



Conscious Animals



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Opinion

It is a fact that all the mammals share same basic brain anatomy, & much is shared with vertebrates more generally. Neurological similarities between humans and other animals also suggest commonality of conscious experience. Conscious experiences characterized primarily by psycho-physiological expressions, biological reactions, & mental states give rise to animal emotions. Higher brain centres in the cerebral cortex are usually associated with the control of these emotions. From a logical stand point consciousness is subjectivity, sentience, and the ability to perceive the relationship between oneself and one's environment. As far as religious perspective is concerned it also insinuates that animals are conscious and are strictly to be dealt ethically.

Darwin's evolutionary theory supported that all mammals (including humans) share neuroanatomical structures such as the amygdale (grey matter mass) & neurochemical pathways in the limbic system that are important for feelings. He promoted that the differences among species are differences in degree rather than kind (there are shades of gray among different species, not stark black & white differences), arguing strongly for the presence of animal emotions, empathy, & moral behavior. Charles Darwin was among the first scientists to write about the existence & nature of emotions in animals. His observational & sometimes anecdotal approach has developed into a more robust, hypothesis-driven, scientific approach. He made a detailed study & expressed the correlation in his book 'The Expression of the Emotions in Man & Animals'. He also projected emotional expression as an outward communication of an inner state. Pain, anger, joy, comfort, hunger & other environmental stimuli are well responded by animals & express their emotional activity individually. Some of the below mentioned episodes confirm that the animals are conscious and have feelings. It has been seen in Great Ape mothers that they have a strong bonds of attachment & whenif a baby chimpanzee or

gorilla dies, the mother will not uncommonly carry the body around for several days which cites this specie of animal for being able to experience empathy&theory of mind. Chimpanzees &gorilla on the other hand have been known for assertion of mournful behaviour & expression of vocalisations over the death of companion.

A study conducted on horses by Bernda in 2013 has shown that horses react differently to various categories of human photographs shown. There reaction & response have been dissimilar when photographs of positive (happy & negative (sad) were shown. It was observed that horses looked more with their left eye towards angry & sad photographs perceiving negative stimuli & their heart rates also show increase in comparison to positive images. A cat will hiss when it is angry or trying to defend its owner. A dog emits a deep growl to scare off any unwanted person or intruder. This is a definite sign of anger and should not be taken lightly. Dog expresses sadness when it whimpers, its ears fold back, and its eyes grow wide in a pleading way. Animals not only understand but they also express their feelings of love and affection in many ways.

A cat loves you when it rubs against your legs. As far as dog is concerned when it starts licking all over is a clear sign of affection towards its caretaker. There are reports that a dogs do have shown an emotional expression of shameat times with signs of the lowered head, ears swept back, the hunched posture, & a doleful gaze & when in joy & under the expectation of any great pleasure, dogs bound & jump about in an extravagant manner, & bark. In Colorado five magpies (intelligent family of birds) were occupying a roadside and when approached it was seen that one magpie was hit by a vehicle & was lying dead & the other magpies were standing around him. One approached the corpse & gently pecked it, while another magpie followed the same. Suddenly one more magpie flew off & bought some grass & left it by corpse then all the magpie stood vigil for few moments & flew away.

This reflects an expression of empathy by birds. In 2011 a Study on cats was conducted by Drakes (Animal science researcher) and it was documented that the cats can learn to manipulate their owners through vocalizations that are similar to the cries of human babies. Some cats learn to add a purr to the vocalization, which makes it less harmonious & more tuneless to humans, & therefore harder

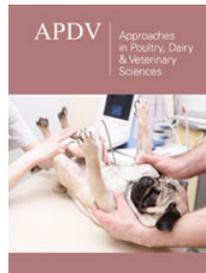
to ignore. The probability of vocalisation increases from cat that elicits a positive response from a human in future. It is now widely accepted that animals have feelings and collection of behavioural, co-gnitive and neurobiological studies supports the notion that, high content of consciousness does occur in various the species of animals.



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