

D i a l o g u e

A m e r i c a n E t h i c a l U n i o n

S e p t e m b e r 2 0 0 2



WHAT IS YOUR RELIGION?

Richard Kiniry, Leader Philadelphia

Some of us have very negative opinions of organized religion. We point to all the negatives - the Crusades, the control of free thought, the acceptance of irrational ideas, the abuse of outsiders and the fanaticism that is too often a byproduct of religion. Some of us translate that negative opinion of the institutions of religion into a negativity concerning anything to do with religion. And yet there are other understandings of religion.

If we don't define religion as an institution but as a person's approach to the ultimate meaning of life, then religion becomes something we each do. So, in this understanding of religion, everyone has their own religion, and considering some people's lives, religion is weirder than we thought- It does sound like wishful thinking to claim that everyone has a personal understanding of the ultimate meaning of life. It is hard to imagine that the executives at Enron connected their lives to an ultimate understanding of life. How about your local drug dealer, or a fan at a Britney Spear's concert? Does a mass murderer have an ultimate understanding of life?

Recently I have been fascinated by the realization that the actual living that is going on in this world, what is actually happening in the lives of all us people, is a far cry from the cultural understanding of what is happening. We live in an artificial arrangement that removes the personal and straightens out the particular. Our com-



THE WAR ON EVIL

Fritz Williams, Leader Baltimore

Ever since 9-11, we've been hearing about evil. Those who council acts of terror against innocent civilians are evil. Those who oppose our way of life and what we stand for are evil. Bin Laden is evil. The Taliban is evil. Al Qaida is evil.

The word "evil" has assumed a central place in our president's vocabulary, and the American people have embraced it. Even normally cynical political observers and pundits have made this intensified awareness of evil a sign of a new sense of moral and patriotic purpose.

But the war on evil has a long history. It has deep religious roots. It reflects a worldview that sees our present struggles and conflicts as battles in a cosmic war between God and Satan. In the words of St. Paul: "Our fight is not against human foes, but against cosmic powers, against authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens."

Unfortunately, human participation in a supernatural war between good and evil has done a lot of collateral damage on the planet earth. It has produced inquisitions and witch-hunts, book bannings and book burnings, tortures and persecutions, conquests and crusades, genocides and holocausts, holy wars and jihads. We should be wary of arraying our forces on that battlefield.

On a practical level, defining our objectives in moral, quasi-religious terms is often counterproductive. The lan-

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NEW LOCATIONS!



YOUTH of ETHICAL SOCIETIES FALL CONFERENCE

will be held November 8-10 at **FROST VALLEY CENTER**
2000 Frost Valley Road, Claryville, NY
For driving directions: www.frostvalley.org

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FALL CONFERENCE

will be held November 8-10 at **STONY POINT CENTER**
in the Lower Hudson River Valley, between New York City and West Point.
For driving directions: horeb.pcusa.org/spc/location.htm



The AEU is pleased to announce that **SUSAN BUZEK** of the **Washington Ethical Society** is the new **National YES Advisor**. Susan has many years of experience in the WES Sunday School and youth programs. She co-created the Coming of

Age Program used at WES and is its Executive Director and Teen Coordinator. Susan is currently planning this year's YES Fall Conference in consultation with the National YES Committee.

The past year was challenging for many Religious Education programs, as we had to include discussions and reflections on September 11. The world is always presenting us with new and challenging ways to approach our children's religious education, and the Ethical Movement, especially at a time like this, certainly is needed.

As the AEU RE Director, I try to make resources and new curricula available to all Directors of Religious Education (DREs). We are proud of the AEU curricula available - "Tapestry" and "Love Your Neighbor." All DREs were recently sent a copy of the revised RE Library catalog and were encouraged to borrow whatever they need. The RE Library also includes all of the Philosophy for Children materials which can be borrowed for up to six weeks.

At this year's conference we will look at those special times we share with the entire Society. Our theme will be "A Festival of Festivals." We are soliciting festival scripts, videos, and props from everyone who is planning to attend. We want to offer a potpourri of Festivals that were successful, hear about those that may not have been successful, and spend some time learning about what exactly a Festival is as well as create one ourselves during the weekend.

The AEU RE Committee wants to remind you that the Fall Conference is for everyone interested in furthering his or her understanding of Religious Education in the Ethical Culture movement. Teachers, parents, RE Committee members, and Leaders are all welcome and encouraged to attend.

Carol Wolff, AEU RE Director

D i a l o g u e

Newsletter of The American Ethical Union

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D i a l o g u e is on the AEU website; click on [Latest News](#), follow links

D i a l o g u e welcomes letters and original articles on topical, religious, or philosophical themes that would be of interest to AEU members. Email to: leesma@optonline.net, or mail or fax to the AEU office.

Submissions deadline for the next edition is September 20

KINIRY (Continued from page 1)

mon space offers a relatively orderly and conventional understanding of life but in actuality everyone is doing something very individualistic and unusual. Even the most conventional of us is a saboteur of the common understanding of life.

And so it is with religion. Real people build lives based on certain values and needs and those feelings express some idea about the meaning of life. They can paste an organized religion onto their lives and actually try to live it; they can use a religion as window dressing; they can develop their own unique religion; or they ignore the whole idea of meaning in life; but they will all still live lives that express some conception of the meaning of it all. For thousands of years philosophers and sages have pointed to an ultimate out and beyond our personal lives but we have insisted on finding our own ultimate in our own way.

In that Ethical Humanism is no different from other religions- I'm so happy when someone says Ethical Humanism or Ethical Culture is his or her religion. Since we are not big on dogma and so open to personal interpretation, it is not easy to identify the Ethical Humanist religion. So, when people label Ethical Humanism as an approach to living comparable to the grand, ancient religions, it is reassuring. But even those who declare Ethical Humanists as their religion are so much more than that. Even the youngest of us has evolved a well-textured understanding of life. It may not be consistent but we are all working with a self-made theory about life and our Ethical Humanism is only part of the package.

So, my question becomes, what is your religion? Take the time to think about what is sacred, special to you. What do you spend your time doing? Does that express your heartfelt desires? Ultimately, what is most important to you? Such reflection may not be a comfortable experience. What we discover to be our fondest desires may be petty. Our ultimate understanding of life might go no further than our self-interest.

If there is no ultimate meaning to life outside of what individual people are giving life, imagine the transformation our world might experience if more people stopped long enough to ask those questions? Our world is full of opinionated people with unexamined lives. Imagine if our world was as full of aware people?

WILLIAMS (Continued from page 1)

guage of good and evil interferes with a meaningful and therapeutic examination of underlying causes- it creates an intolerance of discussion and dissent. It is blind to the fact that right and wrong exist on both sides, and it produces a bias against the spirit of compromise, which is the essence of political problem solving. Moral stereotyping can be just as unfair and just as devastating as stereotyping people by race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. It is an approach that supports simplistic military and law enforcement responses and lays a foundation for a security state. It is itself a species of fundamentalism. It writes off a whole category of human beings as enemies of God.

The language of moral warfare has failed us miserably in dealing with drug abuse and violence in our homes and streets, and it is not achieving much of a track record in combating our mounting ecological crisis or an obscene imbalance of wealth and poverty throughout the world. Instead of speaking in sound bites about fighting evil, we need to do the hard work of trying to understand what is really going on and seeking to achieve less-than-perfect practical solutions. Instead of taking sides in the name of morality and demonizing our opponents, we need to promote a larger, more sympathetic perspective on both sides.

Refusing to engage in moral warfare is part of what we mean in Ethical Culture when we speak of honoring the

A E U Calendar



BOARD MEETINGS

September 7: New York
October 25, 26: Murray Grove, NJ
January 11 & March 15: New York
May 24 & 27: Philadelphia

CONFERENCES

National Leaders Council
October 23-25: Murray Grove, NJ
AEU Growth & Development Conference
November 1 & 2: Brooklyn, NY
Religious Education Conference
November 8-10: Stony Point Center, NY
Y.E.S. Conference
November 8-10: Frost Valley Center, NY
National Assembly
May 23-26:
Philadelphia

In April, the AEU Board, for budgetary reasons, voted to discontinue publishing the separately mailed four page monthly "REPORTS" from the Washington Ethical Action Office (WEAO). The REPORTS contained information on national political matters of special concern to Ethical Culture members as well as political "action alerts" encouraging members to contact their U. S. Senators, Representatives, the President, etc. to urge support (often in the form of opposition) for their positions on currently pending issues. The much reduced version contained on this page carries on in the same vein. However, because such issues demand more space than is available here, and the fact that *Dialogue* is published less frequently, topics included will necessarily be quite selective. However, WEAO plans to send more

extensive action alerts to the Ethical Action listserv on a very timely basis. We anticipate, in addition, that the alerts plus additional informative material will soon be posted on the AEU website. In order that the alerts and other information reach members who do not have internet access without great delays, we encourage chairs or other active members of society political action committees to subscribe to the listserv* and find ways of quickly passing along this material to their Society members.

***To subscribe (all AEU members are eligible), go to the AEU website, www.aeu.org, click on "Discussions", then "email lists", and follow the instructions for the Ethical Action list.**



ACTION: Contact your Senators (e-mail or telephone are presently best), urging them to expedite passage of a TANF (welfare) reauthorization bill. Failure to do so will result in continuation of present law, which lacks needed changes and will diminish chances of obtaining contingency funds for transitional jobs next year. Even more importantly, tell them that you strongly favor the Senate Finance Committee's proposed bill over the House-passed version, which includes unreasonably increased working hours requirements for welfare recipients as well as other less desirable features.

BACKGROUND: The landmark 1996 welfare reform act has achieved substantial reductions in the nation's welfare rolls as former recipients have moved into work. Nonetheless, this year's scheduled reauthorization of federal welfare funding under Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) block grants to States, presents a major opportunity to improve on the original act's provisions and to overcome its shortcomings. The bill approved by the Senate Finance Committee uses that opportunity to far greater advantage than does the corresponding measure passed by the House in July and supported by the President. The House bill emphasizes full-time (40 hours per week) work for welfare recipients—up from 20 or 30 hours—regardless of their children's ages, although it counts as "work" up to 16 hours devoted to job training and rehabilitative

activities. The Senate bill, in contrast, gives states more flexibility in setting work vs. education/training combinations and with special consideration for teenage single parents.

The Senate Finance bill also provides much larger increases in mandatory funding for child care (\$5.5 billion over 5 years vs. \$1 billion in the House bill) and is more generous on contingency funding, notably with respect to transitional jobs. It is also more family friendly than the House bill, the President's touting of this aspect in the latter notwithstanding, in that the House bill continues to allow states to discriminate against two-parent families in their TANF programs. There are other superior features in the Senate committee's bill, such as longer extension of transitional medical assistance and a housing provision for low-income families without triggering welfare requirements. Finally (and importantly), the Senate Finance bill does not include the ill-advised "super waiver", contained in the House bill, which would, at a Governor's request, allow the executive branch to override, without Congressional input, nearly all the provisions of Federal law that govern more than a dozen programs.

STOP THE TAX CUTS!

The much bally-hood Federal budget surpluses of \$5.6 trillion originally projected for the decade 2002-2011 have all but vanished. This has happened for various reasons, including, the Bush administration's tax cut package passed in 2001. The costly (and *de facto* understated because of several unrealistic "sunset" provisions!)

cuts are focused on wealthy individuals and corporations.. Because most of the tax reductions in last year's bill begin to take effect only in 2004, there is time, as well as justification, for canceling most of the impact of that legislation. Moreover, in the light of economic developments and new government expenditure demands, efforts by the Administration and House Republicans to make the cuts permanent and add still others are outrageous and should be strongly resisted. Here is a proposed letter to Congressional members:

Dear Member of Congress:

Stop the wave of tax cuts! We can't afford them! The President keeps proposing and the House keeps passing new cuts (including making permanent already programmed cuts). The much touted \$5.6 trillion (10-year) surplus has already been wiped out. Especially in the face of threatened Medicare and Social Security funding, exacerbated by the upcoming explosion of "baby boom" retirees, the President should stop proposing new tax cuts and you in Congress should stop passing them and act responsibly by suspending cuts scheduled for 2004 and beyond that mostly benefit the wealthiest one percent of taxpayers. Every one of us must think first of the safety and well-being of all Americans: protecting the soundness of the economy through fiscal responsibility, protecting Social Security, providing prescription drug coverage for seniors, protecting children and families, and meeting our nation's education, environmental, security, and other needs.

IHEU FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CONGRESS

Temma Fishman, Philadelphia

“All different, all equal” was the theme of the **International Humanist & Ethical Union’s 50th anniversary Congress held in The Netherlands, July 3-6.** Attending were nineteen members of the AEU as well as scores of humanists from around the world. Eight Ethical Culture Societies were represented along with four Leaders and four members of the AEU Board. **Joe Chuman** was on a panel for a workshop on Humanism, Human Rights and Human Values. **Margaretha Jones** participated in a panel discussion on Humanism in the International Arena, and **Howard Radest**, former president of the IHEU, gave an address on “The History of the IHEU’s first 50 Years”.

At the plenary session on the morning of July 4th, **Jan Pronk**, Dutch minister of housing and the environment, and chair of the 2001 World Climate Conference, stated that the way to a humane world is through critical thinking, not faith or dogma. We are confronted by the reality that a billion and a half people live on a dollar a day or less. Our challenge is to take everyone on board to the good life. We must find the global common denominator of ethics, which will sustain the planet and end crimes against humanity.

Urvashi Butalia of India asked, “Why is violence becoming more prevalent and why have we allowed it to become a way to suppress difference?” She proposed a definition of feminism as “the right of every human being to live in security”, a tenet of Humanism. **Ab-**

dullah A. An-Naim, Professor of Law at Emory University urged Humanists to confront both oppressive Islamic law and nationalistic terrorism by finding ways to express the collective will. Professor An-Naim sees the UN and the International Criminal Court as a means of realizing global solidarity. **Rob Buitenweg**, of the University of Humanistics in Utrecht, warned that fundamentalism is gaining ground with increased exploitation of women and children and a widening gap between rich and poor.

The plenary session on July 5th featured a film entitled, “Humanism In Education”. Made at the University of Humanist Studies in Uhtrecht, it showed students pondering the question, “What is Humanistics?”. Thinking for yourself, finding meaning in relationships, comforting others, and creating a climate for change were some answers. The next film showed how Humanitas volunteers work to assist the mentally ill, enrich the lives of the elderly, help soldiers under stress, and how Humanist chaplains create memorial services. Humanitas is an organization which turns humanistic ideals into practice.

The International Humanist Award was presented to **Amartya Sen**, of the University of Cambridge, an Indian scholar and the 1998 Nobel Prize winner in Economics. He was honored for producing a new understanding of the catastrophes that plague society’s poorest people. He holds that the ultimate purpose of development is to enhance

the individual choice and freedom of ordinary people. **Philip Volk**, who walked from Belfast to Jerusalem while talking about the power of Humanism to change the world, was awarded the Distinguished Service to Humanists Award.

IHEU Executive Director **Babu Gogineni** spoke of the plight of **Dr. Younis Shaikh**, a Pakistani doctor condemned to death nearly two years ago for the “crime” of blasphemy and informed us of a counter campaign to undermine the IHEU’s efforts to save him. Babu urged the Executive Committee to adopt an emergency resolution in support of Dr. Shaikh. Babu urged all of us to object to this religious terrorism, stating that Islamic Sharia law seeks to impose religious practice through government, which is inconsistent with the ideals of Humanism, which sees separation of church and state as crucial. The IHEU should be a home for people who think in terms of humanistic principles. Babu spoke of including Moslems and Christians in the next Congress.

Throughout the Congress there were workshops dealing with oppressive Islamic laws and practices, social inclusion, campaigning and the media, euthanasia, poverty and human development, diversity, education, and gay and lesbian issues, among others.

The Amsterdam 2002 Declaration, a statement of Humanist philosophy, was approved after discussion and some modifications which were proposed by several members of the AEU delegation. The Declaration is available on the web at **IHEU.org**.

AEU Participants:

Top, l-r: Beth Greenblatt, Howard Radest, Carol Nadell, Bo Meyerson, Joe Chuman, Arnold Fishman, Richard and Ellen McBride, and Margaretha Jones. **Bottom, l-r:** Tony Heilman, Fran and Lee Smalley, Judy and Les Toth, Temma Fishman, Ruth Cohen, Carol and Ron Solomon. (Not shown: Linda Chuman)





FROM THE UN

Sylvain and Phyllis Ehrenfeld

Bergen; Delegates to the UN from IHEU and AEU's National Service Conference

The observance of World Press Freedom Day on May 3 reminded us of the inextricable connection between human rights, a free media, and a guarantee of democracy. Press freedom is the oxygen of human freedom, and only 20% of the world's population enjoys it.

With the task of covering brutal conflicts, repressive regimes, and global terrorism, the need to protect freedom of the press is now particularly important. During recent months, we have seen media professionals being imprisoned and assassinated in growing numbers. In the last twelve months, 30 journalists have died or were murdered. At the beginning of 2002, 118 journalists were in jail.

A dramatic interview with Marianne Pearl, the pregnant widow of Daniel Pearl, highlighted the seriousness of the situation. Pearl, a distinguished reporter for the Wall Street Journal, was kidnapped and brutally murdered, while trying to do an in depth piece on Al Quaida. Ironically, Pearl was searching for understanding.

The tension between protecting security and fundamental freedoms increases the difficulty. Some democracies are facilitating wiretapping. In the US, the new Patriot Bill has made it difficult to gather information about accused terrorists. Appeals to patriotism make it harder to raise questions or publish dissenting views. The Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has stressed that counter-terrorism must not become an all-embracing concept that is used to cloak and justify violations of human rights. Strong language!

A media panel was unusually outspoken. The panel included the Washington Bureau Chief of Al-Jazeera of Egypt, a correspondent from CNN, a senior writer of the New York Times, the foreign editor of the Times of India, and the managing editor of Court TV. They exchanged views and disagreements. The Egyptian news head objected to the constant use in the press of the term terrorism, while denying it for the Oklahoma bombing. The Times senior writer pointed out that a 3-part series on Al -Quaida had been largely ignored. The managing editor of Court TV objected to the ruling of no TV coverage for federal trials. The foreign editor of the Times of India thought that the western media had done a fair job on many topics, with the exception of some opaque areas, such as Afghanistan. US media concentrates on US foreign policy with good versus evil thinking, describing certain countries as terrorist, while allying with others, for example Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Egypt, who are praised in terms of their ruling elites. In the search for understanding, one must remember that every religion has a fundamentalist wing. Another speaker pointed out that not all terrorists are Moslems, not all Moslems are fundamentalist, and not all fundamentalists are terrorists!

Some of the questions raised: Does the power of large media conglomerates lead to self-censorship and bias? Should the media try to fight xenophobia and group hatred? What price are we prepared to pay for security? Is objectivity possible? Is it better to present a variety of views, warts and all, while carefully undertaking the responsibility to point out when "facts" are false? We came away with an enhanced respect for the importance of the dangerous and difficult tasks that journalists face.

AEU GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

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

The 2002 Growth and Development Conference will be held at the Brooklyn Society Friday evening, November 1, and Saturday, November 2.

The Conference is designed to stimulate the growth of Ethical Societies throughout the movement by serving as an exchange of ideas for strengthening key programs and enhancing Societies' visibility and attractiveness. It is intended for board members, committee chairs, and committed volunteers from all Societies.

We are scheduling a Friday evening keynote on **"What People Are Looking for in an Ethical Community"** by Curt Collier, Leader of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society, and a full lineup of workshops on Saturday including: **"Responding Ethically to Tough Issues of the Day as a Way of Building Community"** by Jim White, former Leader of the Essex Society and Consulting Leader to the Cleveland Ethical Circle; **"Designing a Full-Service Sunday Morning"** by Bart Worden, Leader of the Westchester Society, and Fritz Williams, Leader of the Baltimore Society; **"Ideas on How to Publicize Your Society"** by Dorothy Lockhart, Staff at the Greater Chicago Society; **"Welcoming and Fostering Diversity"** by Lisel Burns, Leader of the Brooklyn Society, and Donna Roberts, AEU Staff; and **"Membership 101"** by Hank Gassner, Chair of the AEU Membership Committee. Judy Toth, Former Leader of the St. Louis Society and new AEU Growth and Development Coordinator will also talk briefly about how your society can obtain her advice and assistance.

The cost is \$65 each, \$75 for registrants after October 21. Partial travel subsidies will be provided for up to two members per Society for groups more than 300 miles from NYC. More complete information and registration forms will be available in September at each Society and from the AEU office (office@aeu.org). Home hospitality will be arranged for those who live too far away to commute. Out-of-towners are also encouraged to visit one of the New York area Societies on Sunday, November 3. Please save the dates and plan to attend, and encourage prospective leaders of growth and development at your Society to attend as well.

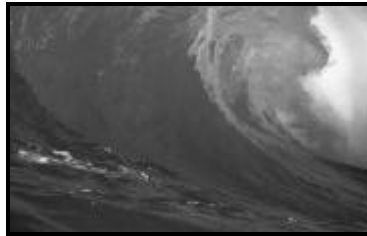
A MORTAL MAN, A HUMAN REVELATION

Robert Greenwell, AEU Leader/Intern

Felix Adler was nobody special. No angel ever appeared to him announcing that he must found a new religious movement. No dream ever woke him up with a sense that from now on there was a destiny he must follow. But he did have formative experiences. Although the course of character development for him was quite smooth, there was an experience he had in early life that, I believe, set the tone. If it did not directly influence him, it at the least powerfully represents the person he became. It's where I like to start the Felix Adler story.

Just five years old, Felix was swept along as his parents packed up their belongings and moved from their home in Alzey, Germany. They traveled to the French coast, and then embarked on a voyage to America. Whatever impression of vastness or soul-stretching sublimity the ocean may have made on the five-year-old, as it does for most who take it in for

their very first time, was only to be overshadowed by the frightening conditions they were about to encounter. What should have taken seven days to New York took seventeen because of a ten-day gale and an engine breakdown. They were trapped on a ship in the middle of the ocean with massive skies, menacing clouds, merciless winds, and crashing waves. In understatement, Felix wrote later in life, "There was delight in romping on the deck until it began to heave underneath, and there was an answering heave. My first seasickness and my last." This was Adler's passage to America, an experience of impending doom, and yet of making it through. It's not that a new Adler emerged on the other side of this passage, but certainly there was an intensification of what was



already in him, an urgency in facing life, an awareness of doom ringed all about, a resolve to get down to the essentials.

Reducing life's concerns to its essentials freed him early on from ever being burdened by any feeling of having to accept dogmas. He sloughed them off like an old skin. As he tells us, "The separation was not violent. There was no sudden wrenching off. There were none of those painful struggles that many others have had to undergo when breaking away from the faith of their fathers. It was all a gradual, smooth transition, the unfolding of a seed that had long been planted." Reducing life to its essence has this liberating capacity. What it came down to for Felix, from early days to last, was the compelling insight that "Every human personality

is to be safe against infringement and is, in this sense, sacred."

This is the challenge of Ethical Culture and Ethical Humanism: Really see one another as sacred. When you do this, you spontaneously start to care. And the more you care, the more the fire within you grows. From this comes a passion for social reform, and from this comes a passion for human community. From this, too, comes a passion for integrating the sacredness of the human with the sacredness of all of nature.

That which gave the Movement its life and energy in its early years can do so again. Adler's revelation was that every person is a revelation. The skill to perceive this, not only at special times, but at every moment, is what we want to learn, and what we want to teach.

Adapted from Riverdale/Yonkers Newsletter, "Concern"

ARNOLD SYLVESTER, past president of the AEU and of the Long Island Society, died on July 13 at the age of 89. Surviving are his wife, Belle, children Vicki and Robert, and two grandchildren. **Muriel Neufeld** of Long Island writes: "He was probably the most knowledgeable and well-rounded friend many of us ever had. He was intellectual and artistic, qualities which were apparent in his conversations, his fine paintings and his violin making. Arnold was truly a man for all seasons." **Howard Radest**, former AEU Director and Leader of the Bergen Society comments: "Never lacking for ideas, Arnold was an original and genuine genius. He liked to give the impression of cool calculating reason, but his caring and sensitivity shown through. If someone was in trouble or if a job needed doing, Arnold was there. He had exquisite sensibility, aesthetic taste, and creativity. We still display a Yugoslav street scene that Arnold painted and gave to us. The places where Arnold lived-- in the community, at work, in the arts, and in Ethical Culture -- are better because of him. Memories of him enrich our lives."

HIGHLIGHTS of BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

New York, June 22, 2002 Annabelle Glasser, Secretary



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS-

1. Set in motion a SEARCH for an EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.
2. Hired SUSAN BUZEK of Washington as part-time NATIONAL YES ADVISOR @ \$12,000. In addition to assisting YES (Youth of Ethical Society) groups, she will start programs for young adults to keep them connected with each other and to the Ethical Movement following high school.
3. Hired JUDY TOTH as part-time MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR @ \$17,000 until an Executive Director is hired. She replaces Fritz Williams. Judy has just retired as the Leader of the St. Louis Society.
4. Elected ARNOLD FISHMAN, President of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, as a BOARD MEMBER, to fill the

vacancy left by the resignation of Mimi Henry.

5. Determined that the 2003 ASSEMBLY will be held in PHILADELPHIA over the Memorial Day Weekend, from FRI. - MON., 5/23 - 5/26.
6. Approved the CERTIFICATION of BOB GREENWELL as a LEADER as of September 1, on completion of his internship and upon recommendation of the Leadership Committee.
7. Approved the CERTIFICATION of MARK WEBER of Cleveland as an ADJUNCT LEADER.
8. Agreed on a statement pertaining to the ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL LEADERS IN SOCIETIES. (See text below.)
9. Approved a 3-part proposal from the NSDT (New Society Development Team): (a) To seek

funding from the Stuckenberg Fund's Challenge Grant for the NEW ETHICAL SOCIETY PROGRAM (NESP) proposal of a committee of Leaders to develop training materials for starting a Society and supporting the growth and development of existing Societies; (b) For the AEU to raise the necessary Matching Funds; and (c) To develop a relationship between the NESP and the St. Louis Society's Spin-Off group.

10. Learned that President Brian King had signed onto an *amicus curiae* brief to stop the funding of religious non-medical health care institutions.

11. Adopted the recommendation that a YOUTH MEMBERSHIP category be established for Members-At-Large, where persons up to 25 years of age are

charged \$25. Those up to 25 who are members of Societies will continue not to be counted as members for Society apportionment purposes. This is to encourage their membership in the Society without undue pressure for large pledges.

12. Approved Treasurer Greta Gladney's request that all FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS be centralized in the AEU Office, and that outstanding documents for the past five years be submitted to the office by July 15, 2002.

13. In response to a request from the Leadership Committee for the hiring of a LEADERSHIP TRAINING COORDINATOR, the Board endorsed the concept for the next fiscal year if recommended by the National Leaders Council

STATEMENT on the ROLE of PROFESSIONAL LEADERS in SOCIETIES

Approved by the AEU Board
June 22, 2002.

The Board of the American Ethical Union, after discussion of the role of professional Leaders in Societies, wishes to clarify our commitment to professional Leadership. Although it is not a guarantee of growth or success, the Board renews its position

that the Ethical Culture model is that a Society have a professional Leader. This does not deny that there are other other models and we do not demand that any present Society change the model they are presently using. We also acknowledge that there can be tension between a Leader in his or her role and lay leaders and members with independent agendas. This tension should be acknowledged and not sidestepped. We feel that a Leader, trained in

both Ethical Humanist Philosophy and in congregational growth, is necessary for a Society to fulfill its responsibility to satisfy the religious needs of members. A Leader articulates our religious philosophy and centers an Ethical Society. Professional experience and knowledge is invaluable to success. New groups should not be started without Leader guidance and without a plan for hiring a Leader.

My Ethical Culture Faith



Randall Best
President and
Adjunct Leader,
North Carolina

I used to be "faith challenged." I found "faith" a troubling term. I associated faith with belief in a supernatural god, and as a self-defined naturalist and humanist, I felt that faith was not meaningful in my life. Belief without proof did not make sense to me.

I began to look at faith differently when I read Margaret Wise Brown's children's book "The Little Island": "...You must

take it on faith what I tell you," said the fish. "What's that?" said the cat - "Faith." "To believe what I tell you about what you don't know," said the fish. My concept of faith was changing - moving from a narrow definition that limited faith to religious belief in something that cannot be proven to defining faith in a broader, non-theistic way.

I now see that faith is expressed in many ways. Faith can be trust in the knowledge and judgment of someone else. Faith can mean fidelity to ideas and values. Faith can also mean commitment to something that is

greater than myself.

My faith deepens the sense of meaning and purpose in my life. Faith and trust in others is the foundation of my relationships. Faith is expressed in the connections between us - in the ideals that we hold close. It takes faith to get out of bed in the morning. We commit small acts of faith and trust to get us through the day. Faith is needed for our existence.

Faith calls to us to invest value outside of ourselves: in ideas and principles, relationships and possibilities. Indeed, faith calls

to us. Aaron McGruder, author of the comic strip "Boondocks," spoke about committing to human struggle at a recent speech at Duke University:

"...people are born with an inheritance. The struggle. Some choose not to accept it. Some do what they can. Fight on the fronts that they have. You become aware that there is something going on that is bigger than you and you try to become a part of it, if you can. The objects of our faith have intrinsic value or worth. We invest faith in these objects because this act confers value and worth upon ourselves."

KENYA FUND - SEMA ACADEMY

Arthur & Lyn Dobrin , Long Island

The impulse to do good lies at the very foundation of the Ethical Movement. Despite the abundance of good works in our history, however, there has never been much emphasis on supporting projects abroad.

Kenya has been close to our hearts for more than 35 years, since we first lived in Kisii District as Peace Corps Volunteers. We have maintained close ties, and two summers ago we returned for what was our twelfth time. As a result of that visit, we have taken on the responsibility of building a school in Kenya, Sema Academy. We hope you will join in that endeavor with us.

Education is the key to good health, to equality between the sexes, to a prosperous life, to social justice and personal freedom. But education isn't available to everyone, especially in a country such as Kenya in East Africa, where free education is a false promise.

Under the direction of Dr. Japheth and Helen Maranga, Sema Academy has become a serious institution, as it has risen to near the top in academic standing in the Kisii/Kipsigis area.

We have known the Marangas for more than 25 years. She is a retired elementary school teacher and he chaired the early childhood education department at Moi University until his recent retirement.

The Kenya Fund of the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island is now a year old, and we are happy to tell you that the project has raised over \$15,000. One of the three wings of the school now has a roof and a blackboard and building is nearing completion. Tuition for his entire school career has been guaranteed for seven-year old Japheth Makori. Scholastic Books sent reading materials for the school library, and a pen pal program



has been implemented with children in New York and Chicago. The school is now acquiring its first computer.

We have received grants from the Schulz Charitable Foundation, the Joe Weill Social Action Project of the Ethical Humanist Society of LI and the Returned Peace Corps Association of LI. The remainder of the money was raised from contributions of individuals ranging in amounts from \$25 to \$1,000.

In a country where the average income is less than \$500 per year, a little money goes a long way. Here are some examples:

\$25 buys a book for every child in one

class; \$64 pays for one month's teacher's salary; \$100 puts a child through grade school for a year; \$400 buys glass for windows, plaster for walls, cement for a floor and a blackboard; \$6,000 completes a building that has 10 classrooms, staff-room, head teacher's office, director's office and a computer room; \$10,000 makes the school tuition-free for all the children for one year.

These hopes, dreams and aspirations can become realities. Two years ago the Marangas never thought they would have one building completed and the help that they have received. Most important is the education that they can now provide in this a country beset with enormous social problems. Some day it will be the children from Sema who will make a difference in their own country.

We hope that you will see the Kenya Fund as one of the projects that you support. We are sure that the money we send overseas will make a difference in the lives of many people. We can assure you that the money goes directly to the project; there are no administrative costs and there is no overhead.

The Kenya Fund is under the supervision of three returned Peace Corps volunteers from Kenya and is part of the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island.

Please send your tax-deductible contribution, made out to the Kenya Fund/EHS of LI to: Kenya Fund, Ethical Society, 38 Old Country Road, Garden City, NY 11530.

If you have any questions about the fund and would like to speak with us, we can be reached at home at 516-997-8545. Thank you.

Arthur Dobrin is Leader Emeritus, Long Island.

In reading the letter sent to Secretary Powell re Israel-Palestine written by Richard Kinery and Joe Chuman, and signed by 18 leaders and 5 directors of the A.E.U., I was struck by the fact that of these 25 informed individuals not one seems to have heard of the negotiations which took place at Taba, six months after the failure at Camp David.

At Taba, the Clinton administration put forward a plan encompassing many of the points made in the letter, along with addressing two other major stumbling blocks to agreement, i.e. giving the Palestinians part of Jerusalem for a capital, and settling the refugee problem. For some inexplicable reason these advances were not deemed important enough to be included in the settlement proposed in the letter. The proposal was accepted by Ehud Barak. Yasser Arafat walked out without even offering a counter-proposal and was held directly responsible for the failure of the negotiations by Bill Clinton. Yet, what our leaders suggest is an international coalition for peace led by the US. They say this is the sole dynamic which can break the current violent quagmire. In other words, it will force a settlement on both parties, which will include a laughable guarantee of Israeli security. What I suggest as the sole dynamic for peace, is a Palestinian leader who is not a corrupt, incompetent, feckless liar like Yasser Arafat, a man whose word is useless and who has broken every agreement he ever signed. I suggest that when the Palestinians find their Sadat, or King Hussein, they will find a ready partner for peace in Israel, as did Egypt, and Jordan.

While I agree that the US must be actively engaged in the process and apply pressure where it can, there are limits to what it can or should impose on either side.

Martin W Cotler, Essex (6/02)

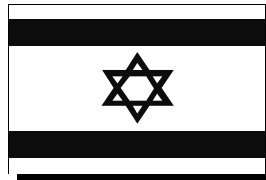
I try not to excuse or demonize either Israelis or Palestinians.

I believe that the large Islamic states, particularly the Arab states of the Middle East, have been too much like America in not taking seriously the degree to which all fundamentalist religion is inimical to cultural evolution in civilized society everywhere.

Israel, perhaps of necessity, was established by terror and war, including the tragic driving out of most



of the Palestinians who had been living there. Those who defend Israel's current actions against the general population of the Palestinians west of the Jordan often



defend Israel as the only democracy in an Arab sea of less worthy states.

Israel set itself a high standard in its original statements of purpose and humane political values, but it has seldom hesitated to use the immoral tactic of mass punishment of the innocent in order to try to intimidate or destroy the guilty. The better of its leaders stood for much loftier social values and political ethics.

But there are obscurantist fundamentalists in Israel as well. One of the most marked features of fundamentalism is its emphasis on opposition to the other, the foreign, and the new. I am not suggesting that every fundamentalist is necessarily functioning on this level, but the general propensity and the general trend is marked.

Middle eastern Arab media have disseminated more than a small amount of hate propaganda against the Israelis and the Jews in general. The propagators of this have acted as if they were trying to create a new holocaust in order to cleanse Palestine of the Jews. Furthermore, opinion leaders all over the Middle East have failed to fight against terrorism, which is often treated as if it were an appropriate counter to the oppression of the Palestinian Arabs by the occupying Israelis. Terrorist suicide bombing is pure barbarism. It does produce terror, but also massive retaliation. Horrors become piled on horrors.

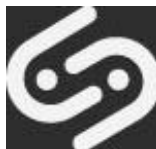
The Palestinian leaders have been unable or unwilling to control the fanatic ideologues. They have allowed their media and their schools to propagate messages of hate as if they might be propositions of fact. So have some of the recognized Islamic nations. This is a perfect example of the horrors of blind fundamentalism mixed with tribal hatreds and aggressions and could lead to a much more general war involving much of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Of course, the Israelis have hardly been enlightened when it comes to indoctrinating children with hatred and fear of the Arabs.

There is more justification for blame on all sides than any critic of either side might need, but blame is no longer relevant. Blame cannot be useful here. Both sides must reject the ancient inadequacies in their traditions. Each must atone for its own complicity by forgiving the other and by committing to the hard work of carving out a new way of speaking, preaching, and persuading, but most importantly, by foregoing those actions which have exacerbated this nightmare.

Olin Beall, North Carolina (5/02)

The origin and meaning of the new logo of the Ethical Society of Austin—

At the very beginning of the design process I worked with member David Schlickeisen, a professional designer. We wanted the logo to reflect the community focus of our Society. David also had in mind the motto, "The place where people meet to seek the highest is holy ground," as he designed the logo.



According to David, "On one abstract level it is two people embracing. On a deeper level, it spells out 'esa', using basic

shapes and positive and negative space. Furthermore, it is friendly, approachable and very memorable."

The Society has used several logos over time. Approximately two and a half years ago the WES logo was adopted by our Board without input from the Society at large. One year ago, after looking over several designs submitted by David, this Board selected the current logo, and then took it to the membership for its approval.

Lauren Sloan
President, Austin, and Member, AEU Board of Directors

AEU NEWS & HAPPENINGS

Annabelle Glasser, reporter, and member, Queens

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

- * The **BROOKLYN** Society honored Rita Lasar at their Peace Site Platform. After her brother died in the World Trade Center on 9/11, she help found "September Eleventh Families for a Peaceful Tomorrow," a group who went to Afghanistan to call world attention to the people who lost family members in the conflict there. The Society had a workshop on "Conflict as Opportunity," led by Ellen Raider, a leader in the field of Conflict Resolution. When conflicts are handled badly, they result in anger and frustration; when handled well, they can be a source of growth.
- * The **ST. LOUIS** Society is planning to establish a new "spin-off" Society about 2 hours away this fall. The Stuckenberg Fund will help underwrite its initial costs, including the hiring a full-time Leader. A Leader-search process is underway.
- * The **LONG ISLAND** Society has selected ANNE KLAEYSEN to be its new Leader. She will complete her Internship this Fall in New York and Long Island in anticipation of Certification as a Leader in January '03. Richard Kiniry will stay on in his role as Interim Leader until January. A new R E Director, Devorah Weinmann, has been hired to replace AEU Board member Linda Napoli, who has retired from the position. The Sunday School raised \$45 for the "Protect An Acre" program of the Rain Forest Action Network. The children learned that every 9 seconds a football-size field of land is torn down in the world's rain forests.
- * The **PHILDELPHIA** Society is donating a paperback dictionary to every 3rd Grade student at a local school. They are in the process of constructing an overnight cabin at Camp Linden, the camp they have rehabilitated and are using to serve inner-city children.
- * The **BALTIMORE** Society co-sponsored the Maryland Peace and Justice Conference in May on the theme, "9/11: Causes and Effects." Numerous workshops were offered.
- * The **NEW YORK** Society has hired an Events Coordinator and a Public Relations-Marketing Coordinator. They have complete the repair of the exterior of their historic building and are now starting to work on the interior.
- * The **RIVERDALE-YONKERS** Society has been offering monthly Sunday afternoon forums on an ethically challenging topic. A presentation, often a video, is followed by discussion and a simple meal in an informal setting; this has proved to be quite popular. Their Leader CURT COLLIER wrote a new comedy which the Society produced at the end of June entitled, "Casting Call: Alien Invasion."
- * The **AUSTIN** Society hosted the presentation of a play by the Ethical Society Repertory Theatre, organized by Riverdale's Leader Curt Collier. The visiting troupe performed "Stones in His Pocket," an Irish drama, as a joint fund-raiser. The Society has started a program of discussing personal ethical dilemmas at Sunday Platforms. Members, who may remain anonymous, are asked to submit their dilemmas in advance, in writing.
- *The Leader of the **ESSEX** Society, BOE MEYERSON, has also written a play which the Society performed: "God: A Play in One Act." It is both funny and philosophical.
- * The **BOSTON** Society still has copies available of Stan Wayne's docu-drama, "Ethical Heroes," for those Societies that have not yet performed it. It is a very good dramatization of Ethical Culture as a Reform Movement. The Society is discontinuing its Sunday School because of lack of interest.
- * The **BERGEN** Society has started planning for its 50th Anniversary.
- * The Leader of the **NORTHERN WESTCHESTER** Society, BOB BERSON, is now the Convenor of the Ossining Ministerial Association.
- * The **IOWA ETHICAL UNION** is dissolving its statewide chapter, but is trying to reorganize as an Ethical-cluster" in the eastern part of the state.
- * The **LOS ANGELES** Society is continuing its joint meetings with the Humanist Alliance of Los Angeles (HALA) for another year. They will meet twice a month.
- * The **AEU MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE** is establishing the role of "Consulting Leaders," each to work in an ongoing fashion with a particular small Society to provide support, inspiration, and guidance. The program is being offered to Austin, Cleveland, and Puget Sound, which do not have Leaders.
- * We thank the **HUMANIST SOCIETY OF FRIENDS** for running our ad for an Executive Director in its newsletter, "Humanist Living." HSOF is a subchapter of the American Humanist Association.



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**AMERICAN
ETHICAL
SOCIETIES'
SYMBOLS**

WASHINGTON, DC

AUSTIN*

NORTH CAROLINA

AEU AND MOST SOCIETIES

ST. LOUIS

* See Page 10 for information about the origin and meaning of the Austin Society's new logo.