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Sommario/riassunto

In this provocative book, Douglas Candland shows that as we begin to understand the way animals and non-speaking humans "think," we hold up a mirror of sorts to our own mental world, and gain profound insights into human nature. Weaving together diaries, contemporary newspaper accounts, and his own enlightening commentary, Candland brings to life a series of extraordinary stories. He begins with a look at past efforts to civilize feral children, such as the Wolf Girls of India found early this century huddled among wolf pups in a forest den (they were originally believed to be ghosts by superstitious villagers, who nearly shot them as they were being captured). It was hoped that the study of these children would help clarify the age-old nature/nurture

debate, but, as Candland shows, so much of the information "revealed" was really only a projection of beliefs previously held by the investigating scientists. Candland then turns to "clever animals," discussing the latest successes of teaching sign language to such precocious apes as Sarah, Sherman, Austin, and Koko. Throughout, Candland illuminates the boldest and most intriguing efforts yet to extend our world to that of our fellow creatures. And he shows that, in the end, our effort to "make contact" is a reflection of the way in which we as a species create and order our universe. Humans have long shown a wish to connect with the silent minds around them. In assembling and interpreting the compelling tales in this book, Candland offers us a new understanding not only of the animal kingdom, but of the very nature of humanity, and our place in the great chain of being.
