



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 95, no. 9

May Platforms

This Season's Platform Theme is *Living Our Ideals: an Exploration of Paths and Resources for an Ethical Life*. The focus this Season will be on a BSEC community-wide, bottom-up collection of questions, resources, themes, and practices to help us assess and achieve our own aspirations for ethical living, however onerous the external conditions, or misguided our national or global authorities.

May 6: *Youth Leadership and the Future of Participatory Democracy*

With philosopher-activist Grace Lee Boggs and BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

May 13: *Founder's Day, New York Ethical No Platform in Brooklyn*. Come to the New York Society for Ethical Culture at 64th Street and Central Park West and celebrate its 125th anniversary at their annual Founder's Day Platform.

May 20: *Recognition Day*

Students of the Children's Sunday Assembly.

May 27: *Memorial Day Platform*

Celebrate the lives of those who have left us.

June 3: *Membership Sunday*

Join us to welcome formally and hear from the people who have made the decision to join the BSEC community this past season.

June 10: *Toward a Humanistic Spirituality*

Last fall Ethical Culture's Leaders tried their hands at defining a version of spirituality consistent with their humanistic life stance. Elements included a sense of deep interconnection, of awe before the earth, nature and greater universe, and personally experienced moments uplifting to the human spirit. Bring your own definition and questions to this exploration of inner life, for the non-traditional folks in modern society. With Leader Lisel Burns. *Last Platform of the Season!*

Platforms are held every Sunday morning from 11am to 12:15pm in the main hall of the Meeting House at 53 Prospect Park West, followed by a convivial and delicious buffet lunch. Please stop by!

Leader Notes: Of Cheerleading and Coaching by Lisel Burns

Teaching Right From Wrong, 40 Things You Can Do to Raise a Moral Child, soon out from the Berkley Publishing Group, is the latest gift from Arthur Dobrin, Leader of the Long Island Ethical Society, to our Ethical Movement, and to society at large. In it he has a lovely piece:

#14 Praise a Task Well Done.

"Your children want to please you. So let them know when they succeed. Praise them for what they have done well; a repeat performance won't be far behind.

"Most parents know this. But some take this to mean that they shouldn't be critical of their children at all. Wanting to boost their child's ego, they will praise everything he does. They do everything they can to shield their son from criticism, refusing to tell him he has done something wrong or less than perfect.

"So Kevin comes home with a drawing, and it goes on the refrigerator; Jennifer writes a poem and it gets framed and hung on the wall. You believe you can boost your children's self-esteem by being cheerleaders. 'Great, Kevin!' we gush, even though the drawing shows no effort. 'Terrific Jennifer' we say, even though the poem is a knock off of yesterday's birthday card. Every effort is praised to the skies, even if the effort is, by any objective standard, mediocre or worse.

"Parents (and teachers) should be cheerleaders. Think of yourself as a good coach. She doesn't yell, 'you jerk,' if Jennifer doesn't kick the ball right. But she also doesn't say, 'excellent job' when the performance was a poor one. Jennifer can be praised for having made a great effort, if that is what she did; but if she didn't play a great game, telling her that she did only builds false confidence. Cheerleaders have a job to do, too, rushing onto the field and singing the team's praises even the team really is a dud. It's part of their job description. They are there to boost the team's and the players' spirits. Their team is always the greatest team, even if it trails the league in everything.

"The coach, on the other hand, points out strengths—good effort, fine try—but also weaknesses. 'That was good,' a coach might say, 'but don't be distracted by your friends in the stands. You need to keep your eye on the ball. Now let's try it again.'

"Self-esteem rests upon a realistic picture of oneself. Boosterism presents a false picture of accomplishments. Eventually, a child will see through the cheerleading, if that's all there is. Far better to present the truth with kindness than falsehoods that create self-deception.

"Criticism should be presented with respect.

"All children do some things well. Focus on what those strengths are and build upon them. At the same time, let your child know that there are matters that need improvement and that there is a goal that she hasn't reached. Achieving it will require persevering in spite of frustrations. Learning how to deal with frustration is essential for moral character—especially when doing the right thing isn't easy.

"There is a balance to be found between total acceptance and constant criticism. This kind of balance means that your child will be respected for who he really is. To be known this way is critical, for it says to your child—you are a real person, not a model or an image or some hoped-for unrealized child."

I like this piece very much. When a parent reads these pages, I expect their motivation is one of love and hope for their child to become a moral adult. At the same time, isn't that also what we want for each other as adults?

How best to do this, when feedback is necessary, is a good question. We need, I think, to cultivate circles of trusting relationships, places where confidences are safe, where motivations are not assumed or assigned to others in the process of working out the inevitable hassles, and where our personal strengths come to shine, however obscured they may be elsewhere in our lives.

In our own and BSEC's projects, cheerleader and coach are both important roles we take with each other. Caring without coaching is a misguided form of love, in my opinion. But we must also be the cheerleaders for each other—the gang that loves you when you self-destruct as well as when you are the star. Ethical Culture communities should be places where members give and get feedback from each other to bring out our best. Please consider buying and spreading the word about Arthur's marvelous little book. If you would like to honor him with a contribution to the new school in Kenya, send contributions c/o BSEC and we will forward them.



**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

53 PROSPECT PARK WEST
BROOKLYN, NY 11215
(718) 768-2972
fax (718) 768-3278
http://www.bsec.org

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Ethically Speaking is published 6-10 times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strook, Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeyens, Remi Gay, Marshall Dubin, and Martha Hoffman.

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.

VIEWPOINT

What Henry Neuman Means to Me by Marshall Dubin

On Sunday, April 8th, the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture dedicated its platform to its first leader, Henry Neumann. This selection struck a chord in my memory.

In the year 1955 Etheline Dunbar and I were married. Soon we were busily engaged in raising a family. We named our children Jonathan and Jason.

One day when he was six years old, Jonathan came to me with a grievance. "Why don't I have some place to go on Sundays like the other boys?" His other friends went to a church if they were Christian or to a synagogue if Jewish. My wife Etheline solved that problem. Looking over our neighborhood she noticed a building with the name Ethical Culture Society. There she met the newly retired leader, Henry Neumann. She was impressed by the warmth and the friendliness of his greeting. He told her that the Ethical Culture Society has a Sunday school for children.

Thereafter she urged me to go to Ethical the next Sunday and to take Jonathan with me. My first visit sold me on the Brooklyn Society.

The rest is family history. Etheline didn't join the society. She was so busy during the week that she reserved Sundays as a time to relax at home. Jonathan found other things he wanted to do, but Jason graduated from the Ethical Culture Sunday School and today is working on the staff of Ethical.

That is why I have a warm spot in my heart for Dr. Neumann and greatly enjoyed playing the role of this wonderful man at the Spring Festival.

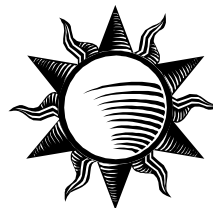
The Neumann Papers

As many of you may have noticed, members of BSEC have recently been talking about long-time Brooklyn Ethical Leader Henry Neumann. Our spring festival this year honored Dr. Neumann, depicting him stepping out of a portrait in the library to tell present-day members about some of our own history. At one point, the play had Dr. Neumann saying he noticed someone had been looking at his books. Well, that "someone" must be me!

Ever since I became a member of Ethical Culture, I have been fascinated by the history of the Society. I am an historian by training and, although my field is European history, I have a special place in my heart for American history, for the kind of history you can see and sense just by walking through Brooklyn or stepping into the Ethical Society. Last spring, I started cataloguing the books in our library and looking through some of our old papers. Many of our older books originally belonged to Henry Neumann, and for me their value (historical, not monetary!) is increased by his pencilled marginal notes and the clippings and drafts of reviews inserted or clipped in the books. I began carefully removing some of these fragile papers and recording where I had found them.

This winter, I applied for and received a small grant from the St. Louis Society's Stuckenberg fund to continue this project with the final goals of publishing a collection of Dr. Neumann's essays, with a biographical note and perhaps a short history of the Society during his forty years as Leader. I hope members of other Societies will also get to know Dr. Neumann, who is now less known but was a Leader of national importance in the first half of the century. In addition, the Society occasionally receives requests for information from researchers interested in some aspect of the social or intellectual history of the Society or of an early member. It would be very exciting to me to be able to invite such interested people to come over and look through our small but interesting collection

Martha Hoffman



Sacred Dance Workshop at Riverdale May 5th

On Saturday, May 5 from 12 to 3pm, the Riverdale-Yonkers Society (in the Bronx) will be holding a workshop entitled "Exploring Ethical Religion Through Interpretive Dance." JoAnne Tucker, the foremost choreographer of religious dance in America, will be teaching this experiential workshop focusing on interpreting Ethical religion through movement. (She did this workshop last year as well – and is familiar with Ethical Culture).

In addition to exploring Ethical themes, JoAnne will be teaching her students how to share this technique with others. Childcare provided (with notification). \$20 adults, and \$10 for children. You do not need to be a dancer in order to take part, and even those with a limited range of motion are invited to participate. Call Curt Collier at (718) 548-4445 for more information.

THE ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF QUEENS

Cordially Invites You to Join Us at our First

FOUNDERS DAY DINNER DANCE

Saturday afternoon, May 19, 2001, at 1 PM
at Villa Marcello, 96-27 Rockaway Blvd., Ozone Park, NY

Contribution of \$40 covers:

Champagne Toast, Appetizer, Pasta, Entree (choice of Veal Francese,
Roast Chicken, Filet of Sole Orreganata, Eggplant Parmigiana),
Dessert, Cake, Coffee, Tea, Espresso or Cappuccino

Unlimited Soda & Wine, Professional DJ, Valet Parking

Lots of Music, Lots of Food, Lots of Fun!

Reservations by May 6 to Ethical Culture Society of Queens,
207-03 43rd Avenue, Bayside. NY 11361.

For more Info: Judy or John Lucania (718) 747-6086.

MAY 2001 BSEC CALENDAR

5/1 – 5/11

Tuesday, 5/1

7:30-9pm: Brooklyn Women's Chorus directed by Bev Grant. *Every woman can sing, so what's stopping you?* Call 965-3611 for information.

Wednesday, 5/2

7-8:30pm: T'ai Chi Chuan class with J.P. Harpignes. \$12 per class or \$40 for 4 classes. Free to BSEC members.

7:30pm: Women's Leadership Support Group.

Thursday, 5/3

7:30-8:30pm: Ballroom Dancing Lessons, led by Christina, an international competitive dancer. \$15/\$10 BSEC Members. Call (212) 781-7475 for info.

Friday, 5/4

8pm: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents guitarists El McMeen and Larry Pattis. Opening for them will be local favorite Alex Mogieleff. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 5/5

9-11am: The Art of Belly Dancing taught by Salome. Free to BSEC members. Call 399-1732 for information.

Sunday, 5/6

10am-12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10am-11am: Library Discussion Group.

11am: Sunday Platform: *Youth Leadership and the Future of Participatory Democracy* with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns and philosopher-activist Grace Boggs.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch.

1-4:30pm: Spring Fair.

Monday, 5/7

7-9pm: *Brooklyn Community Storytellers*. A workshop for storytellers of all levels of experience. \$5-12.

Tuesday, 5/8

7:30-9pm: Brooklyn Women's Chorus.

Wednesday, 5/9

7-8:30pm: T'ai Chi Chuan.

Thursday, 5/10

7:30-8:30pm: Ball Room Dancing.

Friday, 5/11

8pm: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents old-timey bluegrass favorites *James Reams and the Barnstormers*. Donation \$8.

5/12 – 5/25

Saturday, 5/12

9-11am: The Art of Belly Dancing.

Sunday, 5/13

11am: Founder's Day at the New York Ethical Society. Brooklyn Ethical Members will travel to the New York Society to celebrate 125 years of the Ethical Culture Movement.

Monday, 5/14

7:30pm: Computer Clinic. Please call to register 768-2972.

Tuesday, 5/15

7:30-9pm: Brooklyn Women's Chorus.

Wednesday, 5/16

7:30-9pm: *Faith Conversations*, a discussion series centering on the place of traditional religious beliefs and practices within a humanist religion. RSVP 783-2298.

7-8:30pm: T'ai Chi Chuan.

Thursday, 5/17

7:30-8:30pm: Ballroom Dancing.

Friday, 5/18

8pm: Good Coffeehouse concert series and the Park Slope Food Coop present an evening of Brazilian folk Samba with *XODO*. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 5/19

9-11am: The Art of Belly Dancing.

Sunday, 5/20

10am-12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group.

11am: Sunday Platform: Recognition Day honoring graduates of the Children's Sunday Assembly.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch.

Monday, 5/21

7:30pm: Immigration Law Clinic, with Alena Weiser, Esq. Please RSVP to participate 768-2972.

Tuesday, 5/22

7:30-9pm: Brooklyn Women's Chorus.

Wednesday, 5/23

7:30-9pm: Ethical Culture Readings: Arthur Dobrin's *Ethical People and How They Get to be That Way*.

7-8:30pm: T'ai Chi Chuan.

Friday, 5/25

Good Coffeehouse concert series takes a break for Memorial Day Weekend.

5/26 – 6/3

Saturday, 5/26

9-11am: The Art of Belly Dancing.

Sunday, 5/27

No Sunday School

10am-11am: Library Discussion Group.

11am: *Memorial Day Platform*.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch

Monday, 5/28

7:30pm: Computer Clinic. Please call to register 768-2972.

Tuesday, 5/29

7:30-9pm: Brooklyn Women's Chorus.

Wednesday, 5/30

7-8:30pm: T'ai Chi Chuan.

Friday, 6/1

8pm: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents a Bob Jones Fest. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 6/2

9-11am: The Art of Belly Dancing.

Sunday, 6/3

10am-12:30pm: Children's Sunday Assembly

10am-11am: Library Discussion Group.

11am: Sunday Platform: *Membership*

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch.

1pm: **Membership Meeting.**

Caring and Sharing Committee News

The Memorial Day Platform (May 27) will be special this year. Three people have already stepped forward with at least \$100 donations offered on an annual basis in memorial to a loved one who has died. Other people who wish to make donations to the BSEC Memorial Fund and have special commemorations to mark a loved one's life should talk with Celeste Leibowitz, chair of the Caring and Sharing Committee, before the program. We will finally have a list of meeting house and garden ways of marking memorial gifts on an annual basis. Thank you!

If you need help, would like visits or a caring ear, please call Celeste 336-3683; if you would like to join the Caring and Sharing Committee for next season, let Celeste know.



News from the A.E.U.

The American Ethical Union held its national Assembly in St. Louis on April 19-22.

BSEC Member and Pledge Secretary Greta Gladney was elected to the AEU National Board. Congratulations!

Mohammed Hussain was a star, representing BSEC and our YES group excellently. Brooklyn was well-received, and well-represented, at the Assembly.

Leader Interns

Anne Klaeyen will be interning part time in the New York Society next Season.

Bob Greenwell, currently Program Director at the St. Louis Ethical Society, is a possible intern at Brooklyn Ethical, *if enough funds can be found to offset his cost to us as a part-time Leader.* The national leadership committee secures funds to match amounts raised by local Societies where interns will be working. We would like Bob to focus on consolidating membership coordination and some program offerings while he learns as much as he can about Ethical Culture leadership in the New York Metropolitan area.

Children's Sunday Assembly

Peace was the theme for the month of April, with various spring holidays to celebrate as well. For our intergenerational Spring Festival, our instant "Mythical Theatre" encountered the spirit of Henry Neumann, the Leader of the Brooklyn Society for almost 50 years, starting in 1911. He arrived as a memory invoked by inquiries about his portrait in the Meeting House Library, introduced us to his wife and three daughters, and told us about his life and philosophy. Marshall Dubin was great as Dr. Neumann, no doubt inspired by having actually known him.

The weather cooperated on Easter Sunday, so our egg hunt was held outside with great enjoyment, after we decorated real eggs and filled plastic ones with goodies. For Earth Day, Margit's class made beautiful peace pennants that we used to decorate the front of the Meeting House. The graduates in our senior class are making a final push to learn about Ethical Culture historical figures and develop personal ethical action projects.

What can we do to show our appreciation for a hero after s/he rides off into the sunset? Finding ways to acknowledge the special gifts of our hero/heroines, as well as other people in our life, is an important part of ethical living. This month we also honor our Senior Class Graduates in a Recognition Day Ceremony.

CSA Calendar:

5/20: Recognition Day & CSA Graduation.

5/27: Memorial Day: NO Classes.

May Theme: "How Do You Thank A Hero?"

Ethical Action Project: Helping to beautify our BSEC garden.

Our Children's Sunday Assembly program meets every Sunday from 10am to 12:15 pm. We offer an ethics-centered curriculum and community for children aged 4-13 years. Registration is open all year.

Remi Gay, Director

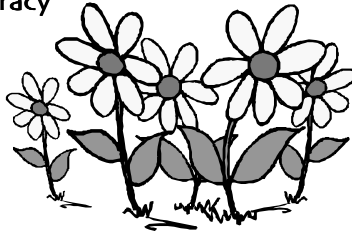
May 6 Spring Fair

Special Platform on Youth and Democracy

Guest Speaker: Grace Lee Boggs

Afternoon Fair to Include:

**Drumming, Booths,
Arts & Crafts, and a silent auction
Plus more surprises!**



May 6 is shaping up to be a big intergenerational program, focusing on the need for youth to take saving their local communities into their school programs and from there into the world. Grace Lee Boggs, a philosopher-activist for over 50 years, co-author of *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*, *Conversations in Maine* and her recent autobiography, *Living for Change* will be the special guest speaker. The topic will be *Youth Leadership and the Future of Participatory Democracy*.

This year's spring fair will be an intergenerational celebration and open house, featuring: an all-ages drumming program in our garden; community organization and craft sales booths; an introduction to BSEC programs and project offerings; a silent auction to raise funds for, among other things, meeting house refurbishment and leadership support in local and global development projects; BSEC children's and youth programs open to the community; and much more. To volunteer, contact Rita at 768-2972 or Maureen at 638-7095 or megg1968@aol.com.

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53 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, New York 11215