

## **The Family**

DiPs at *The Blue Mugge*, Mon 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016, 19.45 – 21.15...

Notes based mainly on Raymond Williams' *Keywords* 1976, and *New Keywords* 2005

1. We'll start with the word '**family**'. What does it mean? It came into English about 600 years ago from French and Latin from words meaning 'household' and 'servant'. 'A group of blood-relations and servants living in one house'. A few more quotes from Williams on the way the word developed... inc: 'Family in the Authorized version of the Bible... a large kin group ...virtually equivalent to tribe..'. In human history the family has always been crucially important but can the same be said of 'tribes'?
2. **Family History** is now a boom industry – why?
3. What is it about **genetic connections** to the past that appeals to so many people? How far back can we in our group go with the history of our surnames? Is discovering that some relative was born in the 17<sup>th</sup> century interesting if that is all you know about the person?
4. If a person is **adopted** and has no knowledge about their natural parents, will exploring the history of their adoptive parents be a satisfying substitute - or are the genes all important?
5. **Contemporary big issues:** quick review of the following:
  - i) More cohabitation and divorce
  - ii) Serial monogamy...
  - iii) More sole living
  - iv) Growth of child-free marriages
  - v) 'Multiculturalism' - arranged marriages etc
  - vi) Same-sex marriages
6. A focus on **grandparents** (From *Mugge* discussion 2009, facts – in Britain there are - 14 million grandparents; 1.5 million are under-50; 300,000 children are being raised by grandparents; several million grandparents look after their grandchildren for 5 days a week; 1 million children are unable to see their grandchildren because of family separation. Many children have more than four grandparents (step families) "The state of grandparents' rights is terrible" says a US family lawyer who frequently goes to the courts representing grandparents seeking visitations or custody.
7. **Dysfunctional families?** The Royal Family, The Labour Family.... All families, in all times, have been dysfunctional in some way or other?
8. Families in **Literature and Situation Comedy** - any insights into the nature and history of family relationships? For example: King Lear and his daughters; Hamlet and his mother; The Trotters; The Steptoes; The Mainwarings; Mrs Pyke and 'Uncle Arthur'; Frasier with brother and father...

Finishing, if we get this far, with two quotes:

9. 'If married couples did not live together, happy marriages would be more frequent' Nietzsche
10. 'There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage' Luther