



Ethical Views

April 2002

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Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Sunday, April 7

Colloquy: *Empathy*

**Platform: Richard Kiniry, Leader,
Philadelphia Ethical Society
*Whose Justice?***

From the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict to the way a parent disciplines a child, our understanding of justice is complicated by personal feelings and commitments. Can we ever agree to an objective standard of justice or must justice always remain a personal opinion?

Sunday, April 14

Colloquy: *Envy*

**Platform: Evalyn F. Segal, Ph.D.,
Hemlock Society**

The Right to Assisted Dying

The Netherlands, Switzerland and Oregon permit a mentally competent person, who has been diagnosed as terminally ill, to receive medical assistance to hasten his or her death. Shouldn't everyone have the right to choose the time, manner and circumstances of their imminent demise?

Dr. Segal received her doctorate in Psychology from the University of Michigan and was Postdoctoral Fellow at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and Laboratory of Psychopharmacology. Her behavioral analysis have centered on social behavior, ethics, values and culture. She was Director of the Institute for Child and Family Development at the University of North Carolina before serving as Professor of Psychology at San Diego State University for over ten years.

Dr. Segal was Founding President of the Hemlock Society of North Carolina and, from 1998 to 99, Acting President of the Hemlock Society of the

Sunday, April 21

Colloquy: *Evil*

**Platform: Anne Klaeyen, Leader,
American Ethical Union
*What Would Emerson Do -
And What Must We Do?***

Ever notice those bumper stickers with the letters "WWJD"? Anne once found herself in a crowd of tee shirts with those letters. The translation was on the back: "What would Jesus do?" So she started musing about what Ralph Waldo Emerson would do. This platform address is the result.

Anne is a longtime member of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture and a Leader Intern at the New York Society. She holds an MA from the State University of New York and an MBA from New York University. This year she will complete studies at the Humanist Institute and the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health.

Sunday, April 28

Colloquy: *Faith*

**Platform: Barry Schwartz, Ph.D.,
Cartwright Professor of Social
Theory and Social Action,
Swarthmore College
*The Tyranny of Choice***

Barry Schwartz has been at Swarthmore since 1971, after earning his doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. He has written "The Battle for Human Nature" (1986), and "The Costs of Living" (1994), both of which won awards as outstanding non-fiction book of the year by a Philadelphia author from the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. He is currently finishing a book on "The Tyranny of Choice," the topic of his

Leader's Message

Things I Don't Need

Richard Kiniry

I have gotten a few laughs recounting my first experience with heated automobile seats. While my sister in Maine, I accompanied on some errands in her new car a chilly morning and before the seat heated up, my seat did. My sister was accompanied by the fear that she would become incontinent and miss the car seating in a puddle of my own urine.

I quickly realized that my sister had another of those luxuries that I think are silly and a waste of time and creativity. That we still have homeless people living on the streets and yet we have clever engineers designing a seat-warmer for millions. An expansive rear-end, seems asinine and depressing.

Of course, my disapproval of luxuries produces a dilemma for me where do I stop? When is improvement not a silly luxury and practical convenience? Are all

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Colloquies at 9:45 AM

Platforms at 11:00 AM

Coffee Hour and discussion

follow the Platforms.

Musical Interludes performed

Pianist Jeremy Gill.

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Leader's Message

Things I Don't Need

improvements an affront to good sense? I still don't have a remote control for my television, but I have friends that don't have a television. Other friends assure me that the quality of my life would be improved if I owned a VCR machine. I was happy without a computer but now I don't know what I would do without it. I still don't bother with the Internet but some people swear by the easy access to information it offers. There are thousands of improvements that we would have thought to be unnecessary fifty years ago and now are indispensable parts of our lives. At what point in history do we draw the line? Is indoor plumbing a luxury?

Like it or not we are on a path of continual improvement. Every human function - personal, familial, communal - is open to improvement, mechanization, and simplification. And in the process, human life is changed and human nature evolves. We are encouraged to think that all this is inevitable but we do have choices. We can consciously make decisions that affect the future of humankind. We can question the direction modern conveniences are taking us. We can decide not to participate, or decide which improvements make sense and which don't. We can say no to wasteful luxuries.

Automobiles are my favorite example. After all, they were originally intended just to get us and our stuff from one place to another. Now, the automobile has become a cross between a spaceship and a luxury suite. Safety locks and children's car-seats make good sense. They make life better. But television in the car to keep the children anesthetized is a surrender of

holders are useful but do cars have to contain all the functions of office, kitchen and rec-room?

Each generation can find it easy to scoff at the next generation's expectations, but where does this road lead us? I don't need an automatic coffee maker or frozen "gourmet" dinners. So, I can look critically at younger folks who expect those conveniences. But the urge for convenience is bigger than any one generation. Do we have an ethical responsibility for the future of humankind? There is nothing unethical in most modern conveniences but how they change humankind is an ethical issue. Our behavior, the choices we make, can continue a pattern that could result in a species of helpless, wasteful, unimaginative individuals. There are many personal ways of finding meaning in life but our lives are also public presences. Our lives also set a pattern. >

I think we share a conception makes a good life. A good life suggest a life of convenience luxury. Our love of improvement making life itself silly. conveniences have become through the years - convenience own sake. Is that the meaning? And if not, how do we say no? not neutral on cultural issues. stands on many issues, but this both the most subtle and the substantial.

Human nature is evolving. How we help set that direction toward and character? Our stand must involvement with the substance and against the detachment to conveniences offer. In a sense of human kind is in the Humankind is on a trip and each should be steering in the direction think best.

School for Ethics

Defining the Good Life

A monthly discussion about the choices we make. We will discuss big issues like racism, sexism and the environment but also more personal issues like lifestyle choices. We will do this within the context of the Ethical Humanist point of view - an understanding that defining values is an ongoing process. Each month we will focus on one topic. Participants can offer subjects for upcoming meetings.

Monday, April 22, 7:30 PM

Introduction to Ethical Humanism

Every Ethical Society has a history, but they are also part of a 125-year old humanist religious tradition. This workshop is an introduction to that history and tradition. Newcomers, visitors and Society members are invited to participate and examine the basic ideas of Ethical Culture. Using *Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture*, we will clarify the principles of intrinsic worth, naturalism, nontheism and ethics as a way of life.

Sunday, April 7, 1:30 PM

New Time !!



Nature and Us

by Temma Fishman, Chair

What a community! When our scheduled speaker canceled at the last minute, we sprung into action and created a new Sunday platform. Members were marshaled into service to speak or to contribute a reading on "What Ethical Culture Means to Me". You would think it was weeks in the planning by the result.

Cherin Silver spoke of the Philadelphia Society being like a good family and about our support of the broader community, especially through Camp Linden. She reminded us of our work at the food shelter, our clothing and book drives, and that the Society is a great place to express our resolve.

Saul Machles believes that older people who care a lot about the world, may become frustrated when they don't see progress. But progress happens so slowly that it's hard to see. He urged us not to lose faith and to do what we can as individuals to make the world a better place.

Dale Drews pointed out that some people who understand Humanism are puzzled when it's compared to religion. There is something beyond a god - and that something is humanity - the world, society and families. This belief is what makes us religious.

I never thought too much about our closing song "as sung to the tune of Finlandia," but Carol Kaufmann has. She reflected on the lyrics. "We would be one," means that we're making the world a better place for our children and tomorrow. "In searching for that meaning" we talk to each other from our hearts and minds and learn what each has to offer. "With love and justice" we affirm that love is the stepping stone to peace. When we sing "Strive to make all free" we remember that so many are still

Humanists. For her it makes life better all week.

An especially timely poem was presented by Lew Wilkinson who read one of his favorites, "Asleep in the Valley" by Arthur Rambeau. The poet uses vivid imagery to convey a powerful message against war. It's worth reading. Lew reminded us that we can make our own statement by signing the petition against land mines.

Irene Putzer, remembering African-American History month, praised Dr. Charles Richard Drew. Born in 1902, he invented the process by which blood plasma can be dried and stored. As we think about September 11 and the many who donated blood, we should be grateful for his research.

It was an uplifting morning in which our community came together and made something truly joyful. It couldn't have been better had it been planned.

Paul Halpern, Professor of Physics at the University of Sciences, presented *The Pursuit of Destiny: A History of Prediction*. Dr. Halpern began by presenting scenarios which included the break-up of a relationship when one partner learns he or she carries a deadly disease, or a talented fourteen-year-old giving up his education as a pianist when he learns he has a predisposition for early severe arthritis - revealed through genetic testing.

If Julius Caesar knew of his fate in advance, would he have crossed the Rubicon or spent his life in depression? Would a president launch a military attack because a poll predicts a favorable response? In ancient times, predictions were made by observing the flight patterns of birds or the designs formed by entrails thrown on the ground. Astronomers were held in great esteem because of their ability to predict eclipses or other heavenly occurrences. Johannes Kepler would

Scientific prediction will improve behavior will always be difficult to predict because we have free will. Among the hundreds of urban planning predictions for the year 2000 were networks of moving sidewalks, individually flying platforms, robot cleaners, picture phones, and cryogenic freezing and regeneration of the body. H.G. Wells accurately predicted nuclear war, genetic engineering, and the credit card.

Science has gotten better at predicting the future because of models extrapolated from the past. However, limits are in place. Quantum theory asserts that the future holds built-in uncertainties. Quantum theory is based in part on the "butterfly effect" - small things can cause big change. Mapping of the human genome will lead to predictions of conditions and diseases. Will we select characteristics in our unborn children? Will it be advantageous to test someone for Huntington's Disease when there is no cure? Science is making strict predictions more predicaments will present themselves requiring responses from ethics and medicine. Our ability to find ethical answers will certainly be

Leader Richard Kiniry eloquently explored the question of our relationship to nature as Ethical Culturalists. In *Worship of Nature*, Richard reminds us that the Native American worldview reflects the love of the Earth, the brotherhood with all creatures, and one with the natural world. In nature we fall in love with nature when it arrives, but still need our cars, indoor heat, and a refrigerator for food. Richard asked, "Is detachment from nature a religious issue?" We need to come up with an ethical mentalism that is other than self-centered - like the Midwestern farmer who eschewed the use of pesticides and practiced minimum plowing. Richard described his relationship to the

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Education Committee Report

Nature and Us

expression.

In Richard's view, nature demands a moral response. How does it fit into the meaning of our lives? Ethical Humanists tend to care about the environment, but care more about racism, sexism and poverty. We're part of the Judeo-Christian tradition that comes late to a concern for the environment. We care about clean water and air, global warming, and the biodiversity of the rain forests because of our desire to survive. Trouble for the earth equals trouble for us, therefore, environmentalism is a human issue. Richard argued that we've gone beyond the point of no return, that life as we've known it is over. The northern elite of Japan, Western Europe and the U.S. are 15% of the world's population, but consume 80% of its resources. As the Third World grabs a bit of the good life, the biosphere will be destroyed.

Without a well-grounded ethical relationship to life, our response is self-serving and abusive. We should do better. Life is an ethical experience and relational, including our relationship to the natural world. We can become vegetarians, get out of our cars and walk, wear last year's clothes, limit the resources we use for a child's birthday party and care about the poor. Richard asked, "Why care about the environment?" Because we have to live with ourselves - that's the best reason. Being environmentally aware isn't going to bring much reward - except in knowing that our respect for nature connected to self-respect. Ultimately, that's what matters most. ◇



President's Message

Happy Birthday to Me

Arnold Fishman

We've just returned from an adventure in what has to be the friendliest, most beautiful country in the world. For my ___th birthday, my wife Temma treated us to a vacation in New Zealand. It was spectacular.

We had signed up for an active tour, and we got it with a vengeance. We were up at the crack of dawn and ran all day. We would fall in bed at night, only to repeat the same program the next day. New Zealand is a thousand miles long and on the other side of the International Date Line. It is separated into two main islands. They lie in the Southern Hemisphere; it was summer. The islands are only a good swim apart but are as different as can be imagined. North Island is almost tropical, lush, green and wet, while South Island is mountainous, rugged and dry.

It adds to the experience to travel in a country which speaks your language - some also speak Maori, the native language of the indigenous Polynesian people. Being able to converse with the people is an education. I found the "Kiwi's" extraordinarily articulate, not just the local family in whose home we dined, but the waiters and drivers as well. They were forever saying "gudiemite"* and if you managed to get something right, "Lovely!"

The government is beginning to struggle with making reparations to the Maori people for past wrongs, and the country is open to all Polynesian people, making Auckland the largest such community in the world. New Zealand has a high standard of living, low rates of illiteracy and infant mortality, universal health care, and a comprehensive social safety net, all benefits of a more population.

bodies of possums, an int species doing much damage to plants. People drink directly from many pristine lakes, some of w the craters of extinct volcanoes by mountains. There are large great geothermal activity. Pictu on a beach with scalding percolating up and mixing v waves of the South Pacific East, toward the coast of Chile largest expanse of water in the

The people are having a love af their country. They recogni fortunate they are to live in a r unspoiled place, although the h ozone is too close for comfo love the outdoors. They ar lying, sitting or standing. The from cliffs (paraponting) and (bungie jumping), climb mounta tramp through forest trails pav with leaves.

They are devoted to sports, wi and cricket being most Yesterday's matches perme conversation and occupy mos TV news and almost half of th of the newspapers. There w space devoted to world news was dominated by happening US. Enron was the top story, b was made of Attorney Gener Ashcroft's quest to cover the breast on the statue of Justic we were identified as American inevitably followed a story ab September 11 affected their was as though they wanted us we are not in it alone.

There is a fierce competitiveness Australia which they jokingly re "West Island". They are excite defending the America's Cup had the opportunity to se "grinders" on one of the retiree boats. We swam with wild c although they were not curie day. We took a jet boat up a l

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Happy Birthday

then canoed back down. We rode in gondolas to the crest of a mountain and were carried by helicopter to a ridge in the middle of an immense lake. In each case we hiked down. We had our dinner on a luxury yacht moored at a lake's hot beach. We did not bungee jump although we did see the spot where it all started - at a bridge which spans a river canyon. Our four-wheel drive land rovers were tested to their limits as the sheer drop from the unpaved rock-strewn road tested our resolve. The stout hearted even paraponted off a mountain in a two-person rig with a licensed professional doing all the maneuvering.

I had heard a lot about Milford Sound . It is not a sound, which is carved by a river and flooded by the sea, but a fjord, which is sculpted by a glacier and drowned. It is on the windward side of South Island. There is so much rain, almost an inch per day, that the surface water is fresh to a depth of about twenty-five feet. Milford Sound might be the most spectacular place on Earth. The purple cliffs, studded with waterfalls, leap from the Tasman Sea which, on this clear rice-crispy-crackling day, was an iridescent turquoise with a sprinkling of dolphins, like raisins, riding our ship's wake.

We broke up the trip home by spending a few days in Tahiti. Our thatched roofed bungalow was built on stilts over the lagoon. The sliding glass doors at the foot of the bed framed a view of the mountains which form the island of Morea and led to a furnished private balcony. Steps then led to the lagoon and to a coral reef with abundant fish and other colorful marine life. The hotel had two fresh water pools. One was fed by a waterfall and the other had a sand bottom. We were hard pressed to choose between them. We relaxed and worked only on our suntans. The sunsets were

my memory. Thanks Hon!

Not counting the short sightseeing excursions, our trip included eight flights and numerous hotels, motor vehicles, boats, restaurants, drivers and guides. I remain amazed that they had all come together in an almost seamless fashion. It was refreshing to have experienced a healthy nation which translates its passion for the outdoors into a respect for the land and an acceptance of responsibility for others.

Flying has changed Temma had two pairs of cuticle scissors and a nail file confiscated and they made me break the file off a small nail clipper which is attached to my key ring. Each time they found an object they made us remove our shoes and x-rayed them - moral, fly in loafers.

We arrived home as scheduled on Saturday night. After a good night's sleep, we were surprised to feel well enough to attend the Sunday Colloquy and Platform at the Society. It is good to go away and it is good to come home - may it always be that way, for everyone.

* gudiemite: The approximate American translation for this is hello friend as in "good-day mate" ◇

To our friends who have come to wonder if the hassle of curbside recycling really makes any difference, we find this answer: ".....a typical curbside recycling program will eliminate, for every ton of waste processed, 620 pounds of carbon dioxide, 30 pounds of methane, 5 pounds of carbon mon-oxide, and 2.5 pounds of soot and ash. Great benefit comes from replacing virgin materials in manufacturing with recycled materials. It takes less than 25 percent of the energy to make aluminum cans from recycled cans as from virgin aluminum ore"

from Browner and Leon, PhDs,
The Greenest Choice, Efficient

Sunday Morning Volunteer
make Sundays special for all of us.
Call the Chairs to enlist.

Coffee Hour Hosts

Harry Thorn, Chair

- April 7 Mary Lou da
- April 14 Ethel Boyer
- April 21 Harry Thorn
- April 28 Carol Love

Ushers

Rick Zorger, Head Usher
with help from Richard Kinin
Arnold Fishman

Flower Dedications

Selma Toth, Chair

- April 7 - Ruth Ann Dubb, in memory of her German Shepherd, Croskey.
- April 14 - Madeleine Suringa celebrate the birthday of her daughter Daphne.
- April 21 - Cherin Silver, in honor of Abigail and Geoffrey, her two companions.
- April 28 - Susan Jo Klein, in celebration of Spring.

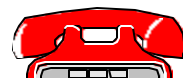
Greeters

Susan Jo Klein, Chair

- April 7 Temma Fishman
- April 14 Susan Jo Klein
- April 21 Lew Wilkinso
- April 28 Jessie Zelnick

Coffee Hour Edibles

- April 7 Howard Peer
Doris Leicher
- April 14 Temma Fishman
- April 21 Jean Bradley
- April 28 Susan Jo Klein



Ethical Action Committee Update

Community Outreach

by Cherin Silver

The Ethical Action Committee continues to monitor the activities of various organizations including NOW, the Gray Panthers, the Nature Conservancy and Amnesty International as a way of alerting members and friends of important matters that we need to be aware of and perhaps influence. In some instances the involvement is merely monitoring activities of the organization as a conduit for information. In other instances we have supported the organization by becoming a member. With respect to Amnesty International, the Society provides free meeting space to the local chapter.

There has been an ongoing discussion as to whether the Gray Panthers should be on the list of organizations we look to for information concerning the elderly. Richard Kiniry points out >

that the Gray Panthers is one of the few organizations that is interested in protecting the rights of the elderly. However, I believe that they promote the rights of the elderly at the expense of other segments of the population. The Gray Panthers support Medicare as a "non-need" based social welfare program. How can a non-need based program be good? Because it is non-need based and limited to the elderly (with some exceptions, such as end-stage renal disease), the working poor, who have 2.9% of their income allocated to the Medicare program (as we all do; with half of that paid by the employer and half by the employee), and who themselves are not insured and cannot afford health care, subsidize the healthcare of not only the poor elderly but of the rich elderly as well. Richard points out correctly, that we need not approve of everything that an organization supports to look to that organization for guidance. >

In addition, the EAC is exploring the possibility of providing a paperback dictionary to each third grade student at Robert Morris Elementary School with the assistance of an organization called *The Dictionary Project*. The school has negotiated with a publisher to provide paperback dictionaries at a very reasonable cost. The dictionaries, which are owned by the students, which the students are encouraged to take home, have a very positive impact on literacy.

March is the last month for the Shelter Dinner Program. Arnold Fishman, Irene Putzer and Cipolone are providing dinner on March 20. Jean Bradley and Saul Kiniry are providing dinner on Easter Sunday.

The Ethical Action committee meets at 7:30 on the second Wednesday of each month. Everyone is encouraged to attend and contribute their own energy.

Ethical Forum with Bob Pierson, Director, *Farm to City*

"The more I reflect on the land-food-body continuum, the more I realize that it is a sacred connection, one which should command a great deal of my attention.

It is the bedrock of my community
and my culture."

April 24 at 7:30 PM
Wine and Cheese Reception
Free and open to the public.

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except July and August. .

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