

animals would seem to have survival value for humans; and studies suggest, indeed, that it is good for our health.

In one study it was shown that ownership of a pet was the most important factor in predicting a patient's clinical course following a heart attack—more important than any of the classical coronary risk factors such as smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels in the blood, or diabetes mellitus. [29]

Or take the case reported by Dr. Gustav Eckstein in his book *Everyday Miracle*. He describes a small spitz dog who doubled as a night nurse for his mistress, who was a diabetic. Each night the little dog would curl up in the angle of the woman's arm. He would awaken immediately if her breathing pattern changed, which is one of the telltale signs of ketoacidosis, one of the most dreaded complications of diabetes. [30]

A growing body of knowledge has accumulated in recent years showing that close connections with animals is valuable for human health. This new area, which bridges traditional and veterinary medicine, is frequently referred to as "pet therapy." [31]

Most instances of human-animal communication can be explained by ordinary sensory cues, and it is unnecessary to introduce the concept of shared mind. But not all of them. If it makes good biological sense that a nonlocal, psychological communion might have evolved between humans and animals as an asset to survival, then the stories of returning animals, precognitive gerbils, and talented flies may be more than amusing parlor tales. They may be indicators that nature in its wisdom would, in fact, have designed a mind that envelops all creatures great and small.

Saint Francis: Patron Saint of Nonlocal Mind

The idea of nonlocal mind implies that our individual mind is part of something larger, something we cannot claim as our own private possession. Taking this idea to heart requires a certain humility—not humility as some existential sweetness that is still only a coverup for the ever-ingenuous ego, but humility as

the genuine article. It is humility that allows us to know deeply that consciousness is not the sole possession of an ego; that it is shared by not only other persons, but perhaps by other living things as well. It is humility that allows us to take seriously the possibility that we may be on a similar footing with all the rest of God's creatures.

This possibility has been an immediate, felt experience for many cultures, such as the Native American. The Sioux Chief, Luther Standing Bear, expressed this connection:

Kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky and water was a real and active principle. For the animal and bird world there existed a brotherly feeling that kept the Lakota [Sioux] safe among them and so close did some of the Lakotas come to their feathered and furred friends that in true brotherhood they spoke a common tongue. [32]

The greatest personality in the Christian tradition who embodied this trait most vividly was Saint Francis of Assisi, whom most people regard as a meek, gentle man who loved all animals and who would not harm a flea. But this view hardly fits the picture given of him by an expert on his character, the medieval and Renaissance historian, Lynn White, Jr. Professor White has called St. Francis "the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ," because he championed a pure democracy among all God's creatures. This view—that other living things have an equal status in the world as ourselves—was and still is at odds with the traditional Western view of nature. Yet it is becoming necessary to take it seriously, if we wish to preserve life on Earth, including our own. Thus it is that Professor White has proposed St. Francis as the patron saint for ecologists because of his deep understanding and respect for the Earth and its creatures. [33]

White believes that "more science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we