

Anthropology U3a Meeting Minutes Tuesday 14th March 2023

Present: Sue (Host), Jane, Anne, Madeleine (Deputy Chair)

It had been agreed at the previous meeting that **Chapter 7 of the Anthropology for Dummies** book would be read and then discussed at this meeting.

The topic of **chapter 7** is **Homo sapiens sapiens, our Biological Species**. Madeleine summarised each of the sub sections, stopping regularly for any comments or observations to be made.

The areas covered were as follows:

Anatomical and behavioural changes,

Africa - the cradle of Humanity, fossil discoveries, dispersal across the globe, differing theories such as multiregional continuity theory and replacement theory,

Early origins of **language** development –

Dunbar's theory links increasing group sizes as a likely consequence from social grooming to language, origins of the mind and the evolution of consciousness,

Donald's model of episodic consciousness tracing development – short term small space bubble, mimetic longer memories simple vocalisations and gestures, mythic use and narrative to organise volume and diversity of ideas, theoretic seeking natural rather than supernatural explanations for the world,

Mithen's model outlines 4 intelligences – social, technical to manipulate tools, linguistic for complex communication, natural history to understand cause and effect relationships,

Roots of **Myth** – **Donald's** theory shows that myths were to assist with memory crowded minds, spoken myth leave little trace, but evidenced from cave art, 4 main myth types seen are shamanic voyages, hunting magic, narrative parables, rites of passage,

Roots of **Ritual** – **Rappaport** theorises that rituals evolved to remind humans of their shared core beliefs, evidenced by complex burial sites and organised religion seen in pyramids and temples,

Roots of **Symbolism** – 2 types theorised – shallow symbolism where only one meaning can be meant and deep symbolism where many different things can be meant such as “the person is a snake in the grass”, this reveals a capacity for metaphor which can convey complex thoughts.

Discussion and additional information was shared throughout the meeting.

To provide structure, the chapters in this book could be followed sequentially (from chapter 7), each month, to be read before the meeting for discussion. This would allow for members to know what is planned ahead of time. It was agreed that **the next meeting on 11 April** would follow a similar format, following the themes of **chapter 8**, with discussion points.