

find a new religion, or rethink our old one." He proposes that the Christian axioms that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man and that man should exercise dominion over it are in large measure responsible for the desecration that we have mercilessly visited on our planet. But White does *not* exhort us to abandon our religious traditions in favor of a more Earth-oriented philosophy such as might be found in the oriental or Native American traditions, for he is dubious of their viability for us. He champions a rethinking and reeling of *our own* basic, indigenous attitudes toward nature. But not just our intellectual or rational attitudes. He believes that the roots of our ecological problems are largely religious, and that the solutions to them must also embody religious and spiritual elements. This is where St. Francis comes in: The spiritual foundation for a reappraisal of our attitude toward nature can be found, he believes, in the heretical Franciscan belief in "the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature." [34]

St. Francis, says the legend of the wolf who ravaged the land around Gubbio in the Apennines, *talked* to the wolf. He *reasoned* with him and persuaded him of the error of his ways. The wolf repented, and when he died he was buried on consecrated ground. This Franciscan doctrine of the animal soul was hurriedly stamped out. St. Francis's view was simply too radical, for it rested on "a unique sort of panpsychism of all things animate and inanimate, designed for the glorification of their transcendent Creator. . . ." [35]

There is an unmistakable nonlocal flavor to St. Francis's carryings-on with "the creatures." No one makes brothers of ants and sisters of fire, to say nothing of preaching to birds and wolves, unless there is some deeply felt connection, some going beyond the self. Saint Francis's belief in the virtue of humility, which made possible his intimate discourse with the creatures, is a prerequisite for entertaining the possibility of nonlocal mind. Lacking humility, the idea of a genuinely nonlocal quality to consciousness becomes offensive. It is a threat to the ego, the person, the sense of I-ness that has become enshrined as an

element of culture in the West. Possessing this humility in abundance, St. Francis was well positioned for the belief in a genuine sharing of consciousness with the creature-world, and all his actions are compatible with this belief.

Perhaps there is a good reason why St. Francis could talk to the creatures; why shamans, since time immemorial, have "become" animals; and why lost animals return home, provided someone, such as their owners, knows the way back. The explanation may lie in the unbounded, shared nature of the mind—the eternal, infinite One Mind, the Universal Mind—that is a central theme of this book. Lyall Watson, an astute naturalist, roving observer, and author of many books, puts it this way:

I think that there may well be a flow of pattern or instruction which crosses species lines and allows even radically different organisms to borrow each other's ideas. . . . As a biologist, I am aware at times—especially when steeped in some natural cycle—of a kind of consciousness that is timeless, unlimited by space or by the confines of my own identity. In this condition, I perceive things very clearly and am able to require information almost by a process of osmosis. I find myself, at these times, with knowledge that comes directly from being part of something very much larger, a sort of global ecology of mind. And the experience of it is literally wonderful. [36]

Watson implies that if we want to know the One Mind—*our* Mind—we may discover it by going, with St. Francis, through nature.

If we find the idea of the unbounded, One Mind foreign, the reason may be that we have gradually lost our connection with the natural world. As a consequence, our world is now gravely imperiled by our mindlessness, our loss of Mind, our lack of sensitivity to the whole. For loss of sanity, loss of Mind,