



Monday 3rd August at 1000hrs
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

- **Introduction**

Marilyn and Judith sent their apologies. 12 members attended.

Vivienne and Harold highlighted the following U3A workshops to be held at Birmingham:

- Mon 5th Oct – Group leaders' workshop (Viv is going to this one)
- Mon 9th Nov – Networks' workshop (Harold is going to this one)
- Mon 23rd Nov – The constitution and committees (Viv is going to this one)

Only 2 people from Shrewsbury can go to each workshop. If you would like to go, please let Viv or Harold know. The travel by train and a buffet lunch will be paid for by your U3A.

- **Discussion Topics**

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

Does a God have to be all-powerful?

- Historically, early Gods were certainly not all-perfect as they were open to bribery and demanded sacrifices – sometimes human ones.
In Mediaeval times power was everything – winning armies were proof that their God was the true/best God and converted the losing side as a result.
- Throughout time, humans have indulged in what philosophers call 'cognitive dissonance' in which people thank God for sparing someone from a tragedy but not blaming God for the harm done to others.
- Most believers would claim that God is all-powerful, yet Pam very neatly pointed out that Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, seemingly unable to help himself, saying, 'My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me?' Since Jesus Christ *is* God (according to the tenet of the Holy Trinity), he is thus telling us that God is not omnipotent.
- But does God *have* to be all-powerful? I'm afraid our discussion lost its shape somewhat here and we fell to the usual discussion of 'Does God exist?' provoking instances of near-death experiences, which others dismissed with a scientific explanation. God will always be believed in, according to at least half of the members present, but there again, there are belief systems, like

Buddhism which promote a spiritual life but which have no supreme, all-powerful figure.

What are the ethics of holidaying abroad?

- The present situation in Greece was examined, and after inputs from many members, we felt we had to state first of all that Greece's problems were their own fault: Being economical with the truth about the state of their economy before they even entered the EU, allotting over-generous and very early pensions to public employees, encouraging a climate of non-payment of taxes, and not having any national health service. So, sure enough, they would like lots of tourists bringing money into the country but these deep faults must be addressed and rectified first. However, we all realise that if we cast Greece aside, we lose a buffer-state between the West and the Islamic East. Greece may even have resort to an alliance with Russia if refused help from the West.
- So why go abroad? Joy told us of two occasions back in the forties/fifties when she and her family went to Switzerland and on another occasion, to Kenya. In Switzerland, they were astonished to discover items on sale in the shops at cheap prices, imported from the UK, thus discovering in Switzerland that there were people in the UK paid pitiful wages, and in Kenya, that it was a scary feeling to be the only white person in a black crowd, and from that, understanding something of what it must feel like to be a lone black face in a white crowd.
- Phil was once in Gambia, where a native tourist guide told him that the best thing the tourists could do was to stay at home. When pressed, he explained that any money brought in by tourism was used on services and comforts mainly used by the tourists. After that, the children of Gambia discovered that they could gain more money by begging than by working, next they discovered that they could make more profit by stealing than by begging, and that's why tourists would help other countries by staying at home.
- Add to those experiences, the heinous effect of western visitors to Thailand, on the women and even the children, then we saw that we westerners were best kept at home.
- From a personal point of view, members had few 'bucket-wish' countries they wished to visit: Europe (for the history and architecture), Iceland (for the natural wonders) and Scotland -which may soon count as 'abroad' too!

Should your last will and testament be the final word?

- Shocking news last week of a mother, whose will was contested after her death because she expressly cut out her estranged daughter and gave all her money to charities. The two reasons given for over-riding the terms of the will were; that a parent has a duty to support her children, and that the departed had had no connection with those charities before.
- This was at first shocking because we all thought (with the exception of Phil, our resident lawyer) that we can leave our money to whomsoever we wish. However, for the last 40 years there has been provision to change the terms of a will where there is a spouse or children who need support.
- In this case, the daughter is now 52, so should the clause about supporting 'children' still apply? And who said you had to have previous connections to charities before you can leave your money to them?
- Yes, it was mean of the mother to deprive her daughter of her inheritance, but we were all convinced that the law allowed us to do just that if we wished. What

then. Is the point of making a will if it can be altered or ignored? Dominic Lawson, in his Times column described how his own daughter was left a bequest by Princess Diana, but the executors of the will had it changed to cut out all the godchildren of Diana, and suppressed the letter written by Diana and attached to the will to explain why she had decided to bequeath item to her godchildren.

- Phil advised us all to use a good solicitor – not to succumb to the salespeople on the way out of B&Q on a Wednesday who target we oldies by asking if we have made our will.

Clinical Drug Trials

- Harold read out a report on clinical drug trials which revealed that trials on new drugs are largely carried out by the chemical companies themselves, who have no interest in announcing any results which are not favourable to the drug's success.
- An example of what can happen under this system is Prozac. It was brought out in the eighties and decades later is now being connected with a higher rate of suicides among those who take it.
- Another example is the government spending millions on stockpiling a drug said to prevent influenza, only for that drug to have just been declared ineffective.
- The group agreed that we take too many drugs anyway and applauded Pam (again!) for not taking any prescription drugs at all. However, we had to concede that sometimes a drug is a life-saver, as in Phil's case, so we shouldn't be too dismissive of medicines.

Should the NHS pay for Alternative Medicines?

- Firstly, what are 'alternative medicines'? Acupuncture, reflexology, homeopathy were all mentioned. It was felt that 'food supplements' vitamins etc., should be bought by the user.
- Next, all these alternative medicines should be trialled rigorously and if they are found to work, then yes, they should be on the NHS.
- What about the 'placebo' effect, which is very strong we all said? Mike reminded us that this is taken into account with control groups when testing the material.
- The only thing we were unsure about was whether food supplements are really 'alternative medicine', or whether they are just food.

● **Future Discussion Topics**

- Should there be a minimum/living wage?
- How do we deal with the immigrant 'crisis' in Calais?
- Should the government or the UN develop new antibiotics?
- Should the House of Lords be abolished?
- Has science improved our lives?
- Do you believe in life-long education?
- Should all drugs be legalised?
- What is spirituality?

● **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on **Monday 7th September at 1000hrs** at The Lion Hotel. The topics for this discussion will be posted on the Café Society webpage nearer the time.

There is no U3A monthly meeting at Theatre Severn in August, so why not come along to the next U3A 'Coffee Time' instead? Coffee Time is at the Beaconsfield Club on Friday 7th August at 10.30 – 12.30 am. Pop in and see who's there, bring your laptop/tablet to ask Mike any niggling questions you have, chat to others from different groups and help to welcome new members.

U3A COFFEE TIME

Take a break from your shopping
Pop in for a tea or coffee and general
Shrewsbury U3A chit chat

Art Appreciation, Birdwatching, Bridge 1, Bridge Society 1 (Discussion), Chess, Cinema, Classical Music Appreciation, Course Fishing, Creative Writing, Digital Photography, DIY, Drawing/Painting, Economics, Family History 1 (experienced), Family History 2, Family History 4, Family History 5, French Beginners Pleasure, Gardening 1, Gardening 2, Golf Croquet, History 2, History of Art, History of Science & Invention, Jazz Beginners, Jazz Appreciation, Just Walking, Knitting, Local History, Looking at Art, Lunch Club (Men's), Mah Jong, Luncheon Club 2, Mah Jong, Modern Art History, Music Appreciation 1, Music Appreciation 2, Nature Watch, Philosophy A, Philosophy B, Philosophy C, Philosophy for Beginners, Poetry Reading, Poetry Appreciation, Poetry Workshop, Reading, Reading 2, Scrabble, Shrewsbury Hill Strollers, Singing for Fun

THE FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

10.30am to 12.30am
The Beaconsfield Club
Meadow Place opposite the bus station

