

Some authors have claimed that perception and motor skills are the most important part of intelligence, and that “higher level” capacities are necessarily parasitic—simple add-ons to these underlying facilities. Certainly, most of evolution and a large part of the brain have been devoted to perception and motor skills, whereas AI has found tasks such as game playing and logical inference to be easier, in many ways, than perceiving and acting in the real world. Do you think that AI’s traditional focus on higher-level cognitive abilities is misplaced?

“Most of evolution and a large part of the brain have been devoted to perception and motor skills, ...” this is simply because they are instrumental to many wide range of goals.

For example, an AI that calculates next moves in chess or go, no motor skills are really needed. There are a lot of complex tasks for which motor skills are not instrumental and therefore no focus is given. Logical inference doesn't look like a mere add-on to perception and motor skills rather a capability in itself.

As AI research progressively takes on more complex tasks, they get increasingly closer to the real world, in which case perception and motor skills simply are instrumental to the system's intelligence.

The focus hasn't been misplaced, because systems are not developed similar to how humans are evolved and it hasn't been the case that perception and motor skills are instrumental in solving certain tasks. However this seems to be no longer the truth (see Boston Dynamics, Waymo, Tesla etc.)