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Instinct properly means the innate impulse which drives lower animals to do certain things which seem to be quite rational, without any conscious design. A few examples will make this clear. Bees make six-sided cells of wax for storing their honey. They always make them the same shape (mathematically perfect hexagons), and the same size. Yet they never learn to make them; for the young working bees, as soon as they are born, set to work making these cells at once as perfectly as the old, experienced bees. Apparently they have no conscious reason for doing this; they do it blindly, and yet perfectly.

Or take young birds' nest-building. They have never seen a nest built, and have had no lessons in the art; yet when the nesting time comes round, they know exactly how to do it. And one species of bird will never make a mistake and build the nest of another species. Sparrows will never make nests like those of swallows, nor swallows like those of minas. How do migratory birds know when to leave England and fly to the South of Europe for the winter, and when to return the next year for nesting? And how do they know the way to go to find a warmer climate? We cannot explain these actions of animals and insects.

But as they are done apparently without reasoning or conscious design, but are due to some inner impulse, we say they are done by instinct. People used to believe that all the actions, of the lower animals were instinctive, and that the only animal that had reason was man. By reason we mean the power of drawing certain logical conclusions from given premises the power of thinking, of choosing to do certain things because we consider them wise and advantageous, and of doing things with a conscious end in view. For

example, men do not build houses as birds build a nest. They have a clear idea in their minds what kind of house they want, and of what materials they wish to make it. The architect, after much thought, draws a plan; the builders calculate how many bricks and how much mortar will be wanted.

At every step conscious thought, reasoning and choice take place. So reason is quite different from instinct. And some animals, like dogs, horses, elephants, certainly have a certain amount of reason, and we call them “intelligent”.

Such “higher animals” differ from men, not because they have no reason at all, but because the reason they have is primitive and limited as compared to man's.