



MEDSOC DISCUSSION GROUP

MICHAELMAS '09

From the ethical to the practical, from the banal to the cosmic, all bases are covered at MedSoc's weekly discussion group. With a lively attendance, students from any subject are welcome to come, enjoy a drink, and add something to the debate.

The weekly discussion occurs on Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm, unless otherwise notified. For full details of weekly time and location, see our Facebook group or website.

1) Nip it in the bud : Approaching eugenics & the right to reproduce naturally

How important is the right to reproduce naturally? e.g. in the case of genetic disorders such as Huntington's, or say Down's, both of which have very distinct issues. Should we legislate against the proliferation of genetic disorders and do our best to get rid of them? How does genetic testing compare with HIV testing? What are the practical implications of banning certain types of reproduction / is it really possible?

2) Identity crisis : Why am I the same person as I was last week?

I'm still as much my parent's son at the age of 20 as I was when I was born, but I have changed immeasurably, from the atoms which make me up, to the opinions I have, from the company I keep to my perspectives on the world. Every experience I have changes me, so why am I the same person this week as I was last. Or am I? What defines personhood?

3) Pirates and Drugs : Antipatency and pharmaceuticals

Pirate parties have recently won seats in the European elections. These single issue parties are against most forms of intellectual property. Currently much of the drug industry is driven by the capital a blockbuster can bring in, a situation reliant on a well established patent system. Antipatency laws would change the pharmaceutical industry massively, by promoting transparency and enabling greater teams of people worldwide to work on the same projects, the rate of advancement could increase massively. But where would the drive to research come from? We look to explore some of the issues surrounding the role of patents in big pharma, and what effect antipatency would have on progress in this area.

4) Reducing religion : can faith be explained scientifically?

Most people believe in some sort of god. Is there a scientific explanation for the prevalence of faith? Why do intelligent people still believe in a literal 6 day creation story? Is there such thing as a stable secular society? Is belief in a god innate?

5) The domain of public health – where should we draw the line?

Public health can save many more lives than first line medical treatment. An advertising campaign preventing smoking, or promoting healthy eating could cost a lot less than a single medical procedure for one person, and save many more lives. To what extent should public health issues be legislated, e.g. banning smoking, or having a saturated fat tax? How should a health budget be spent, on the many individuals, or on society at large? What limits define the realm of public health? Food hygiene, smoking, obesity, stress at work, dangerous lifestyles etc.

6) Tribal minds : Is racism innate?

Equality is a new phenomenon. Multiculturalism is young: why were race distinctions so prevalent in earlier societies and why is racism such a taboo now? Are race distinctions important? Have multicultural societies proven successful?

7) Religious treatment : The role of faith in medical practice

It is well established that a person's faith standing has a profound effect on their lifelong degree of health – they tend to recover better after significant medical procedures, get depressed less, and survive for longer during terminal illnesses. Faith also gets in the way of many medical procedures, e.g. Catholics and abortion, Christian Scientists and antibiotics, or Jehova's Witnesses and blood transfusions. What are the implications of these facts on how a doctor would ideally treat a patient and support them socially, and what are the implications for the desired faith bias of a practitioner?

8) Who cooks for Santa? How innate are gender roles?

An exploration of some of the history and explanations for gender roles. Implications of the feminist / western ideal on family structure and the future, i.e. children. Is an equal society the most stable? (What should equality mean?) What social alternatives are there? How can what we know about gender differences possibly effect us on the social level?

Other events

We will be holding speaker events and socials, all details of which will be published well in advance on our website (http://medsoc.co.uk/?page_id=389) and on our Facebook group.