



Mental Zoo: Animals in the Human Mind and its Pathology

Salman Akhtar

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'Salman Akhtar and Vamik Volkan's dynamic book, Mental Zoo, takes the reader on a panoramic tour illuminating the rich world of animals in human experience. Here Freud's rats, wolves, and horses join our own cats and dogs to meet snakes, spiders, birds, and cockroaches. With an engaging blend of whimsy and erudition, the contributors describe the feelings, fantasies, dreams, nightmares, and delusions that animals evoke in us all. Detailed clinical examples capture the richness of the intrapsychic and interpersonal places that animals inhabit in our psyches. The book encompasses the role of animals not only in normal development and psychopathology, but also in history and mythology. Mental health professionals will listen to their patients with new sensitivities after Mental Zoo introduces them to this fascinating menagerie.'- Alex Hoffer, MD, Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, Training and Supervising Analyst, Psychoanalytic Institute of New England'This book, a psychoanalytic study of the role played by animals in the human mind, is a huge contribution to the understanding of a segment of mental life never before studied in such depth and focus. The results are spectacular. The subject matter, besides being immensely informative, is riveting. From the very dedication, in which the two editors remember their respective family's menagerie, including, a cat, dog, horse, cow, donkey, python, and pet tiger, it is apparent how much each author approaches his subject with reverence, awe, and love. This book, besides deepening the psychoanalytic situation, extends applied analysis to another level, from the inanimate to man's next of kin. The spectrum of animals studied, from rats to horses, dogs, cats and wolves, to birds, snakes, spiders and insects, is dazzling, provocative, and always thought-provoking. It is psychoanalytic, with each animal viewed from philia to phobia, from unconscious to conscious effects, thorough at every level. Each contribution resounds with its relevance to clinical work and to everyday observations. The scholarship is historical, prehistorical, even paleontological, and ranges over myths, religious worship, rituals, language, folklore, symbols, art, and always clinical data, from Freud's to our own with a special bounty to dreams and nightmares. Several of the chapters will be classics. The book as a whole is more than a compendium; it is an encyclopedia.'- Leo Rangell, MD, (1913-2011) psychoanalyst and clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California



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