



Ethical Views



February 2015 Vol. 129, No. 6 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Platforms February 2015

If you wish childcare during Sunday Platforms, please notify Nick Sanders at nick@phillyethics.org or 215-662-5636 by the previous Thursday at 5:00 P.M. He will notify you by noon Saturday whether arrangements are in place.

Sunday, February 1, 11:00 A.M.
The Tao of Ethical Humanism
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

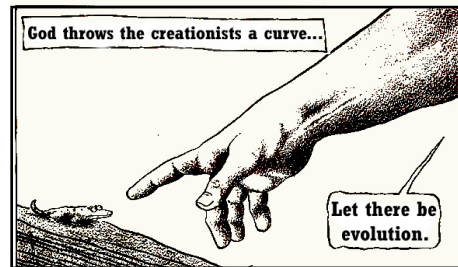
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Both Ethical Culture and the broader tradition of Humanism in general use reason to liberate us from superstition so we can build a better world. Sometimes, however, we can get sucked into overly intellectualized debates about how many atoms fit on the head of a pin. This is why the Taoist sage Laozi reminds us to think less and simply *be*. What would the founder of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler, think of such wisdom? In trying to answer this question, Hugh Taft-Morales relies on Benjamin Hoff's *The Tao of Pooh* in an attempt to keep things simple. [Platform sponsored by Nina Diamond and Bob Bueding.]

Sunday, February 8, 11:00 A.M.
How to Win Debates with Creationists and Really Influence People
Faye Flam, Science Journalist

Surveys show that the majority of Americans subscribe to creationism or intelligent design, but only a few zealots are genuinely entrenched. Many simply don't understand evolution. Creationists may actually do a favor for science popularizers by questions they pose: If we evolved from monkeys, why are there still monkeys? How could life arise without a God? These expose common misconceptions in the public understanding of science. Faye

Flam will discuss how to address such questions. She'll also explain aspects of the scientific method that can help advance public understanding of evolution, climate change and other scientific concepts that affect the future of society.



Ms. Flam is an award-winning science journalist with bylines in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Science*, *Science News* and *The Economist*. She also blogs about science for *Forbes*. She has worked as a journalism critic for the Knight Foundation, as a staff science writer and weekly columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and as a staff writer covering particle physics and astronomy for *Science*. For her *Inquirer* evolution column, "Planet of the Apes," she won a Friend of Darwin award from the National Center for Science Education. Her cat Higgs has blogged (with some help) for *Parade*. Faye holds a degree in geophysics from the California Institute of Technology.

Sunday, February 15, 11:00 A.M.
Animals, Ethics and Empathy
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia



Recent animal studies offer ever more convincing evidence that our fellow creatures experience high levels of awareness and empathy. How does this change the human obligation to be more aware and empathetic to other animals? What is the relationship between ethics, empathy and mental health? How has brain science and the study of "mirror neu-

rons" furthered our understanding? In honor of Darwin's birthday this month, Hugh Taft-Morales continues to urge us to treat non-human animals with greater empathy. Perhaps a change of behavior will offer more insight into what it is to be an ethical homo sapiens.

(Continued next page)

MUSIC at ETHICAL
CONCERTS ON THE SQUARE

Sunday, March 1, 3:00 PM

Music speaks for the marginalized as Music at Ethical returns. Come hear another beautiful buffet of sound. This third in the series is called "OPPRESSION AND TRANSCENDENCE: SOUNDS OF REACTION." It features the transcendent *Adagio for Strings* (and entire *String Quartet*, of which it is a part, by Samuel Barber) and the magnificent *Piano Quartet* by Robert Schumann. The background story is shared to help make the musical experience even more meaningful.

Performing will be:

Megumu Kajino, violin; Geoffrey Baker, viola; Rollin Wilber, piano; Jonathan Moser, violin; Lucy Strother, cello; and Brenda Bonhomme, soprano

Details on the entire series are available at: www.FineArtMusicCompany.com

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Sunday, February 22, 11:00 A.M.

Martin Luther King Jr., James Baldwin and White Supremacy in the 21st Century

Anthony Monteiro, Scholar and Activist



Martin Luther King Jr. and James Baldwin were significant

thinkers on the problems of American liberal democracy. Each pondered whether US democracy could ever fulfill its promise to grant full citizenship and freedom to those whose ancestors endured American slavery and Jim Crow (i.e., legal inequality). Professor Monteiro will look at the tenuous balance between liberal democracy and racial counterrevolution, especially as these two poles of the American political reality manifest themselves in the second decade of the twenty-first century. This examination will be based on the writings of Dr. King and James Baldwin.

A scholar and an activist, Monteiro has taught at several colleges and universities, including Temple University, and has published over 100 essays and articles in academic, political, cultural and popular journals, magazines and newspapers. Scholars in fields as diverse as sociology, political science, literary criticism, history and philosophy have cited his work. A native Philadelphian, Monteiro has been an active participant in the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-Vietnam War Movement, the African Liberation and anti-Apartheid movements and the struggle for independent politics in Philadelphia. He currently teaches philosophy and Black liberation at the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia, a Saturday free school.

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Leader's Column



A two-part Leader's Column

By Hugh Taft-Morales

PART ONE:

Imagination and My Ethical Culture

Sometimes it's hard to see the water you're swimming in. Having worked as an Ethical Culture Leader for almost five years, I swim in humanist seas enriched by many springs. For me the most consistent and powerful spring is the legacy of Felix Adler. For this reason, over the course of this spring I will speak on Adler more often, in my platforms and columns. Beginning here.

Adler left us with a fundamental ethical challenge, one that inspires me every day. He saw a broken world full of suffering and despair where individuals were treated as if they had no worth. He saw growing numbers of people abandoning theistic faiths and belief in the supernatural. These two factors posed a fundamental question: Where could the growing ranks of godless men and women gather to find inspiration, honor the worth of all and build a better world? From 1876 on he could answer: the New York Society for Ethical Culture. Our life is enriched by Adler's vision and hard work.

There are other good sources for humanist inspiration, of course: the birth of democracy in ancient Greece; the beauty and human dignity in Renaissance art; the courage of Enlightenment scientists risking persecution to speak the truth; defenders

of democracy demanding rights for all; and the decency of those who choose compassionate deed over dogmatic creed. From Doctors without Borders facing West African Ebola and Haitian cholera, to protestors out on the streets today honoring the lives and dignity of *both* young black men and officers in blue, hope floods into my life without having to imagine the existence of a better world in heaven above.

I can, however, imagine a better world in my mind, here and now. Imagination is a wonderful tool, a gift biology gave to the human race. I can imagine Felix Adler's yearning for "something more" than the broken world around him – a yearning so strong that it led him to postulate something he called an "ethical manifold," a cumbersome term mired in an antiquated metaphysical idealism. But I interpret Adler's "ethical manifold" more as a metaphor representing a system of interrelations between people where they are at their ethical best. Imagine, Adler challenged us, an "infinite system of interdependence in which men [and women] as ethical units have their place." (*An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, p. 125.) Imagine a world where we all help each other bring out our ethical best.

There are times when Adler sounds as if this manifold is "out there," an external objective reality like Plato's forms or the gods of theists. But in *my* Ethical Culture, any such inspirational concept is primarily a human construction. More importantly, it's a human choice.

At times, Adler understood this existential truth even though he couldn't shake the use of some religious vocabulary, such as the term "divine." As quoted by his son-in-law and biographer Horace Friess, "I affirm that there verily is a divine life, a best beyond the best I can think or imagine, in which all that is best in me and best in those who are dear to me, is contained and continues." (EPL as quoted in Friess, p. 231)

My Ethical Culture is rooted in Adler's affirmation. As a product of free will, such an affirmation needs no "discovery" of some pre-existing

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Quote-Unquote

"In 1099, the Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem and killed everybody in town. Jews were rounded up and slaughtered in their synagogues. One witness describes Christian knights riding through a lake of blood after slaying ten thousand Muslims who had taken refuge on the Temple Mount."

-Lawrence Wright, *Thirteen Days in September*; Carter, *Begin and Sadat at Camp David*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2014, p. 24.

Editor's note. Other sources claim that some Jews and some Muslims were spared on condition that they leave Jerusalem. Thomas F. Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades*, p. 34 (Rowman & Littlefield Pub., Inc., 2005). But it seems clear that a huge massacre was carried out by the Christian Crusaders and celebrated by their clergy.

Leader's Column (cont'd.)

objective truth. It is our joy and challenge to create. Adler explains, "I do not find worth in others, I attribute it to them – I create the ethical manifold. I need an idea of the whole in order to act rightly...." (EPL, p. 121)

The wholeness and unity I discover only in my imagination is a powerful part of my commitment to Ethical Culture. When I find others who choose to imagine this too, then the hard work begins. Then we have to figure out how to act in concrete ways to make this fractured world more whole. The devil, which I spell with no "d," is surely in the details. But I handle the details better when inspired by my humanist faith.

Some people don't like the term "faith," perhaps because to them it implies irrationality or perhaps it is simply too tarred with the brush of unpleasant religious upbringings. Fair enough. But as a secular child of the sixties who saw before me a broken world, I, like Adler, yearned for something that would inspire me to live better. I'm glad I found an Ethical Culture that has evolved to include the existential side of Adler while letting go of idealist metaphysics. If that's too much philosophical jargon to end on, then I will conclude with John Lennon's over-quoted yet appropriate ode to imagination: "You may say I'm a dreamer. But I'm not the only one. I hope some day you'll join us. And the world will live as one."

PART TWO: Sunday Morning Welcome and Sharing



The heart of our life at the Ethical Humanist Society is our Sunday morning program. It's a break from the routine hustle and bustle of life. While it offers a chance to connect with others and learn about community events, Sunday morning offers opportunities for introspection and inspiration; for many of our members it serves as their source for personal, ethical, intellectual and aesthetic reinvigoration. This

is what makes programs at 1906 Rittenhouse unique.

In an effort to maintain this important aspect of our time together from 11 AM until noon, I would like to offer a few suggestions. Let's try these out for a couple of months and tell me what you think.

(A) Regarding interacting with friends and newcomers. One of the joys of Sunday morning is seeing friends and fellow members in an atmosphere of joy, compassion and thoughtfulness. It's great to catch up with how people are faring.

It is also, however, our most regular opportunity to share with newcomers what we are all about. Obviously the quality of our platform talks and music is important, but probably more than anything, visitors will remember how they were included into our community. While most seem to feel warmly welcomed, sometimes people report feeling ignored by others who all seemed to know each other.



What can we do to insure that newcomers have a positive experience? Obviously members can be on the lookout for visitors. Let's remind ourselves to all be hosts in our community home. Let's be more ready to greet newcomers, ask if they have any questions, and exchange pleasantries. Even with these "little things" we can better demonstrate our commitment to deed before creed and to the importance of establishing ethical relationships.

Another alternative is to beef up our "greeting team." Currently we have two hosts that staff the welcome table and pass the collection plates. Should we raise that number to 3, or 4, or 5? That, of course, would require more volunteers. If you are interested in being part of an expanded "greeting team," please contact me. If we get the numbers, I might float the idea by our committees.

(B) Regarding how we share information on Sunday morning. While it is good to offer opportunities to share information, I want to enhance the sense

of introspection and aesthetic flow. As a result, I would like people to participate in the following ways, remembering when speaking to keep your comments relatively succinct and clear:

1) "Joys and Concerns" is a chance for anyone – member or visitor – to share personal or health joys and concerns from their seat. This is offered near the start of the program much as go-arounds begin many of our meetings. It helps establish awareness of our mutual support and care.

2) "Ethics in Action" is offered from the podium by the chair of the Ethical Action Committee or someone they tap for the job. It is a chance to share information about one or two important issues or events, and to explain why they are particularly related to the values and tradition of Ethical Humanism.

3) "My Ethical Culture" dropped out of our routine, but I would like to bring it back. This is a brief opportunity for a volunteer approved by the Leader, Education Committee Chair, or Society President to share a brief prepared statement about their commitment to our unique brand of humanism. This segment will be included in a Sunday program only when a member steps forward by the Wednesday before.

4) "Announcements" are shared by the presider who can edit and group them so as to keep the announcement section relatively short and flowing. We are asking members who wish to have announcements read to make sure they are relevant to our community life and are sent by email to the Leader, Education Committee Chair, or Society President no later than noon Friday.

5) "Flyers" relevant to our community life can be left on the welcome table, posted on the bulletin board upstairs by the Weston Room, and on rare occasions – when cleared by the Leader, Education Committee Chair, or Society President – may be included in the folded paper program.

Thanks to all of you for your cooperation in helping keep our Sunday mornings as welcoming, warm and inspirational as they can be.

Happenings

Vigil of Remembrance

By Kate Esposito

On Saturday, December 13, Christian Hayden, Ken Greiff and I participated in the annual *Vigil of Remembrance* sponsored by City Lights in Southwest Philadelphia. City Lights partners and friends from the Wayne Presbyterian Church, West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship, Hands Across Philadelphia and EHSOP joined to remember the 17 men killed in Southwest Philadelphia in 2014 and to declare that life, all life, and specifically black male life, matters.

Guided with great sensitivity by City Lights Director Carey Davis, we reflected together, then split into small groups to visit murder sites, offer reflections and prayers, and leave roses. Our group remembered Graham Speakes, Jr., 26, (Manny) Jahmeer Jett, 19 and Benjamin Collier, 24. Christian, Ken and I were joined by Ted Behr, editor and publisher of the *Southwest Globe Times*, a great community newspaper. We then gathered again as a group to consider how we might be a part of re-framing the legacy of violent death left in the aftermath of those murdered. How can we work to ensure that this legacy will end?

Here is the reflection we contemplated at the site where Graham Speakes lost his life:

How can it be that one so much alive could lie here still as stone? Limbs gone stiff as lifeblood seeps on asphalt grave. "My child, my son, What could he possibly have done to deserve this dreaded fate?" We have heard it said, "You reap what you sow." But we say instead, "Blessed are those who mourn." Together we declare: ALL LIFE MATTERS.

There is something sacred about these places, to know that lives ended there needlessly and violently. I contemplated heavily about the senselessness, the loss to the men's

families and community and the failure of our own humanity towards each other. When you go to these places, it gets very personal and real.

City Lights links the community organizations and committed residents of Southwest Philadelphia to each other and to partners in the region. Together they strive to create a vibrant neighborhood where residents can flourish, while encouraging personal growth and lasting change in all who participate. To find out more about them, go to citylightsnetwork.org. The website for the Southwest Globe Times is: swglobetimes.com.



CityLights Network
December 13, 2014



Members of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia prepare a shirt to honor a victim of violence.



Shirts hang along the fence in front of Sherwood Outreach Center. One of the murder victims was the father of a pre-schooler at the center.

Announcements



Introduction to Ethical Culture

Sunday, Feb. 1, 4:00 PM, (note different time!)

- Leader Hugh Taft-Morales discusses the history and philosophy of Ethical Humanism.
- Members and visitors will share questions and reflections over wine and cheese.

Open to the public but please RSVP to

leaderhugh@phillyethics.org.

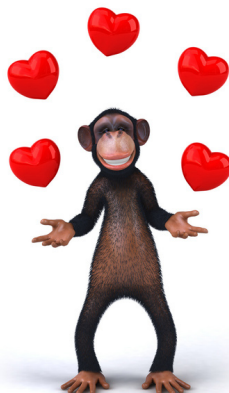
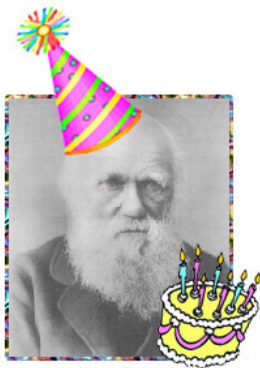


Monday, Feb. 2, 7:30 PM

Kick-off to Bioethics Without God

The Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia continues exploring issues in bioethics, science and medicine. Tonight Ethical Humanist Leader Hugh Taft-Morales opens the series with a wide-ranging, interactive session touching on moral dilemmas confronting doctors, scientists, policy makers, and citizens. Some of the areas to explore include human and animal subjects in medical research, physician participation in capital punishment, caring for patients in persistent vegetative states, organ donation and harvesting, and medical and military use of nuclear technology.

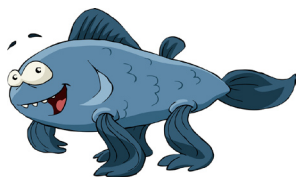
The rest of the spring series, taking place on March 2, April 6, and May 4, will involve expert guests focusing on specific areas of interest. *Free and open to the public. Registration is preferred:* e-mail LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org.



A DARWIN DAY PARTY (in two parts)

Part One: Saturday, February 14, 7:00 PM.

Find **LOVE** in **EVOL**ution Valentine Party



A Good Old Fashioned Saturday Night Party
to Celebrate Darwin Day and Valentine's Day

Join Hosts Kate, Temma, Hugh, and Jeffrey
for an Evening of:

- Great Food and Libations
- Video "Winged Seduction: Birds of Paradise"
- Sing-Along Songs and a Mating Dance
- Game Show Featuring Selected Members of EHSOP
- "Love-Safely Day" Event with Special Prizes
- Guest Appearance by HUGO, the Elusive Rittenhouse Square Gorilla



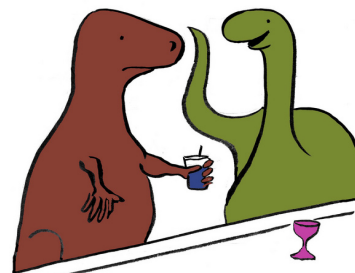
Save the Date!

Dress in **Bright Colors** to Attract a Mate!

\$10 if You Bring a Dish

\$15 if You Just Bring Yourself

Proceeds from the Event will go to POWER!



"I heard you were extinct!"



View From a Picnic

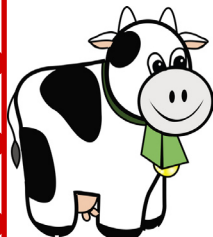
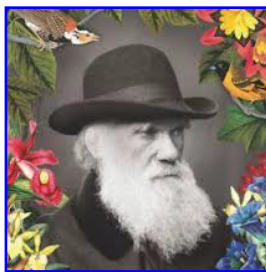
Sunday, February 15, Collier Room, Opening of Exhibit by Bhavisha Patel

Bhavisha Patel was born in Kenya, educated in England, and now lives in Philadelphia. She came to art from a love of life experiences and a desire to express them on canvas. Patel started painting in 1996, dabbling in photography, oils on wood, and watercolors. Oil, because it allowed her to try different bases on which to create images, quickly became the predominant medium of her work.

Says Patel: "Painting is my way of pouring my soul onto a canvas, a spiritual experience that allows me to capture the pure energy and harmonious relationships of elements in life and nature. Finding my inspiration from Corot and Gustave Caillebotte, I have an impressionist style and use oils on canvas, paper or hardboard.

"I paint mainly nature scenes: a cold, snowy day with snow-laden branches dancing with each other in a show of strength and stored energy that will erupt with spring; the awesomeness of a stormy sea that can be threatening and yet sustains us; an empty serene urban park; tranquil waters over a rocky river bed.

"The aim of my paintings is to express the resilience of the moment and hope for the future, by evoking feelings of peace and tranquility: paintings that a viewer can walk into and feel the calmness offered in everyday ordinary views that we don't always take time to stop and allow them to envelope us."



Part Two:
Sunday, February 15,
2:00 - 3:30 PM

"Animals R Us" Kids' Party

Come celebrate Darwin with your children!! Fun evolution-focused activities will include a short *National Geographic* film on the *Birds of Paradise* and an accompanying game. Darwin Day songs will be sung and an appearance by Gorilla Hugo is possible. Children (and adults) are welcome to come dressed as their favorite animal.

Please RSVP to Kim McKay,
kimberlymckay@gmail.com,
by February 8. Please include the number of kids and adults who plan to attend as well as the ages of the children.

February 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
*1 11:00 AM <i>Tao of Ethical Humanism</i> Hugh Taft-Morales 4:00 PM Intro. Ethical Humanism Hugh Taft-Morales	2 7:30 PM Godless Bioethics Hugh Taft-Morales	3	4 Meetings 6:30 p.m. Education Committee 7:45 p.m. Ethical Action Committee	5	6	7
*8 <i>How to Win Debates with Creationists</i> Faye Flam	9	10	11 Meetings 5:30 p.m. Finance Committee 7:00 p.m. Community Committee	12 6:30 PM HLAA Center City Pat McGeever	13	14 7:00p.m. Darwin Day Party #1 (adults)
*15 11:00 AM <i>Animals Ethics & Empathy</i> Hugh Taft-Morales 12:30 Art Opening Bhavisha Patel 2:00 PM Darwin Day Party #2 (kids & adults)	16	17	18 Meeting 6:45 p.m. EHSoP Board of Trustees	19	20	21
*22 11:00 AM <i>MLK, James Baldwin, White Supremacy</i> Anthony Monteiro	23	24	25 Meeting 7:00 p.m. Camp Linden Committee	26  Amnesty International 7:00 p.m.	27	28
*Child care provided upon request during platforms.						

March 1 - 3:00pm



#3



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2 - Sally Redlener
 3 - Arnold Fishman, Esq.
 18 - Vince Russo

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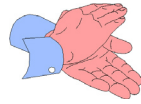
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SUNDAY SERVICES

**Hosts - Coordinated by
Leslie Williams**



February 1 - Michael Blacksmith and
Don Munson

February 8 - Linda Richardson and
Garry O'Rourke

February 15- Sandy and Bill Coffey

February 22 - Lelah Marie and Ken
Greiff



**Flowers Coordinated
by David Ralston**

February 1 - Arnold Fishman's 39th
Birthday, again! From his loving wife
Temma

February 8 - Carol Love. "Happy
Birthday to my witty mother Sheila &
the great Bob Marley"

February 15 - David Ralston. "To
the success of the Ethical Society's
members and friends"

February 22 - Ken Greiff. "For the
non-leap year"



Coffee Hour Coordinators

February 1 - John McCormick

February 8- Ken Greiff

February 15 - Garry O'Rourke

February 22 - Harry Thorn

***Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia***

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