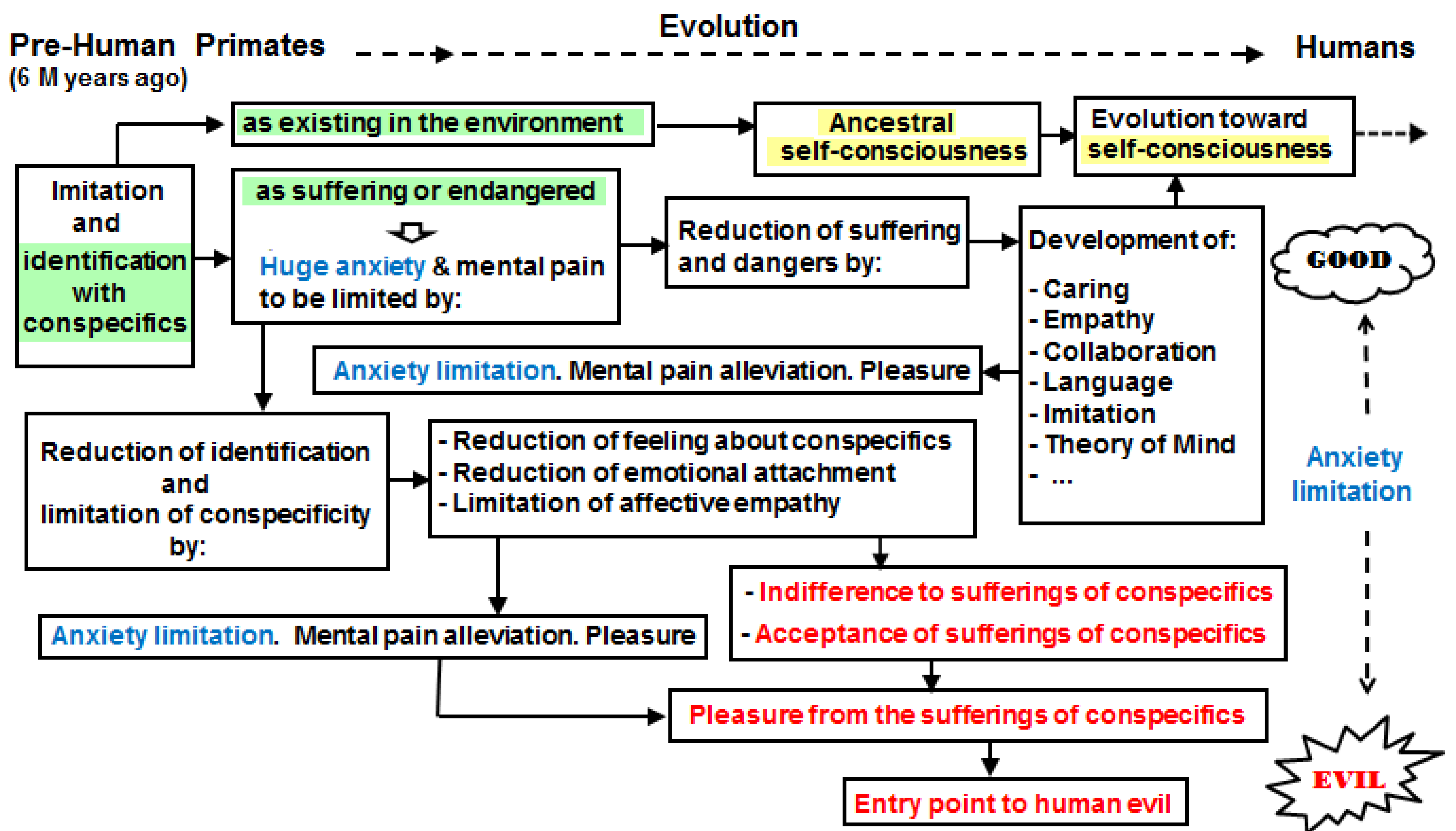


“Self-consciousness and human evil. Proposal for an evolutionary approach”

Christophe Menant-Bordeaux-France



“ **Anxiety management** and **self-consciousness** share a common evolutionary nature”

“ **Evolution of anxiety limitation => Human evil** ”

- 1) Our pre-human primate ancestors were capable of some **identification with their conspecifics**, like are today apes (Olds 2006, de Waal 2008).
- 2) **Identifications with conspecifics** (represented as existing) have built in the minds of our ancestors an ancestral **self-consciousness** (Menant 2014a).
- 3) **Identifications with suffering or endangered conspecifics** have produced in the minds of our ancestors a **huge anxiety** coming from feeling the sufferings of others. It was an unbearable mental pain that had to be limited for the evolution toward self-consciousness to continue.
- 4) That **anxiety** was of a new type, as related to an evolutionary nature of **self-consciousness** (Menant 2017).
- 5) Two ways were available for our ancestors to **limit that anxiety** and alleviate the mental pain associated to it:
 - Reduce the **sufferings of conspecifics**.
 - Reduce the **identifications** and limit the **consppecificity**.
- 6) Reducing the **sufferings of conspecifics** was possible by the development of tools like caring, empathy, collaboration, imitation, communication, ToM, ... These tools also procured evolutionary advantages. The result was an **anxiety limitation** and a mental pain relief, bringing in a pleasant feeling.
- 7) Reducing the **identifications** and limiting the **consppecificity** was possible by reductions of empathy and of feelings about others. The result was an **anxiety limitation** and a mental pain relief, bringing in a pleasant feeling.
- 8) But the reductions of emotional attachments have also introduced indifferences to the **sufferings of conspecifics**, and finally their acceptance. Even more, the pleasant feeling resulting from the mental pain relief has associated some pleasure to the **sufferings of conspecifics**.
- 9) Overall, our ancestors had two possibilities to **limit the anxiety** and the mental pain coming from **identifications with suffering conspecifics**:
 - Reduce the **sufferings of conspecifics** by developing tools (caring, empathy, collaboration, ...) which also brought in evolutionary advantages.
 - Reduce **identifications and conspecificity**, leading to accept the **sufferings of conspecifics** and **wicked behaviors** as a potential source of pleasure.
- 10) These two opposite possibilities for **anxiety limitation** were built up during our pre-human evolution. They are now buried in our mostly unconscious motivations and can guide our actions for better and for worse, leading to sociability or to **human evil**.
- 11) **Anxiety limitation** remains a key part of our (mostly) unconscious constraints that guide many of our meaning generations and motivations.

CONTINUATIONS:

- a) The evolutionary scenario linking **self-consciousness** to **anxiety limitation** has already been introduced in philosophy of mind (Menant 2014b). Its application to primatology and to psychology/psychiatry/ethics is to be developed.
- b) **Wicked behaviors** may be a mode of **anxiety limitation** when empathy/caring/collaboration modes cannot be used. This can support the negative consequences of early traumatic experiences. Such inter-dependences between different modes of **anxiety limitation** are to be analyzed.
- c) The **anxiety** produced by **identifications with suffering conspecifics** has been a traumatic event in human evolution. It needs a specific analysis.
- d) The positioning of **anxiety limitation** as a pleasure participating to the values of experiences is to be analyzed (introduce an ‘anxiety limitation drive’?)