). Besides these two philosophers, mainly historians were writing about human-animal relations in the 1980s, until academics from other fields joined in during the 1990s (DeMello, 2012: 7-8). Since the year 2000, literature on human-animal studies has grown enormously (DeMello, 2012: 9) and occupies a variety of research topics³, for example: animal minds and conscience, the concepts of eco-socialism and posthumanism, personhood of animals, animal ethics and animal philosophy (Ferrari and Petrus, 2015: 5-8). Central to most of these topics remains the question of what makes us human? How do we differ from other animals?

This brief introduction shall indicate how broadly animals are discussed in their relation to humans and how interdisciplinary approaches and debates of human-animal studies contribute to deal with the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals from different academic perspectives. The topic of feral children therefore, is entirely within the focus of human-animal studies.

3. WELL DOCUMENTED CASES OF FERAL CHILDREN

This chapter provides a brief overview of the cases of feral children which will be discussed further in chapter 4, with regard to examining the boundary between human animals and nonhuman animals.

3.1 Amala and Kamala

A book by the title "Wolf Children and Feral Man" was published in 1942 by anthropologist Robert M. Zingg and Indian missionary Reverend Joseph Amrito Lal Singh. It not only discusses known cases of feral children, but it also contains a detailed account of the discovery of two girls who had been living among a wolf pack in 1920: "The

³ Animal hording, animal keeping, vivisectionism, hunting, zoos, circuses, animal minds and conscience, animal cruelty, animals in war, the concepts of eco-socialism and posthumanism, personhood of animals, animal ethics, animal philosophy, environment, veganism, vegetarianism, dignity of animals, zoomusicology, animal breeding, and many more (Ferrari and Petrus, 2015: 5-8)

Diary of the Wolf-Children of Midnapore (India)". Singh owned an orphanage in Midnapore and went on missionary tours throughout the district (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 3). He was told of a "man-ghost" in the jungle (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 3) and went with his men to investigate the story (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 4). Within eight days a family of wolves was seen with two "hideous-looking beings" (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 5) which Singh eventually recognized as human children (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 5). In order to separate them, they drove away most of the wolves, shot the mother wolf dead, sold the remaining cubs, and took the children into their custody (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 7-8). Together with his wife, Singh aimed to raise the girls as "human children" (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 7-11) and named them Amala and Kamala. He guessed Amala to be 18 months and Kamala about eight years old (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 11). The resocialization with other orphans turned out to be difficult and Amala died already in 1921 (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 15). Soon the story of the wolf-children was spread over the neighborhood by the physician of the girls (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 52). Subsequently, Kamala first stagnated in progressing but eventually began to search for company (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 56). Over the years Kamala learned to stand upright (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 90) and to understand social human interactions (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 95). In 1929 she fell ill and did not recover. She died on November 14, 1929 from uraemia (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 113).

3.2 Marcos Rodríguez Pantoja

One of the most recent cases of feral children is the one of Marcos Rodríguez Pantoja. He is known for living with animals from age seven to 19 in the Sierra Morena of southern Spain (Manila, 1982: 8). During my research on his story I came upon two main sources that portrayed quite different sequences of his years in the wilderness. Both, the documentary *Der echte Marcos* (2013) and the book *Marcos, Wild Child of the Sierra Morena* (Manila, 1982) are based on Marcos' narrations and conclude that he spent twelve years of his life among animals. The details, however, differ strikingly. For example, Marcos told Manila about a fox, "I called her dog, because I thought she was a dog" (Manila, 1982: 27). 38 years later,

he told exactly the same story about some wolf cubs to filmmaker Gerardo Olivares (Olivares, 2013:9). Marcos also mentioned a ferret as his “lucky charm” and “friend” and hunting companion (Olivares, 2013: 9) – a striking analogy to the snake that used to protect and accompany Marcos according to his earlier interviews (Manila, 1982: 28). These differences could be owed to the time-gap of 31 years between the interviews and to a probable related memory loss. Marcos himself mentioned that he had remembered more about his past in the late 1960s than in the 1970s, and if he had learned how to write, he would have saved his memories on paper (Manila, 1982: 72). Gabriel Janer Manila, author of *Marcos, Wild Child of the Sierra Morena*, had certain doubts as well and thus approached the story critically (Manila, 1982: 22). To gain a full impression of Marcos’ past in the mountains he visited and spoke to many people who were involved in Marcos’ life before and after this period (Manila, 1982: 11-18). Since Manila talked to Marcos during the years of 1975 and 1976 and therefore only reflects what happened to him until then, I will try to complete the ensuing decades of Marcos’ life with information provided by the press and the mentioned documentary.

Marcos Rodríguez Pantoja was born in 1946 in northwest Andalusia and lived with his family in Madrid (Manila, 1982: 11). When his mother died, his siblings were divided among relatives and his father took another woman who treated Marcos badly (Manila, 1982: 11-12, 23). Due to being poor, they moved to a village in the *Sierra Morena* in the early 1950s (Manila, 1982: 11, 23). Presumably at the age of seven, Marcos was sold to his father’s employer out of poverty, which was not uncommon in the time after the war, and brought to a cave in the mountains (Manila, 1982:12, 23-24; Olivares, 2013:1). There, an old goatherd taught him how to survive in this environment (Manila, 1982: 13; Olivares, 2013: 9). One night, the goatherd was taken away by the Spanish Civil Guard (Manila, 1982: 27) and Marcos was left on his own (Manila, 1982: 13, 25). He made friends with a fox and a snake (Manila, 1982: 27-28) and during the twelve years he spent in the mountains Marcos got acquainted with a wolf pack that helped him in time of need and received food in return (Manila, 1982: 30). In a symbiotic relationship he took care of the animals around him while at the same time benefitting from their company and their strategies to survive

in the wilderness (Manila, 1982: 30). When Marcos was taken back into human society by the Civil Guard in 1965 he was 19 years old and did not know how to speak Spanish anymore (Manila, 1982: 37). He was brought to a convent in Madrid where the nuns took care of his education (Manila, 1982: 63). After that, he was put into military service (Manila, 1982: 58). However, Marcos would be too slow to catch up, and was suspended for “disability” reasons (Manila, 1982: 74). Later in his life he spent much time in Majorca (Manila, 1982: 48) and took small jobs to earn money (Manila, 1982: 49). Marcos had mainly lived lonesome and sought refuge in alcohol (Olivares, 2013: 10) until he found a foster family with Ester and Manuel Barandela who are still living with him today in the village of Rante, Galicia (Olivares, 2013). Marcos has never fully reintegrated into human society (Bolzen, 2012).

3.3 Oxana Malaya

Oxana Malaya was born in 1983 and lived with her brother and her dipsomaniac parents in the village of Nova Blagovishchenka, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine (Weston, 2002; Grice, 2006: 1). One day, when Oxana was about three years old her parents left her outside and so she crawled into the dog kennel for warmth (Weston, 2002). The ensuing five years she kept living with the dogs in the kennel, only occasionally visiting her parents’ house (Weston, 2002). In 1991, a neighbor became aware of Oxana and reported her case to the authorities. She was then brought to an orphanage (Govorit Ukania, 2013) and later to the neuropsychiatric Odessa Boarding School (Канал Украина (Channel Ukraine), 2013). There, Oxana took care of horses and two dogs that were given to her, but the long-term aim of the school’s physicians was to prepare her for a “proper occupation” (Weston, 2002). Oxana learned to speak basics of Russian and developed relationships with people, yet her development went no further than that of a young child (Grice, 2006: 2).

I have not been able to find any information about Oxana Malaya beyond the year 2013. Her case seems hardly discussed. Information about her are mainly based on newspaper articles and TV documentaries. She appears in the book "Deconstructing Youth: Youth Discourses at the Limits of Sense" by Fleur Gabriel (2013) from Monash University in

Clayton, Australia, but Gabriel refers exclusively to the article "Gone to the dogs: the girl who ran with the pack" by journalist Elizabeth Grice (2006). She claims therein that Oxana's case had not been recorded by the authorities, and all that is known about her "has been passed down orally, through doctors and carers" (Grice, 2002: 1).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 First and Second Socialization

In most cases, the earlier life of feral children is unknown. Hence, it is questioned whether these children had been healthy human infants before they came into the care of a nonhuman animal or if they had been disabled, then abandoned, and later found in the wilderness (Dennis, 1951: 153). In the cases of Marcos R. Pantoja and Oxana Malaya, birth records claim them as healthy infants (Manila, 1982: 11; McDermott, 2010). The past of Amala and Kamala, however, remains unknown (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 5). To be able to discuss the process of their socializations and their transformations from nonhuman to human behavior, I will accept the data on these cases stating that children were not disabled and have undergone two forms of socializations: first from a human into an animal society and second from an animal into a human society (see chapter 3).

Regarding the age at which the children joined the animals, psychologist Wayne Dennis explains, "Isolation is possible only beyond the years of infancy" and "no feral child other than Amala has been estimated to be less than 4 yr. old" when it left human impact (Dennis, 1941: 429). It fits the picture, that Kamala had been approximately three years old when she came into wolf company (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 90. 103); Marcos was supposedly seven (Manila, 1982: 12), and Oxana also about three years old (McDermott, 2010).

But how did the children join the animals? In India of the early 20th century, children have allegedly disappeared on a regular basis and assuming that they were being abducted by wolves was not at all uncommon (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 143). That could explain why Amala and Kamala, who were estimated to be six years apart, were found together in one

wolf den (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 8). Marcos, who in contrast to Kamala learned how to speak human [Spanish] again (Manila, 1982: 63), said that one day he was playing with a few wolf cubs and joined the pack over the common need for food (Olivares, 2013: 9; Manila, 1982: 30). Oxana, who also learned how to speak human (Russian) told several interviewers that her mother threw her out of the house (Weston, 2002). She crawled into the dog kennels and was breast-fed and kept warm by the dogs (Govorit, Ukraina, 2013; McDermott, 2010). As veterinarian Walter Tarello explains, canids might be able to adopt human children due to their pair bond which allows the females – while the males are hunting – to “dedicate their full time to the puppies” and enables them “to rear larger litters with up to 8 individuals” (Tarello, (n. y.) [2016]). He claims that “constant contact lead[s] to familiarity” and a “fearless” wolf could be willing to take care of a human baby in need (Tarello, (n. y.) [2016]). Additionally, the phenomenon of “pseudo-pregnancy” or “false pregnancy” (Tarello, n.y. [2016]) of mammals can lead a female to producing milk and mothering behavior. During the time feral children spend among animals they acquire their skills, especially when they are very young (Stewart, (n. y.) [2016]). Neuroscience consultant Heather Stewart explains that “such skills are dependent upon continuous hearing, observation, mimicking and reinforcement to develop properly” (Stewart, (n. y.) [2016]). According to the state of the children when they were found, these theories apply for each Kamala, Marcos, and Oxana. Vladimir Nagorny, Oxana’s physician, agrees that,

Children can copy the habits of the creatures around them. If those creatures are human beings, they become like human beings. But as you know she was surrounded by dogs, so she became more like a dog. (Wild Child: The Story of Feral Children, 2002)

Psychologists and neurologists take part in the issue of feral children because it explains a lot about child development. When we consider enculturation as the process to develop in accordance with our cultural surroundings and, like Ingold, assume that becoming human is “tantamount to this process” (Ingold, 1988: 5), then feral children have become the animal they were encultured with and miss out on developing human skills (Harley, (n. y.) [2016], Stewart, (n. y.) [2016]). Skills like language are “dependent on postnatal

experience” (Stewart, (n. y.) [2016]) and the neural systems of the left part of the brain, which are responsible for language, have to get stimulated in order to develop. According to child psychiatrist Bruce D. Perry, these neural systems get “smaller, and less functional, and disconnected, and ultimately that part of the brain literally physically changes” if a child is never or hardly spoken to (Weston, 2002). Thus, if a child was living without human contact in this particular timeframe in early childhood, it might not ever be able to learn how to speak human language.

When Kamala⁴, Marcos, and Oxana were found they were not showing any signs of human language capability (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 59; Manila, 1982: 37; Weston, 2002). Marcos and Oxana learned to talk with a limited vocabulary (Bolzen, 2012; Govorit Ukraina, 2013), while Kamala acquired about 45 words in Bengali (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 103). Although Singh reported that she knew small sentences, Kamala’s vocabulary did not include verbs and some of her words were simply a sound similar to the actual word (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 103-104). According to Susan Curtiss, Professor for Linguistics, Kamala did not acquire human language, because rather than merely words, human language is “grammar” and “sentences” (Weston, 2002). She explains: When a child is not able to recognize what a sentence is and how a sentence is made, it is “cognitively deficient (...) in the mental faculty that we call grammar” (Weston, 2002). According to these scientific findings, Kamala had been found too late to learn human language because she had missed the timeframe within which this would have been still possible.

Marcos came into human isolation when he was seven and already capable of human language. However, he might have forgotten most of it due to the lack of brain stimulation. When he was found, he understood other people (Manila, 1982: 37), but to reanimate his own speech and to add vocabulary to the knowledge of a seven year old, he had to be taught (Manila, 1982: 63). In 2013, his foster father Manuel Barandela said that communicating was still difficult for Marcos, but he was able to ask about things he didn’t understand (Der echte Marcos, 2013). Oxana made progress in speaking human as she proved in several interviews from 2001 to 2013 (Канал Украина (Channel Ukraine), 2013).

⁴ I will mainly leave Amala out from now on, because she had lived only eleven months in human society and her development during that time had not brought any significant results (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 54)

But like other famous feral children, for example Victor of Aveyron (Itard, 1802) and Genie the Wild Child (Whitaker and Curtis, 1977), she stopped developing eventually, and remained on the mental level of a six year old human child (Grice, 2006: 2).

In 1999, a four year old boy called Edik was found in Mirny, Ukraine, who had been living with stray dogs for two years (Weston, 2002; Scarborough, 2009: 147). According to James Law, Professor of Language and Communication Science, Edik was so far the only child who was hoped to be fully resocialized into human society and learn human language, because he was discovered and educated at this young age (Weston, 2002). The process of resocialization into human society went different for Kamala, Marcos and Oxana. While Kamala was educated stationary in an orphanage, Marcos had changed places and experienced growing up as a poor and naive young man. Oxana was also brought to an orphanage and later went on living in a psychiatric home. I will examine their cases one by one to extract their process of resocialization.

Kamala and Amala turned from “very healthy and robust” in the wild to “weak and emaciated” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 10-11) in a human environment. At the orphanage, Reverend Singh and his wife followed a structured approach for the girls’ education. They understood that Amala and especially Kamala had stayed with wolves for a long time and thus,

“had been brought up as an animal with all the modifications necessary to adapt herself to such a life (...) [and] she became an animal to all intents and purposes, without developing the human side of her being” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 90).

Singh aimed to make Kamala “a human child again” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 90). The girls were “fond of raw meat and raw milk” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 13) which Singh granted them, but he added vegetables with a view to decrease their “ferociousness” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 13). Singh observed that their locomotion was fully on fours. They crawled on knees and hands and ran fast on their feet and hands (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 13), but they “could not stand up at all” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 11, 19). Other children did not get close to Kamala and Amala because they would bite and scratch (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 14). Singh noticed how disinterested and aloof the girls were to anything around them. They

“dislike[d] (...) everything human” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 15, 17). Amala’s and Kamala’s resocialization into human society was not only mental but also physical. The girls were not used to sunlight or artificial light (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 19) and could see “better at night than by day” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 22). They did not eat with their hands but with their mouths and tongues when “lapping” [liquids like] “puppies” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 27). Both of them preferred milk to water which could indicate a breastfeeding by the mother wolf (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 29). Kamala was able to “smell meat or anything from a great distance like animals” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 23). She was also seen eating carcasses (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 24). While she was eating she “would not part” with the food, and if anyone came near she “showed great rage” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 29), a behavior that is well known from canid food hierarchy (Mech, 1999). Kamala’s body seemed adjusted to her life with the wolves and to their way of locomotion (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 25-26).

When the girls were sleeping they were seen “overlapping one another like little pigs or dog pups” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 31). At night they were howling regularly and even though “it startled everyone” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 45), the people from the orphanage eventually got used to the sound. Singh noticed that Amala and Kamala were insensitive to cold and heat, yet in the process of resocialization Singh required clothing and made a loincloth for the girls, which is a kind of diaper, that they could not open themselves (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 31). The next step was to make them house-trained - a term, that is usually used for infantile pets -, because they would urinate and defecate everywhere (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 35). After Amala died (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 38), Kamala became more and more attached to Mrs Singh. Human behavior became more frequent for Kamala (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 46). Exercises to acquire language and to walk like a human were enhanced by using cookies as bait or reward (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 47). Another important factor for Kamala’s resocialization was massages. Together with Mrs Singh’s “affectional” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 49) voice, it had a soothing and familiarizing effect. Massages and the touch of a person were also successfully used in the education of Victor of Aveyron (Itard, 1802). Curtiss believes,

that Jean Itard understood the importance of parental love. And so he put Victor in a situation where he had an essence, a substitute mother, Mme Guérin. She understood the importance of constant care, and understood intuitively how important it is to touch people. (Weston, 2002)

Similar results were found in the field of primatology. Harry Harlow's social isolation experiments on rhesus monkeys in the 1950s revealed the importance of physical contact for infants and the improvement of health by physical stimulation. The monkey infants had chosen a soft clothed dummy without food over a bare wire dummy with a bottle of milk (Blum, 2002: 151). The same applied to Kamala:

"The massage had a wonderful effect in strengthening and loosening Kamala's muscles for human use and in drawing her to trust in, and love her tender foster mother." (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 61)

This important realization may not only explain why Kamala accepted human dependence, but also why a bond was growing between her and the wolves.

Another supporting factor was the use of other animals. Singh introduced dog puppies as a "medium towards [Kamala's] progress in the cultivation of human faculties" (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 51). Kamala was supposed to observe the dogs interact with humans and thus feel encouraged to do the same. However, the experiment did not succeed because Kamala had focused too much on the animals (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 51). Although Kamala made progress in standing up straight, she preferred to still get back on all fours and eat on the floor (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 76). And although she liked to eat sweet human food, she was still seen ferreting dead animals (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 77).

In January 1924, about four years after he brought Kamala into his orphanage, Singh noticed "a great change" (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 84) when Kamala did not feel as comfortable outside at night as she did before. She had become more attached to humans and Singh describes, "Kamala was jolly and no longer morose or peevish" (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 85). Her body transformed as well, from being adapted to the way of living as a wolf to that of a human on a compound. Kamala began attaching importance to hygiene (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 86), and when she began wrapping herself in a blanket, Singh

concluded that her body meanwhile responded to temperature (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 92). Her taste for human diet developed as well (Sing and Zinn, 1942: 87).

Further, Kamala's temper went from an "angry" nature to "that of a timid human child of six or seven years of age" (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 88). By that time, according to Singh, she was already 13 years old. In 1925, Kamala began to differentiate colors, she also learned that the other children had names, and she was able to communicate by nodding and shaking her head (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 95). Those achievements, together with her development in communication skills, like signaling when hungry or getting help in case of emergency (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 96), are hard to classify as a change for either human or animal behavior. As we know, human children have to learn these kinds of things to integrate to social life, but we similarly teach dogs to communicate with us. It raises the question whether Kamala showed empathy, when she was helping a child in need, as Singh describes it (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 96), or if she simply intuitively knew from the situation that something was wrong. Kamala's communication remained mainly mute. She would "express herself in signs" (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 98) most of the time. However, Singh was convinced that Kamala was beginning to like human society (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 102).

Marcos did not receive such a close support in his resocialization into human society. Instead, he learned many things on his own (Manila, 1982: 69-130). Another difference to Kamala was that Marcos did not entirely live like an animal but rather as a human surrounded by animals. When Marcos was taken by the Spanish Civil Guard, he defended himself with a knife and his teeth (Manila, 1982: 37). His foster mother Ester Barandela told filmmaker Gerardo Olivares that they had removed his teeth violently because he had bitten one of the policemen (Olivares, 2013). Marcos was brought to Fuencaliente where he met his father but barely recognized him, and rejected to live with him (Manila, 1982: 39). Marcos did not know how to count because he had never gone to school (Manila, 1982: 54). He knew only few things by name (Manila, 1982: 50). Only later, he was told about what he had seen in the mountains. For example, what he called "meows" had actually been owls (Manila, 1982: 54).

Like Oxana later, and the French feral child Victor of Aveyron, Marcos could not recognize himself in a mirror (Berube, 2013; McDermott, 2010; Manila, 1982: 41). Self-recognition or self-awareness is one of the things that have been declared to be uniquely human (Patterson and Gordon, 1993). Yet the outcome that meanwhile both Marcos and Oxana are able to recognize their reflection (Manila, 1982: 41; Berube, 2013) suggests that self-recognition is taught, not inherited. As a fact, other species of animals have also shown self-recognition which once again questions the uniqueness of this feature as a human differentiator (see subchapter 4.2).

Marcos was brought to a priest in Lopera who replaced the animal skins he wore with clothes and taught him how to eat with cutlery (Manila, 1982: 39). He was unable to walk with shoes and had to have his feet medically treated in order to do so (Manila, 1982: 46). During his time with the priest, Marcos was introduced to radio of which he believed it had people “stuck in there” (Manila, 1982: 40). He also learned that people kept animals as their pets which made him very sad because they were not living wild (Manila, 1982: 40). From there, Marcos was brought to a convent in Madrid where nuns taught him how to speak and to “behave like a person” (Manila, 1982: 63). In contrast to Kamala, Marcos’ opinion of his resocialization is known to a great extent since he learned to speak again.

Marcos found “everything (...) so strange” (Manila, 1982: 46). He did not remember women from the past and believed they were only for “making babies” (Manila, 1982: 44) because his former teacher, the priest, had told him so. Marcos also found friends in Madrid who introduced him to theater and made him understand about two-dimensional pictures (Manila, 1982: 44). Marcos said, he would “gladly” go back to the mountains but since he got accustomed with certain things that he would miss from human society, he would now “need” a TV set, “four or five girls”, and a camera to take along (Manila, 1982: 49). Human society obviously had already changed Marcos. He was convinced that he needed one woman “to cook, one to fetch asparagus, and another to climb those mountains with [him].” (Manila, 1982: 49) It is not clear how Marcos developed the idea of using women as a kind of commodity. At any rate, he seemed torn apart between living in a human society without the familiar things of the mountains and living in the mountains

without the urban luxuries he had acquired. Yet his two worlds met at certain points, for example when Marcos found the skills he needed in the mountains to be very useful in the human world: when there were no lighters, he would make fire with sticks (Manila, 1982: 61).

Similar to the education experiments with Kamala, Marcos' capability of understanding was examined by nuns in Madrid. They asked him to bring a Jesus figure, but Marcos "didn't have the faintest clue" (Manila, 1982: 63), and when they asked him for the time, he took the clock off the wall to let them read the time themselves. Marcos' language lessons eventually ended and he regretted that he could not make anymore progress in speaking (Manila, 1982: 60-61).

Since having knowledge of language for someone like Marcos can be equated with becoming social with other humans and integrate into a society that could give him the feeling of belonging, missing the opportunity to improve vocabulary and grammar means missing out on human interaction, and possibly on becoming completely human. Also Itard had already concluded from his case with Victor, "to be a human being in the fullest possible sense, you had to be sociable, you had to be language-using" (Weston, 2002). This explains, why Marcos said he was proud to be able to care for himself but he never really felt integrated into human society (Manila, 1982: 73).

After Oxana Malaya was retrieved from the dog kennel she came into the care of physicians and therapists. They examined her behavior and found that she "used to show her tongue when she saw water, and she used to eat with her tongue and not her hands" (McDermott, 2010). Anna Chalaya, director of the Odessa Medical Institute in Ukraine, realized that Oxana "was more like a little dog than a human child" (Weston, 2002). She could not speak and similar to Marcos she gave the impression that she did not think speaking was necessary (Weston, 2002). She was also not able to recognize her own image in a mirror (McDermott, 2010). It was observed that she was crawling and jumping on all fours, and similar to Amala and Kamala she was "grinning, snarling" and "trying to bite" when in human company (Канал Украина (Channel Ukraine), 2013).

Vladimir Nagorny, Oxana's doctor at the time, explained, "The only thing we can do is to

try and correct her behavior so she gets used to living in a human society”, and he considered the “best way” would be to “focus her mind from dogs and animals to some sort of useful occupation” (Weston, 2002). However, he also understood that Oxana “will never be considered a normal person.” (Weston, 2002). Oxana grew up among other orphans, similar to Kamala in India. When it was naptime, she would escape to play with the dogs in the yard (Govorit Ukrania, 2013). From a nurse she received two dogs as a present. She raised and trained them, and she did not need to talk to them since apparently they “looked in each others’ eyes and perfectly understood each other” (Govorit Ukrania, 2013).

When child psychologist Lyn Fry visited 23 year old Oxana in 2006 to have a look on her mental and cognitive condition, she found that, “according to the Wechsler [IQ] Test, she could draw at the level of a five or six year old.” (Berube, 2013). To test Oxana’s language skills Fry gave her sentences with prepositions and Oxana had no difficulties understanding them (Berube, 2013). She also found out that Oxana had meanwhile learned to identify herself in a mirror (Berube, 2013). Oxana has had a few relationships with humans but they did not last (Govorit Ukrania, 2013). She was in contact with her brother at that time. She said she enjoyed his family, but that she was never asked to live with them, since she was allegedly not easy to deal with (Канал Украина (Channel Ukraine), 2013).

In 2013, Oxana still lived at a neuropsychiatric boarding school. She learned to read and write and to manage her everyday life. However, it is believed that her development would go no further. In order to come to terms with her past, Oxana wants to meet her biological mother one day, (Канал Украина (Channel Ukraine), 2013).

Concerning a reintroduction to human life, James Law explains that even if certain things cannot be taught to feral children, it is important to do what is possible, “even if it’s just stabilizing their environment” (Weston, 2002). From the case studies above it is apparent that infant human behavior can easily be overcome by animal influence while the opposite is not as likely. Already an experiment by Winthrop N. Kellogg, who created a situation to investigate such transformation in the 1930s, showed exactly that. He brought his one year

old son Donald together with six year old chimpanzee Gua in order to rear them both as human children in the same environment:

“According to our plan, the animal subject was to be fed upon a bottle, clothed, bathed, fondled, and given careful human treatment in every phase of its daily existence.” (Kellogg and Kellogg, 1967: 11-12)

The results of this experiment, however, showed that Gua developed faster than Donald, who in turn began to copy Gua’s behavior. When Kellogg realized that his son was learning chimpanzee sounds to communicate he cancelled the experiment (Kellogg and Kellogg, 1967, 142). Wayne Dennis speculates hereto that, “the change from human to animal is easier than the transformation from animal to human” (Dennis, 1951: 157).

4.2 Overcoming Human-Animal Boundaries

Thinking about why humans are usually seen separate from other animals leads at least as far back as to the Bible. According to the book of Genesis, God created animals before he created humans which he ultimately made “masters over all life – the fish (...), the birds (...), all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals” (Holy Bible, 1997: 3). This religious belief had since been responsible for many classifications among living beings, and even between human beings; e.g. in the segregation of Europeans and Africans by scientific racism (Sanders, 1969: 521). Not least Linnæus who brought together all living forms in his "Systema Naturae" (1735) believed that humans are more intelligent than other animals because God had made them so (Ingold, 2006: 5). Yet, he lived during the Age of Enlightenment, and when he included a tailed human among his depictions of human forms, people began reflecting about the “full range of human variation” (Ingold, 2006: 2-3). Already the discovery of the orangutan during the 17th century, and the mystery that formed around the question whether it was human or not, encouraged people to doubt the “Eurocentric construction of human nature” (Grzimek, 1967: 538; Ingold, 2006: 4).

The question of the human-animal boundary is obviously based on the questions of *what is an animal* and *what is a human being*? While Linnæus understood species according to

morphology, Darwin discovered genealogy to be the cause for biological kinship, the linear development of species characteristics based on natural selection (Ingold, 2006: 5). Darwin's realization explains why the human cannot be separated from the animal kingdom. But Darwin also agreed that *Homo sapiens* was different from other animals because of his intelligence (Diamond, 2012: 7). Other traits that had been classified as being uniquely human, have been "language, symbolic intelligence, bipedalism, toolmaking" and "male-female pair-bonding" (Ingold, 2006: 11). By today, however, all of these traits have been found among other animals as well and therefore may no longer serve as examples for human uniqueness.

It is argued that "human beings are not born walking, nor do they all walk the same way" (Ingold, 2006: 17), and considering Kamala and Oxana who learned walking like canids, it is understood that "walking is not genetical but environmental caused and taught" (Ingold, 2006: 17). Kellogg supported this idea in emphasizing the "immense importance of the surroundings and treatment in the upbringing of the infant organism, whether animal or human" (Kellogg, 1967: 316), and he concludes that human and nonhuman development goes similar when in the same environment.

Further, pair-bonding has also been found among nonhuman animals, as Ulrich H. Reichard shows in his book "Monogamy: Mating Strategies and Partnerships in Birds, Humans and Other Mammals" (2003). The issue of toolmaking is being discussed by Mike Hansell who dedicated a book to animals like spiders, crows, chimpanzees, gorillas and ants that are all to be found using different kind of tools (Hansell, 2007). Also, the skill of language and symbolic intelligence was being deconstructed as human uniqueness by the achievements of gorilla Koko who received education in American Sign Language and spoken English by Francine Patterson in San Francisco from 1972 to June 2018⁵ (Patterson and Gordon, 1993: 58, 60).

Like language, *self-awareness* has remained an exclusive human trait until very late, and Koko and later her companion Michael (also a lowland gorilla) have shown that self-

⁵ Author's update 13/09/18: According to her Website www.koko.org, Koko died June 19, 2018 in Woodside, California at the age of 46.

awareness of animals go beyond the recognition of the self-image in a mirror. They knew the concept of time-related words, they were able to describe their emotions, and to describe themselves in relation to others (Patterson and Gordon, 1993: 58-67). Two major findings were, firstly, that the two gorillas have shown embarrassment, and “[i]n order to be embarrassed animals must be capable of reflecting on their own behaviour and comparing it to standards set by society or themselves” (Patterson and Gordon, 1993: 70), and secondly, that they, “like human children, take initiative with language by making up new words and by giving new meanings to old words.” (Patterson and Gordon, 1993: 62) Cultural scientist Michael Newton emphasizes language as “The highest form of our artificiality” and claims that without speech, one remains “in a brutal state, unable to acquire rational ideas (Newton, 1996: 16). He explains that the “human being in this condition is purely an imitative animal” (Newton, 1996: 16).

It is results like these that suggest we might rethink certain kinds of classifications like, who or what is human, who is a thing and who a person, and at what point the possibility of a blurry transition sets in. If a human feral child cannot speak but a gorilla can, who then is entitled to the term “person”? Since we usually only refer to humans as persons then what exactly defines a person? Human-Animal Studies have profound discussions about that question and reviewing only a few dictionaries makes clear that there is no real consensus about the term⁶. Also, in legal terms animals are not always determined to explicit categories⁷. Despite linguistic and legal determinations, the colloquial use of the term person, and therefore the thought pattern about intelligent animals, is changing.

In 2013, the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests has mentioned in a circular that *cetacea* – the order of whales – “should be seen as ‘nonhuman persons’”, and that they “should have their own specific rights” (Government of India, Ministry of Environment

⁶ Duden currently lists several definitions about solely human beings.

<<http://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Person#Bedeutung4>> (last access February 15, 2016); Langenscheidt lists the term as “person”, “individual being”, “character”, “appearance”, and “body” which seems to be more open to any kind of living being. <http://de.langenscheidt.com/deutsch-englisch/person?utm_source=suchbox_header&utm_medium=webshop&utm_campaign=suchbox_header> (last access February 15, 2016)

⁷ According to Germany’s *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (BGB)* animals are not classified as “item” (BGB, 2015: §90a). However, animals are being continuously included in *item* regulations (BGB, 2015: §601, §701, §903).

and Forests, 2013: 2). Further, they state that *cetacea* are “highly intelligent and sensitive” and that it is “morally unacceptable to keep them captive” (Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2013: 2). The same reasons for a moral responsibility are issued by the Great Ape Project that is aiming to grant fundamental rights to orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, and bonobos since 1993 (Cavalieri and Singer, 1993: 4). The project recognizes humans and apes not superficially as species but as intelligent beings with social structures and emotions. Therefore, it pleads for “extending the community of equals” (Cavalieri and Singer, 1993: 5) to include both humans and apes. An approach that also Cora Diamond and Tim Ingold support (Beleg fehlt).

According to Diamond, only because a species is characterized by certain features does not mean that every individual of that species is also equipped with these features (Diamond, 2012: 107). Hence, she suggests using the term person in the sense of a living being with certain characteristics. This way it is considered that not all human beings have human characteristics and in turn nonhuman beings could very well have them (Diamond, 2012:107). Obviously this does not mean to withdraw the personhood from any human being but rather urges to include more individuals into the possibility of becoming a person. Ingold argues that what a human or animal has become “depends on whom they are with”. If human and animal spend time together they both “undergo a kind of perpetual rebirth” (Ingold, 2013: 21). He therefore suggests to “think of animate beings in the grammatical form of the *verb*. Thus, ‘to human’ is a verb, as is ‘to baboon’” (Ingold, 2013: 21) or in relation to feral children, “to wolf”. Hence, humans and baboons “do not exist, but humaning (...) and babooning occur” (Ingold, 2013: 21).

Such merging of identities can also be found with feral children. The first socialization among animal families makes a second socialization among humans difficult, and the children eventually become torn between wilderness and civilization. James Law, Professor of Language and Communication, picks up on that point when he says, “Part of being human is being brought up by humans – if you’re not brought up by humans, are you completely human?” (Wild Child: The Story of Feral Children, 2002). Not only contemporaries of feral children were stuck between calling them man or beast (Newton,

1996: 276). Even the children themselves often struggled with identity, if they developed well enough to reflect on that. When Oxana was asked what made her happy, she answered “to bark and howl”. When she was asked why, she said, “It is my nature.” (National Geographic Channel, 2007) And when being asked about the dogs, she called them her “home” (Wild Child: The Story of Feral Children, 2002). When Marcos was living in the mountains, he became so much part of his environment that he called himself “the king of the valley” (Manila, 1982: 27). In human society, he remembers the animals as his “family” (Der echte Marcos, 2013). Marcos explained,

I couldn't see the difference between one and the other, for the same reason I saw all kinds of animals. Some who walked on all fours, some who walked on two legs, some who walked and flew and others who walked without feet, creeping along the ground. The only difference was in me, that I could use my hands and my own thoughts [...] (Manila, 1982: 98)

Marcos believed that humans have a greater intelligence, but animals are perfectly intelligent in their own way (Manila, 1982: 98). His reflection resembles the phrase “if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid” (unknown, though often attributed to Albert Einstein). Ingold confirms that “intelligence is not an interior cognitive capacity, of which its actions are the effects, but lies in its whole way of perceiving and acting in the world.” (Ingold, 2013: 20)

Kamala unfortunately could not speak to express her thoughts on identity. From what is read by Singh's diary entries, Kamala developed from a stranger of human society to an almost integrated child (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 102). Yet, looking at the way she was being resocialized, one must ask how far it really differed from that of a dog. She was conditioned with food literally like pets are (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 47), and Singh used the word “tame” to describe her social development (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 29). He calls her life as a wolf her “second nature” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 115), and “[s]he was virtually an animal” whose “human brain cells (...) had lain dormant” (Singh and Zingg, 1942: 16) but came to live during resocialization.

Nik Taylor speaks of the idea that identity is “a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society” (Taylor, 2013: 82). Because identity is not a

“fixed category”, a dog can have the identity of a family member and a cow the identity of food (Taylor, 2013: 82). However, Ingold points out the subtle difference that “the non-human can be *one of ours*” but it “[cannot be] *one of us*” (Ingold, 2013: 16; italics in original?). For example, when a farmer marks his sheep it carries “the stamp or the imprint of the human culture that has “marked them out” (Taylor, 2013: 82) to be property (Ingold, 2013: 16). In order to loosen such fixed thought patterns, Ingold suggests that, “rather than looking at animals as though they were humans, or at humans as though they were animals, we need to find ways of modelling social life that allows for their differences” (Ingold, 2013: 20).

In human society and its everyday life, the status of animals – domesticated or wild – is constantly changing due to moral concepts, due to economic and personal interests, and due to individual situations. What priorities do we set when we “Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows”, as psychologist Melanie Joy discusses in her eponymous book (Joy, 2011)? One might wonder, where do we draw the line, when we use pejoratives in our language by calling people “pig”, “bitch”, “ape”, “camel”, “chicken”, “donkey”, “sheep”, “snake”, or “whale”, while on the other hand flatter them by animal metaphors like “smart as a fox”, “strong like a lion”, “nimble as a cat” or “busy as a bee”. Another problem is the contradiction between what we say about animals and how we treat them. For example, the majority of people in the US agree that an animal’s life is as important as a human’s, while every year approximately eight billion animals are being killed for food in their country (Francione, 2000: xix-xx).

A dog can be a family member, but when it comes to existential questions, will the dog be valued the same as other family members? Gary L. Francione, Professor of Law, sets a thought experiment in his book (2000). He examines the question, “who would you save from a burning house: your child or your dog?” (Francione, 2000: xxi-xxii) According to Francione, the “moral intuition” very likely makes anyone choose the child. It can, however, situationally be altered by redefining the roles of the human and the animal. If the animal is a longtime family member, and the human a criminal, the choice might then fall differently (Francione, 2000: xxii). These considerations do show, that at least in moral

aspects, there is always a human-made boundary between animals and humans, albeit a modifiable one.

5. CONCLUSION

We, as humans, have to realize that we are not much different from other animals. The more we get to know about animal behavior, the clearer it becomes that the human bar of intelligence, of skills, of emotions, and of conscience is not universal. Depending on where we live, we are some of many living beings that carry and develop certain traits essential to survive in our respective environment. And as the phenomenon of feral children shows, these traits are interchangeable.

It is a striking realization, that the environment of a growing child determines its course of development to such a great degree that it creates an identity which is unique to these preconditions. Feral children were growing up without human contact but were socialized by animals. The fact, that this has been working for the children and that they were able to adapt to the respective animal society, suggests that this kind of socialization is not too distant from the development of human beings, and it strengthens the possibility of a further development in human-nonhuman communication.. As shown, together with physical contact, language is one of the strongest factors that make living beings profoundly bond with each other.

In truly being “the other”, feral children cross the border between human and nonhuman and show that such categories can be deconstructed very easily. They rather flow into what seems to be a grey area. Kamala, for example, became a tamed wolf rather than a human teenager during her resocialization into human society. And in turn, gorilla Koko and chimpanzee Gua turned more into apes with human skills than into transformed members of another species. What feral children have become had most of all been a compromise between a human and an animal, a being that was not always considered a person nor a member of another species. And those who survived had primarily have to deal with the trauma of their past and the discomfort of the presence of a new reality.

As we have seen, a shifting between human and nonhuman animals can happen due to their similarities in social and cognitive development. Since feral children cannot be easily classified, their existence lifts the average barriers of understanding the concept of species. They are yet another reason why we might want to continue rethinking who we are as humans, how we are related to other animals, and what kind of responsibility we possibly assume regarding our relationship to them. We might want to reflect on why we maintain certain boundaries between us and “the other” and if we find something more essential to living together with other species that prevails anthropocentric concepts and economic interests. Especially since we learned that who or what we are is completely dependent on whom we are with. Who we become is not so much a genetical but rather environmental issue. The reality of animals that share or are able to achieve skills that we have, already challenges the moral and ethical ideas about the position of animals in our society. Similar to gender and ethnicity this reality encourages rethinking and resolving essentialist concepts and fixed classifications.

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