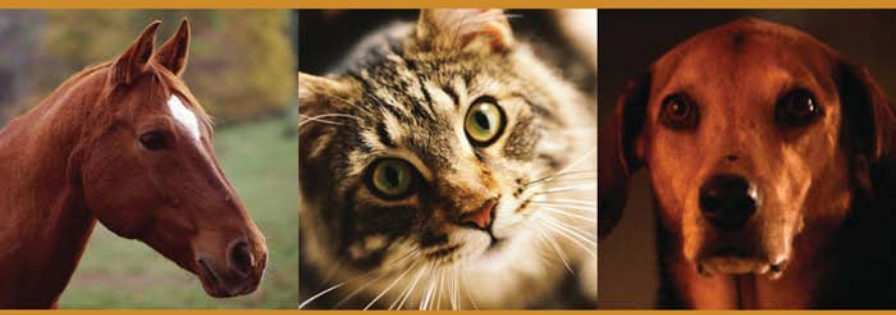
Adam's Task

CALLING ANIMALS BY NAME



VICKI HEARNE
Introduction by Donald McCaig

"When Ms. Hearne relates a dog or horse story, the animals become full-fledged characters, as brightly delineated as people created by Dickens or Twain"—*The New York Times*

Adam's Task

ALSO BY VICKI HEARNE

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Animal Happiness

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ADAM'S TASK

Calling Animals by Name

Vicki Hearne

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FOR DICK KOEHLER

who taught me how to say "Fetch!"

and in memory of Bill Koehler

Contents

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

Genesis 2:19

What will complete the human work is, however, not one other but only all others.

STANLEY CAVELL, The Claim of Reason

Introduction

There are many good books; thrilling books are rare. In 1986, when I happened across Vicki Hearne's essay "Crazy Horses" in *The New Yorker*, I felt like some homesick exile startled by a voice singing brilliantly in my native tongue. I read Vicki's essay phrase by phrase, let her phrases flow into her sentences and then, long before Vicki concluded, I returned to the beginning to start reading afresh. This is not because Vicki Hearne is difficult—though she insists that you pay close attention—but because I didn't want her story to ever end. "Crazy Horses" is one chapter in *Adam's Task*, a book which is certainly the finest philosophical animal study of our generation, and I am beginning to think the best of the twentieth century.

Let me backtrack to 1986. I was and am a sheepdog trainer. I believe that training any dog to anything like his full capacity is an intricate, heartfelt, deeply intellectual undertaking which deepens the trainer's soul as surely as it satisfies the dog's. The conversation between trainer and dog is so subtle, dense, and satisfying that I have known great trainers whose ordinary human speech has atrophied. These brilliant linguists cannot explain what they do, and often cannot answer novice's questions because asking that particular question means the questioner can't understand a true answer.

When *Adam's Task* was published, our national dog discourse—apart from the exemplars and anecdotes working trainers tell each other—was dominated by behaviorists whose claims to understand mammalian learning were couched in language so ugly it makes my eyes water; ethnologists asserting that since dogs are descended from

wolves, one can best study dogs by studying wolves, although they do wonder why—since the wolf is altogether a better character—anyone would want to study dogs in the first place; Cartesian zoologists with their radical disdain for objects of their study and animal rights pioneers, like Dr. Peter Singer, who, having confessed that he didn't know much about particular animals and wasn't especially fond of them, proceeded to develop complex theories of how we should interact with them.

Adam's Task came into this linguistic briar patch with the aplomb of a D-8 Cat. What Vicki did—and this is her great achievement—was translate the conversation great trainers have with great dogs and horses into language all of us can understand. She brought three extreme vocations to *Adam's Task*: philosopher, poet and animal trainer. Elsewhere Vicki has written that she is proudest of the last. That surprising revelation tells us much, I think, about her seriousness.

The first readers to respond strongly to *Adam's Task* were eminent academic philosophers who loved her reasoning and were fascinated by the unusual subject that summoned it and workaday trainers who read the book for the stories of great dogs and great horses. *Adam's Task* made others mad as hell. Animal rights aficionados couldn't decide whether it would be better to simply denounce Vicki or co-opt her as "an animal rightist herself —if she'd only admit it!" Dog fanciers (dog show people) whose arcane lingo obscures and excludes these sparks found Vicki's pellucid prose "difficult" and her democratic spirit profoundly unsettling.

Years later, the debate roars on. Behaviorist training books still begin with impassioned defenses of the "misunderstood" B.F. Skinner, and dog fanciers natter on. But Vicki's thinking has profoundly and permanently altered the debate. *Adam's Task* is the intellectual foundation of how we are beginning to look at "domestic" animals—a looking which unconceals our mutual involvement, allows them and us our creaturely opacities, acuities and dignities.

I don't know how many times I've read *Adam's Task*. I do know that like all great books it speaks to me afresh and differently at each reading.

As I write this, I'm training two Border Collies for sheepdog trials and starting a three-year-old who has been a difficult family pet because her heart is too great for petdom. I tell her she can no longer employ the silly stratagems that have filled her empty hours, but to replace them I will show her a new coherence, the coherence for which she yearns. She hopes to do right, and her trust that I can help her find that coherence is her most poignant appeal. Without her hopes I could do nothing.

Failing that hope, or betraying it, is every trainer's greatest fear—to fail to bring this dog into coherence is to fail her soul and sully mine. Because dog training is such a peculiarly intellectual, spiritual endeavor, my preparation for a training session might include reading poetry or the psalms. Recently I've been rereading *Adam's Task*—it's a terrific mindset to bring to the training field where a young dog will shortly demand of you all you have. For the sheepdog trainer, at least, theoretical philosophy is a very practical discipline. Someone once asked the great sheepdog trainer, J.M. Wilson, if she should talk to her dogs. "Of course you should talk to your dogs, madam," Wilson replied, somewhat testily. "But you must talk sense."

In *Adam's Task*, Vicki Hearne teaches us how to talk sense.

—Donald McCaig
Yucatec Farm
Williamsville, Virginia

Preface to the 1994 Edition

In 1993 *Time* magazine announced that anthropomorphism is no longer a sin, that it's okay now to say that animals think, hope, are puzzled, have expectations, are disappointed, even, for some, make their own little plans in a time scheme of their own. That has happened since this book came out. Also, there have been a few wonderful books published—McCaig's work on Border Collies, Diana Cooper's *Night After Night* (about the Big Apple Circus), and something that marks a major moment, or discovery, of a possibly grown-up consciousness of animals, John Hollander's anthology, *The Naming and Blaming of Cats.* The idea of relationships between people and animals as a potential goldmine of speculation, indeed, of forms of life, is no longer so disreputable as when I was struggling for the understanding that became this book.

This cheers me. Even time cheers me. It is something, at nearing fifty, to find myself accompanied in what was, when I was groping toward it in the seventies and eighties, an eccentric, crank project—finding a language with which to reveal some of what seemed to me to be so crucial to the fact that good trainers, the ones whose animals are so confident and convincing at their work, are precisely the ones whose ways of talking violate the received precepts of religion and science. (They do this even when they also have the habit, when, as it were, wearing their Sunday best, of dutifully mouthing behaviorist, or, earlier, Catholic strictures.)

Yet there are a couple of things emerging from the eighties

that disquiet me. One is, in a way, trivial in this context, because it is merely a fact of history. That is the anti-dog movement, and the policing activities that go with it, which have become ferocious. The most visible aspect of this movement was expressed in the media as countless stories about how "vicious" pit bulls and other breeds are. Less visible is the fact that it is open season on dogs in general, and this phenomenon was sponsored and buttressed by anti-pit bull propaganda *coming from major humane organizations*. Hence, Britain has its Dangerous Dog Act, with the consequence that a lot of people don't celebrate Christmas anymore. As I write this, there is before the Connecticut legislature, and no doubt others, a Dangerous Animal Act that will make some of the mildest critters I know illegal in this state. Why this should be, why the rise of the animal rights movement and an increased interest in "humane" and "not for profit" activities should coincide with, and at times be indistinguishable from, relentless enforcement activities targeting dogs, is a topic for scholarship. All I want to note is that there is an enormous flow of mostly unexamined superstition about animals in this culture, that the twin images of the ferocious beast and the gentle, loving, free, or frolicsome creature are, if anything, more pervasive and influential than they were when I wrote this book.

Disturbing also is the divorce between training and the "new" behaviorists. It's disturbing in part because it means that there are dogs out there on drugs that needn't be, that could be dancing instead. It's mainly disturbing as evidence of the implacable distance that remains between various forms of knowledge. By the "new" behaviorism, I mean that board-certifiable specialty that has appeared in the veterinary profession. A lot of drugs are prescribed; this makes news because the drugs are L-Trytophan, Librium, Prozac—human drugs. This does not mean that animals are almost human, however, but rather that we are learning new dosages. When drugs are not prescribed, lower "octane" dog foods are, and spaying and neutering.

A friend's brother-in-law, a veterinarian, welcomes the new movement because he doesn't like putting healthy animals down for behavior problems (at the owner's request) and so is glad to be able to give them a pill instead. Since drugs of one sort or another

are often a blessing, a momentary reversal of the Fall, this is not necessarily to be deplored, but it seems something of a shame anyhow, that the knowledge of dogs and of training doesn't—no, can't—make it over college walls. There is, despite the regular appearance in the *American Kennel Club Gazette* of a column by a "behaviorist," no genuine exchange between training and the academy. This is in part a function of the fact that trainers and veterinarians are now in competition for the same market, or in some cases think they are, so they fall to quarreling—at least the behaviorists fall to quarreling with some trainers. (Many trainers welcome the behaviorist move out of, I suspect, a willingness to deny the heart of what they are doing with their dogs.)

If you are willing to say that trainers have knowledge (tough for some scientists and philosophers), and that the scientists and even the new behaviorists have some sort of knowledge (that is tough for some trainers to acknowledge), then it looks as though they have knowledge of the "same thing"—that is, the behavior of animals, especially domestic animals. This is not so, no more so than it was when I was writing this book. The philosopher Stanley Cavell says that everyone turns from the world to a world; we are all, then, making reports from the field, and there are different fields. If a very serious dog and a very serious handler are lucky enough to walk into a serious world together, then there is, say, no biting problem. In a different world with a different handler, that's a different dog, and someone has to haul out either some doggie Prozac or the sodium phenobarbital.

A world. I can no more explain to most sheepdog handlers why I persist in obedience training Airedales, when I own a Border Collie, than I can answer the man at dinner who has never had an animal and wants to know why I train. This most obdurate of facts about human and animal existence, that we all occupy niches, say, is not to be altered by any wind of intellectual fashion: it will continue to take genius to acknowledge, well, not THE world, perhaps, but that there is THE world, which is to say, worlds beyond one's ken. Skepticism about animal minds is a kind of panic, whether the authority endorses or refutes anthropomorphism on the one hand, mechanomorphism on the other.

A major issue in this book is authority. Where does it come

from, besides our chimplike impulses? who has the right to command whom? and so on. Since I wrote, "We can command, follow, only whom and what we can obey," meaning only whom and what we can hear, respond to, I have been engaged in some pretty active and sometimes hazardous battles, in court, in the media, and elsewhere, in defense of dogs and people of one description or another. If I were rewriting the chapter "How to Say 'Fetch!'" that closes with the sentence I here quote about commanding, following, I might add the word "coherently" after "can." We can coherently command, follow, only whom and what we can coherently obey. This is not to say that force and guile do not produce many grotesque parodies of the relationship of mutual respect and autonomy I am envisaging—only that to the extent that we command what we cannot obey, we are engaged in force and guile, not genuine authority. Such engagements are inevitable, in the related but different ways death and taxes are; to say this is not to gainsay the possibility of coherence, only to say that it is temporal. This book is not about what a good thing authority is, but about the taint in our authority.

On the whole, even though I have learned things in the last ten years, I still believe this book.

Adam's Task

1

By Way of Explanation

The impulse behind this book is specifically philosophical, which is a way of saying that the circumstances of my life have been such that it mattered enormously to me to find an accurate way of talking about our relationships with domestic animals. It mattered to me as a dog and horse trainer for what I hope are obvious reasons. When you are incoherent in your notions about an animal you are working with, things do not go so well with the animal, and an animal trainer is a person who can't help but be uneasy about such a state of affairs, whether or not s/he has the linguistic wherewithal to articulate the problem and the solution properly.

If I had remained firmly within the worlds of discourse provided by the stable and the kennel, I might have been content, not because there is no philosophy in those worlds, but because there is such a rich and ever-changing web of philosophies when good trainers talk and write. These philosophies remember and speak to their sources in the thought of the past and are, unlike the general run of philosophies, continually tested and either reaffirmed or revised, since the world of the genuinely good dog or horse trainer is one in which reality is quite clearly, as Wallace Stevens had it, "an activity of the most august imagination."

However, my temperament regularly led me away from the kennel and tack room to university libraries and cafeterias,

laboratories and classrooms. The result was that for some years I uneasily inhabited at least two completely different worlds of discourse, each using a group of languages that were intertranslatable—dog trainers can talk to horse trainers, and philosophers can talk to linguists and psychologists, but dog trainers and philosophers can't make much sense of each other. (Philosophers and linguists may have sometimes thought that they found each other incomprehensible, but their quarrels were usually about the interior decoration of the house of intellect and not about fundamental structural principles.) Because I had learned to talk, more or less, in both worlds, I was intensely alert to the implications of Wittgenstein's remark, "To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life."

Here is as good a place as any to speak of the example that most clearly indicates the problem I set out to deal with. In Germany there was once a cart horse named Hans, owned by one Herr von Osten. Hans had to back the cart he pulled in a circular drive, and his skill at doing this, the story goes, so impressed von Osten that he decided that horses in general and Hans in particular must be smarter than generally supposed. Von Osten began doing various things with Hans, teaching him to respond to questions either by tapping with a hoof a certain number of times or else by indicating one of a number of blocks on which the alphabet was written.

Hans was a good learner, and in time philosophers, linguists and psychologists from all over came to test his acumen. It turned out that Hans could not answer questions if he could not see the person asking him. It turned out further that if the questioner was in sight, Hans could always find out what the questioner thought was the correct answer, no matter how hard the questioner worked at remaining still and impassive. Hans apparently read minute changes in breathing, angles of the eyebrows, etc., with an accuracy we have trouble imagining.

This led to von Osten's being denounced as a fraud, and he seems to have died an unhappy man, not so much on his own account as on that of the horse in whom he so deeply believed. And there has now come to be a technical term in academic studies of animal psychology, the "Clever Hans fal-

lacy." This is the fallacy of supposing that an animal "really" understands words or symbols when what the animal is doing is "merely" reading body language. In the literature, this notion is used to discredit virtually anyone who disagrees with the writer in question as either a fraud and a charlatan or else as just plain credulous and stupid. There is an unhealthy air of triumph in the rhythms of the prose of the people who do this discrediting, and I have found myself moved to wonder why, if the trainers and thinkers who believe that Hans illustrates something more important are so discountable, they must be so often attacked.

I told a friend of mine, the poet Josephine Miles, the story of Clever Hans. She said, in response to finding out that the humans couldn't conceal from Hans what counted as the correct answer, "But isn't that interesting!" One of the points of this book is to say, "Yes, Jo, that is interesting." She is now dead, so I can't say it to her, but I can say that she would probably want me to explain that, of course, when I here and throughout the book take swipes of one sort and another at academic thinking, they are lover's complaints—if I didn't love the worlds of discourse we call intellectual and academic, I wouldn't care if things went well there or not.

One of the worlds I lived in when I first set out to address this problem was the animal trainer's world—the trainer of domestic animals primarily, although that world is not to be located by the boundaries of kennels, racetracks, horse-show grounds or obedience trials. The other world was the world of the intellectual, especially the academic or full-time intellectual, though it is not strictly bounded by the walls of either university or editorial offices.

What happened was that in the mornings I would get up just before dawn and work my horses. Generally I had finished with most or all of them (it depended on how business was going or whether certain horses were giving me trouble) by noon, so I would shower and go over to the local university. There were a couple of people there I liked to meet and talk with over lunch, and I also liked to prowl around in the library and either take courses in or just hang around courses in phi-

losophy, psychology, zoology and linguistics. I had been bitten in my childhood by a passion for books, especially books that were, as a recent novel has it, "hard to read, books that could devastate and transform your soul, and that had a kick like a mule when you were finished with them." There were as many glittering and lovely creatures in those books and in the conversations of people who cared about them as there were in the kennel and the stable.

But despite their many beauties, most of the philosophers and their associates in the libraries, and all but two or three of the people at lunch, were profoundly disappointing, not in and of themselves, but in terms of my passion for a language with sufficient philosophical reach to tell me what I wanted to know about the stable and the kennel. And there was a great deal that tended to cause me to lose my temper, such as the enormous amount of time that was spent in "curing" students and others of saying precisely the sort of thing I wanted to say vigorously and significantly about animals.

One thing that preoccupied me was the trainers' habit of talking in highly anthropomorphic, morally loaded language. That was the language I wanted to understand because it seemed to me after a while that it was part of what enabled the good trainers to do so much more than the academic psychologists could in the way of eliciting interesting behavior from animals. Trainers, for example, have no hesitation in talking about how much a mare loves or worries about her foal, a cat her kittens or a dog or a horse their work. But for philosophers and psychologists to speak of love was to invoke abilities that are, for reasons I am still not clear about, as rigidly restricted to *Homo sapiens* as some religious doctrines have restricted the possession of a soul to members of certain races, cultures and sometimes genders.

In any event, the talk I heard was of no help in enabling me even to figure out what my project was, though I knew a lot after a while about what it wasn't. It wasn't behaviorism, it wasn't ordinary-language philosophy and it wasn't classical quantificational logic. Nonetheless, I saw many interesting things along the way. A student giving a paper on post-par-

turition behavior in cats would inadvertently attribute to the mother cat a mental state, such as caring about her kittens. The student would be corrected and would learn in time to deliver solemnly quantified reports on the amount of licking behavior, suckling behavior and so on that was "exhibited" by the queens. I wondered about that word "exhibited." Exhibited to whom? The researchers? The kittens? I also wondered about the intellectual and spiritual futures of students so carefully instructed in the terrible grammar such ways of talking entailed.

Another habit that students had, curiously, to be cured of was the habit of supposing that one animal might hide from another animal. (I have never known a hunter to be successfully cured of this habit of mind.) I was deeply intrigued by this, for what in the world was the puppy doing under the bed when you returned home to find an unwelcome monument on the broadloom, if not hiding? But it was sternly pointed out to me what a great and anthropomorphic mistake it was to say or think this. In order to be hiding, whether from predators or from the vexed owner of the carpet, a creature would have to have certain logical concepts that animals simply couldn't have. I remember one careful exposition on the subject of octopuses, who will, in laboratory situations, hide behind glass in plain sight of predators. A number of things struck me about that seminar. One was the way the scientists cheerfully applied interpretations of the behavior of octopuses to the behavior of gazelles and St. Bernard puppies which seemed to me to demonstrate insufficient respect for the individuality of octopuses. Another was the indifference of the researchers to questions about the importance of vision for octopuses and their predators, and yet another set of considerations had to do with my reflecting that in the same position I would probably do the same thing, either out of mindless habit or because in the tanks in the laboratories there wasn't anything else but the glass to get behind.

But in order to hide, it was carefully explained, one had to have a concept of self. Not only that, one had to have the concept of self given by the ability to speak academic language, or at least a standard human language—a concept of self that depends on the ability to think. And, as one philosopher in-

formed me unequivocally, any sort of thinking requires "first order logical quantification theory." Since I myself didn't seem, on investigation, to be using FOQ, I couldn't make much of this.

Since those days, certain conceptually laborious and interesting experiments involving gorillas and mirrors have weakened the more rigid of the foundations of some of these cognitive allegories, but there is still little help from science. The work with gorillas seems to establish that gorillas share with human beings a tendency, which Aristotle notes in the opening pages of the *Metaphysics* and which Plato worked into his parable of horse and rider, to rely on vision. Dogs and wolves and other animals, by contrast, distinguish themselves from other individuals, and friends from foes, by scent markers. I don't know why one can't speak, at least tentatively and for the sake of philosophical speculation, of a wolf's territorial markings as being a series of scent mirrors, or, as fiction often has it, signatures, and argue from that to a concept of self. But I learned early on to be cautious about saying this sort of thing, and I said less and less as time went on, except to the two or three friends who were patient with my ramblings. My passion to find a way to write about the language of people who actually work interestingly with animals increased, however.

After trying to talk, I would leave the university in the middle or late afternoons to work with a dog or so and any horses that had been left out of the morning schedule. Here, in the various training arenas, the discourse was radically different. It was, as I have said, anthropomorphic, "morally loaded," as it has always been in the great training manuals. By this I mean that implicit as well as explicit in the trainers' language is the notion that animals are capable not only of activities requiring "IQ"—a rather arid conception—but also of a complex and delicate (though not infallible) moral understanding that is so inextricably a function of their relationships with human beings that it may well be said to constitute those relationships.*

*By "moral understanding" I mean that as far as a trainer is concerned, a dog is perfectly capable of understanding that he ought not to pee on the bedpost

Xenophon speaks of horses "greatly appreciating" certain "courtesies," and, to the irritation of a more or less scientifically minded translator, of the "cunning" of certain hunting dogs in leading other dogs off the trail of a rabbit by barking or baying falsely. The editor and translator in question appends a footnote in which he indulgently explains and apologizes for Xenophon's naive little slip here in attributing such a degree of intellectual capacity for misdirection to a mere (helplessly sincere) animal. When I showed that passage to a friend of mine who is fond of fox hunting, he remarked rather gloomily, "I believe I know that darned hound!"

Xenophon wrote quite some time ago, but his notions and something like his language continue to echo in modern training, albeit revised, here and there expanded, here and there muted, as well as from time to time severely reduced. Trainers still speak of whether or not a horse is "mean," "sneaky," "kind" or "honest" and vary their approaches to situations accordingly, sometimes saying, "Hey! You've got to come down on that dog hard and fast and right now—that's a real hood." Or "Relax, there isn't a tricky bone in that horse's body; he'll take care of you." Or "Don't worry, he'll come around okay, he's no real criminal, just a juvenile delinquent." Or, in appreciative awe, "Look at that dog work. She knows her job, doesn't she?" Or, as a general principle of training, "But first and above all, the horse's *understanding* must be developed." Or "If you want to know where the track is, *ask your dog!*"

There seems to me to be something terribly important about this language and what it implies, partly of course because it is a language I myself speak, but also, as I began in time to notice in more and more detail, because one can *do* so much more with the trainers' language, despite the fact that in the mid to late twentieth century it sounds as it has for some time—at best naive and at worst offensive, somewhat in the way that *Huckleberry Finn* has sounded offensive to some. In the past, attempts

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even though he might want to. Characterizing the dog's own formulations of this understanding is a separate matter. To say what I've just said is, of course, to make a claim about the nature of moral understanding.

to speak in the way I have in mind have been regarded as heretical as well as intellectually unsound. And the agitation expressed by some writers and thinkers in the face of the trainers' persistence in talking the way they do, as well as the uneasiness some trainers express in response to their awareness of the possibility of that agitation, and the attempts in the introductory portions of some training manuals to placate that agitation, suggest that modern injunctions against anthropomorphism have as much of a heretic-hounding impulse behind them as any of the older ones. When, for example, I gave a portion of the chapter "Tracking Dogs, Sensitive Horses and the Traces of Speech" as a talk at the New York Institute for the Humanities, one person in the audience said that what I was saying sounded a little, well, religious. I patiently worked at finding out what she meant by religious, and it turned out that she meant "anthropomorphic." I said, "Oh, yes indeed, that's the whole point of this project!" She wondered aloud if I should be allowed to teach in a university, and at a later talk, when I found myself seated next to her by accident, she asked me to leave the room. The morally loaded language of William Koehler's stunningly fine training books have led to any number of court cases and to one case of the books having been banned, for a while at least, in Arizona.

In academic opinion, the trainers are, not to put too fine a point on it, intellectually disloyal. This would not in and of itself be worth more than a few paragraphs of social history if having something to say about what animals are like—about the problem of animal consciousness—were not so ubiquitous a way of providing a rhetorical and conceptual frame for investigations of human consciousness in all sorts of areas. Whatever the author in question thinks women are like, or blacks, or philosophers, or Jews, or Republicans, or Americans, or whatever category defines the "we" of a given discussion, it must first be made clear that the "we" is to be distinguished from the animals. It generally takes no more than a paragraph or so to characterize all of animate creation that is not the "we" at hand, or it did until lately. Now there are respectable tomes that attempt to prove that animals feel pain and that this has

consequences for human morality. And in response to this literature, usually called animal-rights literature, there are renewed versions of the claim that animals are absolutely different from the "we" at hand. When this enterprise began, I felt an upsurge of hope; surely a title such as *The Moral Status of Animals* would help me to expand my own project. It didn't, though, but there began to be, refreshingly, the occasional bit of common sense, as when Tom Regan points out that "if Professor Frey's dog is a normal dog, he will eat his lunch, and not his master."* This sort of thing was cheering, especially as philosophers like Frey are capable of quite extraordinary performances, such as the following:

> Now in the case of my dog, can anything like a ranking of rational desires be achieved?... When I put food before him, my dog eats it; when I throw the stick, he fetches it. Both he does unfailingly, unless he is distracted by some stronger impulse, such as, on occasion, sex; and in response to the question whether my dog desires or prefers eating to chasing sticks, I can only say he does both when the situations are to hand and no other impulse interferes. Several times, I have tried putting food before him and throwing a stick at the same time; each time he has sought neither the food nor the stick but stood looking at me.†

At first I thought this was some sort of irony, but it wasn't, it was just plain old lunacy and ignorance. Several of my friends, some of them philosophers and some of them dog trainers, refused to believe me when I told them about this and other passages in that book, and I had to show them the pages to maintain my credibility.

None of this had anything to do with the knowledge of training that I wanted to bring to bear on various questions, and the "new" philosophers of animal consciousness were no more interested in what the trainers had to say than more

*Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

†R. G. Frey, *Interests and Rights: The Case Against Animals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 137.

"traditional" writers had been. They found them just as vulgar and heretical as the logicians and the church fathers had, and they seemed even more aggressively unwilling to distinguish between boar hunting for sport, the greed that builds appalling feedlots for pigs and calves and high school dressage for horses.

The more of this sort of thing I became aware of, the more ill-tempered I got. In my ill temper I began to notice a lot of things that didn't quite amount to a philosophical ground for honoring the trainers' anthropomorphic language but that I took as license. I noticed that in obedience and riding classes, people with training in the behavioral sciences hadn't much chance of succeeding with their animals, and that the higher the degree held by the person, the worse the job of training was likely to be. And one of the reasons I was the audience for so many lectures on the wrongness of the trainers' way of thinking and talking was that the psychologists and philosophers had to bring their animals to me because they couldn't housebreak them, induce them to leave off chewing up the children or, in the case of horses, get them to cross the shadow of a pole laid on the ground. The trainers' dogs and horses, by contrast, would move with courage and determination over difficult tracks and obstacle courses.

The consequence of all of this was my being led to cast my intellectual, literary and moral lot with the trainers, even the sleaziest of them, despite my fondness for the wonderful creatures of philosophy and related disciplines. This didn't mean that as a thinker I was free from the intellectual tradition I inherited; like any other trainer of my time, I have been enriched and bruised by what I might call "scientomorphism," by which I mean Western faith in the beauties of doubt and refutation that is one of our central intellectual virtues. And it is, in its place, a virtue, but like any popular notion, it is rarely in its place and tends to run amok and lead to the curiously superstitious notion that to have no reason to believe a proposition is the same as having a reason to assert that the proposition is false.*

*I discuss this more fully on pages 98–100.

I should confess that doubt ran amok in my own case even after I had worn out a number of bridles and leashes, and that for a long time, even as I became cranky with the philosophers, I tended to think of the trainers as skillful perhaps but philosophically naive. I hadn't noticed that genuine mastery of anything entails sound philosophical thought of one sort or another. When, for example, I read in William Koehler's book on guard-dog training about the importance of being sure that your prospective protection dog has a well-developed sense of "responsibility," I tended privately and only semi-consciously to think it was a pity that he didn't know better than to use such a vocabulary in relationship to animals. I managed to think that even though I already knew him to be one of the greatest animal teachers the world has ever known.*

It was not, finally, the trainers who showed me the necessity of believing them, but a dog and, later, a horse. In this my story is a common one. Alois Podhajsky, the famous trainer of the Lipizzaner Stallions at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, calls his autobiographical book *My Horses, My Teachers*, the true title of the autobiography of virtually every horse trainer who ever lived.

The dog who forced me to notice what was going on was an Airedale Terrier named Gunner. I was working him on a scent problem, having him follow a track laid by my seven-year-old daughter Colleen. As I work on tracking, the dog is taught not only to follow a scent but to retrieve objects dropped by the track layer. The track was plainly marked for me, since there was still dew on the ground and Colleen's footsteps showed clearly. Furthermore, I knew where the track "had" to end, since Colleen had been picked up in a car and driven away after dropping the last glove. I knew that she hadn't been in the area the track was laid in for a week, so there was no

*He was, for example, for years head animal trainer at Walt Disney Studios, a genius at training scout dogs, war dogs and police dogs, and the author of the best-selling dog-training book of all time, *The Koehler Method of Dog Training* (New York: Howell Books, 1964). His son, Dick Koehler, is at least as fine a trainer as his father and the finest teacher of anything I have ever known.

problem about a confusion of trails. Suddenly Gunner abandoned the trail and began bounding to the left, toward some bushes about eighty-five feet away. I decided, as humans tend to, that I knew more than the dog about what was going on. I shouted angrily and tried to halt him with pressure on the harness, but he kept on merrily (he always looked merry), to my intense aggravation, and emerged from the bushes with a stuffed toy Colleen had been for some days mourning the loss of. It took me a decade to figure out how to talk about training in general and tracking in particular in a way that would make it clear why at such a moment my intellectual loyalties shifted, and how to tell other stories, especially a horse story, that would indicate *what the trainers have in mind* when they talk the way they do.* But the experience was an epiphany rather than a demonstration for me, the moment when, taking the stuffed toy from the joyous young Airedale, it dawned on me that people like Koehler use terms like "responsible" in relationship to animals because those are the terms that *make sense* of the situation.

I began realizing other things as well, such as that in the trainers' world different kinds of animals exist than the ones that I heard and read about in the university. For the trainer there are hot working Airedales, dutiful and reliable German Shepherds, horses with intense, fiery and competitive temperaments, other horses who are irredeemably dishonest. In the universities, there were more or less Cartesian creatures of uncertain pedigree, revised by uncertain interpreters of Freud and Jung, which may be why in the world of letters in general animals are invoked to mark "primitive" and usually unsavory impulses, while in the trainers' world they are more like characters in James Thurber, who insisted that dogs represent "intelligence and repose" in his work. The trainers' language was, if I could only unfold its story with the full acceptance of what Stanley Cavell has called "the daily burden of discourse," the right language, the philosophically responsible language.

*A version of the horse story I am thinking of is given on pages 117–21.

Knowing this was important to me. It enriched my work and conversation as a trainer, but it didn't enable me to tell anyone else much about what I was at last beginning to have a grasp of. There was no philosophical prose rhythm available for me to ring the right sort of changes on. I was able to sketch some of what I had in mind relatively soon in verse, but that was thanks to the virtues of poetry itself, which has wings and is good at dodging, able, to use Stephen Dedalus' phrase, to "fly by the nets" cast by the shadows of dark philosophies, ideologies and bad poems. I was also able to get some expression of the matter into fiction, at least to my own satisfaction, largely, perhaps, because philosophy tends to ignore fiction. But I wanted it to be *philosophy*, or something very like philosophy.

This was a terrific problem for me because argument was at the center of most of the philosophy I knew, and I didn't want to argue with anyone. Then two events occurred quite close together. One was the publication of Stanley Cavell's *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy*, which not only gave into my keeping certain philosophers and problems more securely than I had ever had them before, but also opened the possibility of a prose that was sufficiently subtle, muscular and accurate for me to ride in quest of the meanings I still needed to catch the meanings that eluded me. (It takes a meaning to catch a meaning, as Robert Tragesser, a splendid philosopher, once remarked.)

The other event was the arrival in Riverside, California, a few months later of Washoe, Moja and Loulis, three signing chimpanzees, and my coming to observe them and to talk with two of the people who worked with them. This happened at a moment when the debates about whether or not what the chimpanzees were doing could be accepted as language were particularly hot, and I suddenly had an occasion to begin writing, after hundreds of false starts.

That is one reason why this book, which is primarily concerned with domestic animals, especially working animals, begins with speculations about a wild animal. Another reason

may be that, like the thinkers I have complained about, I needed something against which to define my subject. For me, I suppose, human beings and working animals are the "we," so it was natural enough for me to define my territory against the background of wild animals, whose worlds are far more various than my gestures in their direction indicate. In any event, the book begins at the point where my small knowledge and my vast ignorance met. Most of the questions I encountered quickly became questions about language, questions that located the boundaries of language in regions often understood to be remote from language.

There is one more piece of autobiography I would like to insert. A year or so after Gunner had handed me the central revelation, but some years before the simultaneous arrivals of *The Claim of Reason* and Washoe, I met the poet John Hollander, and we talked about animals.

I told him that I thought that the training relationship was a moral one, and he asked me, "Why do you say that?"

I replied quite crossly, "Because I think it's *true!*"

Fortunately for me, he very gently responded, "That's a good answer, but what I meant was, 'What do you *have in mind* when you say that?' "

No one else had ever wanted to know, so I began trying to explain, and in one way this book is simply an extended attempt to answer his question. And it was his poem "Adam's Task," and the generosity of the poetic thought in that poem about what naming is, that gave me both my title and a portion of the intellectual energy I needed to work out how to write *Adam's Task*. So the book is for him, and for Dick Koehler, who taught me how to say "Fetch!" But it is in memory of Gunner, who was the one who so generously and vigorously brought matters before my conscious mind.

And it is for Donald Davie, who taught nobly at Stanford. Were it not for him and his poetry and what I learned from them about narrative, fighting fair and something that could be called discovering the textures of actuality, I might still be sitting in the back of the lecture hall, in mute frustration.

And for Eleanor Carey, Marsh Van Deusen and Robert Tragesser, quick and subtle listeners who were able to hear and respond to the bits of genuine thought that emerged from my ramblings as acutely as even Gunner ever did.

7

Calling Animals by Name

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field. . . .

Genesis 2:20

In the course of restoring Drummer Girl to herself, I obedience-trained her, and in the course of doing this work with me, she learned what her name was. In fact, although there are often problems even for humans about learning their names, about knowing what one's own or another's name is (as when I don't know whether to call you Freddie or Professor Jones), for us naming the animals is the original emblem of animal responsiveness to and interest in humans, in Genesis, our first text. An apocryphal expansion of the verse that forms the epigraph to this chapter says that not only did Adam name the animals but the moment he did, each recognized his or her name; the cow now knew she was Cow and came when called by name, and so it was like this, as John Hollander describes it:

Every burrower, each flier,
  Came for the name he had to give:
Gay, first work, ever to be prior,
  Not yet sunk to primitive.

Now it is the case, sadly, that many horses go through their whole lives without even knowing that they have a name, and this misleads some logicians into believing that they can't have names, and therefore can't have the mental faculties that go with knowing one's name. But in fact many horses learn their names, either informally around the barn or stable, just as most humans learn their names, or through formal obedience work of the sort I did with Salty and Drummer Girl.

I would like to take a little time here to consider the general implications of naming and acknowledging naming. I see us—meaning anyone possessed of that particular sort of literacy that makes him/her want to write and read books like this one—as not being in the enviable position Adam was when he named the animals—"not yet sunk to primitive." I don't mean that we are primitive in our consciousness but rather that we have gone on to a further distancing. We did this when we learned to write and thus to add to the possibilities of consciousness conceptions made possible by typography of various sorts. One example of this is the advance in mathematical thinking when numerals were devised and replaced the prose descriptions of arithmetic. It was typography that eventually made statistics possible and all of the errors as well as the epiphanies of statistical thinking.

Typography has also made possible further gaps between us and animals, because we have become able to give them labels without ever calling them by name. The registered names of most horses and dogs are primary examples. Champion Redheath Nimble Gunner, C.D., C.D.X., U.D., for example, is not a name but something halfway between labels (of the sort found on packing lists or in livestock inventories) and titles—not titles such as Sir, Madam or Your Highness, but titles like the titles of books. Such names are bookkeeping.

It is only when I am saying, "Gunner, Come!" that the dog has a name. His name becomes larger when we proceed to "Gunner, Fetch!" and eventually when he and his name become near enough to being the same size, he is as close to having a proper name as anyone ever gets. When Drummer Girl learned

her name, one of the things it meant was that she became able to fit into her name properly; when I said in her story that "her soul was several sizes too large for her," I could as accurately have said that her soul was several sizes too large for the truncated version of a "name" she had so far had, not a name she could answer to. Without a name and someone to call her by name, she couldn't enter the moral life.

There are other things at stake. I knew a woman named Shelley Mason, who took a job running an animal shelter in a small desert town. She didn't do this because she thought that the activity of merely housing dogs and feeding them was an especially meaningful activity (especially as one of her duties was destroying unwanted animals) but because she understood the importance of training as a way of increasing the number of animals who were wanted and who would not be abandoned, thus reducing the piles of corpses. She figured that from that small shelter she could insist that anyone who adopted a dog learn at least the rudiments of training a dog to heel and sit before they were allowed to take the dog home, thereby of necessity naming the dog. And she usually had several dogs from the shelter at her house, teaching them more advanced work in order to increase their chances of placement.

One day when I was visiting her, she gestured at the dogs, most of them doomed, in the runs at the shelter and said, "Goddamit! Most of them wouldn't be here if only they knew their names!"

The grammar of the world we imagine when we call creatures by name is not the grammar of the world in which they have no names, is not the same form of life. But our grammar, or maybe I mean punctuation or typography, has given us the possibility of attenuations of naming, of names that are not invocative. Consider for example that

I am involved with a dog

does not indicate a world as fully as when we say

I am involved with a dog called "Annie"

or

I am involved with "Annie."

The last example gives the feel of a more committed and thoughtful relationship than the first two do, but it is still a disturbing (to me) convention of English punctuation to put what philosophers call scare quotes around animal names, to indicate that these aren't real names, in the way Vicki Hearne is, and even many animal lovers conventionally use the pronoun "it" rather than "he" or "she" to refer to an animal. I find this to be extraordinarily weird, evidence of the superstitions that control the institutionalization of thought. It is as weird, to me, as these examples:

I am married to "Robert."
Pass the butter, "Robert."
Kiss me, "Robert."
I wish "Robert" would return.

When I asked my husband, whose name in fact is not "Robert," but Robert, to look at those sentences, he reported feeling a slight jolt of uneasiness, as though what had been a name for a person—his person—had suddenly become something like a label, and the uneasiness—the dis-ease—is the uneasiness of someone the labeler won't and can't talk to.

Obedience-training horses creates a logic that demands not only the use of a call name, since the imperatives demand it, especially for the command "Dobbin, Come!" but also the removal of the quotes from the name, the making of the name into a real name rather than a label for a piece of property, which is what most racehorses' names are.

Which leads me to my final small point about the disciplines of naming, one of which is horse training. I believe that the disciplines come to us in the form they do because deep in human beings is the impulse to perform Adam's task, to name animals and people as well, and to name them in such a way that the grammar is flexible enough to do at least two things. One is to make names that give the soul room for expansion. My talk of the change from utterances such as "Belle, Sit!" to "Belle, Go find!" is an example of names projecting the creature named into more glorious contexts. Our awareness of the

importance of this is indicated, at least partially, by the fact that we have occasions to say, "Well, Rosemary has really made a name for herself."

But I think our impulse is also conservative, an impulse to return to Adam's divine condition. I can't imagine how we would do that, or what it would be like, but linguistic anthropology has found out some things about illiterate peoples that suggest at least names that really call, language that is genuinely invocative and uncontaminated by writing and thus by the concept of names as labels rather than genuine invocations.

I once, for example, heard a linguist talking about the days when the interest in learning and especially recording illiterate languages revealed some surprises. One of his stories was about an eager linguist in some culturally remote corner trying to elicit from a peasant the nominative form of "cow" in the peasant's language.

The linguist met with frustrations. When he asked, "What do you call that animal?" pointing to the peasant's cow, he got, instead of the nominative of "cow," the vocative of "Bossie." When he tried again, asking, "Well, what do you call your neighbor's animal that moos and gives milk?" the peasant replied, "Why should I call my neighbor's animal?"

Since I am a creature born to writing, my horses are not born to their names but to their labels, and care and discipline are required. The dog trainer's knowledge of genuine names—"call name," in fact, is the technical term for a true name—is one of the reasons true trainers say, as I reported in my discussion of Salty, "Joe, Sit!" less frequently than most people and to fewer dogs. They know what the peasant in the linguist's story knew—there has to be a reason for a name or else there is no name.

I am not arguing against advances in culture, only pointing out that it is paradoxically the case that some advances create the need for other advances that will take us back to what we call the primitive, even if not all the way back to paradise, to that region of consciousness in which naming is "Gay, first work, ever to be prior, not yet sunk to primitive." But no

advance will enable me to call Drummer Girl with anything less than her name, which is why obedience training is centrally a sacred and poetic rather than a philosophical or scientific discipline.

10

What It Is about Cats

There used to be, and probably still is, activity in the area called Comparative Psychology that consists of various attempts to work out ways of studying and quantifying memory and intelligence across different species. There was sometimes a certain amount of difficulty in coming up with experimental designs that gave clear results. In one case that I remember something of, various animals were shown the location of hidden food and then brought back minutes, hours or days later and watched to see how well they did in finding the food again. Human beings did moderately well in some of these studies, dogs respectably, but it was the digger wasp that outperformed us all. The way I remember the conversations I used to hear about this, it was less obvious to the researchers than it ought to have been that the digger wasp had shown us that what we call "intelligence" might be a complicated and even chimerical phenomenon. Beyond that it seemed to me as a tracking-dog trainer that not nearly enough had been done to rule out the effects on the tests of the animals' superior abilities, especially scent powers.

I cheered for the digger wasp, because the results in question did at least cause some pause in the machinery of behaviorist speculations. But the animal that defeated such speculations absolutely was the cat. I used to hear older experimenters advising younger ones about working with cats. It seems that

under certain circumstances, if you give a cat or cats a problem to solve or a task to perform in order to find food, they work it out pretty quickly, and the graph of their comparative intelligence shows a sharply rising line. But, as I heard, "the trouble is that as soon as they figure out that the researcher or technician *wants* them to push the lever, they stop doing it; some of them will *starve* to death rather than do it." (This violently anti-behaviorist theory never, so far as I know, saw print.)

That result fascinated me—I would have dropped everything in order to find out what the cats were trying to do or say to the researchers. After all, when human beings behave that way, we come up with a pretty fancy catalogue of virtues in order to account for it. But, of course, I was stupidly supposing that the point of these efforts was to understand animals, and it wasn't at all. The point was simply to Do Science, or so I began to suspect when I heard one venerable professor tell a young researcher, "Don't use cats, they'll screw up your data."

What is it about cats? Among gentler and more tentative philosophers than the investigators I describe, cats are considered unobtrusively ubiquitous, and the philosophers are by and large grateful for this. At least, I hear the sound of gratitude in Montaigne when he says to himself that while our way of talking is to say that one plays with one's cat, there is no reason we shouldn't suppose that it is the other way about, that one's cat is playing with one. Montaigne's delicate alertness to such possibilities of grammatical reversal is sadly missing from most modern speculations about language and consciousness, but our cats are still here, which means that the most agreeable of philosophical expressions, the grateful one, is still possible.

The cats who starved to death in the laboratories were, no doubt about it, frustrated animals. The refusal of food is a signal made to the cosmos itself when one despairs of signaling one's chums that something deep in nature is being denied. Infants deprived of touch move in such ways through rage to despair, starvation and death. A mare on the point of foaling will not eat or drink if there is insufficient congruence between her sense of the event she anticipates and the attitudes of the creatures and landscape around her. Children refuse food when they are

overloaded with various phoninesses disguised as love, even when they don't go so far as to die. And if you take a house cat and put it in a situation in which there is only one choice, that of responding in a linear way to human expectations, the cat won't eat if eating entails the performance of a kind of "pleasing" that is a violation of the cat's nature, a distortion of the cat's duties on the planet.

This does not mean that cats are perverse, but rather that the pleasures and expectations of human beings are profoundly important to cats. In fact, it suggests that, contrary to popular wisdom, getting it right, accurate, just, about pleasing us is in some ways far more to the point of cat nature than it is to the point of dog nature. Dogs are by and large more like humans in being merely amused and relieved when their imitations and approximations of obedience are accepted by us, and their resemblance to us in that way may be one of the reasons it is easier to achieve general agreement on the interpretation of a given doggy action. But cats take the task of pleasing us far more seriously. Science has shown us this.

Of course, science has also shown us that merely having some lunkheaded expectation and presenting it to the cat doesn't satisfy the cat. The cat's job includes making us aware of the invented nature of our expectations, and cats can't do this when the bulldozer effect takes over our expectations, as it can do in science and in our erotic relationships.

I should interrupt myself and say what I mean by my simpleminded assault on science in general and behaviorism in particular. I don't mean that there is much point in simply discarding, for now at least, such notions as Conditioned Response or Operant Behavior. They are far too useful, philosophically and morally. For one thing, thinking about interactions between stimuli and behaviors without reference to internal events can make it turn out that most things are not our fault, thus relieving us of the "bad conscience" Nietzsche so despised. But there are certain confusions that get into the discussions in practice, usually in the guise of genuine difficulties. The result tends to be that the behaviorist overtly denies the interpretive significance of internal events while covertly

making appeal to them when the going gets philosophically rough. The opposite happens too, of course. Some animal trainers declare themselves the enemies of academic psychology without acknowledging the extent to which such things as the Stimulus-Response model has clarified their thinking and practice. All of this is well and good, but it still doesn't turn out that behaviorism in its pure form has come up with a better response to cats' refusals than "Don't use cats, they'll screw up your data."

I am not an especially good observer of cats, so it was a cat who comes when he is called and who performs his interests straightforwardly who first caught my attention. At least, Koshka comes when *I* call him, and he is also tolerably responsive when my queen, Cynthia, hollers at him. He is also somewhat clumsy, which is why it is possible for me to work out fairly easily what he is up to.

Clumsy or not, he is like all cats in his relationship to straight lines. If he is on the windowsill in the living room and I put down a bowl of food on the floor in the kitchen, he selects a route to the bowl that takes him over the sofa and the bookcase and makes it look like a natural route, somewhat in the way a field-trial dog will make his leaps over yawning gullies look natural; it is profoundly important to him that he avoid the stupidities of straight lines. It is because he is clumsy that I was able to see this—the genius of cats is in the way we don't, by and large, think about such things, because they play so sweetly with our expectations, all the while charming us out of false skepticisms.* And they are, as I have said, very serious about this. When they fail at charming us, they move so swiftly

*I am aware that a standard explanation of a great deal of cat behavior has reference to mechanisms that are a function of the kind of predator a cat is. This seems to me to be in all sorts of ways a queer sort of "explaining," in part because the model of explanation implicit in such talk demands that we "explain" such phenomena as philosophy with reference to predation (and, of course, some people have done this) because of the analytical focus most higher predators require. In the case of any thoughtful species, it is odd to appeal to events that can be located more or less historically in an evolutionary picture as determining the nature of the present. As if a child's first experiments with finger paints gave us an emblem that "explained" Michelangelo.

to the next meditation that we are hardly aware that there has been an attempt, much less a failure.

The philosophical condition that makes the cat's indirections meaningful is one in which we understand that something needs to be restored, that straight lines, the lines of speech and intention, are already lost to us, which means that our first impulse toward directness will be irrevocably contaminated. Dogs manifest their sensitivity to that contamination in various ways, most plainly in their refusals to perform complete retrieves without the restorations and consolations of formal training, and cats have their own evasions of post-lapsarian invocations. One traditional way of understanding Eden has been to say that it was pre-linguistic, and there is something right about that in a world in which "linguistic" means "after Babel." But there is something wrong about it if "pre-linguistic" is understood to mean "prior to language," for Adam and Eve and God and all of creation could sing to and call one another. Let us say that Paradise is not so much prior to language—though it is certainly prior to our language—as it is prior to epistemology, prior to doubt about the sources and resources of meaningful resonances.

In such a case, it is important to understand the circumstances in which cats *will* travel in straight lines and under the direction of a human. There are people who work cats for movies. Bill Koehler has had cats whom he could control in the exacting situations in which the cat's movements must be coordinated with directors, cameramen, actors and scripts. These cats are by and large traveling in straight lines in response to signals (or "discriminatory cues") and for food rewards. Such cats are spoken of admiringly with such comments as "Open his cage in the morning and out he comes, jumps on my shoulder, ready to do a job of work," or "The buzzer sounds and that cat makes a beeline, right now." That is to say, the cats are doing in working situations exactly what the researchers I used to listen to failed to do. The trainers are on to something that could be expressed by saying that training is partly a discipline of a kind of negative capability, which they express

in various ways. For example, one day we were watching a woman who was a fine handler work her Basenji on retrieving exercises—and Basenjis are notoriously hard to work with. (I once found myself saying that a masochist is a person who is training his or her second Basenji.) Someone in the group of spectators said, "I like what she does with that dog. Doesn't send out any brain waves." Here "brain waves" was a way of referring to the kind of psychic imperialism I discussed in the chapter on tracking.

By contrast, in the labs where the cats wouldn't eat, I used to see the researcher or the technician or the work-study student walk into the lab, ready to go to work, trying with some degree of sincerity and expertise to be *objective*. This may sound like a corollary of "not sending out brain waves," but in fact it was the first mistake I observed. To be "objective" is to try to approach the condition of being No One in Particular with a View from Nowhere and cats know better than that. They are uneasy around such people because people who don't know better tend to ride roughshod over the cat's own knowledge that a cat is Someone in Particular.

Of course, if the caretaker was an undergraduate, s/he would usually still be moved to talk with the cat, to find the grounds of relationship, but in the laboratory situation the impulse would be truncated, the rhythms of attentiveness and response would be off-beat—and the rhythm and harmony of our attention is everything to a cat. Objectivity depends on models of the world and language that require precisely that flat-footed and contaminated sort of straight line that cats are dedicated to undermining for the sake of clarity and richness of discourse. It has nothing to do with the emptying of self, or really ego, that moves poets to come up with expressions like "negative capability." "Scientific objectivity" is, as most people practice it, precisely what the trainers call "brain waves."

When I was at Gentle Jungle, observing Washoe, there were roughly three categories of people going in and out of the main compound. There was the group that included trainers, handlers and caretakers, there were Hollywood types of one sort and

another and there were academics who were there mostly because of the presence of the signing chimpanzees. I realized that I was able, without consciously thinking about it, accurately and from several hundred yards away to identify which group anyone who came in belonged to. I wasn't doing this with clues of clothing either; almost everyone was in the same sort of jeans, sneakers and T-shirts.

The handlers, I noticed, walked in with a soft, acute, 380° awareness; they were receptively establishing mute acknowledgments of and relationships with all of the several hundred pumas, wolves, chimps, spider monkeys and Galápagos tortoises. Their ways of moving *fit* into the spaces shaped by the animals' awareness.

The Hollywood types moved, of course, with vast indifference to where they were and might as well have been on an interior set with flats painted with pictures of tortoises or on the stage of a Las Vegas nightclub. They were psychically intrusive, and I remembered Dick Koehler saying that you could count on your thumbs the number of actors, directors and so on who could actually respond meaningfully to what an animal was doing.

The academics didn't strut in quite that way, but they were nonetheless psychically intrusive and failed to radiate the intelligence the handlers did. Their very hip joints articulated the importance of their theories, they had too many questions, too many hidden assumptions about their roles as observer. I am talking about nice, smart people, but good handlers don't "observe" animals in this way, from within diagrams of the objective performance, with that stare that makes almost all animals a bit uneasy, especially cats.

Cats do not observe *us* in this way, either—but they do observe us, almost continuously, as I learned from a poem of John L'Heureux's, "The Thing about Cats," which closes with the question:

> A cat is not a conscience; I'm not
> saying that.
> What I'm saying is
> why are they looking?

It took me some ten years, after being struck by this question, to realize that it was the question I had been looking for, or a real question and a real noticing of the fact that our cats are looking at us. This is evidence of my own participation in the culture's ailurophobia.

I just now looked up from my typewriter at one of my own cats snoozing on top of the stereo. Something—perhaps the longish pause in the sounds of typing—alerted him to the change in my mental posture, and he opened an eye, smoothed a whisker, then leaped down and strolled out of the room with a muffled meow. I felt this to be simultaneously an instance of gracious acknowledgment of the moment of contact with me, together with as gracious a refusal to interrupt me. (I should say that I am quite stern with my cats about their desire to be in between my eyes and whatever piece of paper I am engaged with.)

One could read this small episode in various ways, as mere coincidence or as evidence of my sentimentality about Patrick, but it now occurs to me that the success of language itself may depend a great deal of the time on serendipity, just as it may just turn out that the variations of "meow" that our powers can detect are always, by accident, the right thing to say. Patrick just reentered the room, crossed in front of me with a graceful arch and another unobtrusive comment and settled in a new observation post, in his basket. This felt like the right thing for him to do during another longish pause, during which I muttered aloud, wondering where he had gotten to. It is not in any event a *mistake* on his part, to invoke J. L. Austin's wonderful distinction,* about what remarks and actions of his will fit smoothly into my activities.

But he used to make mistakes. This is not easy to remember, and indeed he so quickly became adept at judging when it was appropriate for him to cuddle, or request a favor, and at what distance from me to be under varying circumstances, that I

*In "A Plea for Excuses," in *Animal Thinking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), in which he talks about two instances of shooting a donkey, in one case by accident and in the other case by mistake.

might be forgiven for invoking the notion of an unconsciously "programmed" set of behaviors to account for it. We need a new vocabulary term to notice such errors—a nasty word like "mechanomorphism," for example, or some other way of referring to our thoughtless and superstitious habit of attributing mechanical traits to organisms, as though nature dutifully imitated our inventions. Donald Griffin has pointed out:

> If... an animal thinks about its needs and desires, and about the probable results of alternative actions, fewer and more general instructions are sufficient. Animals with relatively small brains may thus have greater need for simple conscious thinking than those endowed with a kilogram or more of gray matter. Perhaps only we and the whales can afford the luxury of storing detailed behavioral instructions...

But I am in danger here of straying from my investigation. I think that the differences between the case of dogs and the case of cats, and the different superstitious errors we are led into in the different cases, suggest that what we have made mistakes about is the nature of certain virtues, especially the willingness to please. Consider, for example, that there isn't a phenomenon similar enough to ailurophobia for us to have a popular name for it in our relationships with dogs. People just say that they are afraid of dogs, and the fear of dogs is fairly easy to demolish if the right dog and the right handler are about. The fear of dogs usually has a basis that is at least approximately rational, which is one reason why someone who is no longer afraid of Lassie may find their fear reappearing with different dogs or in different circumstances, as in the case of a few friends of mine who are no longer at all nervous about my dogs but are still jumpy when a strange dog goes by on the streets.

Ailurophobia is not like this; it is far more resistant to desensitization techniques (which usually consist of social introductions) and is perhaps more obviously inexplicable. After all, cats are not used much to guard persons or property and are unresponsive to attack training, whereas there are plenty of dogs in the world that are real man-stoppers, as well as quite a few dogs who aren't but who brag that they are when you

happen by their yards or their cars. I am, for that matter, sometimes afraid of dogs. That is to say, I respect a dog's assertion of a claim right to property, and in the case of certain dogs I respect their authority when they say, "Do this, not that!"

But the thing about cats is first of all that they are looking at us, and perhaps the thing about ailurophobes is that they don't want to be looked at like that. We are all ailurophobes to the extent that we have bought the culture's "wisdom" about the aloofness and emotional independence of cats, which, as Stanley Cavell has taught me to understand, is logically very like virtually any other expression of skeptical terror about the independent existence of other minds—such as jealousy and the reassurances it demands, or sexism, or racism. So perhaps the aloofness story is one we tell ourselves in order not to know that we are being looked at. But why should we not want to be looked at?

I find that it doesn't help for me to point out that we have various reasons for wanting to hide, if only because that phenomenon has been too often discussed under the heading of pathology, and I am thinking of something that is part of health. And talk in which we say that some people have a fear of intimacy, or that Americans have this fear, or academics have that fear, is similarly unhelpful, as is talk in which we suppose that intimacy as opposed to its false forms is "threatening," or whatever. I don't mean that such ways of talking are wrong, only that what I am interested in is some false ideas we have about the nature of intimacy. The idea, for example, that it consists of reporting on inner states or feelings. This is at best an odd thing for anyone to think in light of the fact that when people are actually spending most or all of their conversational time reporting on their feelings, they are usually boring, and in extreme cases are as likely to end up locked away somewhere as people who seem to lose entirely the capacity to report on their frames of mind when that is appropriate.

There is something that is not *that* that is intimacy. Babies, as Cavell has provocatively reminded us, learn to talk when you talk to them about something—kittens, say, or pumpkins—

and not when they are shut up in boxes, and I want to say somehow that intimacy is thinking. It is thinking about *something*, something other than just the parties engaged in the conversation. If you are my friend, I may from time to time need or want to request your response to some happiness or some grief of mine, and in the logic of any friendship love will entail that we agree to do this for each other. But we won't, as C. S. Lewis observes, want to talk about it once the occasion has passed; it is displeasing to do so unless our interest becomes philosophical. Dwelling on grief and distress or on happiness, or at least dwelling in a housebound way on them, is to dwell in some busy ranch of isolation that is not intimacy and is not thinking. To dwell upon it or in it would be what Lewis, speaking from a precisely British metaphysics of talk, calls an "embarrassment," and what I, speaking from the animal trainer's sense of things, want to call distraction. As when we say, "It's no use trying to talk to her now, she is distracted out of her wits."

I am thinking of the capacity for intimacy as a virtue, the virtue of friendship as what Lewis has called *Philia*, the emblem of which, he says, is two figures holding hands and gazing at some third object. (This is unlike Eros, that love whose emblem is two figures gazing at each other.) Eros may be—in fact had probably better be—figured eventually as the intimacy of friendship. A marriage, for example, may be founded on a rich and continuous conversation about the nature of marriage and love, but it cannot, as the women's magazines keep warning, be founded on continuous *declarations* of love. A friend of mine once said crossly, after a particularly trying evening at another couple's house, that she couldn't imagine herself in a marriage because she didn't feel like spending all of her time praising someone; she preferred thought and conversation. I didn't know enough then to say, "But what that couple was doing tonight—that is not a bad marriage, that isn't marriage."*

*Some dogs make continuous declarations of love—or *seem* to—and this can enable some people to survive psychic wildernesses of one sort and another, but it is only training, work, that creates a shared grammar of objects of contem-

Cats do not declare their love much, they enact it by their myriad invocations of our pleasure, and they show their understanding of what they are doing—meaning that they show the structure of their understanding—in part through their willingness to give up the last moment's enactment for this one, as though they knew that love, being what refreshes thought, must itself always be discarding us for our refreshment. You may very well get stuck in yesterday's declarations with your spouse or your child, and they may not know how to prevent this in you or in themselves, but your cat will not permit this. The declarations of five minutes ago, that particular arching of the back, that appealing gesture with the paw, may have been true then but now are not, and the cat never allows them to become the bedraggled hermit in our tropes of gesture "who comes and goes and comes and goes all day."*

One may say with John Hollander that our cats are infinitely interpretable texts, but the "text" is something *between* us and our cats; it is the object the cats make out of our positions relative to each other. We regard it from our viewpoint, they from theirs, which introduces a variation on the theme, as cats seldom want to stand side by side with us holding hands unless they are scared or in certain crises, as our cat Blue was recently, when kitting for the first time. She didn't want my husband to leave the room and even reported to him on her frame of mind and feelings. (But she was asking for this from him, I suspect, because she knows that Robert respects her too much to get stuck in some sticky mode of rescue and can be relied on to go back to the conversation. He doesn't, even while holding hands, send out brain waves. Some people are better at talking with cats than other people are; they have larger capacities for the dreamy yet acute sorts of discourse that most cats seem to favor.)

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plation outside of the dog and the master, and there where the best conversations start and with them the bonds of that deeper love that consists in thinking.

*From Wallace Stevens' "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," in *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, edited by Holly Stevens (New York: Random House, 1967).

Koshka, the cat I spoke of earlier who was clumsy enough to reveal himself to my blunt perceptions, is somewhat jealous, or at least he shows his jealousy more obviously than other cats I have known. He has had to deal, over the years, with a variety of cats, kittens, dogs, donkeys and other claimants on the hearth who disturb the progress of his Poem of Koshka. Nowadays he betrays only the slightest tendency to sulk and grump, having learned that sulky cats don't please me. But in his youth this was not so. Once I brought in two fuzzy harlequin-marked kittens and sat playing with them on the couch.

Koshka leapt wildly into the middle of this arrangement and then away, and then back again, screaming hoarsely that it wasn't *RIGHT*. I batted him in the nose and told him to mind his manners, but Koshka said shrilly that they weren't minding *their* manners, were they? Other, more graceful cats would at this point have taken to washing their paws perhaps, or have developed a sudden interest in a squirrel outside of the window while they worked things out. Koshka retreated to the end of the couch and looked depressed and forlorn, alternately meowing and purring at me in a loud, unseemly way. Then he decided to be a good sport and come up and make friends, but found when he tried to get up that his emotional fit had led him to getting his claws stuck in the couch (a frequent mishap for him), and he had to spend a minute or two working them loose.

Once he got loose, he headed in a straightforward, doglike manner for me, then seemed to remember himself and went back to where he had been, lay down again, got up and zigzagged his way around the room, stopping to sniff some flowers in a vase, a pile of magazines by the fireplace, until he finally managed to be hunting an invisible fly that was buzzing near me and the kittens. Leaping for the fly, he suddenly "noticed" the kittens and began playing with them, pausing to rub against me, purring this time in a dignified fashion. This is not a remarkable cat story, of course.

What had happened so rapidly to transform his clumsily expressed aggravation into graciousness was, I think, precisely that typically feline interest in and focus on my pleasure, which

is to say, on my interests—the unstated theme that most of a cat's behavior in relationship to his or her friends is variations on. (This isn't from our point of view an infinitely adjustable pleasing, of course—try keeping cats and parakeets together, for example.) Koshka revealed that theme in his from time to time "doggy" behavior, but most cats don't reveal it so directly, which is why it can seem to us that there is no theme, no focus, to a cat's activities. They stalk the web of our imaginations as carefully as they stalk prey and by and large elude our grosser interpretations with skill and care, not because they wish to remain unknown to us, but because they cannot bear to be *falsely* known, known only by the deceptive glare of a single proposition. Perhaps nervousness about being in such a way falsely known is the healthy source of some of our ill health, our various impulses to hide, to make mysteries of ourselves, as well as the healthy source of ailurophobia. Because cats are more adept than we are at evading monolithic propositions of character, they are also less likely to go insane in the way we do, or dogs and horses do, when "pinned to a proposition."

When our friends get it wrong about us, we tend to go about saying urgently to anyone we can collar that People Don't Understand Us—no one understands scholars, or poets, or animal trainers, or diabetics. And then we go on to try to say what is in fact the case, but one monolithic and totalizing proposition is no better than another, has no more power to penetrate pluralities of perception and misperception.

This, of course, is another error cats avoid. When we aim a misinterpretation at them, they slip sideways so adeptly that it usually seems they just happened accidentally to move at the very moment we took aim and fired, as if it were always by accident rather than by mistake that we miss. (Except, it would appear, when behaviorists get going in laboratories.) Put another way: cats have a much more efficient stroke economy than we do. Here I am using the term "stroke" to mean any stimulus from outside the organism that activates the reticular process (which I heard one psychiatrist call the "starter motor," by way of explaining why strokes are essential to so many organisms).

"Strokes," then, can be any sort of acknowledgment of a creature's existence, and negative ones are effective in at least keeping an organism alive, though unhappy, which is one way of understanding why monkeys will embrace wire mothers and people will stay in relationships that consist largely or wholly of exchanges that leave the participants feeling lousy. Most social animals seem to be capable of becoming addicted to whatever sort of stroke comes handy.

Beyond which, some people seem able to become addicted to "do" strokes rather than "be" strokes, usually in the form of praise for a particular accomplishment rather than for a general way of being. The trouble with "do" strokes is that you can never get enough of them, and their stimulating effect doesn't last very long, hence the dusty trophy cases full of stale strokes that some people clutter up their conversations with.

"Be" strokes, by contrast, can last practically forever and don't require further validation from anyone, including, usually, the creature who gave you the stroke in the first place. So that while I may feel set up for anywhere from a minute to weeks if you tell me that a finished performance is splendid, the thrill will come to an end, whereas if you manage to acknowledge the kind of mind I have accurately, then it is my nature you have acknowledged, something that is by and large immortal so long as I am.

"Be" strokes are the only kind cats are normally interested in, which is why work with them can't go the way work with dogs and horses can. Emotional M&Ms are either ignored or resisted if circumstances make it impossible to perform the preferred feline metaphysics. Hence the grammars of approval and disapproval that so madden humans are refused utterly by cats, who appear to be born with something like an intuitive understanding that approval is almost inevitably the flip side of disapproval, in contrast with some (though not all) dogs, who are like us in that they usually have to spend some time learning the hard way, if they do learn, why it is that bribery and flattery are so dangerous.

Cats' refusal to be approved of or disapproved of may make it appear that, after all, S-R psychology had explanatory force

in their case. Especially when people go on to say, as they sometimes do, that in order to get a cat to perform as Bill Koehler does, the "reinforcements" used must be impersonal—the handler's self-esteem must not get into them. Such a way of talking makes tropes of mechanomorphism look philosophically promising. But the advice about the importance of impersonality, like the dog trainer's advice about the impersonality of "Out!" corrections, itself points to fundamental differences between, say, my cat Gumbie and my Jeep Cherokee. My Jeep also "refuses" to run if there is sugar in the gas tank, and so is "finicky." But what the Jeep does that we can call "refusing" is plainly figurative, as is a meter's behavior when we "feed" it. Neither the Jeep nor the meter cares whether or not I care, do not refuse to be "fed" if I make approval noises at them. This sort of difference is so obvious that I am driven to suppose that there must be a very powerful superstition preventing some thinkers from seeing it—thinkers who like to say that a cat cannot be said to be "really" playing with a ball because a cat does not seem to know our grammar of what "playing with" and "ball" are. This sort of more or less positivist position requires a fundamental assumption that "meaning" is a homogeneous, quantifiable thing, and that the universe is dualistic in that there are only two states of meaning in it—significant and insignificant, and further that "significant" means only "significant to me." Such a view demands that we acknowledge that the proposition "Cats are more significant to Vicki than grasshoppers are" is a remark about Vicki, not about cats and grasshoppers in and of themselves, as though Vicki had infinite interpretive powers. Such positivism of meaning looks often enough like an injunction against the pathetic fallacy, but seems to me to be quite the opposite, and also to be, as some writers have claimed it is, a view that does not answer to the theoretical demand for parsimony. If, for example, Gumbie hides when guests she doesn't like come to visit, and stalks about after they leave, suspiciously checking out the evidences of their visit, then my sense of the guests and of Gumbie is revised a bit, especially as Gumbie usually behaves this way when guests attempt uncalled-for familiarity with her, from which it follows

that Gumbie is revising the meanings of my world, if I respect her. Of course, I may also say, "Oh, Gumbie, don't be such a snob!" and insist on my earlier, friendlier interpretations of the guests and decide that Gumbie is behaving badly. This will still be a function of Gumbie's interpretive powers, including her power to interpret me, without regard for any theories of Gumbie I may start with. Gumbie may also, while sporting herself in the backyard, so draw my attention to grasshoppers that I become interested in them and maybe take up entomology. If the sentence "Cats are more significant to Vicki than grasshoppers are" is one for which the judgments "true" and "false" are relevant, then it is as much about grasshoppers and cats as it is about Vicki. Compare it with "Xqrwz are more significant to Vicki than bxryqwixxws are." This is not, in the language I speak, anything for which the judgment "true" or "false" is relevant, it is not about anything.

With Gumbie, the only way to manage to believe that any significance she has is the product of my theories about her is to kill her; allow her to live, and she will with every turn, every thoughtful purr and liquidity of comment in her throat, remind me that her relationship to the world is mediated through mine only insofar as that mediation is congruent with the revolving "I Am" that is Gumbie. The objections to my saying this are curiously various. Some philosophers would want, of course, to cry out against my attribution to Gumbie of a concept of self, but others would want to say that the cat's unresponsiveness to emotional bribery is "just" a function of the fact that house cats, like tigers, are loners, not social animals, not dependent on the structure and organization of any sort of group. I don't know where this notion comes from in light of the fact that virtually every popular book on owning cats recommends that you have more than one, so that they will keep each other company when you are not at home.

Cats, unlike horses and dogs, are more likely in domestic situations (hanging around the house) to force the dimmest of us temporarily at least to abandon our epistemological heavy-handedness. When Morris is made out in a TV cat-food commercial to be performing some sort of minuet by means of

photographic manipulations, the very ease with which we can so interpret his image is itself a reminder that it is an interpretation built on sand and not a full figuration. We do not forget that "Morris himself" remains outside of our interpretations. Cats are always saying to us in one way and another, "I am the cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me," as the cat in Kipling's story does. When a cat looks at us, there is always in the looking the reminder that a cat can look at me or at a king and in both cases equally from the chosen poise of *that* particular angle of grace and speculation.

But, of course, here is the point I am laboring over: They are saying that *to us*. They take infinite trouble that we should continue to be aware of their way of looking. Consider the cat in Kipling. In that story, the first creature to be domesticated was Wild Man, who was "dreadfully wild. He didn't even begin to be tame until he met the Woman and she told him she did not like living in his wild ways." The next animal was of course Wild Dog, who was easily drawn into the amiability of the cave by the woman when she made "the First Singing Magic in the world." The dog came when called and became, by way of a song, First Friend. Wild Horse was cooperative, too, about being charmed and tamed by the Second Singing Magic in the world. And so with Wild Cow. Even the little Bat is a guest rather than an intruder in the cave, and calls the woman "Oh my Hostess and wife of my Host."

But the Cat refused the tale the humans wanted to tell of him and, indeed, insisted on a revision of the woman's story about *herself*, with the result that it was the woman who was charmed, and said, "I knew that I was wise but I did not know that I was beautiful. So I will make a bargain with you. If ever I say one word in your praise, you may come into the Cave." The cat agreed to this and negotiated further for a warm spot by the fire should there be two words in his praise, and the privilege of drinking milk should there be three.

As is usual in such stories, the woman did say three words in his praise, but of course not in the way she meant—the world of such tales is a magically logocentric world in which, as in legal situations, saying "That isn't what I meant!" doesn't

get us out of it. The cat, first by tickling and charming Baby, and then by purring and so lulling Baby asleep, finally by catching a mouse, moved the Woman to utter the three words of praise.

Kipling goes on to tell of the return of the man and the dog at the end of the day, and of their threats to throw things and use teeth should the cat fail to continue to be kind to Baby and to catch mice. Kipling falters here, I think, for he has it turn out that the threats are effective against the cat, and I have never seen anyone succeed in making a cat go forward and do something (rather than run away) in response to threats. (In fact, threats aren't really very good motivators for any species that I know of. But that is a somewhat separate issue that has to do with the reasons cruelty doesn't work very well.) What matters here is that, up until the end when Kipling sentimentally allows the dog and the man to succeed with the sort of macho display behavior cats generally despise, he has the important part right, the cat's revisionary impulses.

I don't blame Kipling, of course, for his failure to sustain his cat story properly. It is impossible for a writer to stay ahead of a cat. My cat Blue, for example, is becoming a politician these days and has organized the other cats, who are upset with me because I spend too much time talking on the telephone and making airline reservations instead of paying proper attention to creature comforts. Yesterday a friend of mine called me up because she had suddenly learned more about the nature of the FBI than she had wanted to know, so I started talking to her in an urgent, important-sounding tone of voice. Blue has never particularly liked people whose voices are full of importance, because when people start feeling important, she has to leave off bringing comfort and consolation to my dogs when they are embarrassed that they were goofy enough to bark at the wrong passerby. So, when Blue failed to get my attention away from the telephone, she simply "accidentally" walked on the button that hangs the phone up on her way from the bookcase to her water dish. There was ensuing panic on the part of the party I was talking to, who was quite certain that

the CIA or the FBI or someone was trying to prevent us from talking.

By the time I worked out what Blue had been up to, she had given herself a bath, lectured the mice on their behavior and instructed my Pit Bull further on how to keep the male cats in line.

It is pleasing to watch kittens practicing this, stalking a shadow with sideways hops and so on, or playing with parts of their own bodies and those of Mama and their littermates with that odd regard for the intended nature of the tail, paw or ear that makes us tend to say that the kitten chasing his tail doesn't know that it is his tail. What the kitten is born to know is that it is his/her own Tale, the tale of the cat's limitlessly metamorphosing stances toward us and the rest of the world.

I feel again the hot breath of someone wanting to give me a lecture from the opening series in Life Sciences 121a: The Interpretation of Behavior, and tell me that the behaviors I am talking about are explainable as the result of predatory mechanisms in the cat. There is, as usual, an implied "merely" in this, as if in the first place something as difficult and as important as hunting weren't a likely basis for play and tale, and as such also a source of figures of thought in the development of friendships. Believing such a notion consistently would entail denying that any utterance can be a poem, because some or all of its grammar and diction can be shown to have sources in survival modes necessitated by, say, the Pleistocene Drought.

There are differences between the friendship of cats and those of other humans. The cat's insistence on being Herself brings pleasure, whereas such an insistence in human-to-human loves is too often done clumsily and painfully and often results in the static of Quarrel rather than in the Heart of philosophy. But I have been for too long trying to indicate in prose what is more properly celebrated in verse, those turns and graces by means of which not only those who are Beloved Others but philosophy itself consoles us for the very fact of Otherness that drives us to philosophy. Some Eastern thinkers speak of the Gap and then say no more about it. Dogs, people and horses

are all likely to try foolishly to close the Gap, to deny our "differences from one another—the one everything the other is not, [to deny] human separation, which can be accepted, and granted, or not. Like the separation from God."* Cats live in a kind of ever-changing song or story in and of the Gap. Here is "Kitty and Bug," by John Hollander:

```
                I      a
               cat    who
              coated in a
              dense shadow
              which I cast
              along myself
               absorb the
               light you
               gaze at me
              with can yet
             look at a king
            and not be seen
           to be seeing any
          more than himself
        a motionless seer
      sovereign of gray
    mirrored invisibly
  in the seeing glass
of air Whatever I am
seeing is part of me
As you see me now my
vision is wrapped in
two green hypotheses
 darkness blossoming
  in two unseen eyes
   which pretend to be
    intent on a spot of                    bug
     upon
      the
     rug
    Who
    can
     see
       how
         eye
          can
        know
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*Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 496.

Afterword

This is the wrong book in which to discuss this in detail, but a step toward granting the kind of rights I speak of here would be to pass legislation, a Companion Dog law, that would grant to dogs whose owners have put in the time to get real off-lead control the same privileges now granted to the dogs who work with the blind. The discussion of what this would mean in detail is technical in a way this book is not, but I'd be glad to work with any clubs or legal groups on the drafting and instituting of such a law.

Index

A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vicki Hearne (1946-2001) was born in Austin, Texas, graduated from the University of California, Riverside, and became a professional dog and horse trainer in the Riverside area. She trained dogs for obedience classes, the hunt field and scenting work, and trained owners to train their dogs. She also obedience trained several wolves and one goat. She trained horses for the show ring, Grand Prix exhibition and the racetrack. In 1976, she won a Stegner Fellowship to Stanford University and did graduate work there. From 1980 to 1984, she was a lecturer in creative writing at Riverside. In 1984, she went to Yale. She published two volumes of poetry, *Nervous Horses* and *In the Absence of Horses*, and many magazine and newspaper articles.