Twitter Thread by Carlos E. Perez

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It is astonishing that most of cognitive science ignores an obvious reality. That there are two kinds of humans.

Tomasello has a very credible hypothesis that what distinguishes humans from the great apes is the inclination towards shared intentional behavior. What is innate is the disposition and like personalities, it is what defines our cognition as we grow.

If cognitive preference is so critical in cognitive development then why is it that we seem to have completely ignored the difference in cognitive preferences between men and women?

Humans are that species of primates that wandered out into the savannah. The savannah is different enough from a dense jungle to exert the evolutionary pressures that encourage the development of planning and forecasting skills.

Furthermore, human infants required a disproportional amount of effort to rear. This meant the specialization of roles between women who were responsible for rearing offspring and men who were responsible for bringing home the bacon. Failure in either implied death.

To be competent in child rearing, one is constantly challenged in trying to understand the needs of a child. A good mother is one that best understands the needs of a child and how best to accommodate those needs. Needs here isn't confined to immediate needs.

In contrast, the male human in the savannah needs to figure out where the next meal is coming from. In the savannah a human is one of the least physically gifted animals. Humans are relatively slow bipedal mammals.

The only animal perhaps with an approximate speed as humans are bigger mammals. The kind of mammals that can gore and kill a human. So when humans went hunting, there was a real possibility that it would be their last hunt.

So how does a human conjure up the courage to attack another animal that can kill them? They need to develop a kind of cognitive skill that is the opposite of empathy. That is, apathy. A detachment from knowing the consequences of being killed or maimed for life.

So what we thus have are primates a inclination towards shared intentional behavior (i.e. cooperation) that is also differentiated by a preference for empathy or a preference for detachment.

I use the word preference here because humans are complex enough not to be completely devoid of empathy or completely devoid of the ability to detach themselves.

Humans like dogs, dolphins and killer whales hunt as a group. The most cognitively sophisticated of animals are the kinds that need to coordinate a group that seek out energy resources that are also other autonomous things.

Well, it turns out that the most important gender of a social species are the females. We can make an analogy with the human body. Our reproductive cells are encapsulated away from the other cells in the body that is doing all the work.

Biologically, the males of the species are the venturers and also the sacrificial lambs of the species. The females are the ones that are to be protected at all costs. The information to replicate individuals is only available to females.

Organic social groups therefore tend to be matriarchal in nature. Even in human experience, it is usually the women in the family that ensure the maintenance of bonds between other relatives.

But an unnatural thing happened with the scaling up of social groups into much larger societies. The power dynamics of the group changes because the mechanisms of social cohesion has to change from the order of O(n^2) to O(n log n)

Human shared intentionality is made more effective through the use of language. The standardization of languages allows larger groups to communicate. The codification of language allows for information to transcend generations.

The initial usefulness of the codification of language (i.e. writing it down) is to preserve legacy. Legacy in the form of ownership. Writing information of ownership on paper is necessary for resolving future disputes. In fact, going meta means writing down the rules of dispute.

Civilizations scale because norms are written down and agreed upon by their citizens. Not everything can be expressed and written down. These are the tacit norms of society that is carried from one generation to another through practices and rituals.

Now one can make the case that the switch in power dynamics from women to men is a consequence of the written word. See: https://t.co/z5S17hY5Zu

The written word emphasizes detachment instead of empathy. In C.S.Peirce formulation of signs, symbols are detached from individual grounding and are instead understood through norms shared by a collective.

The symbol grounding at the level of the collective is different from the symbol grounding at the level of the individual. The effect of abstraction is that the concerns of the individual are coarse grained away in favor of the concerns of the collective.

Because our thought processes are so dependent on the language that influences our thoughts, modern humans are unable to intuit what they've lost through the habit of using symbols to express thought.

What was lost was empathy. But here's the rub, language is not the core of general intelligence but rather empathy is at the core of general intelligence. Humans by virtual of being shared intentional beings require empathy to find meaning in this world.

Humans who commit suicide are the ones who momentarily discover the lack of meaning in this world. How does that happen if not for the same mechanism that allows for the detachment from this world?

Side note: The danger in American society is that the culture is verbal in nature and has a propensity to favor symbols over empathy. What happens when those symbols are discovered to be lies?

Humans are innately equipped with two kinds of minds. The empathic mind and the symbolic mind. The former addresses complexities of human relationships and the latter abstracts away the complexity the arises from combinatorial explosions of states of affairs.

Computers have shown that we can mechanize the symbolic mind. However, as GPT-3 has shown, the mechanized symbolic mind is devoid of meaning. It requires the empathic mind to discover meaning in the words.

That is because it is the empathic mind that is actually embodied, embedded, extended, enactive and affective in this world. The purpose of things that are digital is to transcend our legacy into the futire. The purpose of things that are analog is to live in the present.

Join me in this journey here: https://t.co/CKl7IvNWys

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