

New trends in Anthropology

Understanding human nature
to give our species some hope

Associate Professor Piero P. Giorgi

Research Affiliate with

The National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

(formally University of Queensland)



MENU

- ◆ **Introduction to “ a new anthropology”**
- ◆ **The discovery of human nature**
- ◆ **The origins of violence**
- ◆ **The real possibility of extinction**
- ◆ **Possible solutions to prevent it**

The taming of universities

- ◆ **Reduction of State support**
- ◆ **Private support**
- ◆ **Competition**
- ◆ **High specialisation**
- ◆ **Political correctness**
- ◆ **Obedience**



A revival of anthropology

- ◆ From the evolution of Man and classical ethnology
- ◆ (WE are the normal end product and term of comparison)
- ◆ to “the study of human beings” = WE as well
- ◆ Have the “new anthropology” escaped the process of taming?



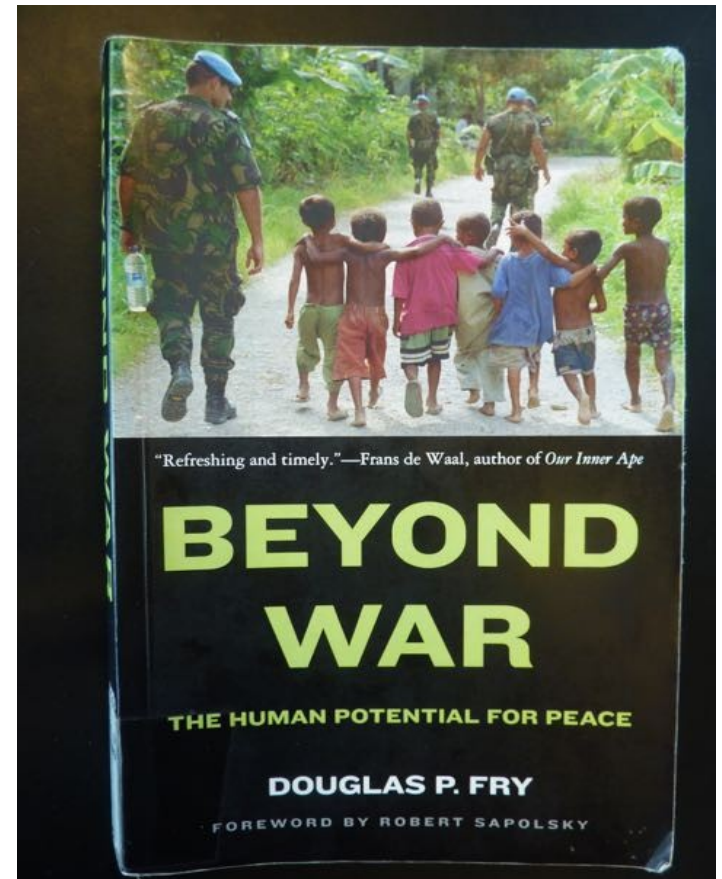
From political correctness ---

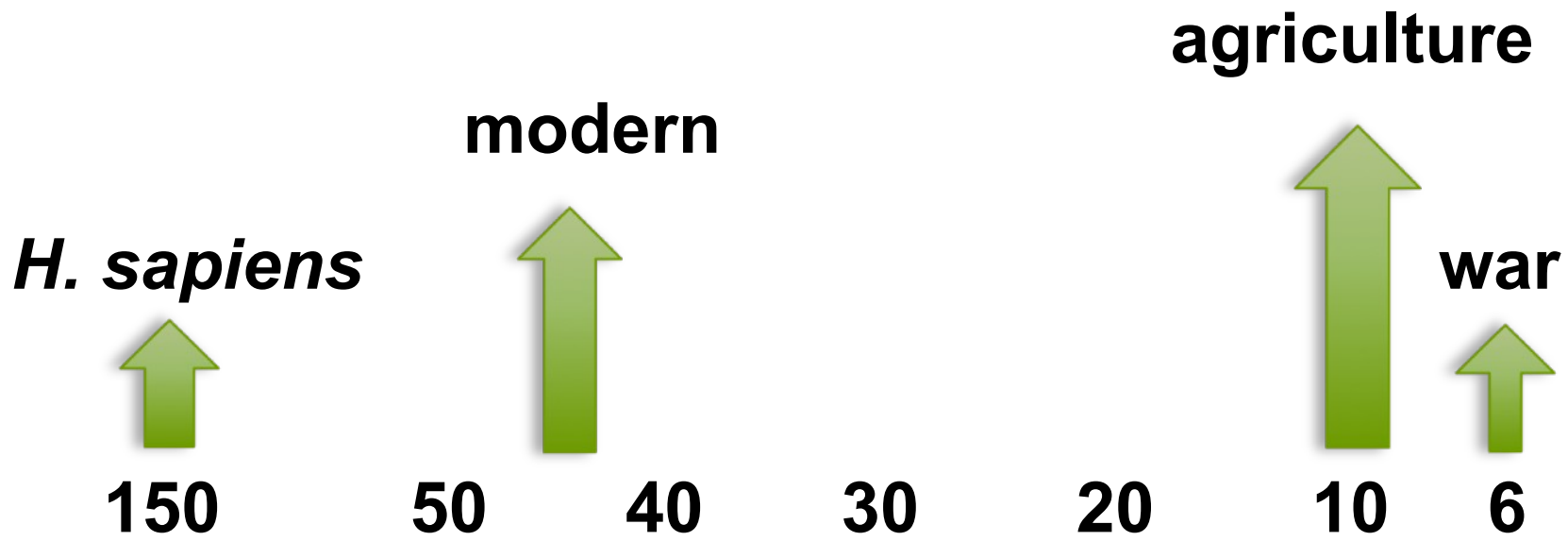
- ◆ Napoleon Chagnon 1960-70s
- ◆ Richard Wrangham 1990-2000
- ◆ Paul Tacon and Christopher Chippindale 1995
- ◆ Steven Pinker 2012



--- to scientific correctness

- ◆ Seville Statement on Violence (1986) and UNESCO
- ◆ Leslie Sponsel (1996)
- ◆ Piero P Giorgi (1999 + 2001)
- ◆ Douglas P Fry (2008)
- ◆ Douglas P Fry, ed (2013)
- ◆ Leiden's conference (2014)





TIMELINE OF HUMAN EVOLUTION

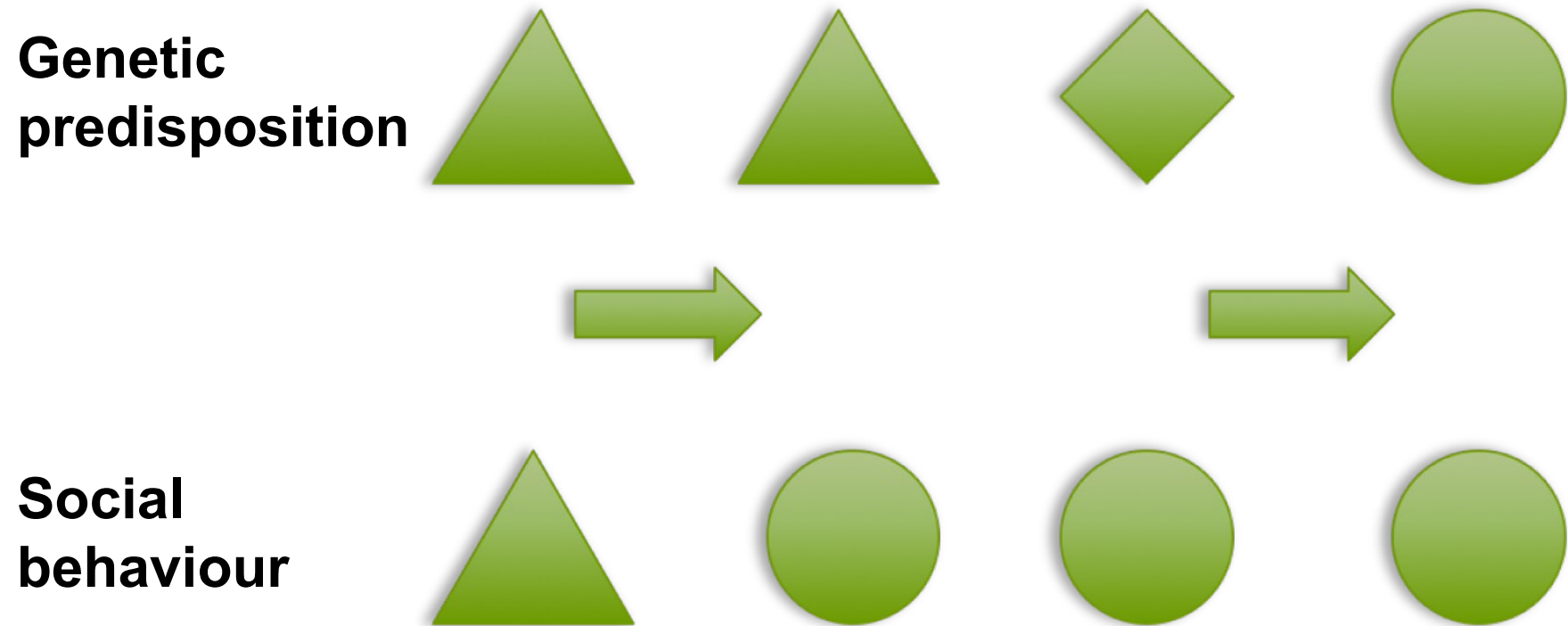
Exploring human nature

**hunter – gatherers
ancient and contemporary**

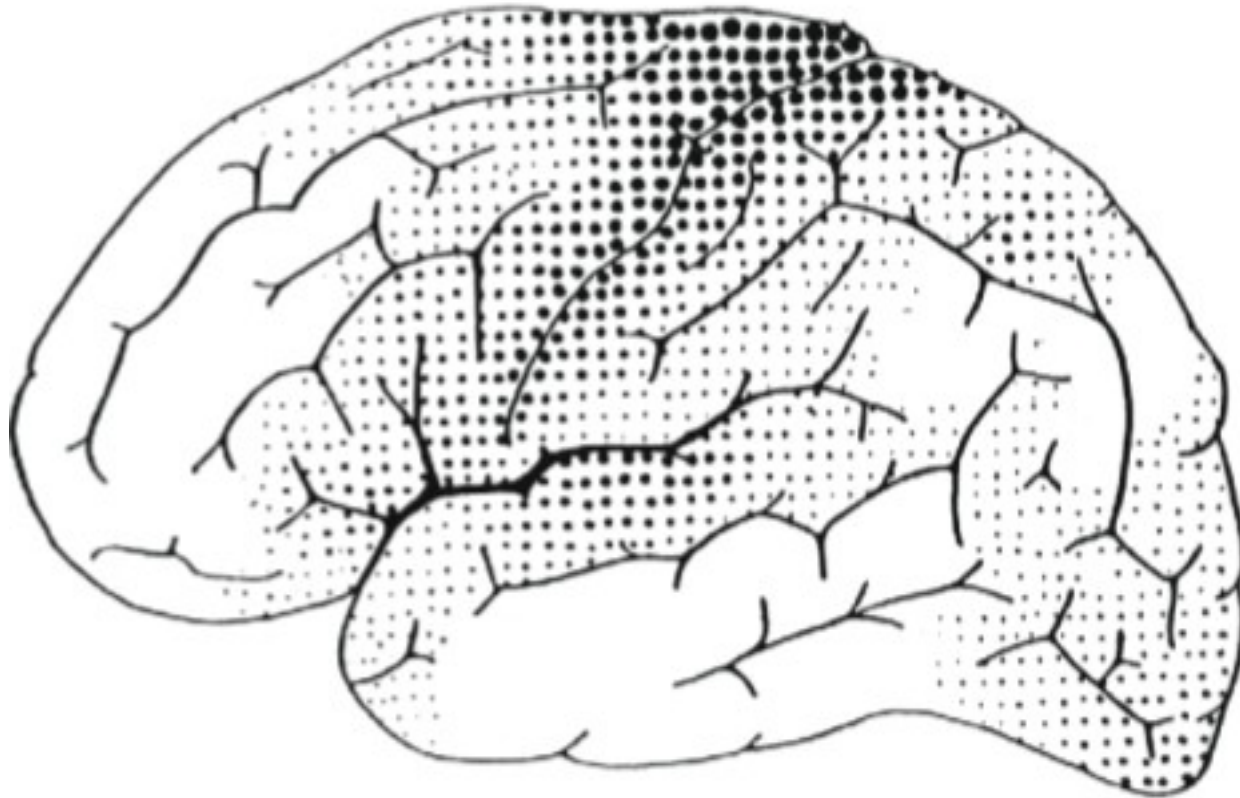
- ◆ Zoologists can define the nature of each animal species, but not that of *Homo sapiens*
- ◆ Philosophers' confusion
- ◆ Anthropologists' shyness about it (100k years silence in textbooks)
- ◆ Doug Fry et al. faced the problem at Leiden (March 2015)



Biocultural evolution a “parallel evolution”



Eight month-old human brain
Frontal lobe neurons are not connected
No social behaviour



H. sapiens



150

modern



50

40

30

20

agriculture



10

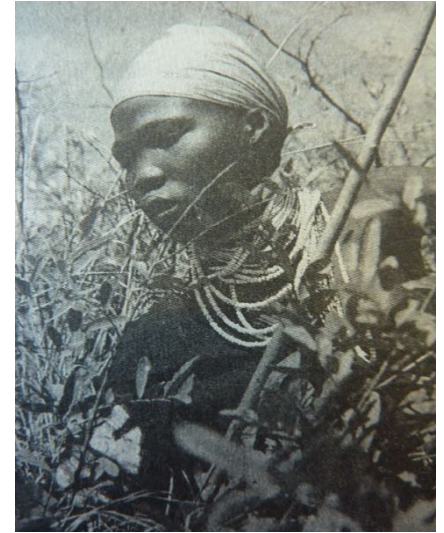
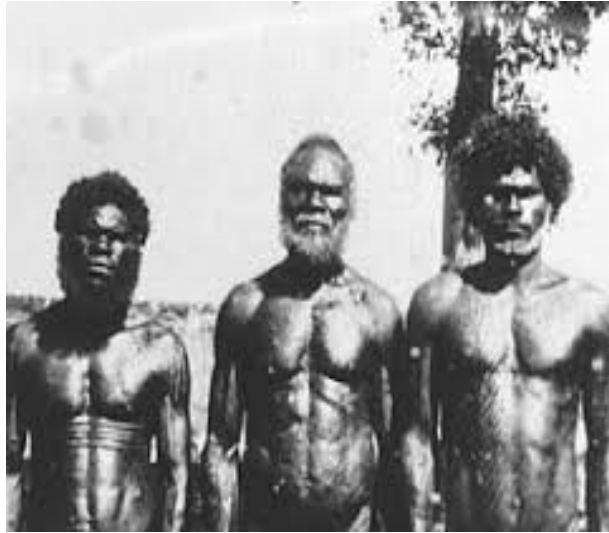
war



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HUMAN TIMELINE

NOMADIC HUNTER-GATHERERS



Social behaviour of Nomadic Hunter-Gatherers Nonviolence

- ◆ **Small, equalitarian communities. No chiefs.**
- ◆ **Women collect fruits / vegetables and hunt small animals. Men hunt large animals.**
- ◆ **Women provide daily food, give birth, look after infants until 3-4 year-old.**
- ◆ **Empathy, solidarity, cooperation, spirituality.**
- ◆ **Social skills to prevent conflicts.**

Evidence of no war

Rock art + archaeology



Contemporary nonviolent societies

- ◆ **Bruce Bonta**, Department of Anthropology, University of Alabama, Birmingham, USA
ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF PEACEFUL PEOPLE
<https://cas.uab.edu/peacefulsocieties/societies/>
- ◆ Batek (Malaysia), Bihor (India), Buid (Philippines), Chewong (Malaysia), Fipa (Tanzania), G/Wi (Botswana), Ifaluk (Caroline Islands, Pacific Ocean), Inuit (Canada), Kadar (India), Ju/Hoansi (Botswana), Ladakhi (India), Lepchas (India), Malapandaram (India), Mbuti (pygmies, NE Congo), Nubians (Egypt), Poliyans (India), Piaroa (Orinoco, Venezuela), Rural Thai (near Bangkok), Semai (Malaysia), Tahitians (French Polynesia), Tristan Island (1,800 west of Cape Town), Yanadi (India), Zapotec (Southern Mexico).

From nonviolence to “civilisation” 1

- ◆ **The first agricultural settlements were small and nonviolent.**
- ◆ **Later settled populations became larger, with job specialisation and social stratification.**
- ◆ **Bartering gave advantage to professions offering goods or services that were more desirable.**
- ◆ **Those who could predict the seasons and write calendars (the astronomers) raised to the top of society.**

From nonviolence to “civilisation” 2

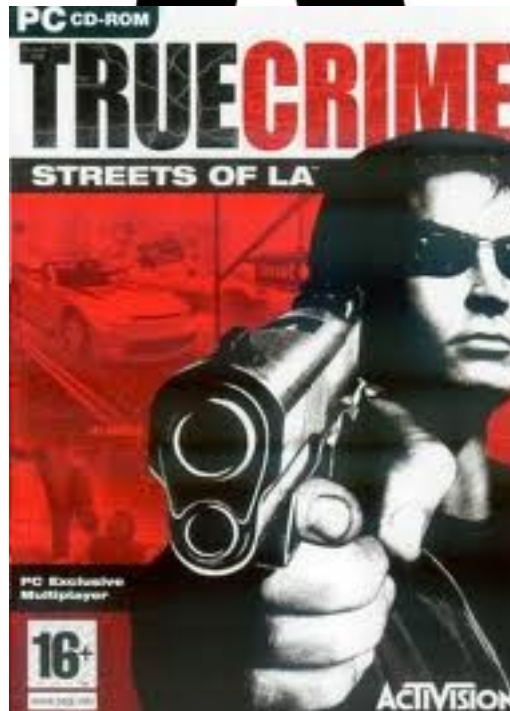
- ◆ Astronomers stated that moving stars had special powers to control weather and plant productivity and assumed the important priestly task of dealing with these “gods” to appease them.
- ◆ When large successful communities began to face the aggression from less fortunate neighbours, the high priests became also military leaders (king-priests).
- ◆ They also appointed aids to keep law and order (police) inside **a very large, anonymous, and greedy population.**

The importance of definitions

Violence

- ◆ Complex cases of social behaviour. As such it cannot be defined by genes = not inherited, not instinctive.
- ◆ **DIRECT VIOLENCE:** all cases of oppressing, or wounding, or killing **members of one's own species.**
- ◆ It is not an adapting trait = it is **selected out** by natural selection.
- ◆ **STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE**
All ideas and institutions that prevent children and adolescent **from becoming human beings.**
- ◆ Therefore, human being are currently the only animals to be violent.
- ◆ **AGGRESSION**
All animal are aggressive, humans included

Violent entertainment



The five ways to extinction

- ◆ **An accidental nuclear exchange**
- ◆ **Excessive warming of the earth**
- ◆ **Reproductive failure**
- ◆ **Excessive rate of depression**
- ◆ **Lack of fresh water**

The use of human nature

- ◆ **Now we know who we are – So what?**
- ◆ **1. Critical views about power systems**
- ◆ **2. Construction of human beings and citizens**
- ◆ **3. Reduction and elimination of violence from below**
- ◆ **4. A nonviolent revolution, slow, legal and local**

Solutions – Short term (adults)

- ◆ They have a set **minds and prejudices**. Are very reluctant to **change their life style**.
- ◆ Understand the advantages of **nonviolence** and the problem of **not living in a community**.
- ◆ Result of peace education are **limited and of a palliative nature**.



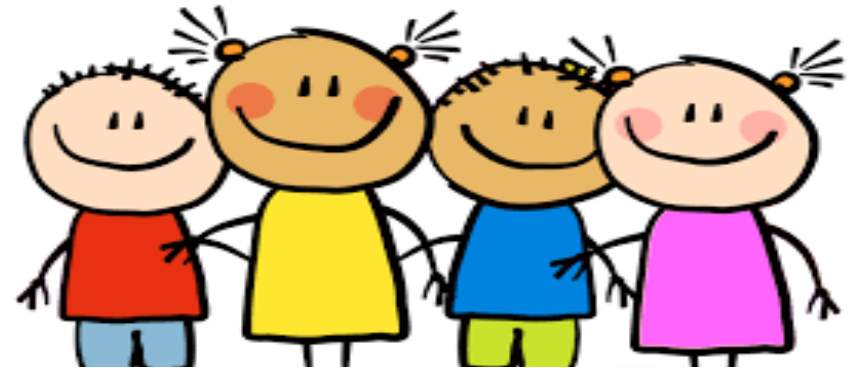
Solutions – Medium term (adolescents)

- ◆ **Maintain some idealism and are open to social innovation.**
- ◆ **Are critical of adults and of the their world.**
- ◆ **Need a community but are easy target of individualism and consumism**
- ◆ **Would love nonviolence.**



Solutions – Long term (children)

- ◆ They are very malleable. Give them a nonviolent social environment and they will spontaneously imitate it.
- ◆ In that case peace education is not necessary.
- ◆ Provide “new parents”, “new schools”, and “new communities” and all will be OK.



Decisive solution – Love infants at the age of 0 to 5

- ◆ These little geniuses acquire very easily bipedal gate, more than one language, and manual skills.
- ◆ This because at the same time **they are establishing nerve connections** for those tasks.
- ◆ If handled as advised by James W. Prescott, they produce enough oxytocin to become empathic and nonviolent.



I nostri cacciatori-raccoglitori
moderni ... se permettiamo loro
di diventare esseri umani



A nonviolent transformation is possible

