

**John MULLARKEY**

***Cinema: The Animals that Therefore We Are (On Temple Grandin's Picture Theory, in Pictures)***

According to the animal scientist Temple Grandin, the success of her work in animal husbandry which has resulted in ameliorating the conditions many farm animals endure stems from the fact that she thinks like an animal, that is, she thinks in images. This is not her human way of thinking about images, but a way of thinking in pictures, a picture theory, that, she also claims, allows her to empathise with animals in a manner that might not be open to neurotypicals like the rest of "us". In this short presentation, I'd like to add a speculative corollary to Grandin's claim, namely that when we empathise with moving pictures (films), we do so as animals. The power of cinema is clearly immense, and many theories psychological and philosophical have been offered to explain its immersive effects on us: Freudian, Cavellian, Cognitivist, and so on. But what if the answer was as simple as this: the power of the cinematic image is purely the power of the animal that we (always) are when we think in images, or when images think in us? Like Pavlovian dogs responding to the dinner-bell, we salivate in front of the screen, to the image-stimuli agitating our senses, almost as though we are in the presence of their "referents". Yet there are also more complex responses, which are neither thoughtless flesh nor disembodied reflections, but affective thoughts, seeing-thoughts, that are all the more potent because they are imagistic (and non-neurotypical). These images are not any less the animal-thinking-in-us, however, nor are they either base or inhuman: they might simply be where our most powerful and animal thinking resides.

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