



# ETHICAL VIEWS

November 2019 Vol. 134, No. 3 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society



## Sunday Platforms

Remember that clocks fall back on Sunday, November 3.

**Sunday, Nov. 3, 11:00 AM**

### ***Good and Evil***

**Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,  
Philadelphia Ethical Society**



What are we talking about when we speak of “good” and “evil”? The dynamic struggle between good and evil has been examined through

art, literature, and philosophy for millennia, but there’s no consensus about the meaning of the terms. Hugh Taft-Morales explores evil as represented in the rise of Nazism and the attempted genocide of Jews, Romani, homosexuals, and others. He will then share the story about the residents of Le Chambon, France, who gave sanctuary to Jewish children. It shines out as what some called “a conspiracy of goodness.” How, in the midst of that dark horror, did goodness survive? What lessons can we draw from this story to help us live more ethically today?

**Sunday, Nov. 10, 11:00 AM**  
***Upholding the Human Right to Seek Asylum*** Rebecca Feldmann, Professor, Villanova University, School of Law

The U.S. asylum laws are firmly grounded in international law. Yet current U.S. policies seek to systematically curtail the rights of asylum-seekers, and

dangerous rhetoric demonizes migrants who are seeking freedom from persecution. Rebecca Feldmann will address the importance of defending and upholding asylum as a fundamental human right, as an urgent matter of social justice and of respect for the basic human dignity of our migrant brothers and sisters.

Rebecca Feldmann directs and teaches the Clinic for Asylum, Refugee and Emigrant Services at Villanova Law. Prior to joining the Villanova Law School faculty, she taught at Seton Hall’s Immigrants’ Rights & International Human Rights Clinic. Professor Feldmann has supervised students representing asylum seekers in hearings before the Baltimore, Arlington, Newark, New York, and Philadelphia Immigration Courts. Her scholarship interests focus on asylum law, international human rights law, and access to justice.

**Sunday, Nov. 17, 11:00 AM**  
***Humanist Thanksgiving***

Come share thanks, readings, music, and a potluck dinner at our annual Humanist Thanksgiving! RSVP to Stan Horwitz, 856-571-2374, or [srhorwitz@phillyethics.org](mailto:srhorwitz@phillyethics.org) (preferred). Donation \$10 with food, \$15 without food donation. When you reserve please state what you will bring.

Rob Saxon, Director of External Affairs for the Metropolitan



Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance (MANNA) will return to update us on the work of this worthy organization that offers evidence-based nutrition services to many Philadelphians in need, with the help of over 7000 volunteers. We will pass a collection plate and all contributions will go to MANNA.

**Nov. 24, 11:00 AM** ***How to Exploring Effective Altruism***  
**Andrew M. Carton, Professor,  
Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania**

As part of an exciting new partnership with the Philadelphia Ethical Society, Andrew Carton, as a representative of *Effective Altruism*, will explain a new global movement to combine head and heart in doing good.

*Effective Altruism* - which grew out the work of several philosophers, including

Peter Singer - uses evidence and careful reasoning to promote the general wellbeing equally, or as close to it as possible. Carton received his PhD from Duke University and has taught at Penn State, London Business School, and Wharton. His research is on how leaders establish a common purpose, manage conflict and discrimination, and topics related to Effective Altruism.



## LEADER'S COLUMN

### EFFECTIVE ALTRUISM

*Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,  
Philadelphia Ethical Society*

A few years ago, I watched one of my favorite contemporary philosophers, Peter Singer, offer a TED Talk on *Effective Altruism*. In his challenging talk, he pointed out that in the year 2011, 6.9 million children under five years old died from preventable, poverty related diseases. Singer thinks that we let this happen not because we are callous. In our hearts we want to make a difference. He suggests that we need to work on our heads – on knowing how to save children in as efficient a way as possible. He points out that Warren Buffet and Bill and Melinda Gates may be “the most effective altruists in history” because they combined a desire to help with a rational understanding of how best to help.

Over the last few years, people have been meeting in small groups under the banner of “Effective Altruism.” There are over 300 *Effective Altruism* groups worldwide. I met Mats Olsen, an organizer for Philadelphia *Effective Altruism*, a couple of weeks ago. We decided to launch a partnership of sorts. They will be holding monthly meetings in our building, the next on Tuesday, November 19, and that will address the cause of mental health issues. (See their announcement elsewhere in this newsletter). I hope some of you can join me in attending that evening.

There are some real similarities between Ethical Culture and *Effective Altruism*. First,

both groups are brave enough to acknowledge the depth of suffering in the world. The founder of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler, wrote that one of the world's most poignant “spiritual pains” was standing on the metaphorical shore of safety seeing “multitudes of our fellow beings struggling in the water, stretching forth their arms, sinking, drowning.” That is the reality before us. It may be easy to distract ourselves from that reality, but it is hardly ethical.

Second, Ethical Culture and *Effective Altruism* share a dedication to rational inquiry. In part growing out of the Freethought tradition, Ethical Culture sees reason as liberating. Evidence and facts liberate us from both ignorance and superstition. *Effective Altruism* evaluates “good works” based on their results, not on their ability to make us feel good. We both seek to reduce the most suffering for the most people. Ethical Culture does this while also striving to treat each individual as being of inherent worth.

Third, both groups embrace epistemic humility – the awareness that despite the temptation to be righteous in our altruism, we could be wrong. We may be working on the wrong issue. We may be using the wrong tools. We may even be making the problem worse. That admission means that we regularly test for our effectiveness and remain open to alternative approaches or issues.

As we move ahead in a new partnership for PES, I hope you all can attend some *Effective Altruism* gatherings. Let me know what you think about this approach of combining heart and head to nurture a more altruistic and a more ethical world!

### *From the PES Ending Racism Task Force: THROUGH THE DARRK SIDE OF LIFE* *submitted by Erik Younge*

In October, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, presented an excellent Sunday platform on The Uses of Humor. He stated, “Even during the darkest of times, human beings have relied on humor to relieve them of the horror all around them so they can better survive.”

African-Americans have developed a unique brand of BLACK COMEDY/HUMOR as a tool against the horrors of slavery, Jim Crow, and racist discrimination during the past 400 years. Slaves were considered “inherently inferior,” “childish,” incapable of complex human thought, spirit and culturally simple – instinctively amusing and clever, “like monkeys and chimps.” All slave talent was for the amusement of white slavers. Blacks were permanent jesters. Black humor had the blessing/curse of always having to be “double-conscious.”

Against the disease of systemic and individual racism, Black humor helped provide release, relief, comfort and healing. Minstrel shows developed in the early 19th century – first performed by whites in blackface, later by Black people in blackface??- that lampooned Black folks as “dim-witted, lazy, buffoonish, superstitious and happy-go-lucky.”

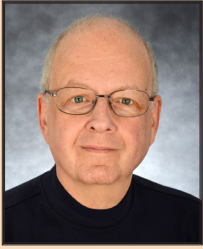
The creative genius of the Black comedians during and after the Civil Rights Movement helped to bring about a revolution: edgy, racially challenging, thought-provoking, sometimes too truthful.

*Continued on page 3*



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### EDUCATION CHAOS



*Bob Bueding,  
President,  
Philadelphia  
Ethical  
Society*

When I think about my education journey, I feel privileged. I have no vivid memories of what my first two years of schooling were like in Cleveland. In 1954 we moved to New Orleans and my parents enrolled me in a private school. My most disturbing memory of that school was that if you stepped out of line, the headmaster would paddle you. I'm not sure whether the laws today permit that type of punishment. After one year at that school my parents were able to enroll me in a very progressive and well-known boarding school

in Lake Placid, NY. I spent three years at North Country School and I can look back on it as a wonderful adventure. In 1960 we moved to Baltimore, MD.

My first experience at a large public school was interesting. My most vivid memory was the fact that Madalyn Murray O'Hair's son was in my class. I can remember that almost daily he was bullied and harassed because his family was atheist. From there I went to a large high school with a very high Jewish student body. I received an excellent education. After high school I attended the Maryland Institute College of Art where I pursued my love of photography. Looking back, I was fortunate.

I've lived in Philadelphia for almost 20 years now, and I've watched the struggles this city has with its public schools. I can barely imagine how challenging attending one of those schools would be. Almost every day there's another story about schools

that don't work. One of those tales that really grabbed my attention was the 1,000-student school loaded with asbestos. They've been moved out of their building until at least January, 2020. It looks as if certain problems (like asbestos abatement) keep getting pushed to the furthest back burner until the crisis alarm goes off. Yes, I know money is short, and we must prioritize what funds we have, but really, there has to be a better way than closing our eyes to health risks for these kids 30 years down the road.

Nobody has all the answers, but we can start with safe buildings, school nurses, and vocational counselors. Public school teachers deserve a living wage to incentivize average tenure of more than the current three years. The future of our city (and our nation) depends on giving our young people the very best education possible.

– Bob

[bbueding@phillyethics.org](mailto:bbueding@phillyethics.org)

*Continued from page 2*

Racial jokes upped the game. Like this one from Redd Foxx: "Black guys can't and shouldn't ever whistle...never ever whistle. Why? Our lips are too black and too big." Laughter! "Look at Emmitt!"

The brilliant Dick Gregory titled his 1964 autobiography *Nigger*, and added this dedication, "Dear Momma – Wherever you are, if you ever hear the word 'nigger' again, remember they are advertising my book."

Give a listen to Moms Mabley, Pigmeat Markham, Richard Pryor, Flip Wilson, Paul Mooney for belly-laughing humor with

that "double conscious" humor sensibility. I remember the brilliant 1969 film *Watermelon Man*, where the great Godfrey Cambridge played an obnoxious white bigot who changes into a Black man overnight and tries to find humanity and his inner worth.

In 2003, the debut episode of *The Chappelle Show* featured a satirical spoof, Clayton Bigsby, about a blind Black man who is not aware he is Black and joins the white racist klan. It shows the absurdity of overt racism using the weapon of humor against it like no other satire before.

Today, humor giants like Chris Rock, Wanda Sykes, and Eddie

Murphy continue to shine with edgy racial humor. It is not for everyone. It can seem truly offensive and negative to non-Blacks. But what I will label as **DARRK HUMOR**, is the double conscious culture that is unique in that it can and has served as an effective weapon, a remedy against overt daily racist ideas and a reaffirmation of our inherent worth, our humanity. African-Americans use it to stay sane, centered, and to resist violent rage and mindless violence in response to daily oppression.

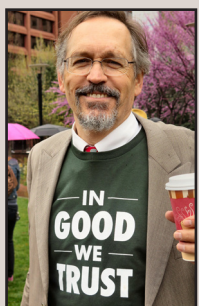
So when it looks bleak and hopeless, remember to always look through the **DARRK Side of Life!**



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

All events in PES building unless otherwise noted

**Sunday, Nov. 3, 7:00pm**  
**Intro to Ethical Humanism**  
 Join Leader Hugh Taft-Morales for a discussion

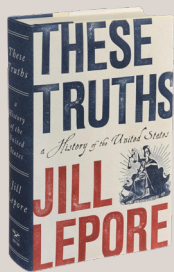


focusing on the importance of putting aside intellectual disagreements so we can work together more effectively to do good in the

world. RSVP to [LeaderHugh@phillyethics.com](mailto:LeaderHugh@phillyethics.com) but you can also just show up!

**Monday, Nov. 4, 7:00pm**  
**Book discussion of Chapters 9-12 of *These Truths: A History of the United States* by Jill Lepore.**

Join Hugh Taft-Morales for a discussion of Part Three of this 21st century look at American history. These chapters cover the decades through which many of our grandparents and great-grandparents lived, from post-Civil War through World War II. Note the change from Tuesday to Monday for this discussion.



**Tuesday is election day.**  
**Make sure to vote!**



RIVERDALE-YONKERS SOCIETY FOR

ethical culture

**Saturday, Nov. 9, 10am- 5pm**  
**Experiential, Experimental Workshop - Uproot and Reseed: Decolonizing Ethical Humanism at Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture**  
**4450 Fieldston Road, Riverdale/ Bronx, NY 10471**

An Experiential, Experimental Workshop entitled *Uproot and Reseed: Decolonizing Ethical Humanism* will be presented at the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture.

Presenters are current Ethical Culture Leaders-in-Training: Christian Hayden, Je Hooper, storae michele, Sarah Tielemans and Anthony Cruz, Liberation Theologian and Interreligious Scholar.

Participants will dialogue, reflect on, create, and embody a decolonized Ethical Humanist movement.

Ethical Humanism developed from traditions of reason, philosophical inquiry, continuous learning. Until now, our community's guiding philosophy is largely rooted in thought influenced by the Enlightenment, with an emphasis on reason and the individual. This has also largely excluded intuitive

and experiential ways of knowing and learning. And as a dominant worldview, that tradition has often supported patriarchy, racism, and imperialism.

What if it is time to renew, reorient, decolonize? What does an Ethical Humanism look like with a wider canon, broader emphasis, an intentional effort to center the experience of those often silenced – even by us? How could this better center our commitment to human worth and human connection? How do we, with attention to serious theoretical work and experiential ways of knowing, develop practices that are inclusive, egalitarian, and healing? Come join us as we begin this work together.

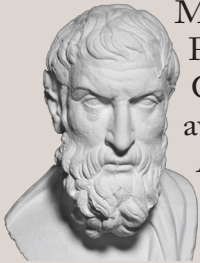
Optional light breakfast and social hour from 9-10 am. Free Parking Available at Fieldston School with RSVP by 11/7 (parking pass will be emailed for you to print, or pick it up at the site) Register at Eventbrite: <https://uprootandreseed.eventbrite.com> Registration (includes lunch): \$20 before 11/4, \$25 11/4 and after Low Income Registration (includes lunch): \$10 Sponsorship Registration (includes lunch): \$50 Donations towards workshop expenses greatly appreciated.

Continued on page 5

## ANNOUNCEMENTS continued

### Sunday, Nov. 10 and 24, 4:00pm **Philadelphia Stoics discussion**

Come and discuss the lessons and practical exercises in *A Handbook for New Stoics: How to Thrive in a World Out of Your Control – 52 Week-by-Week Lessons* by



Massimo Pigliucci and Gregory Lopez, available on Amazon and selected book stores.

In preparation for the meeting on November 10, you are strongly encouraged to do the reading and practices for Weeks 5 and 6. For the November 24 meeting, please do the reading and practices for Weeks 7 and 8.

### Tuesday, Nov. 17, 3:00pm **Fine Art Music concert Inspirations: Chopin**

This is the first of a three-concert season entirely devoted to the music, life and influences around the great composer, Frederic Chopin.



Rollin Wilber (pianist for the Ethical Society platforms) collaborates with pianist Katarzyna Salwinski in all performances. The second and third concerts are at 3:00 pm on February 16 and April 26, 2020. [www.fineartmusic.com](http://www.fineartmusic.com)

### Tuesday, Nov. 19, 7:00pm **Effective Altruism Monthly Social Effective Altruism**

Monthly Social at 7:00 PM followed by an 8:00 PM talk on *Mental Health Issues* by Ellen McGeoch, Research and Operations Manager at a local company called *NeuroFlow*.



*Effective Altruism* uses evidence and careful reasoning to work out how to maximize the good you can do, tentatively understanding 'the good' as promoting wellbeing with everyone's wellbeing counting equally, and using these findings to improve the world. (see Leader's column on page 2.)

*NeuroFlow* uses technology to improve behavioral health and wellness. Ms. McGeoch will discuss how conditions such as depression, anxiety and schizophrenia are a huge

worldwide health burden which is often neglected, particularly in the developing world.

### Sunday, Nov. 24, 2019 2:00pm **Think Ethics? – Thoughtful conversations about philosophy**

Join Alex Gutierrez, a senior at Haverford College majoring in philosophy, for a conversation about *Social Media and Society*. Social media has undoubtedly had a tremendous impact on culture and society. How has social media changed our social lives and sense of self? How has it changed the dissemination of information and the production of knowledge?

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIETY

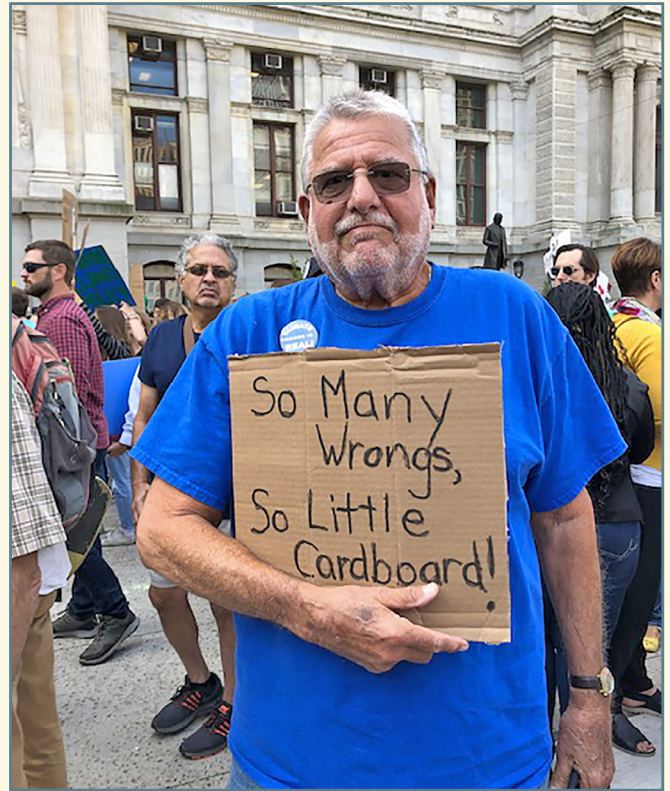
Explore these questions and more in a civil and open conversation free to all.

Final fall discussion:  
Sunday, December 22,  
2:00pm *Rethinking  
Communism: Marx vs. Stalin*  
Free and open to the public.



# PAST EVENTS

## PES Members at Philadelphia Rallies



Above: PES members added their voices at the Global Climate Strike demonstration on September 20th, in front of City Hall. Temma Fishman has her grandchildren on her mind; Arnold Fishman sees too many wrongs to enumerate.



Left: Hugh Taft-Morales has a meaningful dialogue with a young Peace Day Rally attendee.

Below right: It wouldn't be Peace Day without the Dove, asking "What Can You Do?"





# NOVEMBER 2019



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
<b>3</b> 11:00 AM <i>Good and Evil</i> Hugh Taft-Morales  7:00 PM: <i>Intro to Ethical Humanism</i>	<b>4</b> 7:00 PM Book Discussion <i>These Truths: A History of the U.S., Chapters 9-12</i> led by Hugh Taft-Morales	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>  PES MEETING: 6:30 PM Education Committee	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 10 AM - 5:00 PM Experiential, Experimental Workshop - Riverdale-Yonkers Society, New York
<b>10</b> 11:00 AM <i>Upholding the Human Right to Seek Asylum</i>  4:00 - 5:30 PM Philadelphia Stoics Discussion	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>  PES MEETINGS: 5:00 PM Finance Committee 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> 9:30 AM: End Racism TF 11:00 AM <i>Humanist Thanksgiving</i> 3:00 PM Fine Art Music concert <i>Inspirations: Chopin</i>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>  7:00 PM <i>Effective Altruism Monthly Social</i>	<b>20</b>  PES MEETING: 6:30 PM PES Board of Trustees	<b>21</b>  7:00 PM Amnesty International Meeting <a href="http://amnestyeastpa.org">amnestyeastpa.org</a>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 11:00 AM <i>Exploring Effective Altruism</i> 2:00 PM Think Ethics 4:00 - 5:30 PM Philadelphia Stoics Discussion	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>  PES MEETINGS: 5:30 PM Building Committee	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> 

## QUOTABLE

**A building has integrity just like a man. And just as seldom.**

- Ayn Rand

## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Bob Bueding  
 7 Irene Putzer  
 21 Linda Waters  
     Richardson  
 29 Howard Peer

## QUOTABLE

**“Vanity is as ill at ease under indifference as tenderness is under a love which it cannot return.”**

- George Eliot





## SUNDAY SERVICES

11:00 A.M.

*Ethical Views* is published monthly  
except July and August.

*Executive Editor*, Henry Pashkow  
*Copy Editor*, Betsy Lightbourn  
*Web Master, Copy Editor*, Nick Sanders  
*Layout*, Celeste Hardester  
*Production*, Cheryl Desmond

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## Coffee Hour Coordinators



Nov. 3 - Kate Esposito  
Last names: A-E  
Nov. 10 - Ken Greiff  
Last names: F-K  
Nov. 17 - Garry O'Rourke  
Last names: L-Q  
Nov. 24 - Harry Thorn  
Last names: R-Z

## Hosts Coordinated by John Marshall

Sunday hosts greet and orient  
members and visitors and make  
a valuable contribution to the  
community. If you'd like to help out,  
please contact John Marshall.

## Flowers Coordinated by Sally Redlener

Nov. 3 - from Maureen Pielli  
"Grateful for my life!"



Nov. 10 - from Mike Heaney  
"Still grateful."

Nov. 17 - Happy Thanksgiving



Above: On October 6, 2019,  
a small but enthusiastic  
audience enjoyed the virtuoso  
performance on guitar by  
Aaron Larget-Caplan in his show,  
"Transformations." Twenty  
percent of ticket sales will  
be donated to HIAS - Hebrew  
Immigrant Aid Society - a  
Jewish American nonprofit  
organization that provides  
humanitarian aid and assistance  
to refugees.

# Wider Community

during November at the Philadelphia Ethical Society

### • The Whiffenpoofs are coming to Philly! Friday, November 8, 7:00 pm

The oldest college a cappella group, and one of the finest, make their only Philadelphia appearance.

Tickets \$25 [here](#), \$30 at the door.

### • Pianist Sandrine Erdely-Sayo in concert, Saturday, November 9, 7:00 pm

Philadelphia premiere of "For the Love of Bees" by composer Anna Rubin. Tickets and info [online](#).

### • Oliver Herbert, Cellist, Thursday, November 14, 11 am

Presented by Morning Musicales to benefit the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Tickets and info [online](#), or \$20 at the door.

### • "Save Our Sites" will host a lecture, Thursday, November 14, at 7:30 pm, donation suggested

### • Relâche ensemble presents "IMPROVISATORY" fall concert, Saturday, November 16, 8:00 pm

Info [online](#), tickets \$25.

### • David Newman and Yvette Om present "The Grateful Gathering" Saturday, November 23

A day of devotional celebration and community, including an evening kirtan concert, 7 pm, and afternoon  
workshop 2:30 pm. Registration and tickets [online](#).

### • Annual Tibetan Bazaar, Friday and Saturday, November 29-30, 10 am – 5 pm

This popular event is a great place to shop for alternative gifts for the holidays, and  
help the Tibetan community in preserving their culture and identity in the face  
of institutional efforts by the Chinese government in Tibet.

Presented by the Tibetan Association of Philadelphia

2nd floor.