

Coevolved

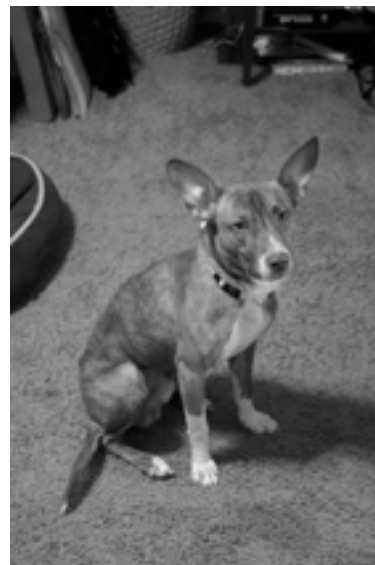
P u p

o r

*I BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE
ARE HARDWIRED TO BE
MOVED TO TEARS AT THE
POIGNANCY OF THE IDEA
OF A MOTHER DOG GIVING
BIRTH ALONE AT DUSK ON
THE HAY FLOOR OF A RED
BARN; AT THE IDEA OF
THE NEWBORN LITTER ALL
SQUEAKING AND HOWLING ,
BEING LICKED CLEAN AND
DRINKING THEIR MOTHER'S
MILK, THEIR FIRST MEAL
ON THIS EARTH*



I' ve been thinking a lot recently about dogs' co-evolution with humans and about my relationship with the runty, pig-nosed, big-eared junkyard baby boy that circled around my metaphorical bonfire in hopes of getting a bite of my metaphorical Flintstones-style Brontosaurus steak.





Much like I wouldn't claim my communication with, say, a rarely seen downstairs neighbor or a disapproving but stalemated parent is necessarily good or clear, I wouldn't say I'm convinced humans are necessarily adequate companions for dogs, nor them us. I don't know if evolution or human progress makes cogs and gears that do anything more than move in vaguely compatible directions, teeth and spaces only interlocking by chance.

Friction, here, does the bulk of the work I think.





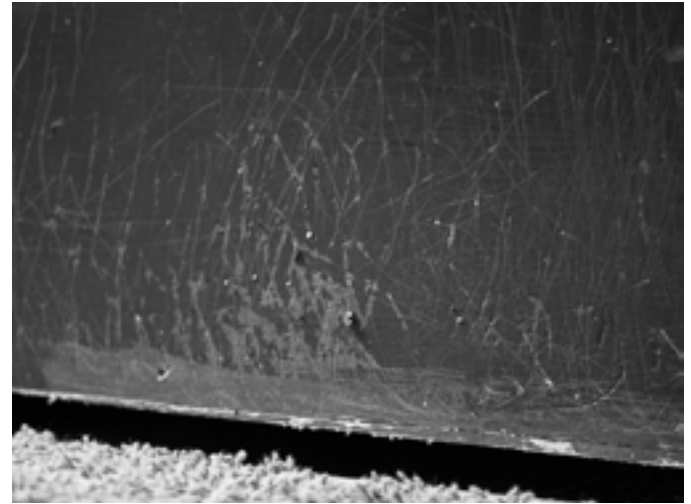
We went to a dog park down near the river recently—it was his first time off-leash. Not to subject you to tired radical ecological clichés, but in the moment I got caught up in some kind of dramatic assonance I saw between things at the dog park; my once-feral, newly re-un-leashed dog chasing and running free between newly planted braced and tagged trees, inside a 10-acre enclosed pen on a leveled swathe of land re-developed in the last 50 years into a nature and recreation complex.







I would dare to say that I've learned about as much about the source and nature of communication by adopting a stray dog as I did from 3 years of a high school classical Latin education. To coexist with a dog, you form a shared lexicon, a spoken and unspoken language involving sound, gesture, movement, and facial expression.



I'm learning to understand his signs of boredom, glee, need, and shame as he learns mine of play, direction, appeal, and disappointment.



What I'm wanting to talk about though is that, though our communication is inadequate, he and I have training wheels in navigating it that have been formed over the last 40,000 years by the billions of past dogs and humans.

He inherently understands me if I point to something—within their co-evolution, early dogs were better off when they knew that when we pointed, we could be pointing towards food.

I think about this as I point my sandaled foot at a dropped piece of scrambled egg in my kitchen.



What I' m looking to ask here is this-

Are dogs a scam?

If my goal is to better understand trans-species communication and empathy—to better know and feel the intricacies of resource-sharing communities formed in forest-tree roots, the motivations of a drone honeybee, or the perception and flurried movement of a brainless, eyeless seafloor slug—

Are dogs a diversion?

Dogs are easy-street in terms of trans-species communication. When I tell him I love him, at least he knows I' m speaking.

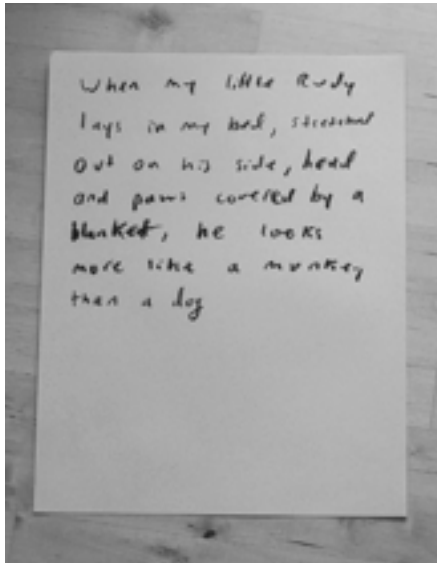




If all I want to do is know the experiences of Others on their own terms, is it really best that my first encounter of an Other is of one that comes pre-packaged to speak with me in my own language?

Maybe one closer—would I be at a handicap when trying to make new friends if the only human I'd ever met was a clone of me?

Are dogs a scam?



To look at a dog is to look at an evolutionary artifact, a member of society or a companion, and a wild animal all at once.

This is not all to knock dogs as companions in this anti-anthropocentric vision quest I've described.

I read something a while ago that claimed that we shouldn't quite consider pet species, specifically dogs and cats, fully as animals, and I think that's what I'm getting at here.






I think all of this has come together for me in some part because my small stray wasn't neutered when we met.

If I'm already making bold statements about dogs, then I'd like to say this- The rare glimpse of an un-neutered male dog's "externalities" offers a disruption of our contemporary symbiosis with and of the un-animal-itude of dogs as a whole.





*It took us up until 50
years ago to breed seedless
watermelons.*

