



Ethical Views

February 2010 Vol. 124, No. 6 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia



Platforms

Sunday, February 7, 2010

Why President Obama is Wrong about Afghanistan

Speaker: Richard L. Kiniry, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

The President has justified expanding the war in Afghanistan as a "just war." Just War Theory has through the years been used by those who would justify their aggression and conversely used by those opposed to aggression. Rather than questioning the justice of any particular war, I want to offer other ethical values that challenge American foreign policy.

Sunday, February 14, 2010

The Evolution Controversy: Implications for the Separation of Church & State

Speaker: Ed Joyce, President of the Bucks County Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church & State

Only about a third of Americans agree that evolution is a viable science in spite of the impact that evolutionary theory has

had on modern medicine, agriculture and biology. In addition, the evolution of fossil groups is used routinely to identify the occurrence of hydrocarbons in the subsurface of the earth. A large and growing segment of the American population wants to replace what is taught in the science classroom with Biblically-based accounts of creation. It is imperative to recognize the efforts of fundamentalists for what they are and keep religion from where it has no place by maintaining a healthy separation between church and state.

Sunday, February 21, 2010

Challenging Children's — and Adults' — Misperceptions about the African Continent

Speaker: Anastasia Shown, Assistant Director of the University of Pennsylvania's African Studies Center

Why do we need to know more about Africa? How can we demystify stereotypes and promote a better understanding through how we teach, parent, vote and shop? Anastasia will

highlight some of her projects in Cameroon, Ghana and Ethiopia.

Sunday, February 28, 2010

Feminism in the Twenty-first Century

Speaker: Kate Lovelady, Leader of the Ethical Society of St. Louis

The issues of women—including work, motherhood and our relationship to men—have been a part of Ethical Society discussions since the founding of our movement. Some of these questions have been resolved for now, whereas others remain controversial or uncertain, such as what innate differences if any exist between men and women. Where is the feminist movement today, and what are the ethical issues related to sex and gender roles that affect all our lives? ◇

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Darwin Day Celebration Saturday February 13th at 6:30 p.m.

That's the thing about evolution, you never know what to expect. You could wind up sulfur-eating goo on the bottom of a geothermal vent, or you could wind up the Head Orangutan with a view of beautiful rainforests.

In this spirit of random creative fun, the Head Orangutans, Doris & Howard, hope to see you at the EHSOP's celebration of Darwin, evolution, natural selection and population dynamics—it often ends with a crash!

Ten dollars if you bring some other species for consumption, fifteen if you don't.
Be there or be sulfur-eating goo.

Reduced \$6.00 parking available at EZ Park covered lot, 2101 Chestnut St. That's off of 21st St about 100' before (north of) Chestnut. Be sure to get the ticket validated at the party.

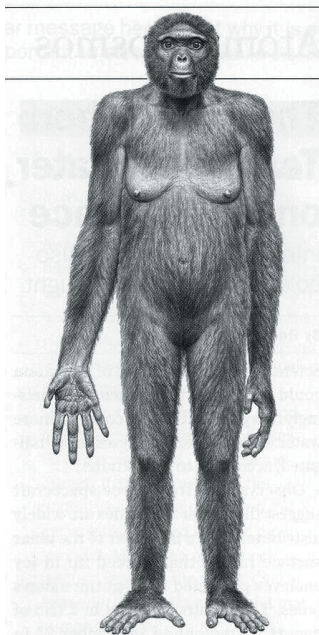


President's Message

Discovering Ardi

--Temma Fishman

Making big news recently in scientific circles and to a very small extent in the popular press is the discovery of a female fossil called *Ardipithecus ramidus*. Fieldwork by a team of anthropologists working in Ethiopia from 1981 to 2004 yielded 36 fossils of her kind. "Ardi" is amazing because of her antiquity (she is 4.4 million years old), anatomy and place in the hominid line – the line leading to humans. She is thought to be halfway between the famous hominid fossil Lucy, 3.3 million years old, discovered by Donald Johansen in 1973 in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia, and the point where the human and ape line split from our common ancestor, 7-8 million years ago.



from Bower, Bruce. "Ancient hominids get a new look with analysis of *Ardipithecus* fossil." *Science News*. 24 Oct. 2009: 9.

at about the same time as canine teeth were reduced in size. Her reduced canines proved that even at this early date in time, our ancestors learned to cooperate with each other. The enlarged canines found in the great apes are used by the males to fight over females. Ardi had already learned a more civilized way to live. Ardi, whose brain was the size of a chimpanzee's, walked upright, but on feet that were more like hands – with opposable, grasping big toes. Lucy walked on feet very much like ours. Ardi's posture is evidence that we walked upright while remaining tree-climbers long before we developed large brains. Ardi also reveals that our earliest ancestors did not resemble existing apes, as was thought until recently. The revelations about Ardi, made possible through the application of powerful technology, have revolutionized scientific thinking about our ancestry.

"*Ardipithecus* has illuminated not only our own ancestry, but also that of our closest living relatives. It therefore serves as further confirmation of Darwin's prescience: that we are only one terminal twig in the tree of life, and that our own fossil record will provide revealing and unexpected insights into the evolutionary emergence, not only of ourselves, but also of our closest neighbors in its crown." *

Richard Dawkins, described by Wikipedia as a rationalist, atheist and popular science author focusing on evolution, reminds us that we humans are apes and that all life forms on earth are cousins to all other life forms. He calls the story of evolution "The Greatest Show on Earth," which is the partial title of his latest book. The evolution story inspires awe and respect for life and an intense desire to protect it. It broadens our concept of "family."

Our children, who are deprived of learning about evolution in public schools in some states, as all of us

are denied much information by the media, need to learn the story Darwin revealed to us. As we teach children that the earth is round and circles the sun, so should we teach evolution. It is necessary to understanding the world we inhabit. In an NPR interview on October 22, 2009, Dawkins reported that he loves to speak about evolution in the Bible Belt, where he finds friendly, enthusiastic audiences. To me, this means that we Ethical Humanists can have meaningful dialogues with even the most evolution-denying, conservative people we encounter.

Darwin's ideas of natural selection, still challenged in 21st-century America, are being confirmed over and over again, as Ardi tells us. Those who would deny evolution because they say it's a theory should be reminded that a theory in the scientific sense is a set of scientific laws and concepts that are constantly being refined, tested and updated in accordance with new discoveries. So understood, "theory" is not a guess, as the term is understood in the vernacular.

Members and friends of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia will celebrate Charles Darwin on February 13th at 6:30 at our Darwin Day Party. Join us as we honor the scientist who taught that we are connected to all life on this planet. We are informed by science and want our fellow travelers on this planet to be also. The survival of all life depends upon the realization that we are all family. We are enlightened by Ardi's amazing story. We affirm the fact of evolution. The greatest story ever told happened right here on earth and will continue, if we let it.

* Lovejoy, C. Owen, Gen Suwa, Scott W. Simpson, Jay H. Matternes and Tim White. "The Great Divides: *Ardipithecus ramidus* Reveals the Postcrania of Our Last Common Ancestors with African Apes." *Science*. 2 Oct. 2009: 106.

Lucy was an accomplished biped, but Ardi reveals how walking on two feet began. This advance developed



FEBRUARY:

DOING

DANTE

Worldly Wisdom:

Great Books and the Meaning of Life

James Sloan Allen has created a humanist approach to the Great Books. "Worldly wisdom is made up of good ideas and useful humanism that help us understand our lives and give meaning to them in this world." The book, *Worldly Wisdom*, is a series of commentaries that follow human wisdom from Homer's *Iliad* to the works of Sartre and Martin Luther King.

This class is a chance for members and friends of the Society to read and discuss those books we meant to read earlier in life while following the course of humanist thinking through the ages. Another advantage will be the opportunity to examine our own lives in the presence of ideas from around the world and through the ages.

This will be a monthly series with participants taking turns in leading the discussion. We will have copies of James Sloan Allen's book to be lent to those leading the discussion and participants will be expected to have read at least part of the selection for that month. In February we will be discussing Dante's *Inferno*.

Tuesday, February 9, at 7:30 PM

CONTINUED THIS MONTH!!!

Moral Mondays

Ethical Explorations

Mondays, 7:15-9:00PM -
February 1, February 15, and March 1



Looking for an engaging intellectual experience? Want to connect classic western philosophy with common ethical experiences? Willing to do some reading?

Join **Hugh Taft-Morales** at the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia for some philosophical fun. Each class will offer dynamic lectures and group discussions. Requires about an hour of reading per week.

Feb 1 – Shades of Selfishness

Animal Selfishness: Survival of the fittest

(Nietzsche, Spencer)

Rational Selfishness: The Virtue of being Number One

(Ayn Rand)

Spiritual Selfishness: The Drum Major Instinct

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Feb 15 – Shades of Altruism

Animal Altruism: Sociobiology and Survival

(Peter Singer)

Rational Altruism: Enlightened Self-Interest

Spiritual Altruism: The Value of Sacrifice

Mar 1 – Morality Beyond The Self

Self-Actualization in the Absolute

(Hegel, Marx, and Bradley)

Autonomy and Relations

Buddhist Detachment

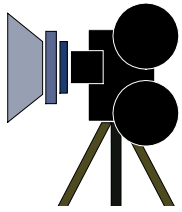
Get to Know Us Social

Wednesday, February 24, 7:30 PM



Every other month we hold a casual informational event for those who are curious about the Society and its philosophy. The Society offers an alternative to theistic revealed religion and at this event we offer a friendly presentation of our point of view. Interested visitors, newcomers and members are invited to examine the basic approach of Ethical Humanism.

Members will be there to talk about their involvement with the Society and what membership has added to their lives. Leaders of the Society will be present to answer your questions. Refreshments will be served.



FEBRUARY THURSDAY NIGHT TALKIES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2010 - 7:15 P.M.

Movie, Discussion, Popcorn and Pop

WAR CHILD

This film by Karim Chrobog is the story of Emmanuel Jal's change from a child soldier at age 7 to an internationally acclaimed hip-hop artist with a peaceful message. The film is a must for anyone interested in social justice: a dire warning about what could happen on our soil if we let our society crumble, but also extremely beautiful and moving in its music, which is a testament to the transformative power of art.



The February monthly meeting of **Amnesty International - Philadelphia Chapter** will occur on Thursday **February 25, 7 PM** at the Ethical Society, 1906 S. Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia.

This month's meeting will feature a talk by Sagar Shah - "Human Rights in Burma".

All welcome.



SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 17-20, 2010

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

95th Annual Assembly

To be held at

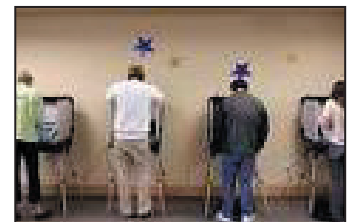
The University of Scranton
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Election of Officers and Trustees

Elections of Ethical Humanist Society officers and trustees will be held at the Annual Meeting of the Membership in May 2010. Up for election are: the President, Vice-President and three Trustees-at-Large.

Nominations for these positions are now open.

Nominees for the Board of Trustees and Officer positions shall have had at least one full year of membership prior to their election, and nominees for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency shall have had at least one additional year's experience as a Trustee. If you would like to be a candidate, please notify the secretary, Doris Leicher, in writing at dleicher@dleicher.com or by mail at 1906 South Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103.



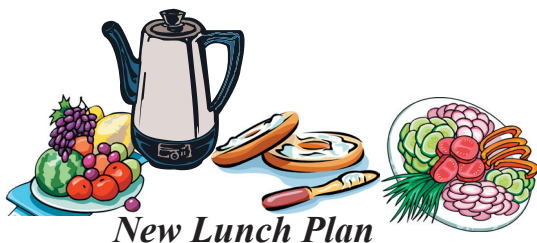
VOTERS

Thank You for Your Service

Many thanks to those who rushed to ush from Nov 29 to Jan 10, namely **Marta Guttenberg, David Ralston, Jeffrey Dubb, Howard Peer, Doris Leicher, Henry Pashkow, Tom Carroll, Terry Martin-Murley, Lyle Murley, Bob and Janice Moore, Nick Sanders and Jim Cummings.**



Although others have signed up for future weeks, we can use additional assistance in setting the stage for our Sunday morning platforms. If you would like to serve our community by ushering either regularly or occasionally, please contact Betsy Lightbourn.



New Lunch Plan

The Ethical Society Board of Trustees has approved a plan to simplify the post-platform lunches. We decided that serving bagels, cream cheese and/or other spreads, and perhaps some Danish, or fruit or vegetable crudites and dips will better serve the needs of our members and visitors than what we are currently doing. Some of us feel over-burdened by the need to cook for or provide an elaborate lunch. Setup and cleanup will be simplified with this new plan, allowing all of us to take part more effectively in greeting newcomers, socializing and participating in Dialogues.

We are suggesting that the bagels, etc. be set up on the coffee table, eliminating the need for a second table, and that a basket be provided for donations. These donations will help fund maintenance of our handicap access ramp, which will soon be in action. Coffee and tea should still be made available.

Responsibility for the coffee and finger foods should be rotated by the usual lunch groups. We are trying this plan in the hopes that it will indeed facilitate participation and enjoyment of the Sunday morning experience for all of us.

Tell us Your ESHoP Elevator Conversation



An ESHoP *Elevator Conversation* is what you would say to someone who asked you as you both were getting on an elevator, "So what's the Ethical Society all about, anyway?" It's a short synopsis suitable for lots of different situations when you start cluing people in on what the ESHoP stands for and why it's important to you. There are many different *Elevator Conversations*, and each member should have his or her own.

For a future article in the newsletter I am collecting different people's version of their ESHoP *Elevator Conversation*. I would appreciate if people e-mailed me theirs, or wrote it down and gave it to me. You may see your words in print, but not your name. I will put them out anonymously.

Thank you in advance for your help with this project.

—Ken Greiff, *Community Committee Chair*




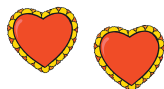
Our Annual Community Fund-Raising Request for Service Auction Items and Events

At the Darwin Day Party (February 13), we want to unveil the service auction items and events for spring, summer and fall. Please prepare a description for either your item or event (type of item or event, location and date [if an event], number of participants or items, and donation for each) and bring it to Jean at the office or send it to the coordinator, Nick, at: sanders508@earthlink.net by **February 7**, if at all possible.

EHSOP members will have the first chance to sign up at the party. If you have questions, please contact Nick or Jean.

February 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Class -7:15 pm Ethical Exploration: Shades of Selfishness	2	3 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee  Arnold Fishman	4	5	6
7 11:00 a.m. Platform: Why President Obama is Wrong about Afghanistan Richard L. Kiniry	 8 EHSOP Whiners Club 6:30 pm at Doobies	9 Class -7:30 pm Worldly Wisdom	10 Meetings 6:30 p.m. Education Committee 7:30 p.m. Ethical Action Cmte.	11 <i>Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Meeting</i> 6:30pm	12	 13 Darwin Day Dinner & Annual Service Auction 6:30pm
14 11:00 a.m. Platform: The Evolution Controversy: Implications for the Separation of Church & State Ed Joyce	15 Class -7:15 pm Ethical Exploration: Shades of Altruism	16  Mary Scholl	17 Meetings 6:30 p.m. Executive Committee 7:30 p.m. Board of Trustees	18 Thursday Night Talkies  7:15 p.m.	19	20
21 11:00 a.m. Platform: Challenging Children's — and Adults' — Misperceptions about the African Continent Anastasia Shown	22	23	24 Meetings 6:00 p.m. - (Weston) Community Committee 7:00 p.m. - (Collier) Camp Linden Board 7:30 p.m. - (Weston) Get to Know Us Social	25  Amnesty International 7:00 p.m.	26	27
28 11:00 a.m. Platform: Feminism in the Twenty-first Century Kate Lovelady						
				 Birthdays		



Wa-a-a! I wost my bow and awwow.

The Annual meeting of the **EHSOP Whiners** will take place on Monday, February 8th.

This will be a lighthearted and open invitation to get together and have a whine or beer with friends and fellow whiners at Doobies, which is located at 2201 Lombard Street.

Jean's monthly listing flier

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except July and August.

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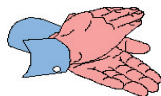
**Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia**

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Doris Leicher, Secretary
Lyle Murley
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SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

Flower Dedications - Ramona Ward,
Coordinator

February 7 - Temma Fishman: "In
Loving Celebration of Husband Arnold's
Birthday!"

February 14 - Bob and Janice Moore:
"To Honor Our Touchingly Human (and
Humanist) Ancestor, Charles Darwin, on
the Occasion of His Birthday!"

February 21 - Harry Thorn: "To
Celebrate the One-Year Anniversary of
the Obama Administration."

February 28 - Howard Peer: "In the
Month of Love, in Honor of His Beloved
Wife, Doris."

Ushers - Betsy Lightborn, Coordinator

February 7 -
February 14 -
February 21 - T.B.A.
February 28 -

Greeters - Ken Greiff, Coordinator

February 7 -
February 14 -
February 21 - T.B.A.
February 28 -

Coffee Hour Lunch

February 7 - Group A-E
February 14 - Group F-L
February 21 - Group M-P
February 28 - Group Q-Z

Photo credits

Janice R. Moore

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of Philadelphia**
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