



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

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Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

JUNE, 2005

Leader's Message: Season's End and Summer Hiatus

As we approach the beginning of our seasonal break, I would like to wish you all a good summer and hope you can find the time to enjoy this wonderful season of the year when we all are in need of refreshment and renewal.

But before focusing on the future, some words on our past season are in order. I would like to thank all of you who have worked so hard to help our Society complete its projects and meet its goals.

Platforms

Patty Bender, Carol Varker and the Platform Committee deserve much credit for their excellent speakers and programs. Special mention for Luisa Lubiak's engaging festivals and her fine courses in ecological responsibility.

Finances

We all need to thank Dick Bohn who has had the thankless task of prodding us make our financial pledges and thereby insuring that we will have another season. We thank Nancy Bohn and the Fundraising Committee for those delightful fundraisers which are also fun raisers. Our Investment Committee, headed by Marty Cotler, saved the day previously with its work on the sale of the East Orange mortgage and has ably continued to monitor our holdings this year. Gigi has as usual continued to handle our rentals which has contributed greatly to our financial health.

Initiatives

We are indebted to Betty Levin for starting the Department of Peace initiative and to Sue Willis and the Social



Action Committee for taking the project on. We also thank Win Theis for his fine programs on end of life issues.

Sunday School

We are indebted to Elaine Norstein for chairing the Sunday School Committee and Dick Varker for his fine work with the children. We thank Jill Fox for her continuing dedication to the needs of our Youth of Ethical Societies (YES Group).

Membership

Chairs Rosalie Sussman, Barbara Cotler and the Membership Committee have brought us new members this year. Our newest member, Anje Moen, is already active in the Social Action Committee and involved in the Asylum Seekers assistance program. By the time you read this, Al Levin, a renowned filmmaker with an enlarged social conscience, and Paul Surovell, our Civic Honoree and President of South Mountain Peace Action, will both have been installed into membership.

We need to thank the Personnel

Committee and its chair, Bob Bender, for its tireless work in setting policies and procedures.

Various and Sundry

Many thanks are due to Marshall Norstein and to Jack Tiner, chair of the Building Committee. Our building is looking better than ever and we now have a ramp. Ashley Lannigan has made an excellent directory and along with Gloria Torrice has worked to improve our publicity. Howard Gilman edits our newsletter (and continues to render it visually pleasing). He is helped by Alice Robinson-Gilman who proofreads and fine tunes. Also many thanks to Fred Sebastian for his fine film project. We are also indebted to our Board and its officers, President Susan Kennedy, Vice President Bob Bender, Treasurer Pat Thompson, and Secretary Terri Seuss, for their dedicated work.

Lastly many thanks to each and every member who played a role in the work of the Society. We all have much to be grateful for as we end our season.

P.S. If I have failed to name someone, please let me know and it will appear in the next issue.

— Best to you all, Boe

From the AEU Library Archives

Excerpts from an address by Dr. Felix Adler, founder of Ethical Culture, May 10, 1931: *On the Occasion of the Fifty-Fifth Anniversary of the founding of the Ethical Movement*

Every one of the chief religions has some element of truth, some vital element in it. This has been fearfully overlaid with superstition. But what now matters is to free the grain from the chaff, to rescue as much as possible of the wisdom and the moral insight that past generations have stored in their religions, not to allow any result

of the effort of mankind toward truth to perish, to preserve truth but at the same time to restate it in such fashion as to fit it into the larger truth that has since been gained ...

Nevertheless, I said emphatically, not creed but deed. Why not creed, if it contains an element of truth? Why this sharp antithesis? Because a creed expresses a certain view of the universe and of human life that is supposed to be absolutely true, true for all time.

(continues)

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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Editor's note

The newsletter invites you to submit articles, announcements, commentary, etc. for publication. ITEMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE FIRST OF THE MONTH FOR INCLUSION IN THE FOLLOWING MONTH'S EDITION. Items should be no more than 150 words, preferably submitted via e-mail to the editor (howardgilman@netscape.net). Items can also be delivered to: Editor, Ethical Society Newsletter, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood, NJ 07040. Please call the office, 973-763-1905, and leave word especially if your item is time-sensitive.

Editor reserves right to edit for length, clarity and content. Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

For those interested in receiving their copy of Ethical Culture Monthly by First Class Mail for a charge of \$10/year or \$5/half year (beginning in January), call the office, 973-763-1905, and request our First Class Mail Special.

Ethical Culture Society
of Essex County,
516 Prospect St.,
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"Feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible — the kind of atmosphere that is found in a nurturing family."

— Virginia Satir

AEU Archive (continued)

Creed is a Procrustes' bed. If the facts of life do not fit it, they must be stretched, if they overpass the creed they must be contracted into it. ... Deed then, not creed, meant the effect on actual conduct to be the test of any philosophy of life. ... But there must be no inflexible statements, no inelasticity of the mind in attacking the problems. Is what you think as to the meaning of man's existence true? The test is: is your philosophy vital, is it livable?

... Our movement is inspired by the belief that the ethical end is itself the supreme end of life to which every other is subordinate, that right relations between men and women, between employers and employees, between people and people, are not to be regarded

as the means for making mankind happy, but that right relations are supremely worth while on their own account, that to act rightly is to do the right for right's sake.

Not that happiness is underrated, or that we affect to be so superhuman as to despise the things

that make for joy. But in the first place we realize that one cannot guarantee happiness. There are too many vicissitudes, too many unforeseen casualties, too many attacks from without, too many bereavements, too many failures of strength. Of course to the extent of our power we endeavor to give the cup of happiness to those we love — crosswise, as I like to think of it. I not seeking my happiness, but receiving it from the other, and he or she not seeking theirs, but receiving it from me, an interchange of the wine of life. But even so, I should say that to make another, precisely one whom we love, just happy, to have only that in mind, the joy of that life, is to think not highly enough of the beloved person.

... Therefore, in every movement for the improvement of conditions, the cachet of the Ethical Movement has been this: that we have kept the ethical end in mind for which these improved conditions are the means — better homes, yes, but not only for the comfort, the

brightness, the little garden perhaps; but because these necessities or amenities are propitious conditions for the family life as ethically it should be lived. Not the rescuing of the child from the mill and the mine only for the sake of the free development of his physical and mental life, but because the freedom to grow mentally and physically is a condition of the child's manifesting the worth that is potential in him, not the relief of the oppressed from the oppressor merely that they may breathe a deeper breath, but because the state of being oppressed and the state of the oppressor too are hostile to the development of the worth that is latent in man. So I have ever insisted that as Christianity says: "Forgive your enemies," we shall say: Side with your enemies, be on the side of the oppres-

sor, on the side, namely, of that which is not the oppressiveness in him; liberate him too from the tyranny he exercises.

... I would say that I was moved and am moved by a religious impulse. I felt myself to be the channel of a spiritual principle that operates in

and through men. What strength I have had has been derived from that. All the influence that I ever exercised is due to that. But so far from claiming that as a special privilege, as charlatans do, my whole aim and purpose was to reveal to others the same principle, dormant but present in them, capable of being roused into astounding action. (As the physicists tell us of inconceivable forces which are locked up in the atom, and which would produce vast effects if they should be released, so I hold that there is a spiritual force in men that can change the face of humanity if once it be released.) But I do not invite you to accept my religion, I ask you to consider the practical directions for the conduct of life which follow from it, and if, having tested them, you find them valid in your experience then they will be of use to you.

... I believe that Nature is but the outside surface of things, that it is the painted drop curtain behind which the real play is enacted, that there is divinity, that the essential life of

"My whole aim and purpose was to reveal to others the same principle, dormant but present in them, capable of being roused into astounding action."

From TIKKUN to The Department of Peace

In an effort to do something positive in the shadow of last year's divisive presidential election, I organized a series of TIKKUN teach-ins. TIKKUN is a Hebrew word meaning "to heal the world." After three teach-ins, our group is moving to support the proposed department of peace bill.

The bill, introduced by Rep. Kucinich of Ohio, would establish a cabinet-level department of peace in the executive branch of the federal government, dedicated to peacemaking and the study of conditions conducive to domestic and international peace.

On the domestic level the secretary of peace would, for example, develop policies to deal with domestic violence, including abuse or mistreatment of spouses, children and the elderly; school violence, gangs, racial or ethnic violence and violence against gays and lesbians; gun legislation, violence prevention programs and the promotion of racial and ethnic tolerance.

On the international level, the secretary of peace could provide training for personnel who administer post conflict reconstruction and demobilization in war torn societies, submit recommendations to the president for reduction in weapons of mass destruction, and facilitate development of peace summits. How comforting to envision a president in his oval office consulting with the sec-

retary of state, secretary of defense and, also, the secretary of peace! We shall be making history! Our first task is to convince our legislators to co-sponsor the bill. In the previous congress, we had 53 co-sponsors.



Join our national campaign by joining the conference call on the first Tuesday of every month from 9 to 10 p.m. EDT at (702) 851-3330. Enter the access code 456123 when prompted. Cost of the call depends on your phone plan. Check the DOP web site (www.dopcampaign.org) for changes. What a delight to hear other voices and enthusiasts from around the country!

For further information, call Tricia Idrobo, DoP Congressional District Team Leader for NJ's 11th District (973) 994-7018, or Betty Levin, co-chair (973) 763-1033. Also learn about our National Conference of the Department of Peace Campaign to be held in Washington, DC on September 9, 10, 11 by checking the DOP web site.

In the meantime, come to hear our next teach-in at the Ethical Culture Society, Friday, June 17 at 7 p.m. Paul Surovell of South Mountain Peace Action will also attend to update us about their exciting activities. See you there!

— E. Betty Levin

[Image from <http://wct.org/tikkun/socialaction/>]

the universe is perfect and therefore divine. The two words perfect and divine are synonymous. Dante in speaking of his master, Brunetto Latino, says: "He taught me to eternalize myself." That is the third word that goes with the two others — eternal, perfect, divine. The religion which I hold is intended to help me "eternalize" myself.

I draw a sharp distinction between divine being and divine life. All the theistic religions insist on divine existence, the existence of a divine being — perfection, eternity, divinity, being contracted into a single individual being. That being is called God. If you believe in that being, you are religious; if not, you are an atheist, they say. I draw the distinction between existence and life. There have been endless attempts to prove the existence of the individual named God. All these attempts have failed ...

My ideal of the divine life is that of an assemblage of parts, a society, a spiritual society, infinite, composed of infinite members infinitely diverse, each eternal, each necessary to the whole, the whole necessary to each. And it is this ideal of the perfect life in which I behold the symbol of the utter reality in things, of the powers and essences that work behind the screen.

The truth of this ideal I can discover in ethical experience, for ethical experience, as I interpret it, is nothing else than my endeavor to act toward my fellow beings as a member of an infinite spiritual society would act toward his fellow-spirits, seeking to quicken them, so as to express the eternal excellence that is potential in each, and thereby making actual the excellence that is in me.

The practical outcome of this daring metaphysics is usable by every one,

whether he has a taste for metaphysics or a capacity to follow such speculations or not. I have put it into simple language: Seek the best in others, — the best is the spiritual part in others — and thereby you will bring to light the best in yourself.

...How almost impossible the ethical effort demanded of us, namely, to see the spiritual nature in others despite the hideous appearances that mask it! How can we see it there unless it has become a convincing force in ourselves? And yet, he who sees the vision is akin to that which he sees. And the vision is not a floating ethereal dream, but power flows from it into the seer and necessity is laid upon him to strive to change his life and that of others in accordance with the sublime pattern which the vision holds out to him.

[Full text © American Ethical Union, www.aeu.org]

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

June, 2005

Platforms begin at 11 am. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. Sunday School 11 am–12:15 pm. Youth of Ethical Societies (YES): contact Society office.

June 5 Boe Meyerson, Leader, “Colloquy on Holiness.” Boe will facilitate our colloquy on the subject of holiness as a humanistic concept. The program will consist of readings, music, song and guided group inquiry. Boe Meyerson is the leader of the Ethical Society of Essex and is the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University. **Memorial Service for Harriette Krasner on Sunday June 5 at 1 pm** The immediate family will be in attendance.

June 12 A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali by Gil Courtemanche. Ethical issues raised by the book will be discussed by Alice Robinson-Gilman and Sue Willis with group discussion to follow. The book is an account of the beginning of the Rwandan civil war between Hutus and Tutsis and the subsequent horrific “ethnic cleansing” of the Tutsis. Mr. Courtemanche is a journalist who was in Rwanda at the time. We hope you can read the book by the time of the platform.

Please note these corrections to your society address directory:

“In regard to information on address changes and the like in May Newsletter, I have never been other than a member of the Ethical Culture Society. I was classified as a ‘Friend’ by administrative error.” — *Win Thies*

Bob and Patty Bender new email:
bob@benderworld.com

June 19 End-of-The-Year Sharing by the chairman of the Sunday School Committee, Elaine Norstein, and friends. Pot Luck Luncheon to follow.

FUNDRAISER EVENTS

Tie-Dying Fun Sat. June 4

Please join us on Saturday, June 4, at the home of Gloria Torrice, who extends an invitation to all, and especially children, to come to her home for a fun-filled day of tie-dying and refreshments. Create your own masterpiece with the help of a master. The donation of \$15. includes a silk scarf, which will become your personal treasure — or bring your own white cotton tee shirt to dye and donate \$10. Either way, this event spells FUN — Who knows, perhaps you will bring to the surface your yet untapped artistic genius — or maybe you’ll simply make a beautiful item. Bring your kids, grandkids, neighbors. For reservations, or further information, please call the office or one of the committee members.

Lunch at the Lake Sat. June 25

“Here’s to the Ladies (and Gentlemen) who Lunch”, especially at the Gourmet Lunch at the Lake — happening on Saturday, June 25, at Boe’s House. On a beautiful deck overlooking a spectacular view of this peaceful mountain lake setting, we come once a year to

refresh our spirits, and partake of the best darn food you’ve ever tasted. Conducive to solving world crises, as well as a few of our own, the view alone is worth the donation of \$20. Special prices are offered for families with children. Rain date is Sunday, June 26. For information or reservations for this or any event please call the office, or contact Nancy Bohn, Louisa, Jill or Jeanine Rosh.

Coming Soon to Your Local Ethical Society

Coming in early fall: our Silent Auction — we just can’t be quiet about it! So many lovely items and services will be offered. Also during autumn leaf time: a Walk in the Woods — if these leaves fall in the woods you must come to hear them, or better yet, to see the beauty of the season’s change. So, it’s into the woods we go for a brisk (or leisurely) walk and then lunch; details to follow. — *Jeanine M. Rosh*

Folk singing off for the summer

Please note that Folk Fridays are cancelled for June, July and August. Check in the fall by calling the office (973-763-1905) or email Lisa at lnovemsky@comcast.net.

**Next issue will be
September, 2005.
Have a great summer!**