

FROM CHAPTER 2:

GENESIS AND NATURE OF THE BOND

“SOCIAL DYNAMICS SWEETEN THE POT”

Dogs and cats have behaviors that invite social interaction, which suits the human need for social contact. Dogs are highly social and companionable creatures that have no problem joining the social packs humans form called families. They assertively seek physical contact with people. Anyone who has been around a dog is familiar with the strategically placed paw or head on the lap, the nudge to the leg, or the undeniable muzzle-under-the-palm maneuver to get attention and make you feel pretty special. Cats will rub their faces, heads, or their torso against your leg, mostly to stimulate themselves, but also to communicate a desire for contact.

Humans delight in these demonstrations, which have evolved into social signals, but it should be no surprise that most of these behaviors originally had more practical functions. For instance, dogs often jump, twirl, and wag their entire bodies when their people return from extended absences. (The definition of “extended” being solely in the eye of the beholder.) The “Boy did I miss YOU!” behaviors are observed in wolf pups.

When being weaned they are taught to “solicit the regurgitation of solid food from parents and other pack members” by jumping up and licking their faces, while performing ritualistic movements similar to the performance you get when you return home.

So you think your dog is trying to *kiss* you, but originally the dog was reverting to type and begging for food. However, dogs have learned that you like the *kisses*, and dogs like to please.

Their innate desire to cooperate with humans was enhanced by selective breeding during

domestication. They are rewarded by your pleasure and are happy to give *kisses*, upon request or spontaneously. Face-to-face greetings are not natural for either canines or felines, so this is an example of something they have learned to do just for us.