



Ethical Views

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Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

November 2010

Platforms

Sunday, November 7, 2010

Finding Meaning in the Ordinary

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

What does it mean to live a meaningful life? Everyone's life means something, but can a meaningful life be negative, even evil?

Sunday, November 14, 2010

Ethical Considerations in Human Subjects' Protections

Speaker: Megan Kasimatis Singleton, Associate Director for Education and Training at the University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board (IRB)

This talk will review the foundational ethical principles that govern human subjects' protections in research and discuss how each of these principles is practically applied to the conduct of research. Consideration will be given to the historical abuses that inspired human subjects' protections and the application of foundational ethical principles to current challenges in biomedical and social-behavioral research.



Sunday, November 21, 2010

Humanist Thanksgiving

The Society's annual celebration of the bounty of life. As we share a Thanksgiving meal produced by the members, we celebrate harvest time with song, poetry and reflection. We both honor the bounty of the earth and remember the unequal distribution of that bounty in our human world. We will have a special collection for Philabundance.

Sunday, November 28, 2010

Reflections on Peace Work: The Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

Speaker: Peter Lems, Program Director for Education and Advocacy Iraq and Afghanistan, American Friends Service Committee

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have challenged the peace community. Fueled by anger over the 9/11 criminal attacks on the United States, public opinion was wildly supportive of a new policy called the war on terror. Responding militarily to a criminal act was a lost opportunity to strengthen non-military international institutions that could hold those responsible accountable and offer a means of protection against further attacks against civilians in other countries. US military

Humanist Thanksgiving

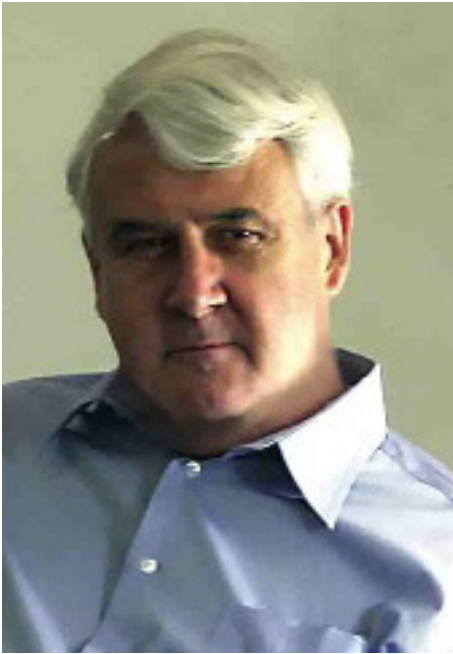
Sunday, November 21, 11:00 a.m.

Join Members and friends for a Humanist Thanksgiving Festival. Share in the feast prepared with loving hands by our community. In addition to the fabulous turkey, a treasured tradition, we need folks to bring their favorite side dishes. Be prepared to sign up on Sunday mornings with your contribution. With music, poetry, readings and song, we will celebrate Fall's bounty and the company of friends. Ten dollars if you bring a dish, 15 if you don't. Victoria Kent will be the impresario for the event, so please talk to her about the contribution you wish to make. We will need plenty of people to help with setup and cleanup.



Our Humanist Thanksgiving will have Traditional and Vegan options.

spending has increased 69% over this decade. That does not include the \$1 billion actually spent on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As we enter year ten of the war in Afghanistan, what are the opportunities for peace? What challenges lie ahead for the US's announced withdrawal of all forces from Iraq? What has been the war's impact on the bordering states?



Richard L. Kiniry, Leader

Leader's Message

Richard L. Kiniry

The Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia is a loosely connected community. Mostly we see each other on Sundays, and then not every Sunday. What ultimately hold us together are the relationships we have built within the group, and those relationships are based on shared interests. The activities of the Society attract certain kinds of people and the members coalesce around some of those activities. But that involvement can also restrict a member's more complete understanding of what the Society is all about. While there are divergent interests within the Society, those interests represent varied attempts at meaningful living.

Since we are without unconditional principles, members are granted latitude in their personal understanding of our philosophy and through the years we have accepted that the purpose of the Society is not one dimensional. In fact we are in the habit of saying we have three missions—community, education and ethical action—and those missions have been translated into our committee structure.

That structure may be too tight a fit for the unique interests of some members but it

can also conceal our primary purpose. Although we accept that much of what passes for religion these days is more a problem than a solution, we are also in the religion business; we attempt to fulfill the function of offering a framework for meaningful living.

Meaning is a complicated word. It is one thing to ask about the meaning of the word life and another to ask about the meaning of life. While we Ethical Humanists supposedly believe that meaning is a human issue and personal to each human being, the feeling that life with a capital L has some greater meaning is hard to abandon.

Beside the designated three missions of the Society, that meaning aspect is part of our larger understanding of who we are. Ultimately the purpose of the Society is to offer an approach to living meaningfully. And that I believe is our primary mission—helping people to move past failed religious understandings to one based on a naturalistic, ethical relationship with all of life.

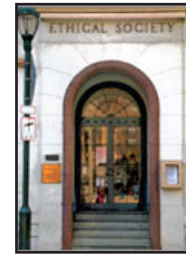
But who needs it? If you are enjoying living and doing something you think is worth doing, then does it have to mean something? Or is that what meaningful means? At certain times in life we retrospectively examine our past and wonder if that living was well done, or important or good. Does that mean we desire meaningful living?

While as a group we are concerned about social issues and making a better world, do we take seriously the job of helping each other attach meaning to our lives? At the Platform on November 7th I will be asking those questions, asking what meaningful living is and asking if the Society is helping with those questions.



CLASSES

ETHICS FOR CHILDREN



Each Sunday the Society offers a children's program at the same time as the Platform. Although this is a "one-room school house," we will have age-appropriate activities for all age groups. The underlying theme of the classroom will be the children's growing awareness of the world around them and developing an appreciation of all forms of life. Relationships with parents, siblings, animal and human friends and plant life are stressed. We have a certified teacher and will use the text "Love Your Neighbor."

Worldly Wisdom

GREAT BOOKS AND THE MEANING OF LIFE



James Sloan Allen has created a humanist approach to the Great Books. His 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. His focus is the humanist ideas that appear in all these historic writings.

This 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 of this reading group is we will have 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 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.

Since the meetings are planned for the third Tuesday of the month, our next meeting will be November 16 at 7:30pm. The reading for this month is Dostoevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor."

KIVA Report

Kate Esposito

For those of you who don't know, the Ethical Humanist Society is involved in an international micro-lending organization called KIVA. KIVA acts as a clearinghouse for lending small loans to various field partners who in turn lend to small collectives and individuals primarily in third world countries. These entrepreneurs are involved in various manufacturing, agricultural, service, construction and food distribution activities.

Currently EHSOP has fifteen active loans in the "paying back" status. Three are in Ecuador, two in the Dominican Republic, Viet Nam and Cambodia, and one each in South Sudan, Bolivia, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan. One loan is currently delinquent, but \$12.01 has been paid back of the \$25.00 lent to a Beauty Salon in the Dominican Republic named "Dreaming Women." We have made 26 loans in total and only one has defaulted with a loss of \$272.00 made to a woman in Ecuador. As of this writing (October 12), we have \$211.45 available to lend

and \$462.78 in outstanding loans being paid back.

The history of our loan-making reveals that we have made 69% of our loans to women and 31% to men in the following sector breakdown: Food Production 30.8%, Retail 19.2%, Agriculture 15.4%, Manufacturing 11.5%, Clothing 11.5%, Services 7.7% and Construction 3.9%.

Since I have taken over as loan manager in April, I have developed a philosophy of sorts. I look for opportunities to lend primarily to women, since they are most directly responsible for the welfare of their children, and those involved in food production or distribution in countries where I believe we owe a debt of repayment, like Viet Nam, or in countries where there is particular known distress. For example, I tried to loan to Haiti, but unfortunately, there were no opportunities listed for that country. So I made two loans to the Dominican Republic, since many of the collectives there include Haitian earthquake refugees. In the next round of loan-making this month I will

look particularly at opportunities in Pakistan and Haiti again and Afghanistan and Iraq.

I employ two strategies to protect our investments. First I look at the rating of the lending "field partner" and secondly I make small loans of between \$25 and \$75, minimizing the potential for default. Unfortunately, we have to pay a fee for every loan we make, so in that sense we deplete our lending capital. I must confess that at first I was somewhat unsure about how to do this job, but now, especially as I see the loans being paid back, this undertaking has become very rewarding.

I think we at EHSOP should all be proud of the profound difference so little money can make in the lives of fishers, farmers, paper sellers and weavers—all hardworking people trying to carve out their existence in very poor countries. So please, at the next opportunity presented to support KIVA, do so with an open heart and with as much generosity as possible.

I welcome any questions and comments.

Fellow Members and Friends...We need your help!

Kate Esposito

Cash flow is a financial principle that most of us can appreciate. I am always aware of when my paycheck hits the bank via direct deposit. The predictability helps me plan what bills I can pay when, always prioritizing that the rent gets paid first. With the Society it's different. Income is not that predictable, depending on rentals and outsources. We can help the Society's cash

flow by paying our pledges in a timely fashion, trying to make sure we keep up with what we have pledged by spreading out our payments over the course of the year. Last year, I was not keeping up myself, and when I got Nick's letter, I was surprised to find out that I was that much behind!

So, please folks, to the best of our abilities, let's all try to keep up with our pledges in a timely fashion. Undoubtedly, it will help with our own cash flow as well.

Staff & Board of Trustees

Richard Kiniry
Leader

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Ken Greiff

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Ethical Masochism

Lyle Murley

Please continue to pepper the Search Committee with your ideas about the next Leader—we on the committee need to be pushed and even welcome it, so long as you do it with gentle clarity. Since each person's opinions do have consequences with us, make sure your ideas are in the barrage we are confronting. We need to hear from each of you, and we need to be bombarded with your opinions because our inferences have to be grounded in your ideas.

The flurry of ideas began with the opening opinion barrage of 2010 Surveys; that was followed by small group meetings designed to elicit deeper views about the Society, about members' commitments and about hopes for a new Leader. But the Search Committee wants and needs to hear more. At this time in November, we are still rather comfortably thinking about possibilities and

ideals. Soon, though, we on the committee will be confronting real applicants with their own strengths, goals and expectations. And we will be looking at the tension inherent in balancing our needs, commitments and hopes with individuals who are seeking to fulfill their personal and vocational commitments. We need you to get us fit for the real challenges.

The more we know about "us," the more chance we have in reaching a realistic balance of a new Leader ready to lead us and a Society ready to support that person's leadership. Talk to, call or e-mail any one of us. By January we hope to have concluded the feasibility stage of our search and to have received clear financial guidelines from the Board of Trustees. At that time we will initiate the actual search.

Besides learning about our own Society, the Search Committee is actively engaged in corresponding with people who have shown enough interest in our opening to initiate preliminary discussions. The committee

is grateful for the ways in which Richard, Trustees and others have helped to get the word out to a wide variety of people and we are pleased by the initial interest that has been generated. Our web page and the AEU web page should be getting some hits as potential candidates explore who we are. We think the interchanges with those who inquire about the opening will be significant helps as we define the actual search.

It is clear that each member of the Search Committee listens in his or her own way, reads in her or his own way and seems to be making inferences in manifold ways. Our masochism is that we desire to be prodded to hear your ideas, prodded to open our minds and prodded to consider many perspectives as we move towards interactions with candidates. So, continue to pepper us with your ideas.

The targeted five are Ron Coburn, Kate Esposito, Betsy Lightbourn, Lyle Murley and Linda Richardson.

Calendar

EACH SUNDAY - 11:00 AM PLATFORM

- Nov. 3 - 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee
- 7:30 PM Education Committee
- Nov. 4 - 7:00 PM Get to Know Us Social
- Nov. 9 - 7:00 PM Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty
- Nov. 10 - 6:30 PM Finance Committee
- Nov. 16 - 7:30 PM Worldly Wisdom Class
- Nov. 17 - 7:30 PM Board of Trustees
- Nov. 18 - 7:00 PM Amnesty International

Birthdays

- Nov. 7 - Irene Putzer
- Nov. 29 - Howard Peer

Flower Dedications

- Arnold Fishman for Nov 7.
- Lyle Murley and Terry Martin-Murley for Nov. 14: Happy 34th Anniversary.
- Ron Coburn Nov 21.
- Doris Dabrowsky Nov. 28th.

Ushers

- Nov. 7 - Jim Cummings and Nick Sanders
- Other Sundays - To be announced

Greeters

- To be announced

ALERT:

Using Society's Wheelchair Lift

Entrance to, and use of, the wheelchair lift from Manning Street requires assistance from someone inside the building. Thus, a person should arrange for such assistance

at least 10 minutes before seeking entrance and 15 minutes before the start of the event. We do not have an independently accessible entrance.

Coffee Hour Lunch

Nov. 7 - Group A-D
Nov. 14 - Group E-K

Nov. 21 - Group L-O
Nov. 28 - Group P-Z

