

Ethical Views

February 2008

Vol. 122, No. 6 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Platforms

February 3, 2008

Are you part of the Movement?

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

The Society rather grandly describes itself as part of the Ethical Culture Movement. And while there are many "movements" – the Environmental Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement, the Gay Rights Movement, etc. – there is also a sense of one historic movement of the entire race toward greater freedom and justice. Are you part of any of these movements?

February 10, 2008

Darwin's Dangerous Idea – And the Even More Dangerous Reaction to It Speaker: Tony Hileman, Senior Leader of the New York Society for Ethical Culture

Published in 1859, after being self-censored for two decades in a justifiable fear of public, academic and religious reaction, Darwin's theory of natural selection as the driving force of evolution threatened the authorities and traditions of his day. So much so that today, a century and a half later, there's a growing number of traditionalists and fundamentalists mounting considerable threat to science itself. Tony Hileman digs below the surface of the continuing heated debate over evolution and offers insight into its cause and effect.

February 17, 2008

Beyond The Crossroads: The Path Most Traveled

Speaker: Richard J. Watson, Exhibits Director of the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, Philadelphia Through his songs, poems and musings, Watson shares the experiences and life lessons that have been the benchmarks of an exciting life in the arts as an activist visual artist and performer, forming his character and focusing him toward serving humanity.



Joe Certaine

February 24, 2008

The Buffalo Soldiers: Pride of Black
Philadelphia

Speaker: Joe Certaine, Historian of African-American Civil War soldiers and veterans, currently serving as Governor's Representative for Southeastern PA

Not only did Philadelphia's Black community provide the largest number of Black regiments for the Union Army during the Civil War, it also was the primary recruiting source for literate Black men to serve as members of the US Army's premier combat units during the last half of the nineteenth century, the Buffalo Soldiers.



Leader's Message

Maturity

by Richard L. Kiniry

Age is no guarantee of maturity. Certainly age is a guarantee of physical maturity but there are plenty of old folks still having tantrums.

Like many words in the dictionary, "mature" and "maturity" can be the starting point for an analysis of the human condition. "Mature" starts as a description of physical growth and becomes an assessment of adult behavior. We think of the maturing process as good, part of one's fulfillment, but maturity is also understood as the end of a trip. Mature fruit is ripe; the next step is not pretty. We humans ripen early and most of our lives, even the best parts, comes after physical maturity. We ripen but we aren't immediately ready for the compost pile.

Psychological maturity is more complex. As we physically develop, we supposedly also develop mentally and emotionally, but it is not an inevitable process. A lot can go wrong. Generally maturity means being in control of yourself, being responsible for yourself and being a useful part of the community. There is a certain level of acceptable behavior that usually (Continued on Page 2)

In This Issue

- 1 Platforms, Leader's Message
- 2 President's Message
- **3** Darwin v. Religion in Rural Pennsylvania
- 4 Darwin's Birthday Party ad, 2008 AEU Assembly, Book Discussion, Intro to Ethical Humanism
- 5 Ads: Blockheads Wanted!; Job Opportunity; Non Violent Communications Workshop; Service Auction; Weekly Platforms; Name a Chair; Tribute and Friendship Fund
- **6** Calendar
- 7 Ethical Action Update, Ethics for Children, Letter from Tim Ribchester, Thank-you to Hank's Cadillac
- **8** Flower Dedications, Sunday Morning Volunteers

Living Ethical Humanism (Cont'd.)

passes for maturity. If you keep a job and your commitments, and live moderately without rocking the boat, most likely no one will tell you to grow up.

Even that level of conformity is not easy for everyone. Some people have too many unresolved childhood issues in their lives, and demanding attention has become part of their personalities. But what about the rest of us? Do you notice a lot of mature behavior in others or yourself?

That is a trick question because I'm trying to snare you in my web. I'm trying to make maturity an ethical issue. The bottom line of both maturity and ethical behavior is sensitivity to our place among others.

A child's journey to emotional maturity is through the realization that life is not all about them. . . And what is ethical behavior but moving beyond self interest to empathy for others?

A child's journey to emotional maturity is through the realization that life is not all about them and the mark of a mature adult is accepting their place in a larger environment and thinking beyond their own self interest. And what is ethical behavior but moving beyond self interest to empathy for others?

Maturity and ethical sensibility are on parallel tracks, which is problematic in a society that believes that immediate gratification is a god-given right. We live in an environment that encourages us to remain immature. The easy, convenient and comfortable are offered as the ideal, and self-expression is the holy grail. Satisfaction is found internally in how we feel rather than in the quality of life together.

As our bodies ripen to maturity, we can simply learn the rules of acceptable behavior and act the role of a mature, adult member of society. That is an easy way of not actually growing up. Beneath the facade of maturity we can attempt to make a life of personal satisfaction using others as means to our happiness. Or we can face life as a relational experience and continue the maturing process by finding a place for ourselves and our needs in the lives of others. We can develop a sense of self and a value system based on participation rather than consumption. And since honestly facing life head on with all its complicated relationship is not easy, real maturity can take a whole life, if we are lucky enough to get there at all.

Maturity is a process of self-development that takes us out of ourselves and into a clash of relationships, and that is an ethical journey. A mature person knows they are responsible for their own happiness; life doesn't owe it to them. They also know that means they are responsible for the life around them. Life is a journey of becoming, becoming mature and becoming ethical.

Richard Kiniry will teach an Introduction to Ethical Humanism class on Sunday, February 3, at 1:30 p.m. (See ad on p. 4.)



President's Message

by Howard Peer

You know the Chinese curse "May you live in interesting times?" I think we are about to find out what that means and that we are in for some very interesting ethical dilemmas. A while ago Richard spoke on population as the underlying issue behind the problems the Millennium Goals seek to address. It brings to my mind something that I have been calling the "Expectation Gap" and Jarred Diamond (author of *Collapse*) has addressed as the "Consumption Factor." It goes like this:

There are about a billion people living the "good life" (*Luckies*), and about 5.5 billion (*Others*) who don't. There are not enough resources for all people to live the "good life," which is why we have so much poverty, war, famine, etc. We *luckies* expect to continue to live our lives pretty much as usual.

The *others* also want to live our "good life." And they expect that they, or their children, should be able to achieve it or something close to it. That is after all, the American Dream. To put it in Diamond's terms, the *others* expect to be able to consume at the same rate as the *luckies*.

The ethical dilemma is that there is a fixed resource, we lucky billion control it, the other 5.5 billion want it, but there is not enough to go around. So what to do? Want to have some fun? Let's play

Luckies Others

Scenario 1. God: "OK kids, play fair, share and share alike." We split the resource pie up 6.5 billion ways, Even/ Steven. Of course that means that we *luckies* will give up about 90% of our wealth and distribute it evenly. That means the *others* will, on average, have their wealth doubled. OK, who here is going to line up to donate 90% of their wealth? Thought so.

Scenario 2. God: "Too many, cull the *Others*." Well, I kind of guess that is what is happening right now with famine and disease, etc. That is not appetizing.

Scenario 3. God: "Too many, cull the *Luckies*." Ouch! Not on my watch. This is just too cruel.

Scenario 4. God: "Too many. I'll teleport 80% of them off to four other planets and instill in them the good sense to not overstress their environment." Yeah, OK, I like this one, I'll sign up. Hello NASA!

Note please that this is a simplified argument; it does not consider the effects of: rising population, global warming, soil depletion, peak oil, etc. And do not delude yourself into thinking that there are technological solutions, because there are not. Those that tell you there

(Continued on Page 3)

President's Message (Cont'd.)

are don't understand the facts or are in denial.

So what to do? I think that we are generally optimistic folks. We have, for the most part, lived in times of increasing prosperity and we have experienced a phenomenal technological growth. We luckies have experienced the best of times and we expect them to continue. They always have before, no? I suspect the *others* have a more pragmatic view of the world. They are down and looking up. What they want is what we have. And, like land, God is not making any more of what we have. If they (others) want it they will have to take it from us (luckies). I'm willing to bet that they will try. I'm willing to bet we will call them nasty names, and maybe worse, for trying.

You know the Christian saying "What would Jesus do?" Good question. Throw out money changers? More to the point, what would you do? Let me rephrase the question once again.

What would you do for the health and welfare of your children and grandchildren? Would you strive to get your fair share to give them a leg up? If you had some would you try to hold onto it to give them an advantage? Damn right you would. Damn right. Damn.

This is just a restatement of "Tragedy of the Commons" writ on a global scale. It is a question of competing ethics; do I do right by humanity or do I do right by my gene pool? Doing right by humanity is the more noble answer, but just try explaining it to your granddaughter.

It is a question of competing ethics; do I do right by humanity or do I do right by my gene pool? Doing right by humanity is the more noble answer, but just try explaining it to your granddaughter.

These are difficult issues with no good answers. I was heartened that Richard addressed world population as an ethical concern. I know of no other forum where such topics are being discussed so openly. I was impressed that our group took it on gracefully and with an open mind. Kudos to Ethical Culture.

Darwin v. Religion in Rural Pennsylvania

A review of three books

— by Bob Moore

I followed the *Kitzmiller v. Dover Board* of Education story in the daily news reports, but it wasn't until books on the subject came out that I really understood the 2005 Evolution versus Religion trial in rural Dover, Pennsylvania.

I just finished three nonfiction books about that trial — 40 Days and 40 Nights by Matthew Chapman, Monkey Girl by Edward Humes, and The Battle Over the Meaning of Everything by Gordy Slack — while preparing for the ESHOP's upcoming Darwin Day celebration.

Some observations after reading a thousand pages about a dispute over a 9th grade biology book: How did the religious conservatives who pushed Intelligent Design (ID) into curriculum get onto the Dover school board? It wasn't philosophy or religion; they promised voters to lower property taxes — and ended up sticking the school system with a million-dollar legal bill.

Kitzmiller v. Dover was more of a battle within Christianity than between Christianity and Secular Humanism. one side: the mainstream denominations. which have few problems reconciling their beliefs with Darwinian evolution. On the other side: the biblical literalists, previously defeated in their attempts to bring Creationism into the public schools, trying to come up with a new strategy to get God back into the curriculum.

Most of the school board members who opposed ID were church-going theists of one sort or another. So was the slate of candidates that were eventually voted in to replace the fundamentalist majority on the school. Atheism and Secular Humanism were less participants in the drama than the slur-like label that the conservative Christians called anyone who opposed them.

The trial raised several challenging issues. Some of the participants were believers in a 6,000-year-old "young earth," and it's pretty easy to side with Science in that dispute. But Evolution advocates insisted that Science had no place in it at all for the Supernatural. That's what the scientists called Methodological Materialism (MM): if it's not measurable, it ain't real. Is that really an adequate description of reality? A number of scientists said that they stuck with MM in the lab but didn't follow MM's big brother, Philosophcal Materialism, in their lives.

Another interesting side trip was the difference between a scientific "theory" and a scientific "fact" — not what the layman would expect

The "Ethical" in EHSOP's name comes from the movement's founders' intention, more than a century ago, to demonstrate that people do not need supernatural instructions to develop a workable sense of ethics. Well, society ain't there yet. As ID-advocate Philip Johnson said: "Once God is culturally determined to be imaginary, then God's morality loses its foundation and withers away. It may stay standing for a historical moment without a foundation until the winds of change blow hard enough to knock it over, like a cartoon character staying suspended for an instant after he runs off the cliff. We are at the end of that period now."

How do I rate the three books? Film-maker Chapman's Matthew great-great-grandfather was Charles Darwin, but that doesn't stop him from an honest Charles Darwin



evaluation of both sides. Chapman's quirky research finds a lot of good facts: the Christian Dominionist (that's theocratic to you and me) origins of one of the ID think tanks; Justice Scalia's hostility to church-state separation; and the apologist-for-wealth origins of Temple University. Edward Humes's book

(Continued on page 4)

Book Reviews (Continued from page 3)

is meatier on the intellectual, historical and philosophical origins of the issues, but a little less entertaining. Gordy Slack's book shows its origins as online columns a little too obviously.

It was a history-making case, right here in our backyard, and if you missed it, these books will help — or you can come to the upcoming EHSOP Darwin Day party, which will include some dramatizations from the Dover ID trial. <>



Finches and lizards and fish -- OH MY!

Come to EHSOP'S celebration of

Darwin's 199th birthday!

Friday, February 15 at 7:00 p.m.

Fun - food - wine - prizes Plus a participatory reading from the Kitzmiller v. Dover Board of Education trial.

We're suggesting attire in vellow to support Naturalists who chose yellow as their color (to reference the sun)

\$5.00 for those who bring a dish to share \$10.00 for those who don't

Book Discussion: What Is the What and Two Companion Books for Young People

February 17, 2008, 1:30 Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Read the "One Book, One Philadelphia" selection for 2008, What Is the What, and come discuss it with us.

What Is the What is an epic novel based on the life of Valentino Achak Deng who, along with thousands of other children (the so-called Lost Boys of Sudan), was forced to leave his village at the age of seven and trek hundreds of miles by foot – pursued by militias, government bombers, and wild animals - crossing the deserts of three countries to find freedom. When he finally is resettled in the U.S., he finds a life full of promise, but also heartache and myriad new challenges.

The book is available at libraries around the Philadelphia area and some suburbs. (The Free Library of Philadelphia is coordinating and publicizing many related activities.) Also, many bookstores carry copies of the inexpensive paperback edition.

For young people there are two companion books, Of Beetles and Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard and Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan. If young people come to the discussion, there will also be an opportunity to hear their reactions to these books.

Ouestions? Contact nick@phillyethics.org



SCHOOL FOR ETHICS

Introduction to Ethical Humanism

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is part of a 130-year-old humanist religious tradition based on the idea that life is an ethical experience. This introduction is an opportunity to delve into that history and tradition. Interested visitors, newcomers and members are invited to examine the basic ideas of Ethical Culture. Do they make sense and can they make your life better? Using the Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture we will look at our core principles - the intrinsic worth of every human being, naturalism, nontheism, and ethics as a way of life. Led by Richard Kiniry.

Sunday, February 3 at 1:30 PM



2008 AEU ASSEMBLY -- ETHICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTIN Thursday, April 17 - Sunday, April 20

Event

Join members from across the country in Austin, Texas to socialize, learn, teach, and celebrate our history and our ethical values.

Here are some of the workshops that will be offered:

"Biocentric Ethics" with Curt Collier ... An Ethical Humanist Religious Approach to Living with Richard Kiniry ... Religious Education ... Growing & Sustaining Society Membership and Society Financial Management; Ethics in Pop Culture: The Ethics of Harry Potter ... Communication Skills in Ethical Society Life with Jone Johnson Lewis ... Out of the Box: Brainstorming to Reinvigorate Ethical Culture, with Hugh Taft-Morales ... and Ethical Decision-making Throughout a Lifetime, with FES member Max Romano and friends

Plans also include:

Keynote speaker and Opening Reception The National Service Conference Luncheon and speaker The Elliott-Black Award and Banquet Sunday Platform; A Liberation Festival -- A Humanist Seder Entertainment

Watch for the brochure in January, and count on having an experience you will long remember. Extend your visit for a delightful Austin vacation. Austin was selected as the No. 2 Best Big City in "Best Places to Live" by Money Magazine in 2006, and the 'Greenest City in America" by MSN.



Arnold Fishman officiating at the 2007 Elliott- Black Award Ceremony.

Photo by Janice R. Moore

Blockheads Wanted!



Want a little piece of immortality while you do something wonderful for our community at the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia? You can write your name in stone (actually cement) along with a message that will last forever, or as close to forever as we can get. As Society president Howard Peer

pointed out in his January article, for \$500 you can do just that. Twenty blocks of concrete from the sidewalk at the back of our building are for sale.

Each block purchase will bring us closer to realizing our dream (and yours) of making our building accessible to everyone. You can make the dream come true. Your name and message will be engraved on a brass plaque installed in the concrete block. Passersby will know you were here and made your statement for a most ethical cause. Send your check for \$500 to the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia along with the name and message you want engraved on the plaque. For more information, contact the Society office at office@phillyethics.org or at 215-735-3456.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

The Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia is looking for a Director/Teacher for the Ethics for Children Program. The job is part-time and we want someone with educational experience. The salary is negotiable. Please spread the word. Call Richard Kiniry: 215-922-4052.

Non-Violent Communications Workshop Facilitated by peacemaker Keith Pacheco Saturday, February 16th 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (1 hour for lunch) Connect with others in a way that meets your needs and helps those you care about. \$000000000000000000000<u></u>



your needs and helps those you care about. Improve your relationships -- with your children, co-workers, friends, and partners.

\$10 per person (lunch not included).

RSVP by February 9th, to the Society or email temma@phillyethics.org. \$......



Sign up for the Service Auction!

It's not too late. Our fabulous annual Service Auction is ongoing. Be sure to sign up for several events when you visit the Society. We're offering Canoe Carnival in Medford Lakes, a dim sum lunch, a trip to a Phillies game, a beautiful painting, lessons in Microsoft Word and many more specialties. Care to host an event or offer a service? Do you need a service (like yard clean-up) or a treat (like a birthday cake) that you're willing to buy? You can still offer a service or request one. Contact Temma at temmafish@aol.com or the Society at philaes@verizon. net. Or call the Society at 215-735-3456. Give yourself a treat while you help support the work of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia.

Friendship Fund

Traditionally, members of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia have marked the passing of other members or members of their families by donations to the Tribute and Friendship Fund. It is a lovely way to honor those who, like us, see our Society as an important part of our lives and of the community we serve. A card is sent to the family of the deceased indicating that a donation was made and a thank you card is sent to the donor. (The amount is not specified in the card to the deceased's family.) Keep the Tribute and Friendship Fund in mind as a way to remember a lost friend as well as to support our Society.

Name a Chair

Honor yourself, a family member or friend by donating an auditorium chair. Compose a tribute or memorial to be engraved on a beautiful brass plaque, which will be attached to the back of the chair. Help support the work of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia while you celebrate someone who has made a difference in your life. \$60 for one chair or \$100 for two. Mail your check to the Ethical Humanist Society, 1906 S. Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103. For more information, contact the Society office at office@phillyethics.org or at 215-735-3456.

FEBRUARY 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Birthdays						
					1	2
10:45 a.m Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: Are you part of theMovement? Richard L. Kiniry 1:30 p.m Intro to Ethical Humanism	4 Arnold Fishman	5	6 Meeting - Weston Room Community Committee 6:30 p.m.	7	8	9 Camp Linden Work Day 12:00 noon
10 10:45 a.m Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: Darwin's Dangerous Idea—And the Even More Dangerous Reaction to It Tony Hileman	11	12	13 Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Ethical Action Committee 7:45 p.m. Education Committee	14	Darwin's Birthday Celebration 7:00 p.m.	NVC Workshop 10am-3pm Mary Scholl
17 10:45 a.m Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: Beyond the Crossroads: The Path Most Traveled Richard J. Watson	18	19	20 Meetings - Weston Room 5:45 p.m. Finance Committee 7:30 p.m. Exec. Committee/ Board of Trustees Meeting	21	22	23
24 10:45 a.m Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: The Buffalo Soldiers: Pride of Black Philadelphia Joe Certain	25	26	27 Meeting - Weston Room 7:30 p.m Camp Linden Board Meeting	Meeting Weston Room 7:30 p.m Amnesty International	29	

Ethical Action Update

On January 6, 2008, **Jim Cummings** and I provided a dinner for the Trinity Men's Shelter (for homeless men) at 22nd and Spruce in Philadelphia. We did this as part of the Ethical Humanist Society's commitment to provide dinner for these men – up to 24 that the shelter admits – on the first Sunday of the month from December to April of each year.

Judith Will coordinates this ethical action for the Society. For each of the five Sundays assigned to us, she arranges for several people from the Society to prepare for and serve to these men a dinner consisting of a main dish, a salad or vegetable and a dessert. In December, Irene Putzer, Scott Pleune and Marvin Liebman provided the meal.

Jim and I were happy to do it in January. The men, who have sleeping spaces in the church basement nearby, seem very appreciative, and I will be looking forward to serving them again next year.

- by Nick Sanders



ETHICS FOR CHILDREN

Our children's program continues to grow. We strive to challenge the child's understanding of right and wrong. If you know of any parents who might be interested, we can send them our "Ethics for Children" brochure. Call the office with your contact information, 215-735-3456.

Each Sunday, 10:45 AM

Tim Ribchester

Director, Eakins Vocal Consort

PhD Candidate in Musicology, University of Pennsylvania

To all my friends at the Ethical Society:

I want to thank you all for being attentive, warm hearted and gracious listeners over the past four and a half years. The emotion I expressed at my final platform came from my recognition that the chance to perform the music I have played during this time, to an audience like you, is one of those rare opportunities in today's music world where a musician can enjoy a constant and close relationship with an audience while remaining artistically free. There's nothing quite like it, and it has been the center of gravity for all the other music making I have done during this time. I know I couldn't have maintained my level, and kept the confidence to be myself pianistically, without your weekly encouragement.

I also want to officially thank the community committee for their lovely gesture of a Barnes and Noble gift card. I thought you would be interested to know that yesterday I went to the Penn Bookstore and bought four books from their music section with the card, that I know will always remind me of the time I spent with you all:

Thad Carbart - The Piano Shop on the Left Bank (novel about, well, pianos)

Joseph Kerman - The Art of Fugue: Bach Fugues for Keyboard, 1715-1750 (80th birthday/retirement collection of essays)



Tim Ribchester

Max Harrison - Rachmaninoff (composer/works biography)

Lawrence Kramer - Why Classical Music Still Matters (recent musicology monograph about music, listeners and society)

And lastly, I would be foolish not to also acknowledge the sublime, humble Johann Sebastian Bach, fellow Sunday morning community musician (!), for providing me with an inexhaustible fountain of riches with which to communicate with you. Please continue to explore his music when you have the time.

Have a wonderful solstice and holiday. I'll see you all soon.

Warmest wishes,

Tim



Our sincere thanks to
Hank's Cadillac who
donated their talent to make
our Party Before New Year's
an enjoyable and successful

Photo by Janice R. Moore

Ethical Views is published monthly except July and August.

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

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SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

February 3 - Howard Peer: in the month of love, in honor of his beloved wife, Doris.

February 10 - Temma Fishman: to celebrate Arnold's birthday, which was on February 3. He was born the year the movie The Wizard of Oz came out. Can you figure out his age?.

February 17 - Ruth Ann and Jeff Dubb: in honor of Ruth Ann's mother, Ruth Cleary.

February 24 - Harry Thorn: in welcome to new family members Evan, Ruby and Nicholas.

Greeters - Saul Machles, Head Greeter For the month of February, Saul Machles and friends

Coffee Hour Lunch

February 3 - Group A-E February 10 - Group F-L February 17 - Group M-P February 24 - Group Q-Z

Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

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