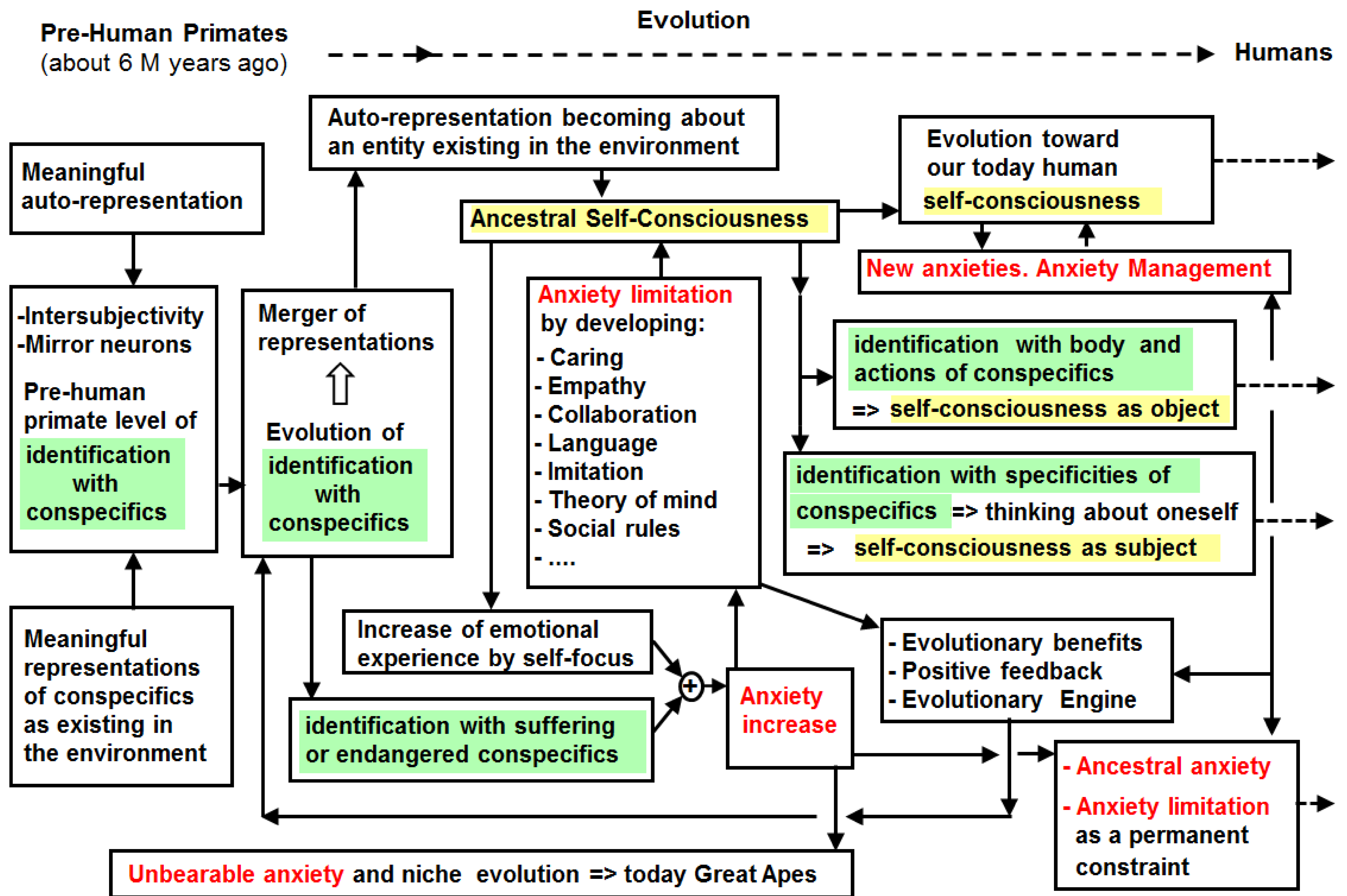


Proposal for an evolutionary nature of self-consciousness linked to a human specific anxiety



- 1) **Self-consciousness** is the ability to think about one's own entity represented as existing in the environment, like others are represented ([Menant 2011](#)).
- 2) Our pre-human ancestors were capable of some level of **identification with their conspecifics**, like are today great apes ([DeWaal 2008](#), [Olds 2006](#)).
- 3) **Evolution of that identification** has generated in the mind of our ancestors an **ancestral version of self-consciousness**, with elements of self-focus dramatizing emotional experiences.
- 4) **Identifications with suffering or endangered conspecifics** have produced a **huge anxiety increase** that had to be limited.
- 5) Our pre-human ancestors have **limited that anxiety** by developing performances that also brought in evolutionary benefits (caring, collaboration, communication, social rules, ...).
- 6) These performances have produced **new anxieties**, partly limited, with new evolutionary advantages (dynamic process).
- 7) It is proposed that **human self-consciousness** shares with a **human specific anxiety** a common evolutionary history based on **identification with conspecifics** and on **anxiety management** ([Menant 2014a](#), [2014b](#)).
- 8) Such evolutionary nature of **self-consciousness** links some human characteristics to **anxiety management processes**:
 - **Anxiety limitation** as a permanent and key human constraint => permanent generation of **anxiety related meanings**.
 - Pascalian type diversions (for good or for evil) to keep consciousness away from **too anxious mental states**.
 - Human sexuality developed during human evolution as a multidimensional **escape and refuge from anxiety**.
 - ...
- 9) These **anxiety management processes** are critical to our human mental health and psychological well-being. Their dis-functionings can be sources of mental disorders and illnesses.
- 10) The evolutionary scenario linking **self-consciousness** to **anxiety management** can be used for other developments:
 - Use the proposed **phylogenetic scenario** as a frame for **ontogenetic approaches**.
 - Look for **neurologic markers** linking **human specific anxieties** to **self-consciousness**.
 - Analyze evolutionary relations between **self-consciousness** and **phenomenal consciousness**.
 - Use the scenario to link the **human self** to a **biological self** based on a far from thermodynamic equilibrium status.
 - See how a meaningful **auto-representation** can have some application in **artificial intelligence** ([Menant 2013](#)).
 - Introduce an **ancestral anxiety** in human **phylogenesis**, as an active element of today human **ontogenesis**.
 - Consider avoidances of **anxious mental states** as key contributors to psychosis.
 - Explain some human wicked behaviors as **modes of anxiety management** ([Menant 2018](#)).
 - Use the evolutionary scenario to define **conscious mental states vs unconscious ones**.
 - Position **anxiety management** linked to **self-consciousness** at the core of human mind.
 - Investigate possible applications of the scenario to **primatology, psychology/psychiatry** and **ethics**.