



Ethical Views

October 2012 Vol. 127, No. 2 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Sunday Platforms



Sunday, October 7, 2012, 11:00 AM

Blessed are the Fact Checkers

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

From Orwell's propaganda ministry that uses newspeak to turn truth upside down, to Karl Rove declaring that he "makes reality," to Steven Colbert's embrace of "truthiness," truth has always been evasive. While campaign spinners make our heads spin, can the media hold our politicians to a higher standard? Is real investigative journalism just a quaint relic of the past? Hugh Taft-Morales explores the importance of an endangered species: truth in the media.

Sunday, October 14, 2012, 11:00 AM



Faith for Faithless Times

Richard Kiniry, Leader Emeritus of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Ethical Humanism claims each person plays a part in creating our human world. So, are we proud of our handiwork? While Ethical Society members may have trouble living up to that belief, most human beings have never heard of the idea. Trying to live that principle could change our world and human beings can learn to find their meaning in life in positive involvement in their relations with others and the natural world. Ethical Humanism is a very good idea; we ought to spread the word.

Richard Kiniry served as our Leader from 1990-2011. A former Roman Catholic seminarian, Peace Corps volunteer in India, and stained glass artisan, Richard joined the Philadelphia Ethical Society in 1984 after a prolonged search for a naturalistic religion that combined humanism with social justice. He became a Certified Leader in 1990.

Among his many accomplishments as Leader were the reopening of Camp Linden as a Day Camp serving underprivileged youth, and related efforts to bolster the quality of life of families living in the Strawberry Mansion section of North Philadelphia. As an active participant in the American Ethical Union, he served in a variety of leadership roles including President of the National Leaders Council, and as Chair of the AEU Ethical Action Committee.

Sunday, October 21, 2012, 11:00 AM

Bringing Out Our Sunday Best

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Many members of the Ethical Humanist Society look forward to our Sunday morning program because it offers community time to connect with friends. Some members are eager for some freethinking intellectual engagement. Others find inspiration and opportunity to engage in ethical action. And for others it's all three! Hugh reflects on what is most important to him about our Sunday morning platform: creation of a special space to honor our deepest values. It's why he puts on his "Sunday best!"

Sunday, October 28, 2012, 11:00 AM

Felix Adler's Vision, Here and Now

Bart Worden, Executive Director of the American Ethical Union and Leader, Ethical Culture Society of Westchester

In 1876 the founder of the first Society for Ethical Culture, Felix Adler, said in his inaugural address: "There is a great and crying evil in modern society. It is want of purpose. It is that narrowness of vision which shuts out the wider vistas of the soul. It is the absence of those sublime emotions which, wherever they arise, do not fail to exalt and consecrate existence." Adler's hope was that Ethical Societies would inspire people to experience profound purposefulness, coupled with

an expansive vision of humanity and a passion realizing each person's worth and dignity—and that would lead us toward a richly humane and just society. How well does Adler's concern reflect our concerns today?

Bart Worden, a longtime member of the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester, NY, was recently named Executive Director for the American Ethical Union, and continues to serve the Westchester Society as their Leader. He has been an active participant with a number of AEU committees and task forces, has served on the AEU board as a National Leaders Council representative, and is a faculty member for the AEU Lay Leadership Summer School.

Bart holds a B.A. (1978) in the Philosophy of Religion from Hope College, Holland, MI, and a Masters in Social Work from NYU, 1983. He has worked as a social worker and psychotherapist for adults with psychiatric disabilities. He currently serves The Guidance Center of Westchester as the organization's Associate Executive Director. Bart graduated from the Humanist Institute in 1997 and worked as a leader-intern at the New York Society for Ethical Culture prior to his appointment as Leader for the Westchester Society in 1998.



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Leader's Column



An Experiment in Democratic Dialogue

Hugh Taft-Morales

About a year ago I met Vince McKenna. As an active participant in the *Benjamin Franklin Thinking Society*, Vince was intrigued by the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. After some conversation, we decided to bring these two groups together to discuss Benjamin Franklin, Albert Einstein and some other great thinkers. It was during the spring of this year that Vince shared with me his particular interest in raising the level of public and political discourse in our country. Given the state of that discourse, it shouldn't be hard, right?

It is clear to anyone that current sound bytes and mudslinging by our leaders, or by anyone managing to get in front of a microphone, aren't working. There's little consensus on how to move forward. Our government has ground to gridlock, and public confidence in Congress has hit historic lows. As more and more important issues crowd our agenda – from climate change, to unemployment, to reform of the criminal justice system – we seem to be fiddling while Rome burns.

Vince encouraged me to seek solutions offered by President of the University of Pennsylvania, Amy Gutmann. An expert on both communications and political science, President Gutmann offers a way out of our current mess, though it won't be easy. She writes, "What are the prospects for progress? The prospects are great; the certainties (or even near-certainties) however, are few. Progress must not be measured by consensus. In fact, in light of the importance of human freedom, one measure of progress (although not the only one to be sure) is the degree of reasoned debate that surrounds important questions."

Reasoned debate. Was it not reasoned debate that gave birth to the first experiment in the agora of Athens? Was it

not reasoned debate that fueled the European enlightenment and swept away much superstition and bigotry? Was it not reasoned debate that led to the most profound document in the history of statecraft: the U. S. Constitution? This document was not a product of consensus or happy compromise. It was one hammered out in the pragmatic furnace of crisis with the tools that President Gutmann sees as fundamental: the "logic of argument," the "soundness of evidence," and the "breadth and depth of understanding."

The Constitution, like the political system it has guided, is far from perfect. It has allowed slavery, exploitation, and the marginalization of millions of people based on gender and class. But it has also provided the means for those groups to raise their voices and acquire the vote. Current efforts at voter restriction are sending us backward. We need more people engaged in the political process, not fewer. We need more people speaking out, not fewer. And that is the point of this year's *Democracy on Trial* experiment.

It's an experiment that reflects some important values of Ethical Humanism: citizenship, responsibility, reason, compassion, and trust. Although we're trying out a debate format, we are emphasizing communication and relationships, not winning and losing. By offering a safe, neutral platform for different perspectives to be analyzed and compared we hope to bring out the best in everyone.

While we have had several meet-ups about this program over the summer, it was in September that we held our first Democracy on Trial debate. The debate had not occurred at the time of this writing, but its purpose is best described on a website Vince created at www.democracyontrial.us. It explains that Democracy on Trial encourages citizens to review, discuss, and challenge the assumptions that form the basis of our democracy. Beginning with the Preamble of the Constitution, are we living up to its lofty goals in the interest of "we the people?"

We are going to try to discuss, debate, and critique that question with reason and respect. We hope to explore the

ethical implications of various political philosophies in an effort for a healthier democracy. The event will start with a debate between four volunteers from both the left and right of the political spectrum offering their perspectives on the proper "role of government." The audience will be asked to participate in a group discussion for the final part of the program in trying to address some of the following questions: What are the basic differences between the two sides in the debate? How do their values differ? What are the most important factors necessary to resolve our conflicts - knowledge, debate, compromise?

We hope that, from here you will go to future Democracy on Trial events, as well as to our companion program, Constitutional Crises, where I will be discussing important issues in relation to the Constitution, legal rulings, and ethics. My guest for this Monday evening Constitution Series will be University of Pennsylvania Law Professor Kim Roosevelt. We hope these programs will allow us all, citizens in a democracy on trial, to find a path toward resolution. At the very least, as president Gutmann said, "...The debate goes on, and our understanding grows." <>

The Constitution at Work

Monday, October 8, 7pm

Our Constitution series offers a series of explorations examining particular current social debates through the lens of the Constitution, related legal rulings, and ethical considerations. The first installment focuses on "Election Reform and the Right to Vote." University of Pennsylvania Law School Professor Kermit Roosevelt will share his expertise in constitutional law with Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. Questions to be explored include: What does the Constitution say about the right to vote? How does free speech and money affect our elections? What kinds of reforms are possible and constitutionally viable? A question and answer session with the audience and refreshments and conversation will conclude the evening.



**“My Ethical Culture,”
from our September 9, 2012
Platform**

Coming Out

By *Arnold Fishman*

After all these years it is time for me to escape the confines of the closet. I am a Social Democrat! (There, I said it and I am glad.) While there can be disagreement as to what that means, there can be no argument that it excludes the abysmal state of our current economic and political affairs. I confess this position with much trepidation, because I am aware that Capitalism, as a moral value in America, is on par with baseball, motherhood, and apple pie.

Let's talk first about Capitalism. The mantra of market-driven “laissez-faire” Capitalism is: “Price is determined in the market place through the interaction of supply and demand.” The validity of that axiom is dependant upon the existence of three unstated preconditions. They are: 1) an infinite number of sellers; 2) an infinite number of buyers; and 3) perfect knowledge. The unlimited number of sellers is required to prevent a situation like the DeBeers diamond cartel, where a group of sellers collaborate to control the supply in order to artificially inflate the cost. The unlimited number of buyers is required to prevent a giant buyer like Wal-Mart from dragooning sellers in order to unnaturally drive down the price. And the perfect knowledge prerequisite is obligatory to insure that the parties on both sides of the transaction are bargaining over the same thing. With all that on the table, it becomes clear that laissez-faire Capitalism exists only as an ideal.

Not only does laissez-faire Capitalism exist only in our imagination, but let us not overlook the role that government plays in our lives. While in one sense it is true that I have built my business, in another sense government has been my partner. The roads that my clients drive on to get to my office, the police and firefighters that protect that office, the zoning enforcement that permits my use and excludes incompatible neighbors, are all taxpayer-supported prerequisites of my success. From the grid that delivers the electricity to the person who delivers the mail, coordinated collective action is required. And where would lawyers be without the courts?

Less obvious but even more important are the strategic decisions made at each level of political authority. Tax

and trade policies as well as a myriad of other laws, resolutions, ordinances, regulations and executive orders have a pervasive impact on all economic activity. Whole industries and even entire segments of our economy come and go at the pleasure and whim of our elected and appointed officials.

Now let's turn to Democratic Socialism. I believe in a well-regulated market economy with a robust public sector and a government responsive to the aspirations of its citizens in its commitment to policies that would: 1) foster personal freedom and the inviolability of human rights as a means to, rather than an obstacle to achieving a pervasive climate of individual and collective security in an atmosphere of world peace; 2) environmental sustainability and the amelioration of the wounds we have inflicted on our planet as a path to, rather than an impediment to economic prosperity; and 3) a benevolently strong and tightly woven social safety net as an essential element of, rather than an intolerable burden upon a more just and humane society for our chosen tomorrow.

If that is not what Democratic Socialism is, then that is what it should be. And regardless of any labels, this is what I believe. The economy needs regulation because history should have taught us that the confluence of American ingenuity, our renowned tendency toward excess, and the rapacious greed of some of the players, forcing others to follow suit, would conspire to produce disastrous results. The strong public sector will smooth the boom and bust of the private economic sector. When consumers stop spending and private employers stop hiring, government can step in to save the day. It is at those times that investment can be made in the magnificent infrastructure projects that distinguish developed from third world countries. Those ventures create jobs that cannot be outsourced and produce taxpayers that reduce, rather than increase our staggeringly swelling national debt.

The governmental policies enumerated – liberty with safety, survival with comfort, empathy with fairness – on behalf of a brighter future will result in a rich and rewarding life not only for our posterity but also for us. We could rest content that we are keeping faith with our responsibility to help create a better world. As the proverb reminds us, “We do not inherit the world from our parents; we borrow it from our children.”

Who could oppose these ideas and on what basis? Aren't we all in that same closet? I've always imagined I wasn't alone. That is my Ethical Culture.

Send comments to: anfesq@aol.com

Ethical Action...Walking the Talk

Fall is upon us, a time when we rev up again, set our sights on our objectives and buckle down to work. This October there are two important issues that shout out, demanding our attention.

As of this writing, Terence Williams, a Pennsylvania death row inmate, is scheduled to be executed on October 3rd. Please contact the Governor and urge him to grant Terry clemency and set aside his execution. Terry, at the age of 17 and 18 did murder two men who had sexually abused him. This information was withheld from the jurors, four of whom after learning this, submitted affidavits that they would not have voted for the death penalty had they known Terry was a sexual assault victim and had been since the age of eight. The wife of one of the victims has publicly asked that Terry not be executed. Please be aware of this case and if he is still at risk of being executed, contact the Governor Corbett at [717-787-2500](tel:717-787-2500) or e-mail him at Governor@pa.gov and demand that Terry's life be spared and his death sentence be commuted to life in prison.



In a related issue, a Candlelight Vigil Against the Death Penalty, in tandem with World Day Against the Death Penalty, will be held on Wednesday, October 10th from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. at JFK Plaza (Love Park). We are co-sponsoring this event with the Philadelphia Chapter of Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Thus far, Amnesty International-Philadelphia Chapter has also endorsed and other groups are sure to sign on. It promises to be a moving event with music, poetry, speeches

reminding us that the threat of execution presently looms over more than 200 people in this Commonwealth and that 350 people have been executed here since 1915. As Ethical Humanists, believing in the intrinsic worth of every person, many of us believe it is a moral imperative to stand against the death penalty. Leader Hugh Taft Morales will participate in the Vigil, revisiting the issue, as he has publicly and strongly articulated a robust humanist position against capital punishment in a Platform this past May. So, please make it a point to be there.

In our July retreat, the Board took a position against the Pennsylvania Voter ID law. Since then we have joined the Pennsylvania Voter ID Coalition, sponsored by the Committee of Seventy. On many Saturdays, we will be organizing a group from EHSOP to walk districts to distribute information about the law's requirements so that voters will not be turned away from the polls. Their office is at 310 West Chelton Avenue in Philadelphia and can be reached at [215-848-1283](tel:215-848-1283). The best way to volunteer is to go to seventy.org, click on ELECTIONS, then VOTER ID and there is an e-mail address you can contact. If you would like to volunteer with one of our "brigades" please contact me at kmesposit@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you, wanting to join in this important, non-partisan work. Voting is a right, a cornerstone of our democracy. People died in gaining this right and to think that this would be denied ANY citizen is a travesty of justice. Shame upon those who are trying to suppress this right and we cannot be idle.

Please join with us this fall. WE are Ethical Action!

Kate Esposito,
Chair, Ethical Action Committee

Quote-Unquote

"God Who?"

--Title of an August 27, 2012 article
in *The New York Times Magazine*, pp.
40-51 about religious ministers who
become atheists and need support.

Introduction to Ethical Humanism

Sunday, October 7, 7:00PM



Come learn about Ethical Humanism. Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will offer a general presentation followed by more in-depth exploration of one aspect of Ethical Humanism. This month's focus will be *the inherent worth of every person*. Members and first-time visitors will share questions and reflections. Wine and cheese will be served. Open to the public.

Please RSVP to
leaderhugh@phillyethics.org



The Humanist Way

An Introduction to
Ethical Humanist Religion



EDWARD L. ERICSON
Foreword by Isaac Asimov

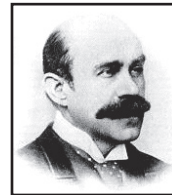
Book Discussion Series: *The Humanist Way* Monday, October 22, 7:00 PM

Come to the second part of our series of discussions about Ed Ericson's book, *The Humanist Way: An Introduction to Ethical Humanist Religion*. We will discuss Chapters 3, 4, and 5, focusing on evolution of humanism and Ethical Humanist values. Future discussions are scheduled for 7:00PM on November 19 and December 11.



Worldly Wisdom Tuesday, October 23 7:00 PM

We will be discussing "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* by Walter Pater, led by Jim DeHullu and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, led by Henry Pashkow and Ron Coburn.



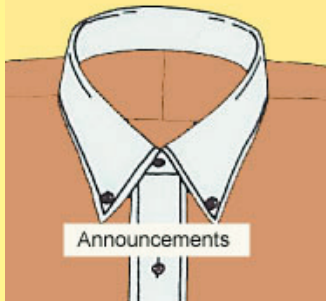
Walter Pater



Oscar Wilde

Button down those announcements, please

Based on suggestions from members and Hugh's creative vision, our Sunday morning Platform is evolving. One change involves streamlining our announcements. To assure information is relayed in a timely, concise manner, we are adopting the following procedure.



1. Announcements can be included in the printed Sunday program by submitting them to Dotti (office@phillyethics.org) by noon Thursdays.

2. Announcements can be given to the Platform Presider by 10:45 AM Sunday to be read by the Presider during the Platform.

3. If neither option is appropriate for your announcement, please make alternative arrangements with the Presider prior to the Platform.

Thank you for your cooperation in making our Sunday mornings better than ever.

--Betsy Lightbourn, Education Chair

Bringing the Rule of Law to Combat Tyranny

This summer marked the tenth anniversary of a major social institution, the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC is the first permanent, treaty-based, international criminal court established to help end impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, and thereby make less likely future occurrences of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

Today the ICC is a fully functional Netherlands, supported by 121 of arrest, established 15 cases, investigations. On 14 March verdict in the case The Prosecutor accused was found guilty of conscripting children under the using them to participate actively 14 years in prison.



institution in The Hague, countries. It has issued 20 warrants and is conducting seven ongoing 2012, the ICC rendered its first v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo. The the war crimes of enlisting and age of 15 into military forces, and in hostilities. He was sentenced to

The United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia, in conjunction with the Temple University Beasley School of Law and the International Law Committee of the Philadelphia Bar Association, sponsored a program to inform the public about the ICC and to celebrate its functioning. This program, held at the Free Library on September 10, included presentations by the Ambassador for War Crimes Issues in the U.S. Department of State; the President-Elect of the American Bar Association; and other experts in related areas of law. Hugh Taft-Morales and Nick Sanders attended, and would like to discuss this relatively new, important institution with others in the Society. Find more about the ICC: <http://www.icc-cpi.int/menus/icc/>



America the Philosophical

Thursday, November 1, 7:00PM



At the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia, Prof. Carlin Romano will speak about his book, *America the Philosophical*, with Hugh Taft-Morales. Prof. Romano rejects the longstanding cliché of America as an anti-intellectual society and contends that America today is the most philosophical culture in the history of the world. *The New York Times Book Review*, in a front-page review of the book on July 1, called it "ambitious... convincing... an encyclopedic survey of the life of the mind in the United States... Romano is enlightening when he analyzes American intellectual life and illustrates its liveliness."

Following a Q & A session, Prof. Romano will sign copies of his book that will be available for purchase.

Prof. Romano, Critic-at-Large of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and Literary Critic of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for twenty-five years (1984-2009), is Professor of Philosophy and Humanities at Ursinus College, Collegeville, PA. His criticism has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *The Village Voice*, *Harper's*, *The American Scholar*, *Salon*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and many other publications.

October 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Meetings 6:30 p.m. Education Committee **7:45 p.m. Ethical Action Committee	4	5	6
*7 11:00 a.m. <i>Blessed are the Fact-Checkers</i> Hugh Taft-Morales 7:00 p.m. Intro to Ethical Humanism	8 7:00PM The Con- stitution at Work	9 7:00 p.m. <i>Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty</i> Meeting	10 6:30p.m. Candlelight Vigil Against the Death Penalty @ Love Park Meeting 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee	11	12	13
*14 11:00 a.m. <i>Faith for Faithless Times</i> Richard Kiniry	15	16	17 Meeting 6:30 p.m. EHSOP Board	18	19	20
*21 11:00 a.m. <i>Bringing Out Our Sunday Best</i> Hugh Taft-Morales	22 7:00 p.m. Ethical Humanism Reading Group	23 Class 7:00 p.m. Worldly Wisdom <i>Renaissance; Dorian Gray</i>	24 Meeting 6:30 p.m. Camp Linden	25  Amnesty International 7:00 p.m.	26	27
*28 11:00 a.m. <i>Felix Adler's Vision, Here and Now</i> Bart Worden 1:30 p.m. Memorial for Jessie Zelnick	29	30	31			

*Child care provided
during all platforms

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS



- 1: Carol Kaufman
- 5: Jeffrey Dubb
- 14: Doris Leicher
- 16: David Collier

**If Terrence Williams does not receive a stay of execution, the EAC meeting will probably be canceled to permit attendance at a vigil to protest the Death Penalty.

Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

Editor, Pat McGeever
Layout, Janice Moore
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Web Master, Nick Sanders

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of Philadelphia**

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(215) 735 - 3456
office@phillyethics.org
www.phillyethics.org

SUNDAY SERVICE

This year, the Community Committee has decided to amalgamate the previously separate positions of greeters and ushers. They will be called ... "gushers." -No, they won't either; that's just your editor being silly. They will be "hosts."



Hosts - Nick Sanders, Coordinator

Oct. 7: Arnold and Temma Fishman

Oct. 14: Garry O'Rourke and someone
whose identity was undisclosed at
deadline



For the remainder of the month, please
remain alert.

Lunch (will become "snacks.") Ken Greiff,
coordinator

Oct. 7: Group A-E

Oct. 14: Group F-K

Oct. 21: Group L-O

Oct. 28: Group P-Z



Flowers (will continue to
be called "flowers") - David
Ralston, coordinator

Oct. 7: Molly and Nick's 10th anniversary

Oct. 14: In honor of Alvin Wolf, brother
and brother-in-law of Temma Wolf
Fishman and Arnold Fishman

Oct. 21: David Collier

Oct. 28: Ken Greiff "In honor of all
voters"

***Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia***

1906 South Rittenhouse Square
Philadelphia, PA 19103