

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

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Sunday Morning Meetings 11:30 AM—Auditorium

December 7 **Our Growing National Unrest: A Humanist's View From Washington**

Tony Hileman
Executive Director, American Humanist Association
Dr. Khoren Arisian Presides

December 14
These Neo-Orwellian Times: Alice's Magical Mystery Tour
Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader
Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh Presides

December 21
What Does Frederick Have To Say? Winter Solstice And The Light In Each Of Us
Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader
Carol Nadell Presides

December 28
Year-End Reflections on 2003—And Looking Forward
Frank Prescod
Society Trustee

Broadcasts
WQXR-FM (96.3)
1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at 7:30 am

December 7
Against the Odds: The Need for Militant Humanism
Dr. Dr. Matthew les Spetter
Leader Emeritus

December 21
These Neo-Orwellian Times: Alice's Magical Mystery Tour
Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader

December Happenings

Winterfest Celebration Sunday, December 21, 11 am. Bring your family and friends to a joyous winter festival and luncheon. See details on page 5.

New Year's Eve Concert and Party Wednesday, December 31, 8 pm. Our annual celebration will be better than ever! See details on page 5.

President's Notes

Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh



A few weekends ago, my wife Holly and I went to visit her parents on Block Island. While there we read in the local paper about the tragic death of a small boy who was playing under the bluffs when a “dump truck sized” chunk of clay broke loose and buried him. Frantic efforts to dig him out were of no avail. By the time they got to him he had suffocated. It was a complete shock to the island as nothing like it had ever happened before.

I have been thinking lately about nature, what significance our lives have within it, and whether or not the universe is a place that owes us anything.

I recently presented another paper on space architecture that discussed at great length the “field of forces” in which every object, animate or inanimate, unfolds and is maintained.

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Sunday Morning Meetings

December 7—Our Growing National Unrest: A Humanist's View From Washington

Tony Hileman, Executive Director, American Humanist Association

A huge, festering anger is growing in our land, an anger born of the tension between rationality and emotion, between progress and tradition. Many of our compatriots hold rational views based on experience and science that are at emotional odds with the tenets of their heritage and faith. Absent the willing acceptance of change and progress, this conflict of head and heart has no outlet but the frustration and anger that currently threaten our democratic way of life. How is this growing resentment infecting our society, our politics, our thinking, and our culture? What hope and answers does Humanism offer?

A fine speaker and writer, Tony Hileman is Executive Director of the largest Humanist organization in the country. He is also a member of the Board of the Humanist Institute, which regularly meets here during the year. Its December gathering, usually convened in Washington, D.C., is being held in New York instead—hence Tony Hileman's availability. We eagerly anticipate his remarks and welcome him to our Sunday meeting.

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Ethical Culture: Who We Are

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

The Ethical Movement is nontheistic and draws upon the whole of human experience to define and create the good life. Science and religion, literature and the arts, economics and social studies are all avenues to expanding truth. The ultimate source of our standards and values, however, is our relationship with others. We believe that relating to others in a way that brings out their best will help us find and develop the best in ourselves. By the “best” in each person, we refer to the unique talents and abilities that affirm and nurture life. We use the term “spirit” to refer to that uniqueness and to the love, hope, and empathy that exists in humanity. When we act to elicit the best in others and in ourselves, we encourage the growing edge of ethical development, the as-yet untapped but inexhaustible worth in each of us.

The good life is lived in concert with others, as together we develop our unique potentials to the fullest. Our greatest passion and fulfillment come from the integration of our sense of self, our relationships, our vocation and avocations, and our values and spirituality.

Ethical Societies build humanist community by

- Exploring science and the humanities to understand and enrich human experience, through speakers, theater, film, travel, and communication and art-related workshops.
- Offering focused opportunities to experience relationship-building as a spiritual practice.

President's Notes

(Continued from page 1)

This field of forces is constantly fluctuating, and while the generalities of it can be predicted to some extent, specific fluctuations can often surprise. Life on this planet persists as a result of organic creativity in the management of the field of forces around it. Bones, for example, generally have a softer fibrous core known as the trabecula that has the capability of realigning its fibers according to the forces of compression, tension and shear that are present. Cells have a similar kind of structure called the cytoskeleton that is capable of similar adjustments. The cytoskeleton even appears to communicate information to the nucleus that can initiate cell division or a death program known as apoptosis that causes the cell to divide or die off when there are too few or too many cells in a given area.

Such structures and processes manage the constant kaleidoscope of fluctuations within the field of forces and allow most organisms to persist. Yet, as we all know, these fluctuations can easily mount, and overwhelm individual organisms' coping mechanisms. The organic response to this is to supply enough organisms to the field of forces such that there are more organisms than lethal field fluctuations. Even so, it happens over the course of geological time that the cumulative effect of field fluctuations, or one cataclysmic event, can bring an end entirely to a given population of organisms or even species-wide disappearance. We know this about the dinosaurs and other extinct species.

The field of forces is, I believe, neutral. It continues to fluctuate and unfold according to a fundamental set of universal laws that can only be described in detail through the unemotional lan-

guage of mathematics. It is simply the ebb and flow of the universe, nothing more and nothing less.

Humans and other animals experience it as something more, however. We can experience this ebb and flow emotionally, a consequence of our ability to experience ourselves and know ourselves as distinctly manifested within this field of forces, and, of course, we have a basic desire to persist. These same emotional forces push us to worry about our children, family and friends and to mourn our loss when a member of our community dies.

Religions that posit an afterlife do so, I suspect, because of the nearly unbearable prospect of having to come face to face with a universe that has no meaning and is simply an ebb and flow of a field of forces. Although I believe there is more to the universe than meets the eye, I do not believe that I will persist in any alternate spirit reality or form after the death of my body. Rather, I think of myself as belonging to a continuum of life that is strengthened and weakened by my every action, and it is my goal to live on through this continuum because I have done more to help it thrive than to degrade it.

As a humanist, I believe we must all turn to the record of our behavior in our lifetime towards one another and life in general to understand the measure of immortality we are entitled to and the character, good or bad, of that immortality. And as the tragic story I began with illustrates, we are not entitled to any particular amount of time in which to balance the sum. Without the reassurance of an afterlife, we've no choice but to stand on our record in the here and now, and without any guarantee on time, we would be wise to live consciously and choose our record every day.

Sunday Morning Meetings

(Continued from page 1)

December 14—These Neo-Orwellian Times: Alice's Magical Mystery Tour
Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

In Lewis Carroll's two pithy masterpieces, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, logic and absurdity are cleverly placed side by side. The humor resulting from this explosive juxtaposition is the spark of recognition that opens our minds and helps us see more of the world around us and what is going on in it. Not for nothing did G.K. Chesterton conclude that humor is "the most erratic of spiritual forces."

Much that transpires in the world, we can all attest, seldom meets the eye. Carroll's two works constitute an incomparable dream play providing escape into a netherworld where things are not what they appear to be. Few works of modern literature are as unintentionally prophetic of the Orwellian absurdities of our own time, especially political and cultural absurdities, than Carroll's contribution to our intellectual and ethical enlightenment.

Alice represents human rationality in a world gone mad; we couldn't ask for a better guide.

December 21—What Does Frederick Have To Say? Winter Solstice And The Light In Each Of Us

Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

Meet Frederick the thoughtful mouse—a poet, a seeker, a gatherer of words and sun rays. Frederick is neither bored nor boring, forever letting the light and life of the world enter him. Society members Pat Debrovner and Larry Yates will read this wise and delightful children's tale by Leo

Lionni as the dialogue it is. This brief presentation will be part of our friends-and-family style solstice celebration this year.

Well-conceived and executed festivals tend to provide an interactive experience in which we all can participate as we discover anew how much we are members of the same human family. Holidays are perfect times for festivals, which encourage us to conjure up ideals we share and to highlight them in ways we normally do not have time for.

Ethical Culture can boast its own unique core values and tenets, central to which is the ideal of personal authenticity, that ensemble of gifts and aspirations that each of us has to offer one another. We become distinctive individuals in community, not in isolation. Is this not an enduring pre-eminent inheritance from Felix Adler? He invented his own peculiar vocabulary to express the profound truth of this aspect of the human condition, calling it "The Ethical Manifold."

This holiday season, all too replete with materialistic baubles, suggests just the opposite: we are more than flesh and blood, we are creatures of spirit. The light that radiates from the spiritual interior of our being is what we refer to as our intrinsic worth, the very source of our freedom and dignity. Whenever we connect at that level, we precipitate sacred ground; in other words we momentarily light up the world around us. If you have doubts, just ask Frederick!

December 28—Year-End Reflections on 2003—And Looking Forward

Frank Prescod, Society Trustee

Join our long-time member and trustee Frank Prescod in a membership gathering to share our reflections on the old year and our hopes and outlook for the new year. This seasonal meeting is a favorite among our members and friends.

**From the Archives
A Case of Deed and Speed**

Dr. Marc A. Bernstein



I was going through some old Ethical Culture journals the other day when I came across a remarkable article entitled "Recollections of A District Nurse." Written in 1890 by Effie

Benedict, one of our earliest visiting nurses, it gives us the sounds and smells of the homes Benedict visited, as well as the voices of those who lived in them.

The Society's district nursing program, it's worth remembering, preceded and anticipated the Visiting Nurse Service later spearheaded by Lillian Wald. By the late 1870s, the Society paid nurses to visit the homes of the sick in some of the worst neighborhoods in New York City. Our visiting nurses, unlike Catholic nurses then visiting the poor, did their work without trying to convert anyone. One Roman Catholic woman Benedict visited was so intrigued by her nurses from the Ethical Culture Society that she "wended her way a couple of times (and it was hard work for her) to Chickering Hall to see what manner of people were those who took such interest in her...and never bothered her about her religion."

The visiting nurse did everything from dress patients' wounds to light fires in cold tenements. She might visit the same patient as often as three times a day. Her visits were short by necessity, as she had a heavy schedule to follow. But the rewards, says Benedict, were great. A Swedish woman who had a child near death told Benedict in her broken English, "Heaven bless you, miss, wherever you are, and those that sent you, for when you not come I had not my baby."

Contemporary newspapers paid tribute to our nurses. In an 1879 article about Ethical Culture, then only three years old, *The New York Times* said the Society's nurses had saved a number of children and that the Society had seen "the immense advantage of the charity it has founded. Six months later, the *New York Daily Tribune* called our district nursing a "noble, practical charity."

More than a decade after these comments, Lillian Wald succeeded in getting Sophia Loeb and Jacob Schiff to finance a visiting nurse service. Wald, by the way, was no stranger to Ethical Culture. She had met Felix Adler in a Social Reform discussion group and she had been taken on a tour of the Lower East Side by Charles Stover of the University Settlement, an institution we had founded in 1886. In her writing on the evolution of American nursing, Wald paid tribute to the innovative work of the nurses from the New York Society.

In this case, as in so many others, Ethical Culture got there first.

Our Ethical Family

Ben Bean and Members

New Members

Julia Boken is a teacher and writer who found us through friends and WQXR. She is active in the Advocacy Forum group and has subscribed for years to our Sunday addresses.

Leslie Doyle is the Society's Marketing and Events Coordinator.

News of Our Members

Dahlia Cohen will become a Friend of the Society and will probably attend the Brooklyn Society.

Amy Schwarz will become a Friend of the Society, since she is now working full-time and going to Library School.

Ethical Action

Carol Rost & Christine Swann, Co-Chairs

We raised \$412 for our DNA fund on the October 12 Weekend of Faith in Action Against the Death Penalty. Thanks to all who attended and contributed to the success of this Sunday program.

We are planning another fund raising book sale to be held in March 2004. Look for the flyer giving details.

Pearl Katz will attend The National Conference on Media Reform at the University of Wisconsin and will report back to our committee.

The December EAC meeting will be held a week earlier than usual, on December 18 at 6:00 pm, due to the upcoming holidays.

Unforgotten Voices

Maria Feliz Fridman

The New York Society for Ethical Culture, the Social Service Board, and Unforgotten Voices, a creative workshop, will present a collective of visual and performing artists who are or have been homeless on Friday, December 19, at 8:00 pm. Please join us. Admission is free and refreshments will be served.

New Year's Eve Celebration

Barbara Levenson

Get together with your friends to celebrate New Year's Eve at our annual December 31 concert and gala party.

The festivities will begin at 8:00 pm with a concert by our own Strathmere Ensemble. The concert is open to the public; tickets for nonmembers are \$15, free to Society members and their guests. Afterward, there is a party for members and their guests at a cost of

only \$40. Join us in Ceremonial Hall for champagne, refreshments, songs, dancing, favors, fireworks, and much more. Tickets are on sale now in the Sunday cafeteria and the Membership Office, or call Ben Bean 212-874-5210 ext. 113 to make a reservation. We need to order refreshments in advance, so please let us know if you expect to attend. Last year was our biggest and best party ever. Why not join us in making this year's party even better?

Family and Friends Event

Celebrate with us at Winterfest!

Patricia Bruder Debrovner

Please join us and invite family and friends as we inaugurate our first annual Winterfest Sunday morning, December 21, at 11:30 am, to usher in the joy of the winter season. In addition to a stimulating address by Khoren, our special morning meeting will feature joyous music, storytelling, singing, and a community candle-lighting ceremony with our Sunday School children.

Following the meeting, a festive meal will be served amid cheerful seasonal decorations, entertainment, and music and, for those who wish to participate, the exchanging of fun gifts. This will be an uplifting event that you won't want to miss, and one that from now on we'll all look forward to enjoying with friends and family each year!

Women's Group

Bernice Cornyetz

The Women's Group continues to meet the second Tuesday of the month from 6:15 pm to 8:00 pm. We have added three new participants, bringing our group's membership to 11 women.

In December we are planning a combined men's group and women's group party. The date and time have

not been set. We usually do a potluck in June, but this year we postponed our combined party until mid-December. Contact Bernice Cornyetz or Al Denenberg with ideas for making the party a success. We welcome your suggestions! Stay tuned for the time, date, and location of the festivities.

Fund Raising

Answering the Call—Together

Chuck Debrovner & Bonnie Bean, Co-Chairs

We heartily thank those of you who pledged at the Pledge Parties. We're sure that, like us, you enjoyed the opportunity to socialize with fellow members and discuss the Society's plans for the future. From the generous 2004 pledges that we received, we assume that the insights into our goals and financial picture indicate your deepened support and dedication to the Society.

If you haven't been able to attend a party and have not yet made your 2004 pledge, you'll look forward to talking with members of the committee when we call or meet with you. We can answer any questions and will gladly report your thoughts and ideas back to the Board.

We also want to thank all of you who simply mailed in your pledge.

As this year draws to a close, we hope that you will soon pay the remainder of your 2003 pledge. Added costs incurred with the major renovation of the auditorium, an important legacy for future generations, make 2003 very expensive. Your year-end gifts matter now more than ever!

Watch for the final results of the pledge drive in the coming months. As of the end of October, 52 people have pledged nearly \$87,000. All increased their pledges from last year and 25% doubled what they previously gave. A terrific response!

Please sign

Revised **Petition** to rescind President Bush's tax cuts of 2001 and 2003, which benefit the very wealthy.

NOTE: *The New York Times* 10/9/03 *Move On*: "Why not allocate equal funds for critical domestic needs? Both guns and butter could be funded by **rolling back that portion of the Bush's tax cuts that benefit the very wealthy.**"

Petition To the U.S. Congress

It's a matter of Fairness: Rescind the Federal Tax Cuts

The tax cuts pushed by the Bush Administration and approved by Congress in June 2001 and May 2003 starve federal programs of needed funding and increase the burdens on struggling local governments while doing little to help the vast majority of Americans or to stimulate the economy.

- The 2001 cuts will mainly benefit the wealthiest 1 percent; those approved in 2003 benefit the top 5 percent. According to Michael Kinsley, writing in the June 2, 2003 issue of *Time*, the tax reductions "represent an extraordinary, even radical, shift of the tax burden from the rich to the middle class."
- The country has gone from a 10-year projected surplus of \$5.6 trillion to an estimated deficit of \$450 billion for 2003 and \$475 billion for 2004.
- The huge deficits will have a severe impact on federal programs such as Medicare and Social Security. Already, before the cuts go into effect, environmental and educational programs are underfunded. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, as quoted in *The New York Times*, spending on even vitally important homeland security has been inadequate.
- States and localities are already struggling with deficits of their own, which have driven up local taxes and fees and curtailed important services. Projected deficits at the federal level make it unlikely that local governments will get any financial help from the federal government, which continues to push responsibilities onto the states without providing them with the needed money.

There is still time to act. Let your representatives know where you stand.

SIGNATURE	NAME	ADDRESS (apt & zip)	PHONE	EMAIL

Please return to Maria Feliz Fridman, New York Society for Ethical Culture
 2 West 64th Street, New York, NY 10023-7179
 Tel-212-874-5210; fax-212-595-7258; e-mail office@nysec.org; www.nysec.org.
 We will forward this petition to Senators Clinton and Schumer.

December 2003

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
	1 January 2004 Newsletter Deadline 7:30 pm – Shelter	2 7:30 pm – Shelter	3 6:00 pm – Men's Group 7:30 pm – Shelter 7:30 pm – Great Books	4 7:30 pm – Shelter	5	6 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation	
7 7:30 am – WQXR-FM (96.3) 10:15 am – Leaders' Writings 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Ethics in the News	8 6:00 pm – Board of Trustees 7:30 pm – Shelter	9z 6:00 pm – Women's Group 7:30 pm – Shelter	10 3:00 pm – ECRA 7:30 pm – Shelter	11 7:30 pm – Shelter	12	13 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation	
14 10:00 am – Membership Growth 10:30 am – Colloquy 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Ethics Study	15 5:00 pm – Caring Committee 6:30 pm – Social Service Board 7:30 pm – Shelter	16 7:30 pm – Shelter	17 6:00 pm – Membership Services Committee 7:30 pm – Politics, Leadership, and Justice 7:30 pm – Shelter	18 6:00 pm – Ethical Action Committee 7:30 pm – Shelter	19	20 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation	
21 7:30 am – WQXR-FM (96.3) 10:30 am – Poetry Reading 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Winterfest Celebration 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Winterfest	22 7:30 pm – Shelter	23 7:30 pm – Shelter	24 7:30 pm – Shelter	25 Christmas Society Offices Closed 7:30 pm – Shelter	26 8:00 pm – Unforgotten Voices Homeless Artists Workshop	27 No Supervised Visitation Today	
28 10:30 am – Yoga Meditation 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Film	29 7:30 pm – Shelter	30 7:30 pm – Shelter	31 New Year's Eve 7:30 pm – Shelter 8:00 pm – Strathmere Ensemble 9:45 pm – New Year's Eve Party	<u>Great Books</u> December 3 – Goethe, Faust, Part One <u>ECRA: (Ethical Culture Retirement Activities)</u> December 10 – Muriel Spark, Reality and Dreams <u>Politics, Leadership, and Justice</u> December 17 – Thuydides, The Median Dialogue			

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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