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.

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