

# 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** **11:30 AM—Ceremonial Hall**

### **November 2**

**The JFK Assassination  
Reconsidered: A 40th Anniversary  
Observance**

*Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader*  
Christine Swann Presides

### **November 9**

**The Attack on the Enlightenment**

*Dr. Joseph Chuman*  
Leader, Ethical Culture Society of  
Bergen County  
Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh Presides

### **November 16**

**The Killing of JFK, The Day  
American Changed: A Contextual  
Analysis**

*Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader*  
John Kreuttner Presides

### **November 23**

**Collecting Art in Perilous Times—  
A Dilemma and A Challenge**

*Dr. Constance Lowenthal*  
Art Disputes Consultant  
Dr. Khoren Arisian Presides

### **November 30**

**The Right to Die: An Inalienable  
Right Revisited**

*Dr. Charles H. Debrovner*  
Physician, NYU Medical Center,  
Past President, New York Society  
for Ethical Culture  
Muriel Berger Presides

WQXR-FM (96.3)

### **Broadcasts**

1st and 3rd Sundays of  
the month at 7:30 am

### **November 2**

**“From California to the New York  
Island”: Whose Country Is It,  
Anyway?**

*Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader*

### **November 16**

**From Roosevelt to Reagan to Bush  
II: How Far Forward—Or  
Back—Shall We Americans Go?**

*Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader*

## **November Happenings**



**Saturday, November 1, Social Service Board Benefit  
Dinner at honoring Frank Prescod**, long-time trustee and  
exemplary volunteer. 6:30 pm. Contribution \$35 to United  
Social Services, Inc. For information and a reservation,  
contact David Leiman, 212-865-1979.

**Sunday, November 2, Fifth Annual Benefit Concert** for the  
Stained Glass Windows Fund. 2:00 pm, in Ceremonial Hall,  
fourth floor. For tickets and information, call Ruth Cohen, 212-860-4096.

## **From the Leader's Desk**

*Dr. Khoren Arisian*

### **First Impressions**

Since this will be my final newsletter column for the current calendar year, I'd like to talk here about the power of first impressions as it relates to physical space and human community. By now we are all aware of the near-total renovation taking place in our



esteemed auditorium. The effect upon us as stewards of the Society will, I predict, be significant and long lasting; above all, it will be uplifting. It will also have a hugely positive effect upon friends, visitors, and potential new members. No longer will our primary public meeting hall be dark, poorly lit, and more than a little shabby. Instead it will be bright, warm, and inviting: Plato's cave will be no more! Winston Churchill was so right when he once famously observed that we human beings construct buildings only to have our architectural creations put a distinctive stamp upon us in turn without our being much the wiser for it.

In light of the above, consider this lengthy excerpt from the “Economic Scene” by Virginia Postrel in the August 14th issue of the *New York Times*:

*Public policy often regards aesthetic value as illegitimate or nonexistent. This oversight comes less from ideological conviction than from technocratic practice. Unlike prices, regulatory policy requires articulated justifications and objective standards. So policy makers emphasize measurable factors and ignore subjective pleasures.*

*Take lighting. Outside the theater, lighting has traditionally been an engineering field. Guys with calculators (or slide rules) would figure out what fixtures would produce enough light for a room at a specific cost.*

*Over the last couple of decades, all that has changed. For retailers, restaurants and hotels—any business that wants customers to feel special—lighting isn't just illumination anymore. It's identity, emotion, drama. Pleasure is in the eye of the beholder. It's subjective. But that doesn't make it any less real.*

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**Submissions Welcome**

Members are welcome to submit articles on recent and forthcoming Society events, Letters to the Editor, personal reflections, and original poetry. Accompanying photographs or graphics may be included. If accepted, articles may be edited by newsletter staff. Unfortunately, time and space requirements preclude consultation with authors on editing.

**Ethical Culture: Who We Are**

*From An Invitation to Action: A Vision of Ethical Culture*  
 National Council of the American Ethical Union, May, 2003

Ethical Culture examines life through the lens of human experience and searches for meaning within human relationships. It is part of that great and living humanist tradition that affirms the primacy and beauty of this life and this world and that cherishes reasoned inquiry, the scientific method, and the creative vision of the humanities.

Our focus is the ethical life, defined as a life of interdependent relationships that develop the unique best within each person. We come together in Ethical Societies to share moral insight and to support each other as we apply these insights to our daily lives.

Goals of the Ethical Movement in this area include

- Creating and supporting Ethical Societies and networks
- Training professional and lay leaders to promote and nurture ethical humanist values and communities....

Central to Ethical Culture is the faith that every person has an intrinsic right to self-determination, a decent life, and personal respect. No person or group has the right to use other humans as mere tools for their advantage. The principle of inherent worth, a central intuition of human experience, obligates us to create a world that respects and promotes universal freedom and dignity.

Ethical Societies affirm universal human worth by

- Participating in progressive social action and making common cause with others struggling to claim their unique voice
- Developing the skills necessary for compassionate and open communication

## From the Leader's Desk

(Continued from page 1)

No less real was our enjoyable attendance at the Retreat on Saturday, September 27. Right in the middle of this eagerly anticipated event, Leigh and I drove up to the Jeronimo Resort and Conference Center located in Walker Valley. The day was crisp and sunny, the location sublime. A couple of hours had been set aside for wide-ranging discussion about the Society and its immediate and future prospects. Bonnie Bean and Leigh McKay (my wife) enthusiastically outlined the 2004 canvassing plan for raising member pledges to higher levels via pledging parties to be held principally at the Society and to a lesser extent at members' homes.

From that point on we moved into a spirited and engaging give-and-take session (no subjects were taboo and there was no pre-arranged agenda) among the more than 40 members (and some friends of the Society), which I loosely facilitated. We talked about money, the Sunday meetings, the Children's Ethics program, the plethora of activities, social-action outreach, what people felt was nurturing and what they felt was missing. Throughout, we dealt intelligently and passionately with the ever-present subject of what an ethical humanist spirituality might look like and how it could be more regularly incorporated into our communal undertakings.

For two hours we were gathered in a large room in a circle, where everyone had a front seat, as it were, which enabled all of us to participate comfortably in the discussion. The time went quickly. All in all, it was a wonderfully inspiring afternoon. I felt energized and informed and hope that most folks did, too. Leigh and I are

most grateful for having been with so many of you; it was a pleasure.

While the interior physical setting we occupied was pleasant and spacious, the surrounding natural environment was spectacular and spiritually enhancing. One could hardly have asked for more. What we should strive to attain in our reborn auditorium is the kind of feeling we all shared that day. Let that serve as our joint forthcoming New Year's wish. People will be attracted to join us less because we are ethical humanists and more because we have shaped a caring and vibrant community where people want and need to be.

## Sunday Morning Meetings

### 11:30 am—Ceremonial Hall

#### November 2—The JFK Assassination Reconsidered: A 40th Anniversary Observance

*Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader*

In 1960 John F. Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon by the smallest margin in presidential electoral history. Although in 2000 George W. Bush had to have his victory handed to him by a five-to-four vote of the Supreme Court, and while the Administration that would bear his name flew into high gear as if an overwhelming mandate had been achieved, JFK by comparison treaded quite lightly at first and was thereafter obsessed with winning big in 1964, which is why he saw his political trip to Dallas on that fateful day in November, 1963 as the first step in that direction.

Kennedy, a capable and ambitious politician down to his toes, was nonetheless flawed both as a person and as a political leader. He was, however,

a fast learner and adroit when he had to be—more style than substance. In the words of one biographer, Richard Reeves, JFK was “addicted to excitement, living his life as if it were a race against boredom.” As for his marriage to Jacqueline Bouvier, it represented a fairytale romance to a public mesmerized by the illusion of Camelot. The Kennedys were perhaps America's iconic first White House couple despite the new young President's compulsive philandering which in that seemingly far off time and age was largely kept secret and unreported by the media.

The nation's youth were enchanted by Kennedy, and would feel orphaned beyond imagining when he was killed. An angry, darker, older side of American life was welling up in the wake of WWII and the subsequent McCarthyist madness. The killing of Jack Kennedy can be seen as the inaugural crowning event of this gradual development—aided and abetted by a culture of pervasive fear bluntly yet cleverly revealed most recently in Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* and in the ever-advancing agenda of the American Right in the nation's capital and throughout the country.

What did we lose on November 22, 1963, and what have we gained since?

#### November 9—The Attack on the Enlightenment

*Dr. Joseph Chuman  
Leader, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County*

Ethical Culture is a child of the Enlightenment. Yet the Enlightenment is under severe attack these days in academia and among some multiculturalists.

Dr. Chuman is the long-time Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, New Jersey and teaches seminars in religion and human rights

at Columbia University, where he earned his doctorate in religion. He also teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University, Hunter College, and the United Nations University for Peace in San Jose, Costa Rica. He has authored articles in many periodicals and is a frequent lecturer on a variety of social and philosophical issues. He is an activist on behalf of human rights and civil liberties and in opposition to the death penalty. He is a regular and most welcome guest speaker at our Society and was an expert panelist at our death penalty workshop in October.

**November 16–The Killing of JFK, The Day America Changed: A Contextual Analysis**

*Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader*

Forty years after his assassination John F. Kennedy remains a president lost in legend. On November 22, 1963, a grief-stricken nation could barely keep its balance: we'll never be young again, American innocence has perished, the prince who presided over Camelot for 1,000 days is gone – his like will not be seen again, the last hope of America's black poor has been taken from us. "He was one of a kind,... There was an aura around him," commiserated long-time presidential aide Lawrence O'Brien.

Reflecting on that unforgettable moment at high noon, 20 years later, a banker in Carlisle, Iowa said: "I still got my opinion as to whether it was a conspiracy or not.... It's almost like the guy knew too much, and they knew he was gonna do a good job, and they wanted him out of there, that's all I can say. Who were they? I don't know." A singer of anti-establishment anthems, Joe McDonald, opined: "Who killed JFK? What did he do that made them so mad? What was the climate of the country? That year, a lot of people

were killed.... I think it's a case of the '60s young generation attempting to change an old-line power structure... (*Newsweek*, November 28, 1963, pp. 71, 76).

Such feelings may speak for themselves, facts do not. Facts require an historical framework within which theory can be used to make sense out of whatever may have happened. Experience requires context if meaning is to inform our understanding. We'll never know who exactly was behind the JFK assassination, but we can surely ask why and come up with some persuasive answers.

**November 23–Collecting Art in Perilous Times–A Dilemma and A Challenge**

*Dr. Constance Lowenthal  
Art Disputes Consultant*

These are days that often try our patience and our resolve. By now we have all heard about the lack of protection afforded by our military to Iraqi antiquities during the surprisingly abbreviated war in April, followed by damage to, and the outrageous looting of, these rare treasures of Western civilization. Today's inquiring art collectors will soon discover complicated issues of ownership surrounding many different kinds of art. A critical question arises: what considerations should be taken into account when collecting art privately, as well as publicly for museums?

Constance Lowenthal holds a Ph.D. in the history of art from the Institute of Fine Art of NYU. For 12 years she was Executive Director of the International Foundation for Art Research, an organization that tries to prevent the clandestine circulation of stolen art in the marketplace, a growing problem that knows no international borders. In 1997 Dr. Lowenthal was named First

Director of the Commission for Art Recovery of the World Jewish Congress and since 2001 has been a private consultant regarding art ownership disputes. We look forward to her presentation of this important and emotionally charged subject.

**November 30–The Right to Die: An Inalienable Right Revisited**

*Dr. Charles H. Debrovner  
Physician, NYU Medical Center,  
Past President, New York Society  
for Ethical Culture*

Last spring, we heard an address by a physician who suggested that, as pain management, anti depressants, etc. improved, death with dignity laws were unnecessary. Dr Debrovner, who spoke on this subject 13 years ago, will restate his reasons why the right to the death of one's choosing is a right that humanists should support.

**ACTIVITIES**

**Film Forum** 

**Friday, November 21, 7:00 pm**

Harrison Ford stars in *The Witness*. He plays a Philadelphia detective caught in a police scam and most of the action of the film takes place in Lancaster, PA.

**Fall Hike** 

**Saturday, November 22**

Join us on a hike in Palisades State Park. We will begin this four-hour hike with a leisurely walk across the George Washington Bridge. We'll see great views of Manhattan's West Side and the Palisades. The trails in the Palisades State Park are fairly flat and offer beautiful views of the Hudson River. However, there will be one steep descent at the beginning of the hike

and one steep ascent at its mid-point. Wear hiking or sturdy walking shoes, dress in layers, and bring water and a light lunch and/or snack for the trail. We should return to Manhattan about 2:30 pm.

We will meet at 9:30 am, at the Port Authority Bus Terminal at 178th Street. To get there, take the A train and go to the ticket office level. We'll meet at the information booth. For more information call Henryka at 212-582-5192. The hike will be cancelled in the event of rain.

## Get Your Newsletter Fast!

Save the Society about \$50 a year by receiving your newsletter as an e-mail attachment.

If you want to receive your newsletters in PDF format, please send an e-mail to Deborah Foster ([dfoster@nysec.org](mailto:dfoster@nysec.org)) requesting that you be put on the list. Each month Deborah will e-mail you with the newsletter as an attachment. Click on the attachment and the document will open. You may print it if you wish. Your name will be removed from the post office mailing list.

Documents in PDF, Portable Document Format, can be read by Acrobat Reader. The reader can be obtained free from Adobe, <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. (If you have a slow internet connection, downloading the Reader may take some time.) It is worthwhile obtaining Acrobat Reader because much material on the Internet is in PDF Form.

Questions? Call Sylvan Wallach at 212-874-7437 or e-mail at [swallach@i-2000.com](mailto:swallach@i-2000.com).

## Our Best Ever Fall Retreat

*Ben Bean and Andra Miller*

We had 39 happy attendees at the weekend retreat in September. The weather was in our favor (rain when we were indoors and sunny when we were outdoors) and Jeronimo's offered a delightful change from the small bedrooms at Pawling. Thanks to Chris and Henryka for the walks; Khoren and Leigh for participating in our Saturday meeting; to Carol Rost, Elaine Berman, and Andra Miller for the evening workshop (see the following); and to Harriet Bigus for the colloquy. Some photos from this wonderful weekend are posted on the announcement board on the first floor of the Society. We hope that more members will join us next year for our annual outing. *Ben Bean*

**A Weekend of Fellowship.** I signed up for the Society's 2003 retreat



expecting gentle talks on making the moral choices faced by those attempting to lead a life of humanitarian ethics, along with moments of meditation in the wilds of upstate New York. Hopefully inspiring, maybe a bit dry.

But this retreat turned out to be just as much fun as the one

I went to as a 12-year-old pseudo-Presbyterian, although I didn't spend the entire weekend running around in my bathing suit getting the world's worst sunburn. I did put a swimsuit on (a much larger one, of course) to check out the pool and sauna, swimming and roasting while having a long chat about the nature of the universe with Mary Ellen.

Speaking of chats, as an example of everyone's openness, one of the many Carols sat beside me at lunch just "to meet someone new." Actually, the whole weekend was a series of conversations with an eclectic array of interesting people. I can't name all the people I met and talked with, but I attempted yet another struggle against my lifelong phobia of learning people's names—and came back knowing quite a few.

There were hikes, an early morning bird-watching session, and other opportunities to commune with nature (a great hammock in which one could study leafy branches against the sky), but the main spiritual nature of the weekend was fellowship. Along with the "put it into words" workshop and the Sunday morning colloquium, it was the warmth of people, the humanity, that made this retreat the perfect engine-charger and spiritual uplift for those who are trying to live an ethical culture kind of life. *Andra Miller*

### Saturday Night Workshop: "Expressing Humanist Views of Current and Everyday Issues"

A group of about 20 met Saturday night for a stimulating workshop under the direction of Elaine Berman and Carol Rost. First, a list of topics suitable for humanist views was developed; then the group voted on three subjects for further discussion; and finally, sub-groups met, each to discuss one of the selected topics

and to compose a brief statement.

One group chose to address ageist attitudes, the second chose explaining the humanist philosophy to theists or religious traditionalists, and the third (and largest) worked on hammering out a statement on terrorism/civil liberties.

The three groups came together to present their work. In the response to ageism remarks, the first group's statement held that all contribute to society and that there is value to every individual. Those working on a theist/religious statement pointed out that the humanist view is to focus on the here and now (not the hereafter), and that positive change requires critical thinking, reason, and education. The group discussing terrorism developed two responses: one that defensive measures should be taken without violating civil liberties, and the other that there can be no predetermined response.

The exercise brought up new ideas and views, engendered lively discussion, and helped members of the group focus on addressing topics of the day in light of the Society's humanist philosophy. *Andra Miller*

## Social Service Board News

The Scholarship Committee of the Social Service Board was awarded a grant by Materials for the Arts of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Scholarships have been granted to further the musical training of talented young students whose families lack the resources for this instruction. Two tuition scholarships have been awarded to an alternative middle school to support basic education for children at risk of failing in the city public school system.

## AEU News

The board of directors of the American Ethical Union has elected as its new officers: President Arnold Fishman (Philadelphia Ethical Society), Vice President Carl Romano (Ethical Society of St. Louis), Secretary Thomas Hoepfner (Ethical Humanist Society of Greater Chicago), and Treasurer Harry Strickholm (Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County). They will serve through May, 2005. Our congratulations!

## Our Ethical Family

*Ben Bean and Members*

### New Member:

**John Hilberry** is a retired architect and has been attending Sunday Meetings for some time. He is active in the Society's Advocacy Forum group.

### News of Members:

**Ben Bean** and **John Kreuttner** attended their 50th high school reunions. (Would you believe?)

**Diane Debrovner** was married to Daniel Minus at Wave Hill in Riverdale October 4. Her daughter Abigail age 10 was the maid of honor and mother Pat performed the ceremony. States father Chuck: "I did my usual sound engineering and technical chores. The weather was cool and damp, but our hearts were warm." Our best wishes to all!

**Faye Joyce** is out and about after hip replacement surgery.

**Phyllis Kreuttner** is doing well under treatment following surgery.

**Barbara Litke's** paintings can now be viewed on the Internet at [www.wsacny.org/litke/](http://www.wsacny.org/litke/).

**Frank Prescod** is home from the hospital after a brief stay and feels greatly improved.

**Phyllis Rosenfield** is home recuperating from hip replacement surgery.

**Mona Roset** was recently seen at the Society. We are glad she was able to join us on a Sunday Morning

**Virginia Scherer** lost her younger brother in October. Our condolences to Virginia and her family.

### Members Resigned:

**Anne Merck-Abeles**

**Rosalind Hurwitz** moved back to Chicago.

**Rene LaCoste** is becoming a Friend.

**Lizzy Soenarjati** is moving back to Holland.

### Members Deceased:

We regret to announce the deaths of **Caroline Fondiller** and **Arthur Simon**.

## Answering the Call - Together



Have you made your pledge for 2004 yet? Join your fellow members at a pledge party and make our dreams for the Society a reality.

Be the one. We're counting on you!

### Our DNA Fund Grows

At our very moving October 12 meeting on the death penalty, we collected \$421 for our DNA fund. Thanks to all!

# November 2003

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Great Books</b> November 5 – Freud, <i>On Dreams</i> Kafka, <i>The Metamorphosis</i>						
<b>ECRA: (Ethical Culture Retirement Activities)</b> November 12 – Robertson Davies, <i>The Cunning Man</i> <b>Politics, Leadership, and Justice</b> November 19 – Wole Soyinka, <i>Kongi's Harvest</i>						
<b>2</b> 7:30 am – WQXR-FM (96.3) 10:15 am – Leaders' Writings 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:30 pm – Cafeteria 2:00 pm – Benefit Concert	<b>3</b> December 2003 Newsletter Deadline 6:00 pm – Board of Trustees 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>4</b> 6:30 pm – Foundations of Ethical Culture 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>5</b> 6:00 pm – Men's Group 7:30 pm – Shelter 7:30 pm – Great Books	<b>6</b> 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation 6:30 pm – Benefit Dinner honoring Frank Prescod
<b>9</b> 10:00 am – Membership Growth 10:30 am – Colloquy 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:30 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Ethics Study	<b>10</b> 5:00 pm – Caring Committee 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>11</b> 6:00 pm – Women's Group 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>12</b> 3:00 pm – ECRA 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>13</b> 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
<b>16</b> 7:30 am – WQXR-FM (96.3) 10:30 am – Poetry Reading 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:30 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Ethics in the News	<b>17</b> 6:30 pm – Social Service Board 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>18</b> 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>19</b> 6:00 pm – Membership Committee 7:30 pm – Politics, Leadership, and Justice 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>20</b> 6:00 pm – Ethical Action Committee 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>21</b> 7:00 pm – Film Forum	<b>22</b> 9:30 am – Fall Hike 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
<b>23</b> 10:30 am – Yoga Meditation 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:30 pm – Cafeteria 1:00 pm – Orientation 1:30 pm – Film	<b>24</b> 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>25</b> 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>26</b> 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>27</b> Thanksgiving Society offices closed 7:30 pm – Shelter	<b>28</b> Society offices closed	<b>29</b> No Supervised Visitation today
<b>30</b> 10:30 am – Coffee in Shelter 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:30 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – TBA						

**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.

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR  
**ETHICAL  
CULTURE** 

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