

Indeed, the shaman generally seems to have a more than normal nervous constitution, for he must be capable of extraordinary concentration. And by any standard, his intellectual skills far surpass those of his fellows. For instance, the poetic vocabulary of a Yakut shaman contains 12,000 words, whereas the commonly used language has only 4,000. Intellectually the shaman lies above the milieu, frequently the guardian of a rich oral heroic literature, as well as being the singer, poet, musician, diviner, priest, doctor, and the general protector of legends several centuries old. [11]

And the shaman's professional duties are so demanding that few can match his physical prowess. He must be able to endure the solitude and danger of the wilds; he must be able to withstand the rigors of the fast and the hours of dancing and chanting. Thus a supple, strong body and an unbounded energy are required to supplement his keen intelligence. As one account has it, "Mytychyl, a Yakut shaman . . . , though an old man, during a performance outdid the youngest by the height of his leaps and the energy of his gestures. . . . He became agitated, bubbled over with intelligence and vitality. He gashed himself with a knife, swallowed sticks, ate burning coals. . . ." [12]

The shaman also excels politically and socially. "For the Yakut, the perfect shaman . . . must be serious, possess tact, be able to convince his neighbors; above all, he must not be presumptuous, proud, ill-tempered. One must feel an inner force in him that does not offend yet is conscious of its power." [13] The best shaman, then, would be a hybrid of a great athlete, an unstinting intellectual capable of synthesizing great stores of knowledge, and the noblest statesman on earth.

Shamans as a group are surely among the most talented and brightest humans who have walked the earth. The belief in a nonlocal, shared consciousness with animals comes to us from an elite class of human beings. This fact does not mean that they were not wrong. Maybe they were collectively deluded or their notion that the entire world of animals, plants, and things was enchanted and alive with mind was a holdover from the days

before man's consciousness had totally dissociated from its identification and fusion with the world around him; when his ego and concept of self was so fragile that he did not have a developed sense of "I." Or perhaps, having developed a sense of self, the shaman in every case is merely regressing to a coveted time of paradisiacal innocence.

Sharing Mind with Animals: ★ Modern Evidence

If we wanted to look to the modern world instead of the world of the shaman, where would we go for evidence of a shared mind with animals? The evidence may be everywhere. For instance, it would be difficult to convince millions of pet owners that they do not on occasion "communicate" with their dogs, cats, birds, or even their goldfish. Everyone has felt at one time or another on the same "wavelength" with an animal. This feeling is particularly pronounced in some vegetarians who feel so strongly connected to animal life that they cannot bring themselves to eat animal flesh. It is impossible to explain the commitment to vegetarianism in some persons on the theory that it is purely an intellectual decision. Something more is involved—such as, perhaps, a genuine sensing of the shared consciousness between humanity and the animals. In a similar vein the growing movement against animal experimentation may represent the same felt connection. In these three instances—pet ownership, vegetarianism, and the reaction against animal experimentation—we may be witnessing vestiges of the time when humanity actually felt a sharing of consciousness with the animal kingdom.

Sometimes the animals may return the favor, behaving in ways suggesting that *they* share consciousness with *us*. Could this be the fuel behind the euphemism that the dog is "man's best friend"? Why should he want to be? For table scraps only? Maybe, although I am not convinced. What about the legendary stories of animals coming to the aid of humans in distress, such