Definition Argument Essay

Prompt:

As scientists continue to study plants and animals, it becomes more and more likely that human beings are not the only living beings to communicate, think, and feel. Some animals, like dolphins and orca whales, have complex languages, evidence of culture, and even self-awareness. Plants, too, have been discovered to have complex systems for communication and fit some scientists' qualifications for consciousness. Some people propose designating dolphins and other advanced animals as "non-human people" and giving them rights similar to those we recognize for humans. What makes someone, or something, a person? Could a dolphin meet the criteria? How about a whale? Dog? Gorilla? A redwood tree? Do some research and argue whether or not an animal or plant fits the category "person."

A definition or categorical evaluation argument is an easy style of essay to organize because you can structure your paragraphs around the criteria you chose to define the term or category.  
  
For this assignment, create an outline for your essay. Your outline should include -  
  
the topic  
the main idea  
the definition criteria you will discuss  
important supporting points  
sources/quotes from sources  
potential rebuttals to the main idea/supporting points  
Your outline should present your ideas in the same order you anticipate for your essay.

1. Introduction:

Can plants or animals be considered people?

Define “person”

Define “consciousness”

Plants and animals cannot be considered “persons” but are conscious, therefore deserving of the same rights we have established come with being conscious.

Insert thesis.

2. Body:

Paragraph I: The Declaration of Human Rights

What are our basic human rights?

Summarize and refer to the Declaration.

Point out the use of the word “conscious”

Can every article of the declaration be applied to plants and animals? Which ones can’t?

Paragraph II: Animals

How can we determine/measure an animal’s level of consciousness? Central nervous system

Why is it important that we extend the rights we have established for ourselves to them?

How will this impact the animals and change their experience?

Paragraph III: Plants

Are plants conscious? Central nervous system

Should we go so far as to extend human rights to plants?

If not, do we need to establish a different declaration of rights for plants not because of their level of consciousness but out of respect for what they do for us and the necessity of their existence to ours?

3. Conclusion:

Reiterate the main supporting facts backing up my thesis and explain how the points I made are important when trying to define the rights of plants and animals.

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Define people, person and consciousness.

person  
1 : human, individual —sometimes used in combination especially by those who prefer to avoid man in compounds applicable to both sexes (Webster)

person

noun  
1.a human being, whether an adult or child:  
2.a human being as distinguished from an animal or a thing. (dictionary.com)

Definition of consciousness  
1 a : the quality or state of being aware especially of something within oneself  
b : the state or fact of being conscious of an external object, state, or fact  
c : awareness; especially : concern for some social or political cause The organization aims to raise the political consciousness of teenagers.  
2 : the state of being characterized by sensation, emotion, volition, and thought : mind  
3 : the totality of conscious states of an individual  
4 : the normal state of conscious life (Webster)

An animal does not fit the category of “person” because they are not human beings, however, they are conscious and deserve the same rights as human beings because what we consider to be basic human rights should be extended to all conscious life. Any being with a central nervous system experiences pain and suffering and should not be subjected to unfair treatment simply because they don’t communicate in the same way human beings to. They cannot fight back and for humans to take advantage of that is disgusting.

Neither plants nor animals can be considered people because they are not by definition people nor should they be classified as people. However, they are conscious beings and deserve the same rights that people have. We have an established declaration of human rights to protect our free will. It is our responsibility as people with higher intellectual ability to ensure that the animals receive the rights they deserve as conscious beings that experience pain and suffering.

There is no reason we need to use the term person to define the rights of plants or animals. As people, we can respect their sentience and extend the rights that we have defined for ourselves as basic human rights to them and expand our

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