

1 In what ways are we characterized by our intellect and reasoning abilities?
2 How do other mental functions like will and emotion contribute to our
3 understanding of what it is to be human? The basic dilemma inherent in this
4 overarching question seems to me to be if our intellect and reasoning play any part
5 in the human experience or not, and to what extent. Throughout the work I've done
6 in this course up to this point I keep returning to the idea that our social selves and
7 intellectual abilities are what set us apart from the other animals that roam this
8 Earth. Thus my gut conclusion is that our intellect and reasoning ability are central
9 in how we're characterized.

10 We like to think of ourselves as above other animals, even above those who
11 are close relatives. If our physical abilities, for the moment ignoring the blatant
12 differences in physical appearance and what that might do to physical abilities,
13 aren't that different from these other species then what more do we have to set us
14 apart? That is where our intellectually driven reasoning ability comes in. This is
15 what gives us a real and tangible edge in the marketplace of capable animals. Sure
16 we may not be the strongest physically (again looping back to our refrain of us
17 humans being "wimpy creatures"), but our strengths lie in the mental ability that
18 intellect and reason provide. We're naturally characterizing ourselves along these
19 lines. The importance placed on higher education and lifelong learning is evidence
20 that our society values one's abilities to think creatively and deeply above their
21 physical strength.

22 The traits of will and emotion are not necessarily limited to us humans, but
23 they're certainly more advanced in us precisely because of our enhanced ability to

24 comprehend them in a much more full sense. All animals, or certainly a good
25 number, will show the basic emotions. Likewise, with some potential exceptions for
26 those who live in packs, they all have basic wills of their own. But we have the
27 intelligence formed of intellect and reason to understand and respect those whose
28 views are different from our own. On the emotional front our intelligence allows us
29 to express a much more expansive range of emotions than other animals. We can
30 grasp the interconnections these all have and see them not in a vacuum, but rather
31 as reliant on one another (not that different from how the six overarching questions
32 for this class must be considered to truly consider them, as interconnected and not
33 separate).

34 Our understanding of what it is to be human is based on the traits of intellect
35 and reasoning alongside the augmentation that emotions and will lend to this
36 understanding. A deep assumption is that we're better than any other animal, and as
37 I've shown intelligence plays a massive role here. But using these to characterize the
38 nature of being human will be just a few of many things taken into account. Yes
39 these may be the most human of the factors, but we must take into account the
40 biological and natural traits as well as those from our own personal experiences to
41 define an understanding for what it is to be human.