

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 for Reflection

February 6

To Make the Land Ring: Theodore Parker—Uncommon Prophet of Radical Reform

Dr. Khoren Arisian

Senior Leader

John Kreuttner Presides

February 13

Race and Politics in George Bush's America

Ron Daniels, Executive Director, Center for Constitutional Rights

Dr. Khoren Arisian Presides

February 20

Toward the Color Purple: Barack Obama and the Future of Race and Politics in America

Dr. Khoren Arisian

Senior Leader

Dr. James Farer Presides

February 27

Thinking Beyond the Box: A Brief History of "Us and Them"

Curt Collier

Leader, Riverdale-Yonkers

Society

Christina Nargolwala Presides

February Happenings:

Ethics and the Theatre—Tuesday evenings February 1 to March 1, 7:00–9:00 pm. (See page 4 for details)

Ethical Family Fridays—an eight-week course starting Friday, February 11, 6:00–7:30 pm. (See page 5 for more information)

NYSEC and the American Place Theatre offer Middle School Children a Drama Intensive During Winter Break—Monday, February 21 through Friday, February 25, 9:00 am–3:00 pm. (See page 6 for additional information)

President's Notes

Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh



A little more than a year ago I wrote the following piece for this column. In light of the tsunami disaster a little over a month ago, I thought it would be appropriate to "reprise" it.

"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.

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Sunday Morning Meetings

11:15 AM—Music for Reflection

February 6—To Make the Land Ring: Theodore Parker—Uncommon Prophet of Radical Reform

Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

If ever there was a prodigious preacher who offered no apologies for being an ethical radical in the pulpit and an activist in the public square, it was Theodore Parker (1810–1860). Parker's ministry anticipated the Social Gospel in America by 50 years. Writing at the beginning of his career, he noted: "Friends questioned my choice of ministry, thinking it a narrow place, but I thought it a wide place." It proved to be very wide indeed, for he made it so, offending so many traditional sensibilities as to have once been dubbed the "best hated man in America"! A contrary assessment was made by Lydia Childe, one of the many remarkable women caught up in the anti-slavery crusade before the Civil War, who

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Ethical Culture: Who We Are

Our Beginnings, Continued

When Felix Adler inspired the Ethical Movement in the late 19th century he intended, from the outset, that it be a movement dedicated to action. He did not envision a Society of members sitting around contemplating an ideal world. Implementing his ideal of morality demanded action in the real world. His intent was to engage the Society in deeds that would raise the level of social justice in society at large.

Adler saw in New York a city of ruthless industry that exploited and devalued workers and their families. It was a question of morality; “the social or labor question,” he claimed, was “the chief moral question of the day.”

In 1877, the very year that incorporation papers were filed, two social projects were initiated. The District Nursing Department, which was to become the Visiting Nurse Service, trained women as nurses and sent them into crowded apartments to visit tubercular patients. Also, a free kindergarten was organized for the children of working people, where they were clothed and fed, as well as educated. This venture led almost immediately to the creation of the Workingman’s School, a unique school in which mental development, practical skills, and moral education were all considered essential components of an educational program.

In 1879, a new corporation, United Relief Works, was founded to coordinate the Society’s social welfare projects. New community works proliferated, both within and beyond United Relief Works: improved tenement housing, the Child Study Association, settlement houses, and summer camps for inner city children.

The Workingman’s School was to become the renowned Ethical Culture Fieldston School; United Relief Works was later renamed United Social Services, Inc., which continues to sponsor many service activities under the name of its board of directors, the Social Service Board.

President's Notes

(Continued from page 1)

"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. This field of forces is constantly fluctuating and while generalities about 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 so 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 cause species-wide disappearance. We know this about the dinosaurs and other extinct species.

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

Having been in New York on September 11, 2001, I witnessed the tsunami disaster from an entirely different perspective than I might otherwise have done. Disasters large and small happen everywhere. No one is immune. I am heartened by the outreach of the world to Southeast Asians, and the many, many stories of heroism and selflessness. The same thing happened during and after September 11. The same thing happens with every new disaster. It is a deep confirmation of my faith that people are capable of the most amazingly positive behavior.

Sunday Morning Meetings

(Continued from page 1)

pronounced Parker to be "the greatest man, morally and intellectually, that our country ever produced." Surely Felix Adler might well have agreed, regarding Parker, as he made a possibly ideal model of what an ethically impassioned clergy person ought to be. Parker, however, was perhaps more radical, and surely more blunt, than the founding Leader of our Ethical Movement. Parker's erudition was daunting—he taught himself to read in 16 to 20 languages, many of them of ancient vintage, placing his scholarship at the service of action.

This presentation is not intended to be a history lecture. Instead we shall concentrate on how this awesome force of nature—Parker—spoke in a modern idiom, couching his wit and learning in words and phrases that make him sound surprisingly contemporary in spirit. Parker directly addressed issues

of war and peace (“presidential wars” in particular) and the rights of labor, women of color, and the poor. When it came to the abolitionist cause, Parker proved to be no mere gradualist; indeed, in the year before he died—1859—he observed: “No nation in Europe has as difficult a problem to solve as America, none has so great a contradiction in the national consensus.” Though reared and educated as a Unitarian minister, Parker was rudely ignored by most of his colleagues, his greatest inspiration and mentor being, as it was for Adler, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who taught the liberating transcendentalist notion of the innate divinity (read “infinite worth”) of our human nature.

Sunday, February 13—Race and Politics in George Bush’s America

Ron Daniels, Executive Director, Center for Constitutional Rights

Ron Daniels is a long-time political activist who speaks out frequently on racism, police brutality, and hate crimes. He was Deputy Campaign Manager for Jesse Jackson’s 1988 presidential campaign and a leader in the National African American Leadership Summit and the Million Man March.

The Center for Constitutional Rights, which Daniels heads, is a non-profit legal and educational organization devoted to the protection and advancement of rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Center uses litigation to empower poor and minority communities, to protect the rights of those least able to protect their own rights, and to train new constitutional and human rights attorneys.

Sunday, February 20—Toward the Color Purple: Barack Obama and

the Future of Race and Politics in America

Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

We may still be barely hanging on as the land of the free, but we are hardly the home of the brave that we used to be, as a country and a people. Pathetic self-conscious searching for “heroes” is an artificial undertaking. Domestic cowardice, especially in the political and cultural realms, has been bred into the bone of the Democratic Party and in the populace at large since the heyday of McCarthyism. If a true progressive force is to be built to counteract the right-wing political machine that would hitch us all to a harshly neo-Calvinist hierarchical social and political environment circa the days of President McKinley, we’re going to have to reimagine and reinvent ourselves as a feisty new breed of Americans! The unusually gifted, engagingly fresh new Senator from Illinois is among the few who know we have to get out of our Red v. Blue ruts and see ourselves as one country, however multidimensional we may be. Part and parcel of this desired transformation requires we get beyond ethnicity and race—and therefore *racism*—a very tall order but ethically appropriate and long overdue. The new color is purple!

Sunday, February 27—Thinking Beyond the Box: A Brief History of “Us and Them”

Curt Collier, Leader, Riverdale-Yonkers Society

Aristotle noticed 2,300 years ago the human propensity for categorizing human experience into manageable realities. How do we move beyond “if you’re not with me you’re against me”? This talk will explore why we need labels, definitions, categories and “others,” and a new ethical approach to avoid being burdened by them.

Sunday Afternoons Black History Month

Feb. 6: Video and Discussion: *Captive Passage*: The Transatlantic slave trade and the making of the Americas, Mary Ellen Goodman

Feb. 13: African-American Poetry: Readings by Harriet Bigus, Pat Debrovner, Ken Gans, Cheryl Gross, Larry Yates

Feb. 20: Video and Discussion: *Brother Outsider: the Life and Work of Bayard Rustin* (organizer of the 1963 March on Washington)

Feb. 27: African-American Artists: Slide Lecture - Speaker TBA

Film Forum

Valerie Leiman

The Apartment (1960): Agreeably mordant business comedy or acrid story? Billy Wilder has directed this “cynical comedy”—arguably media spin, considering its handling of pimping, attempted suicide, and many shades of craven ethics in the business world. The cast includes Jack Lemmon, Shirley MacLaine and Fred MacMurray.

Richard Bruno provides his wonderful critical discussion following the film. The date is Friday, February 4. The doors open at 6:30 pm, and the film starts at 7:00 pm. Admission includes free popcorn and beverages. The cost for members is \$3.00 and for non-members \$4.00.

Ethics and the Theatre

Patricia Bruder Debrovner

We’ll celebrate the world of live theatre with a special interactive series that will explore ethical conflicts dramatized by playwrights. Each Tuesday evening, February 1, 8, 15, 22 and

March 1, 7:00–9:00 pm, we will feature a different play and, to add to the fun and to stimulate our discussion of the moral conflicts with which the characters are struggling, participants will read aloud key scenes. The schedule is as follows:

February 1—*An Enemy of the People*, by **Henrik Ibsen**. Is a community willing to suffer financial ruin in order to protect its citizens from environmental dangers? *with guest director, Manfred Bormann*

February 8—*Major Barbara*, by George Bernard Shaw. Can humanitarian ends justify despised means? *with guest director, Jerry Less*

February 15—*The Truth About Blayds*, by A.A. Milne. Should a father's illustrious reputation be destroyed by revealing that it has been built on a lifetime of lies? *with guest Jonathan Banks, artistic director of the Mint Theater*

February 22—*Doubt*, by John Patrick Shanley. Will a nun succeed in her desperate efforts to prevent a Catholic priest from sexually abusing children? *with guest director, Nancy Robillard*

March 1—*The Best Man*, by Gore Vidal. Is winning a presidential nomination worth resorting to character assassination? *with guest director, Carol Nadell*

This series is bound to stir our interest and passions and challenge us to re-examine our personal values. The fee is \$35 for members and \$50 for non-members. Individual sessions are \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Call 212-874-5210 x118 to register.

Ethical Family Fridays

An Eight-Week Course for Parents and Children

It Takes An Ethical Village to Raise Ethical Children and Build Family Bonds

Recognizing that raising kids today in New York City takes an ethical village, the New York Society for Ethical Culture is launching an eight-session course for parents and their children, *Ethical Family Fridays*, which is designed to give parents and children the opportunity for facilitated discussions and fun activities they can do together and separately.

Ethical Family Fridays is open to parents and their children ages 3 to 12. The course will be held at the New York Society twice a month at 6:00–7:30 pm, beginning on Friday, February 11. The eight sessions run to June 3. The cost is \$25 per session for non-members and \$20 per session for members. The entire series costs \$150 (member or non-member). **Scholarships will be available. Participants can make reservations in advance by calling Lynda Kennedy, NYSEC Director of Family Programs, at 212-874-5210 x106, or pay at the door.**

Topics include:

- Raising Ethical Children: It Takes an Ethical Village
- Ethical Discipline: Sparing the Rod and Not Spoiling the Child
- Bits, Blogs, and Blockbusters: Living in a Media-Saturated World
- Consuming Childhood: You Can't Fight Madison Avenue—Can You?
- Overscheduled and Overwhelmed?
- Talking With and Listening to Your Children
- Winners Without Losers: Competition and Kids
- Safe in the City: Promoting Safety from Drugs/Violence Without Promoting Fear

“The purpose of *Ethical Family Fridays* is to strengthen parents' relation-

ships with their children, help children develop strong positive relationships with others, and bring families together to face current and sometimes difficult issues in parenting,” says Kate Lovelady, Leader Intern of the New York Society, who developed the course with Lynda Kennedy, Director of Family Programs. “Ethical Culture, a humanistic religious and educational movement, can help strengthen families and give our children a sense of what it means to be ethical and care about others,” Kate adds.

During the sessions, children and parents will spend some time together and some time apart. All groups will be facilitated. Parents will participate in discussions with and without their kids. Children's activities will be fun and educational and will include songs, stories, films, skits, and games. Each course will end with parents and children together in a closing activity.

Kate Lovelady is currently completing certificates in pastoral counseling at the Post-Graduate Center for Mental Health and in Humanist Studies and Leadership at the Humanist Institute. She recently finished a year as the part-time Leader Intern of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture. **Lynda Kennedy** received a BFA in Theater from New York University and an MS Ed. from Bank Street College of Education. For nearly five years she served as Education Coordinator at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum where she headed the “Origins Project,” in which NYC teens researched, wrote, and performed plays based on the city's history.

For more information, contact: Lynda Kennedy, 212-874-5210 x106 or see www.nysec.org.

Drama for Middle School Children

NYSEC and the American Place Theatre Offer A Drama Intensive During Winter Break

The New York Society for Ethical Culture announces a first-time opportunity for middle school and high school students during winter break: a week-long Winter Break Drama Intensive with American Place Theatre (APT). The program runs from Monday, February 21 through Friday, February 25 and builds on APT's exemplary *Literature to Life* program.

Literature to Life is designed to encourage self-expression and develop writing and drama skills. It builds a safe environment for risk taking, fosters improved writing skills and critical thinking, and provides a forum for students to discuss, analyze, and critique the world around them. Teaching artists use a variety of creative drama techniques and educational theatre strategies, such as role-playing, improvisation, teacher-in-role, process drama, forum theatre, free/journal writing, interviews, mantle of the expert, tableaux/still images, various games, and much more.

In addition to working regularly with New York City Public Schools, the American Place Theater has been in operation for more than 40 years and has received 30 Obie awards.

The full-day sessions start at 9:00 am and run till 3:00 pm. The fee is \$250, and lunch is included. Registration is necessary, as space is limited. To register, send your name and contact information, and the student's name and age, along with a check or money order to: The New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West 64 Street, New

York, NY 10023, Attn: Lynda Kennedy. Credit cards are accepted via phone or email (below); include card number, name on the card, and card type and expiration date. For more information or to register, call Lynda Kennedy at 212-874-5210 x106, or email Lkennedy@nysec.org.

Cultured Comedy Club

Suzy Frazer

Barry Crimmins and Barry Weintraub were a dynamite duo on January 20, with the irrepressible Scott Blakeman serving as MC. It's time to gear up for a very funny new show on Thursday February 17! For more information, call 212-874-5210 x113.

Music Committee

Dr. Ruth Cohen

The Music Benefit Committee is pleased to report that our sixth annual concert to benefit the stained glass windows was a happy success! Especially well accepted was the Music of the World Segment, a drum solo ably executed by drummer Krishna Shan, which was greeted with rapt attention and much appreciation.

We now anticipate that our seventh annual Benefit Concert will take place the last week of October. Let us hear your ideas for additional Music of the World that you would like us to consider for inclusion in the concert. Call 212-860-4096.

Board Goals

Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh

In September 2004, the board agreed to the following goals:

By this time next year we want

- a demonstrably more motivated membership
- a balanced budget
- to have addressed Leadership transition (within the next 6 months)
 - to double the number of families with Sunday school-aged children in membership [*Ed. Note: in September 2004, 3 families*]
 - to have brought about a communal transformation expressed by a community that is demonstrably more welcoming, friendly, and embracing towards newcomers and members
 - a 10% net gain in membership with emphasis placed on recruiting younger members and families [*Eds. note: in September 2004, 364 members; however an unusually large purge of inactive members from the membership list in December 2004 may make this goal difficult to achieve*]

Our Ethical Family

Suzy Frazer and Members

New Members

Naomi Dagen Bloom is an environmental artist and activist. She attended the Ethical Culture Sunday school in St. Louis and is drawn to the Society by its social justice initiatives and leadership. Naomi will be working with the Caring Committee to bring a course on senior health to the Society.

Hilda B. Classon has worked as a political activist for many years and is very involved in the Democratic Club and the Separation of Church and State organization. She is interested in working with our Advocacy Forum Committee and on social justice issues.

John Lovelady is an actor, puppeteer and writer, with a special interest in dance. He finds NYSEC's philosophy – which he discovered through his

daughter Kate Lovelady – very appealing.

Nancy McGeorge Lovelady is coordinator of retail and visitors at the Frick Collection. She is also an actor, singer, dancer and puppeteer. Hobbies include gardening, movies and museums. She appreciates NYSEC’s compassion for all peoples, and yes, she is Kate’s mother!

Dorothy Rangel is an administrative assistant at NYU, and her interests are in reading, writing, the arts and humanities. She was attracted by our secular approach to ethics. Dorothy will be taking Elaine Berman’s writing class.

Felix Transport was a member of the Society in 1951. He is a retired graphic artist, and his interests include painting and French.

Maureen Young was a member here years ago and is a close friend of member Frances Tait. She is a professional opera singer and noted voice teacher. Maureen looks forward to meeting new people and contributing to the Society.

News of Members

Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh, Board President, has been picked as one of the top 25 New Yorkers of the year by *The Resident* community newspaper. Congrats Michael!

Pat and Chuck Debrovner have a new granddaughter, Jane Lillian, born January 18. Congratulations to the proud grandparents, to parents Diane and Daniel, and to big sister Abby.

We regretfully report that our long-time member **Kitty Venus** has died. Her husband, Joseph, suggests that contributions in her name be sent to the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation.

Florence Weinstein will celebrate 60 years as a member of the NYSEC in 2005. Congratulations, Florence.

Members Resigned

Lois Auritt; S. Ellen Farber.

February 2005 (Office hours for the month: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm)						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Great Books Feb. 2 – Freud, <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i> Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i>		1 March 2005 newsletter deadline 6:00 pm – Drawing Class 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 4:00 pm – Singing Class 7:30 pm – Shelter	4 7:00 pm – Film Forum	5 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
6 10:30 am – Ethics for Everyday Living 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:45 pm – Video: <i>Captive Passage</i>	7 6:00 pm – Board of Trustees 6:00 pm – Grief Support Group 7:30 pm – Shelter	8 6:00 pm – Drawing Class 6:00 pm – Women’s Group 7:00 pm – Meditation Group 7:00 pm – Ethics & the Theater 7:30 pm – Shelter	9 3:00 pm – ECRDG 7:30 pm – Shelter	10 4:00 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 – African American Poetry	14 7:30 pm – Shelter	15 6:00 pm – Drawing Class 7:00 pm – Meditation Group 7:00 pm – Ethics & the Theater 7:30 pm – Shelter	16 7:30 pm – Shelter 7:30 pm – Great Books: “Happiness & Discontent”	17 4:00 pm – Singing Class 7:30 pm – Shelter 8:00 pm – Cultured Comedy Club	18 6:00 pm – Ethical Family Friday	19 No Supervised Visitation program today
20 10:15 am – Poetry Reading 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:45 pm – Video, <i>Brother Outsider</i>	21 9:00 am – A Winter Break Drama Society Offices Closed 7:30 pm – Shelter	22 9:00 am – A Winter Break Drama 6:00 pm – Drawing Class 7:00 pm – Meditation Group 7:00 pm – Ethics & the Theater 7:30 pm – Shelter	23 9:00 am – A Winter Break Drama 7:30 pm – Shelter	24 9:00 am – A Winter Break Drama 4:00 pm – Singing Class 6:00 pm – Grief Support Group 7:30 pm – Shelter	25 9:00 am – A Winter Break Drama 6:00 pm – Ethical Family Friday	26 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
27 10:30 am – Yoga Meditation 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:45 pm – African-American Artists: Slide Lecture	28 6:30 pm – Social Service Board 7:30 pm – Shelter	ECRDG: (Ethical Culture Reading Discussion Group) Feb. 9 – Richard Ford, <i>Independence Day</i> Great Books: “Happiness and Discontent” Feb. 16 – William Shakespeare, <i>As You Like It</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.

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR
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