Lecture 24: Language & Symbolism

Sumerian clay tablets
6000 YA
Cave paintings
Tools
Fossils

Fossil Evidence

Endocasts

‘Language Centers’ in the Brain

Broca’s area
Wernicke’s area
Vocal Tracks
- High position
- Low position
- Laitman et al.
- Basicranium
- Neanderthals?
- Hyoid bone
  (Kebara, Israel)

Hypoglossal Canal
- Australopithecines
  and early Homo
  ape pattern
- Neanderthals and
  later archaics
  modern pattern

Tools and Language
What caused language to evolve?

Archaeology, brain size, position of larynx
Prehistoric Art

Paleolithic Art in Europe
- Lascaux Cave (17,000 YA)
- Chauvet (32,400 YA)
- Longgu carved antler (13,000 YA)

Interpretations of Cave Art
Interpretations of Prehistoric Art

- Henri Breuil: “hunting magic”
- Leroi-Gourhan: art a reflection of society
- Shamanistic

Origins of Upper Paleolithic Art

- Bacho Kiro, Bulgaria
- Tata, Hungary
- Pech de l’Aze, France

Ch 32: The Evolution of Language

- What is the relative importance of the different lines of fossil evidence in revealing past language capabilities?
- How would one test the idea that conformity of stone-tool production implies the imposition of social rules, and therefore the existence of language?
- What type of artistic expression provides the most persuasive evidence of language?
- If human language is discontinuous with primate vocalizations and communications, how might it have arisen?
Lewin Ch 33: Art in Prehistory

- In what ways are modern interpretations of paleolithic art most likely to be biased?
- How would one test the hypothesis that, in some cases at least paleolithic art is a form of hunting magic?
- What possible interpretations are there for the relative rarity of carnivore images in wall art compared with the extensive use of carnivore teeth in body ornamentation?
- Can the art of another culture ever be completely understood by those outside it?