



Monday 3rd September 2018
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

There were 13 members of the Café Society group present at this meeting and apologies had been received from Caroline R, Denise M, and Ken C.

There was a short discussion about the collection of money for drinks and the group unanimously decided that all members should contribute £1.50 when attending a Café Society session. Any additional revenue generated by those who do not desire a tea or coffee will be donated to The Lion Hotel staff in gratitude for the free use of The Tudor Bar room. The mandatory contribution scheme will commence at next month's meeting in October.

The group wishes to pass on their best regards to Libby P and Vivienne B kindly agreed to send a card on behalf of the members.

A summary of the meeting's discussions follows.

Mike S

o Discussion Topics

Should the NHS stop using homeopathy and other so-called alternative treatments?

- There was some confusion as to whether the NHS *does* offer homeopathic treatments and no specific examples were given
- The science of homeopathy was described as the dilution of water with microscopic traces of active elements
- The holistic approach of homeopathy was generally welcomed by the group, who felt that modern healthcare can be too quick and compartmentalised without looking at the bigger picture
- Reflexology, cranial manipulation and herbalism were mentioned as other examples of alternative health treatments
- France was cited as a western first-world country where homeopathy is more widely embraced
- A question was raised that if the NHS is all-encompassing, should it not include any or all alternative types of treatment? The response to this was that the group members felt that the treatments on offer should be measurable
- Concerns were also raised that western medical staff are often over-influenced by pharmaceutical companies (whose financial interests may lie in prolonged treatment rather than cures)
- Further concerns were raised about pharmaceutical companies carrying-out drug tests and studies, as some group members felt that this should be conducted by the government
- As a direct answer to the discussion question, the vast majority of the group thought that the NHS should not be paying for homeopathic treatments

Is it morally right for Israelis to shoot unarmed Palestinian protesters?

- The group felt that this question had fundamental flaws and could possibly be interpreted as anti-Semitic
- Group members reworded the topic to read 'Is it morally right for *anyone* to shoot unarmed protesters', to which their unanimous answer was 'no'... although it happens all the time

Are all religions hard on women?

- 'Yes', was the gut-reaction from the group
- The Quakers were quickly mentioned as a progressive religious group and with input from members who were familiar with the organisation, it was believed that Quakers have little or no gender bias in their structure or beliefs
- It was pointed out that Christianity is heavily patriarchal and most group members could not envisage a female pope in the near future
- Paganism, surprisingly, was mentioned as a religion that didn't have a bias towards either gender

What can persuade people to act altruistically?

- 'Would it truly be altruistic if one needed to be persuaded?', was a group member's initial observation. And with that thought, the question was rephrased as 'What can be done to *encourage* people to act altruistically?'
- A group member explained that the highest level of giving (according to the Jewish philosopher Maimonides) is when nobody knows about the act of kindness
- It was pointed out that the meaning of charity has evolved and that altruism originally involved some form of risk to the do-gooder, much like the story of the Good Samaritan
- On a pessimistic conclusion, it was generally felt that our society is simply not geared towards altruism

Is it ever acceptable to be compliant in capital punishment?

- The group members found it difficult to draw a line between capital punishment and acts of war, targeted-bombing, drone killings and espionage
- No group members were in favour of capital punishment
- The last execution in the UK was in 1964, however the death penalty still exists for crimes of treason, piracy with violence and arson in royal dockyards

Should there be a maximum salary?

- Although there was support for this concept in a theoretic sense, group members could not see how such a system could be universally applied. Multiples of a starting wage could be adopted in large organisations or the public sector but it was felt that the private sector could easily take advantage of such a situation
- The complications of expenses and job perks were highlighted and it was believed that these issues would be too difficult to control under a maximum salary scheme
- This prompted a group member to come up with the delightful suggestion of the day, 'It would be nice if greed was an offence'

Universal basic income - how is it doing in Finland?

- A group member reported that trials in Finland have been receiving unjust bad-press but are still continuing as planned and results are expected to be published next year. It was also reported that two trials are taking place in areas in Scotland
- A large proportion of the group thought that a basic income scheme would provide a good safety net for individuals in society and greatly help with the simplification of welfare distribution

- It was explained that The Green Party have been promoting such a policy (commonly known as Citizen's Income) for many years
- There were concerns about whether a universal basic income would completely replace the benefits system and whether additional benefits would still be needed on top of a basic income
- There were reservations about a universal basic income from some group members but most thought that such a system would give people the incentive and opportunity to be entrepreneurial

What is the alternative to capitalism?

- It was explained that nearly all the world's countries now operate capitalist or semi-capitalist systems
- Cuba and North Korea (both one-party socialist republics) were cited as two exceptions
- Few group members were particularly supportive of capitalism but no viable alternatives were brought to the table
- One group member firmly believed that capitalism is unstable and will eventually implode
- There were suggestions of a kind of mixed-economy, an approach to governance that was seen in the UK following the Second World War

If there was one thing you could change in your life (right now), what would it be?

- The group members were not very forthcoming with their admissions and most of the discussion revolved around the tidying of homes

Is it a good thing to anthropomorphise your pet?

- Group members understood that we can become emotionally-attached to pets but felt that it is important to keep a balance
- Keeping an animal happy and in reasonably natural conditions were deemed to be good guidelines

○ Future Topics

The group spent the last 10 minutes of the session agreeing upon questions for discussion at the next meeting. Below is the list of topics that have been chosen. Hot topical issues should be emailed to the [group coordinator](#) prior to the next meeting.

- Should car-use be rationed (e.g. to a family/house size) and should it be forbidden in the town centre?
- Should organ donation be opt-in or opt-out?
- Do you feel you are English, British or European?
- Is there a safe alcohol limit?
- Should gambling be advertised?
- Should food sizes be dictated by government?
- Should we throw away our televisions?
- Has the BBC lost its way?
- Where is our nation now, politically speaking?

○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on **Monday 1st October 2018** at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room).

