

Preface

The title of this book is intended to suggest what appears to differentiate persons from human beings and their closest relatives: in particular, symbolic discourse. The title indicates one instance of symbolic discourse, taken loosely as persons' distinctive uses of language, which both says something literally while signifying something non-literally.

There are many simple examples, as for instance some sports' enthusiasts effectively using figurative sports expressions in non-sport contexts. The example above, however, is more complicated. The poem tells of a woman walking alone on a summer evening's beach, singing.

The singer voices the sound of her song in such verbally symbolic ways as directly to denote some things while indirectly signifying for two nearby listeners the sound of the sea's waves. The title phrase, quoted more fully in this book's epitaph, comes from Wallace Stevens' well-known poem, "The Idea of Order in Key West." ". . . The song and water were not medleyed sound / Even if what she sang was what she heard, / Since what she sang was uttered word by word. . . Whose spirit is this? we said because we knew / It was the spirit that we sought and knew / That we should ask this often as she sang." (Although he does not mention Stevens, the distinguished prehistorian S. Mithin's 2005 book

PREFACE

The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind and Body may come to mind.)

By way of acknowledgements, I owe sincere thanks for the intellectual challenges, the sensible expectations, and the varied institutional support offered by the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, Ukraine, the Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, the *Akademie internationale für Philosophie* in Liechtenstein, the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung in Germany, the *Institut international de philosophie* in Paris, and the Royal Society of Canada in Ottawa.

I owe very much to many truly excellent students over the last years and to many excellent colleagues. Specifically, I owe quite special thanks to the professional, collegial, and personal support of Adib Aburukin, Czeslaw Porebski, Martin Cajthaml, Mariano Crespo, Volodymyr Turchynovskyy, Ken-ichi Sasaki, Frank Peddle, and Timothy Tackett. Finally, my deepest thanks over many years go to H el ene Bessi ere and to our family.

PETER McCORMICK
PARIS, 23 MARCH 2020