



Ethical Views

May 2010

Vol. 124, No. 9 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Sunday Platforms

Sunday, May 2, 2010

Building Ethical Democracy

Speaker: Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, American Ethical Union

Democracy faces serious internal and external challenges. Internally we are paralyzed by partisan hostility, sound-bite media coverage, culture wars and a selfish individualism corrosive of the common good. On the outside we confront international terrorism, global economic chaos and environmental degradation. Can democracy be reenergized by appreciating it as not merely a form of government, but as an approach to human relationships? Can we find sufficient inspiration within the democratic humanist tradition to nurture simple civility and cooperative leadership? If we follow Ethical Humanism's advice to bring out the best in others and ourselves, can we actually build an ethical democracy?

Sunday, May 9, 2010

The Hidden Sides of Motherhood: Mothering and Aggression

Speaker: Doris Leicher, Psychotherapist and Member of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Taking off from the original meaning of Mothers' Day—a protest of mothers

against their children being killed in war—this presentation will look at the special challenges humans (compared to other species) face in raising a child well. Theories of motherhood and their economic underpinnings will be reviewed, including some revisions to traditional psychodynamic theory in the light of modern neurological research and attachment theory. This will lead to an analysis of our present situation, highlighting challenges and opportunities.

Sunday, May 16, 2010

The Worth of Useless People

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

Stop and notice how you actually treat others. We may claim to be a good person because we stand up for certain values but we ought to judge our goodness by how we treat the least among us.

Sunday, May 23, 2010

An African-American Life Journey

Speaker: Richard J. Watson, Exhibits Director, Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum

Through a presentation of anecdotes, prose, music and visual references, Fine Artist Richard J. Watson reflects upon perspectives for living and choices made in the navigation of his personal journey through life.

Sunday, May 30, 2010

Bringing Out the Best in Capitalism

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

The essence of capitalism would seem to be maximizing your own self-interest. Is there any room for morality in such a system? Can you find the best in yourself if you are bringing out the worst in others? ◇



Start of the Summer Program

Although our regular Platforms will be in abeyance until after Labor Day, we will have Sunday morning events almost every Sunday during the summer. All will start at 10 a.m. and will be held in our air-conditioned meeting space with coffee following.

The first event will take place on **June 6th**: Justice in three parts—a discussion led by Richard Kiniry. (See more at the bottom of Page 2.)

In This Issue

- 1 Platforms; Camp Linden Picnic; Start of the Summer Program
- 2 Leader's Message; Thank-you to Scott Pryor; Intro to Ethical Humanism; Justice in Three Parts
- 3 Secular Concerns Raised at the White House; American Ethical Union 95th Annual Assembly
- 4 Classes: Exploring Felix Adler; Worldly Wisdom: Great Books and the Meaning of Life. Annual Membership Meeting; Thursday Night Talkies
- 5 Calendar
- 6 Flower Dedications, Sunday Morning Volunteers

**Camp
Linden
Annual
Picnic**



The Camp Linden Annual Picnic
will take place on
Sunday, June 13, 2008



Lots of Friends -- Lots of Food -- Lots of Fun!
\$10 for anyone contributing a dish;
\$15 for anyone who doesn't

We will leave the Society building at 10:30 a.m.
Call the office to reserve a ride or to offer one.



Leader's Message

Richard L. Kiniry

Recently WHYY presented a two-part series on Mormonism. The show was relatively objective and therefore presented a religion with a strange history. While I have trouble understanding how anyone could believe Mormonism's far-fetched story, I have to remind myself how far-fetched older (and therefore more acceptable) the stories of other religions are. And yet all those religions claim a membership in the millions while Ethical Humanism, that offers everyday living without magic as its story, can claim only several thousand members. Obviously the lack of a far-fetched story has not helped us grow.

While we might be proud of our clear-headedness, we ought to also be doing a better job of telling our clear-headed story. In the opening statement that we read on Sunday mornings we talk of faith and a supreme aim of human life. Both of those ideas are heavy, full of connections and connotations that we don't often examine. I guess we could dig into those connotations and with a few obtuse phrases make our story sound rather far-fetched but we don't have to bother. To a world accustomed to far-fetched belief systems our sensible, human-oriented beliefs can sound like the weird story.

We are an Ethical Humanist religious community that is non-dogmatic in its approach to its belief claims. As a result some of our most basic principles go unappreciated or misunderstood by some members who feel free to take them with quite a few grains of salt.

Since I honestly assume that the far-fetched stories of some traditional religions are part of the reason

humankind has such trouble creating a kinder, better world (they center life in other, unnatural realities rather than in social relations with life), and since I believe Ethical Humanism's sensible, fetching story is our primary tool in making a better world, then members ought to be clear in their understanding of our stated beliefs. We offer a rational vision of involvement with and responsibility for the life around us not with rituals but in the way we live our lives. That is not just a philosophy, it is also a recommended way of living—a guide for the perplexed. The more we understand that way of life, the more confident we can be in recommending Ethical Humanism to others.

In other words, we have a good product (sorry about the use of that capitalistic term) and we ought to spread the word. And since I will be speaking twice in May, I have decided to use those occasions to approach two of our key ideas: intrinsic worth and Adler's statement, "Act so to elicit the best in others, thereby bringing out the best in yourself". They are key to understanding our approach. Intrinsic worth explains our perspective on reality: living is a relationship among equals. And "Act so..." is our recommendation on how to act in those relationships.

Rather than just talking about those core values I want to place those ideas in real life situations and will do that by discussing *The Worth of Useless People* and *Bringing Out the Best in Capitalism*. <>



Our thanks to **Scott Pryor**, songwriter and guitarist, who performed some of his work for us on Sunday, April 4, 2010.

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

Sunday, May 9, 1:30 PM



JUSTICE IN THREE PARTS— A DISCUSSION LED BY RICHARD KINIRY

Michael Sandel, Professor of Government at Harvard, has taken his course on ethics into a book, *Justice*, and into a PBS show of the same name. Starting on **June 6** and continuing on **July 11** and **August 1** we will travel with him as he examines the ethical theories using practical examples to enhance understanding. We will start by examining Utilitarianism and Libertarianism. You don't have to read the book or see the show to participate but it would help.

Secular Concerns Raised at the White House

—Arnold Fishman

As the former President of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia and American Ethical Union, I represent the Ethical Humanist movement on the Board of the Secular Coalition for America (SCA), a federation comprised of eleven national organizations devoted to, among other things, advancing the concept of the separation of church and state. President Obama in his inaugural address and in subsequent speeches has been careful to not leave out those of us devoted to that goal. While some thought this was merely lip service, others wanted to test the administration's resolve. The SCA asked for a meeting. To our great surprise and joy, the answer was "Yes." The meeting was set for February 26, 2010.

I dutifully submitted background information and made my train and hotel reservations. Security was tight. There was an identity check to enter

the grounds and another to enter the building. These were followed by the ubiquitous x-ray scan of your bag and metal detector scrutiny of your person. An electronic pass had to be worn so your whereabouts were known at all times.

I was disappointed that the briefing was not in the White house but in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building across the street, and that the President made no appearance. Our host was a young Obama look alike from the White House Office of Public Engagement whose impossible charge must be to pander to and try to placate the disparate groups that make up this great nation. The administration had gathered representatives of various departments of the Executive Branch to address our concerns. Since this was the first meeting between the Executive Branch and the secular community that anyone could remember, the ground rules were carefully explained. In order to have a frank exchange of ideas, it was emphasized that anything said by

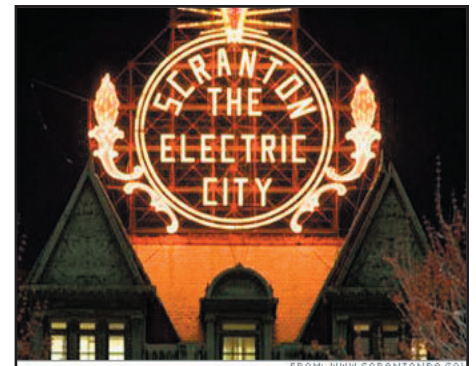
the Administration was on background (i.e., off the record). We were permitted to reveal what we said but not what was said in response.

We raised three issues: 1) the federal neutrality to the "religious exemption" embedded in child abuse statutes in many states; 2) the overt religiosity of some commanding military officers and the resulting discrimination against those subordinates who do not share that world view; and 3) the federal support of "Faith Based" organizations that discriminate in hiring and firing and blatantly proselytize the public they serve without advising them of secular alternatives. This issue was addressed by a representative of the Department of Health and Human Services. A representative from the Department of Defense Office of Public Policy handled the military question. And the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department dispatched a young man who fielded the religious funding problem. ◇



From left to right: Brown, Pergams, Archibald, Chuman and Fishman.

AEU Representatives to this briefing included): **Frank Brown, Esq.**, Land Use Law attorney from the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County; **Dr. Oliver Pergams**, who serves on the Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago Board of Directors and as a Biology Professor at Oliver-Harvey College and a Visiting Research Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago; **Dr. Joseph Chuman**, Leader of the New York Society for Ethical Culture and the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County and Professor of Human Rights at Columbia University; **Arnold Fishman, Esq.**, AEU Board of Directors, Past President of the American Ethical Union and Past President of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia; and **Katharine Archibald**, Executive Director of the American Ethical Union and member of the Ethical Society Without Walls.



SAVE THE DATE

June 17-20, 2010

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION
95th Annual Assembly

To be held at

The University of Scranton
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Exploring Felix Adler, the Founder of Ethical Culture

Monday, May 3, 7:00-9:00PM

Led by **Hugh Taft-Morales**, Leader, American Ethical Union



I do not invite you to accept my religion. I ask you to consider the practical directions for the conduct of life which follow from it, and if having tested them, you find them valid in your experience, then they will be of service to you. - Felix Adler

In *Exploring Felix Adler* we will discuss the influences on Adler's philosophy, his vision for Ethical Culture, as well as his perspective on religion, society, relationships, and human nature. Readings will be available electronically or in hard copy at the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia.

On May 3 we will engage in a detailed discussion of Adler's idealism, including "the ethical manifold," and his ethical commitment to both "bringing out the best in others and thus in yourself" and "deed before creed." We will conclude with a discussion of his essay, "Some Characteristics of the American Ethical Movement," delivered in London, June 7, 1925.

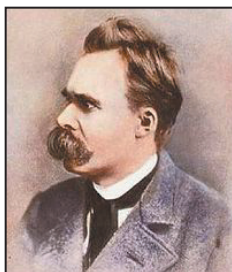


Hugh Taft-Morales



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 May we will be discussing Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

Tuesday, May 11, at 7:30 PM

THURSDAY NIGHT TALKIES

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2010 - 7:15 P.M.



DIRT! THE MOVIE


Movie, Discussion, Popcorn and Pop

Narrated by award-winning actress, author and social activist Jamie Lee Curtis, "DIRT! The Movie" explains how four billion years of evolution have created the dirt that recycles our water, gives us food, provides us shelter and can be used as a source of medicine, beauty and culture.



Filmmakers Bill Benenson and Gene Rosow are shown as they travel to more than 20 locations around the world, visiting renowned global visionaries who are discovering new ways of thinking as they come together to repair this natural resource with practical, viable solutions.

May 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
*Child care provided during Platforms						
2 *11:00 a.m. Platform: Building Ethical Democracy Hugh Taft-Morales	3 Exploring Felix Adler Hugh Taft-Morales 7-9:00 p.m.	4	5 Meeting 6:30 p.m Finance Committee	6	7	8 CAMP LINDEN VOLUNTEER DAY 12 Noon
9 *11:00 a.m. Platform: The Hidden Sides of Motherhood Doris Leicher 1:30 p.m. - Intro to Ethical Humanism	10	11 Class -7:30 pm Worldly Wisdom	12 Meetings 6:30 p.m. Education Committee 7:30 p.m. Ethical Action Cmte.	13 Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Meeting 6:00pm	14	15
16 *11:00 a.m. Platform: The Worth of Useless People Richard L. Kiniry 12:30 p.m. - Members Annual Meeting	17	18	19 Meetings 6:30 p.m. Executive Committee 7:30 p.m. Board of Trustees	20 Thursday Night Talkie  7:15 p.m. (Weston Rm)	21	22 CAMP LINDEN VOLUNTEER DAY 12 Noon
23 *11:00 a.m. Platform: An African-American Life Journey Richard J. Watson	24	25	26 Meeting 7:00 p.m. Camp Linden Board	27  Amnesty International 7:00 p.m.	28	29
30 *11:00 a.m. Platform: Bringing Out the Best in Capitalism Richard L. Kiniry	31	<div><div>MAY BIRTHDAYS</div><div><div>May 01</div><div>May 01</div><div>May 03</div></div><div><div>Jim Cummings</div><div>Felicia Hinson</div><div>Judith Will</div></div></div> <div></div>				

Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

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Distribution, Jean Bradley
Web Master, Nick Sanders

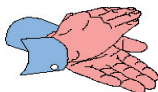
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SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

Flower Dedications - Ramona Ward,
Coordinator

May 2 - Carol Love, MD: "In Loving
Memory of My Mother Sheila, Who Did
Not Suffer Fools Gladly But Put Up
With Me!"

May 9 - Jean: "To My Loving Husband
Saul, My Friend and Partner."

May 16 - Temma and Arnold Fishman:
"In Celebration of Our Fifth Wedding
Anniversary Daughter-in-law, Brandi and
Son, Craig."

May 23 - Richard Kiniry: "In Honor of
My Sister, Mary Eileen."

May 30 - Temma and Arnold Fishman:
"In Celebration of Daughter Cindy's
Birthday."

Ushers - Betsy Lightborn, Coordinator

May 2 -
May 9 -
May 16 - T.B.A.
May 23 -
May 30 -

Greeters - Ken Greiff, Coordinator

May 2 -
May 9 -
May 16 - T.B.A.
May 23 -
May 30 -

Coffee Hour Lunch

May 4 - Group A-D
May 11 - Group E-K
May 18 - Group L-O
May 25 - Group P-Z
May 30 - All Groups

Photo credits

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