

E T H I C A L O U T L O O K

TWO WEST 64TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10023 TEL.212 874-5210 E-MAIL OFFICE@NYSEC.ORG

Sunday Morning Meetings

11:15 AM–Auditorium

April 6

**Community Service Award–
Doing for Others**

Tony Hileman, Senior Leader

Carol Nadell Van Deusen Presides

April 13

A Sense of Humor

Fritz Williams, Leader Emeritus

Baltimore Ethical Society

Dr. Judith D. Wallach Presides

April 20

It's Not Easy Being Green

Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh

Past President

Henryka Komanska Presides

April 27

**The Politics of Inspiration and
America's Reawakening**

Dr. Khoren Arisian

Senior Leader Emeritus, NYSEC

Tony Hileman Presides

*Bring a
Friend on
Sunday*

April Happenings

Community Service Award–Doing for Others–On Sunday, April 6, at 11:15 am, restaurateur Michael O'Neal will be honored for his service to the community. *(See below)*

Adult Education–Ethics and How We Live Our Lives–Tuesday, April 22, at 7:00 pm. Massimo Pigliucci, Professor, Stony Brook University. *(See page 5)*

From the Leader's Desk

Tony Hileman, Senior Leader



Democracy–Public and Personal

“Democracy demands that the religiously motivated translate their concerns into universal, rather than religion-specific, values. It requires that their proposals be subject to argument, and amenable to reason.... Politics depends on our ability to persuade each other of common aims based on a common reality.” –Barack Obama

In his efforts to establish a religious movement of “common aims based on a common reality,” Ethical Culture founder Felix Adler set aside questions of ultimacy–of origin and destiny–as not being the important ones to ask. While explaining this recently I was asked, quite reasonably, What are the important questions?

Of all the questions we can ask–Who/what am I? Why was I born? and a list of others directly or tangentially attached to “the big ones” of Where did I come from? and Where

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Sunday Morning Meetings

11:15 AM–Auditorium

April 6–Community Service Award–Doing for Others

Tony Hileman, Senior Leader

Tony will speak about “Doing for Others” as we recognize **Michael O'Neal** with the Society's Community Service Award. Michael is the actively involved owner of O'Neals' Restaurant, a neighbor of the Society (across from Lincoln Center). The award will be presented under a cosponsorship with Project Find, the Westside social service agency devoted to helping older adults lead more vital and independent lives.

Michael is past president of the New York City Chapter of the New York State Restaurant Association, past chairman of the New York State Restaurant Association, and an Emeritus member of the National Restaurant Association Board of Directors. But, those

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Leader’s Desk

(Continued from page 1)

am I going?—I think the most important is How shall I best live my life?

That raises many considerations, among them those of purpose and meaning. Understanding that we cannot lay claim to objective knowledge concerning matters of origin and destiny, we are left without the protection of a creator or the promise of life’s continuation after death. We could easily feel meaningless and alone—abandoned in an inhospitable, sometimes downright hostile world without known purpose—and be lured toward a nihilistic life in pursuit of exclusively egoistic goals.

Ethical Culture counters this tendency with a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence that lends majesty to life itself. We recognize that we find personal fulfillment in our effort to elicit the best in others, and that working cooperatively to improve society provides collective gratification. In other words, we are social by nature and find inspiration in relationships, personal and extended. Thus the Ethical Humanist lifstance becomes one of intimacy rather than ultimacy. And it is in our intimacy that our ethics and our sense of purpose and meaning emerge.

And so we dedicate ourselves to the betterment of self and others, in

the understanding that through such effort we can make the world a better place for us and for the generations to come—just as our ancestors did for us. The course of human endeavor and achievement make clear that we can, through our own efforts, better understand the world of which we are a part and make it a better, more hospitable place for all. Not that we have achieved even the simple aims of meeting the basic needs of all peoples, let alone the finer ideal of perfected living. But, in the long view, the trajectory of humanity is encouraging.

Which brings us back to the subject at hand: democracy, which has proven to be the best form of governance to encourage and continue that trajectory. We are reminded in this election year that “We the People” have chosen to live our lives together within a rational and dependable system where laws and bylaws are viewed as agreements among people—agreements that depend on trust between representatives and those who elect and empower them, a constitutional democracy in which trust, ideally, runs both ways.

Based on an equal respect for the rights and dignity of all, this relatively modern system has proven itself to be so reliable and so effective that we have incorporated it at nearly all levels of our group interactions, and elements of it heavily influence our personal relationships as well. The pursuit of

common aims based on a common reality has encouraged the making and keeping of clear agreements through the greatest amount of cooperation and the least amount of coercion.

The progressive society, the Ethical Culture that Adler envisioned, is one in which the consideration of how best to live our lives is an ever-present conversation best pursued with fealty to fact and forbearance of force. That takes mutual respect and trust. It takes openness and honesty. It takes an open democracy in which reason and respect prevail.

The root of democracy—public or personal—is reflected in the foundational commitment of Ethical Culture: the choice to ascribe dignity to others and to yourself. That is a choice that allows you to consider others' rights and needs as your own and, through its inherent reciprocity, expect them to do the same.

Sunday Morning Meetings

(Continued from page 1)

honors aside, he has been selected for this award because of his passionate devotion to causes, such as his providing an annual Thanksgiving meal, coordinated by Project Find, to hundreds of senior citizens at The Church of Saint Paul the Apostle in the Lincoln Center area and his advocacy for a smoke-free environment in bars and restaurants. In addition, he has always been keenly involved in the arts and with local political and civic organizations and committees.

Please join us for the award ceremony and for the catered luncheon, \$10 per person, immediately following the meeting.

April 13—A Sense of Humor

*Fritz Williams, Leader Emeritus
Baltimore Ethical Society*

Laughter is possibly the most contagious form of pleasure. It spices up relationships. It brings down pretensions and puts people at ease. It works like medicine in times of sadness, anxiety, and grief. On the most basic level, it is a way of coping with the ultimate absurdity and purposelessness of life. Fritz Williams created this celebration of laughter and humor as a part of his year-long overview of the good life.

Fritz Williams is Leader Emeritus of the Baltimore Ethical Society, where he is appreciated especially for the pastoral quality of his work and the power of messages framed in personal narrative. Before becoming an Ethical Culture Leader, Fritz served as a parish priest in the Episcopal Church and worked as a writer and producer at public television stations in Harrisburg, PA, and Detroit, MI. Fritz has an MDiv from the Philadelphia Lutheran Theological Seminary and a ThM in Bible and Biblical Languages from Princeton Theological Seminary.

April 20—It's Not Easy Being Green

*Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh
Past President*

We are all increasingly aware that we need to adopt habits that are much more environmentally friendly. There is significant evidence that a sea change in attitude is sweeping this country and that we are rapidly catching up to Europe in our environmental awareness and our preparedness to behave responsibly. This is particularly apparent in the field of architecture, where in just the past 10 years we have gone from a place where the use of so-called green materials was championed by a few lonely architects and engineers, to a place where architects and

engineers are scrambling to get their green credentials. Is it enough, though? My talk will argue that an even more fundamental shift is needed, one that will challenge the very nature of the narrative of the "good life" as so many of us have been taught to envision it, and suggest an alternative way of thinking about a good life, grounded in Ethical Humanism.

Board President of the New York Society for Ethical Culture from June 2001 through June 2007, Michael remains a Trustee of the Society. He has also served in the past as Vice President and Secretary of the Board, and chair of the Ethical Action Committee, the Building Committee, and the Strategic Planning Committee. He is currently a member of the AEU Leadership Committee.

In private life Michael has his own architectural practice; projects include 262 affordable homes in the Bronx, a Community Center for St. Jerome's Church in the Bronx, and a lead-free safe house in Brooklyn, NY. He has also presented technical papers on space station design at industry conferences, and designs on which he collaborated with his mentor, Michael Kalil, are part of the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection.

April 27—The Politics of Inspiration And America's Reawakening

Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader Emeritus, NYSEC

By any measure, 2008 will mark the ethically enhanced political revitalization of American democracy. For this sanguine development we owe a debt of gratitude neither to the Democratic nor Republican parties but to the extraordinary catalytic contest between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for the presidency of the United States. It helps to see this unique struggle more in personal than party terms in light

of a citizenry that has finally shed its seven-year long somnolence as it enthusiastically embraces the prospect of what some have called “a new kind of politics.”

As a consequence, over 70 percent of the American people are now paying eager attention to this year’s presidential race. Voter turnout in this primary season has been spectacular. Voting, after all, is democracy’s gold standard. We’ll consider how we, too, can become part of the growing national effort to retrieve and refurbish our ability to self-govern. As Theodore Parker put it: “Democracy [means] direct self-government, over all the people, for all the people, by all the people.” Lincoln listened carefully to those words. Should we not as well?

Dr. Arisian is Senior Leader Emeritus of the New York Society, and was a past President of the Friends of Religious Humanism. Dr. Arisian helped found both the North American Committee for Humanism and the Humanist Institute, of which he was Associate Dean from 1990 to 1996 and on whose Board of Governors he served.

Dr. Arisian has written more than 115 articles on religious philosophy, humanism, and social ethics, and is the author of *The New Wedding*, published in 1973, one of the definitive wedding manuals used by humanist and liberal clergy nationwide for several years.

Adler’s Sense of The Supersensible

A conversation with Tony Hileman Senior Leader

Our next conversation will take place on **Wednesday, April 2, 6:00 pm**, when we will delve into Ethical Culture founder Felix Adler’s curious metaphysics. Adler emphatically rejected supernaturalism, and he

parted ways with the transcendentalism of Emerson and the Free Religion Association of which he was once President. Yet he never embraced the philosophic naturalism that characterizes Ethical Culture today. Instead he clung tenaciously to his unique construct of the transempirical realities of a “supersensible” realm he struggled throughout his later life to clarify and communicate.

Early Sunday 10 AM

April 6—Singing Practice—Led by Pat Debrovner and Jerry Ranck, we’ll practice the songs we sing on Sunday mornings, and get some tips to improve our singing technique. It’s always a lot of fun, so join us! Ceremonial Hall.

April 13—Colloquy—Heroes and Heroines. If you can, bring in quotes from your own heroes and heroines. Harriet Bigus presides. Room 408.

April 20—Poetry Readings—We’ll read poems that present the ideas of heaven and hell. (This topic was postponed from January.) We hope to see you. Cheryl Gross presides. Room 408.

April 20—Singing Practice—Pat Debrovner and Jerry Ranck will lead. Ceremonial Hall.

April 27—No program today.

Sunday Afternoon 1:45 PM

Ceremonial Hall (Except as noted)

April 6—PIC—Speaker Alex Vitale, a Brooklyn College Sociology Professor, will speak on the CUNY faculty union movement. Abe Markman presides.

April 13—Open PIC Meeting. Abe Markman presides.

April 20—Life With Health. Phyllis Kreuttner and Jacqueline Pope preside.

April 27—No program today.

Board Meeting Highlights

Sheila Abrams Kleinwald

Our March 3 Board meeting began with President Andra Miller expressing thanks to: Henryka Komanska for her comments regarding the member survey; the Social Service Board for their fundraising event for DNA testing; Marc Bernstein and Phyllis Harrison-Ross for their participation in the WBAI radio show, *Ethics on the Air*; Eric Norlander for his work on starting a new Ethical Action Committee; Pat Debrovner for the *Ethics* and the *Theater* series; Muriel Berger for her workshop; Sy Amkraut for donating a microwave oven and a book cart; Cathy Davis of WBAI for helping to make the radio program a reality; and Julie Blutstein and Bob Liebeskind for submitting earmark requests (for “Renovation/Improvements for building accessibility in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines”) to Senator Clinton and Congressman Nadler.

Hard copies were available of previously emailed monthly reports to the Board by President Andra Miller, Senior Leader Tony Hileman, Executive Director Robert Liebeskind, and Finance Committee co-chairs Jim Farer and Phyllis Harrison-Ross. A written report previously submitted by Social Service Board chair Harrison-Ross was alluded to, but not in evidence at the meeting. Copies should be available from the Executive Director’s office upon request.

The Board congratulated Tony Hileman on his certification by the

Board of the American Ethical Union as an Ethical Culture Leader. He has completed an intensive two-year, twelve-module course.

The President's report included information on the new Criminal Justice Project. Five of our members have begun regular coaching sessions in reading, writing, and arithmetic for recently released ex-convicts as part of a larger program called Getting Out and Staying Out.

Cheryll A. Lynn and **Scott McNabb** were approved for membership in the Society.

Eric Norlander reported in person on his progress toward reestablishing the Ethical Action Committee, and was encouraged by the Trustees to continue with his efforts.

Julie Blutstein, our new Director of Development and Communications, reported in detail on the grant applications to Congress for "earmark" money to make our building universally accessible. She also gave a presentation on raising funds from other sources for our various other needs.

Meg Chapman reported on the progress of Sunday School Director Rita Chawla toward developing a teen program. The initial cost will be covered by some of the money from the Leon Cowen bequest, in accordance with Leon's wishes.

Twelve members have volunteered to be on the new Leader Search Committee. A motion was passed authorizing the President to appoint seven people from that group to form the committee.

Our Ethical Family

Suzy Frazer

Please welcome our new members!

Cheryll Lynn became familiar with the Society through her friend, member Phyllis Kreuttner. Cheryll is a wellness

and health consultant and educator and a member of the Park Slope Food Coop and Garden of Union. In fact, she gave a presentation about raw food here at NYSEC. Her interests also include professional photography, swing dancing, sewing, and sports.

Scott McNabb is Cheryll's partner and enjoys many of the same interests. He is a satellite analyst and specialist in systems engineering and computer programming. Like Cheryll, Scott was drawn to the Society's focus on the here and now and its philosophy of "Deed Above Creed."

* * *

As the weather improves, look for exciting news about our upcoming hikes and biking and cultural trips!

Film Forum

Sue Dye

Join us on Friday, April 4, at 7:00 pm, to see the Academy Award-winning Dutch film, *Antonia's Line*, the remarkable story of a woman who builds a new life with her daughter in a quiet Dutch village after WWII. "Earthy, sexy, romantic and filled with laughter and warmth" amid the sorrows, it's a beautiful celebration of friendship, tolerance and enduring passions. It's a film you will enjoy remembering. The admission fee of \$5 will cover the cost of refreshments.

Write On!

Elaine Berman

Our ten-week The Joy of Personal Writing Monday and Thursday workshops will begin the week of April 21. The Monday class will meet from 6:30 to 8:30 pm; the Thursday class will meet from 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

These workshops, which focus on both spontaneous expression and struc-

ture, are comfortable places to try your hand at writing, and new voices, experienced or not, are welcome. The cost is \$160 for members and \$250 for non-members. For information, call Gloria Chandler at 212 874-5210, ext. 117.

To read some examples of writing by workshop participants, go to www.nysec.org. To view the essays, click on the Table of Contents and scroll down.

Adult Education Ethics and How We Live Our Lives

Massimo Pigliucci, Professor Stony Brook University

Our spring 2008 program is underway. Sessions will be held in Ceremonial Hall, 7:00 to 8:30 pm. Admission is free.

Tuesday, April 22: The Ethics of Decision Making and the Presidential Elections.

Tuesday, May 20: Moms at Home: What to Think of It?

Tuesday, June 17: The Ethics of Global Warming.

Ethics and the Theater

Patricia Bruder Debrovner

On Wednesday, April 23, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, Ethics and the Theater will present a reading of Thomas Gibbon's *Bee-Luther-Hatchee*.

The play is nothing less than a deconstruction of race relations, as well as a fascinating dramatic puzzle about the myriad meanings behind words. It poses many intriguing questions about race, identity, prejudice, good intentions, and the perplexing problems that can accompany success. *Bee-Luther-Hatchee* doesn't

offer clear-cut answers, but it will be a springboard for a lively discussion after the reading. Gibbons presents eloquent, complex arguments, with the sides so evenly matched that you keep changing your mind about who's right!

Richard Van Deusen directs a talented cast which includes Barbara Fennell, Suzy Frazer, Ben Bean, John Gurney, and Jennifer Fouche. Muriel Berger will lead our discussion of the ethical issues raised by the play. Admission is \$5.

Social Service Board

Valerie Leiman

Presenting Marc Chagall

A robust turnout of more than 50 people came to Ceremonial Hall on February 24 for the presentation of *The Life and Art of Marc Chagall*, by Marcella Montaruli. The occasion was a fundraiser sponsored by the SSB to support the Innocence Project DNA testing program at Yeshiva University's Cardozo Law School, which is a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted people through DNA testing.

The effort raised \$1,120 for the program, which was initiated at the Society in 1995 with an address by Peter Neufeld Esq., founder of the Innocence Project.



Society members and friends at the presentation on Marc Chagall

PIC In Action

Human Shields In Iraq

Eric Volpe



Eric Volpe

On March 2, PIC hosted talks by Judith Karpova, a former U.S. human shield in Iraq, and fellow human shield Namaa Alward, an Iraqi actor and singer. Judith spoke about the current situation in Iraq, citing among her sources Nir Rosen, a journalist and a chronicler of the Iraq War who writes on current and international affairs, and Naomi Klein, an



Judith Karpova

award-winning journalist and syndicated columnist. She does not believe that the current situation was caused by blunders but, rather, is part of a deliberate divide-and-conquer strategy. Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (May 2003-June 2004), was criticized for, among other things, suppressing nascent grassroots attempts to start democracy. Corruption is still endemic and a good deal of U.S. funds wind up in the hands of warlords who control the militias.

Judith also spoke of her experiences as a human shield, of how she traveled to Iraq with others in early 2003 in the hope of protecting the Iraqi people and perhaps stopping the invasion. They were deployed to water treatment plants, silos, oil refineries, and power plants; Judith was at an oil refinery. Most of the group, including Judith and Namaa, left when the U.S. invaded, but some stayed. Many of them have been fined. Judith's fine was \$6,700 and she is suing the Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Controls, about it. Her suit was defeated in the NY District of the Federal Court of Appeals and is awaiting action by the Supreme Court.

Namaa Alward was involved in the anti-Sadam resistance in the 70s and 80s. Forced to flee Iraq, she found sanctuary in Norway. In February, 2003, she risked arrest to return to support the Human Shield project.

Both women stressed that Iraq had been a secular society with favorable laws concerning women, including liberal laws regarding abortion and divorce, which are being replaced under the occupation by sharia law. Ms. Alward also said she believes that the divide between Sunni and Shia is not a relevant question.

About 50 people, including six first-timers, attended. JoAnn Mason, Abe Markman, and Pat Berens contributed to this report, and Barry Snider, Pauline Kravath, and JoAnn Mason volunteered to help make this a successful event.

Breaking News: Paid Family Leave Passes NJ Senate

Abe Markman

By the time you read this, the Paid Family Leave bill will probably have been enacted into law. It is strongly favored in the Assembly and is endorsed by Gover-

nor Jon S. Corzine. The legislation provides six weeks of leave at a maximum of \$524 a week. Companies with fewer than 50 employees do not have to keep the job open for the employee taking leave.

New Jersey joins California and Washington to become the third state in the nation that provides paid time off to care for newborns and the second state to allow employees paid leave off to care for an elderly parent. (Washington does not cover elder care.)

"...This is a rare issue that can unite liberals and conservatives: those on the left interested in better working conditions and those on the right who want to promote family values." –Steven Greenhouse, *NY Times*, 3/6/05, p. 23.

NYSEC is a member of the eight-state Paid Family Leave Coalition, which campaigned strenuously for this legislation.

Pledge Party a Rousing Success

The Society's Pledge Party on March 14, in Ceremonial Hall, was a great success, with delicious food and drinks and terrific music. More than 55 members heard speakers including Senior Leader Tony Hileman, President Andra Miller, and Pledge Party chair Heather Grady discuss plans for the future of the New York Society for Ethical Culture. The outrageously festive balloon décor was donated by the Ethical Culture School. Guests were also treated to several funny "money" songs by our Sunday chorus.

Thanks so much to all our volunteers and attendees; including Heather chair of the Pledge Committee, and the other Committee members: Bob Berger, Maria Fridman, and Margaretha Jones.



Andra Miller, Society President, and Heather Grady, Pledge Committee chair



Jim Farer and Sylvan Wallach, Society Trustees



Carol Rost, Society member, along with new members William and Marilyn Baker

Upcoming AEU Events

April 17–20–AEU's 2008 Assembly, Austin, Texas

Join humanists from across the country in Austin, to socialize, learn, teach, and celebrate our history and our ethical values. This will be a great opportunity to connect—or reconnect—with members of our greater Ethical family. For more information call the AEU at 212-873-6500.

August 9–16–AEU Lay Leadership Summer School

This week of learning more about Humanism and ways to more fully serve the Ethical Movement is one of our most successful programs, and 2008 will mark its twelfth year. We hope you will attend. Brochures giving more information are being sent to Ethical Societies throughout the country.

April 2008

Office hours for the month are: Monday-Friday, 9:00 am–6:00 pm

Shelter: Monday-Thursday, 7:30 pm

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Great Books: April 2–Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i>*</p> <p>* Complete work.</p>		<p>1</p> <p>May 2008 Newsletter Deadline</p> <p>6:00 pm–Drawing Class</p>	<p>2</p> <p>6:00 pm–Men's Group 6:00 pm–Conversation with the Senior Leader 7:30 pm–Great Books</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>7:00 pm–Film Forum</p>	<p>5</p> <p>9:30 am and 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation</p>
<p>6</p> <p>10:00 am–Singing Practice 11:00 am–Ethics for Children 11:15 am–Morning Meeting- Community Service Award 12:45 pm–Luncheon 1:45 pm–PIC: Alex Vitale</p>	<p>7</p> <p>6:30 pm–Board of Trustees</p>	<p>8</p> <p>6:00 pm–Drawing Class 6:00 pm–Women's Group</p>	<p>9</p> <p>3:00 pm–ECRDG</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p> <p>9:30 am and 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation</p>
<p>13</p> <p>10:00 am–Colloquy 11:00 am–Ethics for Children 11:15 am–Morning Meeting 12:45 pm–Social Hour 1:45 pm–PIC: Open Meeting</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p> <p>6:00 pm–Drawing Class</p>	<p>16</p> <p>6:00 pm–Socrates Café 7:30 pm–Great Books: Great Conversations I</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p> <p>9:30 am and 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation</p>
<p>20</p> <p>10:00 am–Poetry Reading 10:00 am–Singing Practice 11:00 am–Ethics for Children 11:15 am–Morning Meeting 12:45 pm–Social Hour 1:45 pm–Life with Health</p>	<p>21</p> <p>6:30 pm–Social Service Board 6:30 pm–Monday Writing Workshop</p>	<p>22</p> <p>6:00 pm–Drawing Class 7:00 pm–Adult Education</p>	<p>23</p> <p>6:00 pm–Ethical Culture Today? 7:00 pm–Ethics and the Theater</p>	<p>24</p> <p>7:00 pm–Thursday Writing Workshop</p>	<p>25</p> <p>11:00 am–Ethics on the Air (WBAL-99.5 FM)</p>	<p>26</p> <p>9:30 am and 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation</p>
<p>27</p> <p>10:00 am–No program 11:00 am–Ethics for Children 11:15 am–Morning Meeting 12:45 pm–Social Hour 1:45 pm–No program</p>	<p>28</p> <p>6:30 pm–Monday Writing Workshop</p>	<p>29</p> <p>6:00 pm–Drawing Class</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>ECRDG: (Ethical Culture Reading Discussion Group) April 9–Nikolai Gogol, <i>Dead Souls</i></p> <p>Great Books: Great Conversations I April 16–Leo Tolstoy, Hadji Murad</p>		

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR

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