

1 Humans are animals, which means we're survival machines. But from the
2 inside, it seems like we're more than that. Different pictures of human nature
3 suggest that we have interests that go beyond survival; we value other things. How
4 should we define self-interest for humans? I believe that defining self-interest is
5 dependent on those factors of what makes us human that aren't in our nature. You
6 can almost think of human nature and human self-interest as two of the major
7 things that make humans human. Let me explore this thesis a bit here.

8 Human nature is far more than just genetics, but one can easily argue that it
9 is universally identical to all humans, but self-interest is far more individually
10 centered. Basic instincts that we have focus our behavior on advancing our own
11 position. In many cases this may have the side effect of helping someone else but
12 we're still doing the task for our own interests. I won't go as far so as to say that self-
13 interest is by definition selfish, but anything that is selfish is in our self-interest.

14 Everyone may have the same reasons that govern their self-interest, but you
15 cannot always reach your own self-interest when a friend is reaching theirs. A trait
16 of self-interest is that it is competitive. Altruism and morality both go against the
17 grain of self-interest and due to that they are interesting elements of being human to
18 consider. Maybe we are reaching our self-interest by acting morally and assisting
19 others, but then that self-interest may be to be a helpful member of society or at any
20 rate we don't reach our full self-interest acting these ways.

21 The question is clear to say that from the inside we're more than survival
22 machines. This brings to mind a related observation I've had about our view of other
23 species. Maybe we don't see other species as purely survival machines, but we do

24 tend to see them as simpler than us in many ways. Human nature, self-interest,
25 morality, etc. all explain why we're legitimately more complex. But, what's to say
26 that other species don't feel much the same way inside and look at us as simpler?

27 We must also take into consideration the fact that we're relational creatures,
28 as altruism is a testament to. What havoc does this play with the definition of self-
29 interest described above? This calls into the spotlight the degree to which our social
30 and relational abilities are in our nature. If they are then maybe we're designed to
31 have self-interest be defined as helping ourselves so long as in doing so we're
32 helping others.

33 If looked at in a vacuum this overarching question is easier to answer than if
34 you, as must be done, look at it in context with other overarching questions and the
35 realities of human life. In actuality I'm not sure there is a single definition of human
36 self-interest, and there truly isn't any single answer to any philosophical inquiry
37 that aims to put some constraints on what we as humans are.