


D i a l o g u e

A E U News & Views - June 2002

DOES TEXAS COURT RULING DEFINE YOUR FAITH?

Don Montagna, Senior Leader, Washington

 In a recent ruling (allowing religious tax exemption to the Ethical Society of Austin), a Texas judge concluded that Ethical Society members have a faith in the **"Ethical Ideal...an ultimate concern, a power beyond an individual...The search for something beyond the power of humankind is exactly how the Ethical Society treats its pursuit of the Ethical Ideal."** Do you agree with his ruling?

The judge's opinion may challenge those of us who relate to the Ethical Society more as our community than as our religion. Our "Deed Before Creed" aphorism supports our individual freedom of belief, and in practice can become "Deed not Creed." However, to function as humanistic religion, the Ethical Society must stand for more than freedom to believe nothing. A religion means more than practicing your favorite social mores and keeping up with the liberal political agenda-both of which can be done without an

The pursuit of a "supreme way of being," rather than "worship of a Supreme Being," is the philosophy that inspired the founding of the Ethical Movement.

Ethical Society. Being religious means to have faith in something that, during our darkest days, can inspire us with sufficient meaning and hope to deliver us from the drift of depression and distress. The judge saw such a "power" in his examination of the Ethical Culture philosophy.

In 1876, the aim of the Ethical Society was to reconstruct religion by freeing it from superstitions by applying science and reason to decipher the ethical meaning inherent in traditional religious

Deepening Our Understanding of HUMANISTIC SPIRITUALITY



David Reis,
*Leader Intern,
Queens*

Sit in a cafe, go to a party, or talk to your friends, and you may hear people say they are "spiritual but not religious." They say this in part because they prefer not to stick to the party line offered by their religious denomination. It also speaks to an individualistic streak, attributable perhaps to American sensibilities. Some of my theologically inclined professional colleagues surmise that their congregants simply don't want to be told what to believe. I find that thought refreshing and hopeful. The word "spiritual" has different meanings to people; it becomes so laden with contradictory meaning that it begs for careful definition.

Consider also how "humanism" may be used in different ways, both within and without our circles. We in Ethical Culture seem to have co-opted the use of the word, while Christian humanists and others also have a long history with it and have equal claim to defining its meaning.

In Ethical Culture, the idea of spirituality has a specific meaning. Felix Adler said "spirituality is consciousness of infinite inter-relatedness", and spoke in these

(Continued on page 3)

In This Issue

Page

- 1 Does Texas Court Ruling Define Your Faith? *Don Montagna*
Humanistic Spirituality *David Reis*
- 2 AEU Calendar; R.E. Fall Conference Highlights, Board of Directors Meeting
- 3 Eda LeShan obituary
- 4 Judgment on Atheists, Agnostics, and Humanists, Now, & Then *Joseph Chuman*
- 5 Fairness, Freedom and the Dying *Winthrop D. Theis*
- 6 Intensity Makes Movements Come Alive
Khoren Arisian
From the U.N., *Sylvain & Phyllis Ehrenfeld*
- 7 Adler - Up Close & Personal, *Marc Bernstein*
- 8 The Return of Camp Linden, *Jean Bradley*
- 9 Interview With the Editor
- 10 Letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell
- 11 AEU News & Happenings, *Annabelle Glasser*
- 12 Religious Education Fall Conference

(Continued on page 9)

Dialogue

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A E U Calendar Board Meetings

New York: June 22; September 7;
January 11, 2003; March 15, 2003
Site to be determined: October 25, 26; May 2003

Conferences

National Leaders Council

Murray Grove, NJ, June 12-14
Site to be determined: October 23-25

National Assembly

Site to be determined: May 22-26, 2003

IHEU 50th Anniversary Congress

The Netherlands July 3-6

AEU Lay Leadership Summer School:

"The Mountain," Highlands, NC August 3 -10

AEU Growth & Development Conference

Brooklyn, NY November 1 & 2

Religious Education Conference & Youth of Ethical Society

Holiday Hills, Pawling, NY, November 8-10

Highlights of BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

April 27, 2002, New York
Annabelle Glasser, Secretary

1. A job description for EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of the AEU was approved. The executive director will be chief executive officer of the AEU, reporting to and evaluated by the Board, and responsible for the consistent achievement of the AEU's mission and financial objectives.

Four committees were established: a Search Committee for an executive director; a Personnel Committee; a Fund Raising Committee; and a By-Laws Committee.

2. The Board also approved establishing the position of a National YES (Youth) ADVISOR who will be responsible not only for helping with the Annual YES Conference, year-round advising and networking with Society YES advisors and groups, and exploring possible summer events, but also for starting a young adult component to keep YES graduates connected to each other and to the Ethical Movement. The Religious Education Committee will conduct the search.

3. FUNDING for these positions, beyond what is currently in the budget, will come from budget cuts, fund raising, and a one-time drawdown from AEU funds.

Since Growth & Development, Fund Raising, and Communications will be part of the responsibility of the new executive director, most of those budget items are available to fund that position.

Some cutbacks for 2002-03 were decided upon: Since Fritz Williams will be leaving as Interim Membership Services Coordinator in September, only half of that position will be funded for 2002-03.

Funding for the Ethical Action Committee as well as its consultant, a position now held by Judith Eckerson, and for the Washington Ethical Action Office Reports were all eliminated. Funding for the Washington Ethical Action Office was left intact. The WEAO Reports will be included in *Dialogue*, and may become available on line.

A request by the Leadership Training Committee for a staff person was not funded at this time.

4. Fourteen new ADJUNCT LEADERS were certified. Six from the St. Louis Society, Lyndon Blaylock, Alan Easton, Jim Honeywell, Marty Henry, Lois Clay Quest, and Danielle Lindsley were trained by its Leader Judy Toth. Eight, from the Washington Society (subject to being interviewed by the Leadership Committee), Ken Davis, Peggy Goetz, Mary Herman, Karen Schofeld-Leca, Nancy Montagna, David Rothman, Irving Spitzberg, and Virginia Thorndike, were trained by its Leader Don Montagna.

5. It was agreed to hold the 2003 ASSEMBLY over the Memorial Day Weekend, but the location, either in Philadelphia or Northern Virginia, is not yet been determined. Sue and Scott Walton, professional conference planners and members of the Chicago Society, have volunteered their assistance in making the necessary arrangements.

6. INVESTMENT GUIDELINES proposed by the Finance Committee were approved and an Investment Subcommittee is being established.

7. A proposal by the Publications Committee for an annual YEARBOOK of LEADERS' PLATFORM ADDRESSES was approved. Each Leader will be invited to submit one address each year for inclusion. Lee Smalley, the editor of *Dialogue*, will serve as the editor of the yearbook.

8. Leader LOIS KELLERMAN spoke to the Board about her just published book, *Marriage from the Heart: Eight Commitments of a Spiritually Fulfilling Life Together*, and how it was developed from the Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture. The Board approved reimbursement of the transportation costs of her Northeast book tour; it was felt that having a book brought out by a major publisher with significant Ethical Culture content was a great publicity opportunity for the Ethical Movement.



EDA J. LeSHAN, the nationally known child psychologist and author, died after a long illness in March at the age of 79. She was a life-long member of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society.

Eda Joan Grossman was born in Manhattan on June 6, 1922. She graduated from the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in Riverdale, and received a degree in early childhood education from Teachers College at Columbia University. She earned a master's degree in child psychology from Clark University in Worcester, Mass.

In the late 1940's, Eda and her husband, Larry, who is an award-winning experimental psychologist, teacher and author, were on the staff of the Encampment for Citizenship, a summer program of the New York Society.

Eda wrote dozens of books on child care, of which the best known was "The Conspiracy Against Children." Other titles include, "When Your Children Drive You Crazy" and "How to Survive Parenthood." Her PBS program was "How Do Your Children Grow," and she did a



regular commentary on CBS radio. She wrote for popular magazines and authored a successful Broadway play, "The Lobster Reef," one of her last creations.

Eda urged all parents to post a sampler on their wall, "I'm Only Human." When her daughter Wendy was 13, a teacher described Wendy as immature. Eda declared, "If a child cannot be immature at 13, when can she be?"

Her message to parents was to ease off on the pressure, and sometimes allow children to just daydream. She thought that the discussion of love was central to sex education, and that spanking only made the child feel as bad as the angry parent. Raising a child, she said, is like gardening, because each flower develops differently.

Her mother, Jean Schick Grossman, was a parent educator, and along with Mrs. Felix Adler, founded the Child Study Association of America. Her father, Max Grossman, a lawyer, was President and Lay member of the Board of Leaders of the New York Society.

"When we truly care for ourselves, it becomes possible to care far more profoundly about other people. The more alert and sensitive we are to our own needs, the more loving and generous we can be toward others."

"Visiting someone in a hospital recently, I watched an elderly couple. The man was in a wheelchair, the wife sitting next to him in the visitors' room. For the half-hour that I watched they never exchanged a word, just held hands and looked at each other, and once or twice the man patted his wife's face. The feeling of love was so thick in that room that I felt I was sharing in their communion and was shaken all day by their pain, their love, something sad and also joyful: the fullness of a human relationship."

Eda LeShan

Humanistic Spirituality

(Continued from page 1)

transcendent terms throughout his life. Spirituality is understood as an expression of the strong inner conviction that we find the essence and meaning of life in our relationships. Yet he consistently defined his spirituality as ethical and non-supernatural: No ghosts, no angels, nothing of the kind; just the sacredness of our human inter-relatedness.

Adler was an idealist in the sense that while he did not believe in the supernatural, he did perceive the existence of a Moral Ideal, a kind of ethical blueprint etched beneath the surfaces of everyday life. This sounds obscure or unnecessary to those who are naturalists and don't see any plan laid out for us.

"Spirituality" does cause problems for

some, principally because of how it is used in the larger sphere. After Adler, most in Ethical Culture came to define their religious faith in humanistic terms. Some continued to think of themselves as spiritually minded, while others found the term fraught with too much difficulty. We need to know what it means to us and to use this meaning for our own purposes. This is "humanistic spirituality".

I have always been inclined to describe my religious humanism in spiritual terms. I believe a spiritual dimension is to be found in everyday life, in the moments when we appreciate beauty, or are in a natural setting and are seized by the realization of our interrelatedness with nature. Sometimes we even find a spiritual dimension in the imperfect quality of life (something the Japanese call wabi-sabi). Most profoundly,

we become aware of our spiritual dimension in our caring for other people. Sometimes we capture this quality when we are able to elicit the best in others, when we realize we have succeeded in helping another to express his or her unique best dimension.

Humanistic spirituality is the deep emotional and intellectual awareness of our natural, transcendent potential, realized when we experience our interrelatedness with each other and the universe.

For Ethical Humanists spirituality is found in everyday life, nestled like a jewel in the ordinary earth. Humanistic spirituality is deep, powerful, transformative, and life-affirming. It is joyful and it is wise.

Joseph Chuman, Leader, Bergen

We are living in a time of God. We are at war. Patriotism is needed, and God is invoked to strengthen our resolve and assure us that we are blessed by the Author of the universe. It's a hard time for atheists, for to espouse unbelief at such a moment is to have one's Americanism questioned. Love of God and love of country go together in the popular mind. To deny one is almost to deny the other.

Atheism reflects more than just a metaphysical take on reality. It's a smear word that is vague in its connotations except to express something worthy of suspicion and contempt. To label someone an "atheist" at various times has meant that the person has departed from "the one true faith" or entertains beliefs that seem strange, subversive, and dangerous in the eyes of those of the dominant faith. In the Middle Ages, those doctors who dared to consider that mental illness might not be caused by the devil were branded as atheists, and put their lives at risk. Often the atheist is to be pitied, someone "to be prayed for" that he see the light and receive the grace that only faith in God can bring. This condescension started early in the Western tradition and continues to this day. Psalm 14 says, "Only the fool hath said in his heart there is no God."

Not long ago I penned a letter to The Bergen Record in response to an article written by a local minister, wherein he defended the Christian faith in an afterlife. He sealed his conviction with the dubious conclusion that "people without stories of hope (in the hereafter) and triumph live a tenuous, troubled earthbound existence that ends as the body de-



cays." I wrote that this type of thinking was not only patronizing, but also dangerous in its effect of marginalizing non-believers, especially when uttered by a representative of the Christian-dominant faith in America. I also asked how he knew such people live a "tenuous, troubled existence," for this is surely an empirical issue. Indeed, it would seem that most of the troubled people who reside in our prisons profess a belief in God and an afterlife, while the number of atheists and religious doubters are relatively few.

No canard is more enduring than the often-stated claim that atheism and immorality go together.

This charge has a certain logic to it, I must admit. Belief in God plays a powerful role in maintaining social control. Many, including those who wield religious power, believe that the masses must be kept in line through promise of divine reward and fear of divine punishment. Without such understanding, anarchy would reign. Skeptics have seen behind this reasoning a deeply conservative rationale for sustaining the power and privilege of the ruling interests. But it has also had its enlightened and contemporary defenders. Spinoza, one of the early fathers of democracy, believed that when it came to moral conduct, philosophy was adequate for the educated, aristocratic classes, but religion was appropri-

ate for the uneducated multitude. John Locke, the father of our constitutional form of government, believed that atheists (also Catholics) should be barred from being witnesses in court. Since they did not believe in God and therefore could not take an oath, their testimony could not be trusted. That prejudice lingered long in our own history. Though our Constitution clearly bars any religious test for public office, it was not until 1961, in *Torcaso v Watkins*, that the Supreme Court decided that an atheist could hold a government job. Senator Joseph Lieberman remarked during the 2000 campaign that the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. Though he retracted the statement, he nevertheless made his bias clear.

Atheists and their skeptical cousins have come a long way on the road to being tolerated. They (we) are no longer burned at the stake nor feel the burden of overt persecution in American society. But those who share their doubts about a supreme being are still stigmatized as untrustworthy and immoral by the general culture. The ability to cast umbrage on the religiously unconventional results in part from the dubious assumption that they are a tiny percentage of society and so can be safely ignored. It's true that in the United States only four percent claim to be atheists. But if we add to their ranks identified agnostics, humanists, secularists, rationalists, free thinkers, doubters, plus those who claim no religion, the number rises to 8.2% of the population. If this group were counted as a single denomination it would be the third largest in the United States after Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists, larger than the total number of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists combined!

Fairness, Freedom and the Dying

*Winthrop Drake Thies, Essex;
President, Hemlock Society of NJ*

In March the High Court in London ruled that Ms. B, a paralyzed patient being maintained on a ventilator to help her breathe, was entitled to kill herself by directing her physicians to disconnect it. Director of England's Voluntary Euthanasia Society Deborah Annetts commented: "This is a victory for common sense. The case has confirmed that patient choice must be at the center of all treatment decisions."

Meanwhile, on the day prior in Strasbourg, France, Diane Pretty, suffering from motor neurone disease and paralyzed from the neck down, was on a stretcher at the European Court of Human Rights while her attorney argued that the United Kingdom's refusal to let her husband help her to die violated her basic civil rights.

Among the simple truths we learned in kindergarten, like "take turns" and "share," was "fairness": that all persons similarly situated should be treated alike. One might think that certainly we are all treated equally when it comes to that most personal, private and—to many—religious experience in our lives: the dying process. Alas, not so. Those who are on life supports or simply need antibiotics for pneumonia are accorded greater freedom than other dying persons.

When a person is terminally ill and unrelievable suffering it is reasonable for that person to regard life as no longer a benefit but a grave burden, one gladly shucked off, if he could. If such a dying person is on life support or needs medical treatment in order to survive, has full decision-making capacity and is not treatably depressed, it is settled law that the patient may as of right direct the removal of life supports or refuse essential medical treatment and thus effect death.

In contrast, a patient in all respects similarly situated but not on life supports or not needing further medical treatment has not that fundamental freedom to die. Only in Oregon under its Death With Dignity Act may a physician lawfully write a prescription for a lethal dose of drugs, which the dying patient may later elect to take. And even that modest advance in freedom for the dying is threatened: on the day after the Diane Pretty hearing attorneys at the direction of Attorney General John Ashcroft were arguing in Portland, Oregon, U.S. District Court that the Oregon law is in violation of Federal drug laws.

to end suffering through hastened dying. In each case doctor and patient in effect act together to achieve that end. And in each case the result is the same: the death of the patient.

It is thus plain that there is no ethical difference between refusal of treatment (including removal of a life support), PAD and euthanasia on our facts. But today only if the first be available does the patient have full freedom to control his or her dying. Currently in all states except Oregon, PAD is illegal and would subject the physician involved to serious jail time and loss of license, while euthanasia, proba-

One might think that we are all treated equally when it comes to the dying process. Alas, not so.

Understand that we are not here considering those cases in which a patient does not want to die in order to end suffering, but merely wants an intrusive life support system removed. In our scenario the patient wants to die and his doctor supports and joins in that position. Is there any ethical difference on those facts assumed between the three means of achieving a good death: refusal of medical treatment, physician aid-in-dying (PAD), where the physician only writes the lethal prescription, and euthanasia, where the physician gives a lethal injection?

Let's look at the factors involved. In each case physician and patient both intend that the patient die. In each case the motive of both doctor and patient is to benefit the patient:

bly the most compassionate of all the three means, is illegal throughout America, including Oregon.

The three means are ethically the same but are treated harshly differently. (Witness Dr. Kevorkian in a jail cell with 23 years remaining on his sentence.) Fairness cries out that we accord to the dying the freedom to write the final chapter in the book of their lives and thus to invoke whatever means they wish. It is not the proper place of government to intrude into this most personal, private, and religious experience in a person's life.

As we freed the slaves, empowered women, and assured freedom of reproductive choices, let us now affirm freedom for the dying by enacting state laws allowing them any of the three means, with reasonable protections against abuse. A good start would be a law much like the Oregon Death With Dignity Act, which has worked flawlessly for four years, but also permitting euthanasia as in the Netherlands.



INTENSITY Makes Movements Come Alive

Dr. Khoren Arisian Sr. Leader, New York



“...Without an intense moral faith there can be no moral fervor, and if there is to be a new upward turn in ethics and religion, if

Ethical Societies are to multiply, they cannot...do so (merely) by instituting forum lectures, by devising a ritual, or even by...other good works, however indispensable these may be. The Movement must give birth to personalities who have attained for themselves an abiding ethical faith, and are aflame with it... Mohammed, it is said, secured his first success by converting his wife. The great task of the ethical teacher is to convert himself. If he has done that...down to the core of his being, he will convert others.” - Felix Adler

What I believe accounts for exceptional attainment in any field of serious endeavor is unqualified commitment to the task at hand, resulting in a noticeable intensity, focus, and energy. Robert J. Oppenheimer's ability to transmit his personal passion for physics to others was truly remarkable. This was largely owing to his presenting physics, not in terms of what it had already achieved but in terms of the thrilling vistas that remained to be explored. He imparted that sense of continuing wonder and intellectual excitement, that sheer play of mind which reveals a love of learning at its deepest level. *There are some people, Cornell University physicist and friend Robert Wilson once remarked, who make you feel that you are more of a person than you really are—Oppie was such a man. He got people to see deeper than they ordinarily would. Physics is best when it is done with style and that is what Oppie brought to it; watching him was like watching a fine athlete.*

Prof. Wilson's observation is acute

and generally applicable; not only is physics best when done with distinctive style, the same holds true for religion, art, music, athletics, politics, etc. What made Charles De Gaulle special, Walter Lippmann once pointed out, was that France was virtually inside him. The same was true of Churchill: English history, English glory, was inside him. What was it that made the principal founders of the American Republic and Abraham Lincoln so extraordinary? It was the new democratic ideology which was in them all and that they bodied forth whenever they spoke and acted. The same holds for Felix Adler in whose very being Ethical Culture was a living flame until the day he died.

At the base of all knowledge is not academicism but the shaping force of living personalities who don't do what others have done just because others have done it....

Arguments based on long established authority alone, such as one hears from evangelical fundamentalists quoting scripture at every turn because they can't think for themselves, are thus based on utter unoriginality. If a VIP says a stupid thing, it's still a stupid thing, and if a homeless migrant states an important truth, it's still an important truth.

What makes any teacher great is the fact that one's subject is fully alive in every fiber of one's own being. Read again the Adler quotation above: you'll note its uncompromising focus on “an intense moral faith” without which there can be no moral fervor. Our Ethical Movement will grow, and grow it must, only if a critical number of individuals attracted to it come to be aflame with an abiding ethical faith. Only then does an Ethical Society reach its potential and achieve its central purpose—namely, an unceasing dedication to moral striving.

Excerpted from the New York newsletter

From the U.N.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT RATIFIED

On April 11 we witnessed an historic ceremony when the UN established a permanent **INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)**. The occasion was marked by cheers and applause from hopeful young people witnessing the event. The inclusion of 66 countries, 6 more than needed, many with painful histories, such as Cambodia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, served as final ratification. This court will try individuals charged with horrendous crimes such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Such a court has been on the UN agenda since 1948 and the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials after World War II. In recent years, world response to the appalling massacres in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda have served to speed the process.

The ICC will be independent of the UN and accountable to the countries that ratify the treaty. The ICC will act only when ratifying nations are unable or unwilling to prosecute individuals committing such crimes. Many countries have had to adjust their laws in order to ratify this treaty. For example, Germany and France had to change their constitutions. April 11 marks a major breakthrough in international human rights law. The U.S is actively opposing this court. For more information contact the website of the NGO Coalition for the ICC: www.iccnw.org.

Sylvain & Phyllis Ehrenfeld, *Bergen; Delegates to the UN from IHEU and AEU's National Service Conference.*

(In December, the AEU Board formally endorsed the ICC. On May 6, President Bush revoked U.S. support of the treaty, which had been signed by President Clinton. -Ed.)



Adler UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Marc A. Bernstein, Bergen, and AEU Archivist

The challenge: Say three things about Felix Adler's personality. That's not easy. Adler, the founding father, the scholar, the activist, the pedagogical reformer – we know many sides of the man, yet his personality remains a blank. A little information would remove him from the pantheon and bring him down to earth, where we might forge a connection to him that his writing, brilliant but often opaque, does not permit.

I had decided I would never learn much about Adler the man until I discovered in our archives a reminiscence written by Ernest Jacques, Adler's personal secretary from 1913 to 1933, the last twenty years of Adler's life. Jacques took dictation, combed libraries, and did note-taking on readings for the great scholar. Adler, Jacques recalls, was a protective but demanding employer who expected punctuality, exactitude in work assigned – typos were not endured – and uninterrupted sessions of dictation. If Mrs. Adler entered the office when work was in progress, Adler might say, only half joking, "If you want to talk to me, make an appointment with my secretary."

Despite his progressive social views, on matters of personal morality Adler was a Victorian, if not a Puritan. Once, when he entered Jacques' office and found him speaking to a woman, he said, "I would like you to know that my secretary is a married man." "I'm married, too," said the woman. Adler chided Jacques for reading the great 18th century English writer, Lawrence Sterne, claiming that he was a corrupting influence, and he detested George Bernard Shaw for the same reason. Books

on sexual matters were never visible on Adler's bookshelves.

More interesting were our founder's ascetic habits. He would imagine himself in the worst possible situation, say as a condemned man, believing this a good form of mental discipline. He drove himself relentlessly, once demanding that dictation proceed even when he had pneumonia. Finally so weak that he had to ask Jacques to read to him, he chose the writings of a German monk, "as though wishing some reinforcement for his stoic attitude."

If Jacques thought all this excessive, he nevertheless admired Adler's moral steadfastness. Adler, Jacques discovered, was not only sure of his convictions, he was also fearless in acting upon them. He would think nothing of visiting President Wilson when he wanted to discuss child labor, or

asking Rockefeller to come to his office when he wanted a financial contribution.

However morally steadfast, on at least one occasion, Adler pursued his interests at the expense of another. Jacques was originally in the employ of S. Burns Weston of the Philadelphia Society, when Weston offered to "lend" his services to Adler for a summer in the Adirondacks, where both Leaders had cabins. After working with Jacques for three months, Adler turned to Weston one morning and said, "Weston, you have lost your secretary."

Our founder was imperfect, after all. How reassuring!



IHEU 15th World Congress July 3 – 6, 2002 in The Netherlands

The **International Humanist and Ethical Union** will observe its 50th anniversary in the country of its founding. The theme is "ALL DIFFERENT - ALL EQUAL - HUMAN DIVERSITY - HUMAN RIGHTS - HUMANISM". The Congress will include a session on

practical services, projects, and activities in S.E. Asia, Europe and the U.S., with illustrations and workshops. Congress registration, including lunches and dinners, is about \$225 for full participants, \$135 for accompanying participants, and \$110 for students.

For information, including accommodations and registration, visit: www.iheu.org/Congress%20Announcement.htm

Learn how to help improve your Society's growth and development. Attend the--

AEU Growth & Development Conference

**November 1 & 2
at the Brooklyn Society**

**Travel subsidy for distant Societies
Home hospitality Details in September**

**Information: Hank Gassner
kargas@earthlink.net**



The Return of CAMP LINDEN

Jean Bradley, Executive Director and member, Philadelphia



guard and swim instructor.

The children who come to Camp Linden are poor and mostly African-American. Their communities endure without the institutions and businesses that normally serve as the financial basis for city neighborhoods. Public resources are equally scarce or dismally equipped and maintained. Children and their par-

ents have to leave the neighborhood to find a good library, and the public schools do not have enough teachers or books. Abandoned homes, vacant lots and deteriorating factories abound. The funds raised from taxes within Philadelphia and Camden are not sufficient to offer all that is needed to guide these children to a good life.



Their neighborhoods are ridden with unemployment, poverty and crack houses; decent working-class African Americans live side by side with street hustlers and criminals. Local community organizations do their best with critically limited revenues and resources to provide access to educational opportunities and after-school projects.

The local schools and recreation centers are our community partners. We offer Camp Linden whatever is needed for the Children's Summer Program,

and they supply staff, transportation and lunches.

In response to increasing incidents of childhood diabetes and the effects of malnutrition, we will be introducing gardening to this year's curriculum. The children will plant and harvest fast-growing vegetables such as leaf lettuce. We will also purchase fruit to supplement the daily lunches. The goals are to introduce a greater variety of healthy foods and cover the basics of good nutrition. As with all our lessons, the emphasis will be on having fun as we learn.

We also plan to erect our first sleeping cabin. Many people have expressed interest in Camp Linden as a potential site for their own programs, and a cabin will enhance our capacity to raise a modest income from overnight camping and retreats. As you see, we've set high goals for this year!

Children at Camp Linden not only have fun, they feel part of a loving world that is safe to investigate. Over the years we have met many of the people who went to the camp decades ago. They tell us how much it meant to them.

From the beginning, our most generous supporters have been Ethical Culturists from Philadelphia, New York, and other Societies. We also receive financial help from the Kennett Square Meeting and the Camden County Bar Foundation. If you'd like to help, you may send a check to **Camp Linden, Philadelphia Ethical Society, 1906 Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103.** Thanks to all who support our efforts to create a camp where needy children can find beauty in the natural world and in themselves.



A summer respite for inner-city children. Camp Linden was founded in 1929 by members of the Southwark Settlement House, one of the first settlement houses in the United States. Its Executive Director, S. Burns Weston, was also the Leader of the **Philadelphia Ethical Society.** Over the years, thousands of children camped at this beautiful site by the Brandywine River. Society members joined with others, including Quaker, Presbyterian and Jewish congregations, to fund and operate the camp.

The camp gradually deteriorated until it closed in 1980. By 1985, members of the Philadelphia Society, led by Leader Richard Kiniry and Trustee Dr. Carol Love, undertook to reopen it. In March of 1987, 11 acres including the dining hall were sold and the proceeds used to transform the remaining site into a day camp. Volunteers, professional supervisors, and paid workers improved systems, renovated the pool and bathhouse, and built other structures.

From 1990 to 1996, members of the Society's Ethical Action Committee welcomed hundreds of children from North Philadelphia communities to the Camp. Through fund-raising drives the Committee members and others provided bus transportation, a life-guard, lunches, supplies, and activities for day trips of 20 to 35 children. Since 1997 the Children's Program is open five days a week for six weeks. The program consists of a half-day nature curriculum led by four counselors, and a half-day in the pool with a life-

An Interview



With the Editor

This is the fourth edition of Dialogue that has been edited by Lee Smalley. We are delighted to have Lee, a member of the Long Island Society, on board. In order for you to become better acquainted with him, the Editorial Board posed some questions, and he agreed to give us an encapsulated view of his life in Ethical Culture.

—Ellen & Annabelle

How did you first hear about Ethical Culture? As a youth in Connecticut I listened to WQXR broadcasts of Platform addresses from the New York Society.

How long have you been involved in Ethical Culture? Fran and I were members of the Long Island Society briefly when our three daughters were children. We returned in the mid '90's when our youngest joined the youth group, and this time we stayed.

What are some of your present interests? Since retiring from careers in law and business three years ago, I've been doing volunteer work in literacy tutoring and community and court mediations. For the past two years I've been Treasurer of EHSLI and have been asked to be its next President. Besides the friendships we've formed at the Society, I've enjoyed the monthly ethics seminar which Arthur Dobrin has been leading for years. Discussing essays by and about philosophers past and present has enriched my Ethical Humanist perspective. I also participate in the fiction and non-fiction book

groups and sing bass with our new chorus, "The Ethical Harmonists."

What led to your editing Dialogue? I've always enjoyed writing, so when I saw the ad for editor of Dialogue it was a "why not?" moment for me. It has been a genuine pleasure right from the start.

As editor of Dialogue what direction would you like to develop in the future? In the spirit of its name, we should have an ongoing DIALOGUE page with Leaders and members submitting commentaries. Although there were impassioned responses to articles on the ramifications of September 11, I've seen little reaction to other less momentous yet important topics discussed in these pages. Also, if and when possible, I'd like Dialogue to become a MAGAZINE, a more attractive and impressive format which would likely increase readership and might help to draw new members to Ethical Culture.



Does Texas Court Ruling Define Your Faith?

(Continued from page 1)

metaphors and rituals. Ethical Culture philosophy challenges people who no longer believe in the personified "man-god in the sky" to understand what that epic metaphor means. While members have always been free to hold their own beliefs, the Ethical Culture founders professed a faith in an Ethical Ideal as the phenomena that religions had personified as "God" and codified as "God's Laws." According to the original philosophy of Ethical Culture, living in truth, love, justice, integrity, and forgiveness is the means to the heavenly experience of the divine in life that was historically understood as the "presence of God." In contrast, hell is living in a world of deception, hatred, cruelty, unfair-

ness, dishonesty, and revenge. Ethical Society Founder Felix Adler posited that ethics influence our lives whether or not we believe it so. Adler would ask, "If the image of a blindfolded woman holding scales disappears, would justice remain?" Whether your faith is in a personified image of God, a higher power, or an Ethical Ideal, ask yourself what inevitable truth about life these concepts are intending to convey.

I joined the Ethical Society as a skeptic, suspicious of any faith, certain only of what I did not believe. I eventually made my own leap of faith about how I think the world really works. The two fundamental assumptions I inherited from Ethical Culture are:

1} We exist in a universe where everything is invisibly connected, and therefore, the ethical quality of our relation-

ships shape our reality.

2) The natural capacity for good in the human spirit makes it possible, despite contrary evidence, to cultivate in people their ability to elicit the best from each other. Many people do not see the "invisible connections" nor hold any faith in the "capacity for good in the human spirit," but I do. Every behavior has a consequence that cultivates character and culture for better or for worse whether we see it or not. The Ethical Ideal is humanistic, reasonable, and natural while also, as the judge observed, "a mystery" and "power beyond an individual." Faith in the Ethical Ideal becomes a source of guidance and courage in dire circumstances because we know that seeking the Ethical Ideal, acting with truth, love, and justice, uses the most powerful harmonizing principles

possible.

Along with American historian and Ethical Culture leader David Muzzey (1870-1965), I believe "The first postulate of Ethical Culture is the existence of a moral law as permeating as the physical laws of nature," and "The second postulate of ethical religion is the existence of a spiritual element in human nature which makes us capable of seeking the fulfillment of the moral law in our daily conduct." While no member is required to agree, this is the leap of faith that Ethical Culture presents as a humanistic option to traditional theism. The pursuit of a "supreme way of being," rather than "worship of a Supreme Being," is the philosophy that inspired the founding of the Ethical Movement, and today is the basis for our acceptance as a religious alternative.

THE AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

2 West 64th Street
New York, NY 10023

April 17, 2002

The Honorable Colin Powell Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State 2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Powell:

The world witnesses with horror the escalating cycle of violence engaged by Palestinians and Israelis. From a different perspective, and at the same time, the conditions for peace have never been more sanguine. With the endorsement of the Crown Prince Abdullah plan by the Arab League, and the recent United Nations resolution, for the first time the entire international community supports a two-state solution enabling Palestinian sovereignty and security for Israel.

The sole dynamic that can break the current violent quagmire and enable peace to be realized is purposeful and forceful leadership of the United States at this moment. What is needed is an international coalition for peace as rigorous as the coalition you have generated for the war on terrorism. I urge you to do the following:

1. Announce American resolve to broker peace in the Middle East while building a coalition to include the United States, the European Union, the Arab League, and Russia, as well as other nations willing to sign on.

2. With the backing of such a coalition, strongly press the Israelis and the Palestinian Authority to resume negotiations along the lines of the Barak-Clinton plan proposed at the last Camp David summit, with several significant alterations.

Among the objectives to be strongly endorsed by the Coalition is the removal of Israeli settlements on West Bank and Gaza, except for several surrounding Jerusalem. The plan must also ensure contiguity of Palestinian territories. Assuredly, the current Israeli administration will be very resistant to the dismantling of settlements. If needed the Coalition should provide sufficient funding to enable housing construction for settlers in the Territories to relocate to Israel proper, recognizing that the majority of the 200,000 settlers reside in the Territories out of economic, not ideological, motives.

3. The Coalition needs to also vouchsafe the economic viability of an independent Palestine, including safeguards to minimize economic and political corruption while maximizing productive investment.

4. To ensure Israel's security, an independent Palestine must be demilitarized.

5. To help ensure peace the Coalition needs to establish, under its own and not United Nations auspices, an armed international peace keeping presence in the area for a minimum of fifteen years. This force must include at least a token American presence as well as forces from Muslim countries.

This proposal recognizes the following realities:

a. Demonstrative American leadership is imperative to the establishment of peace in the region. The current vacillating and tentative approach cannot be effective.

b. Continuing Israeli occupation of the Territories and the existence of an independent Palestine is a political contradiction and untenable. The Palestinian tactic of employing suicide bombers presents a weapon against which military force cannot promise to be effective. It is difficult to see how the current Israeli approach can bring the desired results. Only a sustained internationally vouchsafed peace agreement can do this. Any future peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis will have to resemble the one outlined herein. Although this proposal requires a massive commitment by the United States, the moral unacceptability of the violent status quo and the political destabilization it threatens, makes such an international initiative necessary.

Thank you for your kind attention in this important matter.

Respectfully,

Richard L. Kiniry

President, National Leaders Council; Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

Dr. Joseph Chuman

Vice President, National Leaders Council; Leader, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, NJ

Editor's Note: This letter was endorsed by eighteen Leaders and five Directors of the American Ethical Union.

AEU NEWS & HAPPENINGS

Annabelle Glasser, reporter, and member, Queens

Gleaned from oral reports, newsletters, and Stan Wayne's AEU "Clipping Service"



The **ST. LOUIS** Society has chosen **DON JOHNSON** to be its next Leader, replacing **JUDY TOTH** who is retiring and moving back to Washington, DC. Don was Leader of the New York Society for ten years before retiring to North Carolina. Its Humanist of the Year Award went to Eddie Mae Binion, founder of the Southside Welfare Rights Organization, who has worked tirelessly as an advocate for families and individuals receiving public assistance.

The **WASHINGTON** Society was selected to participate in "The Learning Circles Project: Building Non-profit Excellence." This foundation-supported program is designed to improve and sustain the long-term health of nonprofit organizations in the DC Metro area. Its Earth Ethics Committee challenged Society members and children with a "Twice Is Nice" Contest, to coincide with Earth Day. The idea was to devise ideas for transforming objects that had outlived their original purpose into something useful. (Home recycling!)

The **NEW YORK** Society is proud of the Fieldston School whose senior class had a very high college early acceptance rate despite the fact that the school challenged tradition by eliminating Advanced Placement classes. It did this to permit its students to focus more intently on specific topics of interest and leave room for greater creativity. The school continues to be a trailblazer in liberal, progressive education.

The **BERGEN** Society has undertaken to visit, support, and advocate for the detainees at the Elizabeth Detention Center. About 300 people, many who suffered great traumas of torture and war, are seeking political asylum in the US. They are kept under maximum security conditions, without rights, sometimes for years.

The **BOSTON** Society gave its Humanist of the Year Award to Dr. Joseph Gerstein for being a whistleblower in a major drug-pricing scandal that resulted in a multi-million dollar settlement. As the medical director of a health plan, he was offered a bribe by a pharmaceutical company to use its medicine instead of another company's; instead he went to the FBI. Dr. Gerstein is president of the Humanist Association of Massachusetts. C-Span televised their meeting, "Freedom of Speech and the Supreme Court," with William Wiecek,

Prof. of Law and of History at Syracuse University.

The **CHICAGO** Society had a workshop on "Valuing Diversity" led by representatives of the National Coalition Building Institute. By helping to develop guidelines to resolve conflicts and to build bridges across lines of gender, ethnicity, class, physical ability, etc., the workshop aimed to teach how to respect other groups and to eliminate prejudice. Its Ethical Action Committee is a co-sponsor of "Death Sentence 2002: An Interfaith Forum to End the Death Penalty in Illinois."

The **NORTH CAROLINA** Society is a sponsor in building a house under the Habitat for Humanity program. It will be built almost entirely by women along with the new owner and her children. Many Society members are involved, and everyone is taught the necessary skills. There are also opportunities for males to participate, such as by providing lunch for the hungry workers.

The **NORTHERN WEST-CHESTER** Society rebuffed an attempted infiltration by the Moonies into their Society. A youth group from a church visited the Society and presented a sizable check raised at a bake sale for the Special Knitting Forces. Although the group had an innocuous sounding name, they were really from the Unification Church. After consideration, the Society Board returned the check. The Board also wants to issue a warning to other Societies to be alert to this type of infiltration. Its "Special Knitting Forces" project has been a great success. By mid-April, they had processed 708 packages from 46 states, plus D.C. and 4 provinces in Canada. They had sent to Americares, for delivery to the children of Afghanistan, 1,351 sweaters, 2,927 hats, 201 blankets, and 406 scarves, plus mittens, booties, socks, etc. Many national magazines wrote articles about the project. The Society was planning to close the project by May 15th but are very pleased that it will be continued by the Riverdale-Yonkers Society.

The **RIVERDALE-YONKERS** Society is holding classes in "Ethical Discernment", which originated with the Quakers, in which a person or "seeker" with an issue or a problem comes before a group of caring members who guide the individual by asking questions without offering solutions or advice, thereby

helping the person reach his or her own conclusions.

The **AUSTIN** Society encouraged members through a project of the Austin Area Interreligious Ministries to become mentors to youths in trouble with the law. Youths who have been helped by this program have a 96% non-recidivism rate.

The **NORTHERN VIRGINIA** Society helped WETA-TV's fund drive by answering phones and taking pledges. The station displayed the Society's colorful logo several times during the evening, making it more visible to the public and leading to inquiries about the Society.

The **BALTIMORE** Society has VHS cassettes for sale (\$10 each) of a talk by Leader FRITZ WILLIAMS, "Compassion: The Heart of the Good Life," plus his famous "Tincture of Merthiolate" story. The video was originally produced for the AEU to distribute to its Members-At-Large and to newer Ethical groups.

PUBLICATIONS: A new book by Brooklyn's Leader Emeritus LOIS KELLERMAN, *Marriage From the Heart: Eight Commitments of a Spiritually Fulfilling Life Together*, with co-author Nelly Bly, was published by Viking Press and released at the end of April. Lois is doing a book tour of the Northeast and will speak at the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Copies of her book may be purchased through her website, www.loiskellerman.com. A new book by Long Island's Leader Emeritus ARTHUR DOBRIN is now available, *Ethics for Everyone: How to Increase Your Moral Intelligence*.

The **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE** has produced new Question & Answer booklets for primary level children on *What do Ethical Humanists Believe?* Several **Y.E.S.** (Youth of Ethical Society) groups have been exchanging visits: YES of Chicago visited St. Louis, and YES of Brooklyn hosted YES groups from Long Island and Northern Westchester.

The **ETHICAL ACTION COMMITTEE** Consultant and Editor of WEAO Reports, JUDITH ECKERSON, says that AEU members should take pride in having helped influence the U.S. Senate to defeat the proposal to drill for oil in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, despite the urging of the President for passage.

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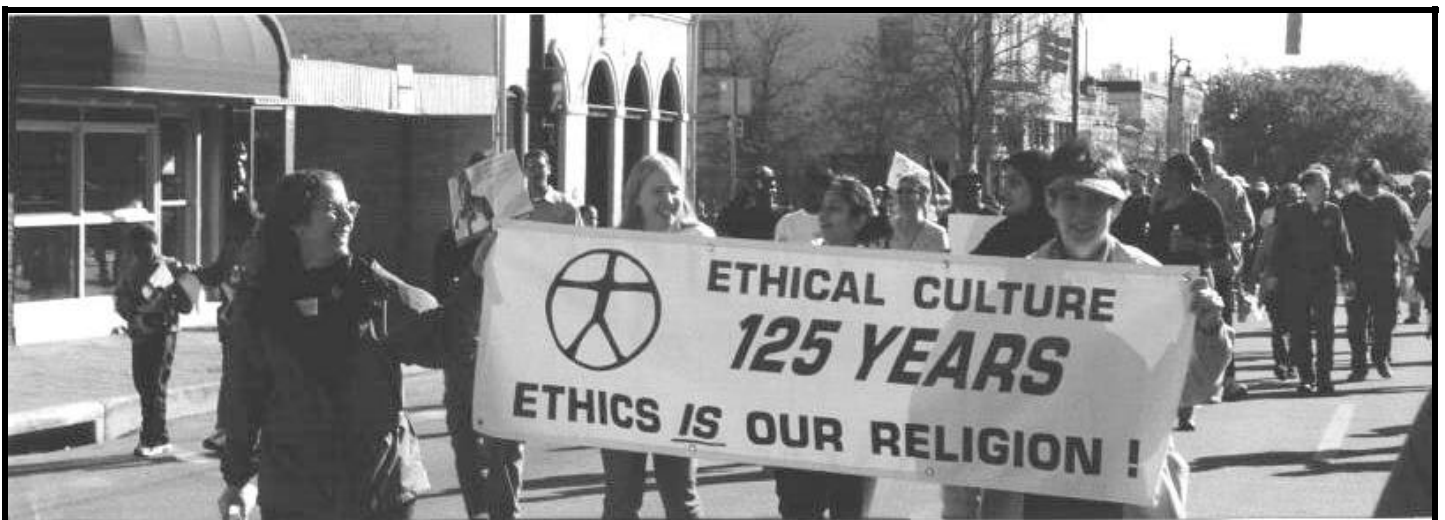
LIVING ETHICAL CULTURE

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FALL CONFERENCE

...will be held at beautiful **Holiday Hills** in **Pawling, NY, November 8-10**. This enjoyable and educational weekend is open to Sunday School directors, teachers, parents, children and anyone who believes in religious education as an Ethical Culture priority.

Our theme is **Festivals**, as celebrated at Ethical Societies throughout the country. These events provide us

with traditions that make us feel connected to our chosen spiritual culture. They enable us to share intergenerational experiences of song, music and drama throughout the year. Attendees are asked to bring examples of festivals that have been successful at their Societies, and we will create our own special event as a culminating activity. Please watch for the flyer and join us at our "**FESTIVAL OF FESTIVALS**".



AUSTIN SOCIETY members marching in 2002 Martin Luther King Day parade.