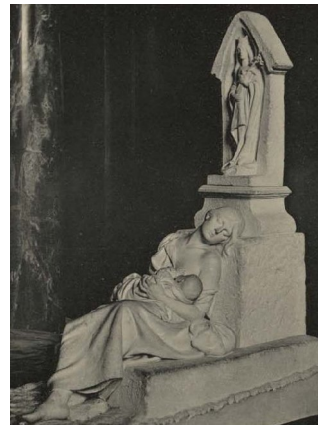


## RHEINHOLD'S PHILOSOPHIZING MONKEY



The late-19th century German sculptor Wolfgang Hugo Rheinhold (b. Oberlahnstein, Prussia March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1853, d. Berlin Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1900. Often misspelled Reinhold) first exhibited his "Affe mit Schädel" (monkey with skull), otherwise "Affe einen Schädel betrachtend" (monkey viewing or contemplating a skull), in 1893 at the Große Berliner Kunstausstellung (Great Berlin Art Exhibition). It was in fact Rheinhold's first professional foray into sculpture having previously been an import and export merchant, living in San Francisco (1874-79) and then Hamburg, before moving to Berlin to study science and philosophy at the university following the death of his wife in 1882 after only their first year of marriage. In 1886 he studied under the sculptors Ernst Herter and Max Kruse, before officially enrolling as a student at the



Berlin Academy of Arts (1888-92). Soon after its debut at the Große Berliner Kunstausstellung, the "Affe mit Schädel" was a featured bronze in the catalogue of the Gladenbeck foundry (set up by Carl Gustav Hermann Gladenbeck in 1851), becoming popular through its quirky originality (Thomas Henry Huxley would die 2 years later, but in 1893 he still found it necessary to preach persuasive Darwinism to the Royal Society even though "On the Origin of Species..." had been in print for 34 years). What inspired Rheinhold in making his sculpture is unknown, although it has obvious parallels with Auguste Rodin's "The Thinker". It is quite unlike his later, better known works that include a group of reading monks ("Lesende Monche"), a tribute to Alfred Nobel ("Dynamite in the Service of Mankind"), a bust of socialist leader August Bebel and his most famous piece "Am Wege" (1896) a marble of "an unfortunate young woman with a child at her breast". Rheinhold was protective of his Jewish heritage being a strong influence in the Deutsch-Israelitische Gemeindebund (an association of Jewish corporations) and sculpting "Die Kämpfer" ("The Warriors") in protest against burgeoning anti-Semitism. Rheinhold's last work of serpentine deities in a fountain ("Brunnengrotte mit zwei Wassergottheiten") was exhibited close to his death in 1900.

### Consciousness Unexplained

When a human is depicted holding a skull it is usually a comment on mortality and the inevitability of death. Famously, Hamlet bereaves Yorick in one instance ("Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him...") but is soon repulsed by this macabre souvenir as it brings him face-to-face with all life's grim destiny. But, for Rheinhold's monkey it is something quite different. The monkey is engaged in assessment and measurement (confirmed by the callipers also held). The countenance is not one of sorrow through personal loss nor is it melancholic through an encounter with such a physical embodiment of quietus. Is it studious indifference in the gaze, or has a whimsical consideration led to a risible parenthesis? Has the ape chanced upon the measure of man? Indeed, that we should even consider this level of intelligence in another species is a bold examination of ourselves through eyes that bear witness to the disproportionate leverage historically awarded humankind. Is not the whole relationship and divide between man and animal conjured up in this single image? So, Darwinian reasoning places us further up the diverging evolutionary tree than our closest genetic companions. Yet, thanks to completion of the Human Genome Project, we now know that the chimpanzee featured in the statuette shares 95.2% of our genotype, nevertheless, in spite of our morphological similarities and like physiology, there is an essential "something" more that prescribes our special difference. That additional ingredient is our consciousness, albeit strange that "conscious" and "conscience" are intrinsically separated more than their homophonic distance might suggest.

Thus we should be assured in our evolutionarily appointed position of superior intelligence, yet the possession of a consciousness that can only be explained in terms of unconscious events (as concluded by Daniel C. Dennett in *Consciousness Explained*, Penguin Books, 1996) barely ratifies us as an extraordinary organism. If we are unable to explain this faculty, then, by applying Occam's Razor, we are probably left with not much more than Descartes' "I think therefore I am", such that human supremacy over the animal kingdom is balanced on this knife-edge of reason. In that case perhaps we should be wary of our confidence. Our precarious position atop the intellectual book pile is continually buffeted by the winds of dissent from a flourishing field of studies in animal sentience (e.g., Compassion in World Farming Trust, From Darwin to Dawkins, Conference, London, 17-18 March 2005). Additionally, a recent claim reclassifies the chimpanzee with us hominids (as *Homo troglodytes*) on the basis of shared genetic history (and an alternative estimate of 99.4% shared DNA, Wildman, D.E., Uddin, M., Liu, G., Grossman, L.I. & Goodman, M., 2003. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 100, 7181-7188). Then perhaps our summit is shrinking, and in future we may find it difficult to defend an ossified prominence fossilized through presumption.

A higher position? Are we sure of that? Apes studying Darwin? Calm! Relax now. The statuette is not really suggesting a *Planet Of The Apes*-like negation of human superiority by another species (preserved in our paranoia by Pierre Boullé's *Monkey Planet*, John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*, H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*, &co). Mitigation of our control over the rest of the animal kingdom might be assumed for one version of the statuette ("The Tables Turned" attributed to Randolph Caldecott), however, even this reference is not one of some Doomsday scenario depicting human slavery in the paws of super-intelligent primates. This William Wordsworth poem actually speaks more of animal rights under vivisection and the introspection of academic endeavour, rather than the threatened rise of a subordinate species.

Rheinhold's original inscription "eritis sicut deus" (sometimes wrongly "eritus ...." from Genesis 3.5 the serpent is enticing Eve to eat of the apple tree against the Lord's command, promising "And ye shall be as God [knowing good and evil]"), either suggests that Darwinian understanding may lead to Frankensteinian abuse of life's essence, or a more inclusive innocence that recognises a place for other advanced life-forms on our intellectual podium, if only we can just accommodate those guests.

### Adaptation

Ethics aside, selection pressures for changes to the statuette have been overwhelmingly for maximal sales in a mass-produced market, simply compare the cheaper copies with the original. Yet some manufacturers still maintain niches based on quality not quantity, and decent reproductions are available via a limited number of vendors and auction houses.



### The Tables Turned

Up! Up! my friend, and quit your books;  
Or surely you'll grow double:  
Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks;  
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,  
A freshening luster mellow  
Through all the long, green fields has spread,  
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 't is a dull and endless strife:  
Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music! on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throats sing!  
He, too, is no mean preacher:  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
Our minds and hearts to bless --  
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings,  
Our meddling intellect  
Misshapes the beautiful forms of things --  
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;  
Close up those barren leaves;  
Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives.

Bildgießerei Seiler GmbH now own and are implementing the 13 cm Gladenbeck casting mould (Nr. 1194) on marble base. Thomas Blakemore Ltd. (Walsall) produce a fine reproduction simply named "Darwin's Monkey", a popular, glib sobriquet for variations on the theme of Rheinhold's sculpture, alternatively "Darwin's Ape". Other versions less faithful to the original mutate the chimp's pensive contemplation to head-scratching bewilderment, or sacrifice metallic lustre by substitution of cheaper materials (e.g., clay), and often undermine the sculpture's poise with careless positioning of a plastic skull. Prices currently range from \$10 to \$4,500.

### Locations

Other than our own statuette here at the Institute of Evolutionary Biology, University of Edinburgh, other original (Rheinhold-attributed) bronzes of the statuette can be found at Aberdeen's Medico-Chirurgical Society, the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh, the Boston Medical Library and the Medical Library of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, and also in Calgary, Cottbus, Gloucester, Kerikeri, Munnekeburen, Oakville, Osaka, Oxford, Salem am Bodensee, Stevens Point, Vienna, and famously on Lenin's desk in the Kremlin. One was even salvaged from a WWII Junkers 88 at the bottom of Lake Attersee (Austria).

### Contact

If you have any further information about the statuette or are interested in obtaining your own copy of the "Affe mit Schädel" statuette please contact the author of this pamphlet:  
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### Further information

There is an archive of statuette varieties @ <http://www.angelfire.com/apes2/rpm/archive/>  
Axel Schmetzke (University of Wisconsin) has the most comprehensive page about Hugo Rheinhold and the "Affe mit Schädel" statuette @ [http://library.uwsp.edu/aschmetz/Rheinhold's\\_Monkey/Rheinhold's\\_Monkey\\_Page.htm](http://library.uwsp.edu/aschmetz/Rheinhold's_Monkey/Rheinhold's_Monkey_Page.htm)  
Axel Schmetzke, Jochen Richter and Julian Derry are currently preparing various articles and a book related to the statuette.