

DARWIN'S APES OR "SAVAGES" DESCENT DILEMMA, REVISITED.

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At the end of *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin mentions that he would rather have descended from a brave baboon who would risk his own life in order to save an infant from hunter's dogs than from "savages" that torture their enemies, make human sacrifices, practice infanticide, enslave their wives, know no decency and are haunted by the worst superstitions. Darwin had shocked his contemporaries insisting in our evolutionary closeness to extant pongids. Tyson (1699) had shown before him that "orangutans" (chimpanzees, actually) were anatomically closer to Humans than to monkeys. But Darwin went one important step beyond him proposing that we could share which non-Human primates mental traits, such as the altruism shown by that baboon. Darwin had known and spoken with Fuegian's during the Beagle's voyage. But he new little concerning ape's behavior: he observed an orangutan in London's zoo, but, especially, he read Brehm's *Thierleben* (1876). The founders of contemporary primatology (Köhler, Yerkes, etc.) had all but ignored Darwin's work. His ideas can now be contrasted with recent researches. In this historical presentation we compare what we know now on the extinct Fuegians and the extant *Papio* in order to contrast his view with contemporary studies and enhance his role as a forerunner of evolutionary anthropology and primatology.

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