

Grounding humanistic therapy in human nature: What counselors can learn from the Andaman Islanders



Presented by Matt Bukowski, MA LPC

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Sentinelese tribe thought to have killed American 'world's most isolated'



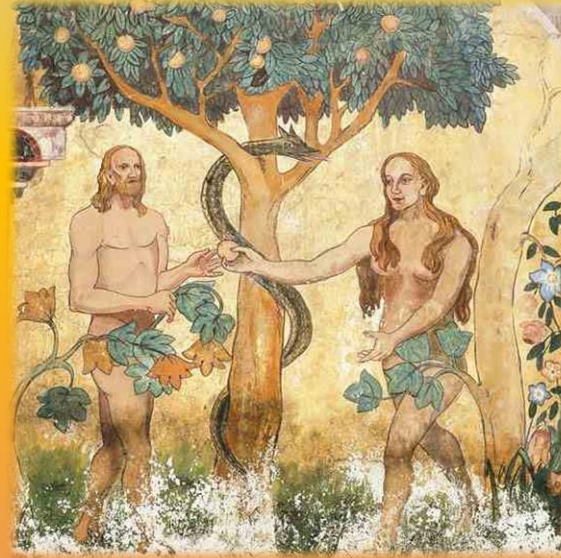
By **Euan McKirdy** and Sugam Pokharel, CNN

🕒 Updated 1:45 AM ET, Fri November 23, 2018



Western theories of human nature

- Greek - Socrates
- Biblical - Genesis
- Enlightenment - Hobbes
- Modern
- Post-modern





“Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry... no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

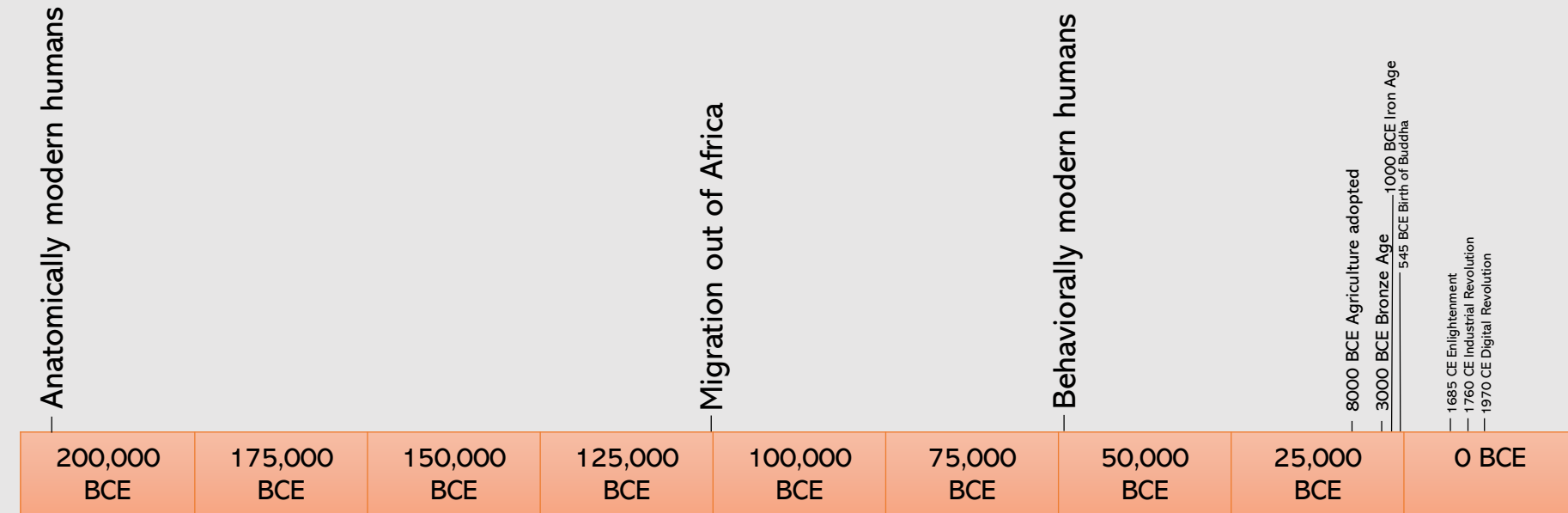
~ THOMAS HOBBS

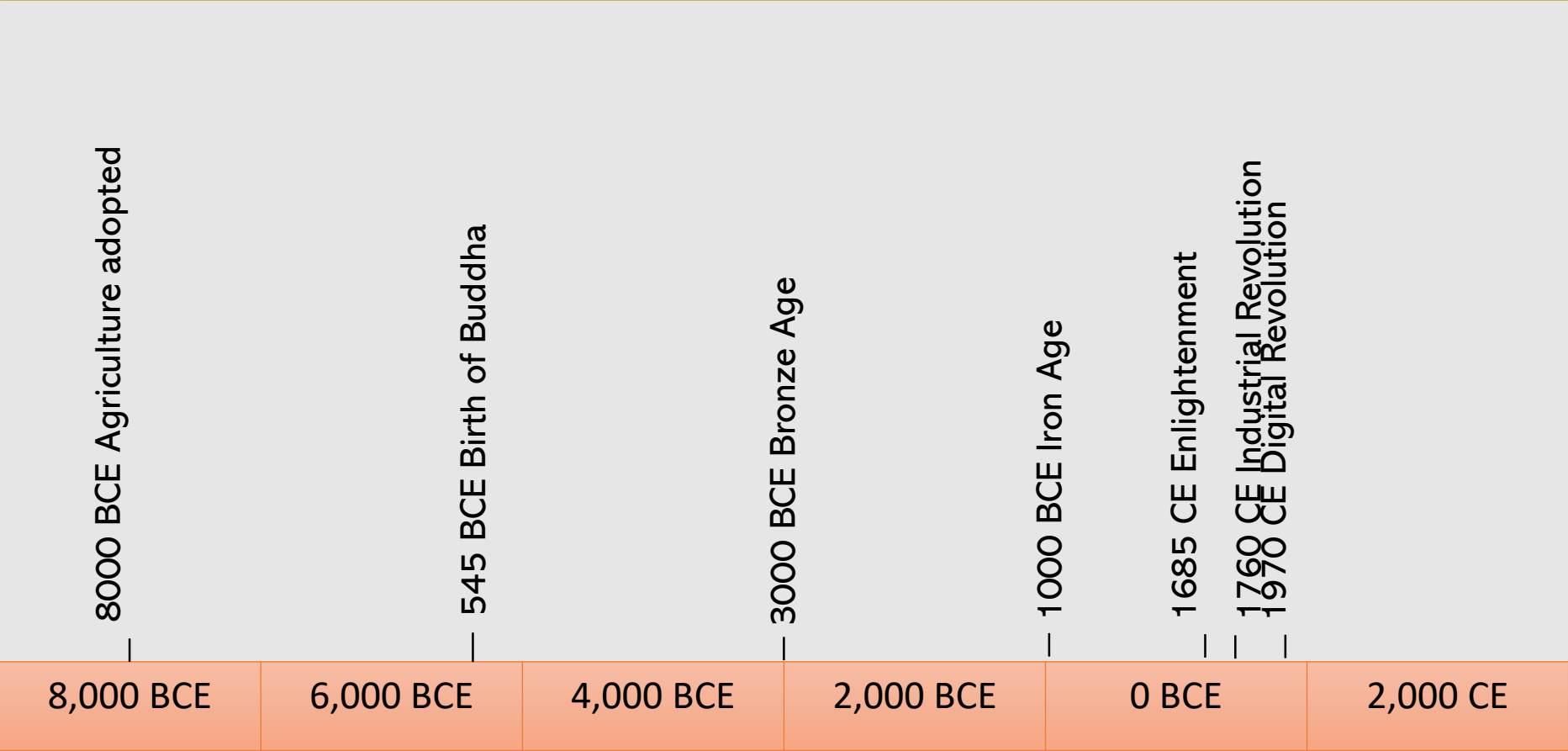
“Human beings would live together more easily if their knowledge of human nature were more satisfactory. Disturbing social relationships could then be obviated, for we know that unfortunate adjustments are possible only when we do not understand one another....” – Alfred Adler, 1927



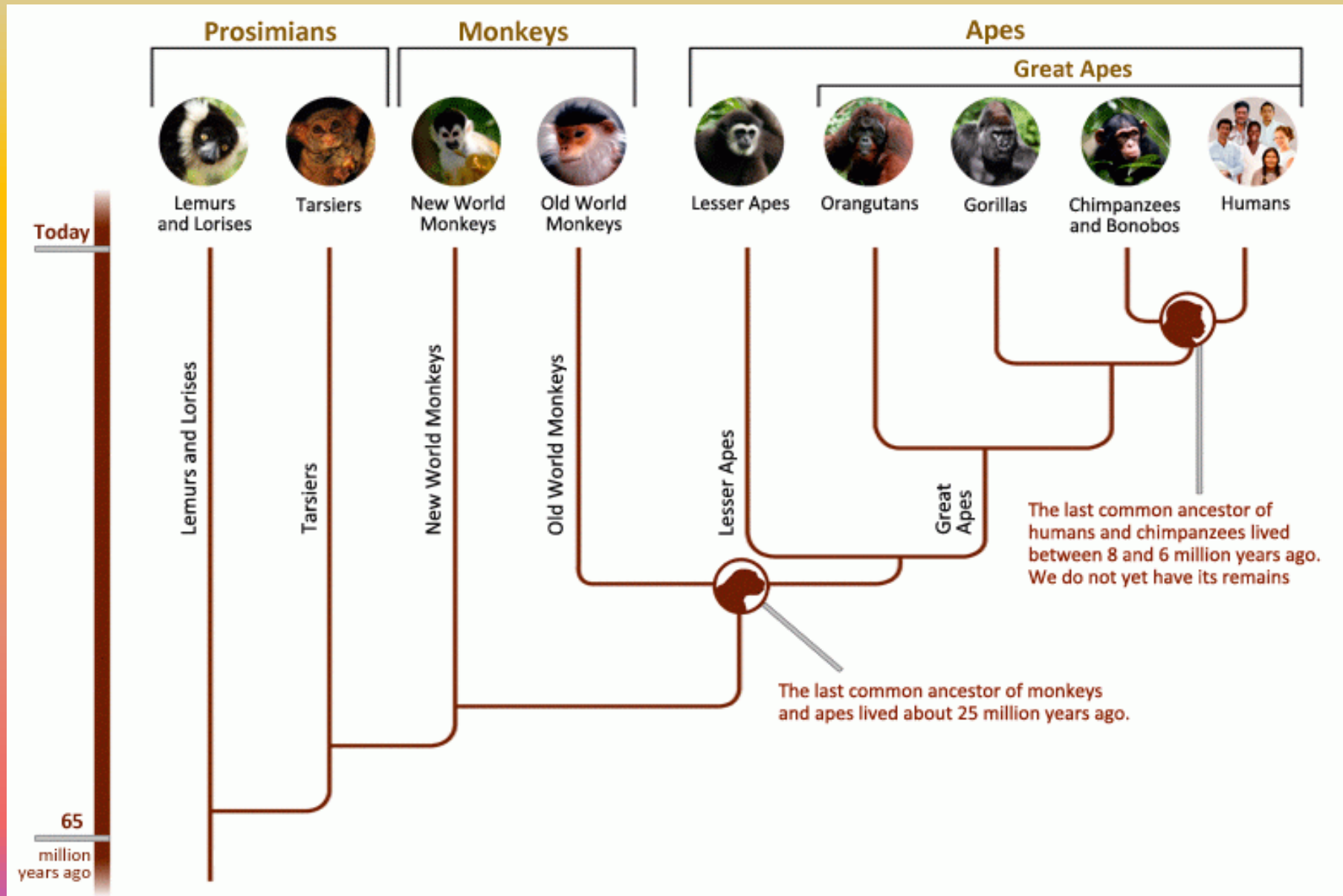
Timeline of cultural change

Stone tools – 2.5 Million
years BP
Control of fire – 800,000 BP





What is a human?



Today

Homo group

Like modern humans, other species in this group had large brains and used tools. Members of this group were the first to expand beyond Africa.

1

million
years ago

2

million
years ago

3

million
years ago

4

Homo sapiens

Homo neanderthalensis

Homo floresiensis

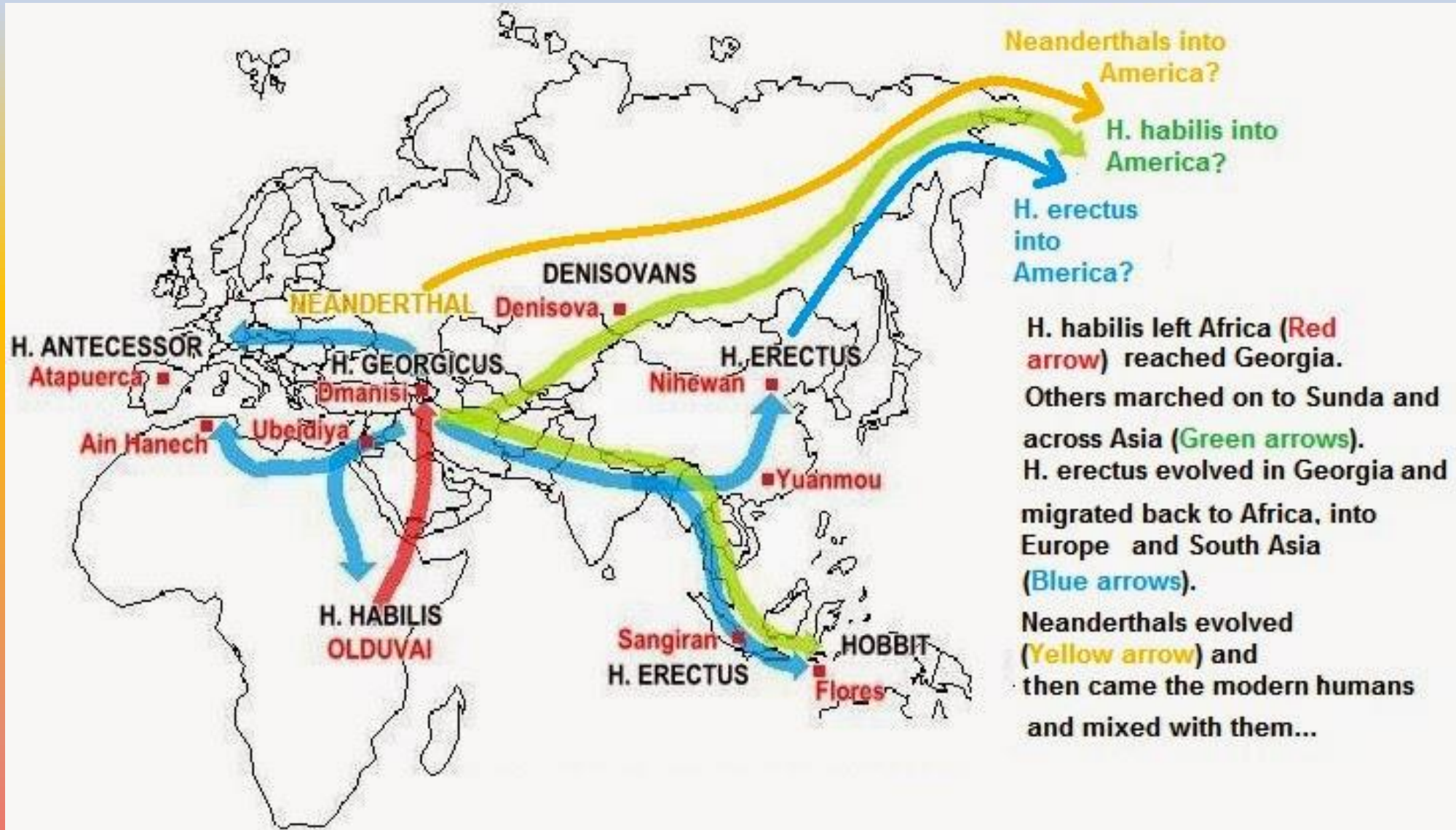
Homo heidelbergensis

Homo rudolfensis

Homo erectus

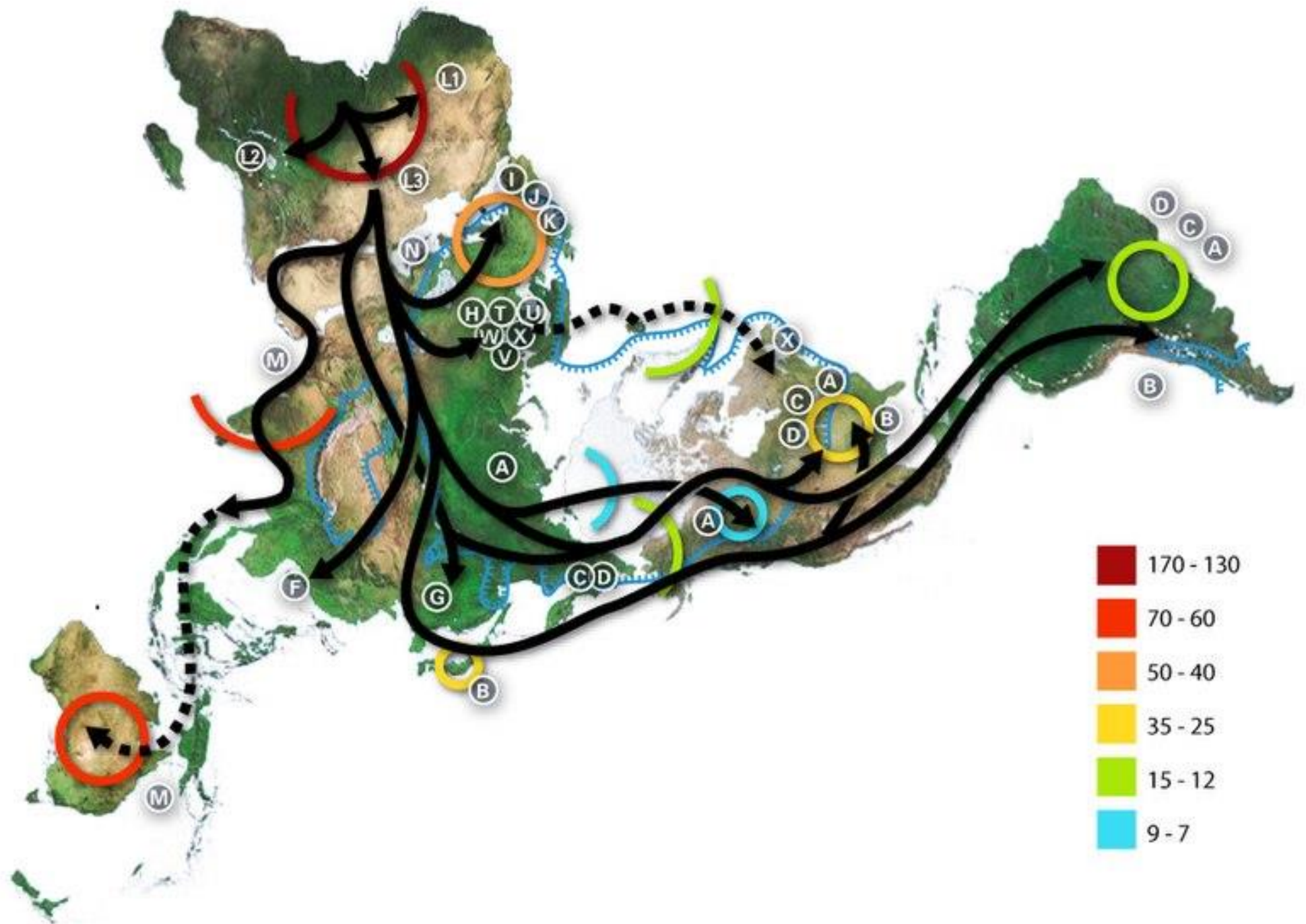
Homo habilis

From: <http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/human-family-tree>



<https://resonance.is/homo-sapiens-direct-ancestors-migrated-africa-2-million-years-ago/>

DNA
migration of
Homo sapiens



The most genetically ancient human populations

Khoi San - Botswana



Korowai – Papua New Guinea



Tiwi - Australia



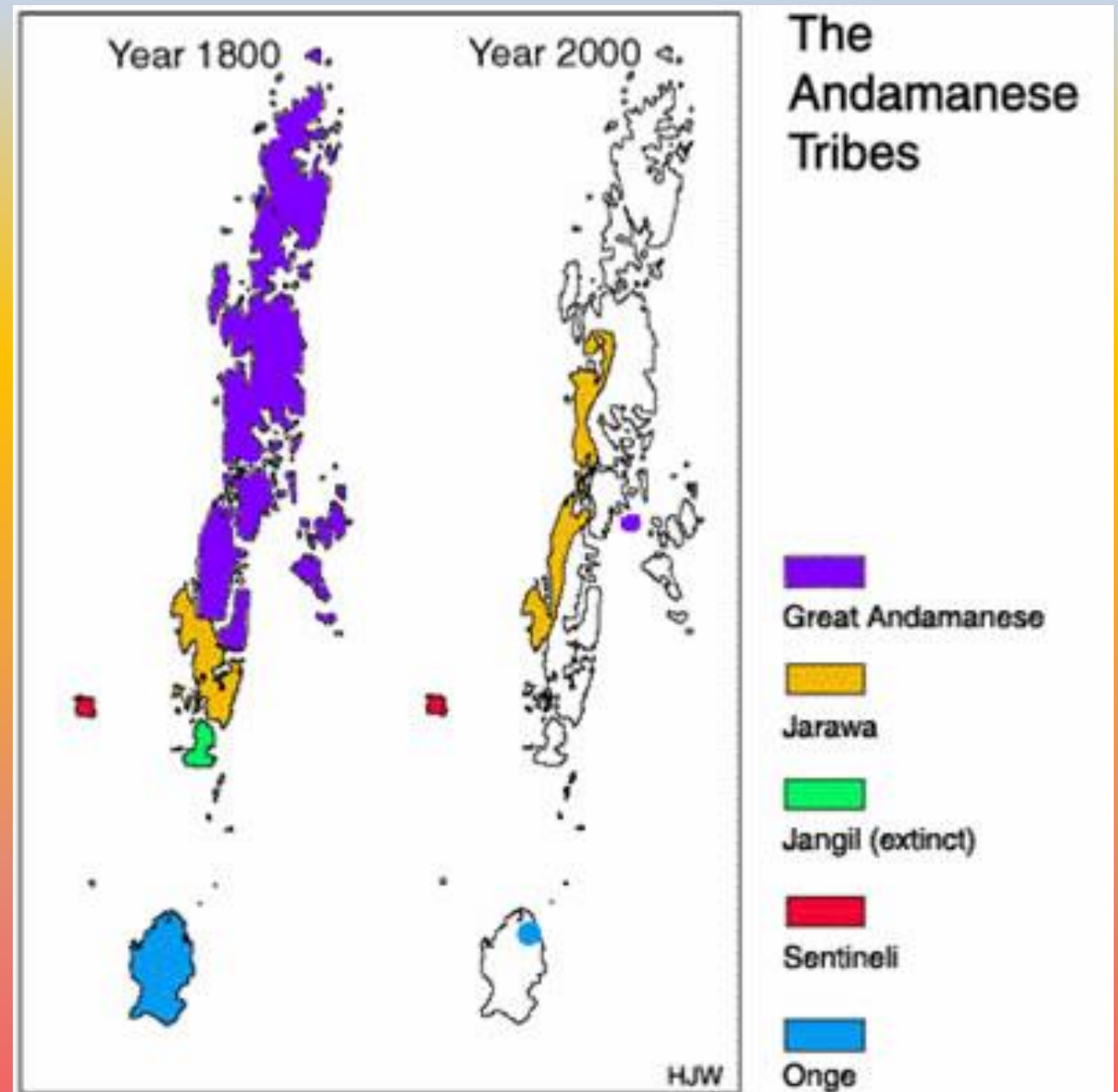
Mbuti - Zaire



Jarawa – Andaman Islands



© Claire Belvert



Ethnocentric Portrayals

VIDEO PODCAST NEWSLETTERS **BIG THINK**

Six disastrous encounters with the world's most hostile uncontacted tribe

From questionable shipwrecks to outright attacks, they clearly don't want to be bothered.

MATT DAVIS 23 September, 2018



IFLSCIENCE!

The Tribe That Killed An American Missionary Are Deeply Hostile To Outsiders. This Is Why

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An aerial photograph of a sandy beach. Two indigenous people are visible, walking across the sand. They are carrying spears. The beach is wide and sandy, with some sparse vegetation on the left side.


Shifting Opinion


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Los Angeles Times

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OP-ED OP-ED OPINION

Uncontacted tribes aren't 'Stone Age.' They just want — and deserve — to be left alone

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Sentinel Island's 'peace-loving' tribe had centuries of reasons to fear missionary



Cultural imperialism, projection, idealization

- The Andaman Island tribes are real humans in all ways.
- There is evidence for:
 - A wide range of emotions
 - Anger, jealousy, rage
 - Emotional violence
 - Physical threats and violence, murder
 - Social conflict over resources, property, relationships, etc.
- Anti-social potentials exist in all cultures, and all cultures have mechanisms for managing and mitigating them.

Who are the Andaman Islanders?

- Greater Andamanese, Lesser Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, Sentineli
 - Indian Ocean – 870 mi to India, 620 mi to Thailand
 - Estimated 20,000-60,000 years of habitation
 - Average traditional group size 30-50 people (10-300)



Contact with Western Culture

- Scientific accounts
 - E.H. Man documented observations in 1880's
 - M.V. Portman – 1880-1901
 - A.R. Brown - 1922
- History of contact and current status
 - 1789-1796 British Penal Colony
 - 1850-present British and Indian colonization
 - Pre-1850 population – 3500
 - 1960 population 60,000
 - 2011 population 343,000



“It has been stated above that all food is private property and belongs to the man or woman who has obtained it. Everyone who has food is expected, however, to give to those who have none. An older married man will reserve for himself sufficient for his family, and will then give the rest to his friends. A younger man is expected to give away the best of what he gets to the older men...The result of these customs is that practically all the food obtained is distributed evenly throughout the camp....Generosity is esteemed by the Andaman Islanders one of the highest virtues and is unremittingly practiced by the majority of them. (Brown, 1922)”





“Besides the respect for seniority there is another important factor in the regulation of the social life, namely the respect for certain personal qualities. These qualities are skill in hunting and in warfare, generosity and kindness, and freedom from bad temper. A man possessing them inevitably acquires a position of influence in the community. His opinion on any subject carries more weight than that of another even older man. (Brown, 1922)”

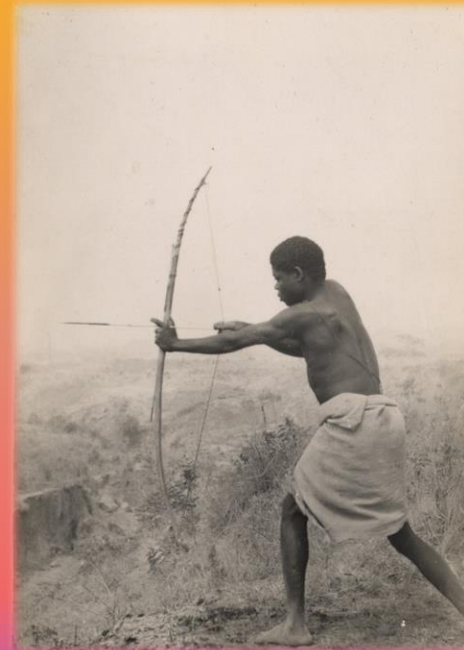
- Evidence of an orientation toward personal growth
- Self-mastery
- Positive self-actualization



“Women occupy a position of influence similar to that of the men. The wife of a leading man generally exercises the same sort of influence over the women as her husband does over the men (Brown, 1922)”

“There does not appear to have been in the Andamans any such thing as the punishment of crime....No case of one Andaman killing another has occurred in recent years. Quarrels sometimes occur between two men of the same camp. A good deal of swearing goes on, and sometimes one of the men will work himself up to a high pitch of anger, in which he may seize his bow and discharge an arrow near the one who has offended him...(Brown, 1922).”

-Directly contradicts Hobbes' ideas



“A man who is liable to outbursts of violent anger is feared by his fellows, and unless he has other counterbalancing qualities, he is never likely to become popular. He is treated with outward respect, for everyone is afraid of offending him, but he never acquires the esteem of others. There is a special nickname, *Tarenjek*, in the North Andaman, to denote such a man (Brown, 1922).”

“During their infancy the children are in the care of their mother. Children are, however, such favorites with the Andamanese that a child is played with and petted and nursed not only by his own father and mother but by everyone in the village. A woman with an unweaned child will often give suck to the children of other women. Babies are not weaned until they are three or four years old.”

“Until the age of about eight to ten a child lives with his parents, having a place in the family hut, and a share of the family meal. The children are treated with extreme kindness, and are never punished and hardly ever scolded (Brown, 1922).”



Voices of the Jarawa

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIEJPdCvb8&t=92s&pbjreload=10>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdvIO6bPG60&t=417s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6l6L8b6mQs&t=1084s>

Jarawa culture through a humanistic and wellness lens

- Highly empathic
- Hyper-social
- Hyper-religious and spiritual
- Fiercely egalitarian
- Prolonged, frequent, ubiquitous affection – All are family
- Abundant time outdoors – with respite and favorable conditions
- Highly active
- Highly creative “makers” and artists
- Long-term food security (the ocean + Jungle)
- Long-term political and geographic stability
- Political and social autonomy
- =An evolutionary model of what humans need psychologically to be healthy?

Rollo May

- “...the person and his world are a unitary, structural whole; the phrase “being in the world” expresses precisely that . The two poles, self and world, are always dialectically related. Self implies world and world self; there is neither without the other, and each is understandable only in terms of the other.”
- “World is the structure of meaningful relationships in which a person exists and in the design of which he participates (May, 1956)”



Application to Counseling

- How can exploration of human nature promote health and wellness?
 - Provide evidence for humans being highly sensitive by nature
 - Ground discussion of healthy lifestyle habits in an evolutionary perspective
 - Emphasizes the importance of close, nurturing human bonds
 - Affirms the centrality of relationships, meaning and purpose for human wellness

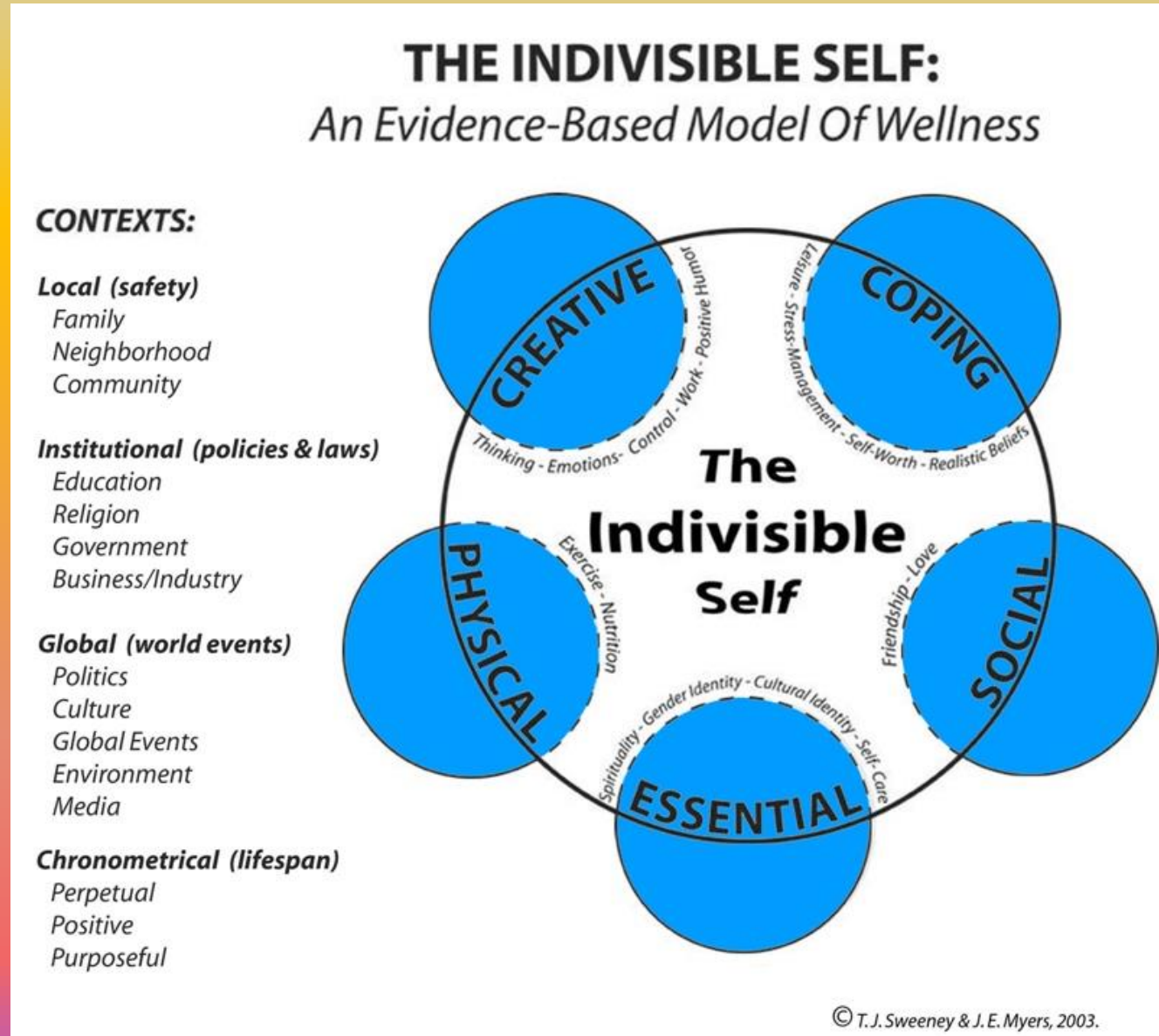


Counselors can...

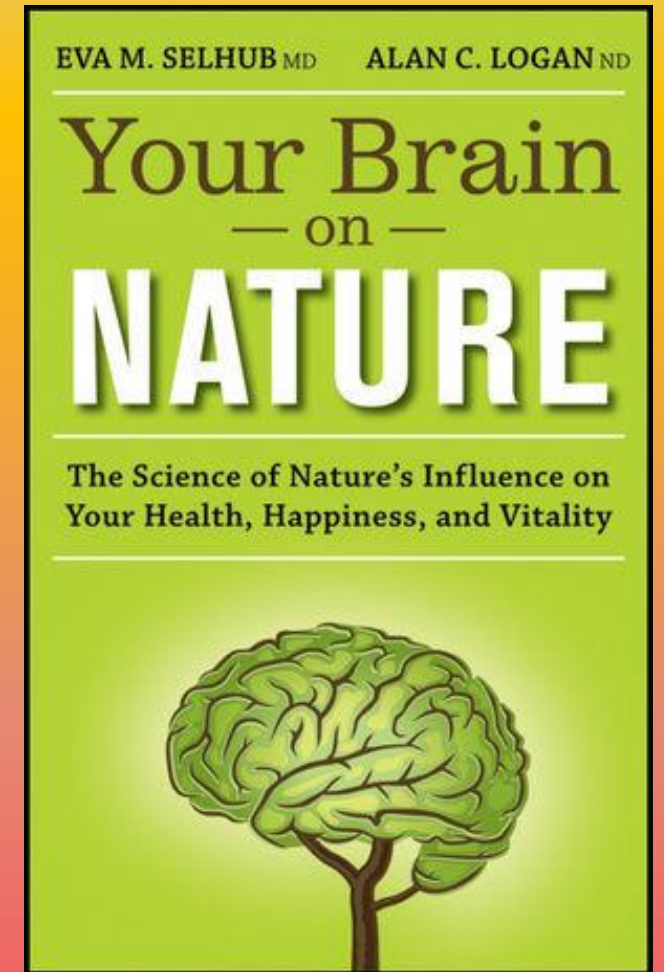
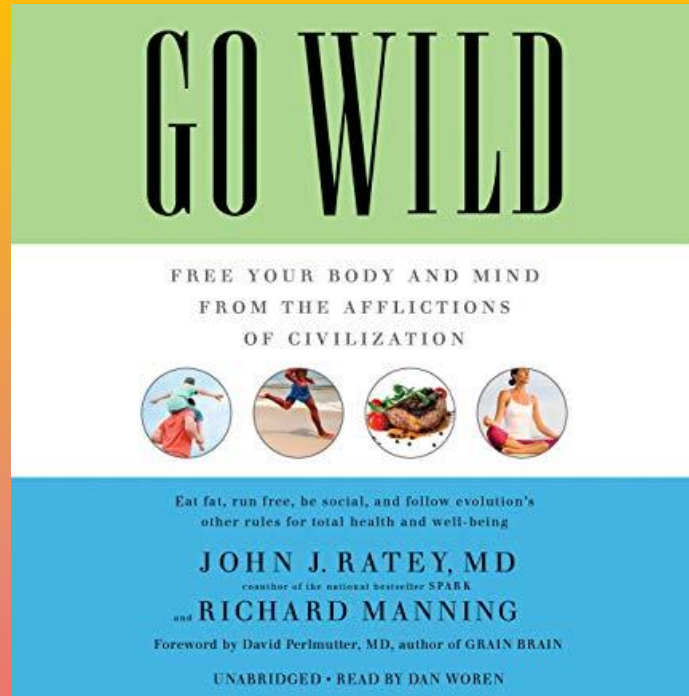
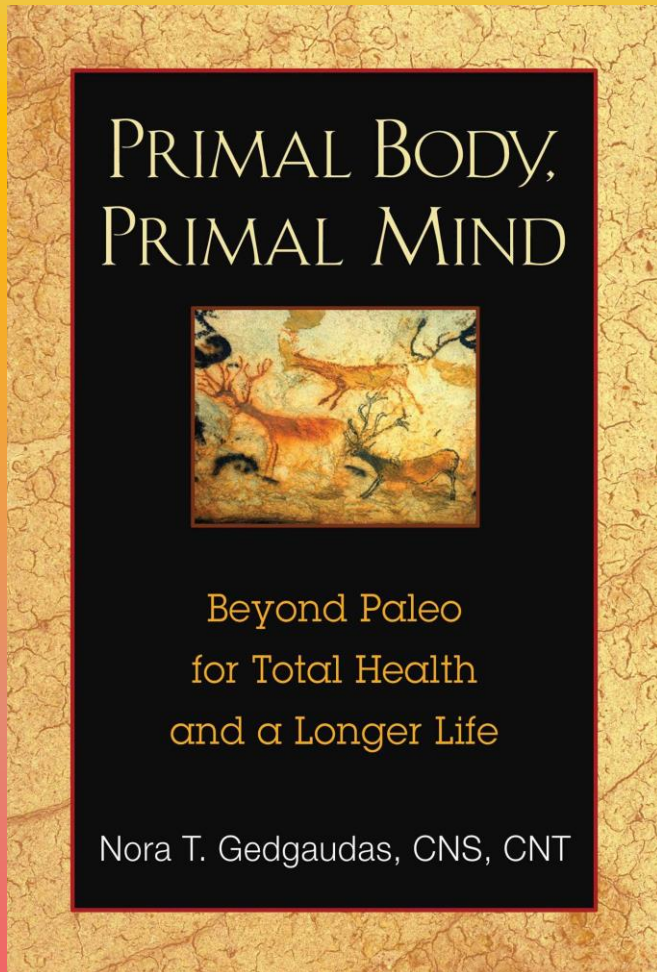
- Explore clients' beliefs about human nature, sources of those beliefs, and how those beliefs manifest in their relationships
- Discuss the roles of meaning and purpose in clients' lives
- Ground wellness interventions in evolutionary theory and logical implications
- Promote nature connection in everyday life



Holistic Wellness and Human Nature



The evolutionary view of wellness



Conclusions

- Evidence from biology, anthropology, evolutionary psychology all support the positive view of human nature hypothesized by humanistic counseling pioneers.
- Humanistic counselors can be empowered to embody this understanding and may provide some of this evidence to expand .

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