Proposal for an evolutionary synergy linking anxiety management to self-consciousness

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Presentation

A) An evolutionary approach to Self-Consciousness introduces a human specific ancestral anxiety

- * The evolutionary approach starts at pre-human primates time (6my ago). Is based on the evolution of identification with others [1].
- * Evolution of self-consciousness and of identification with suffering others => huge anxiety increase (mental pain) [2]. Self-focus, projection in time, anxiety management => Build-up of a human specific Ancestral Anxiety.
- => Ancestral Anxiety limitation as a permanent constraint.
 * Self-consciousness and human anxiety exist in synergy. They share a common evolutionary history (evolutionary engine).

B) Anxiety and ancestral anxiety in our human minds

- * Anxiety as a natural alert system in animal life. Anxiety as an unpleasant feeling. Anxiety limitation as a natural constraint.
- * Self-consciousness and projection in time => Human anxiety with psychological suffering and mental health concerns.
- * Poster proposes that self-consciousness and human anxiety belong to a same evolutionary process based on identification with conspecifics (existing within our pre-human ancestors). Led to self-consciousness and to an ancestral anxiety.
- Ancestral anxiety limitation, as a permanent constraint, participates to the generation of anxiety related meanings [3].
- Specific human tools have been introduced to limit corresponding anxiety with its associated psychological sufferings. Like:
 Pleasure seeking (drugs processing).
- Development of affectivity, and of sexuality as a multidimensional escape and refuge from ancestral anxiety.
- Limitation of identification with selected others, with risk of neglecting them and taking advantage of their sufferings. Can be seen as an evolutionary entry point to wicked behaviors. Introduces human evil as a natural part of our human minds [7].
- Pascalian type diversions keeping consciousness away from too anxious mental states [9].

C) Continuations and conclusions

Continuations

Several items presented here need more developments. See list.

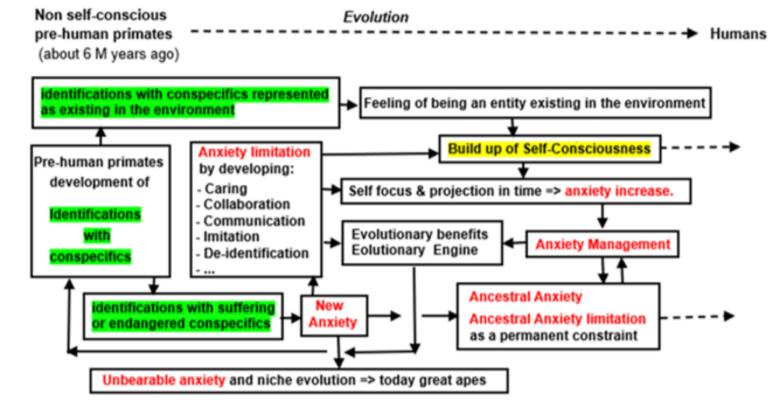
Conclusion

- * An evolutionary scenario has been presented. It links the nature of self-consciousness to anxiety management. The scenario is based on identifications with conspecifics at pre-human time. It introduces an evolutionary engine [2].
- * A human specific ancestral anxiety is part of the scenario. Its limitation processes guide many of our physical and mental behaviors with a possible entry point to human evil [7].
- * The scenario highlights anxiety as an emotion contributing to our mental and physical lives much more than assumed so far.

B) Anxiety and ancestral anxiety in our human lives:

- . Anxiety is a natural emotion that finds its source in animal life as part of an alert system existing to satisfy stay alive constraints.
- * Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling. Anxiety limitation is a basic constraint, is source of anxiety related meanings in organisms [3].
- Studies have been implemented about the evolution of anxiety from animals to humans [4], [5].
 Relations to self-consciousness by identification with others have not been considered so far.
- Self-consciousness in humans amplifies animal anxiety by having the subject consciously perceiving himself as anxious, and by projecting his anxiety in time.
 - * Corresponding psychological suffering brings the need for anxiety limitation processes.
- * Anxiety can become pathological and significantly diminish quality of life. General Anxiety Disorder is an example [8].
- We propose here that self-consciousness and human anxiety are part of a common evolutionary process that began at a pre-human time. The process is based on the development of identifications with conspecifics already present within our pre-human ancestors.
 Such development led to self-consciousness (by identification with entities represented as existing in environment) and to an ancestral anxiety (by identification with suffering conspecifics) [6].
- Ancestral anxiety limitation, as a permanent constraint, participates to the generation of unconscious and conscious anxiety related meanings [3].
- In addition to anxiety limitation tools derived from animal life (caring, collaboration, communication, imitation, ...) specific human ones
 came up during our evolution in order to limit the corresponding psychological sufferings. Among others:
- * Pleasure seeking (drugs processing).
- * Development of language for more efficient cooperation.
- * Development of affectivity, and of sexuality as a multidimensional escape and refuge from ancestral anxiety.
- * Limitation of identification with selected others (de-identification) to limit the anxiety coming from identification with their suffering. This brings to neglect the suffering of others and consider such neglection as profitable in term of one's own anxiety limitation. This can lead to associate pleasure to the suffering of others by de-humanization. It can be seen as an evolutionary entry point to wicked behaviors and introduces human evil as a natural part of our human minds [7].
- * Pascalian type diversions to keep consciousness away from too anxious mental states (anxiety management can create new anxieties to hide more painful ones) [9]. Leisure and many human activities are part of these diversions. Human discoveries and inventions can be somehow related to such diversion tools.
- The proposed evolutionary linking of self-consciousness with anxiety management positions anxiety as contributing much more than assumed so far to our mental and physical lives.

A) An evolutionary approach to Self-Consciousness introduces a human specific Ancestral Anxiety



Evolutionary scenario for Self-Consciousness based on identification with conspecifics [1, 6] introduces a human specific "Ancestral Anxiety". (Is not "Evolutionary Psychology"):

- * Primate identification with conspecifics represented as existing in the environment => feeling of existing > build-up of Self-Consciousness
- * Primate identification with suffering or endangered conspecifics => New feeling of suffering → New anxiety to be limited.
- * Anxiety limitation, self-focus, projection in time => anxiety increase & anxiety management: → Specific Ancestral Anxiety to be limited.

C) Continuations and conclusion

Continuations

Several items presented here need more developments:

- Address the nature of self-consciousness as existing with and by an ancestral anxiety limitation constraint.
- Work is needed to understand the modes of anxiety limitation that were implemented during our pre-human evolution.
- Consider the vulnerability of our human nature as depending on successful anxiety limitation processes. Correspondingly position the
 dis-functioning of anxiety management processes as possible source of mental disorders. The proposed approach should be
 continued with psychiatry in an evolutionary background (human evolution has not stopped).
- Analyze the ontogenetic/phylogenetic parallels of identification with others
- The process of selective de-identification as an entry point to human evil brings to consider wicked behaviors and de-humanization as modes of anxiety management. Such perspective is to be developed.
- Position anxiety limitation as a subject per se, as it conditions many of our mental and physical activities.
- Investigate and imagine alternate modes of anxiety limitation with a focus on relation with others.
- Analyze the content of Freudian life and death drives in terms of anxiety management. Look at the possibility for introducing an anxiety limitation drive.
- Investigate components of Pascalian type diversion to make available positive diversions.
- Use the Maslow pyramid for an understanding of anxiety increase in human minds.
- Use anxiety management as a thread for an understanding of human motivations and mental disorders.

Conclusion

- An evolutionary scenario has been presented linking the nature of self-consciousness to anxiety management. Their synergy has
 produced an evolutionary engine favoring the build-up of our human self-consciousness.
- A human specific ancestral anxiety has been introduced. It is still active today and its limitation is a constraint that guides many of our mental and physical behaviors.
- The scenario is based on the development of an identification with conspecifics which led to self-consciousness (by identification with entities represented as existing in environment) and to an ancestral anxiety (by identification with suffering conspecifics).
- The scenario brings to consider the limitation of ancestral anxiety by selective de-identification as an entry point to human evil.

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