

Reasons and Concepts

Hurley, Susan (2003) “Animal Action in the Space of Reasons,” in *Mind and Language*, 18(3): 231-256.

In short, Hurley wants to argue that we can attribute rational reasons and intentionality to (some) non-human animal behavior without having to claim these animals have fully-fledged concepts in the way that humans do.

“We shouldn’t overintellectualize what it is to have a mind. We don’t have to choose between conceptualized, inferentially promiscuous reasons and the fine, rich kind of justification they provide, on the one hand, and the absence of reasons that are reasons for the agent, on the other: this dichotomy is spurious. The space of reasons is not coextensive with the space of conceptualized inference and theory, but rather with the space of intentional actions at large. This is a space in which nonhuman animals can and do act...” (253).

question 1

question 2

question 3

question 4

“Suppose a monkey observes that conspecific A is dominant over B and that B is dominant over C and, never having observed A and C together, registers that A is dominant over C, and is able to use this information in instrumentally appropriate ways in relation to various goals. Nevertheless, she might be unable to generalize the ability to make transitive inferences to foraging contexts, such as: tree A has more fruit than tree B, which has more than tree C, so tree A has more fruit than tree C. Evolution might have conferred the ability to make transitive inferences in the social context, if it was most valuable there, without conferring the conceptual abilities needed to transfer it readily to other contexts. This empirical possibility (I do not need to claim it is more than a possibility) illustrates how holistic means/ends flexibility might obtain without conceptual flexibility” (239)

The Exam

Combination of: (a) true or false; (b) multiple choice; (c) matching quotes with authors; (d) short answer

The Exam

Combination of: (a) true or false; (b) multiple choice (incl. matching quotes with authors), and (d) short answers

(a) and (b) can draw from either required readings *or* slides. (But not from recommended reading that was not discussed in the slides.)