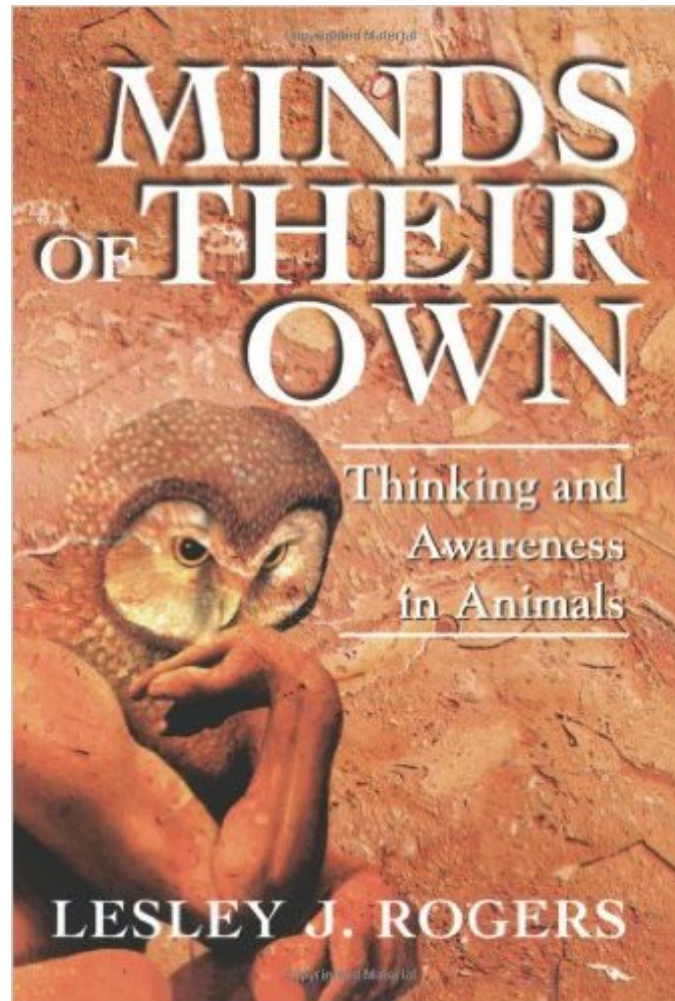


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# Minds Of Their Own: Thinking And Awareness In Animals



## Synopsis

Do Animals have ideas? Do they experience pain like humans? Do they think about objects that they cannot see? About situations that have occurred in the past? Do they consciously make plans for the future or do they simply react unthinkingly to objects as they appear and situations as they arise? All of these questions have bearing on whether or not animals have consciousness. The advent of computers that "think" has lead us to consider "intelligence" in a way we never thought possible a decade ago. But when and how does information processing in the brain become automatic? In *Minds of Their Own*, Lesley J. Rogers examines the issue of animal thought both sympathetically and critically by looking at the different behavior characteristics of a variety of animals, the evolution of the brain and when consciousness might have evolved. To most people, to be conscious means to be aware of oneself as well as to be aware of others. But does this hold true for animals? The answer may have implications which transcend mere scientific inquiry: if animals are cognizant creatures, what, if any, moral responsibility do humans have to assure their rights? This timely book examines this issue and others by emphasizing comparisons between humans and animals: how we evolved; how we remember; how we learn.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Until very recently the subject of animal awareness has not even been approached with the correct questions. As Rogers clearly points out, most of the research on cognition has been directed at supporting the assumption that consciousness is an exclusively human phenomenon. An inherited

predisposition to preserve a human monopoly on consciousness survives only because it appeases our omnivorous behaviors. In the early 1600's Spinoza correctly determined the existence of an emotional balance. He told us that one extreme emotion will dominate the senses until such time that an equally extreme opposite emotion brings us back to emotional center. Antonio Damasio provides a compelling case that consciousness is inextricably linked to emotion in his book "The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness". Using Damasio and Spinoza as a frame of reference it follows that each and every decision we make is based on an emotion, not a uniquely quantifiable language infused thought, as the popular human interpretation might assume. Examples of this might be choosing the color of paint, a selection from a menu, the selection of a mate or which way to turn when unsure. Animals have provided us with an exhaustive and documentable list of emotional behaviors. How is it possible to arrive at the conclusion that animals are not conscious when most animals will clearly display behaviors consistent with emotional stimulus? The last frontier of computer science is the quest for a conscious, non-human entity. Ray Kurzweil has spent the better part of his life predicting the emergence of an exponentially accelerating form of machine augmented human consciousness.

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