November 2003 Vol. 118, No. 3 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Sunday, November 2 Platform: Richard Kiniry, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society One Argument Fits All

The Society takes stands on issues. Sometimes we do it officially and other succulent turkey, which is comple- Stroh, Guy W./Callaway, Howard G.:, times it is assumed. In this talk we will have one argument for all of them - the Death Penalty, Gay Rights, Israel / Palestine, Abortion, Affirmative Action, community and the bounty we are and more. You will never have to think fortunate to share. If you would like to again.

Sunday, November 9 Platform: Bridget Croke, Philadelphia Fair Food Project Conscious Eating and Connecting with the Source of Your Food

In a day and age in which the typical food item travels an average of 1,500 miles Sunday, November 30 from source to consumer, it is easy to feel overwhelmed when trying to be conscious of where our food comes from. Fortun- for Services to Children ately, many groups are working to build a Nutritional Problems more localized food system in the Greater of Inner City Children Philadelphia Region and to connect local Carla Neal will speak about the citizens with the source of their food. In nutritional problems commonly faced by this program, you will learn not only about children living in the inner city. She will the abundance of food grown in this shed light on the causes of obesity and region and how you can find it, but why it malnutrition in these children and is important to know where your food suggest what we can do to help them understanding of the intellectual and comes from and how it is raised.

Sunday, November 16 Platform: Suzie Abulhawa, Activist A Palestinian View of Conflict with Israel.

Suzie Abulhawa, a young Palestinian activist, will describe how the conflict with Israel affects her people and what we Americans should know to respond ethically to this issue. Ms. Abulhawa will offer a controversial point of view not commonly heard in our media. We will have a chance to examine her ideas more fully in what promises to be a lively dialogue following the platform.

Sunday, November 23 **Platform: Members and Friends Humanist Thanksgiving**

Join us in this festive event. We arrive early in the morning to roast a mented by delicious side dishes. The meal is interspersed with singing and poetry in which we give thanks for contribute one of your specialty dishes, please let us know. We especially seek vegetarian alternatives to the traditional holidav menu. You must make a reservation by calling (215) 735-3456 by November 15. There is a \$10 charge for non-members.

Platform: Carla Neal, Program Coordinator, Philadelphia Society

lead healthier lives.

Platforms at 11:00 AM Coffee Hour & Discussion follow the Platforms. Musical Interludes performed bν Pianist Tim Ribchester. Childcare provided at no charge. All are Welcome!

Book Review

American Ethics, A Source **Book from Edwards to Dewey**

Univ.Press of America, 501 pages.

American Ethics elegantly collects 75 texts and 40 authors, selected from among the most outstanding thinkers of the first 300 years of the history of the United States, into a work of reference. The authors, texts, and themes assemble, in their original sources, the ideas and discussions that presented themselves from the puritan origins of North America to the middle of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, the book also creatively transcends the explicit objectives of its compliers. Divided into six chapters which assemble texts from the six representative phases of philosophical development of the United States, the work appropriately shows the narrative unity of this thought, with the origin, decline, and interrelation of its diverse currents, which illuminates and otherwise facilitate the overall cultural life of North America. This second and more subtle effect is the fruit of the appropriate interjection of brief but substantial introductions, with the major lines situated at the start of each chapter and with the detail of the weaving exposited with every selected text. Finally, another special accomplishment of this book is the natural and almost unintentional presentation of the grand themes of the contemporary culture of the United States. Diversity and multiculturalism, tolerance, feminism, moral emotivism,

continues next page

American Ethics

authenticity as principle of value and the practical orientation can be traced back. These almost belong to the puritan origins of the "American experiment".

The first chapter assembles the classical texts of Puritanism, those of the pioneers who, in the 17th century, arrived in New England in search of a place where it was possible to live in freedom. They were characterized by a strong sense of sin and intolerance of other beliefs. The great theme of these years is the freedom of conscience and of religion. Although Puritanism declined with time, it put moral questions in the center of American life, including the debate concerning diversity and a certain emotive character of ethics which still persists.

The second phase of North American thought is that of the Enlightenment and of the founding fathers. Still much influenced by Europe, the United States justified its independence with the affirmation of the natural rights of man.. Religion was divorced from morals and the values of the puritans were secularized. The founders not only articulated the institutions of democracy but also preached, by word and example, the basic virtues of social order. The morality, the goal of which is the increase of well being, is what gives stability and harmony to society. In contrast to their Calvinist ancestors, they now believed that the naturally human is essentially good and began to hear the cry raised against slavery and against discrimination directed at the aboriginal peoples.

This idea arrives at the summit with the transcendentalism of Emerson and the romanticism of North American. The transcendentalists did not constitute a school of academic philosophy, however they notably influenced the culture of the country, exalting the values of selfreliance and individuality. They were idealists, believing that the mind is creative, that good and the evil were relative to each person and that rules and society conspire against the person. >

From there they invite contact with nature, with authenticity, and with the ever present disposition to concrete action. Like-wise, in this period, the defense of the rights of I was just elected President of the women begins in strength.

The fourth phase is that of the origin of the modern philosophy of North America which constitutes, moreover, the first original philosophy of the United States: pragmatism. Since the end of the 19th century and into recent days, this philosophy, founded by Peirce, James and Dewey, has exercised a profound influence in the land of the North. Such a system is defined as a method --the experimental method in philosophy. The theory is instrumental, the hypotheses aim to accord with experience, and concepts extract their significance in their observable effects. In other words, the emphasis of these points is on action and on the future. They affirm the fallibilism or provisional character of the results accepted or believed, the evolution and continuing accumulation of knowledge, and they promote cooperation among the investigators. In ethics every author has a distinct vision, agreeing perhaps only in their empiricism and in the idea that progress, overall, is only achieved in collective action, in community life.

Finally, the ultimate phases are the reactions and continuation of these ideas. The idealism of Royce, which criticizes the atomization in pragma-tism is not capable of an a priori totality in which new partial experi-ences are integrated; and there is the naturalism and scientificism of Dewey and Santayana. The ultimate postulate is that morality has a biological origin and that benefit or evil depends on the interests or preferences of concrete individuals. Dewey is well known for his intention of applying the scientific method to the area of the moral.

In summary, this is an indispensable book for those who want to know the history of North American ethical thought. Beyond that it helps the reader to a profound understanding of the reality of the contemporary culture of the United States. <>

President's Message

The AEU

Arnold Fishman

American Ethical Union. The Board also elected Carl Romano from the St. Louis Society as Vice President, Tom Hoeppner from Chicago as Secretary, and Harry Strickholm from Bergen, NJ as Treasurer. The Board itself was elected by the delegates to the last Assembly. Other successful candidates were Martha Gallahue (Brooklyn), Bill (Northern Virginia), Kate Lewis Lovelady (North Carolina), Linda Napoli (Long Island), Ron Solomon (Baltimore), Judy Wallach (New York), and Betsy Weir (Northern Westchester). Leaders Bo Meyerson, and Jone Johnson-Lewis.. I look forward to working with them, as well as with John Hartman, Executive Director. I would be remiss in not acknowledging the dedicated service of outgoing President Brian King and past President Ellen McBride. I will be counting on them to help me achieve the goals I have set for my presidency.

While any job can be defined in terms of minutiae, and the devil really is in the details, it is imperative that a grand vision guide us into our future. We must support the important work of our Societies and help them become healthy communities whose members grow in stature and satisfaction. On a planet that is critically ill, the curative message of Ethical Culture is urgently needed. Former Governor Mario Cuomo said, "Every Ethical Humanist I ever met believes . . . [in] two principles: we're supposed to love one another and we're supposed to work together to make the experience better. That's all the religion you need, really, to make a success of this planet."

Some grumble about the AEU and ask, "What do we get for our money?" The Growth and Development Conference is but one example. The upcoming >

continues next page

Report of the Education Committee

About Ethical Culture

Temma Fishman, Chair

Long ago, two young brothers, wanting to help their beloved grandmother, decided to clean and paint her house. They scraped, sanded, and scrubbed for two days. One of the boys was Fritz Williams, who shared with us his enduring joy in the giving of this gift. In his talk, *The Hunger* for Goodness, Fritz, who is the leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society, remembers the delight of loving and of a labor freely given. For him, it was not work, but "a celebration, filled with goodness". Traditional Christianity, with its low view of human nature, teaches that only God can bring goodness to the world. Wars, holocausts, a market economy driven by greediness support this view. But Fritz, in the tradition of Ethical Culture, credits people with the desire to do good, to build, to bring comfort to others, desires stronger than their opposites. He thinks the most important thing he can do is to remind people of their goodness, and the worse thing we can do to our children is to send the message that they are bad. "Goodness admits failures and shortcomings, is buoyant and remains intact," he said. "Goodness is creative, idiosyncratic, and beyond civility." Ethical Culture is a "school for goodness" where we struggle to liberate the childlike >

President's Message from previous page The AEU

AEU Lay Leadership Summer School is a life-altering experience. Those who grumble have failed to take advantage of these opportunities or to appreciate the thoughtful reasoning which went into our resolution opposing the war in Iraq. No movement can be successful without some national and international presence, and we are represented by the International Humanist and Ethical Union. The AEU is the voice of Ethical Culture. Our challenge is to fashion it to serve our needs. To do that, we need your input and your support. Together, we can triumph.

goodness residing within all persons.

Member Howard Peer was the first of the season to share his view of Ethical Culture at a platform. He, like many of us, has come to the scary conclusions that life has no intrinsic meaning, there is no god, and we are the final arbiters. One of the few places he finds support for these ideas is the Philadelphia Ethical Society. Here he finds the sense of community that fits his definition of religion and a place where people are not just against what "those other guys" are doing, but are positive about human nature.

In digotry".

Stacey Sobel, Executive Director of the Center for Gay and Lesbian Rights, is engaged in a struggle to legalize civil marriage. It would allow partners to each other while enjoying benefits such as health care, transfer of property including social security, and being involved in medical decisions for their partners. This social justice issue, like the death penalty and abortion, divides

Who can deny that technology progresses at a dizzying rate? But has our ability to take care of each other evolved to an equally lofty level? Some strides have been made, but millions of children still starve and are otherwise abused, segregated schools persist despite the civil rights movement, women are denied control over their own bodies, and here we were again at war. Ideas such as "Boys will be boys," "Take care of number one," "Those people bring it on themselves." and "Your job is who you are" endure. Why is this so? Leader Richard Kiniry, in his talk, Handing Down Bigotry, proposed that the very institutions we turn to for moral guidance are the cause. The Pope, George Bush, Jerry Falwell, and other icons so often spew intolerance and prejudice that violate their own values and disregard the evil they visit on their fellow human beings. They should be the "keepers of the truth," educating us on how to take care of each other, but inherent in their world view is a lot of bigotry. Their ideas become "us" and create the world we live in and the one we hand to our children. Human beings really do hunger for goodness, but the limitations we put on each other hold us back. Our job in Ethical Culture is to challenge the messages that keep us from evolving. To best judge an act or idea, Richard said, you must first see what it does to your fellow human beings. In his words, "Ethical Culture is about making the world better. We are the creators of the values of our

doing to those around us. Find out who the dogma hurts, and you'll discover the bigotry".

engaged in a struggle to legalize civil marriage. It would allow partners to affirm their love and better care for each other while enjoying benefits such as health care, transfer of property including social security, and being involved in medical decisions for their the death penalty and abortion, divides Americans. And the cause is traditional religious belief. Civil marriage would create the more caring society we would all like to live in. All of us have a stake in how government and religion treat us. We should all be able to take care of our families, especially children, which many gay couples now have in increasing numbers. Serious questions arise, such as "What happens if a child needs medical care or a partner needs someone to accompany her through the emergency room door? Who can make the necessary medical decisions? Surprisingly, as Ms. Sobel informed us in her talk, Pennsylvania has the best laws regarding civil marriage and its concomitant obligations such as second-parent adoptions, custody, and child support. While many Americans favor legalizing gay unions, Rick Santorum, George Bush, and others, while touting their support for American families and the Constitution, oppose gay marriage and adoption. Opponents often also decry common law marriage. This bigotry most affects the Africanadversely Americ an, minority, and populations, and all families that don't "fit in." Ms. Sobel anticipates the debate getting uglier. Unfortunately, the opponents have the loudest voices. Ms. Sobel is asking all in favor of human dignity and the right to live freely to raise their voices in the struggle for reform.

<

November at the Philadelphia Ethical Society - Harvest & Hunger

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
2 11 AM Platform One Argument Fits All	3	4	5 Class 7:30 PM Defining the Good Life	6	7 Jrene	8
9 11 AM Platform Conscious Eating and Connecting with the Source of Your Food	10 Social 7:30 PM Get to Know Us	11	12 Meetings 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee 7:30 PM Education Committee	13	14	15
16 11 AM Platform A Palestinian View of Conflict with Israel	17 Selma Toth	18	Forum 12 PM Why You're a Feminist Meeting 7:30 PM Board of Trustees	20 Class 7:30 PM The History of Ethics	21	22
23 11 AM Platform Humanist Thanksgiving	24	25 Class 7:30 PM Economic Justice	26	27	28	29 Howard
30 11 AM Platform Nutritional Problems of Inner City	31				Birthdays	

Humanist Thanksgiving

Sunday, November 23 at 11 AM

Join us for a delicious meal while we give thanks for our ethical community.

Sigh up with the Community Committee
& bring your favorite dish.

\$10 for nonmembers, \$3 for members.

The Hunger Project

November 7 beginning at 7:30 PM. Facilitated by Jim Goodman, Regional Director of US Funding.

Wine and cheese reception to follow the forum. Free and open to the public.

Ethical Forum Series Fall and Winter 2004

Lunch and Learn Series: Why You're a Feminist (But May Not Know It)

Wednesday, November 12 from 12 noon to 1:30 PM

The Series continues with a profile of a feminist non-profit agency, the *Community Women's Education Project* working in Port Richmond.

Wednesday, December 17 from 12 noon to 1:30 PM

A discussion by Kathy Black, president of the *Coalition of Labor Union Women*, of pay-equity and other economic issues.

The Hunger Project

November 7 beginning at 7:30 PM. Facilitated by Jim Goodman, Regional Director of US Funding.

The Hunger Project is a strategic organization and global movement committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, they empower local people to create lasting society-wide progress in health, education, nutrition and family incomes. They apply a two-prong strategy: mobilizing grassroots self-reliant action and local leadership. Their highest priority is the empowerment of women. Women bear primary responsibility for family health, education and nutrition — yet, by tradition, culture and law they are denied the means, information and freedom to fulfill their responsibility. The Hunger Project is committed to transforming this condition. Visit < thp.org > for more information.

A Wine and Cheese Reception will follow the evening forums. Free and open to the public.

School for Ethics

Defining the Good Life

This is an opportunity to examine your values as you confront real situations in the news or in your personal life. Each session will have a predetermined article or situation to examine.

Wednesdays, November 5, December 3, January 7, February 4 at 7:30 PM

Get to Know Us Social

A casual event for those who are curious about the Society and its philosophy. Refreshments served. Monday, November 10 at 7:30 PM

The History of Ethics

We will start the new season by looking at the Utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill. Following we will discuss Peter Singer's book, <u>Practical Ethics</u> and Daniel Dennett's <u>Freedom Evolves</u>.

Thursdays, November 20, December 18, January 15, February 19 at 7:30 PM

Social Analysis: Economic Justice

This ongoing discussion group has been examining historic economic theories. We started this season by looking at the reality of our present economic system, but we will continue keeping an eye open for explanations of poverty and economic inequality.

Tuesdays, November 25, January 27, February 24 at 7:30 PM.

Introduction To Ethical Humanism

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is part of a 127 year old humanist religious tradition. This is a chance 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 ideas - the intrinsic worth of every human being, naturalism, nontheism, and ethics as a way of life.

Sunday, December 7 at 1:30 PM

Ethical Views is published monthly except July and August

Editor, Ellen Rose Layout & Distribution, Jean Bradley

Philadelphia Ethical Society

Richard Kiniry, Leader

Board of Trustees

Arnold Fishman, Esq., President
Dale Drews, Ph.D., Vice President
Jeffrey Dubb, MD, Treasurer
Howard Peer, Secretary
Jean Bradley
Temma Fishman
Betsy Lightbourn
Irene Putzer
Lew Wilkinson
Jesse Zelnick

(215) 735 - 3456, philaes@prodigy.net, www.phillyethics.net

Sunday Morning Volunteers

Ushers

Rick Zorger, Head Usher, with help from Richard Kiniry, Saul Machles, Joe Monte & Arnold Fishman

Flower Dedications

Ken Greiff, Chair

November 2 Terry & Lyle Murley, in recognition of their wedding anniversary.

November 9 In Honor of Pamela Kay from her father Bob Kay.

November 16 Saul Machles, in memory of his mother Meryl Jacobs.

November 23 Barbara Beeler, in memory of her mother and humanist role model, Margaret Landes Beeler.

November 30 Doris Leicher, in honor of Howard Peer's birthday.

Greeters

Saul Machles, Chair

November 2 Lew Wilkinson

November 9 Saul Machles

November 16 Saul Machles

November 23 Nick Sanders

November 30 Jean Bradley

Coffee Hour Hosts

Harry Thorn, Chair

November 2 Nick Sanders

November 9 Harry Thorn

November 16 Jessie Zelnick

November 30 Ken Greiff

Coffee Hour Lunch

November 2 Doris Leicher and

Howard Peer

November 9 Jean Bradley

November 16 Jesse Zelnick

November 30 Betsy Lightbourn

Philadelphia Ethical Society 1906 South Rittenhouse Square Philadelphia, PA 19103