

Re: Why Humans are Conscious

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- *From:* claudiusdenk@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* Tue, 30 Jan 2007 14:30:25 -0500 (EST)
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On Jan 29, 10:55 am, "feedbackdroid" <feedbackdr...@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Jan 28, 11:20 pm, claudiusd...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Jan 22, 7:25 pm, "Stephen" <stephe...@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote: The previous post makes it sound like ONLY humans, and maybe some

apes, have consciousness. However, this overlooks the idea, discussed by Dan Dennett and Gerald Edelman among others, that there is a continuum of consciousness in the animal kingdom.

Sure. To some degree. But human consciousness is orders of magnitude higher than that of any other species, most notably our closest relatives, chimps.

To help explicate

matters, they talk about "primary sensory consciousness", which at least all mammals have (and which some people consider that all animals have to a lesser degree), and "higher-order consciousness", which only the highest primates have, and which involves language and general ability to think rationally and to manipulate symbols.

The corollary to this is that, the latter (HOC) evolved out of, and on top of, the former (PSC).

Why do humans have a consciousness? It's a direct result of the group/communal selective aspects of human

evolution:

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- 1) A shift in world climate about 8 million years ago. (A shift in Hadley cells [paleoclimatology--look it up].)

- 2) Resulting shift from a seasonless rain-forest habitat to a dry-season dominated monsoon habitat.

- 3) Patchification of resulting treed habitat near source of perennial water into city-sized, town-sized patches of forest.

- 4) Emergence of large predators, especially in the surrounding treeless or less treed habitat.

- 5) Resulting Isolation of (chimp)/A'pith communities at these treed patches as a result of #3 and #4 above. (Note: isolation is essential to the group selective aspects of this hypothesis. Without it individuals or subgroups of a community site could [and would] easily escape the dry season predatory massacres [see #6 below] that links the fate of the members of a community to one another.)

- 6) Tendency of the predators to target community sites during the desperate depths of the dry season that are impoverished, starving, thirsty, experiencing internal strife and to ignore those that are healthy, well-fed, and that maintain internal cooperation.

- 7) Emergence of large food-competitor species that, if left unchecked, could and would rapidly deplete the resources in a (chimp)/A'pith community thereby increasing the probability (see #6 above) that the community site would be targeted by the opportunity seeking predators during the desperate depths of the dry season.

- 8) Due to the implications of #1 through #7 above, the emergence of cooperative rock-throwing, stick wielding behaviors in (chimp)/A'pith directed against immigrating food-competitor species. The communities that were most successful in this behavior were the ones that best avoided predatory massacres.

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So, to answer the question, why did consciousness emerge in humans/hominids? Because individuals that have consciousness/conscience are more likely to be members of communities that are better able to achieve the behavior/ends indicated in #8 above.

It's that simple.– Hide quoted text — Show quoted text –