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to accompany the installation*

‘Life in the Anthropocene epoch’

‘The importance of the sensory
and the cognitive, the body
and the mind’

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Human Life

Survival:

The human body has physiological needs which must be met in order to survive. The most fundamental of these needs are food and water, but shelter, warmth, a safe environment and access to sanitation and medicine also contribute to survival. Human Greed.

Individuality/ personality:

Humans are defined by their actions and thoughts which create a unique personality for each individual human. Personality may be influenced by the upbringing of the individual, their current or past environments/ experiences and their genetics.

Civilisation:

Humans participating in a functioning society often have a specific role which will involve the individual exchanging their time in order to meet their essential physiological and psychological needs. The uptake of different roles by individual contributes to the running of society and means that each individual is not self sufficient but reliant upon society for survival.

Entertainment:

Humans partake in activities which are not vital to their physiological survival. This may include participation in religion, art, sport, music, leisurely activities and the consumption of mind altering substances such as alcohol. Humans take part in these activities because not all of everyone's energy is needed solely for survival.

Consciousness:

Humans have an awareness of themselves and of others. Our ability to think and feel makes us aware and emotionally responsive to the world around us. Imagination allows us to problem solve and gives us choices in how we navigate the world. Anxiety and compassion help to create a consciousness which gives us self-nihilating characteristics (which is a unique trait of humans).

Relationships:

Humans have a wide variety of relationships with family, friends, partners and associates. Most humans need lots of contact with other humans in order to stay mentally stable and happy.

Status:

The status or position of a human can either be ascribed (the individual is born with it) or is achieved through an individuals actions. Status can be dependant on gender, ethnicity, occupation, monetary wealth, physical abilities, beauty, intelligence or occupation. The context in which an individual is placed within is also important in defining an individuals status as different contexts may offer different criteria by which status is judged.

Possessions

Humans have possessions, objects or artefacts which belong to them. Tim Kasser, psychology professor at Knox College "the more people are focused on those materialistic values, the more they say that money, image, status, possessions are important to them, the less happy they are, the more depressed they are, the more anxious they are. Psychological problems go up as materialistic values go up."

Technology:

Humans have developed technologies which help us to achieve things that we wouldn't be able to do using only our own body. Important technologies throughout history include the knife, the plough, the abacus, gunpowder, the printer, electricity, the motorcar and the computer.

Processing Information:

Humans receive and process information through sensory experience and cognition. Utilitarianism philosophy suggests that a judgement on whether an action is right or wrong is based upon the whether we experience pleasure or pain.

Human physiology:

Many humans continue to experience an improved quality of life due to advances in medicine, sanitation and economic developments. However, humanity continues to suffer from physical ailments and mental health problems.

The economy:

Humanity is living in an increasingly centralised and global economy which is still being driven by capitalism and the principles of free trade. The only notion of progress is an economic one – that of economic growth. There is an increasingly unequal distribution of wealth, the top 1% of the population is benefitting financially from a growing economy. Land and animals are commodities which can legally be owned and traded.

Technology:

The internet has given rise to the third industrial revolution which has developed through the ability to instantly share information all over the world. The development of computers has drastically changed the way that we spend our time - with many of us now spending vast amounts of our time in front of computer screens or televisions. Computers have also lead to the mass automation of work previously done manually by humans. Genetic engineering using CRISPR has given scientists the ability to edit genomes more easily than ever. There is research being done to grow human organs in animals.

Human Life in 2017

Politics:

A liberal, free-trading and open bordered world is dwindling in popularity against the forces of 'populism' which has been driven by a wish for a less globalised and fairer economy which does not only favour the rich. This has led to events such as the UK voting to leave the European Union and the election of Donald Trump in the USA. There is mass human migration from the Middle East and Africa into Europe as a result of on-going wars and economic migrants seeking a better life. The role of the USA as the world super power is being challenged as China, Russia and India reposition themselves as leaders of the world.

Choice:

Humans have more choice than ever before in the products we buy, the food we eat, the entertainment which we partake in, the role we have in society, the clothes we wear, the relationships that we have. This is perhaps the main difference in the Anthropocene epoch. As globalisation extends its reach, people will have access to the same range of goods, services and cultures as everyone else around the planet.

Information:

We are very informed about ourselves and other humans; so much information is available and given to us.

The Anthropocene epoch:

Human activity has been a dominant influence on climate and the environment, which has led to some geologists claiming that the Holocene epoch (which began about 11,000 years ago) has ended and we are living in the Anthropocene epoch. The ecological systems and geological structures of the physical world are in crisis as humans have created mass environmental destruction and pollution which has led to the 6th great extinction and rising temperatures.

Break down of the status quo:

A constant state of flux and lack of stability has been created by the developments in technology, the current economic system, the environmental crisis, the humanitarian crisis in many parts of the world, political upheaval and a lack of cohesive identity amongst individuals. This has also given rise to an increased awareness and divisions of opinions about these issues.