



Ethical Views

April 2007

Vol. 121, No. 7

Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society



Sunday Platforms

April 1, 2007

God is Dead, Get over It

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

A movement within Christianity in the 1960s declared "The Death of God" as a means of popularizing the theological evolution of the idea of god. It didn't work. The traditional idea of a personal god is another way of keeping people simple and compliant. While Ethical Humanism is not an atheistic movement, we do believe the meaning of life is found here and now in a natural experience. We ought to be proud of our non-theism. It is a better idea and it can help make a better world.

April 8, 2007

Helping Homeless Veterans Negotiate the VA Bureaucracy

Speaker: Michael Taub, Staff Attorney and Director of the Veterans' Project at Philadelphia's Homeless Advocacy Project

Veterans make up approximately 15% of the homeless population, both nationally and in Philadelphia. As recent news suggests, dealing with the VA bureaucracy is often very difficult, both for veterans and attorneys who advocate for them. Taub will recount the successes and failures he has experienced in his quest to provide the necessary legal services for reducing the number of homeless veterans on the streets of Philadelphia.

April 15, 2007

Some Ethical Issues and Questions in Current Political Campaigns

Speaker: Tim Kearney, lifelong political activist and former Democratic nominee for the Pennsylvania state legislature.

Kearney will use his two recent campaigns for the state legislature to illustrate aspects of current political campaigns that are completely legal and commonly used by both major parties that he nevertheless considers to be unethical.

April 22, 2007

Bringing Our Ethics Out Into the World

Speakers: Four Members of the Ethical Society of Philadelphia

An important theme of Earth Day is stewardship: how we take care of the earth and the space around us? Four members of the Ethical Society of Philadelphia will talk about how they use their ethics in their vocation and their life outside of the Ethical Society.

April 29, 2007

Biomedical Research and the Public Good

Speaker: Jordan Orange, MD/PhD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine; Member, Ethical Society of Philadelphia

In reviewing of the process by which taxpayer dollars are committed to biomedical research, focusing on the benefits and disadvantages of the current paradigm, Jordan will invite us to challenge some of the basic premises that motivate biomedical research in this country. ◇



Leader's Message

**TO SEE
OURSELVES AS
OTHERS SEE US**

by Richard L. Kiniry

Old truisms ought to be reconsidered occasionally. Case in point: I have always assumed that everyone or almost everyone knows that they aren't perfect, knows that they can be aggravating, overbearing, passive aggressive, strange, judgmental, mean (even cruel), self-destructive, childish (even ignorant), and selfish at times. I assumed that because I have noticed so much imperfect behavior in other people. It has been said before but I ask again, why are other people's faults so easy to notice?

Most of us are good at noticing the undesirable characteristics of other people, the ones that make life difficult both for themselves and the rest of us. I stand back in wonderment when people put their foot in their mouth in the same way for the thousandth time. I hear some people excuse themselves countless times and face others who are never able to admit they are wrong. Another truism: if they could only see themselves as others see them. Which makes me wonder, what are people not telling me about myself?

Without denying that some people are especially difficult, much of our trouble with other people's behavior is a natural clash of personalities. We all have a history that makes us unique and we see life from our individual

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Leader's Message (Continued)

perspectives. From inside our private world we have an open view of others' behavior, but from that vantage point it is difficult to see ourselves.

Ethical values are easy to apply to the great issues of the day, but every day issues are harder. We Ethical Humanists have the central ethical proposition that everyone has Intrinsic Worth, meaning that everyone deserves respect not because of how useful they are but because they are valuable in and of themselves. That is easy to apply to the immorality of the Iraq War but we tend to forget about the Intrinsic Worth of annoying people. Intrinsic Worth is not merely an ethical theory. It can be a way of living and of relating to others. In that sense it becomes a more intense way of connecting to others. Imagine actually caring about others enough to say how we feel about them and in reverse wanting to know how they feel about us.

We miss out on some of the best information about ourselves because of the social conspiracy of "don't rock the boat." We seem to believe that if we all started telling the truth civilization might go down the tubes. We avoid confrontations, even friendly ones.

Where did we get the idea that people aren't supposed to annoy us? Actually, what's more annoying than someone who consistently finds other people annoying? Life is full of weird stuff and that includes people, but they are who they are. That's life. Imperfection is the stuff of life. Why run away from it? Life could get a lot better if we all found nice (caring, not cruel) ways of being more honest with each other. If we aren't going to honestly engage life in all its variety, can we claim to be



living our best? We live in a web of relationships and, dare I suggest that we be true to our fellow spiders.



Photo by Ken Greiff

President's Message

by Howard Peer

This month I have the good fortune to welcome four new members to our Society: **Chuck and Ramona Ward, Laura Katz Rizzo and Rich Rizzo**. We are a small group and each new member makes a significant contribution. Welcome aboard!

It is also pledge time. And adding new members reminds me of one of the things Richard asks prospective members when they are going through the process of joining the Society: "What can you contribute financially to our Society?" Once members are in the door, however, we do not do a good job of revisiting that issue. I guess that is because we are shy and don't like asking for money. Yet that does us all a disservice.

There's an analogy between pledge time and evaluation time at work. When done right, personnel evaluations are an opportunity for the employee and supervisor to sit down and discuss their relationship. Ideally, the employer gets the worker's labor and the employee is compensated for it financially. When one party or the other feels that they are being taken advantage of, things go sour quickly.

Similarly, the Ethical Society expects something from you and you have a right to expect something from the Society in return. You as members deserve to know what your money is going for and what you are getting out of the relationship. We, the Trustees, need to hear you say, "I'll be here for you." Both parties need occasionally to revisit the basis of that relationship. What's wrong with talking about the service we provide in return for the support we get?

Perhaps we should rethink the meaning of pledge time. Yes, we are asking you to pledge to support us. But also, we should be pledging support and services in return. We are a community after all. Isn't that what communities do, at least successful communities?



Platform Summaries

On February 18, **Dr. Walter Tsou, MD, MPH**, and a Public Health Advocate, spoke on the topic "Can We Fix Health Care Before It Kills



Us?" He detailed serious US healthcare problems: lack of national policy, rising costs, inability of companies to sustain insurance premiums, expenditure inequities, inadequate coverage, increasing number of uninsured, etc. To fix healthcare, he recommended a national health policy that would provide universal coverage, negotiating drug costs with pharmaceutical companies and medical costs with doctors, and reducing administrative costs. To succeed, he stressed that health care "fixes" be kept simple and that the moral issue of health care be aligned with economic interests in a global economy.

— **Marvin Leibman**

On February 25, **Steven Masters**, Co-Chair for Advocacy and Public Policy, Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace,



delivered his talk, *Is Peace Possible Between Israelis and Palestinians?* Masters, a lifelong Zionist, believes that a pro-Israel, pro-peace, two-state solution is in the best interest of Israel, the Palestinians, and the US. He explained that the Palestinians are in Palestine because it is their homeland and that the Jews have only Israel to call home. History has shown that this conflict over land cannot be resolved militarily. Three staunch Israeli military organizations—the Refuser Movement, made up of Israeli soldiers and elite officers; the Council for Peace and Security; and Shin Bet—have embraced the view that military occupation and actions are disgraceful, cause great suffering, and will destroy Israel. Their influence has effected great changes in thinking.

(Continued next page)



SCHOOL FOR ETHICS

THE HISTORY OF HUMANISM

We are starting a new class. This time we are looking at the history and evolution of Humanism. We will begin by discussing Alan Bullock's book, *The Humanist Tradition in the West*, which starts with Renaissance Humanism and moves to the present. This is a discussion group and not a lecture. All are invited. For more information speak to Richard Kiniry.

Third Thursday of the month,
April 19, 7:30 PM

ETHICS FOR CHILDREN

Our children's program is growing quickly. We now have a staff of three with our new lead teacher, **Josh Bickford**. We strive to challenge the child's understanding of right and wrong and not brainwash them. If you know of any parents who might be interested, we can send them our Ethics for Children brochure. Call the office with the information, 215 735 3456.

Each **Sunday** morning, 10:45 AM



Get to Know Us Social

Wednesday, April 4, 7:30pm

Every other month we hold a casual informational event for those who are curious about the Society and its philosophy. Members will be there to talk about their involvement and growth. Leaders of the Society will be present to answer your questions. Refreshments will be served.

AEU SUMMER SCHOOL

The **AEU's School for Ethics** (Summer School II) will be held in Highlands, North Carolina from **August 11-18, 2007**.

An exciting new program is planned, with flexibility for individuals to select learning experiences to deepen knowledge of ethical ideas, develop leadership skills for thriving Ethical Societies, develop a personally richer Ethical experience and lifelong learning, and experience ethical community.

Information about the school and registration materials are available on the AEU website, which is accessible from the Ethical Society of Philadelphia's own website. An early bird discount will be given to those who register by **May 1, 2007**.



Platform Summaries (Continued)

Masters favors the Geneva Accord, a two-state solution, which would allow Palestinian refugees the right to emigrate to the new state of Palestine. The Israeli government refuses to negotiate with Hamas, but Master's organization—like most Israelis—support talking to the Palestinian Unity Government now. Almost half the Palestinians support the Geneva parameters and 85% support the recent ceasefire between Israel and Palestine. Eighty-one percent want final status negotiations now, according to recent polls.

Masters urged us to sign up for "Let's Talk," an effort by the Jewish Alliance for Peace and Justice, and sign letters — which he provided — that urge Congress to support a Permanent Peace Envoy, currently being considered in the Senate. Masters believes that peace cannot be achieved without the support of the United States. ◇

— **Temma Fishman**

Other Recent Speakers



Photo by Ken Greiff

On January 28th, **Jennifer Pennington**, Community Education Manager of Planned Parenthood, was our speaker.

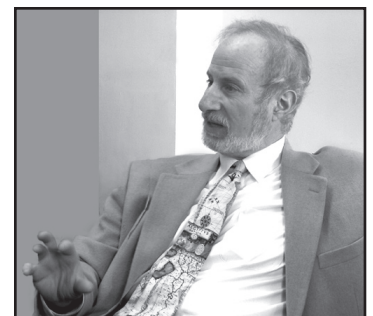
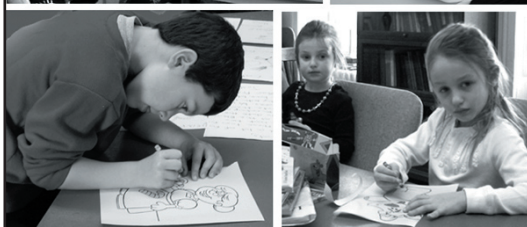


Photo by Janice R. Moore

Dr. Joseph Chuman, Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, NJ, spoke to us on February 11th.

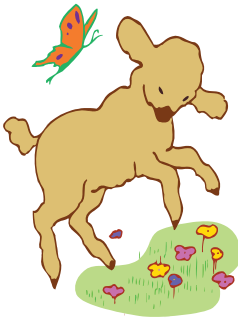


Top Row: Staff - **Monica Peer** (Assistant Teacher, **Josh Bickford** (lead teacher), **Lily Locke** (Assistant Teacher)

Bottom Row: Students - **Noah Cox**, **Marlee** and **Audrey Orange**.

SPRING FLING FESTIVAL

Usher in spring with a blast of merriment. Join members and friends of the Ethical Society of Philadelphia for our Spring Fling Earth Festival on Friday, **April 20 at 7 PM**. Welcome the season of flowers and lambs with music and dancing, fabulous food, games, wine and beer – all in the best of company. Come alone or bring a friend. Care to donate a spring-time dish? Need more information? Contact the Society office at 215-735-3456 or temmafish@aol.com. RSVP by April 13th. \$5 if you bring a dish, \$10 if you don't. The best bargain in town!



A Day of Caring May 3, 4:00-6:00 p.m.



On Thursday, May 3, the US will be observing a National Day of Prayer. As an alternative, the Ethical Society of Philadelphia will observe a Day of Caring. We are going to make some home-cooked meals to donate to the Aid for Friends Project. Aid for Friends (AFF) is located in northeast Philly and has been delivering meals to over 3,200 frail, elderly, and disabled people in the Greater Philadelphia region since 1974. Volunteers make the meals in their homes or churches, then deliver them, frozen, to AFF. Volunteers then take 7 meals to the shut-ins once a week. These meals allow the clients to remain in their own homes and apartments and not in nursing homes.

On May 3, we will assemble turkey dinners with stuffing, potatoes and a vegetable. We are asking everyone to join us in this huge endeavor. We will need at least 15 people to cook a turkey breast at home, slice it when it cools, place in a plastic Ziploc baggie, and bring it to our refrigerator at the Society. This can be done anytime **from Sunday, April 28 to Thursday, May 3**. We also need instant mashed potatoes and Stove Top stuffing. These can be made at home or in our kitchen. If you can't contribute a cooked dish, please bring in a BIG can of peas, peas and carrots, carrots, or green beans.

The rest is fun! We will need about ten people at the Society on **Thursday, May 3, from 4-6 p.m.** to assemble the meals in small tin foil trays. We'll add a bit of gravy, insert a menu, and wrap the tray in a tin foil sheet and a plastic bag. Once the trays are assembled, I will take them home to my freezer and a few days later deliver them to AFF.



Won't you join us as we celebrate our National Day of Caring and feed some needy people in our great city. Please sign up as a cook/assembler when the sign-up sheets are on display. Children over 10 are welcome.

— *Carole Erb, for the Ethical Action Committee*



A Special Thank-you

On March 18th, we were honored by the performance of a choral group, **EakinsVocal Consort**, led by **Tim Ribchester** at our Spring Celebration. They will be performing a concert at the Society on **Friday, April 27th**.

New Lunch Plan Continues

Since January, we have been asking each member to help provide lunch once a month so that everyone can pitch in and take the burden off the few who have been doing it for so long. The meal doesn't have to be elaborate.



The membership list is divided into groups by the first letter of last names, and each group is assigned one Sunday per month to make lunch, *and to make coffee*:

- 1st Sunday of the month - letters A-D
- 2nd Sunday of the month - letters E-K
- 3rd Sunday of the month - letters L-O
- 4th Sunday of the month - letters P-Z

In months that have a 5th Sunday, we'll make ad hoc arrangements for that week.

This new plan started on Sunday, January 7 with the First Sunday folks (A-D) and will continue through May. Please check your membership list for those in your group. We think it will be most efficient, fair, and enjoyable for everyone if group members consult and work together.



The cost of lunch is \$4 and will continue to benefit our Handicap Access Fund. Reimbursement for expenses is available. If you have questions or concerns, contact Temma or the Society office at 215-735-3456.

Many thanks to our members and friends who have worked to make our new lunch plan a rousing success. We've collected more money than ever from the lunches for our handicapped accessible fund. Keep up the good work!

Valentine Party and Service Auction



On Saturday, February 17, the Ethical Society of Philadelphia held its annual Valentine Party and Service Auction. Friends and members set out a variety of excellent dishes to accompany pizza and hoagies. There were plenty of soft drinks, wine, and beer. We walked around tables spread with sign-up sheets selling exciting events like outdoor barbecues, Phillies games, a plane ride, a canoe excursion, a vacation in Jamaica, and tickets to the opera, to name a few. All were offered by our members and friends to help raise money to support the work of the Ethical Society. We were entertained, too. **Jean Bradley** and **Saul Machles** led us in a singalong of "Leaving on a Jet Plane" and **Arnold Fishman** regaled us by singing, "When Father Papered the Parlor". **Temma Fishman** countered with a limerick about Arnold. **Carol Love** read a poem for children and **Bertha Waters** delivered two readings, one about a teacher's dedication to children and the other about a mother's dedication to the education of her daughter. **Andi and Ray Smith** performed two songs, one of them a riotous ode to the periodic table. While we were eating, being entertained, and signing up, **Laura Katz Rizzo** and **Rich Rizzo's** daughters **Isabella**, 4, and **Talia**, 2, played lively games with their parents and Sunday School teacher, **Josh Bickford**, who kept their interest for many hours. All the while, little brother **Orion**, 3 1/2 months, slept peacefully. We had a great time partying and even cleaning up together. There's still time to sign up for those Service Auction events. Treat yourself and help our Society. Look for the event sheets when you come to the Society.

— **Temma Fishman**



Photographs by Bob Moore



Top, from left: Erpang Zhang, Director, Association of Asian Research; Torsten Trey, Doctors Against Organ Harvesting; Stephen Napier, Ethicist at National Catholic Bioethics Center; and David Matas, Senior Legal Counsel, B'nai Brith Canada.

Left: An audience member described his experience going to China to find an organ for his dying mother.

Ethical Action Committee Hosts Forum on Organ Harvesting in China

The Ethical Society's Ethical Action Committee hosted a forum on "Organ Harvesting and Human Rights Violation in China" on March 11th.

The forum focused on a newly released report that discussed alleged organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners in China. One of the authors, David Matas, an international human rights lawyer, was a panelist. Matas coauthored the 65-page report with David Kilgour, a Canadian prosecutor, "BLOODY HARVEST: Report into Allegations of Organ Harvesting of Falun Gong Practitioners in China".

By its very nature, the report said, the allegations are difficult to prove because "there is unlikely to be any eye witness evidence," the Red Cross is not allowed to visit Chinese prisoners, and China has no freedom of information laws.

But Kilgour and Matas were able to "piece together" a variety of evidence of the practice.

For one thing, in its transition from a socialist to a market economy, China now requires both the hospitals and the army to find their own means of funding. China also has no organized system for organ donations -- and yet leads the world in sale of organs for transplants. For instance, the number of kidney transplant hospitals in China increased from 106 in 2001 to 368 in 2005.

The strongest evidence came from discussions with hospital staff. The authors used Mandarin-speaking investigators to call a number of Chinese hospitals. The investigators presented themselves as potential recipients for donor transplants, and were told where organs from Falun Gong practitioners could be procured.

— **Bob Moore**

News from the Caring Committee

— **Temma Fishman, Chair**



Jessie Harmath needs visitors.

Roberta Wood is gravely ill. Please send cards to the facility listed on the membership list, but not to her room. Your mail will be delivered to her.



Pat Leopold has had her surgery and is recovering nicely. She would enjoy cards and letters. Temma will announce whether or not phone calls are welcome.



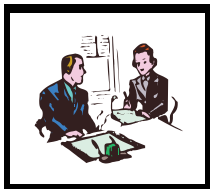
J. Zelnick / P. Leopold

Greetings again to **Jesse Zelnick**. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Let's wish **David Collier** a speedy recovery from a bad fall. Cards welcomed.

Call it Ethics

— Henry Pashkow



In '96 I supervised six case managers serving residents of various shelters in the city homeless system. They spent a few days a week at each assigned shelter getting residents in line with bureaucratic expectations, designed to achieve independent living. We were under contract to the city and responsible for monitoring procedures. I was new to the job and wanted to show my stuff. Relations with the directors of these shelters were in disarray, so I visited each of them, eager to discuss problems and solutions. The job performance of our group, as an entity, needed tuning up.

The city homeless system is complex and byzantine and doesn't work, and for a homeless man burdened by deficits — the kind you hear about but can't imagine living through — it's an arduous undertaking under the best of

conditions. Most people fall by the wayside.

The director and operations manager at one local shelter complained that the case manager assigned there delayed paperwork causing problems in their billing cycle. I knew a little about the woman assigned there, though I hadn't known her long. She had lost her only son in a drive-by shooting years before. A man I worked with told me she had been radiant before. She was good looking now, but drawn, deep in sorrow and drained of luster. I looked at her now and visualized that bullet winging its way at the target snuffing out her son's life. Some get through it and some don't; some scars burn forever, and reduce you to ash.

The ops manager, irate, wanted her transferred out and I said, "Look, I can't do this to her. I know it's not professional, but I want to do my job and not feel like a shit."

The director, a priest — not the usual doctrinaire priest — was willing to work through this. I was never good at

getting people to abide by bureaucratic dictates and I knew it, so I nudged her along and brought her work up to an acceptable level. It was good enough. Two years later when I left that job she was still there, but called out sick one day and didn't return. I was later told she wound up at another job.

We do what we can.



Camp Linden Volunteer Day Saturday, April 28 at 11:00 a.m.

Another opportunity to support the summer program and our wonderful campers. Let Jean or Saul know if you need a ride.



Photographs by Janice R. Moore

Our Annual Pledge Skit was written by **Jeff Dubb** (middle picture, bottom row) and included characters based on such notables as:

George W. Bush (**Saul Machles**),
Laura Bush (**Jean Bradley**),
Condoleeza Rice (**Irene Putzer**),
Nancy Pelosi (**Carole Erb**),
George H. Bush (**Howard Peer**)
and
Richard Kiniry (**Richard Kiniry**).

The song at the end of the skit, "We Gotta Get Outta This Place" by The Animals, was played on guitar by Saul and sung by Irene, Jean, and **Bob Moore** -- who coordinated the production.

APRIL 2007



Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: God is Dead, Get over It Richard L. Kiniry	2	3	4 Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Community Committee  Get to Know Us Social 7:30 p.m.	5	6	7
8 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: Helping Homeless Veterans Negotiate the VA Bureaucracy Michael Taub	9	10	11 Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Ethical Action Committee 7:45 p.m. Education Committee  Jeanette Kohler	12	13	14
15 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: Bringing Our Ethics Out Into the World Four ESOP Members	16	17	18 Meetings Weston Room - 6:30 p.m. Executive Committee 7:30 p.m. Board Meeting	19 Class The History of Humanism 7:30 p.m.	20 Spring Fling Festival  7:00 p.m.	21
22 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: Some Ethical Issues & Questions in Current Political Campaigns Tim Kearney  Kate Esposito	23	24	25 Meeting Weston Room - 7:30 p.m. Camp Linden Committee  Chuck Hinson	26	27	28 Camp Linden Volunteer Day 11:00 a.m.
29 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: Biomedical Research and the Public Good Jordan Orange, MD/PhD	30	31				

Reminder: For those who are participating in the “A Day of Caring” project, you may cook your turkey breast any time beginning **Saturday, April 28th through Thursday, May 3rd.**

Assembling of the meals will take place at the Society on **Thursday, May 3, from 4-6 p.m.**

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Editor, Ellen Rose
Layout and Photo Editor,
Janice Moore
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Web Master, Bob Moore

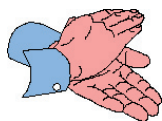
Ethical Society of Philadelphia

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



SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

April 1 - Carol Love: In honor of her
mother and grandmother's birthday
month.

April 8 - Doris Leicher: In honor of our
Community!

April 15 - The Oranges: In honor of
Josh, Lily, and Monica, who run the
Sunday School!

April 22 - Harry Thorn: To EARTH DAY.

April 29 - Mary Lou Da Silva: In
memory of her mother, Mary S. Welch,
September 1902 to April 2006.

Ushers - Arnold Fishman, Head Usher

April 1 - Scott Cox
April 8 - Chuck Ward
April 15 - Marvin Liebman
April 22 - Jeffrey Dubb
April 29 - Scott Pleune

Greeters - Saul Machles, Head Greeter

April 1 - Saul Machles
April 8 - Saul Machles
April 15 - Janice Moore
April 22 - Saul Machles
April 29 - Saul Machles

Coffee Hour Lunch

April 1 - Group A-D
April 8 - Group E-K
April 15 - Group L-O
April 22 - Group P-Z
April 29 - T.B.A.

Ethical Society of Philadelphia

1906 South Rittenhouse Square
Philadelphia, PA 19103