

Are We Conscious Beings? Not Yet.

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When asked how humans differ from animals, few people will give a sound answer, and some would even ask back: "And do they really differ?" This lack of determinacy must have objective roots, and there is something in the world, which hinders proper distinction between humans and animals. Probably, many will say that people possess consciousness, and animals don't; however, there is yet no general consent on what consciousness is, and how one could check its presence in humans and its absence in animals. This vagueness of such a fundamental notion is also due to the real situation, which, objectively, does not distinguish us from those whom we so often considered as inferior creatures.

Still, the very existence of the idea of difference indicates that there must be something supporting it in the world, and, if not now, in the perceptible future, humans may develop into an essentially different kind of beings, who will be able not only to consciously behave, but also to understand how their behavior differs from that of the other creatures on the Earth or elsewhere in the Universe.

Freedom must be listed among the indispensable features of conscious behavior. An animal is driven by necessity, struggle for life; the availability of choice in animals is always associated with a state of being protected from the world by an external force. As long as humans have to struggle for life, work for money, prove anything to anybody, compete with the others—they demonstrate animal behavior, and hence cannot be called conscious enough.

If we want to differ from animals, we have to also overcome the animal dependence on the body. Conscious being use their physiology to achieve definite goals, supplementing it with other tools, whenever necessary, and they should never be slaves of their flesh. Putting aside smokers, alcoholics or drug addicts, we could point at the very process of physiological birth as a stigma of our animal nature. The humanity has yet a long way to go to full birth control and birth planning, including both genetic self-construction and the controllable birth environment. We have already made the process of insemination independent of sexual intercourse; as a next step, we have to deliver women from the pains of childbearing and bringing forth a baby, passing this function to special incubators. We have already made the familial relations a purely juridical matter; we have to support it with eliminating biological kinship as such, and transition to conscious (industrial) production of new humans, including both physiology and education.

Accordingly, all other production and product distribution processes are to become socially controlled, since chaotic economy and free market are utterly incompatible with consciousness. A conscious being knows what should be done, and does that, rather than merely adapts to what has been done incidentally by somebody else.

There is another side of consciousness, that of responsibility. If we act consciously, we are responsible for what we do, and we should not push responsibility to somebody else. An animal is not responsible for its acts, since it has no choice. Today, humans also have very limited choice and do not feel responsible for anything, observing that everything goes beyond their will. Religion is a clear

manifestation of this fear of responsibility, the necessity for somebody to judge by oneself; any religion tries to ascribe the ultimate judgment to an incomprehensible entity (god, spirit, fate, tradition, etc.), which is nothing but an abstraction of the very process of human decision making. People are still apt to believe in magic, or a lucky strike, rather than conscious concentration on the problem and its rational solution. As a complement to religion, alcohol and drugs provide similar illusory salvation, in reality being deliverance from the reason itself.

The humanity has gone a long way from the animal to the conscious being. The earliest stage of this development knew the general phases of savageness, barbarity and the primitive communal system; on the level of civilization, with its phases of slavery, feudalism and capitalism, humans have learned to re-create the world on their will, but the will itself yet remains enslaved; now, time is coming to master our own existence, and replace civilization with a much better organized society. We have a chance to become conscious. But we are not conscious now—not yet.

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