

# Ethical Views



March 2010 Vol. 124, No. 7 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

## Platforms



**Sunday, March 7, 2010**

### ***Why President Obama is Wrong about Afghanistan***

**Speaker: Richard L. Kiniry, Leader of the 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, March 14, 2010**

### ***Organizing Around the Triple Threat: How Unions Can Help Us Build a Better Future***

**Speaker: Jerry Silberman, Senior Staff Representative, Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals**

Activists on the triple threat of global banking, resource depletion and social injustice rarely talk to each other. Each sees the crisis they address as the pivotal one to resolve for the future success of humanity, without considering the real limitations on their options for solutions which result from the crises the other movements face. Our future requires that all three legs of this tripod be sound and that we strategize from the apex, rather than separately from the foot. As a union organizer for over 30 years, Jerry Silberman asks, "What lessons can union organizing bring to coordinated organizing around the triple threat?"

**Sunday, March 21, 2010**

### ***Learning to be Inclusive: An Ally's Education in LGBTQness*** **Speaker: Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader-Intern**

Hugh Taft-Morales shares insights about the challenges facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals and their friends and families. Appreciating the difficulty in shifting from uncertainty to tolerance to inclusion, Hugh encourages himself and the Ethical Culture community to reaffirm our historical role in advancing the rights of all people. An important social justice cause today is the promotion of marriage equality. Learning to celebrate together unions of love and joy makes the work lighter.



### ***Leader's Message***

#### ***Deception***

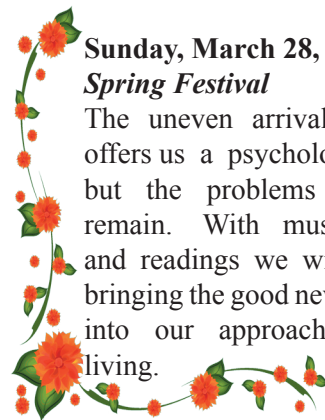
--Richard L. Kiniry

The Society's Worldly Wisdom discussion group just read Dante's *Inferno* and I could not help wondering where, given the chance, we in the twenty-first century might place certain sinners in the descending circles of hell. Dante has a degree of sympathy for average human faults and saves

(Continued next page)

### ***Sunday, March 28, 2010*** ***Spring Festival***

The uneven arrival of Spring offers us a psychological boost but the problems of Winter remain. With music, flowers and readings we will focus on bringing the good news of Spring into our approach to active living.



### **Platforms at 11:00 a.m., Sundays**

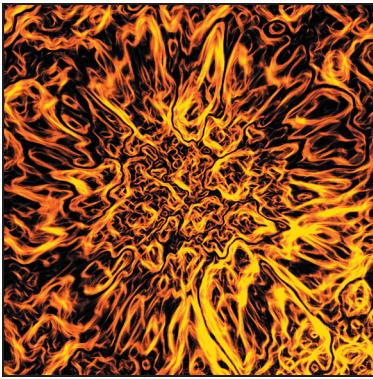
Musical interludes performed by  
**Katarzyna Marzec-Salwinski**  
Coffee Hour & Discussion follow Platforms  
Childcare provided at no charge  
All are welcome!

## **In This Issue**

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- 8 Flower Dedications, Sunday Morning Volunteers**

*Leader's Message (Continued)*

the especially cruel punishments of hell for those who betray others or who are disloyal. Although he was speaking as an angry politician who was actually betrayed, I appreciated his perceptiveness; he finds the worst sins on the relational side of behavior. Dante has sympathy for those of us who have trouble controlling our urges (we don't have evil intentions), but he has no sympathy for those who consciously work at exploiting others. The deceivers, the betrayers and the fraudulent consciously use their minds (for Dante their God-given minds) to damage the fabric of community. They destroy the trust that should be the birthright of all of us.



From that perspective, where would I place ex-vice presidents who refuse to admit their mistakes, who in fact continue to square the circle? (Denying wrongs was for Dante especially evil.) Without specifying a particular ex-official, it does seem we need a new circle of hell for those who not only deceive and deny the deception but then convince a large percentage of the community that the deception is actually reality.

Dante's circles of hell were full of historic characters of his time; 14<sup>th</sup> century Florence was ripe with deception. With all that deceiving there was plenty of blood on the streets of Florence and opposing families or groups would be killed or exiled.

When it comes to deception the world hasn't changed that much since the 14<sup>th</sup>

century, but our era has refined and dressed up deception; we live within a virtual reality of subtle deception and it is more difficult to find the actual deceiver. Who is the deceiver when large organizations in the interest of the bottom line create shiny realities without substance? We can find evidence of deception in hospital wards with individuals dying of cigarette- or asbestos-caused cancer, or in the same hospital's emergency room with people hurt in accidents caused by the faulty engineering of their cars, but the deceiver is lost in the haze of corporate culture. A scapegoat might be found, but with thousands of small decisions that cut corners or were "good enough," casual deception becomes standard practice.

So, consumer beware is good advice but what concerns me is the expansion in acceptance of deception as a political and social tool. When people stop believing that facts and truth ought to be the bases of our shared reality and accept that a relativistic opinion approach to reality will do, then the cohesiveness of community is in great danger. Religion can take some of the blame for this confusion. Since so many of its truths turned out to be empirically untrue, religion encourages the idea of special truth which accustoms people to the idea that true is what you want it to be.

Religion's role in making truth relative may be in its self-interest but that does not annul its responsibility to stand against deception in our public life. Besides religion there are other cultural institutions that supposedly serve the interest of the people and they also ought to point out deception. The press is given specific protection in the constitution and that should translate into responsibility to distinguishing between facts and blatant if colorful deception. Obscuring the facts of global warming and avoiding the full presentation of the human cost, both military and civilian, of two unnecessary wars in

Iraq and Afghanistan is evidence that the deceivers among us are winning.

Dante's special dislike of deception was, as I mentioned earlier, his concern for the trustworthiness of the fiber of community life. People who purposely distort reality pull the rug out from under the relationships of everyone in the community. You don't know what to believe. Any sense of unity and community is distorted.

Dante had special circles of hell for such people. We ought to find our own version of hell for today's deceivers.

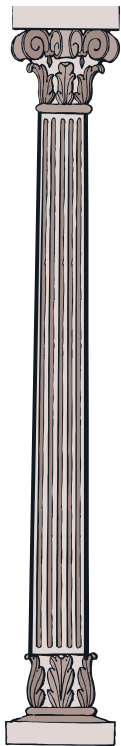


## *Announcing a Period of Transition*

The Ethical Humanist Society is entering a period of transition. Our leader, **Richard L. Kiniry**, who has served us so well for the past twenty years, is planning to retire in June 2011. Our Board of Trustees and Leadership Advisory/Personnel Committee are now thinking about the direction our Society should be taking. We are considering all our options, such as being leaderless or seeking another leader. We must take into account what we can afford to pay. If we decide we want another leader, we will be appointing a Search Committee to help us find one. We must consider where we want a new leader to direct his or her energy in meeting the needs of our Society.

We intend to have many meetings with discussions about this significant change facing our community. We are seeking guidance not only from Richard but also from others in the Movement. We will be meeting with you in the near future, in small groups, to discuss the transition. But in the interim, please feel free to ask questions or offer suggestions to the Leadership Advisory Committee, c/o [jeffrey.dubb@gmail.com](mailto:jeffrey.dubb@gmail.com). This transition is both a challenge and an opportunity for all of us.

— **Temma Fishman**, President, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia



## FINAL CLASS

### Moral Mondays

#### *Ethical Explorations*

Monday, 7:15-9:00PM -  
March 1



Join **Hugh Taft-Morales** at the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia for his final class. As in previous classes, this one will offer a dynamic lecture and group discussion.

This class will also require about an hour of reading.

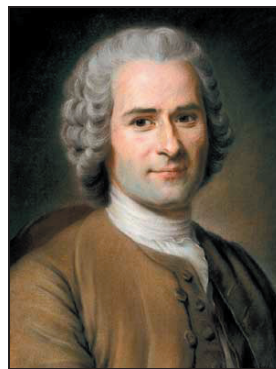
*Morality Beyond The Self*  
Self-Actualization in the Absolute  
(Hegel, Marx, and Bradley)  
Autonomy and Relations  
Buddhist Detachment



### INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL HUMANISM

The Ethical Society is part of a 133-year-old Ethical Culture Movement. We are a humanist religious fellowship. This workshop is a chance to delve into that history and philosophy. We attempt to offer the “big picture” of Ethical Humanism and provide opportunities for questions. Interested visitors, newcomers and members are invited to examine our approach to living as we look at our core ideas – the intrinsic worth of every human being, naturalism, nontheism and ethics as a way of life.

Led by Richard Kiniry  
**Monday, March 8, at 7:30 PM**



Jean-Jacques Rousseau

## MARCH:

### EXAMINING “ÉMILE”

### 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 March we will be discussing Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Émile*.

**Tuesday, March 9, at 7:30 PM**



### Jewish Dialogue Group

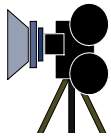


The Society has been offered an opportunity to participate in an organized conversation about the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Jewish Dialogue Group, a nonpartisan grassroots organization based in Philadelphia, provides carefully structured, facilitated dialogue sessions.

**The date for the first event has been chosen: March 23.** We do this in conjunction with Leyv Ha-Ir, the Reconstruction Synagogue that uses our building and with the support of a grant from Center City Kehillah. Many members expressed interest in this effort when it was first announced and now it is time to sign up. You will be expected to fill out an application and answer an internet questionnaire before March 16.

Speak to **Richard Kiniry** for more information and an application.





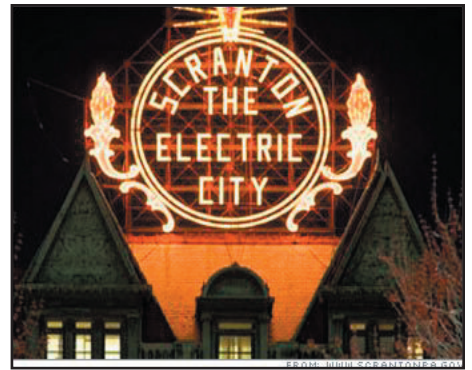
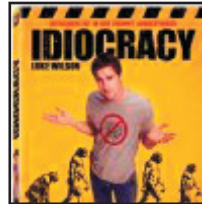
## FEBRUARY THURSDAY NIGHT TALKIES

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

Movie, Discussion, Popcorn and Pop

### IDIOCRACY

This film by Mike Judge makes a satiric contribution to Darwin's theory of evolution. A narrator explains that natural selection is indifferent to intelligence, so that in a society in which intelligence is systematically debased, stupid people easily out-breed the intelligent, creating, over the course of five centuries, an irremediably dysfunctional society. Demographic superiority favors those least likely to advance society. Consequently, the children of the educated élites are drowned in a sea of sexually promiscuous, illiterate, alcoholic, proletarian peers.



## SAVE THE DATE

June 17-20, 2010

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

95<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly

To be held at

The University of Scranton  
Scranton, Pennsylvania



## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL MEETING

SATURDAY, MARCH 20  
9:00 AM—5:00 PM

You are invited to the Amnesty International Regional Conference which will take place on **Saturday, March 20, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM** at the Philadelphia Ethical Humanist Society, 1906 South Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia.

There will be an exciting array of guest speakers and panels on immigration detention, the death penalty, poverty and human rights. This event is free and open to the public, and light breakfast and lunch will be provided. Contact **Ron Coburn** for information about registration.



## 2010 Service Auction

This year's service offerings present quite an interesting collection of possibilities that take place during the spring, summer and fall. Offers include;

- \*a 30-minute chair massage;
- \*private coaching about using Non-Violent Communication methods;
- \*a night of story-telling;
- \*tee shirts for sale;
- \*pet sitting, walking, manicuring;
- \*creation of a living will or medical power of attorney;
- \*a 1-1/2 hour canoe ride along Brandywine Creek;
- \*a gala Canoe Carnival parade under the stars at Medford Lakes, NJ;
- \*specialty dinners in the homes of some of our members;
- \*a Phillies game;
- \*chocolate biscotti with Kahlua;
- \*a Jamaican fly away home;
- \*an afternoon reading of a play;
- \*brunch and a movie;
- \*an early supper at a Philadelphia cafe;
- \*a \$50 Trader Joe's credit card;
- \*a Vermont getaway.



This is a fund raiser to benefit the Ethical Humanist Society. Following the next several Sunday Platforms, these offers will be displayed on a table in the 2nd floor event room at which time you can sign up. You may also call the Office at **(215) 735 - 3456** or email [office@phillyethics.org](mailto:office@phillyethics.org) to sign up or to get more information. Contributions are made directly to the Society.

## 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



## 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.

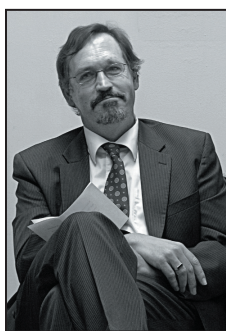
Nominees for the Board of Trustees and Officer positions shall have had at least one full year of membership prior to their election, and nominees for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency shall have had at least one additional year’s experience as a Trustee. If you would like to be a candidate, please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



**January 10**

*Working on a Local Level for Decent Health Care for All in Philadelphia*

**Speaker:** Carol Rogers, recently retired Physician Assistant and Health Educator with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health



**January 17**

*Ethical Culture as More than a Religion*

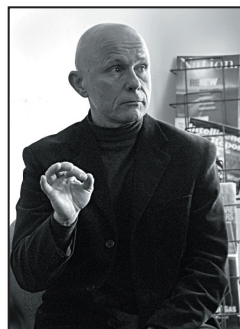
**Speaker:** Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader-Intern, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia



**January 31**

*Looking Ahead at Health Care in the United States*

**Speakers:** Sylvia Metzler, Nurse Practitioner, and Ron Coburn, MD and Member of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia



**February 14**

*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

## SUNDAY PLATFORM GUEST SPEAKERS

JANUARY  
AND  
FEBRUARY  
2010



**February 21**

*Challenging Children’s and Adults’ Misperceptions about the African Continent*

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












Staff Photo

**February 28**

*Feminism in the Twenty-first Century*

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

# March 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b> Class -7:15 pm <b>Ethical Exploration:</b> Morality Beyond The Self	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee	<b>4</b>  Terry Martin-Murley	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
*Child care provided during Platforms						
<b>7</b> *11:00 a.m. Platform: <i>Why President Obama is Wrong about Afghanistan</i> Richard L. Kiniry*	<b>8</b> Class-7:30pm <b>Intro to Ethical Humanism</b>	<b>9</b> Class -7:30 pm <b>Worldly Wisdom</b>	<b>10</b> <b>Meetings</b> 6:30 p.m. Education Committee 7:30 p.m. Ethical Action Cmte.	<b>11</b> <i>Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Meeting</i> 6:30pm 	<b>12</b>  Lew Wilkinson	<b>13</b> Camp Linden Volunteer Day 12 PM
<b>14</b> *11:00 a.m. Platform: <i>Organizing Around the Triple Threat: How Unions Can Help Us Build a Better Future</i> Jerry Silberman	<b>15</b> EHSOP Doo-wop** at Doobies 6:30 pm	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> <b>Meetings</b> 6:30 p.m. Executive Committee 7:30 p.m. Board of Trustees	<b>18</b> Thursday <b>Night</b>  <b>Talkies</b> 7:15 p.m. (Weston Rm)	<b>19</b>  Saul Machles	<b>20</b>  <b>Amnesty Internat'l Regional Meeting</b> 9:00a.m-5:00p.m.
<b>21</b> *11:00 a.m. Platform: <i>Learning to be Inclusive: An Ally's Education in LGBTQness</i> Hugh Taft-Morales	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>  Susan Jo Klein	<b>24</b> <b>Meeting</b> 7:00 p.m. Camp Linden Board	<b>25</b>  <b>Amnesty International</b> 7:00 p.m.	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Camp Linden Volunteer Day 12 PM
<b>28</b> *11:00 a.m. Platform: <i>Spring Festival</i>  12:30p.m. <i>Pledge Luncheon</i>						
				 Birthdays		



\*\*Just check out that lively Juke Box  
at Doobies!  
2201 Lombard Street  
Monday, March 15th - 6:30 pm

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*Editor*, Ellen Rose  
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**Ethical Humanist Society  
of Philadelphia**

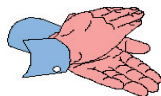
Richard Kiniry, Leader

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## SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

**Flower Dedications** - Ramona Ward,  
Coordinator

March 7 - Lyle Murley: "In Honor of My  
Loving Wife, Terry Martin-Murley."

March 14 - Ellen Rose: "Happy Birthday  
to My Granddaughter, Madeleine."

March 21 - David Collier: "In Memory  
of My Parents, W. Edwin & Laura M.  
Collier."

March 28 - Chuck Ward: "To  
Marshall Rosenberg, the Founder of  
Compassionate  
Communication."

**Ushers** - Betsy Lightborn, Coordinator

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

**Greeters** - Ken Greiff, Coordinator

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

**Coffee Hour Lunch**

March 7 - Group A-D  
March 14 - Group E-K  
March 21 - Group L-O  
March 28 - Group P-Z

**Photo credits**

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of Philadelphia**  
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