

Notes from the Radlett U3A Philosophy Group 17th January 2013

The subject for discussion was the quote from Albert Einstein “The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”

At the start our facilitator, Christopher Langdon, reminded us that the group is intended to stretch our minds and encourage critical thinking; that there are no silly questions, but equally, no answers. We were encouraged to give each other space and respect. Philosophy was suggested to be a questioning of accepted beliefs, between science and religion.

During a general discussion the following points were aired: -

- It takes courage to stand alone in a world where a whistle blower is often perceived as a traitor.
- As children many were taught not to make waves and not to stick our head above the parapet.
- There has always been evil and we are all a mixture of good and evil.
- The vocal minority appear to overpower the silent majority.
- Those with money and influence can override the law.
- Fear of repercussions on those we love, or the need to stay in employment, may keep us silent.
- The breakdown of community leads to us not knowing who can be trusted and who is a danger.
- The majority seem indifferent to the fate of others
- Extremist organisations play on justifiable opinions and concerns to gain support.
- Individuals have always come forward to stand against injustice such as slavery, the Nazis and apartheid.
- Martin Heidegger believed that we can live an authentic existence if we make our individual choices rather than an unauthentic existence, going with the flow.
- Jean Paul Sartre said “We are cursed – we are free to choose, but we have to choose”
- It is easier to sleep at night if you do what you believe to be right.
- What is considered right and wrong changes with time and culture. We have to make each decision based on current advice and our own instincts.
- Organisations such as Childline have made a difference.
- Social networking has empowered the individual.

Christopher finished the discussion with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi “Be the change you want to see in the world”