nova·nevėdoma



A Clockwork Human

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In a room resembling a prison cell sat a human, an adult male sample, mouth-taped, strapped to a chair. Catheter-like pipes slithered from his naked chest and arms to the apparatus behind him. On his head the sample wore a helmet, which connected a bundle of wires, transistors, or cones resembling car candles, to his shaved skull – all needed for tracking precious bits of data.

The distinguished scientist Dr. Dogsey, a charming cynocephalic lady Shiba, stood on her hind legs in front of the sample and, with her tongue hanging out, jotted down some thoughts, twitching her ginger ears and twirling her cinnamon-bun tail.

Day 1: Today is the hinge of history, the greatest day the canine has ever seen, the beginning of an unprecedented era; today is the day we regain control; the end of great oppression, the day we make dogs great again. Many days have been claimed like this before, arrogantly, recklessly, foolishly. Many canine anthropologists have vainly ventured into this area of science, but the glory is mine and mine only. I am not afraid to do what they were even terrified to consider. I am prepared, I finally have a perfect sample; I swear I won't hesitate, I swear won't step back; Extremis

malis extrema remedia. Woof-woof.

A little nervous, the sample smiled with only the left side of his lips and looked around the room from time to time, entertaining himself, waiting, listening to Dr. Dogsey's rapid breath and the rustle of her pen on paper.

The sample's condition is stable given the tendered medical evidence: no instances of ophthalmopathy or cerebral dysfunction, no mental deviation and a phenomenal enthusiasm for participation in our canine's anthropological pursuits. The equipment has been tested and certified. All of the necessary documents can be found attached to the report in the appendix.

Hodie mihi, cras tibi. Today, we're embarking on a new journey into the unknown.

Dr. Dogsey barked, hid her tongue and smiled. Behind her, a screen hung on the wall, fifty five-inches of pixels.

"Good Woofternoon, 031. My name is Dr. Jacqueline Dogsey. I'm a senior researcher in the anthropology department of Pawlove University. I'll be accompanying you during the experiment. Much excited, such impatient! You wouldn't believe it! Shall we start? Please nod if you are ready to start."

The sample nodded.

"Lo-ve-ly! So we'll proceed with the following. The first day of the

experiment is all about measuring how your cerebrum reacts to different stimuli. This screen in front of you," Dr. Dogsey said, and turned and pointed to the screen with her short-furred ginger paw, "will be showing you images of diverse content. All you have to do is to sit and watch, and press the green button on the right side of your chair if you like what you see and the red button on the left side if you dislike it. Much easy, right?"

The wires from the helmet moved slightly as the sample nodded again.

"Wonderful."

Dr. Dogsey put her tongue out and started breathing rapidly. She galloped to the apparatus behind the sample's chair, took round dark glasses out from a pocket of her lab coat and put them on.

Thus went the day of flashing images and electric impulses pulsing through the wires. The screen was kaleidoscoping with a range of visuals: from colourful to monochrome, from light to dark, from pattern to plain; mostly neutral, inanimate objects, landscapes and textures. Soon, the constant flashes made the sample blink often in attempts to lubricate his eyes.

Hooman perception of contrast and affinity has a remarkable nature and explains much aspects of their complex behavioural system. Our initial hypothesis has been evidently confirmed with sufficient levels of statistical significance. Such significant, much wow. (see attached estimations in Appendix 2): high contrast stimuli (in our case, visuals) – either colour

(generously available for hooman vision), tone, shape, not theoretically excluding sound, smell, etcetera, or sequences, combinations, juxtapositions of them, either simultaneous, consecutive or distributed in time, either with uniform intervals or stochastic intervals – increase the sample cerebrum's reaction; while low contrast stimuli – like a blue sky or a sea, or a plain forest or a field, or a protracted period of either stability or stagnation – decreases it, soothing the sample's cerebrum, up to the level of immersing the sample into a temporary state of boredom. Switching between two opposite types of images – or shall we say to a carrot and a stick? – might be a diminutive step for a dog but a much giant leap for the canine in our dominance over hoomans, or pardon our Feline, the skinbags. Hereby, and by using other known methods (see Appendix 3), we can control stimuli and remodel hooman cerebra, remap their neural circuitry in the way we, the canine, and the much respected cynocephali tribe in particular, need.

Now, to the much crucial part. The test. She leaned over the apparatus and made a few changes to its settings. The neutral objects changed to images of dogs and cats, of different breeds, in different outfits. They stood and sat and played and smiled their bestial smiles. They all were cute and kind and never hostile. Not without a reason.

The sample pressed the buttons, falling through the funnel of visuals, one after another, hundreds and thousands of them. Dr. Dogsey saw how numbers accumulated and converged to a metric she was seeking, and a quiet growl oozed from her maw. She'd always known this sample's cerebrum was contaminated, too.

Alas, he was a cat person.

Day 3: Although we increased the proportion of canine visuals over feline, the result is still stable – the feline adoration coefficient (FAC) is higher than the canine adoration coefficient (CAC) by an unmistakable margin (1.373 versus 0.875, which marks a change of 0.498 with a standard error of +-0.11). Nevertheless, the result is such significant (p-value=0.0218) and this is what makes our sample ideal for the experiment.

Some canine images are still favoured by the sample, all we prospectively require is to alter the visual sequence accordingly in the next stage.

Dr. Dogsey entered the room and lit the lights. The sample was sitting, still strapped to the chair. Dr. Dogsey greeted the sample with "Howl you doing, my puppy?", received a double nod back, approached the apparatus with her notebook under her arm and manually entered new settings. It was only the third day and she was already tired. Of course, Dr. Dogsey expected that and was prepared for all the issues but she overestimated her mental tolerance. She was stressed and a stressed dog is nothing but a wolf. Despite all those breedings, tortures, cripplings that her predecessors endured under human reign, Dr. Dogsey's heart and soul had always been one of a wolfess, in a forest, hunting. Her innermost self was a primal and wild animal that nobody, not even herself, wanted to discover from under her outward Shiba demeanour.

The screen on the wall started flashing. No cats anymore, but dog after dog: large, small, tall, slim, slobbery, dribbling, shorthair, longhair, black, white and ginger, spotted, mottled and monochrome; in suits and

in jeans, in airy robes, in uniform, naked. She stared at them through her round dark glasses with pride and grief. Who are they? Right. Heros, warriors, martyrs – with all their ears erected and cropped, with all their tails twirled and docked, with all the chains and collars and leashes and muzzles and stupid knitted vests. And who is she? Merely a pussy cat in a white coat hiding in her lab.

The buttons meanwhile were mindlessly pressed, green after red, red after green, sending information through wires. Then after some time, the sample got bored. His eyes became dry and refused to behold the canine, and the pace of pressing buttons reduced.

“No-no-no, this is not how we do it, my wishbone. Please open your eyes widely.”

The sample tried to obey for some time, yet nature was stronger. Dr. Dogsey growled, and scratched her notebook, gently. Fumbling in her pocket, Dr. Dogsey approached the sample. She took lid locks she prepared for an emergency case (like that one was) and tried to put them onto the sample’s eyes delicately, but the sample fidgeted and squirmed, moaning. Dr. Dogsey snarled and barked. The sample shuddered and started trembling. One more attempt. She spread his eyelids, still snarling, and put the lid locks, not delicately.

“Ineluctable modality of the visible, my puppy, an infinite stroll through the medium of beauty. Don’t worry, it’s only for the sake of the experiment. We cannot ruin all the work done, right? This,” she said and took an eyedropper from her pocket, “will keep your eyes moist.

Don’t forget to press buttons, my wishbone, such sweet wishbone.”

She barked.

Day 8: Since the overall methodology was altered on Day 8, we finally and thankfully observe some improvements in the recent benchmarks. Much early to celebrate as FAC is still higher than CAC (1.270 vs 0.988), but we believe and hope we’re on the right track. Despite some insignificant cosmetic damage done to some of the sample carcass’ parts, its cerebrum is stable, its eyes are much functional, its hands can push the buttons, and there’s nothing that could undermine the future of the ongoing experiment.

“Today’s procedure has certain risks, I must warn you,” said Dr. Dogsey. She was standing in front of the slightly shaking sample. The sample’s eyes, bulging from between his scratched eyelids, crawling with capillaries, stared at Dr. Dogsey. He was still strapped to the chair, his mouth still taped, but no longer with a helmet on his hairless head. His neck and cranium were fixed in place. “You don’t have to worry, my bonelet. Such strong you are. Your endurance has impressed me since day one. Today we’re stepping one step higher on the steps that lead us to glory. Woof!”

She moved aside and revealed another frighteningly scientific device placed on a small cart. The sample gulped. The device was a box of incomprehensible construction. The only things that looked obvious were two transparent tubes and a transparent tank filled with a pinkish liquid.

“This beautiful thing,” said Dr. Dogsey, patting the device, “will help you think more clearly.” She pulled the cart closer and positioned it at the side of the sample. The sample continued to quiver and widened his eyes so that they seemed likely to roll out of their orbits, fall to the floor, roll across it to some other room, away from here into the darkness, far enough away, so far away that he would never have to see anything with them again.

Wagging her tail, Dr. Dogsey unhooked the tubes from the device. At their ends were what looked like clutches or valves: huge metal cylinders with mechanical switches. Dr. Dogsey stuck the tubes to the sample’s temples, and forcefully jerked the right-side switch. Something snapped, the sample screamed, or rather mumbled – with his mouth gagged it was hard to scream – as a short needle plunged into his skull. A second later, the second switch, the second snap, the second needle, and the second scream joined the symphony of pain.

Dr. Dogsey herself twitched at every snap, flattening her ears. Her tongue dangled out of her mouth and trembled with every rapid breath. She felt hot. Was it the temperature in the room, or the excitement, or the fear of doing something wrong and ruining the whole experiment? But so far everything was going smoothly and according to plan. Well, almost everything. She had forgotten the anaesthetic.

The sample continued to fill the room with moaning sounds. Dr. Dogsey took a syringe out of her pocket and injected it into the sample’s neck. He twitched, started shivering. After a few seconds, the mooing

stopped. All that remained was fear, which seemed to be audible nonetheless.

Scratching behind her ear, Dr. Dogsey examined the sample and walked over to the device, shook off her anxiety and pressed the “Start” button. The device began to noise. The pinkish liquid from the tank crawled down the tubes and soon reached the sample’s skull. The moment the liquid penetrated it, the sample’s eyes widened, glazed over, and stared off into nowhere. Dr. Dogsey, meanwhile, bit the claws on her left paw and watched anxiously. After a few seconds the liquid, cloudy and slightly stained, began to emerge from the tube at the opposite temple of the sample. Through the tube, it reached the second empty tank. This was the whole several-minute process: pinkish water from one tank pumped into the other, filtering through (or filtering out) a sponge of grey matter.

But everything ends at some point: the water in the tank, Dr. Dogsey’s anxiety, the effects of the anaesthetic. The specimen regained consciousness and looked at Dr. Dogsey from behind his muddy eyes languishing between the twitching eyelids.

“I told you! You shouldn’t have even barked!” She said and stuck out her trembling tongue.

Day 13. The ongoing experiment is proceeding remarkably well. Yesterday’s measurements of FAC (0.9621) and CAC (0.9056) showed us that the relationship between the progress length of the ongoing experiment is either not linear or always prone to having a disturbance term in its

mathematical notation. Science is never easy but always much divine. Nevertheless, the current stage is apt to become rotary for the whole course of actions, and any day may yield unprecedented results. Although, the uncertain nature of outcomes cannot be evaluated probabilistically because the canine scientific world knows no data that could evidently support it. To our endless luck, audentes fortuna iuvat, and we're the ones, me, a much audentiă Dr. Jacqueline Dogsey, in particular.

There was no chair anymore. Only the fifty five-inch screen still hanging on the wall, turned off, and the sample, a bony and bruised creature lurking in the shadows. The sample, his mouth free from any tape, crouched in a foetal position in the corner with a chain running from his foot to the wall. He wore a massive collar with a dim green light beeping around his neck and nothing else.

Dr. Dogsey was observing from the next room through the one-way glass. She was standing right in front of it, fogging it up with her breath, paws crossed and waiting.

Suddenly a bell rang inside the room. The sample perked up, pricked up its ears (if you can say so) and squatted down. Saliva was dripping from his mouth. The screen lit up and turned into a luminous white beacon amidst the dark ocean of room. In the past, Dr. Dogsey had been convinced that it was impossible to get used to the blinding light, but in the end, it turned out to be only a question of controlling one's reaction. No matter how bright the light was, and whether or not one's eyes began to melt and leak out of their orbits, as it turned out,

squinting was a personal choice. The sample chose not to squint. Clinking his chain, he crawled to the centre of the room, crossed his legs and sat down in front of the screen. A drop of saliva fell to the floor between his legs.

Images started running across the screen: dogs and cats, cats and dogs, small and big, little, tiny and large, black and white, two-colour, three-colour, all of the breeds, and their name is legion. The sample sat still and stared, bewitched and beguiled. Blissful, engaged, again and again, his eyes flickered and twitched but didn't get dry. Nor did he dare to blink anymore. Instead and in spite, his eyes were moisturised with tears. A spasmodic smile stretched on his lips when suddenly images disappeared, the screen faded black and turned off, but a trace of warm pixels still glowed. The sample froze. He was robbed of delight. He was robbed of the absence of darkness, and it crept to his mind, crowding out, displacing any languishing traces of sanity.

Suddenly, a desperate scream filled the room. The sample started scratching and punching the floor. Dr. Dogsey immediately pressed another button, the collar around the sample's neck beeped red and electrocuted him. He shuddered and stopped screaming.

The bell rang again. Drops of saliva. The sample cheered up and crossed his legs. One image replaced another. Dogs replaced cats, cats replaced dogs, a dog replaced God. Bitten lip. Broken nails. Tears and blood. Widened translucent eyes. Dwindling glimpses of rationality. A scream to the void of the screen. An electric shock. Convulsions. Moments of

silence. The ringing bell. More saliva. Images, pictures and pixels: dogs, dogs, dogs, dogs, dogs flashed and disappeared. A shrill cry. The trembling creature started banging its head against the floor. An electric shock didn't work. It failed. It failed once more.

A key crunched in a door lock and Dr. Dogsey barged into the room, growling and barking, and kicked the sample a few times. She had strong hind legs. The frenzy of an interrupted trance had vanished and the sample curled up foetally, vainly protecting himself from the spree of kicks. He was groaning and grunting, wailing and wheezing.

Seeing that the sample regained consciousness, Dr. Dogsey calmed herself down, too. She hovered over him, still growling, and heard something resembling speech.

"Mo...." mumbled the sample.

Dr. Dogsey's ears stood up straight, alert.

"W-what?" She couldn't believe her canine ears.

"Mo-o...."

"Much wow! Such wonderful! " she shouted, instinctively took her notebook from the lab coat's pocket and started scribbling, guffawing now and then, woofing.

The sample is calling me mom, an unexpected yet pleasant result. So achievement! You, whoever reads this, must be jealous; but also you must

be respectful, delighted, impressed, inspired! You must remember this day. The sample is calling me mom! The sample is calling me mom! Unprecedentedly unprecedented. Unprecedented success.

“M-mo...”

“Mother! Yes! The world will know! The world must know! Woof-woof!”

Dr. Dogsey galloped out of the room not even closing the door and left a trail of echoing woofing sounds behind her.

The semiconscious sample was left trembling in the room’s corner. The saliva dripped from his mouth to the floor. His reddened right eye was twitching. He couldn’t lift his head. He could only open his lips in an attempt to squeeze sounds out of his aching chest. The sample moaned.

“M-m-more...”

A vibrant wave of appreciation goes to a much distinguished gentleman David Torkington for helping me with the draft of this story.

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