

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

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Sunday Morning Meetings **11:15 AM–Music & Reflection** **in the Auditorium**

March 6

Out of the Shadows and Into the Light: Plato's Cave Revisited

Dr. Khoren Arisian

Senior Leader

Bonnie Bean Presides

March 13

Student World Assembly: Promoting Global Democracy, One Student at a Time

Paul Raynault

*Founder, Student World
Assembly*

Sheila Kleinwald Presides

March 20

Musical Program

Gerald Ranck

Society Music Director

Elaine Berman Presides

March 27

What Do You Want to Lead When You Grow UP?

Kate Lovelady

NYSEC Leader Intern

Dr. Khoren Arisian Presides

Sunday Afternoons 1:45 PM

- March 6: "Ethics in the News" by
Mary Ellen Goodman
- March 13: Community Meeting
- March 20: A brief talk on women's
reproductive rights by
Carol Rost, and a movie,
Citizen Ruth
- March 27: "Ethics in the News" by
Mary Ellen Goodman

March Happenings

Ethical Explorations—We will continue our **First Sundays Multi-Generational Service**, 11:15 am–1:00 pm in the Adler study. The theme for March 6: **The Gender Box**. See page 4 for more details.

Advance Alert: See page 6 for new course on **Religious Fundamentalism**.

From the Leader's Desk

Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

Observers vs. Participants: Reinventing the Way We Grow (Part II)



"To have great poets," famously pronounced Walt Whitman, "there must be great audiences, too." By the same token, to have great leaders, there must be great constituencies, as well. To be "great" in this context suggests, ideally, that when it comes to our Ethical Societies, there need to be some great members who form a critical mass and are supportive, generous, active, forward-looking, and independent-thinking, who create an atmosphere that will attract able leadership.

I've long since come to the conclusion that so called "great preaching"—whatever the "preaching" may be about—does not by itself create great congregations of enthusiastic members. Such oratory tends to attract observers who are thrilled to be swept off their feet or seats, rather than participants who want to do something useful. This raises the delicate question of charisma and community.

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Sunday Morning Meetings **11:15 AM–Music and Reflection in the Auditorium**

March 6—Out of the Shadows and Into the Light: Plato's Cave Revisited

Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

Plato casts a long shadow upon the whole extent of Western history. His political certainty of the static society as the acme of human attainment is every authoritarian's dream. But there's another, more uplifting side to his legacy: his poetic, especially mythological, musings.

The central moral thrust of Plato's myth of the cave is that as creatively endowed beings, we owe it to ourselves not to remain content solely with what's given to us by our culture, especially if we expect to become, through our own exertions, more of what we could be. The status quo provides us with safety, not stimulus. Plato, we must remember, had to contend with his ever dissenting mentor, Socrates, whose overarching presence, powerful personality, and penchant for truth-telling did not sit well with the pooh-bahs of Athens. The ten books of Plato's philosophic masterpiece, *The Republic*, are conceived,

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Ethical Culture: Who We Are

From the Meeting Called to Organize the First Society for Ethical Culture, May 15, 1876, Standard Hall, by Felix Adler

The freedom of thought is a sacred right of every individual [hu]man, and diversity will continue to increase with the progress, refinement, and differentiation of the human intellect. But if difference be inevitable, nay, welcome in thought, there is a sphere in which unanimity and fellowship are above all things needful. Believe or disbelieve as ye list—we shall at all times respect every honest conviction. But be one with us where there is nothing to divide—in action. Diversity in the creed, unanimity in the deed! This is that practical religion from which none dissents. This is that platform broad enough and solid enough to receive the worshipper and the “infidel.” This is that common ground where we may all grasp hands as brothers, united in mankind’s common cause. The Hebrew prophets said of old, To serve Jehovah is to make your hearts pure and your hands clean from corruption, to help the suffering, to raise the oppressed. Jesus of Nazareth said that he came to comfort the weary and heavy laden. The Philosopher affirms that the true service of religion is the unselfish service of the common weal. There is no difference among them all.

Leader's Desk

(Continued from page 1)

Charisma is a rare and wonderful quality, an inborn gift, a certain power of personality attributed to individuals who have demonstrated an unusual ability to win the devotion (sometimes too fawning) of large numbers of people, be they followers or admirers. A lesser degree of charisma is *duende*, signifying an ability to attract others through personal magnetism and charm. Duende is more likely to be exhibited in private contexts and small gatherings; charisma is better suited to large, public situations.

Duende warms people and makes them feel good; charisma demands scope, dazzles the multitudes, challenges them to follow the leader and do his or her bidding. Charisma draws attention to itself, not to community enhancement.

Our Ethical Movement, precisely because of its modest size, tends at times to be attracted to, feel in need of, charismatic leadership perhaps more than it realizes. But if we are to be a flourishing religio-ethical organism, we have to place more and greater emphasis upon community building and elicit aspirations, abilities and loyalties of those who want to build lasting institutions that raise the level of member participation across the board. An audience is not a community. To build a movement is to nurture ties among people; whereupon ideas and philosophy provide the depth, justification, and pleasure of coming together to achieve common goals of importance.

On December 8, 2004, we held our final Advocacy Forum; it proved to be a blow-out event that filled the auditorium to overflowing; so that a couple of hundred folks had to be turned away for lack of space. Our challenge

is to learn how to connect a number of those who are initially attracted to our major public programs and functions to express what may be an untapped yearning to join like-minded folks in a more formal way—as members, friends, or associates of the Society.

Of the 1,100 or more people who over the past year duly left their email addresses with us so we could contact them about Society events, about 100 responded with a strong desire to come to our informal January 28 gathering in Social Hall to learn more about Ethical Culture and who we are. The extremely cold weather kept a third of them from attending, so roughly 60 showed up, along with 15 Society members who greeted and engaged them in conversation around tables laden with food and information: all-in-all, a great start. I plan to help this new development along until my tenure runs out in the early summer.

In such simple ways we can reinvent how we grow. The key to the organizational theory behind social reinvention is elementary: different parts of a Society like ours need regularly to share information about their various activities and become genuinely interested in what's happening beyond their immediate tasks and interests. Programs and actions must have content and "edge." In time, as they expand, they can touch and ignite one another.

What's done will gradually become more integrated; synergy results when an institution comes alive because its participants—no longer just observers—come alive. Finally, all that we do must be crisply executed. And, voila, life's inherent heft and drama have us in their grip. What more could we ask for?

Sunday Morning Meetings

(Continued from page 1)

after all, somewhat deferentially by the author, as a dialogue with Socrates as its chief protagonist and narrator.

Might not all of us be unduly influenced by history's spin doctors who deal in the currency of deceit, not that of truth-telling, deliberately casting shadows upon the walls of our less than inquiring minds? Suppose, in other words, that we ourselves were so chained, metaphorically speaking, to see in only one direction, and like the prisoners in Plato's cave, can't imagine alternative ways of perceiving. Thus, if our divinely inspired President insists there are WMD to be found, they must somehow exist, and a majority of Americans for a long time took him at his word, as if they could look in one direction only—the President's.

Sounds as though Plato was on to something! If we hope to leave the shadows and seek the light outside instead, we must again revisit Plato's everlastingly powerful myth of the cave.

March 13—Student World Assembly: Promoting Global Democracy, One Student at a Time

Paul Raynault, Founder, Student World Assembly

The Student World Assembly brings together individuals to represent not only themselves, but also others who share similar views—regardless of nationality. In the Student World Assembly, everyone is given a voice. In just over a year students from more than 250 colleges and universities representing over 100 countries have joined SWA. Every month, a chapter of the SWA highlights a pressing global issue, about which news reports, articles, and scholarly resources are provided through the SWA website. Members are urged to exchange ideas on the issue online.

Founder Paul Raynault is also the founder and board president of the

highly successful Englewood on the Palisades Charter School and a long-time member of the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County.

This event will include a Power-Point presentation, and several SWA students will participate.

Sunday, March 20 – Musical Program

Gerald Ranck, Society Music Director

Details to be announced.

Sunday, March 27 – What Do You Want to Lead When You Grow Up?

Kate Lovelady, NYSEC Leader Intern

March 27 happens to be not only Christians' Easter Sunday, but also my thirty-fifth birthday. A thousand years ago, I would be lucky to be alive to enjoy the many grandchildren I would probably have. A couple of hundred years ago, thirty-five was considered so mature that it was set as the age of eligibility to be President of the United States. Felix Adler was in his twenties when he inspired the founding of Ethical Culture in the 1870s. Martin Luther King was in his twenties when he organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the 1950s. Today, many twenty- and thirty-some things have more in common with the characters of "Friends." Younger people are putting off marriage, putting off children, struggling to find meaningful work, and constantly pulling up and replanting roots in their search. Many communities and movements these days are being ably held together by older folks who wonder where tomorrow's leaders are. They *are* out there—many younger people are joining more flexible, Internet-based movements, and many more are not organized at all but still forging new ways of living and working. So are younger people "commitment phobic" when it comes to taking the reins of the future? Are they

simply too busy making rent and debt payments? How do traditional institutions need to evolve to attract and make room for future leaders?

If you're trying to figure out whether you're an adult yet, or if you've been one for decades, come out to explore how we can encourage leadership in ourselves and others. Birthday gifts are not necessary.

Thursday Writing Workshop is Back

Elaine Berman

A new semester of "The Joy of Personal Writing," Ethical Culture's 10-week Thursday writing course led by Elaine Berman, will begin in early April. For information, call Suzy Frazer at 212-874-5210 x113.

Ethical Explorations

Lynda Kennedy

There have been many changes in the last half century for women and men, changes which are both positive and negative. Some questions we will be exploring in children's and adults' circles are: What are the gender-role expectations of today? How can we be comfortable with who we really are? How are traditional gender roles reinforced or exploited by media and marketers? Please join us, whether you are older, younger, on your own or with your family, for a lively discussion and a participatory service.

Cultured Comedy Club

Suzy Frazer

We had a smash evening on January 20 when the well known Barry Crimmins and Barry Weintraub graciously filled in for Randy Credico (who had to fly

to L.A. to do the *Tonight Show* with Jay Leno). M.C. Scott Blakeman was as sharp and topical as ever.

On February 17 we celebrated Black History month with the superb comedy of favorite Leighann Lord and the debut here of the great Warren Thomas.

This month, to celebrate Women's History Month (and St. Pats) we'll have the brilliant RENO! Scott B. will be her M.C. (and foil!) on March 17 at 8:00 pm. For full info please call 212-874-5210 x113.

Caring Committee

Les Graifman

Sex, Seniors, and the HIV Crisis

Imagine your 70 year old divorced grandmother telling the family that she has AIDS!! Impossible, you might gasp!! The reality is that if her active social/dating life is typical, she probably believes sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS are not a worry. Sadly, she is wrong. Women and men over age 50 are part of a growing group at risk for HIV. Indeed, HIV/AIDS may join the ranks of Alzheimer's, MS, and Parkinson as life-altering threats to our seniors.

On Wednesday, April 20, at 7 pm at the Society, the Caring Committee will co-sponsor, along with the New York Chapter of the Gray Panthers, a ground-breaking Social Action Forum. The keynote speaker will be Jane Fowler, who travels around the country to tell her personal story about becoming HIV positive following her late-life divorce. An experienced journalist who was a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*, Jane has dedicated her energies in the last ten years to consciousness-raising about AIDS through her organization, HIV Wisdom for Women, and public appearances. She was featured on the CNN program "RU Positive" this past November. Two panelists will

join Jane to discuss the problem and what we need to do now as individuals and organizations. Please come to this important free event.

Film Forum

Cheryl Gross

Join us for our March Film Forum on Friday, March 4 when *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1967) part of our series, *Movies That Mean Business*, takes a humorous poke at the American success story. The film offers satire, wit, sharp dialogue, and songs (with music and lyrics by Frank Loesser—*Guys and Dolls*), and is based on the multiple-Tony award-winning Broadway musical. Tony award winner, Robert Morse (as J. Pierpont Finch) recreates his stage role. Excellent in their co-starring roles are: Rudy Vallée (as Kasper B. 'J.B.' Biggley), and Michele Lee (as Rosemary Pilkington). J. Pierpont Finch, who washes windows in New York City, decides to follow the advice of a *How to Succeed* book. Through wiles and deception, he maneuvers a rise to the top of the corporate ladder—and no ethics are in view. Join us this month for an amused look at “Big Business.”

A discussion will follow, led by Richard Bruno. Doors open at 6:30 pm and the movie begins at 7:00 pm. Admission is \$3.00 for members and \$4.00 for non-members, and includes popcorn and beverages.

Sunday School

Maria Feliz Fridman

In 2004, Society member **William Charlton** offered the Sunday School a \$1,500 matching grant. The Committee was able to raise that amount by the end of 2004 with the help of members and friends. We thank Mr. Charlton, members, and friends for their generosity.

Our Ethical Family

Suzy Frazer and Members

New Members

Shu Chin Li is a research analyst who also enjoys painting, singing, yoga, and biking. She first learned about NYSEC from our website, has attended Sunday morning meetings, and is interested in ethical education courses.

Jane Scileppi-Lowson is a teacher who was drawn to us by our undogmatic, nonsectarian reputation. She has attended Quaker meetings for 10 years. **Ian Lowson** (Jane's husband) has vast interests—travel, history, literature, Spanish, French, German, and Italian. He also is a member of the Quakers.

Nina Tornabene is a government attorney who would like to be active in our social justice and service initiatives. Her son attended our Sunday School.

News of our Members

Owen Marvel, son of **Joe Marvel** and his wife Carolyn, married his long-time companion, Michele Laing, on December 27 at Brooklyn Borough Hall. The senior Marvels entertained family at a luncheon in their Brooklyn home, where Carolyn's culinary talents were on display in the wedding cake she made. The newlyweds treated the families to dinner at Landmarc Restaurant in Soho. Both Owen (a Culinary Institute of America and Ethical Culture Sunday School graduate) and his wife work at Asiate restaurant in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in the new Time-Warner Building. The hotel provided them two complimentary nights in residence.

Members Resigned

John Arents; Barbara Meyerson

A Night at the Shelter

Andra Miller

It's the easiest volunteer job in the world. You're one of two who arrive at 7:30 pm. You ring the evening bell and wait. Sometimes it takes a while, but then a smile opens the door, a warm hello.

You go down the stairs to make your bed in the hall.

The women arrive, sometimes two, sometimes six, you never know.

Mostly they go right to bed, and if you want, you can watch TV, drink a cup of tea.

Sometimes they sit in the kitchen and talk—then, you read on your cot, or chat with the other one here to help you listen, both of you to be there in case you're needed.

You never are, except to sign that they've come and gone.

You go to sleep, wake up from time to time, or like a log sleep straight through to 6 am when you must get up, strip your bed, bag the sheets.

The bus arrives and you say goodbye to women who may have been hellions back in their past; they're gentle now as they line up and climb aboard.

You watch the bus turn the corner, then you make sure the front door is latched, and say goodbye again, this time to your fellow watcher.

The morning is bright and fresh and quiet, and you walk to the subway feeling special. Soon you're home or on your way elsewhere. It's a wonderful new day.

To volunteer for a night of shelter duty, call Dr. Maria Fridman at 718-263-5490.

Delving into the Mindset of Religious Fundamentalism and Progressive Orthodoxy

Tuesdays – April 2005

6:30 – 8:30 pm

(All sessions will be held in Social Hall, lower level)

Facilitator: Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture

April 5

American Religion in the 21st Century: Evangelical Christianity and Christian Fundamentalism: What's the Difference?

Professor Randall Balmer, Chair, Department of Religion, Barnard College, Columbia University

April 12

Judaism's Fundamentalist Challenge: The Modern Orthodox and Ultra Orthodox Jews

Professor Samuel Heilman, Jewish Studies and Sociology, Queens College, CUNY

April 19

Muslim Religious Politics Today: Islam and Secular Modernity

Professor Richard Bulliet, Middle East History, Columbia University

April 26

Politicized Religion: Whither The Rise of Fundamentalism in a Violent World? A Summing Up

Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

Members \$35, Non-members \$50
Single Admission: Members \$10, Non-members \$15

To register, call the Leader's Office 212-874-5210 ext. 118
Childcare available if request is made in advance of registration

Amy needs your help!

Amy Schwarz

We need a team of three or four members to share the job of Coordinator of the Sunday Morning Meeting Greeters. To find out what this involves, please contact me at 212-666-5219 or schwarz@frick.org. Thanks for your help.

Benefit Concert

Dr. Ruth Cohen

The Music Benefit Committee is pleased to announce that the Seventh Annual Benefit Concert will take place Sunday, October 23, at 2:00 pm in Ceremonial Hall. Please let me know of any program conflict your committee may have. You can reach me at 212-860-4096. We look forward to an interesting program for all and hope to see you there.

Excerpt from *The New York Times*,
January 30, 2005

"Can Angelina Jolie Really Save the World?"

Timothy L. O'Brien

"At Infosys we have a saying: 'You can disagree with me as long as you're not disagreeable.'"

Contributed by Society Friend
Gordon Jones

March 2005

(Office hours for the month: 9:00 am–6:00 pm)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Great Books Mar. 2–Darwin, <i>The Moral Sense of Man & The Lower Animals</i> Hume, <i>Of Justice and Injustice</i>		1 April 2005 newsletter deadline 7:00 pm – Meditation Group 7:00 pm – Ethics & the Theater 7:30 pm – Shelter	2 6:00 pm – Men's Group 7:30 pm – Great Books 7:30 pm – Shelter	3 6:00 pm – Singing Class 7:30 pm – Shelter	4 7:00 pm – Film Forum	5 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
6 10:15 am – Ethics for Everyday Living 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:45 pm – Ethics in the News	7 6:00 pm – Board of Trustees 7:30 pm – Shelter	8 6:00 pm – Women's Group 7:00 pm – Meditation Group 7:30 pm – Shelter	9 3:00 pm – ECRDG 7:30 pm – Shelter	10 6:00 pm – Singing Class 7:30 pm – Shelter	11 6:00 pm – Ethical Family Friday	12 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
13 10:30 am – Colloquy 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:45 pm – Community Meeting	14 7:30 pm – Shelter	15 7:00 pm – Meditation Group 7:00 pm – Ethical Edge Series 7:30 pm – Shelter	16 7:30 pm – Shelter 7:30 pm – Great Books: "Happiness & Discontent" 8:00 pm – Strathmere Ensemble	17 6:00 pm – Singing Class 7:30 pm – Shelter 8:00 pm – Cultured Comedy Club	18	19 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
20 10:15 am – Poetry Reading 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:45 pm – Movie: <i>Citizen Ruth</i>	21 6:30 pm – Social Service Board 7:30 pm – Shelter	22 7:00 pm – Meditation Group 7:30 pm – Shelter	23 7:30 pm – Shelter	24 6:00 pm – Singing Class 7:30 pm – Shelter	25 6:00 pm – Ethical Family Friday	26 No Supervised Visitation program today
27 10:30 am – Yoga Meditation 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:45 pm – Ethics in the News	28 7:30 pm – Shelter	29 7:00 pm – Meditation Group 7:30 pm – Shelter	30 7:30 pm – Shelter	31 7:30 pm – Shelter	9 ECRDG: (Ethical Culture Reading Discussion Group) Mar. 9 – Peter Mattheissen, <i>The Snow Leopard</i> Great Books: "Happiness and Discontent" Mar. 16 – Emily Dickinson, <i>Poetry</i>	

Ethical Culture is a humanistic religious and philosophical movement in which people share a core of common values: the worth of each individual, ethics as central to our lives, eliciting the best from each other and doing good in the world.

We seek truth as a growing, changing body of knowledge based on experience, reason and scientific observation, and seek to use it in support of human well-being.

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