



Monday 1st June 2015
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

- **Apologies**
Marilyn and Vivienne sent their apologies.
- **Introduction**
Helen kindly chaired the meeting and took the minutes.
- **Discussion Topics**
A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

How should we deal with criminals?

This topic generated a lot of feeling. We started by trying to decide the meaning of criminality, but as this would be a topic in its own right, we decided to talk just about those who had broken the criminal law as it stands.

One of the major ways of dealing with criminals is to put them in prison. This could serve one of four purposes:

1. to protect others in society
2. to act as a deterrent
3. to aid rehabilitation
4. to be a punishment

There was general agreement that we, as a group, have been very lucky in our lives, whereas many of those in prison may have a very different background and may also face discrimination. Racial discrimination in particular was mentioned.

There is much evidence, particularly from America where there is a very high prison population, that prison just does not work either as a deterrent, or as an aid to rehabilitation. Not only is the re-offending rate very high, prisons can institutionalize, act to reinforce hatreds, exacerbate drug habits, and facilitate the sharing of skills needed by criminals.

It was agreed that there must be respect and compassion for prisoners, although this can sometimes be nigh on impossible.

We need to change the social environment so that people are valued, and particularly change the idea of 'good' and 'bad' poor. But how? An example needs to be set by those in authority. It was also pointed out that criminality must be kept out of the police force itself.

It was agreed that sometimes there is no alternative to prison, but when this is the case it should as far as possible produce a 'good' result, but this would cost a lot of money and time.

Other ways of dealing with criminals already exist and could feasibly be used to greater effect e.g. fines, community service, and face to face meetings with victims

We should deal with offenders or potential offenders on a personal level, but it was agreed that society at the moment is not yet willing to engage fully with this.

No-one was in favour of the death sentence.

This discussion could have gone on much longer and there is much scope for further debate.

What happens after death?

We agreed to talk only about what might happen to humans (as opposed to other animals) after death. There are many current beliefs, even within Christianity, and beliefs in reincarnation differ even between Buddhists.

There seems to be a great need in many humans to believe in an afterlife, and there is evidence that extremely early people already felt this way.

It was also pointed out that these ideas may have partly been introduced as a control measure, in order to ensure 'good' behaviour in this life, with the promise of a reward in the next.

The key question appears to be whether humans have some sort of soul or spirit which is separate from the body.

There is a strong feeling in many humans (as quoted in the discussion), 'what is me is more than just my body'. This of course poses the question or how and when the spirit enters the body, and also exactly what it is.

Interestingly, only one of our group believed in a continuation of some sort after death. Others believed that we live on in memories and stories

One member is pleased that there is no life after death as by then they will have had enough. One even quoted 'thank God for death!'. Most seemed to be happy merely to decay and return to natural cycles.

- **Discussion Topics for the Next Meeting**

The subjects up for discussion at our next meeting (July 2015) will be:

- **What are the pressures on us today?**
- **Can you express yourself with 'emoticons'?**
and time permitting...
- **Why is society becoming more secular?**

- **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on **Monday 6th July 2015 at 1000hrs at The Lion Hotel.**



Links:

[Shrewsbury U3A Website](#)
[Café Discussion Webpage](#)
[Shrewsbury U3A Facebook Group](#)