

THOUGHT IN ANIMALS

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OW is everything at the monastery?"

"Seminary," I corrected.

Ed Harding smiled. "Those places are all the same to me. Monastery, seminary, cemetery,—what's the difference?"

Now Ed Harding is one of those people we have to put up with. At least I have to put up with him. He is a successful criminal lawyer who has aroused the emotions of even phlegmatic juries. Success in his own line has given him an intellectual superiority complex. To be sure, he has a superior intellect, certainly a deep one. I have passed him on the street, his head down, hands clasped behind his back, lips set tight, with never a sign of recognition, although I had greeted him extra loudly. Like most deep minds, he had concentrated on one branch of knowledge, law; and then assumed that he could dip into any other branch and form exact, albeit hasty judgments. His little excursion into philosophy and history had brought a judgment detrimental to religion. He came to be pointed out as the "village atheist." This title pleased him. He cared little (and with some reason) for the superficial social life of the suburb. Dances at the country club and bridge parties were all very well for bankers and merchants, but he could use his evenings to better advantage. His gruff manner, his unkempt appearance, his practical scorn of social etiquette had focussed many a lorgnette upon him, resulting in a conclave of the local matrons anathematizing his behavior and excommunicating his presence from all future functions of the *élite*. It was too bad that his wife must suffer socially, but then she should have thought twice when she married him. So reasoned the matrons.

Because he was an old friend and neighbor of Dad's, it was my misfortune to run into him occasionally. I admired the man for his real and charitable character. It was amusing to hear him vigorously denounce the current political issues, to feel his warm enthusiasm for his pet theories. But it was most unpleasant to find an argument on my hands every time I enjoyed a

holiday from the seminary. Ed was sure to be there, ensconced (and "ensconced" is the word, "seated" is much too weak) in the best living chair, clouded in the smoke from one of my Dad's best cigars.

Such was the present setting. I cared little for starting another argument, but found difficulty in restraining a distinction between a seminary and a cemetery.

"A seminary," I answered, "is the school where men are educated for the priesthood; a cemetery is the burying ground for dead bodies."

"They're both pretty dead if you ask me."

"But I'm not asking you."

"Oh, all right, don't get sore. Must have my little joke."

I breathed more freely. Perhaps there would be no argument today. Perhaps my holiday would be a pleasant, peaceful visit with the family. Perhaps—Suddenly the answer to my speculation came bounding into the room. He put his paws on my lap and grinning a devilish grin waited for his petting. I made a fuss over the poor fellow, little thinking that Rover would demolish my hopes for peace and joy. He sprang over to Ed's chair to receive his usual pat on the head and "Good old Rover!"

Ed looked at me with twinkling eyes.

"Now there's something for you. How do we know that Rover doesn't think like a human being? If he could talk, he could probably beat any of us in an argument. Take a good look at him. Doesn't he look intelligent and almost human? I think he looks more human than some of the commuters who ride down on the 8:15 every morning."

I knew now that the die was cast. There was nothing to do but forget all hopes for a peaceful day at home. I couldn't let this go by.

"The mere fact that Rover doesn't speak ought to be sufficient proof that he has no intellect. He never speaks because he never has anything to say. Speech, rational speech—I don't mean grunts or noises—is the manifestation and intercommunication of thought. If Rover possessed genuine thought, he would speak it out."

Ed Harding shook his head.

"Can't agree with you there. How about wolves howling and warning the pack when they're in danger. Parrots can talk, can't they?"

"Just a minute. What do you mean by thought, or rather,

what do you mean by intellect? To begin with, the intellect is nothing but the faculty of thought. Under this there is included intellectual attention, judgment, reflection, self-consciousness, the formation of concepts, and the processes of reasoning."

"Doesn't the parrot pay attention?"

"Sensory attention, yes, but not *intellectual* attention. But let me finish what I was saying. No animal has ever been known to manifest knowledge of universal ideas. It doesn't matter whether they manifest these universal concepts by vocal or by visual signs. Now if they possessed reason and these universal ideas, certainly their associations with one another for so many thousands of years would have forced them to invent some means of rational intercommunication. When you cite the wolf warning the pack of danger, you are merely appealing to an effect of the laws of association, which are nothing but manifestations of concrete experiences. I'll admit that a parrot can utter every letter of the alphabet, and can be trained to speak short phrases very distinctly, but this only goes to show the immense gap between brute and rational creatures. Have you ever heard a parrot arrange words in a new order? If you have, then you're the first man to have ever heard it. I repeat again: they don't speak because they have nothing to say."

Harding gazed meditatively at his cigar before answering.

"It seems to me that there was little difference between primitive man and animals. Have you ever been down to the Museum? There are plenty specimens of prehistoric arrowheads and stone knives, the crudest workmanship imaginable. Compare those with the wonderful inventions of today, the airliners, the stream-lined trains, the radio, and thousands of others. Doesn't it seem evident that there was a time when man's intellect was as low as the animal's?"

"Before answering your question," I replied, "let's find out what the invention of a tool as crude as an arrowhead implies. It shows knowledge of the relation of means to the end. This is obtained by the intellectual process of generalizing, in other words, the universal idea. This is the very reason why archaeologists determined that the arrowheads were the inventions, not of animals, but of man. Now don't you think that if animals, or at least *some* species of brute animals, were endowed with an intellect or rationality they would have remained all these thousands of years without inventing such a crude tool as the stone arrowhead, or knife? There is no evidence that an animal has

ever lit a fire, invented a mechanical instrument, or intelligently transferred one piece of useful information from one generation to another. They have never manifested intellectual curiosity, the most primitive and useful form of the desire for knowledge. Human beings are noted for individual personality. The newspapers are filled with contrasts in personalities. Men are not content to do the same things in the same way. But animals, even when they are separated from their kind and are living with people, always do the same things in the same way as other animals of their species with very few exceptions. Schools and colleges formulate rules and sanction penalties to enforce them; thus they make certain that students *do* act essentially in the same way. Individualism and singularity in human beings creates a problem. But not so in animals. The problem with them is to find any traces of individualism."

My opponent leaned over in his chair and patted Rover.

"Did you hear what your master said about your lack of personality? What an insult to a faithful old hound like Rover!"

Refusing to be swayed by this sentimental touch, I interrupted his words of sympathy.

"Let me ask *you* a question now. You're supposed to be a successful lawyer, have handled murder cases and all the rest. Have you ever defended a dog after he had bitten a man? Or a horse after he has kicked someone senseless?"

Ed Harding grinned broadly.

"Now you're being absurd. Do you think there are horse lawyers as well as horse doctors?"

"My question isn't so absurd as you might think. When a man murders someone, he is brought to trial at the request of the community. Why? Simply because they are aware he knows that the action was unjust. What happens when a horse kicks a man to death? No one punishes the horse with death because he was responsible for his act. The horse knows no distinction between right and wrong, justice and injustice. Man-kind has never attributed morality or responsibility to beasts. The argument boils down to this: Man's cognitive powers differ from the brute animal, not in degree, but in kind. An animal simply hasn't the power to abstract from concrete things. Man has not only the power, but he has used it to a wonderful degree. I'm afraid, Mr. Harding, that Rover does *not* think!"

He held up his hand for silence, then pointed to Rover lying at his feet. Rover was audibly sleeping a deep sleep.