

## 30DayTheri 10: Tangram Model

This may feel a little out-of-order, as I plan to write future posts going into more detail about the exact experiences (noemata, behaviors, etc.) that I associate with my therianthropy, and why I identify as a psychological therian. But today, I'll summarize those things briefly in order to get at a metaphor for how I construct identity, period.

So first, a bulleted list of the kinds of things I, personally, associate with my therianthropy:

- Behaviors
  - Food preferences
  - Growling and barking urges
  - “Fetching” behaviors (will probably elaborate later)
  - Mouth = 3rd hand (I thought this was normal, my bf gently poked fun)
- Internal experiences
  - Phantom shifts (ears, tail, teeth)
  - Mental shifts
  - Noemata (red and white fur, pattern, general body size)
  - “Me” recognition feeling in response to dogs
  - Euphoria at being seen as a dog
  - “My person” interpersonal feelings
  - Sheep protective feelings
- Traits
  - Extroversion
    - Responsiveness to rewards (yes this is linked to extroversion)
    - General sociability/friendliness
  - Suggestibility
  - Social Submissiveness
  - Passion/identification with animals in general
- Not sure if therianthropy or something else
  - Sensitivity to sound and smell
  - Constant chewing habit
  - Singing preferences (this one is weird and ???)

The thing about literally everything on the list above? All of it could have a different explanation. It's the sum, not the parts, isn't it? Any identity, if one is asked to explain “how do you know you're X?”, the individual reasons are never 100% applicable. Just like roleplaying as a different gender in video games is a common trans experience, but not exclusive to *all* or *only* trans folks. Or how I'm Lithuanian for several reasons (I was born there, my parents and grandparents were, I speak the language and participate in the culture). Another person might have been born there but not speak the language. Another might have only distant ancestry but participate in the culture. Etc. Etc. I'm sure there are otherkin that have a list of experiences with no overlap with mine (past life memories, dream

shifts, species dysphoria) who are still equally otherkin. No specific reason is the necessary-and-sufficient factor.

And here's the thing- I don't care if there are other explanations. Even if literally everything I ascribe to therianthropy can be broken down into normal personality traits, neurodivergence, random chance, etc., to me, that doesn't erase my ability to draw a circle around those traits and call it therianthropy, especially if doing so helps me navigate the world and makes me happy.

Identity is often approached, I think, like a jigsaw puzzle: the pieces only fit together a certain way, and once you figure out all of them, you can get one correct picture. Consider [this really neat post](#) that compares a therian and an autistic person, pointing out external behaviors that may seem similar, but are internally caused by different things.

Here's the thing. People don't know why they do things. It's a whole thing called the introspection illusion. If someone is trying to introspect to determine "am I doing this for sensory reasons or otherkin reasons?", they have no assurance of getting the right answer. It's just not that neatly knowable.

I would like to introduce instead the metaphor of a tangram. A tangram is a type of puzzle where there is a set of seven pieces, which need to be arranged (without gaps or overlaps) to make a bigger picture. You can play a bunch [here](#). The point of a tangram is that the pieces are literally all the same. They don't have patterns like a jigsaw puzzle, the whole point is "how many shapes can I make out of the exact same set?".

So that's how I see my therianthropy, when it comes to questioning how much of it is influenced by "other" things, like personality and neurodivergence and childhood experiences and quirks and habits. For me, pointing to my chewing behavior and going "that's just stimming, like in autism" or my food preferences and going "that's just coincidence" is a little like pointing out that both a cat and rabbit tangram have the same big triangle piece in it. Like...so what? The individual pieces could belong to anything. In me, they make a larger picture of a dog, and that's what's important to me.

((Or for another metaphor, tacos, burritos and quesadillas can have similar or many overlapping ingredients, but the difference in arrangement and preparation still matters))