



# ETHICALLY SPEAKING

53 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn NY 11215 (718) 768-2972

Volume 94, no. 9

## **AEU Assembly/AHA Conference Joint Meeting June 2-4, 2000 Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey**

### **“Launching the Humanist Century”**

In recognition of the wide range of common ends and ideals shared by the two organizations, the American Ethical Union and the American Humanist Association are holding a joint Assembly/Conference at the Hilton Hasbrouck Heights in northern New Jersey, June 2 through June 4.

Register separately for a pre-conference all-day program on Thursday: *Humanism, Human Rights, and the United Nations*, including a tour of the UN and a chance to attend an NGO briefing, followed by several workshops at the hotel.

Thursday evening is a recognition dinner for the retiring Ethical Culture Leader *Matthew Ies Spetter*. Workshops will be held on Friday and Saturday, led by a wide range of Ethical Culture and Humanist leaders, tracking the similarities and differences between the two movements.

On Saturday night, the AEU will present their annual *Elliott-Black Award* to *The Innocence Project*, a clinical law program that provides pro bono assistance to prisoners challenging their convictions based on DNA evidence.

This is a wonderful chance to acquaint yourself with the great people in the national Ethical movement. It's also a rare opportunity to see the Ethical and Humanist movements working closely together; the cross-pollination benefits alone make the conference worth attending.

Lisel Burns is planning to help organize groups to attend the Thursday dinner, as well as the Friday/Saturday workshops, so if you are interested in attending, contact the office to make sure that Brooklyn is well-represented!

*The following excerpt is from an article by BSEC Leader Henry Neumann published in The Standard Vol XII No. 4 Section 1 December 1925. The original article, titled The Heroic Appeal of the Ethical Faith, was based on an address given before the Ethical Societies of Brooklyn and St. Louis. The article in our copy of The Standard, however, is unique, for it is full of Dr. Neumann's own hand-written corrections. The changes begin with the title itself:*

### **The Courage of Ethical Faith by Henry Neumann**

Our Ethical Societies have a faith, in some respects a faith more fundamental than that of many who speak of us as infidels. It is a faith that there is a supreme task which we are expected to promote, and in the furthering of which our lives find their leading justification. We are not here only to multiply acts of kindness or truthfulness. These are undoubtedly necessary. We take them for granted as the mere ABC's of right living. Nor are we here merely to work at this or that piece of social reform or reconstruction. Profound changes are necessary, but in the interests of a still more profound inner transformation. Acts of integrity and kindness, civic and social remaking, a radically better schooling, are all vitally requisite; but we need to see them all of a piece in the light of the chief demand made upon thinking men and women – the demand to be clear in their own minds about what gives the whole business of living its final importance.

First among the obstacles which an ethical faith encounters is the fact that the ethical interest is far from being popular. This does not refer to the downright badness there is in the world. There is more than enough of positive cruelty and greed. But all in all, there is relatively much less sheer malevolence than we are apt to suppose. Most people would rather not do wrong if they think they can avoid it. So far as they reflect on the matter at all, they would rather be neighborly than quarrelsome, kindly than cruel, upright than dishonest.

But what a tiny thing it is, after all, that one is not a scoundrel, in jail or out of it. The threshold virtues of truth-telling, kindness, and the like, no more comprise the whole of an excellent life than a good day is one in which a person has washed himself or staved off an illness. The real man or woman grows with the years – grows in the taking on of heavier responsibilities, grows in understanding, grows in the broadening and elevation of his mind, grows in earnestness and in fineness. Such a person is different from a child, not merely because his body has reached adult size, but because he is attaining a deeper and richer comprehension of his place in the scheme of things and a growing desire to put that place to the best among its many uses.

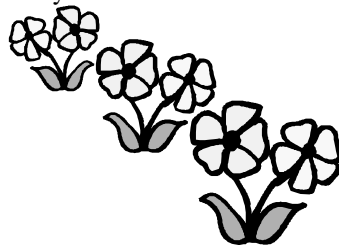
Such growth often requires, among other needs, courage to break with beliefs or customs accepted by those around us. “Whoso would be a man,” said Emerson, “must be a non-conformist.” If his own life cannot find good and true the beliefs which suffice for other people, let him have the courage to walk by the light which he does find good. Our Ethical Societies are here because whatever the traditional beliefs may mean to those who accept them, they do not answer our needs. To break new paths is harder than to walk those already trodden by the centuries. But we accept the responsibility because we feel the need.

Nor must the independent mind part company with only the older beliefs. Dozens of new beliefs clamor for our support today. Their newness does not make them necessarily better. There are radical spirits who ridicule the older views, but are quite ready to swallow new absurdities in their place. The latest proposal put forward in the interest of progress may not mean advance at all, but on the contrary, a relapse to the cave-life from which the race has scarcely emerged. It is by no means so important to be a radical or a conservative as it is to be intelligently radical or intelligently conservative, and to have the courage to reject either the new or the old when your own best thinking so decides.

## **Spring Fair May 21: Crafts Fair, Open House, Silent Auction**

The May 21 Open House will combine booths from our programs with some creative fund-raising. We will inaugurate a giant raffle with mystery prizes, including cash prizes, use of the building (worth up to \$2000), or prized artworks by celebrated artist members and friends. There will also be a silent auction, and booths offering a wide range of arts and crafts for sale.

If you are interested in helping us host our Open House, welcome visitors from the Park Slope Civic Council House Tour, and raise funds for our programs and for long range restoration of our Meeting House, contact the Leader's Office via Rita Wilson or Lisel Burns.



**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY  
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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*Ethically Speaking* is published 6-10 times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeysen, Marshall Dubin, Martha Hoffman, and Sandra Cole-McNaught.

*Ethically Speaking* is written by a number of BSEC members. Views expressed in this publication are always open to friendly discussion. Our newsletter staff, like the membership at large, may vary in their thinking on many issues, yet we are all committed to putting deed before creed, and to strive constantly toward living out, each in our own particular way, the Ethical Ideal of eliciting the best from ourselves and others.

Bob Strock has recently joined the theater group *Dzieci*, a group whose goal is to weave the disciplines and traditions of theater, comparative religion, and therapy into a strand stronger than any of its individual threads. Bob will be appearing with *Dzieci* in a performance of their new piece: *The Devils of Loudun*, based on the book by Aldous Huxley. Performances are Friday and Saturday, May 5th and 6th. If you'd like to know more, call Bob at 369-3165, or e-mail [strock@mindspring.com](mailto:strock@mindspring.com).

Also, meet the director of *Dzieci*, Matt Mitler, at *The Creative Process*, Wednesday June 7, 8pm.

## VIEWPOINT

### The Meaning of Membership: Part Four

by Anne Klaeysen, Membership Coordinator

We're growing! Our Newcomer Circles have been well attended, and several people at our potluck dinner workshops have expressed an interest in joining. The incoming "class" of new members reflects the diversity of our community: different ages, sizes, colors, families, economic and educational backgrounds, and interests. We have Sunday School parents, Brooklyn Women's Chorus singers, wedding and commitment couples, musicians, and people new to Brooklyn who are looking for an intergenerational ethical community to call home.

"Growing the movement" has been a major concern and topic of discussion at almost every American Ethical Union gathering I have attended for years. Those of us who have made a commitment to Ethical Culture as a religion and way of life think we are on to a pretty good thing and wonder how we can overcome our shyness and dread of proselytizing to let others in on it. We have tried publicity campaigns and partnering with other

organizations, open houses and entertainment, confident that once someone walked through our door and got to know us, they would want to join our community.

But it's not that easy, is it? After all, this is not Disney World where so much effort is devoted to guaranteeing that every person's experience every time is exactly the same: magical. We are just ordinary folks with good qualities and bad. Sometimes we get things right, and sometimes we miss the mark. Sometimes we wonder if we should grow at all, because we are afraid to lose the closeness with each other that we enjoy. But it always warms our hearts when someone new attends a Sunday platform, workshop or event. We can't help it: we love to share a good thing – ourselves. And we know that we will learn something new and wonderful from every new person we meet. As one member put it, "Whenever I walk into a room – any room, I know I will connect with at least one person. We really are all one family."

### Ethical Meandering: by Sandra Cole-McNaught

How can we use art to articulate our ethical stance?  
How can we use art in ethical parenting?

These two questions came out of our parent discussion last April 16th. They are so provocative that they have led me to a sort of ethical meandering. Four things come to mind as a result of this meandering: art as ways of seeing, art as representation, art as declaration, and art as evaluation.

Art as ways of seeing challenges us to apply ethical mores to the way we see ourselves, others, and the world. Art as representation requires that we honestly present ourselves to others and that we represent others in ways that are positive and empowering. Art as declaration opens up an arena in which we can apply Freirian dialogic discourses—talking to others about who and what they think they are. Finally, art as evaluation makes it possible for us to see the best in others and thereby provides opportunities for eliciting the best from others.

Art as ways of seeing means that I must refrain from making myself into an object to be consumed. I must treat myself as a subject for whom life is filled with possibilities. This is the ethical stance and the ethical lesson to be taught to my children. Paintings, poetry, music, dancing, literature, are all pathways through which I and my children can come to an understanding of our roles and responsibilities. The same is true of art as representation. We can refrain from harmful stereotypes, refrain from representing ourselves and others as objects to be exploited sexually, politically, economically.

We must also challenge those things which represent human beings as objects rather than as subjects. Many works of art present human kind as either sexual objects to be dominated or exploited, goods to be bartered, things to be feared and hated, or objects to be destroyed. These gestures (works), whether discursive (written) or non-discursive (visual pieces, performance pieces), provide frames of reference from which I can examine my own ethical interpretation and responses and from which I can enter into a dialogue with my children.

Art as declaration and art as evaluation speak to the act of positioning ourselves in relation to others. The lines of demarcation are manifested in the language which deems products of the creative processes as belonging to the realm of "high", "popular", or "primitive" culture. The labels we use and internalize will more than likely shape our perception of our socio-cultural, socio-political, and socio-economic worth. As someone striving to live an ethical and meaningful life, and as someone committed to eliciting the very best in others, I must examine the connotative and denotative characteristics of the language I use to declare or evaluate works of art and by extension, the creators of these works of art.

The meandering has led back to the two questions posed at the beginning of this reflection: How can we use art in articulating our ethical stance? How can we use art in ethical parenting? Upon reflection, the possibilities seem to lie within the realms of seeing, representing, declaring and evaluating.

# MAY 2000 BSEC CALENDAR

**5/1 – 5/7**

**Tuesday 5/2**

**7:30-9PM:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus* directed by Bev Grant. We believe every woman can sing! Join us. 768-2972 for info.

**Wednesday 5/3**

**6:30-10PM:** *Pinewoods Folk Open Sing* with potluck supper & snacks. Bring your voice, instruments, friends, neighbors, and family. Free admission.

**6:30-8PM:** *But Is It Right?* an open discussion focusing on basic ethical notions and everyday moral dilemmas. Led by Vanda Bozecevic.

**8-9:30PM:** *The Creative Process*, a series of discussions with guest speakers in the fields of literature, music, and art. Tonight's guest is artist Tom Keough.

**Thursday 5/4**

**7PM:** Monthly Board of Trustees Meeting. *All members encouraged to attend!*

**7-9PM:** *T'ai Chi Chuan* with J.P. Harpignes. \$12/class; \$40 for 4; BSEC members free.

**Friday 5/5**

**7PM:** *Y.E.S. Youth Group Meeting*. Contact Rita Wilson at 284-0241 or Tony Severo at 854-0710 for information.

**8PM:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents *James Reams and the Barnstormers* in an evening of hard-driving, heart-pumping, foot-stomping bluegrass music. Featuring Carl Hayano, Mark Farrell, and Mickey Maguire. Donation \$8.

**Saturday 5/6**

**10-11AM:** *The Art of Belly Dancing* taught by Salome. Free to BSEC members. Call 399-1732 for information.

**Sunday 5/7**

**Monthly Membership Sunday**

**10AM-12:15PM:**

Children's Sunday Assembly.

**10-11AM:** Library Discussion Group: *Ethics and Sexual Behavior* led by Celeste Leibowitz. Parents and non-parents, those in and out of committed relationships, are all invited to attend.

**11AM:** Platform: *What Happened to Standing For Something?* with Lisel Burns and Y.E.S. Member Mohammed Hussein.

**12:30PM:** Lunch With the Bunch and May birthdays celebration.

**1PM:** Newcomers' Circle and Ethical Culture Workshop.

**1:15PM:** Caring/Sharing Committee.

**5PM:** *Couples' Workshop* with Leader Lisel Burns. RSVP to 783-2298.

**5/8 – 5/23**

**Tuesday 5/9**

**7:30-9PM:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

**Wednesday 5/10**

**7:30-9PM:** *Women's Bodies, Women's Choices: The Mind-Body Connection* video by Dr. Christiane Northrup, followed by a discussion on women's health issues with holistic health practitioner Rachel Koenig.

**Thursday 5/11**

**7-9PM:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

**7:30-9PM:** Storytelling Workshop with storyteller and consultant Mary Savage. Create community through storytelling and celebration. Four workshops, \$7-10 each, free for BSEC members.

**Friday, 5/12**

**8PM:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Haitian Troubadour *Steve Brunache* in a celebration of Haiti Flag Day and a benefit for Fonkoze Microcredit and the Leogane Summer Camp. Donation \$8. A delicious Haitian dinner will also be available.

**Saturday 5/13**

**10-11AM:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Sunday 5/14**

**10AM-12:30PM:**

Children's Sunday Assembly.

**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group.

**11AM:** *Colloquy on Motherhood* and support for the Million Mom March in Washington, DC.

**12:30PM:** Lunch with the Bunch.

**Tuesday 5/16**

**7:30-9PM:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

**Thursday 5/18**

**7-9PM:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

**7:30-9PM:** *Storytelling Workshop*. (see 5/11)

**Friday, 5/19**

**8PM:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Third Friday with the Park Slope Food Coop featuring Xodo and the Nancy Kennedy Quintet. Donation \$8.

**Saturday 5/20**

**10-11AM:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Sunday 5/21**

**10-11AM:** Children's Sunday Assembly.

**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group.

**11AM:** Intergenerational Recognition Day with the Children's Assembly.

**12:30PM:** Lunch with the Bunch.

**1-5PM: Spring Fair and Open House.**

Crafts, raffles, auctions, and house tours.

**Tuesday 5/23**

**7:30-9PM:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

**5/24 – 6/7**

**Wednesday 5/24**

**6:30PM:** Newcomers' Workshop: *Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture*.

**8PM:** *Ethical Core Values Workshop* with Lisel Burns and Anne Klaeysen.

**Thursday 5/25**

**7PM:** The Richard Price Book Discussion Group discusses *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham. Call Constance Pigozzi at 331-1137 for information.

**7-9PM:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

**7:30-9PM:** *Storytelling Workshop*. (see 5/11)

**Saturday 5/27**

**10-11AM:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Sunday 5/28**

**10AM-12:30PM:** Children's Assembly.

**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group.

**11AM:** Memorial Platform.

**Tuesday 5/30**

**7:30-9PM:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

**Thursday 6/1**

**7PM:** Monthly Board of Trustees Meeting.

**7-9PM:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

**7:30-9PM:** *Storytelling Workshop*. (see 5/11)

**Friday 6/2**

**7PM:** *Y.E.S. Youth Group Meeting*.

**8PM:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents a Youth Group dance program. Donation \$8.

**Saturday 6/3**

**10-11AM:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Sunday 6/4**

**Monthly Membership Sunday**

**10AM-12:30PM:** Children's Assembly.

**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group

**11AM:** Membership Appreciation Platform

**12:30PM:** Lunch With the Bunch and June birthdays celebration.

**1:30PM: Membership Meeting.**

## June 11 Platform: Practicing Without Preaching

Lisel Burns will preside over the final platform of the Season, the final installment of her *Ways of Living* series, on Sunday June 11. The title is *Practicing Without Preaching: Brooklyn Ethical Culture Practices and Self-Development Traditions Today*. Judgement Day, Brooklyn-style. Come help rate our BSEC community against a standard we set for ourselves when we picked the "Rooted, Responsible, and Reflective" platform theme and mission statement last spring. Do we really value what we do not make real and evident in our personal or community life?

## Membership News

The BSEC Caring/Sharing Committee is now working out of the Leader's Office and will meet the first Sunday in May 7 at 1:15pm. Join if you want to help us establish alternative ways of caring and sharing among our members and friends. Contact: Ken Sevitsky (212-254-4185 or [kesebe@worldnet.att.net](mailto:kesebe@worldnet.att.net))

**Million Mom March Update:** Several BSEC members are already planning to go to the Million Mom March on Sunday 5/14. To help with the BSEC display, or to sign up for bus tickets (6:30am Sunday) call 783-2298.

The Y.E.S. group is planning a special June 2 Good Coffeehouse program; all ages are welcome. This is the perfect chance to bring a teen-aged friend to check out BSEC and the Y.E.S. group! They will set the program in early May.

### Baby Announcements!

Sheila Jean-Baptiste and David Kosoff are the proud parents of Langston, born April 12.

Michelle Sharon and John Glassford are in Scotland, and welcomed their son John Henry (call him Henry) into the world on April 2.



Those who sit within the hall oft hardly know  
of what kin be they who come;  
no man so flawless but some fault he has,  
nor so wicked to be of no worth.  
Both foul and fair are found among men,  
blended within their breasts.

*Havamal, Edda (Iceland, c. 1200)*

## BSEC Membership Meeting Sunday, June 4

### Haitian Troubadour Steve Brunache at Good Coffeehouse May 12

Haitian singer/songwriter/musician Steve Brunache, Haiti Fonkoze Microcredit, and the Leogane Summer Camp Project will make music and raise funds at BSEC on May 12, in a special Good Coffeehouse program celebrating the annual Independence or Flag Day for Haiti. A delicious Haitian supper will be provided for a small additional fee.

Many thanks from Marie Yoleine Gateau for the \$250 donation from BSEC to the Summer Camp. She says it will be used toward a coffee sales initiative to benefit the camp.

## What's In a Name?

(with apologies to William Shakespeare)

For many years the two stone lions flanking the entrance to the main library in Manhattan have borne the names "Patience" and "Fortitude". They were so named by New York City's great mayor Fiorello La Guardia.

This act has inspired me to select two names for the two stone lions flanking the entrance to the building belonging to the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture. Let them be named "Deed" and "Creed".\*

*Marshall F. Dubin*

\*Remember, deed comes before creed!

## Storytelling Workshop Thursdays May 11 thru June 1

Join us for a journey: an adventure in storytelling. Mary Savage, professional storyteller and consultant, is our guide for four consecutive Thursdays starting on May 11th at 7:30pm and concluding with a celebration on June 1st. The sessions are being offered free to BSEC members and on a sliding scale fee of \$7-10 per session for non-members.

Ms. Savage has had many years of experience in schools, colleges and community organizations. She has published articles on storytelling and literature and has a doctorate in Medieval Narrative. She is the founder of the *Henry Street Parent Storytelling Workshop*, a community-based storytelling project on the Lower East Side, and she directs *Stories in the Land*, the Storytelling Institute at Hofstra University. Her primary interest is in "helping people find their way back home through storytelling." Experience her powerful and plainspoken performances, and learn how to discover the stories all around you. For more information, please call 768-2972.



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