

## **Animals vs Humans: Are Ants Superior? Part. I**

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Jan. 2022

"It's okay, you're human," my sister said.

I was worrying about post-secondary... a lot. Are my grades high enough? Do I really want to go to that school? Was it a waste of time and money to apply? What do I want to do for the rest of my life? Should I take a gap year? Is my application eloquent enough? What if I don't get in? Am I smart enough? Am I worrying too much?

Am I enough?

Her advice really did help that day. But that got me wondering, what does it mean to be human? To worry? To err? To not be an "animal?" But what separates humans from "animals?"

I've asked this question many times, and often it boils down to our remarkable cognitive functions, which seem to warrant the idea we are superior. Which, sure? We've built civilizations, developed technologies, morals, intricate cultures, and languages, and we have the remarkable ability to create bonds. But, many non-human animals exhibit remarkable cognitive functions as well.

The best example is chimpanzees. Chimpanzees naturally communicate through facial expressions, body language, and sounds. Researchers have even been able to teach them to use sign language. What's crazy is that, like us, their elders pass down knowledge to the younger

generation. This has led them to develop unique cultures among each community, such as using different tools to perform the same task to having different mating rituals. In addition, chimpanzees have morals and the ability to create bonds. They often are seen helping each other and have been documented disproving infanticide. But you may be thinking: chimpanzees are the most biologically related to us, so it makes sense that we display similar cognitive functions. So, I'll scrap that.

### **Introducing ants.**

Ants communicate through chemicals to create a highly efficient society. Their colonies may include climate control, spectacular architecture, and an agriculture industry that farms fungus and domesticates other insects as livestock. Their civilization looks scarily like ours; they even have slaves, wars, and a social hierarchy. Though the main difference is ants act unconsciously as a group to make rational choices for the benefit of their colony. Think of an army of biological robots.

But, it's unfair to say their lack of consciousness deems us to be superior. We make irrational and harmful decisions even with our conscious and subsequent morals. Think of the -isms such as racism, ageism, and sexism and how we continually hurt one another. Or even the immoral and unsustainable animal and human exploitation involved in consumerism. Our insatiable need for more *stuff* is degrading our habitat by drying out its finite

resources. Consequently, our decisions have made an enjoyable standard of living unattainable. We have to work longer hours and harder to afford a bite-sized piece of resources, making us miserable. Our consciousness leads us, along with everyone else on Earth, to extinction. So, is having a conscience really beneficial? Compared to ants who make sensible decisions for their survival, maybe not.