



ETHICAL CULTURE

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President' Message

Dear members and friends,
As we are reminded several times a day that we have to stay apart so we can be together again, it doesn't make it any easier, especially for those who live alone, and are elderly. It is, however, heartening to know that there is a lot of help out there. Several sources have been made available by SOMA Two Towns for All Ages, local libraries, for entertainment and grocery shopping. In this newsletter various connections have been mentioned which are organized by the American Ethical Union. Please take advantage of them. And stay safe. We will see you soon. — Zia Durrani

Annual Society Meeting Postponed

The Annual Meeting of the members of our Essex Society, normally held on the 3rd Sunday of May, has been postponed due to the current health situation as a result of the coronavirus, which, for the time being is changing the very way we pass our days. In the meantime the existing Board of Directors will continue the governing of the Society. Our fiscal year does not end until August 30th, so we look forward to being able to reschedule the meeting as soon as circumstances allow.

In the meantime please be assured the Society is "fiscally healthy" and with the help of Marshall and Elaine, who are so diligent in their efforts to continually sanitize the building and take all the necessary precautions, the building will return to its normal use as soon as is possible and advisable. Also we must thank Liz Cunningham,

who is keeping us current with our banking and bookkeeping needs.

The Board of Directors will issue a notice to all members when the meeting is rescheduled.

FROM THE AEU

How the AEU is Responding to Coronavirus

<https://aeu.org/2020/03/how-the-aeu-is-responding-to-coronavirus/>

By Bart Worden, AEU Executive Director, 31 Mar 2020

At the time of our March 14th message, people were rapidly making efforts to adjust their lifestyles to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Since then, all the American Ethical Union (AEU) staff and volunteers began working remotely and all of our member Societies stopped having in-person Platform meetings. This past Sunday, at least eleven Societies held Platform meetings via Zoom video conferences, which included attendees from several other Societies.

Our daily lives are quite different from what we are used to, to say the least, and it is a significant challenge to connect and stay connected with others when we need to be physically apart. With that in mind, the AEU is actively developing supports to help our communities function effectively in these trying times. Our leadership has reached out personally to the Presidents Council representatives of each Society to hear what our groups need now and expect to need in the future. We will be continuing and expanding that outreach.

Here are some things we have put in motion so far:

Connections Web Forum and Calendar

We have launched a new Ethical Community page on AEU.ORG, our main website (<https://aeu.org/ethical-community/>). This page includes an interactive web forum called "Connections" where we share helpful information, ideas, and resources from inside and outside the Ethical Culture Movement.

You can access the Connections web forum from the aeu.org home page by clicking on the "Connections" graphic. Once there, the web forum will be on the left side of the page. Click on any of the Discussion Categories to view related topics. If you would like to add your own topics or respond to a post, you can join the forum and do that.

The Ethical Community page also has a Connections calendar on the same page as the Connections web forum. This calendar is where you can find online meetings and activities to join. The Washington Ethical Society, Ethical Society of St. Louis, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, New York Society for Ethical Culture, and Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture have all used Zoom for Sunday meetings and other events. Each Society will determine which of their events to add and has a representative who can post to the calendar. Societies can contact the AEU office for help in getting their events posted on the calendar.

We encourage everyone to participate with their own Society's programs and also with the programs offered by other Societies that are listed on the Connections calendar. Both the web forum and the calendar are open to

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The Ethical Culture Society

is a religious and educational fellowship that seeks to achieve the ethical life without dogma; to develop the highest values in human relationships in ourselves, our families, and our community; and to elicit the best in others, thereby eliciting the best in ourselves.

Ethical Culture is a humanist religion.
Come and visit!

Newsletter

Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

Newsletter items must be received by the eighth of the month for inclusion in the following month's edition, preferably via email: gilman.howard@gmail.com.

Editor may edit for length, clarity and content. Members submitting for publication time-sensitive items in the EC office's mail slot or in the mail, please also email or call Elaine Durbach or Howard Gilman.

the public and continuously growing, so please visit them often and tell your friends about them.

Coming soon:

- Virtual Sunday Ethical Education for Kids — a collaborative effort between the AEU and interested Societies that will offer a joint program with breakout rooms for different age groups
- Support Call for Societies with Buildings — a chat on coping with the financial struggles and health concerns caused by COVID-19
- How to Conduct Virtual Platforms and Other Events via Zoom video conferencing
- Online caring and support service for Societies without a Leader

The AEU is working to get these resources in place to help our Societies address the challenges ahead because we know the most important resource we have is each other. Let's connect, let's share, let's together bring as much goodness into life as we can.

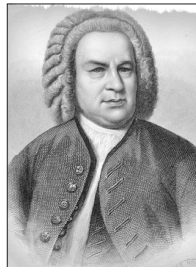
These times are scary and unpredictable, but one thing is certain: we will emerge stronger if we pull together now and stay connected with each other. I look forward to working with you to do what we can to bring ethics to life!

BACH SESSIONS ONLINE

The Bach-Session of March 20th is available on Youtube. I recorded it and plan to continue doing so as long as needed. For technical reasons I had to split up the recording into 6 segments, but that may even be more convenient for people than listening to one long presentation.

I also wrote a blog entry about the process of recording the session. That can be found at Music, Life and other Challenges on blogspot.

The link is:
<http://musiclifeandotherchallenges.blogspot.com> — Birgit Matzerath



ABOUT ETHICAL HUMANISM

What is Ethical Humanism?

Ethical Humanism, also called Ethical Culture, is an evolving body of ideas that inspires Ethical Societies. Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity (Humanist Manifesto III). For Ethical Humanists, the ultimate religious questions are not about the existence of gods or an afterlife, but rather, "How can we create meaningfulness in this life?" and "How should we treat each other?"

Ethical Humanism is clear about the essential role that ethical principles play in human relationships. Despite how uncertain we might feel about our personal standards—or how best to apply them—for an Ethical Humanist, there are unquestionably acts that are good and evil, right and wrong. In order for human beings to have good lives, love must prevail, truth must be respected, honesty esteemed, justice secured, and freedom protected. Learning how to realize these ideals in personal and political relationships is the purpose of Ethical Societies.

Does Ethical Humanism have a creed?

No. We are not bound by any community creed or dogma. Rather, Ethical Societies emphasize the importance of developing a clear personal philosophy that makes your life understandable and meaningful. Learning to benefit from a diversity of viewpoints is one of our challenges. Members encourage each other to think freely and to disagree without being disagreeable. We do agree on "Deed before creed," sometimes expressed as "Diversity in the creed, unanimity in the deed."

What beliefs do Ethical Societies teach?

Freedom of Belief: When we stimulate our thinking with new insights and inspirations, our understanding of the world evolves, and we realize the full capacity of our human spirit. *(continues on next page)*

Eliciting the Best: It is by acting in a way that encourages the finest characteristics in others that we bring out the best in ourselves.

Respect for Human Worth: We treat all people as having an inherent capacity for fairness, kindness, and living ethically.

Ethical Living: When we put into practice ethical principles such as love, justice, honesty, and forgiveness, we experience harmony within ourselves and in our relationships.

Reverence for Life: We cultivate the spiritual dimension in life by experiencing our interdependent connections to humanity, nature, and our inner values.

What does ethics mean?

Ethics defines the elements essential to human well-being and proposes guiding principles to generate an ethical culture. Ethics also refers to the specific values, standards,

rules, and agreements that people adopt for conducting their lives. Ethics, most broadly, is the study of human behavior and its consequences in the light of what is ideally possible. For example, ethicists might study a society's mores or morals to determine what effect they would have on humankind if they were used as universal standards. Ethics are not merely social conventions, like table manners. Rather, ethics define the social conditions necessary for human beings to thrive.

Here (*below*) is the 2008 National Leaders Council Statement on where Ethical Culture/Ethical Humanism stands at the beginning of the 21st century. Its intent is to clarify our shared beliefs in language that resonates with the familiar and unfamiliar alike. Open to the possibilities of the future, it is part of a living canon—an expression of those Ethical Culture Leaders who endorse it and are devoted to furthering Ethical Humanism within its context.

ETHICAL CULTURE — 2008 NATIONAL LEADERS COUNCIL STATEMENT

The following is a statement on where Ethical Culture/Ethical Humanism¹ stands at the beginning of the 21st century. Its intent is to clarify our shared beliefs in language that resonates with the familiar and unfamiliar alike. Open to the possibilities of the future, it is part of a living canon—an expression of those Ethical Culture Leaders who endorse it and are devoted to furthering Ethical Humanism within its context.

Dedicated to cultivating moral development in personal life and moral reform in society, Ethical Culture seeks to nurture relationships in which we act so as to elicit the best in others and thereby in ourselves, to provide inspiration and guidance for moral living, and to transform the way humanity views the meaning of life.

Our faith is inspired and animated by the deliberate and reasoned choice of attributing worth and dignity to all. Imbued with a profound sense of in-

terrelatedness, we recognize that we are both dependent and independent—each a unique end unto ourselves. We understand that if any one of us were different life itself would be different. It is through this sense of ourselves as members of an organic whole that we reinforce the attribution of moral worth to every individual.

Ethical Culture is a religion of ethical relationships, a Humanist² movement in which ethics is central. We organize congregationally in order to live out our values in community with others, inspired by the ideal of perfected living that always lies beyond our reach. Together we direct our efforts toward assuring a just and abundant life for all.

We are committed to life-long learning and endeavor to keep our beliefs consistent with our advancing knowledge of ourselves and of the rest of nature. We love life, embrace it in all its particularity and diversity, and ac-

cept it, and the natural world in which it occurs, as all and enough.

We are dedicated to the principle that relationships of respect, compassion, and integrity are the building blocks of personal and global harmony. We hold that democracy is not just a political system but also a personal commitment—a continual exercise in freedom of conscience, thought, and moral responsibility expressed through humane deeds. We seek to promote personal moral development and social responsibility through direct assistance, social action, and public advocacy.

Ethics begins with judgment and choice, and we know that how we choose to treat others is what is most important, as the kind of world in which we live radiates from personal decisions and interactions. The values and principles that guide our choices rest on a natural interpretation of experience, and are derived from the emotional

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¹ Today the historic identification, Ethical Culture, and the modern description, Ethical Humanism, are used interchangeably.

² “Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.” *Humanism and Its Aspirations, Humanist Manifesto III*, The American Humanist Association, 2003.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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For information, call 973-763-1905; visit our web
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Collections: Please remember to bring canned or boxed food items for
the **Food Pantry** box in our front hall. Donations go to NJ Food Bank.

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(Ethical Humanism, continued) capacities and intellectual abilities of human beings and the culture they create.

Ethical Humanism connects personal living with moral responsibility to and for community. Our relationships bind us together in universal citizenship. This sense of mutuality leads us to a shared responsibility for the kind of world in which we live. Examining life through the prism of human experience, we see that we are capable of wonderful and inspiring things. We find that there is meaning in the potential for personal growth and cultural transformation.

Since its founding in 1876, Ethical Culture has evinced a reverence for life and a dedication to its improvement, uniting with others of goodwill in an effort to create a more humane world. In placing deed before creed our welcome

becomes broader and more inclusive than the boundaries of our beliefs. Standing as a beacon of hope for all, we extend the hand of welcome to those who share these aims and are eager to work toward them within the Ethical Humanist context.

We, the undersigned, Leaders of the Ethical Movement, in accepting this statement as a product of many minds and recognizing that we may be of varied convictions on its particulars, affirm our substantial agreement with its affirmations and confirm our dedication to live by the principles it espouses and to promote the values it reflects.

Adopted by the National Leader's Council of the American Ethical Union, November 1, 2008

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