

Notes on Michelle Merritt, "Dismantling standard cognitive science: It's time the dog has its day," *Biology and Philosophy* (2015, 30:811-829).

Against the representation / computational / "cognitivist" theory of mind, with thoughts as representational / internal / propositional, and as part of a linear input-processing-output model, Merritt proposes to talk of cognition as cooperative, dynamic, and interactive. Doing so enables to see 1) human-canine interaction as genuinely cognitive, 2) inexplicable under the standard model, and 3) a model for human-human cognition. Throughout the piece she warns us against the dangers of anthropomorphism: we will never know what it is like to be a bat or a dog, but on the other hand, we can't just think they do what they do with human mechanisms.

I think this fits nicely with the anthropological view (explicated in cognitive science and psychology by Michael Tomasello) of human evolution as having been shaped by our ancestors' turn to "obligate collaborative foraging." That is to say, wolves were able to become cooperative with us about 15K years ago, because we had been under selection for cooperative capacities for a long time before that.

While physicalism has defeated substance dualism, another Cartesian dualism still holds, that between humans and non-thinking "meat machines" who fail to demonstrate semantically responsive language production and hence fail at showing "the mark of the cognitive."

Behaviorism and functionalism loosened human chauvinism by allowing cognition with other substrates than human brains. Ethology was another important step: studying animals in their natural environments doing their own things in their own way, rather than in labs trying to do human things. Merritt also notes the turn to examining emotional lives of non-human animals, as well as the turn to studying the dog (as opposed to chimps and bonobos).

Dog cognition studies show some fascinating results that show the ability to sense and respond to social and emotional affordances (p. 820).

821: canine intelligence is not rational, linguistic, and logical.

821: Perhaps we should think of them more on the lines of toddlers?

821: human rationality doesn't fall from the heavens but is subtended by and shaped by practical, social, embodied interactions, the sort of processes we see in dogs when they interact with us.

822: Merritt mentions human-canine co-evolution rather than humans simply domesticating wolves with no looping effects on us. 826-27: that therapy dogs work might imply some co-evolution. (Or it could just mean humans are essentially social and loving and since dogs supply that, there is mutual love.)

823: De Jaegher and Di Paolo's "participatory sense-making" can be a model for non-linguistic emergent cognition among humans; why not use it to think about human-dog interactions?