



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 9

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MAY, 2005

Leader's Message

Dear Members and Friends,

As I was reading the *New York Times* articles on the life of Pope John Paul II, I was struck by the repeated emphasis on those events which exemplified his compassion, warmth, care and deep enjoyment in interacting with his fellow human beings. These traits were repeatedly made clear in his constant desire to circle the globe many times during his papacy in order to give strength, inspiration and guidance to people. From the very first day of election until the last day of his life, the responses he received from those people were almost always tumultuous eruptions of joy and love. As he stood on the balcony after the white smoke appeared after elected, he said to the crowd, "I do not know whether I can express myself in your — in our — language..." The crowd roared appreciatively and laughter swelled into resounding cheers. "If I make mistakes," he added, beaming suddenly, "you will correct me." Tumult erupted. The cheers went on and on and then grew into rhythmic waves that broke on the basilica façade and echoed across the square in a thundering crescendo: Viva il Papa! [*New York Times*] I have since learned that he mispronounced the word "correct" which only increased the mirth.



It was often mentioned that he had the ability to place ordinary people at ease in his presence. In fact he made them feel important. Yet in addition to his great warmth and interpersonal skills was a deep respect for the dignity of human beings. As much as he con-

demned the totalitarian rule of Marxism, he also condemned the mindless materialism and excesses of capitalism as well as its history of abuse of working people throughout the world.

(This is not to say that all his views were consistently humane. He was very conservative. Most of the Catholic views governing human sexuality, reproduction and the role and status of women I believe to be inconsistent with respect for human rights. He and most conservative Catholics would disagree.)

Yet what the people cherished in John Paul II was not his doctrinal views but his basic humanity and his love of and concern for people — his ethical personhood.

When I was at a recent meeting of members of the Interfaith Outreach Committee, after a young man's dramatic reading of a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., someone raised the question: "what is there that all our faiths have in common?" The young man answered that it was the moral concern for humanity. This was also the view of Felix Adler and why he considered Ethical Culture to be at the heart of the world's mature religions.

Join me on May 1 at 11am when I speak on the topic of "Ethical Culture as a Universal Religion."

— *Best to you all, Boe*

Fundraiser Calendar

Remember to bring your [clean usable] items to the society for the Saturday **May 7 White Elephant Sale**. Please volunteer now: we need help Friday to set up, Saturday to sell and clean up.

Two new exciting events are planned for spring. First, at Betty Levin's home, is the **Azalea Display** on Saturday **May 21**. This is the epitome of spring's

floral abundance: the entire mountain blooming with colorful azalea patterns. You can also count on wonderful food, stimulating conversation and loving community. Donation is \$15.

Next is the **June 4 Tie-Dyeing Party** at the home of Gloria Torrice. Gloria invites all, including children, to come to her home for a fun-filled day of tie-dyeing and refreshments. Donation of \$15 includes a silk scarf — or bring your own white cotton tee shirt to dye and donate \$10.

Saturday, **June 25 is Lunch at the Lake** at Boe Meyerson's house. Wonderful gourmet food at this spectacular mountain lake setting. The view alone is worth the donation of \$20. Special prices for families with children.

For information or reservations for any event, call the office or contact Nancy Bohn, Jill Fox, Louisa Lubiak or Jeanine Rosh. — *Jeanine M. Rosh*

Social Action Committee

From the April 3 meeting

Our newest committee members, Anja Moen and Joan Bernitz, held a "carding" during coffee hour at which people wrote postcards to their representatives in congress encouraging them to support the creation of a federal department of peace. Anja and Joan will do the carding again in two weeks.

We had an in-depth discussion of our support for providing Advance Directives after the May 1 platform (*see item on page 2*). Some committee members were doubtful about providing this service without counseling, but the majority felt that at least on a one time, *ad hoc* basis, we ought to provide this as an important community service.

The balance of the meeting consist-

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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Jim White, Leader Emeritus

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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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"If I have been of service, if I have glimpsed more of the nature and essence of ultimate good, if I am inspired to reach wider horizons of thought and action, if I am at peace with myself, it has been a successful day." — Alex Noble

*("In Touch with the Present"
Christian Science Monitor 6 Mar 79)*

ed of discussion of topics that the platform committee might consider: preschool readiness and nuclear power education. Further discussion focused on that we will continue to work for a department of peace, exploration of where we might weigh in on New Jersey tax reform and interest in prison reform.

Social Action Committee's next meeting is Sunday, May 22, immediately after platform. Please come, and invite a friend!

— Sue Willis

Advance Directive Program May 1

The tragic Terri Schiavo case has concentrated the public mind on the importance of a well thought out and effective advance directive for medical care. Our Social Action Committee has planned a program to follow the platform May 1 beginning at 12:30 pm, during which participants may validly execute an Advance Directive. Win Thies will give a 10-minute presentation on the procedure, followed by a question and answer period. A short form has been prepared that people can use and have notarized on the day of the program (no fee will be charged) or at another time. If you wish to use another form, possibly one from a hospital, doctor or bar association, you may do so.

Carefully consider whom you wish to have the responsibility of making medical decisions for you. Who should be an alternate? Have names and post office addresses of such persons ready. Bring identification, preferably photo.

The form is a so-called "combined" form: you designate an agent to make medical decisions if you are no longer able to do so. Like a "Living Will", it sets out some of your wishes regarding medical care. It adds two options: (1) the opportunity to make an organ donation and (2) to provide, if you wish, that you shall not be deemed dead until your heart and lungs cease working. This would run contrary to the usual presumption under NJ law that you are deemed dead when you are "brain dead" (no variable brain function).

Several states require "clear and convincing" evidence on your wishes regarding a feeding tube. The form allows you to be specific. Again, several states require notari-

tion so we shall have a Notary Public or NJ attorney present.

— Win Thies

Folk Singing May 13

7:30 pm second Friday of the month with Lisa Novemsky. Check in advance by calling the office (973-763-1905) or email Lisa at lnovemsky@comcast.net.

Philosophy for Children May 25

At the Bridgewater Library, Wednesday, May 25, 7:30 pm, Maughn Gregory, PhD, Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Montclair State University, will discuss the Institute's program of teaching critical thinking and ethics to children.

— Bob Bender

AEU Assembly May 27

The Annual AEU Assembly will be held in Virginia on Memorial Day weekend this year starting on Friday night, May 27. Anyone interested in attending should call the ECS office (973-763-1905) or Susan Kennedy.

Memorial Service June 5 for Harriette Krasner

On Sunday June 5 at 1 pm we will have a Memorial Service for long-time member Harriette Krasner. The immediate family will be in attendance.

Book about Rwanda to be discussed at June 12 platform

Ethical issues raised by the book, *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* by Gil Courtemanche, will be discussed at a June 12 platform by Alice Robinson-Gilman and Sue Willis with discussion to follow.

The book is an account of the beginning of the Rwanda civil war between Hutus and Tutsis and the subsequent horrific "ethnic cleansing" of the Tutsis. The United States chose to ignore this, not sending in troops to stop the killings. Mr. Courtemanche is a journalist who was in Rwanda at the time. He narrates and all references are to actual people using their real names.

We hope you can read the book by the time of the platform so we can have a discussion amongst all attending. ■

Peacemaking and Peacekeeping

The world is a dangerous place. In spite of almost insuperable financial and political obstacles, the UN has been the principal institution dealing with these dangers. An overriding problem which has limited the UN's effectiveness has been, as quoted from the *New York Times*, "Washington's unremitting hostility to the UN."

Still the UN has been remarkably successful both in peace-making and peace-keeping. So says a study from the Rand Corporation. The message is surprisingly upbeat. Even in the worst failed states, low income countries under stress can be helped into recovery. The UN has been quite effective in dealing with these problems. Of the eight UN-led missions studied by the Rand Corporation, seven have brought sustained peace. (Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Eastern Slovenia, Sierra Leone, East Timor and Cambodia).

Is it in the developed world's interest to intervene? The answer is simple and overwhelming. Chaos is a traveling epidemic for crime, disease and general social instability. Atrocities committed within failed states spread to armed rebels in neighboring countries. Since the 1970s, the number of civil wars had by 1990 increased sharply to over 50.

In 1992, the UN created a peace-making and peacekeeping office, resulting in a rapid growth in UN activity in combating civil wars. By 2002, the number had dropped by 40% to about 30. In the last 15 years, more civil wars have ended than in the previous two centuries, in large part because of UN action. There are 17 peacekeeping missions involving 80,000 people.

The annual cost of all UN peacekeeping operations in a year is less than America spends in a month in Iraq.

Most of the failures, such as Rwanda and Bosnia, have occurred when the Security Council, which mandates these operations, cannot agree. When there is cooperation within the Security Council, even worst case examples such as Liberia, can be rescued. In that crime-ridden country, the United States, the UN and Nigeria have worked together for a power-sharing transitional government. Neighboring Sierra Leone is no longer a theatre of killings, because Sierra Leone is prosecuting its criminals through a UN-backed special court. The underlying principle is that the culture of impunity that plagues much of Africa can only be stopped by internationally accepted legal means.

Currently the world body is addressing a major humanitarian disaster in the Sudan. The Secretary General has been pressing for a beefed-up international force and has succeeded in gaining unanimous Security Council approval for 10,000 troops to serve as peacekeepers. The delays in the deliberations have come about because the US and the Sudan resist the use of the International Criminal Court, the legal body with the right to try criminals accused of crimes against humanity.

In the Congo, a major effort is being undertaken to eliminate the outrageous sex abuses which have hurt the UN's reputation. It is important to understand that this is a sovereignty issue in which each country insists on control over their troops but at the same time must take the responsibility to

Platforms (continued from page 4)

Commoner at Queens College, City University of NY, and programs manager for the Society of Environmental Journalists. Jim also served in VISTA as a juvenile caseworker and as a Peace Corps Volunteer on a Pacific atoll. Jim and his son reside in East Orange, NJ.

May 29 Boe Meyerson, Leader, "A General Memorial Service." This is a participatory platform. Anyone present will be able to share memories of loved ones who have passed away this year or anytime in the past. Special attention will be given to those who have died in this and recent wars: Iraqis, Afghans, Americans, Italians, British and others. Boe Meyerson is the leader of the Ethical Society of Essex and is the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

monitor their soldiers. Procedures are being taken for a zero-tolerance effort to implement this responsibility.

To prevent future disasters, the UN has offered two proposals. One is a peace-building commission to alert the Security Council of upcoming tensions and potential conflicts. A proposal to meet the need for preventive interventions is a rapid deployment force. This would not be a UN army, but a force contributed by member nations: action-ready forces in sufficient strength to be used immediately at the onset of the UN's entry.

Over the years, up to 102 nations have contributed troops and personnel and 2,000 have died in this service. The UN is the only institution that can assemble the essential international cooperation needed to combat the grave issues facing the world. ■

— Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU
Representative to the UN and Phyllis
Ehrenfeld, AEU's National Service
Conference Representative to the UN

Please note these corrections to your society address directory

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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

May, 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.

May 1 Boe Meyerson, Leader, *“Ethical Culture as a Universal Religion.”* This address will explore the ways in which the ethical dimension of the great mature religions of the world can be seen as pervasive and universal though not always central. Boe Meyerson is the leader of the Ethical Society of Essex and is the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

Following the platform, the Social Action Committee will present a program at 12:30 pm on **Advance Directives** (see description on page 2).

May 8 Curt Collier, *“The Magic Tent: Recovering from Absolutism.”*

The West has long wrestled with the challenge of living up to its ideals. In fact, having “ideals” is part of the problem. We all know the benefits of setting goals and standards: high aspirations to strive for. But built into this dynamic is the notion that we are somehow separate from our beliefs. This talk will explore an ethical approach to living, one that weds our values and beliefs with pulsing and greening life.

Curt Collier studied philosophy in college, intending to be a rabbi. He spent time on a kibbutz in Israel, but moved away from the language of theism toward science, and took a Master’s degree in clinical audiology. Out of a desire to work in a community, however, he sought out Ethical Culture and

is now leader of the Riverdale Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture, as well as working on a dissertation in Pastoral Counseling at Hebrew Union.

May 15 “Why We Joined The Ethical Culture Society.” Betty Levin will conduct a panel discussion with five members of the Essex County Ethical Culture Society. They will talk about the impact that Ethical Culture has had on their lives. The panel members include Esther Barcun, Dick Bohn, Louisa Lubiak, Ted Seagull and Carol Varker.

Betty Levin is a licensed professional counselor, in private practice for 26 years serving all age groups and also supervising other therapists. She is president of the Association for Spirituality, Ethics and Religious Values in Counseling of the New Jersey Counseling Association and founder and past president of the NJ Association of Women Therapists, as well as an active member of many other organizations. She has published papers on subjects such as “Psychotherapy as Modern Art.” She is also a past president and long time vital member of our society.

Following the platform, the **Annual Membership Meeting** will take place.

May 22 “Redefining Environmentalism” James Quigley and Louisa Lubiak will discuss “The Death of Environmentalism.” This controversial essay by Mi-

chael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus has stirred a vigorous debate in the environmental community about three decades of environmental activism. Their discussion will explore what wisdom may be in this debate and where do we go from here.

Louisa Lubiak spent the summer after college graduation living in an Ecovillage in Tennessee and learning about organic farming and social activism. From there she took a term as a Watershed Ambassador in an AmeriCorps program sponsored by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection. Louisa has worked to protect groundwater resources with the Pas-saic River Coalition, and volunteers as a discussion course facilitator for the Garden State Earth Institute. Louisa is currently employed in the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water Quality, Bureau of Non-Point Pollution Control.

H. James Quigley, Jr. has been the Executive Director of the NJ Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability, a member of the faculty in environmental sciences at Portland State University (Oregon) and an adjunct at the State University of NY-Stony Brook and at Ramapo College of NJ. Jim’s work has also included research associate at the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems headed by Barry

(continued on page 3)