**cockroach life (19 votes)**

[**BenChida**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1330541)*a day ago*

Posted by: rjane

What makes my life more important than other organisms' life? Why is it okay to kill another organism but it is not okay to kill another person? what makes natural right inalienable?

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(this post is about [Live Question and Answer Session with Professor Sandel, Part 2 / Top Vote-Getting Questions](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/jump_to/i4x:/HarvardX/ER22x/discussion/6efbd5d53d5241b6bf99409448272104))

1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**MM999**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/879123)

*about 18 hours ago*

I think this is an amazing question, food for thought so to speak. I believe this after reading a post recently on social media in which China is exploring the use of animals such as pigs for use of "organ harvesting" for humans and if this is a just practice or not be explored or the program scraped. They want to raise baby pigs to harvest human organs within them and then be able to slaughter the pigs. They are to remove the organ that was grown within the pig prior to slaughtering them. They are trying to decide to continue this program or not, <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xhru5f_chinese-scientist-clones-pig-organs-for-human-transplants_news>.

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1. [2](javascript:void(0))[**milarepa**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/522254)

*a day ago*

As it is humans that are deciding what it is permissible that said humans do, they invariably will be bias toward themselves. Your question depends on what species is asking. Or what force in existence.

Humans, with their superiority complex have long decided themselves to be the god's of this planet. There we have it. We do what we want because we can. Although we have the capacity to live in harmony with our surroundings, it might be that our own self-belief and power have gone to our heads.

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* + Milarepa, you are on a roll! Well said, again!

*–posted about 19 hours ago by*[clarvic](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1420263)

* + What about people being given equal 1 vote power to everyone with different intelligence and decision making capacity to elect government in present day democracy?

*–posted about 18 hours ago by*[GIRIDHARI](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/284152)

* + According to your personal view,,Should we go vegetarian? it would be just? or it is a personal choice? Regards, Javier We hope you can come to Ecuador Regards, Javier

*–posted about 18 hours ago by*[JavierEduardo](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/342973)

* + Milarepa,

I agree with you that it is problematic that only humans decide what is permissible. But a moment's study of nature will reveal that omnivores and carnivores kill one another for food, basically, whenever they need food and can kill others. That doesn't say it is a good thing, but it is the reality of the world.

I have no way of proving to you that a cockroach or a potato does not feel pain in a way that requires a moral response, but that is certainly my belief. Your belief is that we can live in harmony with our surroundings. I think part of that harmony is our own participation in the endless cycles of animals eating animals. The cruel efficiencies that we've brought to the process are another matter entirely. Factory farming is needlessly cruel. Our casual treatment of mammals and especially fellow primates will most likely be seen by history as unforgivable.

*–posted about 17 hours ago by*[mjtrac](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/88248)

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**etstowell**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/441203)

*about 19 hours ago*

I believe that this attitude is what led to the banning of DDT so it is kind of in reverse. We saved eagle eggs and are letting millions die of malaria. Not we are having the return of bed bugsin our own country.

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1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**7Daveb**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1405839)

*about 19 hours ago*

If rational capacity or sentience is the basis for deciding whether it is OK to murder someone, how about a brain-damaged human incapable of reason or sentience (e.g., in a vegetative state)?

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1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**ceebeegeebee**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1857383)

*about 19 hours ago*

To extend this, you can say that a baby is not capable of reasoning, but will grow into a rational being, so its life cannot be taken. But a person who is in a permanent vegetative state or any other human who has lost their reasoning capability - what would Kant say about them? What makes them different from animals? - Carolyn Gibson, England

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1. [3](javascript:void(0))[**RozS**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1214328)

*about 19 hours ago*

I fear Kant way overestimated the power of reason in our own species so the distinctions drawn among species are not always valid. Further, if you look at the act of killing with no concern for the suffering of the "victim", the effect on the killer is not negligible, and often results in de-sensitization at the very least. So just take the bug outdoors and try to leave a little outdoors for them to live in!

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* + I wonder if the implication of Kant's view is that if a being is not capable or reason,then his suffering cannot be considered, then the suffering of humans with birth defects that make them mentally challeged should not be taken into account.

*–posted about 19 hours ago by*[NekroPaco](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/159476)

* + Then that makes him sounds like a Nazis isn't it? What if today we are living in Apes Planet? Will we be capable of thinking? Even though we may be more rational than the Apes, They will insist that humans are inferior and the reason may also be that we are incapable of thinking.

*–posted about 18 hours ago by*[Yaoxz](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1326761)

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**tpkeenan**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1364289)

*about 19 hours ago*

To your comment that a less painful killing of an animal is somehow morally superior to a painful one. In her new book "Frankenstein's Cat" Emily Anthes suggests that genetically engineering cows that were incapable of pain (if that were possible, and they wouldn't e.g. die of barnyard infections from that trait) might be immoral because it would diminish our own sense of responsibility for what is still killing. How do you react?

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**lawrenceycc**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1459406)

*about 19 hours ago*

What of laws that protect pets such as dogs and cats from animal cruelty? No equivalent rules exist for slaughtered cows and pigs, even though it is dubious a cow or a pig is any less sentient or has any less of a right to live than a pet. Is this injustice in our treatment and utilization of different species problematic?

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1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**Zacherano**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1835700)

*about 19 hours ago*

For me, one of the most powerful implications of this question is the connection to animal testing. Often, people justify animal testing with the argument that killing or harming an animal will save one or more human lives. The U.S. has been rolling back animal testing on chimpanzees, but the testing has been a double-edged sword because chimpanzees are the most emotionally, genetically, and mentally similar beings to humans, and thus may help to cure human illnesses. It may be more valuable, however, to let the chimps live and observe them in the wild. Is one side more morally justifiable than the other since chimps, and many animals in the lab, are sentient beings who feel pain?

Thanks!

Peter

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**Angeladds**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1281553)

*about 19 hours ago*

Because we all, by necessity, rely on consuming other organisms to sustain life, there is a hierarchy--the food chain--built into the natural world. Most philosophers seem to draw a sharp distinction, setting humans apart from the natural world, where they don't impose moral law on a cheetah, for example. This seems to me the easier route, to say that human civilization is set apart--and perhaps it has to be. But I wonder--do any philosophers that we've studied, aside from Locke, provide a different answer, fitting humans into the context of a natural moral world from which our higher moral responsibilities arise?

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**carpam**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1692910)

*about 19 hours ago*

Do we really know that animals are incapable of reasoning? And, is the distinction even a valid distinction?

How much is really based on religious ideas of human supremacy?

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1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**mattam**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/983339)

*about 19 hours ago*

But if Kant says that animals are not capable of rational reasoning and therefore one may kill them, does this not open door for killing even human beings which lack certain level of "rational reasoning" (for example mentally ill etc like in the Third Reich)?

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* + So how do we define this rational in this case? Is rational being defined by actions carried out or just a notion that stays within us. If it is the first case, then I think we are pretty irrational most of the time.Shall this justify the killing of human? If it is the second one, then what are we to judge whether or not other living organisms are less rational than human?

*–posted about 18 hours ago by*[Yaoxz](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1326761)

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1. [1](javascript:void(0))[**Yaoxz**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1326761)

*about 18 hours ago*

Well, I think as long as it is a life, it shall be respected and treated equally. It is pretty simple that all organisms share the same progress of life. Birth, growth, sickness and death, non of the organism can escape these steps. This progress of life does not seem to really differentiate human with other organisms. In term of the statement that humans are rational, we, if we take a look at the stupid things that many of us are doing, I think we are worse than animals. Beasts only kill to feed themselves but human sometimes (or most of the time) kill for greed (perhaps for higher pleasure too)

If you were to kill a cockroach, the cockroach will react exactly the same way as a helpless human. It will run for protection, that shows it fears and fear is fear regardless of the level of intensity. It too feels hungry or else it won't eat. And it needs a family too ( most probably sharing with some humans). In view of these comparisons, I really do not see much a difference in term of human and other organisms in term of life progress, physical abilities and emotional emotions.

In my opinion, killing in any form is unjustifiable as it definitely violate the right of life. The only reason it is justifiable for human to kill other organism is that unlike humans, there is no one out in the nature to protect their rights. So until one day the Apes take over our Planet, sad to say, human will continue to live as a big dictator who does what he wants. If the dinosaurs are still here, we may be part of the organisms that we despise today.

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* + It will run for protection, that shows it fears and fear is fear regardless of the level of intensity.

Running for protection does not show fear, it demonstrates the presence of some kind of survival instinct. Fear is an emotion, and I don't believe that insects are capable of emotion.

In my opinion, killing in any form is unjustifiable as it definitely violate the right of life.

Am I then to assume that you only eat plants or plant pieces that fell to the ground with no human intervention? Or do you draw a line between plants and animals? If so, on what basis?

*–posted about 18 hours ago by*[gprice](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1393732)

* + In my opinion, killing in any form is unjustifiable as it definitely violate the right of life. The only reason it is justifiable for human to kill other organism is that unlike humans, there is no one out in the nature to protect their rights

I agree. If this is the case, do you think morality is merely a human construct.

If so, does it follow that morality is not universal or objective?

Will humans have rights? If humans are worthy of respect because they have rational capacity, will robots/humanoids be worthy of respect/dignity?

*–posted about 17 hours ago by*[rjane](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/763523)

* + I am really sorry that I don't know how to reply to both of you right below your comments. However I would like to thank you for raising such opinions which I believe will help us to sharpen our thoughts and benefit us ultimately. I will answer gripce's first part of the questions first and answer the second part together with rjane's question, since both of you have about the same area of concern. In order to benefit all of us, I will really appreciate if you can elaborate on your opinions and show how you actually thinks through a particular issue.

**gprice's question first**

Running for protection ..... demonstrates the presence of some kind of survival instinct.

Yes you are right that it is a survival instinct and I hold this opinion too. May I ask you, will you run if a lion chases after you or will you run if a cat chases after you ? I suppose many of us will choose to run in the first scenario(I bet many of us will break the world record). The reason we run is indeed for survival need, which is also know as fight-or-flight responses. However it seems our survival mode is only triggered during a life threatening experience, in this case, being chased by a lion.

Now, think a little bit deeper, when will this survival mode be triggered? It seems only when our life is threatened and when we are being threatened, we tend to **fear**(unless we are in a film as an action star).If you know that no matter how hard the cat tries, it is unable to harm you, will you still run (yes I will run to play with it)? Hence it appears that fear actually triggers the survival mode and only when we fear, our survival instinct will be triggered, if I am not afraid, why shall I run? ( I think the greatest fear of living organisms is the fear for uncertainty)

If you do not'believe that insects have emotions, well, I suppose that it is pretty hard to prove this. However we can have a better idea through observation. For cockroach, it seems they are pretty timid and once threatened, they tend to hide. While in the case of bees, it seems that they will fight for the honor of their queen to protect their rights even though that means to sacrifice their life. In both cases, these insects behave exactly like human, some will run due to fear of death even though the lion is far away, while others, when really threatened, may stand up for their loved ones.

So it seems more convincing to believe that insects are like any other animals although I tend to agree with the fact that they may be of a less complex being compare to others and this determines their position in the food chain. However, as I mentioned in the previous post, fear is fear regardless of the level of intensity, I will still regard insects as having emotional feelings for their behaviors. This is because behavior is the reflection of notion and shall be respected.

*–posted about 10 hours ago by*[Yaoxz](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1326761)

* + Fear is certainly *sufficient* in many cases to trigger a survival reaction. However, that does not mean that fear is *necessary*. Take, for instance, the reflex of pulling away when you touch a burning hot object. Such reflexes actually aren't even processed by the brain but rather are caused by direct connections in the spinal cord between sensory and motor neurons. Our muscles are activated before the pain signal even reaches the brain. To me, the insect behaviors that you mention are merely evidence of some similar automatic neural pathway that connects stimuli to actions. Given the simplicity of the insect nervous system, I simply don't see how they can experience emotion.

*–posted about 10 hours ago by*[gprice](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1393732)

* + - Yes, in my opinion, morality is artificial as long as humans are involved. I can’t speak for the animals but I do believe they have a system too. Craws actually feed their parents when they aged and Rhinos, famous for being loners, do have social lives at night. This may implicate that animals too, while living in a society, has certain moral standards to follow. However it comes to a higher moral standard to treat other animals like one of our kind. In ancient times, a person who was willing to treat the slaves with respect in that era may be considered as unacceptable or even immoral, but we will see them as people of greater morality by today’s standard. I do, however consume meat on a regular basis. But my main diet is consist of vegetables instead of meat. I do not encourage killing through verbal or action. Neither have I done any harm intentionally to living organisms such as plants or insects. That means I do not kill just to fulfill my lust for tastes, needless to say to kill for pleasure. I do believe that plants do have emotions too (water has too and there is an experiment on this known as Emoto’s water crystal) and I have been searching an answer for years on what makes us morally right to eat plants. It is pretty shameful that one is unable to do what he preaches, I guess this is just like the idea of a utopia or a communist state, as much as we would like to achieve such high moral obligations, we are still limited by our greed, lust, the fear of losing and the need to survive, which had ultimately led to the extinction of many great civilizations.
    - Humans will only have rights when someone in power says so. Human rights does not seem to be “god” given as throughout the history, humans have been used as slaves by other humans without any rights. If right is something needed to be protected, then it seems that “right” is not of a natural/fundamental thing. Because something natural is something that goes on regardless of conditions. Such natural things are things that do not come from creation and it never extinct, neither does it undergo a process of birth, age, sickness or death. One of the example is our soul which is can never be destroyed nor created. The creation of all other objects or organisms, by natural or artificial, shall be treated with same respect under moral concerns rather than right (moral is come from within while right is given by others).
    - When a certain object is being created, it is the combination of human wisdom, hard work, life, and at last a great deal of natural resources. Not respecting such a creation may seem to undermine the attentions and resources used, which I prefer to put it on a moral ground rather than a right issue. This results in ignoring human wisdom and labor. Some people may argue that since a price is being paid, that gives the buyer the right to do what he or she wants. However, we have to bear in mind that price does not reflect value completely. By ignoring the remaining values that is not being covered by price, it creates a waste in the society. A waste in this case, becomes a moral issue as waste is not encouraged by any societies of human kind.
    - Whether or not humans are worthy of respect because we have rational capacity? If it is within the human societies, we tend to only respect people who have more resources and power or abilities (I am not sure whether rational capacity is considered the main notion) than us. Therefore it is clear we only respect people for the things that we would like to process but the procession of such thing is greatly limited by our capabilities. This is a sad truth, as much as we would like to respect every one regardless of backgrounds, it just does not seem to be a natural thing to do. Therefore right comes into the picture when morality does not work.

In a hypothetical situation, if you are a ruler of a developing country and two people have committed crimes that by are being sentenced to death penalty. (A US citizen or a person from a country that is under developed) Suppose that both government wrote you a letter to ask you for mercy, who will you kill? Assuming that both have the same intellectual abilities. This sounds cruel but I will kill the person from the less developed country, reason being that I know the US government will look after me to protect the right of US citizen while the other will not. The foreseen consequences somehow drives our intention in our daily life. In this case, both people are considered as having rational capacities. We know that killing is wrong. The idea of right seems solely survives when someone in power is obligated to protect it in order to compensate what morality had failed to provide.

Rights therefore seems to only exist in civilizations that are able to enforce it. I do have the notion that right is somehow independence of moral obligations. The idea of right is a recent product that comes in our attention and it appears to be more objective than moral. It seems more complex than moral issues as it tend to cross over between the tangible and intangible world of thoughts. It seems the idea of right first comes out to protect a particular elites instead as it is now to and this adds on to the complexity of the issue that we are experiencing today.

I would really like to know how you look at moral and rights and I really appreciate if you can show how your actually organize your thoughts. thank you .

*–posted about 6 hours ago by*[Yaoxz](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1326761)

* + In deed the body reflex is a great function of our body to keep us out of dangers. It appears more convincing to me that the cockroaches actually runs away before we are touch them. This ability of sensing danger is also found on many other insects such as housefly. Their bodies are being created and evolved to help them better survive in a particular situation as all other animals and plants. A fly can sense your motion of smashing it even the danger comes from behind, thanks to its eyes which give it the ability. So most of the time, they will not need of such reflex as when danger gets too close to them, they will be dead. I do agree that the insects have less developed neuron system as compared to human’s standard. But that does not necessarily mean they cannot experience emotion. Emotion is intangible and can be hardly traced or experienced by others. How about a case of a person devoid of mental or physical abilities. A vegetable in that sense does not suffice your idea of a complex nervous system. The person in such a situation will not be able to express any emotions freely, but does that mean they do not experience any emotions?

*–posted about 5 hours ago by*[Yaoxz](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1326761)

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**vladimircobra**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/805876)

*about 13 hours ago*

you know that question is alike why don't we follow jainism beiefs ? jainists don't kill animals to eat, and they are vegans but they don't garden themselves because they don't want to kill bugs, this is not killing. killing animals in danger of extinction for the pleasure of hunting, or gaining money from them is a crime, but actually if an innocent animal is obliged to kill a vicious man who is torturing him, ..., is right no ? so the relations between humans and animals are very self policed, and when there are excesses from a group to another, they are limits, limits being putted by humans to both, and by animals to both, even if we aren't aware of that, like lions, they hunt and kill in their own territory not like in the popular belief that they have no limits, and you know if we heard from time to time about animal attacks, it's because people subconsciously and consciously they stepped and keeping it in animal territories, so the frictions aren't unavoidable, as for the relations between humans, or the relations between animals, as for plants, when we don't destroy it, nature rebirths, and sometimes people aren't stronger then her, it's not natural right, and i don'y think there is a natural right here. what people call here natural is the excess of power and species put themselves their own limits, it's a moral question and not a high top philosophical one.

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