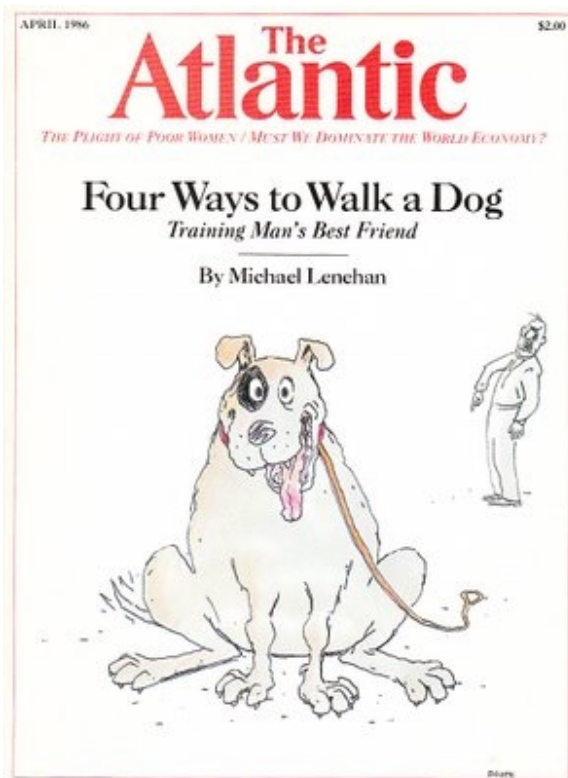


Four Ways to Walk a Dog

Philosophies of Dog Training



By Michael Lenehan

In the beginning God created jackal and fox, dingo and wolf. Then man came along and created the bulldog, the golden retriever, the Lhasa Apso, and the Dandie Dinmont terrier. No one can be sure exactly where one creator left off and the other started, but a few scientists have guessed at how it happened. One of the most compelling guesses comes from Konrad Lorenz, a founder of ethology, the comparative study of animal behavior. In the beautifully wrought first chapter of his book *Man Meets Dog* he imagined a timid, bedraggled band of human beings—hunters and gatherers—struggling to escape predators on some fearsome prehistoric plain. The tribe has recently moved into new territory, and the wild canines that usually follow it, hanging back at night just beyond the campfire's glow, don't seem to have come along. As a result, the people are suffering. Once contemptuous of the canines, they are beginning to understand that the animals, though annoying, served a useful function at the campfire,

warning with their ruckus when a saber-toothed tiger approached in the night. Now that the people must stand guard for themselves, they have not been getting much sleep. They walk wearily, seeking a safe place to set up camp. Suddenly they stop: a welcome sound is in the air—one of those lost canines is howling in the distance. The leader of the tribe—his forehead a bit higher than the others'—takes a portion of their meager food supply and, over the objections of his uncomprehending fellows, executes what Lorenz called a "stroke of genius," one whose "meaning in world history is greater than that of the fall of Troy or the discovery of gunpowder." He faces the source of the sound and throws a bone. Thus begins the domestication of *Canis familiaris*, the pet dog.

That people and dogs have got along so well since then is largely attributable to the character of those wild canines. To put it bluntly, they must have been a lot like us. For one thing they probably lived in

well-organized social groups that were remarkably similar to those of the human hunter-gatherers to whom they became attached. The wolf, which is generally considered the dog's wild ancestor (though scientists have quibbled on this point; Lorenz, for example, had the jackal in mind when he wrote the above scenario, though he later thought better of it), travels in a pack that is roughly comparable to a slightly extended human family: a mating pair, a generation or two of their offspring, and a few related adults—aunts and uncles, if you will. Mating pairs seem to stay together for life. The pack has a pecking order, with an "alpha" male (not necessarily the mating male) at the head. It hunts cooperatively—rare is the lone wolf that can bring down a moose—and divides its labor to a small extent, as when a mother joins the hunt and leaves another adult behind to care for her pups.

This social structure requires a good deal of communication, for each individual must know its place and its role in the society. Wolves have elaborate means of expressing cohesion and affection, and they maintain their positions as leader and followers through ritualized gestures of dominance and submission. Many wolf gestures are quite similar to those used by people. An alpha wolf returning to the pack after an absence is likely to be encircled by several wolves and greeted with a great deal of affectionate nuzzling, as a daddy or mommy might be received at the end of a long business trip. A male wolf asserting his dominance may behave like a lout picking a fight in a saloon: he may scowl, pursing his lips and furrowing his brow, and stare directly into his adversary's eyes. In response the adversary might submit by looking away, by "smiling" sheepishly—pulling back the corners of his closed mouth—or by slinking away with his tail between his legs. Such signals are not universally understood among animals, not even among higher mammals. Konrad Lorenz was convinced that dogs and cats have no inherent understanding of each other's body language, even though to human eyes their signals seem quite similar. He also pointed out that one reason we consider bears so unpredictably dangerous—inclined to lash out with no apparent warning—is that the bear's face is thick-skinned and has little expressive musculature. Bears are not able to communicate facially to the extent that dogs and people are.

In addition to using signals similar to ours, dogs may be intelligent enough to learn some of our signals from us. One of the most prominent and prolific writers on canines, Michael W. Fox, who is the director of the Institute for the Study of Animal Problems, the scientific arm of the Humane Society of the United States, has observed that the canine "grin" often seen by pet owners may be learned from human beings: this expression, in which the dog's lips are pulled up and back, exposing the teeth, is remarkably similar to a human grin, and in Fox's experience dogs use it to communicate only with people, never with one another. Another expert has suggested that an ability to learn human facial expressions may account for the oft-repeated observation that pet dogs come to resemble their masters.

Though an experienced observer can tell a lot about a dog simply by looking at it, the communication more commonly goes from person to dog. One reason for this, certainly, is that our language makes us lazy, insensitive to the nuances of posture and expression. Another reason may be that the dog's extraordinary sensory equipment enables it to pick up signals that people don't even know they're sending. Dogs have been known to detect sounds as high in pitch as 60,000 cycles per second (the human limit is about 20,000), and they are apparently able to make fine distinctions among human words. Lorenz told of an animal psychologist named Sarris whose three German shepherds could respond reliably to commands made by name from another room; their names were Aris, Paris, and Harris. Of course the dog's sensitivity to sound is not nearly as impressive as its legendary sense of smell. A large dog's olfactory region—the nerve-packed membrane lining the nasal cavity, over which inhaled air is drawn—is about fourteen times the size of the comparable structure in a human being. Investigators have found some dogs that are able to detect sulfuric acid in concentrations of 1:10,000,000—less than a drop in a hundred gallons. This acuity explains why dogs are so adept at finding lost children, hidden explosives, and smuggled drugs, and why pet dogs always seem to be sniffing at each other or at the ground. Smell is to them what sight is to us—their chief means of experiencing the world. To say, as people sometimes do, that "a dog can smell fear" may be more than merely a metaphor. Perhaps as we learn more about the physiological causes of our mental states and the chemical signals we give off—pheromones, as the biologists call them—we will learn that dogs can smell a whole range of human emotions. That would come as no surprise to legions of pet owners. One dog trainer I know claims that his German shepherd can read his moods better than he can himself. "If I get

out of bed in a bad mood," he said, "the dog knows it before I do, and I can see it in the way he acts. He tells me." The dog's sensitivity to body signals, combined with its inherent desire to follow a leader, probably explains the ability of certain people miraculously to "train" a dog within a matter of minutes. Evidently, in their posture, their movements, their tones of voice, and perhaps even in their perspiration, these people simply exude the aura of an alpha wolf.

The canine, then, was highly qualified for the position of man's best friend. And its on-the-job training started as soon as it accepted its first free meal; that's when human beings began selecting, though unconsciously at first, the characteristics they found most useful and endearing. Chief among these is a kind of persistent infantilism, or a lack of development of adult characteristics. Traits that change or fade as a wolf pup grows to maturity persist through adulthood in domesticated dogs. In some breeds of dog these include physical characteristics—shortened muzzle, floppy ears, domed skull—but characteristics of behavior have doubtless been more important. For example, wolf pups, like dog pups, are friendly to strangers and highly dependent on their elders; these traits diminish as the wolf pup grows into a wary, independent adult, but in the domestic dog they persist more or less through life. We like our pets tractable and cuddly, and over thousands of years we've selected the ones that remain that way. (Incidentally, this phenomenon of persistent infantilism, sometimes called neoteny or paedomorphosis, is seen in other domesticated animals—for example, the domestic pig and cow. Michael Fox has pointed out that it is also seen in human beings: in some respects we look and act a lot more like baby apes than like adult apes.)

Of course, we haven't quite succeeded in making our dogs as tractable and cuddly as we might wish. In fact, as our society becomes increasingly urban and our cities increasingly strange, our best friend sometimes seems to be turning against us. Consider this classic pet-problem scenario: A modern Mom and Dad, perhaps remembering the dogs of their own happy childhoods, stop in at a shopping-mall puppy mart to pick up a surprise for the kids. Believing that dogs are essentially alike, they intend to choose one of a convenient size and an agreeable color. But their plans change as they are won over by an adorable male puppy, one that pads up fearlessly to check them out while his litter mates cower in the corner of their pen. Mom and Dad feel that this dog has chosen them. So they bring him home, and the children give him a name. Let's call him Rambo.

All goes swimmingly for a few months, save for the usual problems of soiled carpets and diminishing interest on the part of the kids. Then one night, while the maturing puppy is eating his dinner, the youngest child wanders into the kitchen and makes a move that looks to the dog, seeing it out of the corner of his eye, like an advance on his food dish. Responding less to the child than to the genetic legacy of his hunter forebears, Rambo growls his most menacing growl—as a feeding wolf might do in such a situation, even if the interloper were higher in the pack's pecking order. The child recoils in terror, and Rambo goes back to his dinner, having learned a new way to avoid the stress of mealtime interruptions. The next time this sequence occurs, the child runs to the living room and complains to Mom and Dad. When Dad goes into the kitchen to investigate, Rambo tries the technique out on him. Dad, knowing little of dog behavior but feeling certain that retaliation would only make things worse, also retreats, giving Rambo another valuable lesson in how to influence people. Eventually, through numerous repetitions of this exercise, the dog expands his territory until the entire kitchen is his at mealtime. And, having had much success with the growling technique, he samples other tricks from his bag of genetically organized aggressive behaviors, baring his teeth, snapping, and—when those fail to produce the desired result—biting. The children's pet has become a menace.

Perhaps TV can help. There's Barbara Woodhouse, the Julia Child of dog training, waving jauntily and striding confidently into the living rooms of America, dressed in her English-lady uniform of blue sweater, plaid skirt, and no-nonsense shoes. Mrs. Woodhouse—it wouldn't seem right to call her anything else—is a savvy animal trainer, to be sure. Her experience is long and varied, including work with horses and cows in addition to dogs. She has trained many animals for the movies, and she wrote a couple of good books before becoming an international media celebrity. And just look at the way the dogs mind her! They seem to obey almost instinctively. That they return to their mischievous ways as soon as she hands the leashes back to their owners only proves that she is someone special.

With Rambo blockaded safely in the kitchen, Mom and Dad bask in public television's reassuring glow. This is going to be easy. Mrs. Woodhouse is full of advice, and Dad is taking notes: Hold the leash over two fingers of the right hand. Not three fingers, two. Give the sit signal with two distinct arm movements, and enunciate the command in separate syllables accordingly: "Si-tt." To praise the dog for doing well, scratch its chest gently with one finger—don't rub!—and say "What a good dog"; drop the pitch of your voice on the word good. Remember, there are no bad dogs (except for the obvious cases of mental derangement), only inexperienced owners. And we're going to fix that.

Next day Mom goes out and picks up the correct sort of choke chain—the links are not too big, not too small—and when Dad gets home from work he takes Rambo out for his first lesson, notes in hand. The notes say that a good firm jerk on the leash can make a nervous dog confident, so Dad summons up his merriest tone of voice, cries "Walkies"—the word Mrs. Woodhouse prefers to "Heel"—and sets out with a decisive, confidence-building yank. Rambo confidently bites him on the leg.

By this time Rambo is nearly a year old and has assumed in our hypothetical household the same position that he enjoyed among his mates in the pet shop: he is top dog, alpha wolf, the leader of the pack. Unless they are content to live with this situation—which a surprising number of people seem to be—Mom and Dad now stand at a crossroads. One way leads to the local animal shelter. The other leads to a live, in-the-flesh dog trainer. We already know what happens at the shelter. Let's see what we can learn from a few trainers.

TWENTY-NINE DOG OWNERS, twenty-nine dogs, and eight or ten onlookers are gathered in the training area in front of Bill Koehler's house in Ontario, California. It's a Saturday morning, and Koehler's son Dick is conducting the fifth session of a ten-week beginners' class in dog obedience. Bill Koehler (his last name rhymes with dealer), who is seventy-one, began teaching such classes in 1946; during the war he was a civilian trainer at the War Dog Reception and Training Center, in San Carlos, California, and later he made a successful career in what he calls the "picture-dog" business, training and handling such dogs as Roy Rogers's Bullet and the stars of the Walt Disney movies Big Red and The Shaggy Dog. Now the family business consists mostly of group classes, and Dick Koehler, who is fifty-two, runs nearly all of them—Friday nights at a dog club in Fontana, Monday nights in the parking lot of a pet-supply house in Colton, Tuesdays in San Bernardino, six and sometimes seven classes a week, thirty or forty dogs to a class, 800 or 900 dogs a year.

Bill Koehler used to operate a kennel here in front of the house. It's in an out-of-the-way place in one of Ontario's industrial districts, so close to the tracks that some people have to struggle to be heard over the sound of a long passing freight. Not Dick Koehler; he has voice to spare. He's a rugged-looking man, with weathered skin, graying dark hair, and a big belly hanging over his belt. With a leash in his hand he is nimble. He sometimes paces while addressing his students, and he sometimes calls them "people," as in "Now, people, there's something I want to show you. Who has a dog that's heeling wide?"

To heel properly, a dog must walk at its handler's left side, changing pace as necessary to keep its ear about even with the handler's knee. A dog that heels wide is straying too far to the left, allowing too much distance between itself and the handler's leg. If the dog is on a leash and wanders to the far side of a fireplug, the fault can be annoying; if it wanders to the far side of, say, a toddler or a senior citizen, the consequences might be more serious. Dick Koehler is going to demonstrate a cure.

A four-by-four wooden post is planted firmly in the yard, extending three or four feet above the ground. It's called the heeling post. Koehler accepts a leash from one of his students and walks the volunteered dog, a female black Labrador retriever, toward the post, allowing her to heel wide so that she will pass by one side of the post while Koehler passes by the other. As soon as he can see that the dog will err, Koehler locks the leash tight in his hand and picks up his pace slightly; as he passes the post, the dog is pulled rudely into it, her head pressed firmly against the wood. She squirms and struggles, looking for a way out. Koehler keeps moving forward; the pressure on the dog's neck lets up only when she manages to free herself by backing around the post.

Now Koehler returns to the starting point and sets off a second time. Again he walks purposefully toward the post; again he gives the Lab enough leash to hang herself. But this time the dog is having none of it. As the two approach the post, she appears to have been grafted to Koehler's knee; she has no intention of letting anything come between her and her master. Koehler makes it hard for her, angling toward the post so that she will have no room to pass with him. At the last minute she stops and lets him walk ahead, and then follows him on the correct side of the post. Students and onlookers laugh appreciatively.

The teacher addresses his class: "How many of you, when you were little kids, stuck a hairpin in an electrical outlet?" Pacing, he surveys the raised hands. "Couple of you. How many times did you do that?" Single raised fingers. "One time. How many of you have ever held your finger over a burning match? How many times did you do that?" Pause one beat. "It doesn't take long, does it? Okay, your dog is capable of figuring out a simple mechanical problem—if you bang your head against a post, it smarts. It doesn't take much. The dumbest dog in the world is gonna bang his head against the post maybe three times.

"Now, if you noticed, when I went past the post with the dog the first time, I maybe even speeded up a little bit. I want to give that dog the privilege of learning that when you bang your head against the post, it smarts. That's his God-given right, to learn information like that. Don't take it away from him. There are people in the world who would be kindly, and actually end up punishing their dog, by coaxing and getting to the post and losing their nerve and not allowing the dog to learn that when he sees that post coming, he better duck behind the handler and get out of the way." Pause. "You understand that?"

Now the students line up to try it for themselves. Bill Koehler, who is watching the lesson with me and wants to be sure I get the point, has supplied me with a stopwatch and told me to record the total time each dog spends in the trapped, hung-up position on the wrong side of the post. I'm also to record the number of passes each dog makes before it catches on. Here are my results from a sample of eighteen dogs: one dog failed to learn the lesson after the third try; one learned in three tries; six learned in two; six learned in one; and four could not be induced to run afoul of the post in the first place. No dog spent more than eight seconds total in the hung-up position on any one try, and most spent only three or four. Bill Koehler's interpretation of this data is that most dogs can figure out the relationship among dog, handler, leash, and post within a few seconds, and many require only one trial. It's an example of what Koehler calls "single-experience learning," and he offers it as proof that dogs can think.

Koehler likes to show the heeling-post exercise to psychologists. He sees them as the enemy, as inexperienced and overeducated fools who labor to obscure the obvious—that dogs and other animals are capable of reason—with the gobbledygook of stimulus and response, operant conditioning, instinct and reflex. "I always ask, when I give a clinic, if we have a psychologist or a psych major present," he told me. "You have to stake your shrink out, always.

"I had one psychologist cry," he said proudly. This was at a clinic in Elgin, Illinois. Before demonstrating the heeling-post exercise he questioned her closely on what the dog would do according to accepted psychological theory. "I made her commit herself first. I pinned her down on every definition. You have to do that with psychologists—they're like weasels." Then he walked a dog around the post a couple of times and pressed the psychologist to explain its behavior without resorting to the concept of thought. "Tears were streaming down her face," Koehler said. Had he just confronted her with the bankruptcy of her life's work? Or had he reduced her to tears by the sheer force of his badgering? Either is possible, I think. He's an opinionated and combative old cuss, but he makes a good case for himself.

BILL KOEHLER MAY BE THE ONLY person in the United States whose name stands for a method, perhaps even a philosophy, of dog training. The Koehler method, laid out in detail in a successful series of books that began appearing in 1962, is known all over the country—practiced in some places, vilified in others. Of course Koehler does not mind the controversy; it is, he told me, a "marketable commodity."

The Koehler method starts with a walk. The dog wears a common choke-chain collar (universal choice of the trainers I've met), attached to a fifteen-foot cord that Koehler calls a "lunge" or "longe line." (One Koehler-method instructor in my area calls it a "lounge line.") The handler may not tug on the line to indicate the direction he intends to go in; rather, Koehler insists, the line must be slack, lest it become an unwanted means of communication between handler and dog. Verbal communication is also forbidden at this point. To those who cannot resist coaxing their dogs or pleading with them, Koehler suggests tape over the mouth. The handler should pay the dog no attention whatsoever. His task is simply to choose an objective and walk toward it, holding the line firmly enough and proceeding with enough conviction to ensure that the dog has no choice but to come along. Whether the dog "plows a furrow with his fanny or saunters at your side," Koehler instructs, "do not permit him the victory of stopping you before you reach your objective."

The purpose of this exercise, which takes up the first three days of Koehler-method training, is to persuade the dog that the handler is going to go where he pleases, and that if the dog wants to know where that might be, it must watch the handler. Koehler contends that speaking and tugging on the leash only convince the dog that it doesn't need to pay attention. If the handler announces his every move, the dog may feel free to pursue its own interests between announcements. Koehler says, "A dog is an intelligent creature—intelligent enough to see that if the human is going to pay all the attention, the dog doesn't have to. There are lots of people who work as seeing-eye humans for dogs that can see perfectly well. Seeing-eye humans do all the thinking for them."

These three days of noncommunicative walking are preparation for what may be the most important event in the Koehler program. If all goes well (Koehler promises it will), the fourth day brings a fundamental reordering of the relationship between dog and handler. The handler begins by devising a temptation that is certain to appeal to the dog and disrupt its attentiveness—the neighbor's cat, a pile of hamburger, an open gate. Say it's an open gate.

"Now, equipped with the longe," Koehler has written, bring the dog from confinement and approach the open gate as head-on as the layout of your area permits. . . . If your dog fails to see the invitation, stop at least twenty feet from the gate until he alerts to his opportunity. Lock both hands tightly in the loop of the longe, and offer him Godspeed and the full fifteen feet of slack. As he moves toward the gate, hold your line-grabbing hands to your chest like a ball-hugging halfback and drive hard in the opposite direction. You should be going at least eight miles per hour to ensure follow-through for the dog's abrupt stop and complete reversal. And there is a reversal, unless you mush out and slow down. Let the unchallengeable force of your momentum carry the dog at least eight feet in your direction so that the lesson has the maximum significance as well as impact.

Can you picture this maneuver? What Koehler refers to as the dog's "abrupt stop and complete reversal" other people sometimes call flipping or dumping the dog; of the eight feet that the dog is "carried in your direction," half or more are likely to be traversed in midair. It is a rude surprise, which is exactly what Koehler intends. Just a few repetitions of this, he claims—three minutes, more or less—will effect a dramatic transformation in the dog's behavior. "The third time, you'll feel like you lost a fish." The dog will be watching your every move; indeed, with its extraordinary sensory abilities, it will seem to anticipate your every move. Koehler promises that by repeating this exercise over a period of time with a wide variety of progressively more tempting distractions, one can eventually persuade the dog that when it is in a training or obedience situation, it must watch the handler at all times, especially when tempted by something else.

Some see this technique as cruel or unnecessarily rough. Naturally Koehler's perception is different, and he claims that the dog's is too. If one uses a fifteen-foot line, he says, and takes care to give the dog plenty of slack, the dog perceives its "abrupt stop and complete reversal" not as a fate visited upon it by the handler but as something it has brought upon itself. Think of an oak tree, Koehler says. A dog may light out for the gate once, or it may try running full-speed into an oak tree once. In each case it quickly learns the consequences of its action. Now, Koehler asks, can you imagine a dog running into the tree a second time? Does the dog hate the oak tree? Is the oak tree cruel? If the dog does charge the tree again, does it deserve to get a lump on its head? Koehler insists that the longe exercise is every bit as

impersonal. Moving eight miles an hour in one direction after the dog has taken off in the opposite direction is not a technique for punishing or correcting the dog: at this early stage of training, Koehler says, he wouldn't think of correcting the dog. "But I'm gonna remember the cake in the oven and I'm gonna run to see if it's burning." If the handler presents the exercise without emotion or malice, the dog will perceive it that way, just as it accepts the neutrality of the oak tree. That, Koehler says, is why the technique is so much more successful than the common method of yanking on the leash and asking or ordering the dog to come along. The common method is a contest of wills—master against dog. The Koehler method is a matter of fact—dog against the oak tree, dog against the laws of physics. Were you to infer from this that dogs have more respect for oak trees than they have for their masters, Koehler would smile and say that you're beginning to get the idea.

THE CONTEST OF WILLS does have a place in the Koehler method. Indeed, it becomes central as training proceeds beyond the first, fundamental steps. The special relationship between people and dogs is made possible by a small miracle of transference: a dog is willing to accept a human family as its pack, a human master as its alpha. But in the wolf pack the master's job is open to new applicants. Rudolf Schenkel, in a famous study on wolf behavior, wrote that "every mature wolf has an ever ready 'expansion power,' a tendency to widen, not a personal territory, but his own social behavior freedom, and to repress his 'Kumpans' [the other members of his pack]." The Koehler method assumes that the same is true of domestic dogs—that deep within its canine heart every pet wonders if it might not be better suited for the job of alpha than the chump who currently holds the position. Occasionally—the Koehlers would say constantly—a pet dog will try its luck. It may challenge the owner's authority by simply disobeying, or in extreme cases it may mount an actual physical attack.

The Koehlers and many other trainers therefore see their work chiefly as a matter of establishing the proper dominance hierarchy—placing the dog at the bottom of the household pecking order. The classic means of asserting dominance is the simple "leash correction," a decisive upward jerk on the leash which momentarily closes the choke chain around the dog's neck. (If the chain is arranged properly, it will fall open again immediately after the pressure is released.) To this some trainers add a technique or two borrowed from the alpha wolf. Konrad Lorenz claimed that he persuaded a self-reliant chow to accept him as its master by leading the dog on long excursions into unfamiliar territory, as the alpha wolf would lead his mates in a hunt. The Monks of New Skete, a group of Eastern Orthodox religious who breed, board, and train dogs in upstate New York (and who have published a well-regarded book called *How to Be Your Dog's Best Friend*), recommend that pet owners assert dominance with a method they call the alpha-wolf roll-over. The trainer grabs the dog by the scruff of the neck and rolls it onto its back, into one of the classic postures by which an inferior wolf submits to its betters. The monks also counsel pet owners on the use of eye contact to communicate affection and disapproval.

Trainers say that such expressions of dominance are desirable from the canine viewpoint as well as the human—that although dogs will test their masters, or challenge them for the leadership position, all dogs are most secure and confident when their places in the social order are firmly established and enforced. According to this reasoning, being the alpha wolf is less important to a dog than having an alpha wolf and knowing with certainty who it is. This may be why some dogs seem to go to pieces when separated from their masters. It is also the rationale behind Barbara Woodhouse's contention that a skittish dog can be made happier and more confident by a few firm jerks on its choke collar. "Jerk 'em and love 'em" is the way Mrs. Woodhouse puts it.

The Koehlers begin to rely heavily on the common leash correction as they move into the standard beginning exercises—sit, lie down, heel, stay, and so on. They also employ a couple of tricks picked up from the behavior of nursing bitches. To say "No!" or "Knock it off," the Koehlers use the word *out*, which they claim mimics the guttural snarl used by a mother to reprimand her young (for example, as Dick Koehler says, when a puppy "bites too hard on the faucet"). To control an aggressive dog in extreme circumstances—in other words, to stop a fighter or biter—they sometimes "hang" the dog by its collar, literally letting it twist in the wind. They say that mother dogs discipline their puppies in a similar manner, taking them by the scruff of the neck and holding them, sometimes shaking them, in midair; Dick Koehler says the method is effective because dogs fear the "loss of environmental control" that they suffer when their feet lose contact with the ground. If hanging fails, the Koehlers sometimes resort

to what they call the “tranquilizer”—a piece of rubber hose, reinforced with a wooden dowel rod, that is used to strike the dog on the muzzle, between nose and eyes.

Most conscientious trainers who use these techniques—and many, perhaps a majority, do—try to be fair with them. Most would tell you that though it is proper to correct a dog for failing to obey, it is not proper to correct it for failing to understand. If you want to teach your dog to sit, for example, you must begin by gently guiding the dog into position while saying the word sit, and you must continue doing so until you are confident that the dog understands what is expected of it; then and only then are you justified in making a leash correction if the dog fails to sit on command. The Koehlers subscribe to this standard. Bill Koehler’s books state it clearly, and Dick Koehler emphasizes it in his classes. Both also say that the most extreme forms of discipline are appropriate only for the most extreme cases of aggression—biting, fighting, and other pursuits that are likely to land a dog in the local gas chamber. Here again, they subscribe to the common standard. But the Koehlers have the reputation of being rougher than most trainers; in some circles the mere mention of their name causes heads to shake and eyes to roll.

One reason for this reputation is that what the Koehlers consider the inevitable consequence of an errant dog’s mistake—the indignity a dog is likely to suffer at the heeling post or on the end of a longe line—looks to a lot of other people like an unwarranted correction. Another reason is the frankness with which Bill Koehler writes about the nuts and bolts of dog discipline. Many trainers know how to use a rubber hose, and when it is likely to be effective; not many feature such information in their books. But the biggest reasons, I suspect, spring from Bill Koehler’s convictions about what dogs can do and what training should be. Koehler thinks that dogs are smarter than most people will acknowledge. He also thinks that most training problems are matters of disobedience, not misunderstanding. The two convictions are surely connected. Koehler thinks that if a dog fails to sit on command after a few training sessions—and many do—it can only be because the dog is getting uppity. Not only is it smart enough to understand what is wanted, it is also smart enough to feel contempt, and crafty enough to express it. Koehler has written:

Of the many ways in which a dog can demonstrate his contempt for a deficient master, the “sit exercise” is one of the most expressive. By simply waiting for the second, third, or fourth command, or a number of nagging tugs before sitting, he can show his disdain. To add emphasis, he can sit sideways, his eyes and mind focused on something more interesting than his master, who by now is happily misconstruing his action as obedience.

Such response to a sit command is similar to the action of a child who, when told to sit on a chair, flops down on the floor. To say that the child’s response denoted respect and the exercise of good qualities of character is ridiculous. To construe a dog’s delayed, inaccurate response to command as character-forming obedience is laughable.

Koehler believes that the refusal to perform usually stems from a lack of respect. He contends that dogs can be confused, upset, or perhaps even angered by a tentative or unjust handler. What they respect, indeed require, is authority, assurance, and fairness. This is another reason why Bill Koehler forbids tugging on the leash and pleading with the dog for cooperation. One decisive correction is far kinder, he says, than “nagging a dog into neurosis.”

Another difference between the Koehlers and some other trainers is the degree to which they stress reliability and off-leash control. The Koehlers are not content with a dog that will sit on command nine times out of ten, or with a dog that obeys only when a leash keeps it close to its handler. They strive, Bill Koehler says, for “the kind of obedience that can save a dog’s life,” a level of control that will stop a dog dead in its tracks when it is about to do something dangerous—take off after a moving car, for example, or attack the toy poodle next door. For this reason among others, Bill Koehler derides those who use food tidbits in training, the practitioners of so-called positive or inductive methods; he calls them “cookie people,” making no effort to hide the contempt in his voice. To train a dog solely by means of positive reinforcement is to ask for trouble, he says, because the dog’s world is full of positive reinforcers —toy poodles, moving cars, and hundreds of others. A dog must learn to obey when no pleasure accrues from

doing so; sometimes the only motivation that will work is respect for (some would say fear of) unpleasant consequences.

To ensure that this motivation will work even when the dog is off the leash, the Koehlers use a couple of implements designed to convince the dog that the handler is ubiquitous or omnipotent—able to administer corrections when he appears to be out of reach or even out of sight. One of these implements is a “throw chain,” a short length of chain similar to that used in choke collars, doubled over and fastened in a way that makes it a convenient throwing object. After a dog has learned to perform the standard exercises on the leash, the Koehlers use the throw chain to wean it off the leash, directing it at the dog’s backside if the dog fails to come immediately when called. Later they add a “light line,” a length of fishing line that, Bill Koehler has written, “should be very strong, very long, and very light: so strong that your dog couldn’t possibly break it; so long that, regardless of [the dog’s] great speed and your slowness, you would have no difficulty in grabbing the trailing end [if the dog were to bolt]; and so light that its weight and length would be almost imperceptible.” The idea is to persuade the dog that it can be reeled in at any time; it can never be certain of being beyond the long reach of the handler.

IF YOU CAN IMAGINE THESE TECHNIQUES being practiced on a group of thirty more or less contentious dogs, by a group of thirty more or less exasperated dog owners, in a public place like a park or a pet-shop parking lot—flying chains and flipping dogs and jolting leash corrections and people yelling “Ouut!” at the absolute top of their lungs, with now and then a snarling dog suffering a loss of its environmental control—then you can imagine the sort of public-relations problems Bill Koehler has encountered in more than forty years of dog training. He once showed me some faint scars in his fingertips and told me this story about how he got them:

“I was in Griffith Park, in Los Angeles, and this person, who wasn’t even in our class, brought a Dobie”—he means a Doberman pinscher. “Honest to God, it had bitten seven people in a week, including a policeman. There was nothing wrong with the dog, but the dog had controlled its owners, see, and had gotten unstable, because he had no authority figure at all. So they handed me the leash, and the dog tried to take me. I mean he was out to get me. So I took him airborne. Well, the women—we were working on a basketball court there in Griffith Park, and the women had all piled their purses together, at one end of it. And I backed up holding the dog—did you ever step on a pile of purses? Man, you go down! So I went down on the cement, see. He was going after my face, but luckily I kept a hand on the collar, and then somebody grabbed him—I couldn’t get up because there were purses all around. There was a guy over on the tennis court, when I had the dog hung up, and he said, ‘What are you tryin’ to do, kill that dog?’ A big old guy playing tennis. And what I said to him I wouldn’t repeat even to another man. I think one of the things I said was, ‘Come on over—you handle him.’ This always shuts them off. But it just bugs you when you’re trying to do something for people, with an animal, and one of these wincers doesn’t understand.”

By the time Koehler began writing books, his contempt for the wincers—or the “humaniacs,” as he sometimes calls them—was so finely developed that he decided to take the offensive. When I read his first book, I thought I was reading the second or third, so combative was its tone; I assumed that I’d lost track of a book somewhere and that Koehler was answering its critics. In the first chapter he goes after psychologists, tidbit trainers, the authors of other dog-training books, and—most vehemently—the “kindly” people:

They range over most of the civilized world; generally one or more will be found close to where dogs are being worked. They often operate individually, but inflict their greatest cruelties when amalgamated into societies. They easily recognize each other by their smiles, which are as dried syrup on yesterday’s pancakes. Their most noticeable habits are wincing when dogs are effectually corrected and smiling approvingly at each other when a dozen ineffective corrections seem only to fire a dog’s maniacal attempts to hurl his anatomy within reach of another dog that could maim him in one brief skirmish. Their common calls are: “I couldn’t-do-that—I couldn’t-do-that,” and “Oh myyy—oh myyy. ” They have no mating call. This is easily understood.

When I asked Koehler what he was so angry about, he assured me that he was not answering any critics when he wrote that passage. It was a preemptive strike. "See," he told me, "I think most people are sane, and I wanted a way that I could alienate all the nuts and get the mentally sound people to read my book." On another occasion he made me laugh out loud by announcing, "I guess the nicest thing that could happen to you is to enjoy the enmity of the incompetent." This is another reason Bill Koehler has a bad reputation in some dog-lovers' circles: he baits his adversaries. He takes an almost perverse pleasure in shocking them.

He can't help himself. "See, I love dogs. Believe me, I've slobbered over more good and worthless dogs than almost anybody. Yesterday morning I was bawling like a baby because I had to have an old dog put down. But you know, sentiment is one thing, but there's a time for logic, too, in the training of dogs and every other profession. I suppose that every doctor who's had to open the abdomen of a child felt some sorrow for that child, but he also felt a responsibility to take whatever drastic steps were necessary to try to save the child's life.

"I've run a survey, from Cape Town, South Africa, to Regina, Saskatchewan, and in this survey I ask the people who are attending my clinics a simple question: If they were a social menace, and if they had their choice, would they rather be put to sleep in a black box or be knocked cold? And from Cape Town all the way to Regina, I've never run into anyone who would rather be put to sleep permanently than knocked unconscious, if it took that.

"I think these humaniacs are the worst damned enemies that dogs and other people have. . . . A lot of this stuff sounds so nice—'We love our doggies.' Cripe. They don't really love 'em, they love themselves, and they love their image of being such kind people. And I'll tell you this, when their dog gets killed unnecessarily from running out in traffic, they're very apt to go the whole route and put a little box edged in black in *Off-Lead* magazine or one of those: *Terdle*, 1979-1982.' And the poor dog would be alive today if they had vertebras instead of Jell-O."

part

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Four Ways to Walk a Dog, part 2

By [Michael Lenehan](#) part [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#)

WATCHING BERNIE BROWN teach a dog to heel would drive Bill and Dick Koehler up a wall. The Koehlers walk a dog on a slack leash and tempt it to err, so that it can learn from its mistakes; Brown holds the leash taut, so that the dog will have no choice but to walk in the correct position. The Koehlers forbid “bribing” a dog with food and “nagging” it with repeated commands; Brown teaches a puppy to watch him by fluttering his fingers at his belt buckle, sometimes holding a tidbit there, saying “Watch . . . watch . . . watch . . . watch.” The Koehlers think that dogs are smarter than most people give them credit for; Brown is one of the people who don’t give them much credit. “I treat a dog as a very simpleminded animal, like a mentally retarded child,” he says. “I go very slowly.” The Koehlers aim to teach a dog the “consequences of its own actions,” stressing the animal’s dignity and the handler’s authority; Brown tries to make training fun and exciting for the dog, expressing enthusiasm with a particularly gooey sort of baby talk: “Look at that baby! Look at that boy! Oh my goodness, oh my goodness gwacious, is that bootiful! That’s just scwumptious.” When he’s particularly pleased, he’ll hold a dog’s snout in his hands and kiss the dog full on the lips, loud and wet.

Finally, whereas the Koehlers are straightforward, perhaps to a fault, about the use of physical force in training, Brown’s attitude is a bit more complicated. Having learned his first techniques from traditional, military-style trainers—practitioners of what he calls the “jerk ‘em, sock ‘em, bang ‘em method”—Brown now claims to have found a better way. His method, which he pointedly calls “the No-Force Method of Dog Training,” does not eschew force so much as seek to avoid it as long as possible. Brown admits that for some dogs forceful training is the only way to get results. But for others—the majority, he says—it does more harm than good. It can make a “soft” dog or a shy one nervous, withdrawn, even aggressive. Brown therefore envisions a ladder of escalating force, and he advocates taking each dog only as high as is necessary to get results. Where his own dogs are concerned, he’d rather replace the dog than climb all the way up, but of course he cannot ask the same from everyone who comes to him for help, so he operates by a double standard that he readily acknowledges. I once heard him say to a roomful of dog owners: “I can’t bang a dog around. I cannot live with myself if I have to beat up my dog. I can beat up your dog okay. I can handle that.”

At times the Koehlers and Brown appear to be in entirely different businesses, and in a way they are. Brown is one of the extremists of dog training—one of the “obedience people” (as distinct from “pet people,” in Brown’s parlance), who have turned training into a means of amusement, a form of human competition. Obedience competitions—or trials, as they are called—are regulated by the American Kennel Club and held at dog shows all over the country. In them dogs are required, among other things, to heel, jump over hurdles, retrieve wooden dumbbells, respond to silent hand signals, and pick from a group of objects the one that bears the handler’s scent. By accumulating points in these trials, handlers can work their dogs up through a progression of obedience titles, from C. D. (companion dog) to O.T.Ch. (obedience-trial champion).

Few people are better at this game than Bernie Brown. For three years running, 1979 through 1981, his male golden retriever Duster—properly Ch. and O.T.Ch. Meadow-pond Dust Commander—was the Ken-L-Ration Obedience Dog of the Year, meaning he had scored more obedience-trial points than any other dog on the circuit. Brown retired Duster in 1982, at the age of six. Until last summer, when he was surpassed by another golden retriever, Duster had scored more points than any dog in the history of AKC obedience competition. Such a feat requires not only a talented dog but also a driven handler. Brown, a former newspaper copy editor and magazine publicist, says that obedience competition is his ego trip. “You know, you walk into a room where there’s a thousand dogs, and you walk by and people say”—his voice drops to a whisper—“Look who’s here. That’s Bernie Brown! That’s my high in life. That’s what turns me on. Don’t think it’s not something to be able to walk into a room in Detroit or Carolina or Florida or California or wherever I go, and when I’m in the ring suddenly from all over the room people come just to stand by and watch—don’t think I’m not aware of that. Do you know I retired Duster a year before the dog should have been retired? Why? So nobody in the world, not one person alive, can say, ‘Oh, I saw that dog, he wasn’t so great.’ I retired him at his peak, because I never wanted anybody to say, ‘Well, Jesus, that’s Bernie Brown? What’s so great about him?’ I don’t want that. It would hurt my pride too much. I can’t handle that.”

Duster begat his own successor in the obedience ring, a male golden called Chip, short for Meadowpond Duster’s Chip Off the Block. (Meadowpond is the name of the kennel where the dogs were bred.) Chip was only sixteen months old when he competed in the Gaines 1984 United States Dog Obedience Classic, held in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He won in the novice division and earned the meet’s highest score, 199 out of a possible 200. But later, as Chip moved from novice to open competition, a spine problem surfaced, ending his career; the open level is where the jumping begins, and Chip was literally unable to make the leap. Brown found him a home with some pet people and began searching for another competition dog. He was still searching a year later. When I first met him he was high on Skor, a golden puppy that he had just begun to work with. A couple of months later, when we met again, Skor was in the doghouse and Brown had a new world-beater, Cajun. He said, “Regardless of how good I am—and I really think I am one of the best trainers in the United States—I am only as good as the dog working with me. Duster made me look fantastic. Skor makes me look like a piece of I think Cajun is going to make me look as good as Duster.” But it’s hard to judge a young puppy. By Brown’s own reckoning Cajun was the sixteenth dog he had tried as Duster’s replacement. His pride would not allow him to return to competition until he had found the perfect partner. “When I go into the ring, I want ‘em to say, ‘That little . . . that sonofabitch has got another one.’ I want them to hate me.”

Success in the ring is Brown’s chief source of ego gratification; it also generates his chief source of income. He gives occasional group training classes, like the Koehlers’, and he makes house calls to deal with problem dogs, but most of his livelihood comes from private lessons and weekend seminars that he gears specifically to AKC obedience competitors. (He has also written a couple of training manuals, the first of which is dedicated to Duster.) I attended a seminar he gave in Bristol, Tennessee, for about fifty dogs and their owners, mostly women. (Obedience competition is overwhelmingly female.) He put on a good show. He’s a compact, peppery man of fifty-three, who could easily be mistaken for forty-three. He is affable, open, and hopelessly profane—if he fails to swear within five minutes of shaking your hand, you’re probably making him nervous. Working the floor of a YWCA gym with a wireless microphone clipped to his shirt, he instructed his audience the way he teaches his dogs: very slowly, repeating some sentences two or three times for emphasis. He larded his talk with “we”s and with teacherly phrases like “In other words” and “What do I mean by that?” Once in a while he brought Duster or Cajun to the center of the room to illustrate a point. (Skor had been left at home, in Hinsdale, Illinois.) Brown harangued the audience, swore at them, ridiculed their pitiful ignorance, and they laughed and ate it up.

“Write this down,” he told them. “As a dog trainer, you have one function only. One function only. What is that function? I’ll tell you. It is, you’re not to let your dog make a mistake. It’s that simple. What is your job as a dog trainer? Pure and simple, cut out the bull. . . Not let your dog make a mistake. Now, I am in the minority. Most trainers feel that we have to let the dog make a mistake so we can correct the dog. Because how does the dog know what’s wrong unless the dog is corrected? That’s the way ninety percent of the dog training is done today in this country. I think that’s wrong.”

An example of what Brown thinks is right is his heeling technique, which he calls binding. He uses an extra-short leash—he just happens to have them for sale; you can pay during the doughnut break—and grasps it just above the clip that attaches it to the choke chain. Holding the leash taut as he walks, he gives the dog virtually no room for error. He uses a different verbal command to correct each of the four mistakes the dog can make. If he feels the dog forging ahead, he commands “Get back”; if he feels the dog lagging behind, he says “Get up”; if the dog wants to swing wide to the left, “Get in”; if it crowds in toward his leg, “Get out.” Brown walks the dog in this fashion for minutes, days, months—until, as he likes to say, “the dog tells me it’s ready to go on to the next step.” The dog tells him through the taut leash, by not pulling in any of the four forbidden directions. The next step is to repeat the whole process, holding the hands a bit higher on the leash—one inch higher. Brown moves up the leash literally an inch at a time, until the dog can heel reliably on a slack leash and finally on no leash at all. Then it’s time to teach the right turn: back down to the bottom of the leash and up again, an inch at a time. This progression in tiny increments is characteristic of all of Brown’s training, even the advanced, off-leash work involving jumps and retrieves.

At the seminar Brown gave two main reasons for teaching the heel this way. The first stems from his working assumption on canine intelligence. The conventional way to teach heeling—used by Barbara Woodhouse, among many others—is to walk the dog on a slack leash, jerking in the appropriate direction to correct the faults of forging, lagging, and so on. The handler commands “Heel” on setting out and repeats the command with each correction—“Like this,” Brown mocked, jerking a poor imaginary dog on the end of a leash that he held in his hands: “If the dog goes wide—‘Heel!’ If the dog crowds in—‘Heel!’ I want the dog to go around—‘Heel!’ I want the dog to swing—‘Heel!’ Now look at that from the dog’s standpoint. Say we’re walking off-leash, where I can no longer jerk the dog, and I say to the dog ‘Heel!’ Should he swing, get up, get back, get in, get out—or fall on the floor in total frustration? I have given him six definitions for one word. So you say, ‘He can figure that out.’ Well, maybe your dog is smarter than my dog. See, my dogs are very dumb. So I give my dogs one word to mean one thing. ‘Get back’ means only one thing. ‘Get in’ means only one thing.”

The second advantage of this technique, Brown claims, is precision. “Jerking is a very unscientific way to get a dog in the heel position,” he said. “If I jerk the dog back, where do I jerk him back to? If I jerk him forward, how far is forward? Binding lets me bring the dog within a sixteenth of an inch of where I want him to be.”

IN THE STRANGE WORLD OF COMPETITIVE OBEDIENCE, inches count. To earn the title of companion dog, a dog must qualify in three separate novice obedience trials. In each trial it must score at least 170 points out of a possible 200, and it must receive at least half the points allotted to each of the trial’s several exercises. (For example, the off-leash heeling exercise is worth forty points; any dog that fails to score at least twenty on it does not qualify—a shameful fate known to obedience people as NQ.) Here is what the dog must do: heel on and off leash, staying in position when the handler speeds up, slows down, and turns; sit automatically whenever the handler stops; heel on leash as the handler walks in a figure eight; stand still and allow itself to be touched by the judge; come without delay when called and sit directly in front of the handler; move when commanded from this sitting position to the heel position, at the handler’s left knee, and sit there; sit and stay in a line of other dogs for one minute, and lie down with the other dogs for three minutes, while all the handlers stand on the opposite side of the ring.

To most pet people, a dog that could do all this would qualify as a fairly well trained dog. Most obedience people would consider a score of 170 reason to look for another hobby. Bernie Brown considers a score of 195 reason to look for another dog. The difference between the qualifying score of 170 and the perfect score of 200 lies in the speed, enthusiasm, and precision with which the dog completes the exercises. Points can be deducted if a dog lags a few inches while heeling, if it walks lackadaisically when commanded to come, or if it sits with its tail end a few degrees off center.

Brown thinks that competitive obedience is the most stressful endeavor a dog can endure—more

stressful even than the responsibility of guiding blind people through busy city streets. When he first told me this, I scoffed, but later I came to understand what he meant. I suggested to him that the difference between a guide dog and an obedience dog might be something like the difference between an infantryman on patrol in wartime and a grunt performing drills in boot camp. The infantryman's job is more dangerous and his responsibilities greater, but he enjoys a sort of freedom, and to an extent he can control what happens to him and his buddies. In comparison, the grunt in boot camp endures a particularly grating kind of stress. He has no freedom, no real responsibility, and very little appreciation for the utility of lockstep marching, snappy saluting, and precision bed-making. To the grunt, it all seems an arbitrary exercise of authority: If the object of marching is to get from one place to another, why am I being hollered at for walking out of step? Similarly, a dog might ask, if it could ask such things, If the object of sitting is to be still at this person's side, why am I being corrected for placing my butt a few inches to the left of my nose?

Brown liked my analogy. When I went on to suggest that competitive obedience is perverse and unnatural, he said, "Probably, you're not too wrong. I've said that dogs don't think or reason; they communicate in animalistic terms that we don't really understand. But I guess if dogs could talk, the dogs would say, 'Hey, this is a bunch of ... A dog is not made to be a precision animal. God didn't make him to be a machine, to be wound up like a robot.'"

Brown, a pro among hobbyists, demands much more of his dogs than most obedience people demand—not only more precision but also more enthusiasm, or at least the appearance of it. In the ring he aims to present a picture of unalloyed joy, exuberance, communion between dog and master. His golden retrievers walk with an almost equine prance, bending their heads around his leg to look adoringly up at his face. It's a sight to see, and Brown insists that it is a consequence not of training but of the dogs' temperament. Once, for my benefit, he took Cajun for a spin around the ring; the dog was only fourteen weeks old at the time, but he already had that Bernie Brown look. Brown said, "The average dog walks along and says, 'Aaah, let's get this over with.' But the natural temperament of this dog just says 'I want to please you: you enjoy it, I enjoy it, I love ya, I'm happy, I want to do it, I'm having a ball.'"

"Now," Brown asked me, "did I train him to do that?" No, he had not yet begun to train Cajun formally. "The dog popped out of the womb like that," Brown said. This is why he devotes so much energy to finding the right dog. He wants his dogs to look happy and enthusiastic under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, and he is convinced that dogs able to do so are born, not made. When he's "campaigning" a dog, as he campaigned Duster for three years, he competes in sixty or seventy shows a year. "Load the dog into a car, drive five hundred miles one way to a dog show, compete on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, take him back five hundred miles—week in, week out, week in, week out. You know something? In the history of the sport of obedience only three or four dogs have been able to handle that grind." The grind is part of the reason that Brown tries to avoid forceful training. He says that if he showed ten times a year, he might be able to get away with using conventional methods. But, he says, "I know that a dog can't stand that while competing seventy times a year. You can't beat a dog up to make it work like that. Numerous competitive trainers have tried it, and they've all gone down in flames."

IN HIS MANUALS AND SEMINARS BROWN STRESSES THAT whatever one's objectives in owning a pet—competition, companionship, or anything else—selecting a puppy of the proper temperament is more important than any training method. Too few dog owners, he says, are aware that dogs even have temperaments, and their ignorance is the main reason that animal shelters are euthanizing seven to ten million dogs each year in the United States. "You talk to a pet owner and say, 'What about the temperament of your dog?' and he won't even know what you're talking about. He'll say, 'I've bought a dog. My grandfather had a dog, my father had a dog, I had a dog, and now my son's got a dog. It has two legs in front, two legs in back, and a tail. What's temperament?'" As he said this, Brown was warming up to a diatribe, getting into character. "Then the dog starts snapping, growling, barking, and it's 'What have I got here? What's the matter? I better get something. I better get a book.' The guy goes in the store and picks up Barbara Woodhouse's book. 'Hmmm, "There are no

bad dogs, only problem trainers." Jesus, I'm doing something wrong. Barbara Woodhouse, I've seen her on Mery Griffin. I've seen her on Johnny Carson. Obviously there's nothing wrong with the dog—it says so here. There's something wrong with me."

Brown believes that the world is crawling with bad dogs. The commerce in purebred dogs has increased dramatically since the end of the Second World War. In 1930 and 1940 the American Kennel Club recorded about 48,000 and 83,000 new registrations respectively. By 1950 the number had shot up to about 252,000, and in 1970 it exceeded a million. (The number of purebreds registered by the AKC is of course only a small percentage of the country's total dog population. According to the Pet Food Institute, the United States is home to about 50 million pet dogs in all.) Brown believes that much of the rising demand for dogs is being met by less-than-conscientious breeders and pet-shop operators; the result, he thinks, is a serious decline in the temperamental quality of our pet-dog population. "In 1940 I had my first dog, a cocker spaniel. The cocker spaniel was the number-one breed in the country. Everyone wanted a cocker spaniel because of a dog named My Own Brucie. He was a black cocker, and he was on all the cereal boxes and magazine ads. . . . The breeders went insane. They bred mother to son, father to daughter, and on and on, and suddenly the cocker spaniel turned into a vicious, snarling, mean, aggressive little bastard. Today the cocker is one of the most miserable-temperament dogs in the world."

Almost all of the dog people I know agree with Brown that sloppy breeding—and particularly the overbreeding that tends to occur when a breed becomes very popular, as a result of a movie or a TV show, for example—has seriously harmed some breeds, both physically and temperamentally. Most would agree that a prospective pet owner can avoid many common pitfalls by educating himself, getting good advice, and carefully selecting a dog rather than simply obtaining one. This does not mean, however, that you have cause to panic if you've recently come home with a hastily acquired cocker spaniel. Breed stereotypes are like any others: valid though they may be as generalities, they do not apply reliably to individual dogs. Moreover, Brown's perspective differs greatly from that of the ordinary pet owner. As a competitor he demands much from his dogs, as a trainer he sees a disproportionate number of incorrigible cases, and as a character he tends to express himself enthusiastically. The cocker is not the only dog whose temperament qualifies as miserable in his view.

"The same can be said of the Irish setter," Brown says. "They bred the brains out of the Irish setter. They bred the brains out of the German shepherd, the Doberman. They're breeding the brains out of the rottweiler, and they bred the brains out of the collie. The dog your grandfather had is not the same as the dog your son has. The collie had a big, wide, pie-shaped head, and he was massive, a hundred pounds. Now the collie's head is about that narrow"—Brown was holding his fingers a few inches apart. "The old Irish setter had a massive, gorgeous head. Today an Irish setter is an insane, off-the-wall maniac. They bred the brains out of him. That's where dogs are going today."

DANIEL TORTORA IS THE ONLY DOG TRAINER I MET who was able to say, with a perfectly straight face, "Come on into my office." His office is on a wooded estate, about three acres, in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, an expensive suburb of New York City. His house is just outside the office door. His pool is out back, and his fire-engine-red Mercedes is usually parked up at the top of the hill. As we talked in one corner of the office, Tortora's assistant, Andrea Meisse, was working in another corner, entering data into a computer system that keeps track of Tortora's cases. Shelves in the room are packed with video cassettes documenting some of his more impressive cures. Behind his large desk is a small library of academic and reference books—Aversive Conditioning and Learning, Physiological Correlates of Emotion, Structure and Function in the Nervous Systems of Invertebrates, and dozens more. Arrayed on one wall are a collection of diplomas, including a Ph.D. in psychology from Michigan State, 1973. A sign down at the roadside identifies the place as Dr. Tortora's Pine Hill Kennels. A few miles away in Queens, where Tortora grew up, it would be called a nice setup.

In Tortora's training method—which is named RemBehCon, for remote behavior control—a dog is taught to heel in eighteen discrete steps (nineteen if you count heeling backward), enumerated in a computerized document called the RemBehCon Training Thesaurus. The first step, command level 1,

goes by the description INDUCED HEEL. Definition: dog can be induced to follow handler, walk alongside handler. The inducement might be a tidbit, a hand slapping playfully on a thigh, or merely the dog's affection for the handler. Command level 18 is SUCTION: find the heel position from progressively increasing distances from handler with an attraction close to the dog + FULL HEEL. (FULL HEEL is command level 9, a drill-review of levels 1-8.) "This is what most people have, if they're lucky," Tortora told me, pointing to the top of the list. "This is what most people want," he said, sweeping his hand down toward the bottom. He laughed generously, as he often does; the ironies of life and of dog training seem to amuse him greatly. "Customers come to see me and they say, 'I want something very simple. All I want the dog to do is to listen to me when I tell it something.' What they mean is 'All I want the dog to do is come when called when he's chasing a rabbit, or sit calmly when he's getting prepared to jump excitedly on a guest.' All they want the dog to do is be controlled in the most demanding situations."

As Tortora defines it, dog training is the act of getting from what the customer has to what the customer wants—from the top of the list to the bottom. His Thesaurus, which he says is one of the keystones of his method, lays out for each of eighteen different commands a progression of tasks arranged in order of increasing difficulty. A dog is not asked to heel at level 6 (circles and figure eights) until it has mastered level 5 (straight lines at varying paces). In this respect Tortora is similar to Bernie Brown. "A correction trainer will be around here," Tortora said, waving his finger over the middle of his list, "and then the dog will be exposed to an attraction, and it will be punished, or corrected, for going toward the attraction. In my way of training that's sort of like teaching a child arithmetic, giving it a test in calculus, and then punishing it for failing." Bernie Brown's cardinal rule of training—never let the dog make a mistake—is in Tortora's argot "errorless learning," a concept that he says is well accepted among behavioral psychologists. And Tortora's leash technique—"leash pressure," he calls it, to distinguish it from the traditional jerking—is somewhat similar to Brown's binding. But Tortora parts company with Brown, and many other trainers, when it comes time to move from on- to off-leash control, probably the most difficult step in all of dog training. This is the point where Bill Koehler resorts to the throw chain and the fishing line. Tortora has used Koehler's techniques and admits that they work. "But you can't imagine the cursing," he says. "You know, if you've got a fish on the end of a fishing line, it gets tangled up. You can just imagine the potential problems if you've got a dog on the end of the line." Tortora, as one might expect from a quick look around his office, prefers a higher-tech approach. What puts the Rem in RemBehCon is another keystone of his method—a Tri-Tronics model AI-90 remote-control trainer, or what is commonly called a shock collar.

Tortora's kennel is a place where nitty-gritty dog training meets highfalutin experimental psychology. That's a rare intersection. Here Tortora is advising the readership of *Gun Dog*, "The Magazine of Upland Bird and Waterfowl Dogs," on the qualities that make a desirable retrieving prospect:

I want an easily developed natural fetch. I want the pups to chase after a bumper when it's thrown and have a desire to carry it around. I want pups that will naturally choose water over land.... If you find a pup with a good set of qualities, you can get a shallow water retrieve in his first session with water. I got all of this and more in my pups, so I'm pleased. So now what?

Here he is addressing his colleagues in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 1983, Vol. 112, No. 2:

The data seem to suggest that safety training may create in dogs a sense of control over environmental stressors. By teaching the dogs a behaviorally balanced battery of prosocial "coping" responses, they may be developing the canine counterpart of "self-efficacy" or "courage." This cognitive modification . . . may be of prime importance to the success and stability of the results.

LIKE MOST OF THE DOG TRAINERS I've encountered, Tortora trained his first dog in his early teens, largely by the seat of his pants. "He was a combination German shepherd and yellow Lab, a really big sucker. I have no idea how I trained him. I just figured it out. I never read a book on it; I think

I read a pamphlet, but I don't think I heeded it. It just made sense to me to do it this way: give a command just before the dog was about to do what I wanted him to do anyhow." Later, as a psychology student, Tortora would learn a name for this training technique—overlying. He used it to teach his dog to defecate and urinate on command. "I waited until he was about to have to go anyhow; then I'd run him outside and give the command for defecating, which was 'Hurry up.'" Tortora told me he went to camp one summer and left the dog with his father, neglecting to give complete instructions. His father walked the dog ten times in two days, to no avail, and finally called the camp in a panic. Tortora told him the secret words, and the crisis passed.

At Michigan State, Tortora worked not with dogs but mostly with rats, and mostly in the area of what is called escape-avoidance learning. He gave me a brief lecture on it from behind his desk, stopping occasionally to fish for a journal reference or to pull a book from the shelf behind him. (He teaches a few psychology courses at Jersey City State College.) "In a standard, basic escape-avoidance study—the first one was done in 1948, by a guy named Neal Miller, but his experiment was a little more complicated than this—you'd put a rat in a box. On one side of the box there are shock grids on the floor, and on the other side there are none. The two sides are divided by a small hurdle. A light comes on, and a second later electrical stimulation is sent through the floor. The rat hops around—no attempt is made to make this a nice experience for the rat—and then jumps over to the other side." With repeated trials, Tortora said, the rat learns to jump to the other side of the box as soon as the light comes on, before the electrical stimulation begins. "So the rat goes from escaping the stimulation—that is, jumping when it is on, when he's sort of having a hotfoot—to avoiding it. Now, once you teach a rat a really clear and unambiguous avoidance response, it sticks; it's very hard to extinguish that habit." Many behaviors learned by lab animals fade away when the reinforcement used to elicit them, whether positive or negative, is removed. If pecking a key no longer yields a morsel of grain, the pigeon soon loses the inclination to peck. If turning the wrong way in a maze no longer causes its foot to be shocked, the rat soon ceases to go the right way. In short, when the rules of the game change, the animal's behavior changes as well. But in avoidance learning the animal does not know that the rules have changed. "If you turn off the electricity," Tortora said, "so the light comes on but there's no shock following it, the rat still jumps. It makes sense, because the rat's jumping before it can find out that there's no electricity anymore."

In *Understanding Electronic Dog-Training*, a book written for and published by the manufacturers of the Tri-Tronics training collars, Tortora explained the principle of avoidance learning in dog-training terms:

Research has proved that a habit learned through avoidance training is the most permanent of all habits. To understand why, look at the situation from the dog's perspective. Let's say you trained your dog to sit using avoidance training. This means that you have convinced your dog to expect that sitting on command prevents discomfort. Thus, every time he sits on command, he feels that he has successfully avoided the discomfort, regardless of whether he really did or not. Everytime he sits on command, he reinforces his belief that the rules are still in effect since he didn't feel electrical stimulation.

There's an old joke that conveys the powerful effects of avoidance training. It goes like this: A man walks into a psychiatrist's office and sits on his hands. When asked by the psychiatrist why he is sitting in such a peculiar position, he says, "I always sit on my hands, it keeps the lions away." The psychiatrist replies, "There are no lions in Manhattan." To which the man responds, "See! It works."

After the dog has been trained to sit on command with avoidance training, if he could be asked, "Why are you sitting so nicely when commanded, you haven't felt electrical stimulation in years?" the dog would reply, "See! It works."

Tortora began working with dogs again after he completed his doctorate, in 1973. Within about a year he had hung out his shingle as an animal psychologist in Spring Valley, New York, not far from his present home. But he did not immediately understand how relevant his academic training was to the problems that pet owners were bringing him. When he first encountered the electronic dog-training collar, he

didn't even see the connection between it and the shock grids that he had worked with in grad school.

"I was taking dogs in, and I was running up against problems like, Here's a dog doing something wrong when I'm not there, and I need to be able to stop it. I think stealing food was the first case like that. What I needed was a device to deliver an aversive stimulus when I wasn't around. But I didn't even know that radio-control collars existed." At the time, a few shock collars were on the market; in principle (though not in electrical output) they were basically remote-control cattle prods, popular especially with the trainers of tracking and retrieving dogs, who need a way to correct their dogs at great distances. Before such devices were developed, some hunters used the fishing-line method that Bill Koehler advocates. Others used such imaginative techniques as "dusting," which is essentially shooting a load of buckshot at the ground near the dog, so that the earth appears to explode forbiddingly in response to the dog's mistake. Tortora sought something a little more practical. "I made a few calls," he said, "and bought my first radio-control collar from a trainer who said, 'Oh yeah, I got one of those.' He dusted it off—I think he was grateful to find somebody to take it off his hands." Tortora soon learned why. "When I first used it, I used it the same way everyone else was using it—to punish the dog. And I quickly saw the problems. The intensity was too high, and the results were not predictable. If a dog was jumping up on the kitchen counter, I could fix that problem using the collar, but then the dog wouldn't even go into the kitchen anymore. Or if the phone rang just before I pressed the button, the dog would be afraid of the phone. These were unpredictable results you wouldn't get when you had an animal in a Skinner box, where there was only one thing it could do."

Tortora said he floundered with the collar for about a month before realizing, suddenly, that he had been seduced by the ethos of traditional dog training and had abandoned the principles of behavioral psychology. "I remember sitting in my old office, in Spring Valley, and doing one of these," he said, smacking his hand against his forehead. "I said, 'What, did I forget what I've been doing for the last seven years?' Then I started thinking about how to use the collar in the escape-avoidance paradigm, and everything grew out of that."

Tortora began talking with the collar's manufacturers, who were in the process of transforming their product from a dirty little secret into a rather sophisticated behavior-modification tool. The original Tri-Tronics collar was fairly simple: pushing a button on a hand-held, battery-powered transmitter sent a radio signal to a box on the dog's collar; two pronglike contacts protruding from the box conducted an electrical charge to the skin of the dog's neck. The charge was supposed to hurt, just as a jerk on a leash is supposed to hurt; the purpose was punishment, and no one pretended otherwise. Present models are different. Now the user can set the electrical stimulation at one of five levels, the highest of which corresponds to the single level available previously. Tortora, who helped the company determine which levels would work best, believes that the change allows the collar to be used as a motivation rather than a punishment. At a low level, he says, the electricity may stimulate the dog's neck muscles, causing them to tense, without activating the pain nerves, whose response threshold is higher. Thus the stimulation may be felt not as pain but as a "pressure to perform," similar perhaps to the pressure that a dog feels when a choke collar binds it in a heeling position. Tortora has some reason to believe that when a dog is naturally motivated to perform—for example, when a retriever is fetching, indulging the instincts bred into it over centuries—the stimulation may even be felt as a form of arousal. Both Tortora and John Maurice, a trainer who was working for him when I visited his kennels, told me that a dog's perception of the electrical stimulation can depend on the way the handler presents it. Tortora demonstrated this to me with one of his own dogs, Levi, a German short-haired pointer. He gave her a jolt while she was running full-tilt after an airborne Frisbee; she ran right through the stimulation, with no reaction that I could discern. A few minutes later she made a mistake in another exercise. Tortora yelled "No!" and gave her another jolt of equal intensity. She yelped in pain.

(I have felt the third strongest of the five available shocks on my finger, which is no doubt more sensitive than a dog's neck. The sensation was certainly uncomfortable, but I'm not sure I can call it pain. I have seen the collar used on several different dogs by several different handlers, at Tortora's kennels and elsewhere. Usually the dogs flinch or tense visibly in reaction to the stimulus, but they do not act as though they have been struck or punished.)

Two of the three remote-control trainers now available from Tri-Tronics are designed explicitly to serve as escape-avoidance teaching devices. In these models each burst of electrical stimulation is preceded by a conditioning tone audible to the dog—a brief buzz that predicts the onset of stimulation, just as the light does for the rat in the shock box. Like the rat, the dog can learn to avoid the shock by responding quickly to the buzz. A button on the transmitter allows the handler to send the buzz only, without any accompanying electrical stimulation. In addition, the top-of-the-line Tri-Tronics trainer also produces a second tone, a beep that follows the electrical stimulation. This feature, added at Tortora's instigation, is based on "relaxation theory," a concept developed at Michigan State by Tortora's major professor, M. Ray Denny. The beep serves as a "safety tone," an indication that the shock is over. It too can be decoupled from the electrical stimulation, and can therefore be used to signal the dog that it has performed well and has avoided the aversive stimulus. "From half a block away," Tortora says, "I can say 'Good dog' by pushing a button." Eventually, if the training goes according to plan, the electricity drops out of the system and the dog can be trained entirely through the use of the conditioning tones.

In "Safety Training: The Elimination of Avoidance-Motivated Aggression in Dogs," a study he published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, Tortora describes using the remote-control collar to train thirty-six problem pets—biters, snappers, and growlers referred to him by veterinarians. These were what he calls "avoidance-motivated aggressors"—dogs that in his judgment had learned to use aggressive behaviors as means of avoiding stressful or unpleasant experiences. (Rambo, the kitchen terrorist invented for the beginning of this article, would probably qualify as an avoidance-motivated aggressor.) Tortora trained these dogs to respond to the standard obedience commands—come, heel, sit, stay, and so forth—according to his usual procedures. That is, he introduced the electronic collar only after each dog had learned the commands through more conventional training methods, and he played fetch or tug-of-war with the dog as a part of the training regime, because he believes that such play—the only chance most dogs ever get to exercise predatory instincts, which they no longer really need—is the most powerful reward a trainer has at his disposal. (It is also, he points out, more convenient than a pocketful of smelly liver treats.) In the end, Tortora claimed, every one of the thirty-six dogs was cured completely. Having learned aggression as an avoidance response, he explained, they were able to discard it, or suppress it, after learning a new set of avoidance responses in training. By imposing stress on the dogs, in the form of electrical stimulation, and teaching them that they could avoid it by obeying commands, training gave them alternative ways of coping, and ultimately a sense of control over their environment. Even their carriage—"the manner of holding and moving the head or body"—improved. In a word, the dogs became confident.

THE TRI-TRONICS COMPANY, which retains Tortora as a consultant, has taken pains to inform dog people that its products seem to be most effective when used as behaviorist tools rather than as instruments of punishment. But prejudice against the shock collar dies hard. I have encountered several dog trainers who dismiss it as vile but who apparently don't understand how the manufacturer recommends using it. I have heard the editor of a dog magazine announce that he'd never publish an article encouraging its use. Tortora believes that the prejudice is rooted in the mind-set of traditional dominance-submission dog training: trainers who know only punishment and physical dominance naturally assume that these are the purposes for which the collar must be used.

Tortora thinks that dominance does enter into training, but as a consequence, not as a starting point—something a trainer earns rather than something he seizes. A well-trained dog perceives its teacher as one who "gives good advice," Tortora says. "When I say something and the dog does what I say, or if the dog makes a certain movement after I make a certain sound, the dog eliminates pressure and gains reinforcement. If you consistently give the dog good advice about how to deal with its environment, then of course you're going to be the leader. If you think about the head of a pack, a dog or a wolf may bite or attack the subordinate members if they get out of line, but I don't think that's the key to holding dominance. I think the key is successfully controlling the whole pack's movements. If you ever saw a pack hunting, you know that the way the leader moves controls the rest of the pack. The result of that of course is the chase, or the successful bringing down of the prey. So it's movements—not obedience, not right and wrong, and not necessarily dominance. You never seek that, you get it. It's a by-product.

“If you look very carefully at the successful correction trainer, you’ll see that he’s using the terminology of correction training but he’s actually doing escape-avoidance learning. I’ve watched, I’ve had the opportunity of being sent around the country to watch very successful trainers. They use the same words as other trainers, but they’re a little out of kilter. They’ve learned to do it a little different because they say it gives them a ‘better result.’ They have discovered escape-avoidance learning.” So have horse trainers and elephant trainers, Tortora says. When a rider wants a horse to turn, he applies pressure to the head or mouth, and the horse turns to escape the pressure. A mahout trains an elephant the same way, using a clawlike device to pull the animal’s ear. “Horses have a dominance hierarchy,” Tortora says. “Elephants do too. But I don’t think the mahout seeks to dominate the elephant. Ultimately he does dominate, but—you know, with a dog the suggestion is you throw it over on its back. What do you do with an elephant?”

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Four Ways to Walk a Dog, part 3

By [Michael Lenehan](#) part [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#)

“HEEL,” USUALLY THE FIRST command a dog hears in training, is one of the last learned by a Seeing Eye dog. From the start these dogs are taught to pull ahead. Only after their training is well along—when they have learned to stop at intersections and walk around ladders and ignore the attentions of other dogs, children, and well-meaning adults—can they be introduced to the idea of heeling. When giving the command, the trainer drops the handle of the special working harness and holds the dog only by its conventional leather leash. The dog must learn that on leash it’s a follower; in harness it’s the boss.

The Seeing Eye, Inc., of Morristown, New Jersey—the first organization in the United States to provide guide dogs for the blind (and the only one entitled to the name Seeing Eye)—places about 230 dogs every year. A few of these dogs, mostly golden retrievers, are bought from breeders; a few are donated by the public; the rest are German shepherds and Labrador retrievers bred by the organization in its own kennels. Seeing Eye dogs are selected and bred generally for calm disposition and convenient size—they must fit comfortably under desks, restaurant tables, and so on—but a certain amount of variation is desirable. Blind people come in all sizes and temperaments, and so must their dogs.

Seeing Eye dogs are not quite the astounding creatures that myth makes them out to be. For example, they do not typically respond to such commands as “library” or “coffee shop”; their blind masters must tell them to go right, left, or forward at every intersection. Nor do Seeing Eye dogs read traffic lights. A much-repeated misconception is that, being color blind (as all dogs evidently are), they learn to stop for the top light on a traffic signal and to go for the bottom light. In fact their masters decide when it is time to cross the street, usually on the basis of what they hear; the dogs’ job is to disobey the command when crossing would not be safe. Seeing Eye people call it “intelligent disobedience.”

Most dogs need about four months to learn the job. For the first two weeks of this period they are drilled in basic obedience. For the last four weeks they practice guide work with the blind people to whom they have been assigned. In between they walk, walk, walk the streets of Morristown, five days a week, rain, snow, or shine, pulling behind them a band of dedicated and very well conditioned young men and women, mostly hearty, good-looking people dressed in the functional attire of the outdoor-fashion catalogue houses. Last summer I spent some time following one of these trainers, Pete Jackson, on his rounds. And I do mean following.

“THE BASIC THING WE’RE PLAYING WITH HERE is that the average domesticated dog wants to please humans. My goal is to teach the dog what makes me happy.” Jackson, blond, well tanned, and voluble, thirty-seven years old, was driving into Morristown when he offered this capsule analysis of dog training, nearly shouting to be heard over the clatter of his Seeing Eye van. Behind us, clipped to chains hanging from the truck’s walls, were his students for the morning, Zoe, Walt, and

Mickey—two shepherds and a yellow Lab. (The names of all Seeing Eye dogs have been changed.) Jackson was working a string of eight dogs, all in their eighth week of training, their sixth week in town. Today, as on every weekday, each would get thirty to forty minutes of work. "The dog has its own concept of safety," Jackson continued. "It doesn't have to be trained to avoid bumping into things. What the instructor has to do is increase the dog's degree of clearance, so its body becomes two and a half feet wider. It's like the dog grows an extension. The most difficult thing for the dog is to learn how to start and stop this 150-pound human being at the end of the harness. They develop a skill similar to that of the leading partner in a dance."

The Seeing Eye must take special measures to ensure that the puppies it raises will become devoted partners. Though they are not ready for formal training until they are about a year old, they cannot be kept in kennels much past their second month of life. Researchers have found that dogs undergo a critical socialization period, from about three to about twelve weeks of age, during which they form social habits that persist more or less throughout their lives. Puppies removed from the litter and given lots of human attention early in this period have been known to identify so strongly with people that as adults they have had difficulty mating with other dogs. Similarly, if a puppy's principal companions throughout this period are litter mates or other dogs, it will probably never get along well with human beings; kennel-raised dogs are often nervous around people and distrustful of them. The general belief among dog people is that puppies should begin to receive a significant amount of human attention at seven or eight weeks of age; this gives them the opportunity to socialize with both dogs and human beings. The Seeing Eye farms its puppies out at the age of eight weeks to the families of 4-H Club members in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. The 4-H families adopt the dogs for about a year, during which time they introduce them to elementary obedience exercises. Then the dogs return to the Seeing Eye for the first phase of their formal education, two weeks of intensive training in the basic obedience commands. They learn to sit, come, stay—no heeling, of course—and fetch, because guide dogs are sometimes called upon to retrieve dropped gloves or wallets for their masters.

The obedience drilling continues after the dogs begin training in the streets of Morristown. In a garage beneath the building that serves as the Seeing Eye's downtown headquarters there, Pete Jackson took Zoe from the van—the others lay there quietly awaiting their turns—and began her training session with a brief obedience review. "It's very important," he said, "to continually remind the dog who the master is. In this obedience session there is no intelligent disobedience. It's simply come, sit—you do it when you're told to do it. If you do it you get praised, and if you don't you're punished. The dog has to be reminded of this every day, at least once a day. We do it in a neutral area where no guide work is involved, no responsibility other than to obey the master. Because five minutes later we could be out on the street and be in a situation where the dog might have to intelligently disobey a command."

On the streets as well as in the obedience sessions the standard Seeing Eye punishment is a conventional leash correction paired with the reprimand "Pfui!" (The word is a German exclamation, a reminder that the first Seeing Eye dog, a German shepherd named Buddy, was raised and trained in Switzerland.) At this stage of training most of Jackson's dogs were hearing only a few pfuis and a great deal of enthusiastic verbal praise, which is an important part of the Seeing Eye training formula. Zoe walked Jackson up to an intersection and stopped. "Good girl!" He commanded her to cross the street, which was empty, and she set out. "Good girl, Zoe." At the opposite curb she slowed down so that he could feel his way forward by tapping his foot in front of him, as a blind person would. "Good girl." Up on the sidewalk he told her to go left and she did, walking as far as the curb and stopping again. "Attagirl, Zoe. Good girl!" After crossing the street again, she steered him around a parking meter. "Good girl." She slowed for a second to sniff a patch of grass. "Pfui!" She put her mind back on her work. "Good girl." Jackson, who has been a Seeing Eye trainer for about twelve years, was so sensitive to the dog's movement, and his reactions were so immediate, that sometimes I didn't know which of the dog's actions he was responding to. He told me, "People who are watching can't appreciate the communication that's going on between the dog and the handler." The people of Morristown long ago accustomed themselves to the ubiquity of these harnessed dogs and their young trainers, but they may never get used to the merry babble that issues constantly from the trainers' mouths. It seems to make sense to the dogs, though. The conviction that dogs understand and can be motivated by verbal praise—through tones of voice if not through the meanings of the words themselves—is nearly universal among dog

people.

As Zoe led us toward a streetlight pole, Jackson showed me how he teaches a dog to allow for the person at the end of its harness. "Let's say the dog was too far to the right here. What I would do to teach her clearance . . ." He deliberately walked smack into the metal pole, made a great deal of noise—including a loud "Pfui!"—and stumbled around histrionically for a second, a poor blind fellow who'd bopped his noggin because of his dog's incompetence. Zoe was visibly upset. She stopped and cringed, as though his pain were her own. "Then I'd back up," Jackson said, "to give the dog the chance to see the object in the perspective of its environment, so she can plan her move: How am I gonna get around that thing? This also gives the dog a chance to relax after the reprimand. You walk back, give her a chance to relax, turn around—Huh, there it is again; now let's go and see if we can do it better this time."

It's not merely a matter of mechanics, Jackson emphasized. "Sooner or later the dog has just got to reach inside and draw on its own ability to figure things out. And that's where the fun part comes in—after you've taught the dog basic avoidance, taught it to clear those extra two feet on the right-hand side, and you can feel that the dog is really starting to work for you. When you put the harness on, the dog knows it's not going out for a walk. It may not understand completely everything that's going on out there, but it does realize that for some special reason you need its help." What's in it for the dog? "I think these dogs could be some of the happiest creatures around," Jackson said. "They're not left alone in a kennel all day, they're with someone, they're working, they have companionship, and if you accept the idea that the dog wants to please human beings, this dog and all the other dogs in this program really have the ideal opportunity to please their masters all day long."

Zoe brought us to a halt, for what reason I could not determine. But Jackson, who is several inches taller than I, was pleased. Though I had not noticed it—and would have failed to see its significance even if I had—Zoe, standing about two feet tall, had noticed a tree to our left whose branches were hanging over the sidewalk. Avoiding these overheads, as the Seeing Eye trainers call them—awnings and ledges as well as branches—is one of the most difficult lessons for dogs to learn, because they have no natural need to look for trouble six feet in the air. Jackson said, "Hup-up," a command to go on. After hesitating a moment Zoe walked him to the right edge of the sidewalk, beyond the branches' reach, and then continued on her way. "Good girl!"

"You could see her pause and wait there," Jackson explained. "Without any pressure I just encouraged her to go on, and then she could have done one of two things. She could have just stopped and not moved, which would have signaled to me that I better start feeling [by waving his hand in the air] to see if there's anything here. I could have found the tree, and then we could have walked under it. But instead, she made her initial move to the right, and I encouraged her by saying 'Good girl, good girl,' *Think, think, do it, do it*. She could have gone all the way out into the street and around, but she looked and saw we could get by the tree without having to step off the curb. It was a very good move; it showed a lot of good thinking power and confidence in this dog, which is exactly what I want to see at this stage of training. You know, there was no fear involved at all, she just thought it all out. This is the kind of thing that's going to help a dog take care of someone."

Mickey, the next dog out of the van, responded so well to verbal correction that Jackson almost never had to jerk his leash, even during the obedience session. A simple "Pfui!" was enough to make him wince and do better next time. Some of this was conditioning, Jackson explained: all of the dogs learn to expect a leash correction when they hear the reprimand. But not all of them respond to the word alone. Zoe, though Jackson described her as "fairly sensitive," was also "active, lively, quick-thinking." She needed to be jerked. But "Mickey wants to please me so badly that, even though he's physically strong, I don't need to jerk on him a lot. Every dog has to be handled differently."

I saw Mickey thinking, or whatever it is that dogs do instead. We were standing at an intersection. Jackson said, Mickey, forward," and gave the signal that always accompanies the command, a sort of underarm wave with the free hand. Mickey's job now was to check the street for traffic and go forward only if all was clear. Instead he stepped immediately into the street. Just as immediately he stopped and

began looking about nervously. I could see it in his face: he knew he'd made a mistake, and he didn't know what to do next. "Sometimes a dog will do that because he's too bold," Jackson told me. "Other times they do it because they're too nervous." Mickey, he said, had been doing this a lot a few weeks earlier, though lately he'd been improving. "He was so nervous and afraid of me that when I said 'Forward,' he'd always obey me initially, and then say"—here Jackson began looking around frantically, in an uncanny mimicry of Mickey's curbside panic—"Oh-God-I-shouldn't-have, oh-no-I-gotta-stop. He wasn't relaxed enough to think, Wait a minute, let's take a look at things before we go forward here."

What Jackson wants in a dog is a delicate balance between obedience and independence. In practical terms, he believes, this means he must be judicious in the use of force and dominance. "I could get a better obedience dog by being harder and more demanding, correcting them harder, but if you do that, what happens is you create a dog that's too obedient, and then it's reluctant to intelligently disobey out on the street." Jackson told me that he sometimes experiments with a string of dogs, introducing subtle changes to the training routine to see what will develop from them. This time, he said, he was using less force in the obedience exercises, particularly in the fetch, which is the hardest to teach (the dogs have to pick up with their mouths such distasteful objects as flattened tin cans). The result seemed to be that the dogs, although they weren't learning to fetch as quickly as usual, were learning their guide work a bit more readily. Jackson thought that by demanding a little less obedience he had won a little more imagination and initiative.

"I used to spend a lot of time jerking on the leash, because I figured it was the easy way," he said. "The dogs take it, and somehow you can be successful with it. But after twelve years I think I've sort of run out of energy for it. There is probably a time and place for force with almost every dog. But I've found, year by year, that the more careful you are and the more attempt you make to get into the dog's brain first—find out what the dog is, what he knows, individually, each dog—the less you have to do it.

Seeing Eye trainers have several other reasons for minimizing the force they use. They cannot rely too heavily on their physical strength, because they cannot be sure that the blind person who receives a certain dog will be strong enough to control it in the same way. Public relations must also be considered. Guide dogs, whether they are working or training, are often in the eye of a public that does not react well to the sight of a dog being physically corrected; the Seeing Eye receives a small but steady number of calls and letters complaining about blind people who have been seen "abusing" their dogs. Finally, the Seeing Eye can get away with a little less dominance than other trainers find necessary; the sort of strict obedience demanded by Bill Koehler, for example, is not required of Seeing Eye dogs, because they are always on leash or in harness.

None of which is to say that Pete Jackson won't get physical when he thinks he has to. One of the dogs he was training while I was in Morristown was a German shepherd female that "had my number for a while," Jackson confessed. "I was being a softy with her because I didn't want to push her, I wanted her to learn at her own pace—but in a month and a half she never got any better, she would just never come around. Finally last week I just took the leash and yanked her hard once, stung her a little bit—you know, she yelped in pain—and ever since then she's been an angel. I said, Damn, she's been playing with me for a month and a half, making me do all the work. That happens all the time." Another shepherd female was losing interest in her guide work about halfway through every training session, as though she were starting to think about getting off the street and back to the kennel. "I always ask myself," Jackson said, "Would I take this dog if I were blind? And until I can say yes, I don't pass the dog." This dog was what Jackson would call dangerous—so far from ready that he had decided to hold her for another three months of training. Before giving up on her entirely, he said, he would try force, but he didn't think it would work. "I'm fairly certain that if I get tough with this dog, what's going to happen is I can make her obedient but I can't make her guide." Jackson's attitude reminded me of Bernie Brown and his ladder of escalating force. Like Brown, Jackson believes that force works on some dogs—is indeed necessary with some dogs—but he starts with minimal force, to accommodate the "soft" dogs that do not react well to pressure. He resorts to sterner methods only when the easygoing approach fails, and when he reaches this point he begins, again like Brown, to lose confidence in the dog. Both trainers want their dogs to do things that they don't believe dogs can be made to do. And unlike trainers at obedience classes—who take all comers thirty or forty at a time—both can afford to go

slowly, and both have a surefire cure for the dog that doesn't pass muster: wash it out of the program and give it to some pet people.

ONE MORNING I LEFT PETE JACKSON TO HIS DOGS and met his boss in the upstairs lounge of the Seeing Eye's downtown building, where blind people wait with their dogs for a session of practice in the streets. Doug Roberts, the assistant director of instruction and training, started at the Seeing Eye as an apprentice trainer and has been there for some eighteen years. Now in his forties, he's a relaxed, friendly man who's serious about dogs. As we talked, he brushed the coat of Gilda, a golden retriever that had recently returned to Morristown because her blind master had died. Gilda was a special case. She was headed for the home of another blind person, which is not unusual in itself—but this person required a dog that would walk on the right side instead of the left. Later Roberts would be taking her into the streets to teach her new habits.

Roberts told me that a large part of Seeing Eye training is suppressing the instincts that the domestic dog has inherited from its predatory ancestors. "Dogs are just loaded with instincts," he said. "In different dogs some instincts are more powerful than others." Some dogs have a high chase instinct—"the squirrel goes, he's gotta go." In others, the sniffing instinct may predominate, or the scavenging instinct. "When we train a dog," Roberts said, "we cannot eliminate an instinct. What we do is put it under the surface. The blind person then must keep it from the surface." This involves drilling the dog in obedience every day as well as controlling it while it's working. "If you've got a powerful, energetic dog that's got that chase instinct, then it has to be matched carefully with a person who can handle that, who is energetic enough himself to keep that instinct down." Training a dog to suppress its instincts involves a fairly straightforward application of Bill Koehler-style tempt-and-correct tactics. A scavenger might be walked along a route scattered with popcorn; a fighter might be led down a block where a particularly obnoxious and belligerent mutt is known to reside.

C. O. Whitman, as quoted by Konrad Lorenz in *Man Meets Dog*, said that the decline of instinctive behavior is "the open door through which the great teacher, Experience, can enter and bring about all the wonders of the intellect." He was speaking in an evolutionary sense, not about individual dogs, but it occurred to me as I listened to Doug Roberts that something similar happens in the Seeing Eye dog. Roberts is the only trainer I met who was able to synthesize for me the viewpoint of the Koehler-style trainers—that dogs will behave reliably only if forced to—with the opposing view that dogs want to please their human masters. He said that while the Seeing Eye trains a dog, and for about six months after it has gone home with a blind person, the dog is in its "teenage years." It knows what it's supposed to do, but it is subject to distractions. "Like a teenager, it can do marvelously—both because it wants to, sometimes, and because it has to, at other times. Later, after it has gone through the adjustment of its teenage years, it wants to do the work." It becomes, in other words, a responsible adult—able to curb its instinctive appetite for self-gratification, to appreciate the value of useful work, and, most important, to form lasting relationships based on trust and devotion. "When the dog is fully mature," Roberts said, "it becomes what everyone considers the 'Seeing Eye dog'—a special sort of bonding occurs where the dog feels like it is part of the person. You don't get that in many human-dog associations. You can get really close attachment between a pet owner and his pet—you know, really superclose—but the twenty-four-hour-a-day I'll take care of you association, that's a bit different."

How, I asked him, can such a bond be transferred? How will Gilda, the dog lying at our feet, develop that kind of devotion for a new master? A dog suffers tremendously when its master dies, Roberts admitted, but in a way its desperate need for affection and security—another instinct—makes the transfer easy. Since losing her master Gilda had been living in the Seeing Eye kennels without much human contact. "She hasn't had any hands on in about a month," Roberts said as he brushed her. "You can see she's just loving this." Her deprivation would last a while longer. "What we've done, and what we will do, is to give this little girl a break from any ability to bond herself to anyone else for a little while—not long. She's not neglected by any means, but you can see she wants to go to you—Will you love me? Will you love me? The dog needs the security, the affection, the bonding. Therefore, if you give it a break, let it rest for awhile, and match it with someone else, it will rebond. You can humanize it if you

want to: you can be totally devoted to your wife and she can die, and you can have a very good second marriage.”

One does not hang around the Seeing Eye long without hearing analogies like this. I once left the office of Richard Krokus, the Seeing Eye’s director of instruction and training, wondering if he realized how often and how easily his conversation slid from dog training to child rearing. Many trainers do it. A large part of the reason, I think, is simply that the human analogy is the handiest way of expressing what I’ve come to think of as a fundamental lesson, perhaps the fundamental lesson, of dog training: Dogs are individuals.

One of the classic studies of dog behavior, by John L. Fuller and John Paul Scott, was undertaken to shed some light on how genetics affects the behavior of human beings. The scientists chose the dog for their study, they wrote, “because it shows one of the basic hereditary characteristics of human behavior: a high degree of individual variability.” Michael Fox and his associate Randall Lockwood have explained how such diversity benefits the wolf pack: in a social unit characterized by hierarchy, cooperation, and division of labor, a range of temperaments is necessary. Only one wolf can be the alpha; as a rule only one female at a time can bear young. Such a society requires the timid as well as the aggressive, the deliberate as well as the impulsive, followers as well as leaders. Perhaps variety of temperament is another of the traits that qualify the dog for pethood; the unique relationship between dogs and people cannot be hurt by the fact that a dog can be found to match almost every human personality.

That individual dogs of the same breed—even of the same litter—can have vastly different “personalities” is no great secret. Any experienced dog person, and countless popular books, will tell you as much; certainly a great many have tried to tell me. But the lesson and its importance did not sink in for me until I visited the Seeing Eye. It’s in the air there. Every day Pete Jackson works with eight or ten different dogs—a bold one, a lazy one, a sensitive one, a nervous one, a shy one. Every fourth Saturday a new group of blind people arrives on the campus—bold ones, lazy ones, and every other type—and on Sunday each goes on a “Juno walk” with one of the trainers. The trainer, holding one end of a working harness, plays the role of Juno, a trained guide dog, and leads the person through the streets of Morristown. After this opportunity to judge their students’ physical strength, walking pace, and personality, the trainers huddle with their supervisors and decide which dog is best suited to which person. Making the right matches, they say, is one of the most important elements of the program.

I began to appreciate this when I met my own match, a German shepherd I’ll call Solly. Pete Jackson had prepared me to dislike this dog. He told me that Solly was timid, that he jumped at loud noises; for his first three weeks of training he had literally refused to come out from between Jackson’s legs. I was attracted to the dog from the moment I saw him. Unlike most of the Seeing Eye dogs I’d encountered, Solly walked at a pace that seemed sensible to me. He did not respond to precious talk or phony enthusiasm. He did not require elaborate displays of affection, nor did he give any. He did his work deliberately, intelligently, and (by the time I saw him) never made a mistake. I wanted to tell Jackson: This dog is not slow, he’s careful. This dog is not afraid, he’s reserved. This dog is not skittish, *I don’t like loud noises either!* When I did confess my admiration for the dog, Jackson was not a bit surprised. “Sure. He’s your kind of dog,” he told me. Jackson had known me less than two days at this point. He proceeded to deliver a brief analysis of my personality, enumerating a few traits that I thought only my wife understood fully.

When Solly and Pete Jackson taught me that dogs really do have personalities, I felt that I was beginning to understand dog training. All the conflicting claims of the trainers I had met, the hostile ideologies, the various methods that seemed to have nothing in common except that they all worked—now they fell into place behind words that Jackson had said to me on our first day together: “Every dog has to be treated differently.” If this is true, perhaps it follows that every method of training will work on some dogs, and no method will work on all of them. Dogs are resilient; most of them will do fine no matter what they are subjected to. But why shouldn’t some thrive on gentle patience while others thrive on discipline? Military school is not for everyone. Neither is Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood.

ARE DOGS PEOPLE TOO? Do they (to put the question in less sensational terms) think, reason, or experience mental states that are in any way comparable to our own? Bernie Brown assumes that they do not. Bill and Dick Koehler and Pete Jackson believe they do. Dan Tortora's answer surprised me. He admits to being the product of a "very strict behaviorist upbringing," and I expected him therefore to tell me that the question was a waste of time; that it's useless to speculate about things we cannot observe; that we must restrict our study to things we can see—the input, the command, the stimulus, and the output, the behavior, the response; that what happens in between is not science, it's philosophy. In other words, I expected the behaviorist party line, the sort of lecture that animal psychologists have been delivering since before B. F. Skinner was a grad student. Instead, Tortora answered my question with a brief disquisition on the difference between serial logic and right-brain parallel mental processes. His response was involved, somewhat technical, and full of careful qualifications, but its first words were "Yes, I think dogs think. . . ."

Tortora told me that when he studied psychology, he had a professor who would cock his eyebrows whenever he heard someone use a word such as mind or mental in connection with animals. About six months ago, Tortora said, he visited Michigan State and found the same fellow working on an experiment that looked suspiciously like a study in animal cognition. Times are changing. As evidence accumulates that chimps can use sign language and dolphins can imitate other animals, including their human keepers, scientists are being forced to confront the question of what goes on in an animal's mind. One who has confronted it head-on, and has struggled manfully to drag his kicking and screaming colleagues along with him, is Donald R. Griffin, a former chairman of Harvard's biology department and now a professor at the Rockefeller University. In 1976 Griffin published a book whose title, *The Question of Animal Awareness*, must have seemed blasphemous to some. His purpose was not so much to offer new evidence on the subject as to plead for an "open-minded agnosticism" regarding it—to clear away the orthodoxy of strict behaviorism.

One tenet of behaviorism that Griffin attacked quite directly was its claim to "parsimony." This is science's name for one of its most cherished concepts, the conviction that the best solution to any problem is the simplest and most direct. According to traditional behaviorism, parsimony dictates that a scientist who interprets animal behavior must do so without resort to a subjective mental state such as "thinking." One of the earliest and most influential investigators of animal behavior, the British zoologist C. Lloyd Morgan, expressed it this way: "In no case may we interpret an action as the outcome of the exercise of a higher psychical faculty, if it can be interpreted as the outcome of the exercise of one that stands lower in the psychological scale." In *The Question of Animal Awareness*, Griffin argued that this invocation of parsimony has become outdated, and he did so by turning the behaviorists' own thinking against them. Behaviorists, he said, contend that mental processes are identical with neurophysiological processes (that is, they believe that the workings of the mind can be explained in terms of physical structures, chemical events, and so forth); neurophysiology, he pointed out, has yet to discover any fundamental difference between human neurons and those of other animals. So how can it be parsimonious, he asked, to claim that a vast gulf exists between human and animal mental experiences? "Unless one denies the reality of human mental experiences," he wrote, "it is actually parsimonious to assume that mental experiences are as similar from species to species as are the neurophysiological processes with which they are held to be identical." Further, Griffin asked, how can it be parsimonious to acknowledge our physiological continuity with other animal species, as we routinely do in any discussion of evolution, while postulating a huge discontinuity in mental abilities?

Griffin attacked behaviorism's claim to parsimony in another way; this argument, though I suspect it is only incidentally important to him, may touch a nerve in anyone who has ever stood slack-jawed and awestruck at the things that animals are capable of doing. Griffin mentioned laboratory research showing that animals sometimes respond to stimuli not immediately, as is normally the case, but after some delay. Since this is incompatible with strict stimulus-response behaviorism, Griffin wrote, "psychologists have struggled to explain what keeps an animal ready to respond after appropriate delay by calling it 'bridging.' But," he continued, this seems a major problem only if one's thinking about animal behavior is constrained within the narrow limits of conventional, behavioristic learning theory. If we assume that the animal simply understands what it has learned, the delayed responses cease to be

especially puzzling. Perhaps postulating simple thoughts in the minds of animals may result in more parsimonious, as well as more nearly correct, explanations.

I may be stretching this argument further than Griffin would like, but it reminded me of the marvelously complex dance of the honeybee, which Griffin described in another context early in the book. With the waggle dance, as it is called, a worker bee directs her comrades to a place where she has recently obtained food. In the darkness of the hive she dances in semicircles, alternating left and right, and after each she moves in a straight line, wagging her abdomen as she goes. The direction of these straight lines indicates the flower's position with respect to the sun; the amount of time devoted to them indicates distance from the hive. Griffin points out that a bee will perform this dance not only immediately upon returning to the hive but also, under experimental circumstances, some time later. I wonder: How many events must a behaviorist arrange, and how artfully must he arrange them, to explain this extraordinary form of communication in terms of simple stimuli and automatic responses? How long before the "parsimonious" explanation becomes a hopelessly complicated house of cards? At what point does it become simpler to say that the bee remembers where the nectar came from and tells her friends how to get there?

By 1984, when he published another book, *Animal Thinking*, Griffin was able to report in his preface that now, "because of impressive progress in ethology and psychology, animal thinking is again receiving serious scientific attention." I suspect that some time will pass, however, before this new open-mindedness filters down to the public at large. A case in point is Bernie Brown. At the obedience seminar in Tennessee, he recommended to his audience a newspaper article that he had read recently, in which some eminent academic had summarized the consensus among scientists—that animals do not think. Later the same weekend, Brown told a story that made me wonder if he hadn't accepted this scientific orthodoxy at the expense of his own experience. He said that he and Duster had been competing in a dog show and had come to the retrieve exercise, in which the dog is required to fetch a small wooden dumbbell thrown by the handler. Because Duster was not in the habit of watching the dumbbell to see where it would land—part of his magic being that he kept his eyes fixed on his master—Brown considered it his job to make an accurate throw so that the dumbbell would be easy to find. But this time it took a freak bounce and landed behind a stanchion at the perimeter of the ring. Brown gave the command to retrieve. Duster bolted confidently from his side to the place where he expected the dumbbell to be—and stopped, frozen in panic. He began charging across the ring, this way and that, his speed increasing all the while, searching for the dumbbell that he'd been sent for. "He must have been out there three minutes," Brown said. (The exercise normally takes less than fifteen seconds.) "Finally, his working pattern got him near the fence; he saw the dumbbell, charged the fence, picked the dumbbell up, brought it to me, did a perfect front, a perfect finish; and the expression on his face was like My God! Thank God! . . . The judge gave me a perfect score. Duster won that trial, and my peers were all over that judge. 'How could you give that dog a perfect score? He worked three minutes before he picked up the dumbbell!' And the judge's answer was, 'If I could have given extra points, I would have.' Because the dog *knew* he just couldn't find the dumbbell."

Brown doesn't believe that Duster was "thinking" when he performed this feat; rather, he says, the dog had simply learned, through years of training in this exercise, that he should not return to his master until he had something to bring back with him. I don't mean to question Brown's knowledge of his own dog (and I should point out that I have met many dog trainers who would agree with him), but I wonder: How often do we choke back an intuitive response to such a story in order to satisfy ourselves that we are scientific thinkers? To what length will we go to protect the notion that we are different in kind, not merely in degree, from the animals around us?

Our resistance to the idea that animals have mental abilities was once spoofed by the psycholinguist Roger Brown, whom Griffin quoted in his 1976 book: "Most people are determined to hold the line against animals," Brown wrote in 1958. "Grant them the ability to make linguistic reference and they will be putting in a claim for minds and souls. The whole phyletic scale will come trooping into Heaven demanding immortality for every tadpole and hippopotamus." As the animal-rights advocates remind us constantly, we cannot dwell long on the possibility that animals think without confronting the moral questions raised by the way we treat them. If animals are like us, the reasoning goes, what right do we

have to kill them, eat them, tame them for our work and pleasure? What right have we to play God?

I don't know, but as I visited with dog trainers and read their books, I bumped repeatedly into the idea that human beings are the gods of the dog universe. Bill Koehler says that dogs have knowledge of right and wrong, but of course he is the one who defines the terms and metes out the appropriate reward or punishment. Dick Koehler told me, "Come, sit, down, stay—that's not really dog training. What you're trying to do is get the dog to be responsible for his own actions, so that when he has to avoid a dog fight, stay out of trouble, or remain on a sit-stay or a down-stay on a blanket with six other dogs and you're a quarter of a mile away, he knows that if he moves, God is gonna strike him dead on the spot, or you're gonna come flying through the air and make a correction." Barbara Woodhouse recommends that if a dog is in the habit of tearing at trouser cuffs and overcoats, the surest cure is to pour water on its head. "This method is better than all the scolding in the world," she writes, "for the dog doesn't know where the water comes from, he only comes to realize that cloth-tearing causes it to flow." One of Daniel Tortora's rules for the use of punishment is that it "should be like a 'bolt from heaven.' The dog should feel that no matter where you are, when he has transgressed he will be punished." Richard Krokus, of the Seeing Eye, said it in so many words: "A dog is a dog, and you have to understand what makes them tick, and you have to get under their skin and make them think you're God."

Michael Fox wrote in the *Soul of the Wolf* that "man has made the dog in his own image." In fact we have made the dog in a bewildering variety of images—a menagerie of shapes, sizes, and colors, none of which have much use or meaning without us. The English bulldog, carefully crafted over centuries of selective breeding, is just one example of our creativity. Today a "prize" bulldog is likely to be born by cesarean section for fear of the damage that its grossly enlarged head—a desirable trait in the show ring—might inflict on its mother during delivery. This breed and most of the others would not exist but for human meddling, and they wouldn't last long if we didn't provide their daily kibble. What right have we to play God with our dogs? A dog trainer might answer that it's not a right but a responsibility: You made this animal, now you teach it how to get along in the world.

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