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## Peter Carruthers and Brute Experience; Descartes Revisited

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## **Abstract**

Peter Carruthers argues in favour of the position that the pains of non-human animals are nonconscious ones, and from this that non-human animals are due no moral consideration.<sup>1</sup> I outline Carruthers' argument in Section II, and call attention to significant overlap between Carruthers' standpoint regarding non-human animals and Rene Descartes' position. In Section III I specify various ways Carruthers' premises are undefended. I argue that we are either forced to take seriously an absurd notion of pain experience that fails to be adequately defended, or we are forced to accept an underlying problematic ideology Carruthers shares with Descartes that begs the question of non-human animal consciousness. In Section IV I conclude by arguing from both a common sense and moral perspective that Carruthers' analysis is fundamentally flawed.

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## Peter Carruthers and Brute Experience; Descartes Revisited

### I. Introduction

Peter Carruthers argues in favour of the position that the pains of non-human animals are nonconscious ones, and from this that non-human animals are due no moral consideration.<sup>1</sup> I outline Carruthers' argument in Section II, and call attention to significant overlap between Carruthers' standpoint regarding non-human animals and Rene Descartes' position. In Section III I specify various ways Carruthers' premises are undefended. I argue that we are either forced to take seriously an absurd notion of pain experience that fails to be adequately defended, or we are forced to accept an underlying problematic ideology Carruthers shares with Descartes that begs the question of non-human animal consciousness. In Section IV I conclude by arguing from both a common sense and moral perspective that Carruthers' analysis is fundamentally flawed.

### II. Carruthers' Argument

Carruthers maintains the view that although non-human animals have experiences, such experiences need not have a subjective feel.<sup>2</sup> He explains nonconscious experiences by reference to examples such as driving. You may drive a considerable distance without being consciously aware that you are driving. While driving your mind may wander while you simultaneously, but nonconsciously, manoeuvre your way through traffic. Carruthers also has us consider washing dishes. Like driving, you can wash dishes while your mind is otherwise occupied.<sup>3</sup> He goes on to claim these nonconscious experiences have no phenomenological feel, rather, only "conscious experiences have a distinctive phenomenology, a distinctive feel. Nonconscious experiences are those which may help to control behaviour without being felt by the conscious subject."<sup>4</sup> According to Carruthers, although we may share sense organs and behaviour with the 'brutes,' this is insufficient for establishing that they too experience phenomenological feels.<sup>5</sup>

Recall that Descartes likewise assures us that despite the plethora of behaviours shared by human and non-human animals, this is not sufficient evidence for positing that they have minds, and thus conscious experience.<sup>6</sup> He takes non-human animals to be automata; "they have no intelligence at all...it is nature which acts in them according to the disposition of their organs. In the same way a clock, consisting only of wheels and springs, can count the hours and measure time..."<sup>7</sup> To maintain this proposed divide between human animals and other animals, rather than using a mind/body distinction where non-human animals are just bodies, Carruthers uses the language of conscious experience and nonconscious experience. As we will see, on Carruthers' view humans have privileged access to conscious experience by virtue of the way some humans sometimes think.

Carruthers wants to separate the question of whether an entity can *experience* from whether an entity can *feel*. He does this through claiming nonconscious experiences have no phenomenological feel while conscious experiences do. Carruthers believes nonconscious experiences to be a species of experience, and assumes that not all experiences are conscious ones.<sup>8</sup> He stresses that nonconscious experiences *are* experiences because the states in question conform to the practical-reasoning model of explanation, and because of the high degree of sophistication at which the incoming information is processed.<sup>9</sup> These are less than convincing grounds for accepting this conception of experience, and I interpret Carruthers as recognizing this because he gives the following qualification. For those of us who take issue with defining nonconscious states as experiences, given that experience *by definition* is a conscious state, Carruthers suggests a simple rephrasing of his conclusion will suffice. We can then read him as saying “since there exist in humans similar levels of cognitive processing and behavior control to those displayed by brutes, which do not involve experience, it is an open question whether brutes have experience at all.”<sup>10</sup> I will address the problem that results from this alternative construal of his position in Section III.

Carruthers proposes the following definitions. He takes it as given that pains are experiences; so on his view we can ask if they are of the conscious or nonconscious variety.<sup>11</sup> A conscious mental state “is one that is available to conscious thought – where a conscious act of thinking is itself an event that is available to be thought about in turn,” whereas a “conscious belief (qua standing state) is one that is apt to emerge in a conscious thinking with the same content.”<sup>12</sup> On Carruthers’ account, a conscious experience “is a state whose content is available to be consciously thought about (that is, which is available for description in acts of thinking which are themselves made available to further acts of thinking).”<sup>13</sup> When it comes to qualia, “what constitutes that feeling as a conscious rather than a nonconscious state is that it is available to be consciously thought about.”<sup>14</sup> As such, Carruthers maintains that higher order thoughts are *required* for any qualitative feeling to occur.

In like form, Descartes requires a restricted and very specific display of thought for the establishment of mind and thus for the possibility of sensation. For Descartes, sensation cannot be differentiated from thought. He states in *The Passions of the Soul* that “there is nothing in us which we must attribute to our soul except our thoughts.”<sup>15</sup> Recall that by the term “thought,” Descartes means “everything which we are aware of as happening within us, in so far as we have awareness of it;” he identifies thinking with understanding, willing, imagining, and sensory awareness.<sup>16</sup> Norman Malcom explains how Descartes conceives of the relation between thought and consciousness in the following way: “...something is a thought of mine if and only if I am conscious of it, and only to the extent I am conscious of it. Since animals have no thought they have no consciousness of anything.”<sup>17</sup> On Malcom’s reading of Descartes, thought requires both propositional content and a propositional attitude.<sup>18</sup> This is why animals are believed to lack thought. Non-human animals are mere automata because they “are devoid of mind, of all consciousness and awareness, of real feeling and sensation, because they do not ‘apprehend,’ ‘entertain,’ ‘contemplate,’ or in plain language, think of, *propositions*.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, we can take Descartes, like Carruthers, to be a HOT (higher order thought) theorist. So when Descartes states what might otherwise seem unusual, namely that “thought is included in our mode of sensation,” it is not so curious because “every human sensation includes thought, and if thought is propositional content together with propositional attitude then at the center of every sensation of ours there is a proposition. Animals do not have propositional thoughts and therefore do not have sensations in the

human mode.”<sup>20</sup> Notice Malcom’s qualification regarding thought in ‘the human mode.’ In Section III I discuss this ‘human’ limitation on what can count as thought, and thus sensation, in detail. What is important to note for the time being is that Carruthers and Descartes share the criterion that the sort of thought required for conscious experience must be of a particular and clearly delineated kind; namely, it must directly simulate specifically human modes of thought.

Carruthers believes that from the distinction he posits between conscious and nonconscious mental states the “nonconscious status of most animal experiences follows with very little further argument.”<sup>21</sup> He first assumes that “...no one would seriously maintain that dogs, cats, sheep, cattle, pigs, or chickens consciously think things to themselves...”<sup>22</sup> He believes it follows that if his “distinction between conscious and nonconscious experience is correct, the experiences of all these creatures will be of the nonconscious variety.”<sup>23</sup> Carruthers leaves open the possibility of higher primates engaging in the appropriate acts of thinking, though he doubts such a possibility.<sup>24</sup> In the interest of brevity, and given Carruthers’ doubt regarding the possibility that higher primates partake in the right kind of thinking, in the discussion that follows I generally characterize his position as applying to all non-human animals. I assume Carruthers selects dogs, cats, sheep, cattle, pigs, and chickens because many humans in the Western world use them for consumption and testing. If the trend were to change, and different non-human animals were used, then I take it his arguments would still be applied. The nonconscious states Carruthers and I focus on are pain states.

I take a simplified form of Carruthers’ argument concerning non-human animal experience to run something like this:

1. Pains are experiences which are conscious or not.
2. A conscious experience or belief is a state whose content is available to be consciously thought about. When it comes to qualia, what constitutes that *feeling* as a conscious rather than a nonconscious state is that it is available to be consciously thought about.
3. All non-human creatures (with the possible exception of higher level primates) have no second order beliefs, and thus have only nonconscious experiences.

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Therefore: All non-human animals have only nonconscious experiences, and more specifically no conscious pain experiences.

Utilizing this rendering of his argument, I will address various ways his premises are flawed in what follows.

### **III. Flawed Premises Based On Undefended Assumptions**

The first premise, that pains are experiences that are conscious or not, is not adequately defended. First of all, it is difficult to conceive of what specifically a nonconscious pain actually amounts to. I take experience *by definition* to involve consciousness. I agree with Nagel that “an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to *be* that organism – something it is like *for* the organism.”<sup>25</sup> I am unconvinced that we can call a nonconscious ‘experience’ a pain experience in any meaningful sense of the word. I take the notion of a nonconscious pain to be inherently problematic in that the meaning of pain rests on an unpleasant *feeling*; it is a felt experience, a *sensation* one is aware of.<sup>26</sup> Further, only to the degree that a pain

is felt does it exist as a pain. Given this, the notion of nonconscious pain is absurd - it is an oxymoron. If one were not conscious of an unpleasant sensation, one would not be *in* pain. A nonconscious occurrence is not felt. I take this to be the reason it is called nonconscious. Once it is consciously apprehended, it is felt, and is therefore no longer nonconscious. This notion of a nonconscious experience remains experientially vacuous. We are unable to insert any experiential content into this notion because it would then become a felt experience, a conscious one. For these reasons I take the premise that pains are experiences that can be conscious or not, and that these nonconscious pains can still be pain experiences in some meaningful sense of the word, to be indefensible.

For those of us who question the viability of a ‘nonconscious pain experience’ Carruthers prescribes the following rephrasing: “since there exist in humans similar levels of cognitive processing and behavior control to those displayed by brutes, which do not involve experience, it is an open question whether brutes have experience at all.”<sup>27</sup> There are two ways to interpret this rephrasing. One involves Carruthers begging the question, because to find this rephrasing satisfactory, we must already be convinced non-human animals do *not* have conscious experiences; we must already be inclined to the view all non-human animal ‘pains’ are of the nonconscious sort. If we utilize another interpretation, where we are not already assuming non-human animals do not have conscious experiences, then the application of Carruthers ‘rephrasing’ to pain states is perplexing. This is because pain experience is *characteristically* conscious experience. That *any* pains are of the nonconscious sort, of course, flies in the face of common sense. Carruthers himself admits, that there “are no noncontroversial examples of nonconscious pain in humans....There is an obvious reason for this, since part of the function of pain is to intrude upon consciousness.”<sup>28</sup> The *characteristic* intrusive nature of pain separates it in an important way from the nonconscious examples provided by Carruthers at the outset. The performance of what Carruthers calls nonconscious acts is fairly common in our day-to-day life, but these are substantially different from what is common when it comes to *pain* experiences.

Carruthers attempts to give evidence for nonconscious pain experiences. Though I have already called into question the legitimacy of the notion of nonconscious pain experiences, I think it worthwhile to attend to these examples because they illuminate the extent to which we have to radically manipulate the dictates of common sense to lend credence to this view. One example Carruthers advances as an instance of a nonconscious pain is when an injury occurs while a person is concentrating intently on something else. In this case, aversive behaviour is displayed but the pain is not felt. He has us consider the example of a soldier who does not notice her wound until after the battle.<sup>29</sup> There are two problems with this example. First, this is a rare case, not a common one. If we are to extrapolate from the fact that there is similar cognitive processing and behaviour control between species and that this processing and control do not involve conscious experience, then the experience discussed must generally be nonconscious, not an unusual case. The occasional and temporary diversion of pain does not amount to a rationale for taking non-humans not to experience pain. Second, there is no reason for thinking that similar cases of diverted attention do not occur as well with non-human animals. A variety of non-human organisms can be conceived as failing to take notice of other things, both internal and external, when these organisms are focussed on one thing in particular to the exclusion of others. Robert Lurz argues that we have reason to believe that non-human animals have this same ability to have their attention directed otherwise, such that they are not consciously aware of a pain for a time. He gives as an example the case of a

dog with an injured leg who,

...upon seeing a cat in the middle of the yard...may suddenly stop his whimpering and attempt to chase the cat limpingly. It is quite plausible to say ...that the dog, upon seeing the cat, stops whimpering and attempts to chase the cat because at that point he starts to pay attention to the cat, and *stops paying attention to this pain*. It seems quite plausible to maintain that at the time of the chase, the dog's pain was nonconscious, but prior to the chase it was conscious.<sup>30</sup>

Rather than serving as evidence of something that differentiates human animals from all non-human animals, we can take Carruthers as identifying a possible underlying commonality in conscious experience across species.

The second example Carruthers puts forth amounts to a possibility (both logical and physical) of a nonconscious pain. Carruthers argues that there are possible “events which otherwise occupy the normal causal role of pain, but which are not available to be thought about consciously and spontaneously by the subject.”<sup>31</sup> However, from this *possibility* Carruthers moves to the claim that *it is the case* that all non-human animals do not experience pain. It is bad science to move from a possibility to it being the general case. In this morally charged debate, maintaining that there is a possibility that non-human animals do not consciously experience pain fails to provide good reason to treat non-humans as though it is generally the case. I take Carruthers failure to support this move as stemming from his starting assumption that non-human animals do not have the cognitive capacity to feel pain. The coupling of his second and third premises requires from the outset the conviction that non-human animals are not in a position to have conscious pain experiences.

Carruthers' second premise draws the line of consciousness to include only those who have HOTs. On Carruthers' view a conscious experience or belief is a state whose content is available to be consciously thought about. But we know Carruthers is convinced that no one would seriously maintain that any animals except human animals think things to themselves. Carruthers *defines* conscious experience such that there is no possibility of non-humans being included. This fails to account for the possibility Thomas Huxley notes:

We know, further, that the lower animals possess, though less developed, that part of the brain which we have every reason to believe to be the organ of consciousness in man; and as, in other cases, function and organ are proportional, so we have a right to conclude it is with the brain: and that the brutes, though they may not possess our intensity of consciousness...they can have...trains of feelings ...have a consciousness which, more or less distinctly, foreshadows our own.<sup>32</sup>

I do not wish to take from Huxley any explicit specification of the sort of conscious experiences non-human animals have, for I agree with Nagel that we do not have this sort of privileged access.<sup>33</sup> Rather, I am interested in highlighting that without justification Carruthers denies from the outset what Lurz proposes; namely that, “Animals may have...a radically different conceptual scheme from the one that we humans have.”<sup>34</sup> As Lurz helpfully points out, a non-human animal “need not conceive of their experiences as we humans do.”<sup>35</sup> For other creatures to have conscious experience it is not necessary that that conscious experience must be “...our human concept of the

experience.”<sup>36</sup> Assuming otherwise from the outset makes use of such a thoroughly anthropocentric conception of conscious experience that all organisms that are not sufficiently ‘human’ are taken to be incapable of having conscious experiences.

One issue I take with Carruthers’ construal of conscious experience is that the spectrum of conscious experiences does not jump from nonconscious states directly to higher order thoughts. There is a much wider and more widely differentiated spectrum of thinking than the one outlined by Carruthers, with a variety of sorts of thinking and ranges therein. Descartes’ HOT theory likewise has an overly limiting notion of the sort of thought required for consciousness. As Malcom puts it, “this is an absurdly overintellectualized view of the life of man [sic].”<sup>37</sup> All conscious experience need not require thought in this restricted and over-intellectualized way. For example, Carruthers’ rigid defining boundaries for consciousness fail to adequately account for the following. When I am in an emotional state, I need not consciously think “I am in a state of distress” to *be* in a state of distress. Nor need I think “I am experiencing joy” to experience joy. I need not be at one thought removed to be legitimately consciously experiencing the feelings of any given emotional state. I take Carruthers’ problematic equivocation between higher order thoughts and conscious experience in general (which includes feelings consciously experienced without taking the additional ‘thinking about’ step) to stem from his assumption that the ‘higher order’ human mode of thought is the only relevant one. Unsurprisingly, Descartes also takes what marks human thought off from all other organisms to be the only relevant mode of thought.

In Part Five of his *Discourse On The Method* Descartes outlines two tests for locating thought, namely, the action test and the language test. In his original presentation of them they were meant to determine whether a *person* was a mere automaton or not.<sup>38</sup> From this original presentation of the tests Descartes later takes the tests in combination to be a test of consciousness in general. In the *Sixth Set of Replies to Objections* Descartes states:

But if we wish to determine by the use of reason whether any of the movements of the brutes are similar to those which are performed in us with the help of the mind, or whether they resemble those which depend merely on the flow of the animal spirits and disposition of the organs then we should consider the...differences which I set out in Part 5 of the Discourse on the Method, for I think these are the only differences to be found. If we do this, it will readily be apparent that all the actions of the brutes resemble only those which occur in us without any assistance from the mind. And we shall be forced to conclude from this that we know of absolutely no principle of movement in animals apart from the disposition of their organs and the continual flow of the spirits which are produced by the heat of the heart as it rarefies the blood.<sup>39</sup>

Descartes believes that he has provided tests not only for proving that humans are not mere automata by indicating the presence of mind, but also for showing that non-human animals do not have minds. Descartes sees his claims in Part Five of the *Discourse on the Method* as providing “very strong arguments” for the “fact that brutes possess no thought whatsoever.”<sup>40</sup> Given that, for Descartes, a mind is a thinking thing, brutes thus have no mind.

There is a circularity implicit in Descartes’ use of the language and action test as tests for locating other minds in that these tests amount to nothing more than a test for locating humanness. Part of

the problem is what Descartes later takes the action and language test to be evidence of. In their original instantiation they were meant to be a test of humanness. Denise Radner and Michael Radner note,

The language test started out as a way of distinguishing between human beings and the machines resembling them. That is to say, it was a test of genuine humanness. When applied to animals, this role is not simply to establish that they are not human, everyone already knows they aren't. Descartes uses the language test to draw a further conclusion about animals. The conclusion is variously stated...that animals 'have no reason'... 'that they have no thoughts'...animals lack 'any real feeling or emotion'...The language test in its final formulation concerns only one class of mental acts, namely, acts of pure understanding. Strictly speaking, failure to pass it is evidence for the absence of pure thought only. Yet in drawing his conclusion about animals, Descartes slips into the wider meaning of 'thought' as all that of which the subject is conscious.<sup>41</sup>

This slippage is crucial to his project and is undefended. He takes conscious thought to be specifically human thought, and defines such thinking so that humans and only humans can be thought to have conscious experiences. Descartes' reasoning proves circular. He 'concludes' from his two tests that only humans are conscious, but this conclusion is presumed by the tests themselves – otherwise a test for humanness would not suffice for a test of consciousness. I maintain that Descartes' tests do not suffice as a test for consciousness, given Descartes' overt bias in structuring these tests such that the end result *necessarily* allows humans and only humans to pass. Descartes must assume we are already convinced that humans and only humans are conscious for his test to be a legitimate test of consciousness, but this is what the test is meant to prove.

A similar sort of problem is evidenced in Carruthers. He defines conscious states at the outset such that humans and only humans have them. (Of course there is the doubtful possibility that the 'higher' primates might be included, given that their thought processes might adequately explicitly mimic our own.) Higher order thoughts require a cognitive capacity Carruthers takes to be evidenced only by humans. To forward this position while acknowledging a plethora of similar physiology and behaviours among all animals, humans included, requires Carruthers to focus on a means of differentiating the experience of human animals from non-human animals. The thing that sets us apart amounts to a specification of one way we humans occasionally think. Maintaining this occasional mode of thought as being *the* important qualifier for experience requires Carruthers to concoct a highly questionable divide in which some *experiences are nonconscious*. I have argued that the notion of nonconscious experience is vacuous. Carruthers' HOT theory fails to account for the more general understanding of human conscious experience that makes room for a possible similarity regarding conscious capacities across species. The realm of conscious human experience takes a variety of forms, and the highly intellectualized component of thought forwarded by Carruthers is only one of many. Positing a lack of this specific sort of thought fails to serve as evidence that it is not the case that different sorts of conscious experiences are available to non-human animals. It merely provides support for the view that humans' experience in characteristically human ways. In the last analysis the conception of consciousness Carruthers advances is limited to humans at the outset. He defines conscious experience so narrowly that it is *necessarily* limited to humans, and not all humans at that. The very young fail to have the relevant experiences for us to deem them conscious on his view.<sup>42</sup>

The circularity I see in Carruthers' argument stems from his rigid limitation on what can count for conscious experience. He uses his conclusion, that non-human animals do not consciously experience pain, to inform his premises, such that the only possible answer that can be advanced is that humans, and only humans, have conscious experiences. Given his commitment to only humans having conscious experiences, he must define conscious experience so narrowly that *only* some humans can have the relevant traits for having conscious experiences. The criterion he advances as required for evidence of consciousness necessarily excludes non-human animals. If we concoct a theory where the only relevant sense of consciousness is explicitly the sort of conscious experience a limited number of humans have, then we are begging the question of non-human consciousness. Consider a parallel case. Imagine Racist Joe (RJ), who, in seeking an answer to the question "What is relevant for evidence of a pain experience?" constructs a test such that white people, and only white people, can pass it. In such a case it is obvious that RJ does this because of his prior (racist) epistemic commitment that white people, and only white people, feel pain. The science is bad because the starting assumptions result in a test that can only have one outcome. The philosophy is bad because rather than honestly exploring possible answers, the premises are manipulated such that one possible answer that adequately adheres to starting biases will result. The test is constructed such that RJ's theory (that only white people can experience pain) is not fallible. RJ cannot be proven wrong given the limits he sets for testing.

That such a move is the case with Carruthers' analysis is supported by the bias inherent at the outset, and encapsulated in his premises. Either we are required to seriously entertain an oxymoron as a useful description when it comes to pain, and jump from the *possibility this oxymoron might occur to the knowledge that this is the case* – wherein this move is only justified if we *already* deem such to be the case, or, we must assume at the outset that non-human animals do not have conscious experiences given a overly narrow construal of conscious experience. Neither option, a nonsensical notion of 'pain experience', or assuming a commitment to the view that humans are the only animals that feel pain, is reasonable; one is nonsensical, the other is question begging.

Indeed, we can very plausibly directly reverse the reading Carruthers makes of shared physiology and behaviour. Carruthers takes it to follow from the claim that "since there exist in humans similar levels of cognitive processing and behavior control to those displayed by brutes" that these similar levels "do not involve experience", and that it "is an open question whether brutes have experience at all."<sup>43</sup> Rather, we can take similar levels of cognitive processing and behaviour to suggest the opposite. Namely, since there exist in humans animals similar levels of cognitive processing and behaviour control to those displayed by non-human animals that *do* involve conscious experience, it is highly likely that animals that are not human have comparable (though not identical) conscious experiences. Here common sense comes into play.

#### **IV. Failing the Common Sense and Moral Requirements**

There is the lack of fit between Carruthers' conclusion and the proponents of common sense and scientific points of view. Put coarsely, the denial of conscious pain experiences in non-human animals requires contradicting common sense and scientific evidence. Of course, there is always the possibility that *any* animal does not have conscious experiences given our inability to see life from another's perspective, be it a human or non-human perspective. However, we have good reason for supposing conscious states both in humans and non-humans. From a common sense point of view,

given that we are all animals, and given that there is much overlap in terms of physiology and behaviour, and more specifically given that we all have brains, and brain states in our experience have a direct correlation with conscious qualitative experiences, it is *highly* probable that other animals have conscious qualitative experiences. Bernard Rollin argues:

Denial of pain consciousness in animals is incompatible not only with neurophysiology, but with what can be extrapolated from evolutionary theory as well. There is reason to believe that evolution preserves and perpetuates successful biological systems. Given that the mechanisms of pain in vertebrates are the same, it strains credibility to suggest that the experience of pain suddenly emerges at the level of humans...Human machinery is virtually the same as that in animals, and we know from experience with humans that the ability to feel pain is essential to survival; that people with a congenital or acquired inability to feel pain ...are unlikely to do well or even survive without extraordinary, heroic attention...Feeling pain and the motivational influence of feeling it are essential to the survival of the system, and to suggest that the system is a purely mechanical system in the case of animals but not in man is therefore highly implausible.<sup>44</sup>

Although this alone would convince most that there is good reason to believe non-human animals consciously experience pain, I think the above analysis I provide showing the deficiencies in Carruthers' approach, and the implicit problematic assumptions it contains, is also necessary. Theoretical positioning that supports an overtly biased view of conscious experience needs deconstruction at the philosophic level, as well as the common sense, scientific, and moral level.

From a moral perspective, the burden of proof weighs heavily on Carruthers to provide substantive evidence that non-human animals do not experience pain. Thomas Huxley's comment concerning Descartes is fitting here regarding Carruthers.

I confess that, in view of the struggle for existence which goes on in the animal world, and of the frightful quantity of pain with which it must be accompanied, I should be glad if the probabilities were in favour of Descartes' hypothesis; but, on the other hand, considering the terrible practical consequences to domestic animals which might ensue from any error on our part, it is as well to err on the right side, if we err at all, and deal with them as weaker brethren..."<sup>45</sup>

I have argued that Carruthers fails to provide substantive evidence that non-human animals do not experience pain. His argument is either absurd in that he asks us to take seriously an oxymoron, or it is question begging. Given the structure of Carruthers' argument we must either A) commit ourselves to what amounts to be a nonsensical notion of a nonconscious pain experience, or B) commit ourselves to the notion that non-human animals do not experience pain at the outset in a variety of ways. This is done either by accepting Carruthers' proposed rephrasing, or by accepting a notion of thought at the outset that is so narrow that no animals except (some) human animals can be considered conscious. I find the parallels between Descartes and Carruthers uncanny. Further, I find the fact that there continues to be place given in academic writing to such overt and self-aggrandizing human bias in discussions of non-human organisms disturbing, to put it mildly.<sup>46</sup>

## Notes

1. Carruthers argues for this position both in his book *The Animal Issue: Moral Theory In Practice* and in his paper “Brute Experience.” I will refer to “Brute Experience” for the purposes of sourcing his position in this paper. Also, Carruthers allows the possibility, on his view an unlikely one, that higher primates might experience pain. However, when I refer to his position I usually apply it to all non-human animals given his doubt with regard to the possibility, and in the interest of brevity. Peter Carruthers, *The Animals Issue: Moral theory in practice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Peter Carruthers, “Brute Experience”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989): 258-269.
2. More specifically Carruthers takes issue with the view Thomas Nagel advances in “What it is Like to be a Bat,” 258.
3. Carruthers, 259.
4. Carruthers, 259.
5. Carruthers, 259.
6. Descartes contradicts himself in that he takes it to be the case that *no* action, no behaviour, is sufficient for establishing that non-human animals have thoughts, and thus experiences, but claims - as will be shown later - he can provide evidence that they do not. “But though I regard it as established that we cannot prove there is any thought in animals, I do not think it can be proved that there is none, since the human mind does not reach into their hearts.” Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Volume Three, 365.
7. Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Volume One, 139-141.
8. Carruthers, 261.
9. Carruthers, 260.
10. Carruthers, 261.
11. Carruthers, 266.
12. Carruthers, 262-263.
13. Carruthers, 263.
14. Carruthers, 264.
15. Descartes, Volume One, 335.

16. Descartes, Volume One, 195.
17. Norman Malcom, “Thoughtless Brutes,” in *The Nature of Mind*, ed. David M. Rosenthal, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 456, 454-461.
18. Malcom, 456.
19. Malcom, 457.
20. Malcom, 456.
21. Carruthers, 265.
22. Carruthers, 265.
23. Carruthers, 265.
24. Carruthers, 265.
25. Thomas Nagel, “What it is Like to be a Bat,” *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J. Chalmers, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 219, 219-225.
26. I am not alone in taking this to be the case; the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines pain in part as: “the range of unpleasant bodily sensations...”. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, ed. R. E. Allen, (Oxford: Calrendon Press, 1990), 856.
27. Carruthers, 261.
28. Carruthers, 266.
29. Carruthers, 266.
30. Robert W. Lurz, “Animal Consciousness,” *Journal of Philosophical Research* 24 (1999): 165, 149-168.
31. Carruthers, 267.
32. Thomas H. Huxley, “On the Hypothesis That Animals Are Automata, and Its History (Excerpt)” in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J. Chalmers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 28, 24-30.
33. Nagel, 219-25.
34. Lurz, 163.
35. Lurz, 164.
36. Lurz, 163.

37. Malcom, 457.

38. The first is the language test, “[Automata]...could never use words, or put together signs, as we do in order to declare *our* thoughts to others.” The second test is one of actions. Descartes claims, even though machines “might do some things as well as we do them, or perhaps even better, they would inevitably fail in others, which would reveal that they were acting not through the understanding but only from the disposition of their organs. For whereas reason is a universal instrument which can be used in all kinds of situations, these organs need some particular disposition for each particular action; hence it is for all practical purposes *impossible* for a machine to have enough different organs to make it act in all the contingencies of life in the way in which *our* reason makes *us* act [my emphasis]. Descartes, Volume One, 140.

39. Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Volume Two, 161-162.

40. Descartes, Volume Two, 287-88.

41. Denise Radner and Michael Radner, *Animal Consciousness* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), 48-49.

42. Carruthers acknowledges that on his theory small children fail to have the relevant experiences for us to deem them conscious. (Carruthers, 269).

43. Carruthers, 261.

44. Bernard E. Rollin, *The Unheeded Cry: Animal Consciousness, Animal Pain, and Science*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 154-155.

45. Huxley, 28.

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