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If Dogs Could Talk: Exploring the Canine Mind

Vilmos Csanyi

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If Dogs Could Talk: Exploring the Canine Mind Vilmos Csanyi
Every dog owner knows intuitively that there's something special about the high degree of mutual understanding and empathy that exists between humans and their proverbial best friends. Now, an internationally renowned Hungarian ethologist (a specialist in the scientific study of animal behavior) traces the roots of this unique relationship back to the unusual circumstances in which the two species co-evolved over many millennia.

Drawing in part on close observations of his own two pet dogs, Flip and Jerry, the author argues that the longstanding alliance of dogs and humans arose from behavioral traits present in the original wolves from which all modern dogs are descended. Wolves, like humans, are highly intelligent social predators, with well-developed cooperative problem-solving and communications skills, giving them distinct advantages in their developing relations with humans. These basic intellectual skills were refined and enhanced over tens of thousands of years, resulting in the enormously varied "artificial animals" we see today.

Although the book's specific focus is on dogs, it ranges far afield to discuss in an easy-going, accessible style recent experimental and theoretical work on the behavior of other animals, and especially on their interactions with humans. A highly personal work, *If Dogs Could Talk* makes the case that the social and emotional bonds between dogs and humans are indeed special, and that they ought to form the basis for our treatment of dogs. Moreover, the author concludes, by closely observing the cognitive behavior of dogs, we can also learn a good deal about how the human mind works.

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