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Human beings have long imagined their subjectivity, ethics, and ancestry with and through animals, yet not until the mid-twentieth century did contemporary thought reflect critically on animals' significance in human self-conception.

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Animals and the Human Imagination by Wendy Doniger, 9780231152976, available at Book Depository with free delivery worldwide.

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The beauty of the pre-Hindu and Hindu mythology is that it confers divine status on the animals themselves—Kurma the tortoise, Matsya the fish, Garuda the eagle, Jambavan the bear, Kamadhenu the cow (who in later mythology is given a human head, body of a cow, and the wings and tail of a peacock), Nagas like Sesha who can change into humans at will like Balrama.

Animals and the human imagination - The Kathmandu Post

How can literary imagination help us engage with the lives of other animals? The question represents one of the liveliest areas of inquiry in the humanities, and Mark Payne seeks to answer it by exploring the relationship between human beings and other animals in writings from antiquity to the present.

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Human beings have long imagined their subjectivity, ethics, and ancestry with and through animals, yet not until the mid-twentieth century did contemporary thought reflect critically on animals' significance in human self-conception. Thinkers such as French philosopher Jacques Derrida, South African novelist J. M. Coetzee, and American theorist Donna Haraway have initiated rigorous inquiries ...

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Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal ...

Historical background Earliest inferences. The mind and behavior of non-human animals has captivated human imagination for centuries. Many writers, such as Descartes, have speculated about the presence or absence of the animal mind. These speculations led to many observations of animal behavior before modern science and testing were available.

This interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collection reflects the growth of animal studies as an independent field and the rise of 'animality' as a critical lens through which to analyze society and culture, on par with race and gender.

This book explores the phenomenon of animal imagination and its profound power over the human imagination. It examines the structural and ethical role that the human imagination must play to provide an interface between humans' subjectivity and the real cognitive capacities of animals. The book offers a systematic study of the increasing importance of the metaphors, the virtual, and figures in contemporary animal studies. It explores human-animal and real-imaginary dichotomies, revealing them to be the source of oppressive cultural structures. Through an analysis of creative, playful and theatric enactments and mimicry of animal behaviors and communication, the book establishes that human imagination is based on animal imagination. This helps redefine our traditional knowledge about animals and presents new practices and ethical concerns in regard to the animals. The book strongly contends that allowing imagination to play a role in our relation to animals will lead to the development of a more empathetic approach towards them. Drawing on works in phenomenology, contemporary animal philosophy, as well as ethological evidence and biosemiotics, this book is the first to rethink the traditional philosophical concepts of imagination, images, the imaginary, and reality in the light of a zoocentric perspective. It will appeal to philosophers, scholars and students in the field of animal studies, as well as anyone interested in human and non-human imaginations.

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How can literary imagination help us engage with the lives of other animals? The question represents one of the liveliest areas of inquiry in the humanities, and Mark Payne seeks to answer it by exploring the relationship between human beings and other animals in writings from antiquity to the present. Ranging from ancient Greek poets to modernists like Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, Payne considers how writers have used verse to communicate the experience of animal suffering, created analogies between human and animal societies, and imagined the kind of knowledge that would be possible if human beings could see themselves as animals see them. The Animal Part also makes substantial contributions to the emerging discourse of the posthumanities. Payne offers detailed accounts of the tenuousness of the idea of the human in ancient literature and philosophy and then goes on to argue that close reading must remain a central practice of literary study if posthumanism is to articulate its own prehistory. For it is only through fine-grained literary interpretation that we can recover the poetic thinking about animals that has always existed alongside philosophical constructions of the human. In sum, The Animal Part marks a breakthrough in animal studies and offers a significant contribution to comparative poetics.

There exists an undeniable chasm between the capacities of humans and those of animals. Our minds have spawned civilizations and technologies that have changed the face of the Earth, whereas even our closest animal relatives sit unobtrusively in their dwindling habitats. Yet despite longstanding debates, the nature of this apparent gap has remained unclear. What exactly is the difference between our minds and theirs? In *The Gap*, psychologist Thomas Suddendorf provides a definitive account of the mental qualities that separate humans from other animals, as well as how these differences arose. Drawing on two decades of research on apes, children, and human evolution, he surveys the abilities most often cited as uniquely human -- language, intelligence, morality, culture, theory of mind, and mental time travel -- and finds that two traits account for most of the ways in which our minds appear so distinct: Namely, our open-ended ability to imagine and reflect on scenarios, and our insatiable drive to link our minds together. These two traits explain how our species was able to amplify qualities that we inherited in parallel with our animal counterparts; transforming animal communication into language, memory into mental time travel, sociality into mind reading, problem solving into abstract reasoning, traditions into culture, and empathy into morality. Suddendorf concludes with the provocative suggestion that our unrivalled status may be our own creation -- and that the gap is growing wider not so much because we are becoming smarter but because we are killing off our closest intelligent animal relatives. Weaving together the latest findings in animal behavior, child development, anthropology, psychology, and neuroscience, this book will change the way we think about our place in nature. A major argument for reconsidering what makes us human, *The Gap* is essential reading for anyone interested in our evolutionary origins and our relationship with the rest of the animal kingdom.

It is well known that children's activities are full of pretending and imagination, but it is less appreciated that animals can also show similar activities. Originally published in 2002, this book focuses on comparing and contrasting children's and animals' pretenses and imaginative activities. In the text, overviews of research present conflicting interpretations of children's understanding of the psychology of pretense, and describe sociocultural factors which influence children's pretenses. Studies of nonhuman primates provide examples of their pretenses and other simulative activities, explore their representational and imaginative capacities and compare their skills with children. Although the psychological requirements for pretending are controversial, evidence presented in this volume suggests that great apes and even monkeys may share capacities for imagination with children, and that children's early pretenses may be less psychological than they appear.

In this illuminating and evocative exploration of the origin and function of storytelling, the author goes beyond the work of mythologist Joseph Campbell, arguing that mythmaking evolved as a cultural survival strategy for coping with the constant fear of being killed and eaten by predators. Beginning nearly two million years ago in the Pleistocene era, the first stories, Trout argues, functioned as alarm calls, warning fellow group members about the carnivores lurking in the surroundings. At the earliest period, before the development of language, these rudimentary "stories" would have been acted out. When language appeared with the evolution of the ancestral human brain, stories were recited, memorized, and much later written down as the often bone-chilling myths that have survived to this day. This book takes the reader through the landscape of world mythology to show how our more recent ancestors created myths that portrayed animal predators in four basic ways: as monsters, as gods, as benefactors, and as role models. Each incarnation is a variation of the fear-management technique that enabled early humans not only to survive but to overcome their potentially incapacitating fear of predators. In the final chapter, Trout explores the ways in which our visceral fear of predators is played out in the movies, where both animal and human predators serve to probe and revitalize our capacity to detect and survive danger. Anyone with an interest in mythology, archaeology, folk tales, and the origins of contemporary storytelling will find this book an exciting and provocative exploration into the natural and psychological forces that shaped human culture and gave rise to storytelling and mythmaking.

"Beautifully written essays" on animals, "the real and mythological, the ordinary and the exotic, the wild and the domesticated" (Publishers Weekly). Humans were surrounded by other animals from the beginning of time: they were food, clothes, adversaries, companions, jokes, and gods. And yet, our companions in evolution are leaving the world--both as physical beings and spiritual symbols--and not returning. In this collection of linked essays, Alison Hawthorne Deming examines what the disappearance of animals means for human imagination and existence. Moving from mammoth hunts to dying house cats, she explores profound questions about what it means to be animal. What is inherent in animals that both leads us to destroy and leads us toward peace? As human animals, how does art both define us as a species and how does it emerge primarily from our relationship with other species? The reader emerges with a transformed sense of how the living world around us has defined and continues to define us in a powerful way. "Beautifully written essays on animal and human behavior and biology . . . highly recommended for lovers of words and nature." --Publishers Weekly "Human beings live in an age in which industrialization and mass extinction are facts of life. But as Deming suggests in this collection, the more people denude the planet of animals, the more diminished they become in spirit . . . Eloquent, sensitive and astute." --Kirkus Reviews "Serpentine intellect and wry humor." --Booklist

The Imagination Gap helps leaders in every sector apply their imagination effectively to explore new, creative approaches to survive and thrive. Examples from a range of industries and settings, from Broadway to Silicon Valley, with simple steps and exercises, help you stop thinking the way you "should" and start making extraordinary things happen.

Unfortunate Destiny focuses on the roles played by nonhuman animals within the imaginative thought-world of Indian Buddhism, as reflected in pre-modern South Asian Buddhist literature. These roles are multifaceted, diverse, and often contradictory: In Buddhist doctrine and cosmology, the animal rebirth is a most "unfortunate destiny" (durgati), won through negative karma and characterized by a lack of intelligence, moral agency, and spiritual potential. In stories about the Buddha's previous lives, on the other hand, we find highly anthropomorphized animals who are wise, virtuous, endowed with human speech, and often critical of the moral shortcomings of humankind. In the life-story of the Buddha, certain animal characters serve as "doubles" of the Buddha, illuminating his nature through identification, contrast or parallelism with an animal "other." Relations between human beings and animals likewise range all the way from support, friendship, and near-equality to rampant exploitation, cruelty, and abuse. Perhaps the only commonality among these various strands of thought is a persistent impulse to use animals to clarify the nature of humanity itself--whether through similarity, contrast, or counterpoint. Buddhism is a profoundly human-centered religious tradition, yet it relies upon a dexterous use of the animal other to help clarify the human self. This book seeks to make sense of this process through a wide-ranging-exploration of animal imagery, animal discourse, and specific animal characters in South Asian Buddhist texts.

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