
Do animals think like humans?

Examining the Language and
Cognition Debate

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Dividing the Class into Debate Teams

- Group 1: Some animals “think” about aspects of the natural world very much like humans do.
- Group 2: Animals only appear to “think” like humans. In actuality, they use very simplistic problem solving or learning routines that they have used over and over again.

2

Mental Maps

- Human and animal abilities to create and use mental maps is equivalent. They both create an aerial view mental photograph of an area.
- Some animals can create mental maps that are better than human maps

3

Problem Solving

- Some animals can solve problems by envisioning a set of mental solutions and choosing the one that works best.

4

Imitation

- Imitation by some animals demonstrates that they construct a mental picture (movie) of an event that they want to imitate and that they insert themselves as an actor in the event

5

Concepts

- Some animals know concepts such as tree and bush much like humans.
- Some animals have an appreciation for art that is similar to humans

6

Numbers/counting

- Some animals understand the concept of numbers and can compute numbers by assigning number words in sequence

7

Animal Communication

- Some animals can convey meaning in their calls in the same way humans convey meanings in their words

8

Human language

- Some animals comprehend the meaning contained in words and phrases using the same language decoding mechanisms that humans use.

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