Are animals conscious?

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Animal consciousness is defined as the quality or state of being self-aware of both external or internal factors or instincts. The debate of animal consciousness is one of the critical topics, taking into account that many of the researchers believe animals are not conscious while others think that animals are conscious. (Ristau, 2018). It creates and represents a problem in terms of human subjectivity and the essence of rational experiences. There is a compact history of animal consciousness, accompanied by different experiments considering arguments and counter-arguments of different philosophers. This paper will argue either animals are conscious or not by exploring relevant articles.

**Article against the consciousness of animals**

The first article that appeared to me while searching, “Animals are not conscious”, is a website of research by Cambridge University. In this article, it is asserted that the essence of consciousness varies with the animals. It is affirmed that the term, consciousness is something that is more like abstraction because consciousness is associated with the cognitive skills that are present in some animals. According to research, it has been observed that most of the animals don’t have a centralized nervous system and they are not the sentient. (Ristau, 2018). Moreover, there are a number of animals who have a simple nervous system and they are sentients. The reasoning comprises of following premises:

Premise 1: The neural substrates of emotions is not confined to cortical structures. The possession of the centralized nervous system is the aspect that enables animals to undergo some experiences and it is the fact that differentiates an animal from other things such as plants, fungi, and bacteria. (Ristau, 2018).

Premise 2: In accordance with the study, it is suggested that the conscious perception is not a necessity for the operation of certain complex processes that are cognitive in nature such as attention, volition, cognitive control, and semantic analysis. It was supported by different theories such as inner sense theory and higher-order theory. (Rowlands,2019).

Conclusion: Consciousness is more like a paradigm that is continuously evolving in a few animals and absent in some beings.

**Evolution of the quality of the argument, “animals are not conscious”**

The argument given appears to make strong points of view in accordance with the conclusion. The first premise highlights a general understanding and recorded observation that animals do have a central nervous system and it facilitates an experience that initiates the ideology of consciousness. It is asserted that it is the possession of the central nervous system and the compact framework of nerves that facilitates thinking and critical attributes. In principle, the beings that don’t have a nervous system are not able to think and feel something. However, the animals that have a well-developed nervous system are capable of critical thinking. (Rowlands, 2019).

The second concern highlights that there are a variety of animals with different anatomy and physical features that determines that animals such as fish, bees and the higher order animals like chimpanzees do have bodily sensation and these assumptions were supported by theories such as higher-order theory, first-order theory, and inner sense theory. (Ristau,2018). The research is affirmed by an example of an experiment called mirror technique in which the skin of few animals is marked and then it is made to view itself in the mirror that makes an animal become aware of itself. Within the last thirty years, it has been observed that those animals are able to recognize the marks on their skin and it confirm that animals are aware of themselves. Those animals included apes, elephants, and few birds. (Ristau, 2018).

**Articles in favor of animal’s consciousness**

The article that appeared to me while searching, “Animals are conscious”, is a journal article that I found through google scholar, titled, “Insulting words, “They are animals”. In this article. It is asserted that the essence of consciousness in animals is related to the concept of feeling and awareness. The ideology of consciousness is associated with pain, taking into account that all the animals feel pain and they react. It is assumed and proved by different experiments that animals are living beings, they are reactive towards the stimuli they receive from their environment and it results in the fact that animals are conscious. (Animal Consciousness: New Report Puts All Doubts to Sleep, 2019).

Premise 1: Animals have neurochemical, petrophysical and neuroanatomical substrates of the conscious states that empower the capacity to initiate behaviors that are driven by intentions. Such instances and characteristics highlight the significance of consciousness in animals. (Animal Consciousness: New Report Puts All Doubts to Sleep, 2019).

Premise 2: The essence of being reactive and feel something is the most broader form of consciousness. If you hit an animal and it responds, it is one of the greatest forms of conscious response. (Animal Consciousness: New Report Puts All Doubts to Sleep, 2019).

Conclusion: Animals are conscious in both broad and narrow spectrums, they feel and react, similarly they also have conscious states. Analysis of anatomy and physiology both highlight the role of consciousness in animals.

**Evaluation of the quality of argument, “Animals are conscious”**

The argument makes strong points in addressing all the main concerns about the topic, "either animals are conscious". There are two strong and affirmative points that are highlighted in the article, and they stand the scrutiny of counter-arguments. The conclusion of the argument needs to be understood in the context of neurology and social experiences. It is, therefore, asserted that consciousness is a very broad term that needs to be understood differently with respect to the subject category. In the case of humans, consciousness is all about the attributes such as alertness, response, intellectual and awareness. However, in case of animals, consciousness is a two-dimensional concept, at one side, it is the product of human observation where animals are living beings and they are reactive towards the external factors that are affecting an animal. This statement also includes the element of “pain”. Animals do feel pain and they react where they are beaten. The other dimension highlights that there are animals who are positioned at the more refined and well-designed level at which one can find humanely attributes in them. (Animal Consciousness: New Report Puts All Doubts to Sleep, 2019). So, it would not be wrong to say that calling animal as animals in the context of lack of consciousness is wrong because all animals are conscious. (Animal Consciousness: New Report Puts All Doubts to Sleep, 2019).

**Evaluation of non-scholarly and scholarly sources**

An analysis of the sources reveals that scholarly sources have more sound reasoning as compared to non-scholarly reasoning. In scholarly sources, the target audience is the general public who are concerned with the study of the subject or an idea while in non-scholarly sources, the target audience is the people who belong to the panel of discussion and experimental board. (Animal Consciousness: New Report Puts All Doubts to Sleep, 2019). Moreover, the motif of the authors of the scholarly source is to enlighten and broaden understanding by undergoing qualitative or quantitative study, whereas in non-scholarly sources, the motif of the authors is to set a dimension of study that can prove or disprove a fact or an idea. There is no apparent fallacy in any of the researches.

**Conclusion**

This activity would prove to be quite helpful in conducting research in future because I came to know the significance of scholarly and non-scholarly resources. I got to know the overall framework of research and the patterns adopted to continue research such as data collection or experimentation and then the representation of data.

References

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