A Shaggy Dog Story

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According to Chrysippus, who was certainly no friend of non-rational animals, the dog even shares in the celebrated dialectic. In fact, the author says that the dog uses repeated applications of the fifth indemonstrable argument-schema when, arriving at a juncture of three paths, after sniffing at the two down which the quarry did not go, he rushes off on the third without stopping to sniff. For, says this ancient authority, the dog in effect reasons as follows: the animal either went this way or that way or the other; he did not go this way and he did not go that; therefore, he went the other.

The Dog’s Tale

An Old Dog Taught New Tricks

Dogs use logic, so they are as clever as humans
Dogs use logic, so using logic is nothing special
Dogs reason well enough without logic
Dogs reason better for not having logic

An Old Dog Taught New Tricks

Four options

1. Dogs use logic, so they are as clever as humans;
2. Dogs use logic, so using logic is nothing special;
3. Dogs reason well enough without logic;
4. Dogs reason better for not having logic.
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Gregor Reisch, *Margarita philosophica*, Basel, 1517 [1503?]
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Gregor Reisch, *Margarita philosophica*, Strasbourg, 1508
Thomas Murner, *Logica memorativa*, Strasbourg, 1509

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Gregor Reisch, *Margarita philosophica*, Basel, 1536

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Chrisippus holds dogs are Logicians,
In that, by study and by canvassing,
They can distinguish twixt three several things:
As when he cometh where three broad ways meet,
And of those three hath stayed at two of them,
By which he guesseth that the game went not,
Without more pause he runneth on the third;
Which, as Chrisippus saith, insinuates
As if he reasoned thus within himself:
Either he went this, that, or yonder way,
But neither that, nor yonder, therefore this.
Ælianus thinkes that *Dogges have reason, & vse logick in their hunting*, for they will cast about for the game, as a disputant doth for the truth, as if they should say either the Hare is gone on the left hand, or on the right hand, or straight forward, but not on the left or right hand and therefore straight forward. Whereupon he runneth foorth right after the true and infallible footesteps of the Hare.

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[T]his behaviour of the dog is an evident proof that his mind is capable of the three operations of logic, and I do not see why a Shock Dog and a Mastiff may not carry his reasoning as far as a Regent of Philosophy in the College of the Four Nations.

Cited by Floridi.
Michel de Montaigne, *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, Bordeaux 1580; John Florio’s translation, London, 1603

*Chrysippus*, albeit in other things as disdainfull a judge of the condition of beasts as any other Philosopher, considering the earliest movings of the dog, who comming into a path that led three severall wayes in search or quest of his Master, whom he had lost, or in pursuit of some prey that hath escaped him, goeth senting first one way and then another, and having assured himself of two, because he findeth not the tracke of what he hunteth for, without more adoe furiously betakes himselfe to the third; he is enforced to confesse that such a dog must necessarily discourse thus with himselfe,
'I have followed my Masters footing hitherto, hee must of necessity pass by one of these three wayes; it is neither this nor that, then consequently hee is gone this other.' And by this conclusion or discourse assuring him selfe, comming to the third path, hee useth his sense no more, nor sounds it any longer, but by the power of reason suffers himselfe violently to be carried through it. This meere logickall tricke, and this use of divided and conjoyned propositions, and of the sufficient numbring of parts: is it not as good that the dog know it by him selfe, as by Trapezuntius his logicke?
The dog, chasing the stag, reached a crossroads, and having smelled the first and the second path, missing any information, ran with all certainty in the third direction, without further investigation, as if he had used a syllogism. ... From which we can infer that brutes have a capacity to choose.
Why does this story excite either wonder or incredulity? — If the story be fact, and not a fiction, I should say — ... the Breeze brought his Master’s scent down the fourth Road to the Dog’s nose, and ... therefore he did not put it down to the Road, as in the two former instances.
Whereas the wise of our world may spend a life-time of laborious meditation on the combinations of syllogisms, dogs manage to clear up such problems naturally.

Cited by Floridi.
[l]t is not logic, but experimental reasoning … which we possess in common with beasts … on which the whole conduct of life depends … nothing but a species of instinct or mechanical power, that acts in us unknown to ourselves; and in its chief operations, is not directed by any such relations or comparisons of ideas, as are the proper objects of our intellectual faculties.
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