

KINGSTON PHILOSOPHY CAFÉ UPDATE December 2009



December Philosophy Café - 2 thought experiments, one on free will, one expressing a sceptical view of planning for sustainability, kept half a dozen groups talking animatedly for the evening, possibly to the detriment of planning for KPC 2010. We even had an opportunity to sum up, as we had the café to ourselves.

What next? Topics proposed at the meeting, in no particular order, apart from the first 4 which got one or more ticks: John Rawls' Theory of Justice; Free will; Peter Singer; Collective responsibility. "The purpose of life is to avoid boredom."; Why?; Schopenhauer; The notion of "self"; Sustainability requires living with the natural world's capital – the bonus would be a more fulfilling life; Choice is very partial, relative and dependent on degree of knowledge and understanding; Free will; Which ideas, assumptions and practices current today might our descendents come to regard with incredulity?; Do philosophers ever achieve anything?; What is the point of philosophy?; Free speech.

Some of these are very promising and we'll do our best to cover them. Some we have discussed before, though there's much to be said for revisiting them. And some are so specific that probably only the anonymous person who suggested them could lead on them – so we await volunteers.

These topics were suggested in December 2008:

Identity, consciousness, memory
Philosophy of History – how do we know about the past?
Philosophy of Science, Life and death issues,
Environment / Why should we care about future generations? Post-modernism, Literary influences, The Good Society / society's values, Crime, What is education for? Religions – are they relevant?
Materialism, Free will, choice, determinism, British values, Business ethics, Spinoza
Sartre, Music, What is time? The influence of the Enlightenment, Continental philosophy, Philosophy from other cultures / countries, What has philosophy achieved? Reply to relativism, Democracy, Ethics of sport, Nietzsche,
Heidegger, Appearance and reality, Philosophy of language, Information about various philosophical areas, Drama, What is our nature? How should we live?

And this is what we talked about in 2009:

"Are you the same person you were ten years ago?"
The Good Society
Dr Mark Vernon on "Philosophy and the Art of Living"
"Trolleyology, space travel, justice and equality"
Steven Connor on "Writing, Thinking, Playing and Laughing"
A philosophical conversation about theatre and drama with Stephen Unwin, Artistic Director of the Rose Theatre
Contemporary environmental issues +
Environmental ethics: "It might cost the Earth – but why should we care?"
"Philosophy Poetically"
"What is this thing called love?"
"Guilt: A Philosophical Exposé"
2 thought experiments – on free will and environment

So we did cover some of your suggestions, at least!

KPC Thursdays coming up

■ **Thursday January 7, 6.00pm – 7.25ish** in the Rose Culture Café: Barrie Selwyn, Principal of Kingston Adult Education, on "Nietzsche, a personal view". Nietzsche (pictured, right) is a fascinating and controversial philosopher who should provoke a lively discussion. He is also very quotable, as can be seen by googling "Nietzsche quotations". Barrie recommends advance reading of the 1873 Nietzsche essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" and other essays and extracts that are now at http://www.e-voice.org.uk/kingstonphilosophycafe/files/index?folder_id=3640678, and if you want an overview and introduction http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche is not a bad place to look. Free.



■ **Thursday February 4, 6.00pm – 7.25ish** in the Rose Culture Café: Ken Cottell on "The wood from the trees" – exploring the frequently discussed and never quite resolved topic of free will, a very apt follow-up to the January discussion on Nietzsche and to one of our December thought-experiments, but don't worry if the subject is completely new to you - everyone is welcome to come along and join in. Free.

■ **Other 2010 KPC dates for your diary: 4th March, 1st April...** – thus far all on the first Thursday evening of the month. We hope that 4th March will be a Think-in-Kingston event.

See www.kingstonphilosophycafe.org.uk for more information about these events, including occasional changes of time, venue or topic. The further ahead, the more likely things are to change!