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The Pet Psychic: Is America Going Nuts, or What?

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Monday, November 24, 2003

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Just in case any of you were unconvinced that America is headed into serious fruitcake territory, take a good look at The Pet Psychic on Animal Planet. Brought to you by the wonder of cable television, The Pet Psychic is hosted by Sonya Fitzpatrick, who offers to “open the telepathic channel to your pet.” As Animal Planet’s “resident pet psychic,” Fitzpatrick is even able to communicate with pets who died long ago.

In her recently-released book, *What the Animals Tell Me*, Fitzpatrick claims “animals have taught me everything I know.” In some strange sense, that’s almost believable. It’s clear that Ms. Fitzpatrick is no fool, however. Like every charlatan, she has found a way to make fools out of her audience.

“People often ask me how I ‘talk’ to animals,” Fitzpatrick relates, “how I make myself understood, and how I manage to understand what they are saying back to me.” Well, at the very least, that looks like a good question.

Fitzpatrick explains that her method “though perhaps not widely known, is neither complex nor mystical.” As she explains, “I use my mind’s energy, sometimes called telepathy, to communicate with animals, to discover what is worrying them, what they like or dislike, and what makes them happy.”

And wow, does Ms. Fitzpatrick sense an intimacy with these animals. “If they hurting or hungry, I feel those sensations in my own body. A pleasantly full sensation tells me the animal is being regularly fed, while gnawing hunger pangs tell me just the opposite. If the animal has an ear or bladder infection, or is stiff with arthritis, I feel the exact symptoms in the correlating parts of my own body.” Let’s all hope the Pet Psychic doesn’t get telepathically in touch with a rabid animal. It could be ugly.

Those with sufficient fortitude to tune in to a broadcast of The Pet Psychic, will discover an audience, largely made up of women, ready to receive Ms. Fitzpatrick’s psychic readings as if they were messages from an oracle. These pet owners are given readings of their pet’s disposition and supposed thoughts, and those mourning deceased pets are promised that all is well. Ms. Fitzpatrick offers soothing words of encouragement from the animal after life so that owners will know that their pets are happier now “on the other side.”

In her book, Fitzpatrick relates a series of anecdotes that supposedly testify to her psychic ability. She loves to resolve problems between humans and animals. Take the case of “Hubert,” identified as one of a pair of tabby cat brothers. It seems that Hubert started waking his owner around three a.m. in the morning by jumping on her chest in bed. Suffering from lack of sleep, Hubert’s owner reached a point of distress. Who should she call? The Pet Psychic, of course.

Fitzpatrick immediately communicated telepathically with Hubert. It seems that Hubert complained to Fitzpatrick that

he was receiving insufficient attention from his owner, and thus was waking her up in the middle of the night because he wanted attention. Furthermore, Hubert was upset because he had been denied his favorite food, tuna fish. "He wanted tuna more often, he told me, and couldn't understand why they didn't have it anymore." Hubert related a host of other simply fascinating details of his frustrations, and Fitzpatrick was able to communicate all of this to Hubert's owner who was immediately humbled by the realization that she had wronged her furry little friend. Once animal and human reached understanding, peace descended upon the household and Hubert and his human went, presumably, to live happily ever after.

Then there is the case of "Amadeus," a talented dog who was in training to join the "Houston Flyball Association," whatever that is. Amadeus was traumatized by living with nineteen cats. Furthermore, he told Fitzpatrick that he had once been a cattle dog on a ranch and feared being trampled by the cows. Because of this, he was now afraid of being in the presence of other large dogs and this explained his aggressive misbehavior.

But Fitzpatrick is not only able to resolve conflicts, she is also to offer pastoral counseling to pets. In one session with Amadeus, Fitzpatrick "felt great sadness and worry." Inquiring what was wrong, she was told by Amadeus that one of his companion cats was dying. Amadeus, evidently a deep theological thinker among the canine breed, "wanted to know where the cat would go if it died." Always ready to offer a soothing word of pastoral counsel, Fitzpatrick reassured the dog "and told him that dying means the cat's spirit would go on to another place where he would be very happy."

Fitzpatrick's psychic ability is not limited to mammals, either. She also tells of a telepathic session she had with a pet turtle. It seems that the turtle, "Jean Lafitte," had gone on a hunger strike. According to her picturesque description, "he started to drift aimlessly in his tank, spewing mucus from both nostrils." That would be enough for most of us to decide to be rid of the mucus-spewing turtle, but not this pet owner. No, once again it was time to call the Pet Psychic.

As Fitzpatrick related, "I offered to speak to the turtle and find out what was wrong, an offer which astounded her, Pat had no idea what I was talking about. Though we had been friends for more than a year, I had never mentioned my ability to communicate with animals to her." Imagine that! A friend having such a gift and never having mentioned it. Go figure.

Once a telepathic connection had been created with the turtle, Fitzpatrick learned that he was dying. The terminal turtle said that he was very sad because he did not want to leave his human family, and then he went on to speak of the many inconveniences he had suffered in their home. "Speaking in a small, tinny voice he told me he had outgrown his aquarium tank, and that it didn't have any stones on the bottom where he could get proper traction to walk and dive." He passed along requests for a larger tank, cleaner water, a green plant, "and a small fish for a companion."

Well, after receiving such helpful advice, Jean Lafitte's owner went out to buy all the necessary accouterments. A very happy Jean Lafitte was soon swan-diving off his new rock and basking in his luxurious new home. Nevertheless, within just a few days the goldfish, Jean Lafitte's requested companion, had disappeared. The Pet Psychic was again called in for an emergency consultation. She interrogated the turtle about the fish. "I've eaten him," the turtle confessed. "I knew I would never get the fish if I'd told you I was going to eat him." This was almost enough to push the Pet Psychic over the edge. "To this day, I haven't forgiven myself for my role in the hapless goldfish's death. He really deceived me, that turtle."

The Pet Psychic may claim to have an unerring ability to communicate with animals, but she seems to be no judge of animal character. You can only ask for so much from the Pet Psychic. In *What the Animals Tell Me*, Fitzpatrick also offers helpful suggestions on how you, too, can communicate with your pet. These simple directions include the fact that you should first reach a point of calm and tranquility with your pet. Then begin to speak the animal's name telepathically in order to gain its attention. Later, you will move to exchanging telepathic images and information with the pet. As she enjoins, "always acknowledge the answer, whatever you receive back from your animal." It would be rude to do otherwise, of course.

The Pet Psychic is also ready to offer theological advice about animals and the afterlife. "Despite what some people are taught—that only humans have immortal souls—I know that animals are spiritual beings." Fitzpatrick insists that when animals die, they do not go off into nothingness, but rather to a place "of unearthly beauty, where joy, peace, and happiness reign supreme; where memories of pain, care and worries fade into bliss." Now you know.

Sonya Fitzpatrick alone knows whether she actually believes this stuff. The average person with a triple-digit I.Q. is

more likely to assume that she is laughing all the way to the bank. It's very hard to take seriously a woman who claims to have been in telepathic contact with a turtle, and then goes on to admit that the turtle got the best of her.

More to the point, the very existence of The Pet Psychic as a program on national television and the success of What the Animals Tell Me indicates with crystal clarity the fact that millions of Americans are trapped in patterns of spiritual darkness and confusion.

For some, the temptation is an academic rationalism and its companion anti-supernaturalism. This explains the arid secularism and open hostility to Christianity all too often found on the university campus. For others, the danger is the hyper-supernaturalism found in the environs of the New Age movement. This anti-rational sentimentalism explains the popularity of The Animal Psychic and the profitability of supermarket tabloids.

The spiritual confusion of our age reaches from the elites of our culture down to the lonely person living alone who honestly believes in telepathic communication with pets. Our assignment as Christians is to take the Gospel to all persons –and that includes those who watch The Pet Psychic. My dog Baxter warns me that this is going to be a big challenge.

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