

TOTAL MARK AWARDED	9
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Supporting evidence (Drawn from written evidence submitted, creative work and judgements based on oral presentations.)

Very good commitment shown, clearly developed. 10 sources used with summaries and analysis plus exploration of sources in the discussion. Consideration of arguments for and against. Some assistance was given with the framing of the discussion but this was thoroughly explored by [redacted]. Clear conclusion which sums up the argument.

NCH School Certificate in Philosophy

NAME:

Project Title: Do animals think?

Set:

Consent

This project is the student's own work.

Permission is granted for this work to be used to exemplify School Philosophy Certificate work and in the examining and moderation process.

Student signature (Student should add initials)

Teacher signature (Teacher should add initials)

Philosophy Project Plan

Question: Do animals think?

Form of project (e.g. report, presentation, film or podcast):

Slides presentation

Topic areas to research:

Animal neurological research, animal rights, do animals have minds, what is thought

Ideas for resources (e.g. websites, books, articles, magazines, people to interview):

<https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691126364/do-animals-think>

[https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/can-animals-think-and-feel-in-the-way-humans-do-939zh0](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/can-animals-think-and-feel-in-the-way-humans-do-939zh066)

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<https://theweek.com/articles/463962/possible-think-without-language>

<https://www.peta.org/about-peta/why-peta/why-animal-rights/>

If you are part of a group project, list the roles and responsibilities of each group member and explain how you will identify each group member's work in your report:

Do animals think? (Or do animals think in the same way we do?)

Introduction (100 words - explain the question and define any key words)

To think is defined as "*to believe something or have an opinion or idea*"¹. Most people feel as though animals have some sense of thought, whether it's a dog wagging its tail to make you know it's happy or a horse pawing at the ground with its hooves to show you that it's hungry

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/think>

or raring to go. Is this all a misconception? How can we know the specifics of how animals' minds work? I believe that animals do think but in a dissimilar way from humans as this is supported by vast amounts of scientific evidence.

Research (700 words)

Is it possible to think without language?

Many sources say that you don't have to be able to speak to think, but speaking enables your thoughts to develop and become more complex. This is shown when Marc Hauser, a Harvard professor of psychology says, *"Animals have interesting thoughts, but the only way they can convey them is by grunts, shrieks, and other vocalizations, and by gestures,"* Hauser points out. *"When humans evolved speech, they liberated the kinds of thoughts nonhumans have."*² Therefore this source says that animals can think but just do not have the complexity of thought that humans have as their thoughts have never evolved and therefore have slightly different thoughts to us.

Other sources also agree with this and go further in their argument by stating that animals with these thoughts can make conscious decisions. An example of this is that, *"Cameron Buckner, assistant professor of philosophy at UH, says empirical evidence suggests a variety of animal species are able to make rational decisions, despite the lack of a human-like language."*³ This source therefore states that animals can make reasoned decisions that will benefit them even though they do not speak. Meaning that they have to be able to think as decisions involve many thoughts and the weighing out of the best and worst options in something's mind.

Whereas some sources state how animals, although they can think, have a completely different way of doing it. As demonstrated by this source: *"While animals are by no means dumb, they don't think the same way we do."*⁴ This shows how some people would argue that the thought process of humans and other animals are completely different but they are definitely able to have some thought complexity.

One source talks about how humans think we are different from animals but in nature, there is an example of every single skill that we think makes humanity "special". An example of this is that Caledonian crows make intricate tools which is something .⁵ This shows how some people think animals and humans' thought processes are the exact same and this is completely different to the quote mentioned before.

² <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2002/03/scientists-think-that-animals-think/>

³ <https://www.uh.edu/news-events/stories/2017/november/11012017Buckner-Animal-Cognition.php>

⁴ <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691126364/do-animals-think>

⁵ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/how-animals-think/476364/>

Others will agree with the previous view: *"Life is very vivid to animals. In many cases they know who they are. They know who their friends are and who their rivals are. They have ambitions for higher status. They compete. Their lives follow the arc of a career, like ours do. We both try to stay alive, get food and shelter, and raise some young for the next generation."*⁶ This shows how the ultimate goal for both humans' and animals' life are the same and therefore they think mostly the same to achieve their targets.

Another argument is that this question is not even a valid question to ask. This is shown when a source says, *"There is little doubt that animals think. Their behaviour is too sophisticated to suppose otherwise. But it is awfully difficult to say precisely what animals think. Our human language seems unsuited to express their thoughts."*⁷ Therefore another argument is that this question shouldn't even have been asked as we will never be able to tell their exact thoughts.

For a long time due to religion people believed that animals could not think or feel at all. There was, *"a long tradition in European thought which held that animals had no minds at all. This way of thinking stemmed from the argument of René Descartes, a great 17th-century philosopher, that people were creatures of reason, linked to the mind of God, while animals were merely machines made of flesh—living robots"*.⁸ Although, after much research over the last 40 years in the field and lab, *"most scientists now feel they can say with confidence that some animals process information and express emotions in ways that are accompanied by conscious mental experience. They agree that animals... have complex mental capacities"*⁹ This shows that through science and experiments it could be said that animals can think complexly and to think that they can't would be going against modern science and resorting back to thoughts of the 17th century.

It could be argued that animals have a wide range of emotions including sadness and loneliness (which shows how they think with utmost complexity) which was presented by one source: *"in 1972 Jane Goodall witnessed a young male chimp named Flint die just a month after the death of his mother Flo – the male was so despondent following her death that he*

⁶<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/150714-animal-dog-thinking-feelings-brain-science>

⁷<https://theconversation.com/can-we-really-know-what-animals-are-thinking-122678>

⁸<https://www.economist.com/news/essays/21676961-inner-lives-animals-are-hard-study-there-evidence-they-may-be-lot-richer-science-once-thought>

⁹<https://www.economist.com/news/essays/21676961-inner-lives-animals-are-hard-study-there-evidence-they-may-be-lot-richer-science-once-thought>

stopped eating or socializing to the point that he simply didn't survive."¹⁰ Therefore this source could support the argument that animals don't only think the same way as humans for survival but they actually think about others and rely on others for a good, happy life as humans also do.

Another argument would be that animals can think very much like humans because they have relationships and try to help others. For example, "in 2012, researchers in Monterey Bay, California, witnessed a group of humpback whales protect a gray whale from a pod of killer whales (orcas)."¹¹ Therefore people might say, animals must be able to think like humans as they actively have tried to protect other animals and be selfless and therefore they can think very similarly to the complexity that humans think.

Discussion (800 words)

Arguments:

A - Animals do think

B - Animals think in a different way to humans

C - Animals don't think

Firstly I think that animals do think because there is a lot of scientific evidence to support this fact including the evidence of them making tools and being very creative. This is shown when it is said that Caledonian crows (who live in a group of islands east of Australia) make intricate tools in order to eat¹². This could be conceived as being very similar to cutlery that we eat our food with. Therefore the animals have to think about how they craft their tools and how they are going to eat their food to be able to do what the Caledonian crows do. So, I believe that animals must be able to think as they have creative and innovative ways of doing daily tasks and therefore they must have a mind capable of coming up with these ideas.

Secondly I believe that animals do think as there is a lot of scientific evidence to support this fact. For example it is said by Cameron Buckner, who is assistant professor of philosophy at UH that, "empirical evidence suggests a variety of animal species are able to make rational decisions, despite the lack of a human-like language."¹³ Therefore they must be able to think

¹⁰<https://www.bbcearth.com/news/the-truth-about-animal-grief>

¹¹<https://wonderopolis.org/wonder/do-animals-protect-other-animals>

¹²<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/how-animals-think/476364/>

¹³<https://www.uh.edu/news-events/stories/2017/november/11012017Buckner-Animal-Cognition.php>

for themselves if they are making decisions that aren't just based on natural instincts and they have to think which is the best option and in which situation will they benefit the most. So animals have to be able to think as there is scientific evidence that they do.

Another argument is that animals ought to be able to think as they have human-like emotions and act on these emotions so they must be able to think if they have a complex range of emotions and are able to make decisions off these emotions. For example, someone, "*witnessed a young male chimp named Flint die just a month after the death of his mother Flo – the male was so despondent following her death that he stopped eating or socializing to the point that he simply didn't survive.*"¹⁴ This demonstrates how animals mourn the deaths of their loved ones which is very similar to humans and this animal was so caught up in grief that they didn't care about their own life, which completely goes against the argument that animals just act off instincts and shows that animals are able to love and therefore must have some kind of thought process going through their heads which isn't just based off their hormones. Therefore animals must be able to think

Although, you could argue that animals can't think as many people before the 20th Century thought this. For example, a great philosopher in the 17th century called René Descartes said, "*that people were creatures of reason, linked to the mind of God, while animals were merely machines made of flesh—living robots.*"¹⁵ This coincides with the argument that animals do not think as it says that they just act off instinct with no other thought process or emotion to anything. Although I strongly disagree with this as it is stated in the same source that, "*most scientists now feel they can say with confidence that some animals process information and express emotions in ways that are accompanied by conscious mental experience.*"¹⁶ Therefore sources suggest that animals can think as at the time that people thought they couldn't, the science wasn't advanced enough to find out what but now we have physical evidence from scientists.

As well as this, many could argue that Animals can think, but they only have such a limited amount of thoughts that the fact that they can think is almost irrelevant. This is supported when Mark Hauser, a professor of Philosophy at Harvard says, "*When humans evolved speech, they liberated the kinds of thoughts nonhumans have.*"¹⁷ Therefore although animals

¹⁴<https://www.bbcearth.com/news/the-truth-about-animal-grief>

¹⁵<https://www.economist.com/news/essays/21676961-inner-lives-animals-are-hard-study-there-evidence-they-may-be-lot-richer-science-once-thought>

¹⁶<https://www.economist.com/news/essays/21676961-inner-lives-animals-are-hard-study-there-evidence-they-may-be-lot-richer-science-once-thought>

¹⁷<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2002/03/scientists-think-that-animals-think/>

can think, their thoughts are so limited compared to the complexity of humans' thoughts due to the development of language, it is almost as if they do not think at all. Although I do disagree and believe that animals' thoughts are relevant and even though they are different to humans they still have relatively developed thoughts as they present complexity of emotion and decision making to the outside world.

Lastly, I believe that animals do think, but very differently and present their thoughts in different ways to humans. This is presented by a source from Princeton saying, "*While animals are by no means dumb, they don't think the same way we do.*"¹⁰ This reflects that animals are slightly less intelligent than humans and think in a different way to us but they do have a vast range of emotions as presented in earlier sources and are able to make connections between each other. Therefore animals can think and have a variety of thoughts.

Conclusion (100 words)

To conclude, I believe that, although there are many arguments otherwise and you can never be sure as it is extremely difficult to have in depth communication with animals, animals do think and have thoughts beyond natural instinct which is especially shown in acts of kindness or emotion. Therefore to answer the question I do believe animals do think and a being can have thoughts without language and sources that state or imply otherwise are mostly not relying on modern science and the arguments that animals are merely mindless beings are simply illogical. The sources that I have presented demonstrate that human thought is not the only kind of thought and animals think in a different way to us. As Benjamin Franklin profoundly spoke, "If everyone is thinking alike, then no one is thinking".

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¹⁰<https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691126364/do-animals-think>

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