



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 94, no. 4

Ethical Action:

Preserving Neighborhood Diversity

BSEC is invited to join a "Campaign of Conscience" to help our low income neighbors in Park Slope from being evicted. Because of the skyrocketing real estate market, many homeowners are selling their homes to buyers who double or triple the rent. New buyers displace long-term tenants who often are elderly, disabled, minorities or single parents with children. Unfortunately, existing laws exclude tenants in buildings with fewer than six apartments. Many long-term residents stuck with the neighborhood when it was more troubled, and helped to make it the stable and attractive community that it is. Now, we are losing them and our neighborhood is losing its diversity.

BSEC members, I believe, feel that a community that evicts seniors, minorities and low income people is not the kind of place we want to live in. The Campaign's goal is to prevent displacement of tenants in small buildings, by educating the community about our shared values, by encouraging and honoring landlords who respect those values, and by discouraging landlords who do not.

The Fifth Avenue Committee, which has an excellent record in creating job programs, housing, and sustainable businesses, is helping tenants join with religious groups in the Campaign. It has declared the area from Bergen to Second Street and from Third to Sixth Avenue a "Displacement Free Zone" and will mark the zone with posters. It will try to obtain pledges of support from landlords, real estate agents, mortgage lenders, community leaders and residents. The Campaign has a well thought-out and comprehensive plan to stop unconscionable profiteering, especially by absentee landlords, from harming our community. Please attend a workshop about the Campaign on Tuesday, January 11 at 6:30pm (place to be announced). Following the workshop, BSEC, along with other religious groups in Park Slope, is planning a consciousness-raising Housing and Community Sabbath program about the campaign on February 11-13, 2000. For more information contact me or Lisel Burns.

Charles Horwitz

The Heroic Appeal of the Ethical Faith by Henry Neumann (1926)

Henry Neumann was BSEC Leader from 1916 until 1957. These remarks were excerpted from an essay written in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Ethical Movement, and despite some archaic language, they ring true as much at the end of this century as they did at its beginning.

No guarantee exists that Evolution, the God whom many modern persons have substituted for the older, must eventually bring a perfect human society. The higher we rise, the more aware we grow of a higher still beyond. The best we ever succeed in reaching is the vantage ground from which we behold a better surpassing even that. Between the loftiest demands of the spirit and the response in the world of flesh and blood there will always be a chasm, never fully bridged.

Even if a life without the least stain or flaw were at last possible, yet before it appears, this planet of ours may grow as cold and lifeless as the moon. And what do we know of the life there may be in worlds other than our own? This globe, which looms so large when we think of it by itself, is but a pitifully time speck of dust in worlds upon worlds of boundless extent. When we say "perfect" life we must not be provincial, we must not shrink from the sublimities which the world implies. Perfection means totality. In the perfect whole no life is deficient, and no life is any guarantee that this puny fragment of the universe we see in the life of our planet must finally reveal the full glory of the perfect day.

But it is precisely when we have faced these facts at their worst that the heroic appeal in the Ethical faith touches us. We deny that the best in us can come out only when we have the guarantee that the right will ultimately win here and everywhere. On the contrary, many of us believe that a courageous loyalty to the right is most needed when there is no such assurance beforehand. We do not need the guarantee of victory. Our greatest need is to be on the side that deserves the victory. Life

is not exalted for us by the fact that our side will win. It is greatened by our trying to be the sort of men and women who fit themselves to promote what ought to triumph, whether we know beforehand that it will or not.

We take our stand upon the worthwhileness of loyalty to the perfect ideal, whatever may thwart its work. We believe that there are heroic depths in the human soul that have never been addressed as they deserve. The real greatness of man shows itself only when the heroic spirit is most challenged. And we are all of us capable of more than we ordinarily suppose. There are depths upon depths in us that we are never aware of until we face unafraid the difficulties we imagine we can never bear. It is marvelous what can be done by courage, which is only strength made conscious of its unused resources. The Ethical faith believes that the spirit of man, awake and aware of itself, is more than a match for whatever it is called upon to meet.

When we learn to see the radiance reflected from the faces of those with whom we now live and work, the problem of living is cleared up for us. We know why the labors that progress exacts are amply justified. We know better what a sacred undertaking a genuine ethical progress is to mean. We think of our religion not as a way of escaping effort but as a way of getting more effort out of us. The pain that attends growth is not the last word. The guarantee of victory is less important than the will to enlist on the side that deserves to win. To live heroically is its own compensation in which all can share. In every person there is a slumbering hero. To rouse himself he needs only to know how exalted is the cause he is called upon to promote.



Time is running out...

to make your reservations for the

BSEC New Year's Eve Party!

Join us as we celebrate the new millennium!

(see back page for all the details)

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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

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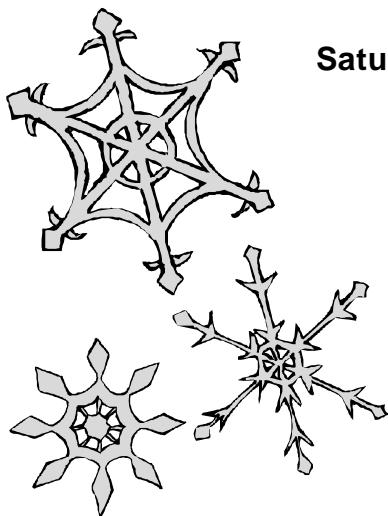
Coffeehouse: Anne Klaeysen 965-3611

Environment: Kurt Johnson 768-2972

Youth Group: Rita Wilson & Tony Severo

Ethically Speaking is published six to ten times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeysen, Marshall Dubin, Antoinette Wegnerman, Celeste Leibowitz, Remi Gay, and Charles Horwitz.

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.



**WINTER CRAFTS FAIR:
Saturday, December 11, 11am - 4pm**

GIFT SHOPPING?

BSEC celebrates Winter Crafts Fair '99 on Saturday, December 11th, 11 AM - 4 PM. Our magnificent turn-of-the-century landmark mansion will be transformed into a gallery of original arts and crafts, including pottery, jewelry, clothing, toys, art prints, and much more. Find that something special for everyone on your holiday shopping list. Also: delicious refreshments and a raffle of selected crafts. Call the BSEC office at 768-2972 for information, or to volunteer.

VOLUNTEERS STILL NEEDED!

VIEWPOINT

Creed and Deed: An Ongoing Dialogue

Over the past year BSEC member Martha Hoffman has been taking an inventory of the books in our library, most of them from Dr. Henry Neumann's collection and many of them with his handwritten notes. She has discovered several gems, including a first edition copy of "An Ethical Philosophy of Life" inscribed by Felix Adler to Dr. Neumann. My favorites are the 47 volumes, from 1914 to 1961, of "The Standard," a publication issued by the American Ethical Union "to promote ethical thinking and to encourage better ways of living." Dr. David S. Muzzey writes in the inaugural number, "So in the battle of today, amid the clash of creeds and the confusion of moral judgments, we raise our standard. May it be an inspiration to courage to clarity, and to candor!"

I have been reading a series of articles in Volume 2 (1915) under the heading, "Should Ethical Culture Societies Formulate Any Statement of Belief?" There are contributions from Dr. Muzzey, Alfred W. Martin, Percival Chubb, Dr. John Elliott, Horace J. Bridges, S. Burns Weston, G.E. O'Dell, Dr. Henry Neumann, and of course, Dr. Adler, resulting from their discussion during a conference of the Fraternity of Leaders of Ethical Societies. It makes for fascinating reading: hours slip by and "real" work remains untouched. And the answer? Well, at the last National Leaders Council meeting the question posed was: Does Ethical Culture need a metaphysics? Another question. And that is what I have always liked about Ethical Culture: we try to ask the right questions; we dialogue with each other, and we search together, not for the right answers, but for the right way to be with each other that respects both the search and the searchers.

Anne Klaeysen

Ethics for December and Beyond

December is the month of holidays. According to the Judeo-Christian religions, the major celebration is Christmans and Hanukah. Also to be honored are the holidays of Mohamed and Buddha on whatever month they occur. Underlying all of these faiths is the emphasis on peace and good will to the hard-pressed humanity of this planet.

What does the month of December mean to our Brooklyn Society?

At our best and we strive to elicit the best
Ethical Culture is unique.

The distinction we seek

Is to preach sparingly and daringly

For causes that matter to our sate and nation.

Let it be our main concentration

To demonstrate by what we do,

BSEC is the place for you.

Marshall F. Dubin

A Note From the Editor...

Unfortunately, this month's issue of *Ethically Speaking* is late again, as usual. As the editor, I think I'm doing fine with pulling things together into a presentable whole, but I'm not so good at other important things, like scheduling work, and enforcing deadlines, and ensuring a timely delivery every month. Plus it's my responsibility to keep the website updated, and every month around newsletter time that project gets put on the backburner.

In the words of Regis Philbin, "I'm only one man!" And I need help.

With that thought in mind, I'd like to start a BSEC Media Group, whose purpose would be to help BSEC take best advantage of its two main modes of mass communication: the newsletter and the website.

The newsletter is the old warhorse, and still our most important mailing. It is a piece of BSEC in people's hands each month. But space is limited, and it's best suited for timely announcements and articles.

The website is more than just a place for announcements and the office phone number. It has the potential to reflect BSEC in all its diverse detail — not just a calendar of events, but a rich archive of our history, and a reference to our present and future. Plus, a good website can attract a lot of new members, especially younger members, so it must not be neglected.

If you're interested in plotting the future course of BSEC's mass communication, please e-mail me at "strock@mindspring.com". You can also call me at 369-3165, or leave me a note at the office. (Just because we have new technologies doesn't mean we abandon the old ones.) We'll see each other sometime in January. Thanks! —Bob

DECEMBER 1999 BSEC CALENDAR

12/1 – 12/5

Wednesday 12/1

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 and ongoing discussion focusing on basic ethical notions and every day moral dilemmas.

8-9:30PM: *The Creative Process*, a series of discussions with guest speakers in the fields of literature, music and art. Tonight's presentation on *Straddling That Narrative Place* with composer Bernadette Speech and poet Thulani Davis.

Thursday 12/2

7PM: Monthly Board of Trustees Meeting.

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

Friday, 12/3

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 an evening of devotional music produced by *Loretta Roome*. With henna painting by the *Mehndi Project*. \$8 Donation.

Saturday, 12/4

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

Sunday 12/5

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

10-11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Sunday Platform with Leader Lisel Burns: *What Are My First Things?*

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

Combine Fun, Food, and Matchmaking to do Good

Matchmaking our members and friends with resource needs of self help groups in local and global communities is an emerging approach in BSEC ethical action programming. If you want a fun evening meeting do-gooders like yourself, or if you have a need or a resource to share on behalf of underresourced community development leaders and groups, then find out more about these evening gatherings. Hosted by Lisel's wedding couples but single folks are fine! To help organize or come, contact Linda Stallard at the BSEC office Monday through Wednesday afternoons, or Lisel at 783-2298.

12/6 – 12/12

Tuesday, 12/7

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

Wednesday 12/8

7:30PM: Wedding Couples Workshop with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns. For further information call 783-2298.

Thursday 12/9

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

Friday, 12/10

6:30PM: Membership Potluck Supper for new, old, and future members.

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents singer-songwriters *Ilene Weis* and *Jane Barnett*. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 12/11

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

11AM-4PM: *Winter Crafts Fair*.

Sunday 12/12

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

11AM: Sunday Platform: Intergenerational Winter Festival with the Sunday School.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

Membership News

Don't forget about the auction, planned for March 26! *Donations are still needed*. If you have any services you can offer, or products you would like to donate, or storage space we can use, please contact Ruth Pikitch, Bruce Leibowitz, Larry Sherman, or the BSEC office.

Constance Pigozzi, BSEC's First Vice President and Platform Committee Chair, experienced a heart flutter in November. We all hope that she takes extra good care of herself during this holiday season.

Bea Garber has volunteered to "pet-sit" for BSEC members who are going on vacation and need someone to care for a pet while they are away. She has offered to donate the proceeds to the Society. Thank you, Bea!

Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but is virtue itself; nor do we rejoice in it because we restrain our lusts, but, on the contrary, it is because we rejoice in it that we are able to restrain our lusts.

Spinoza

12/13 – 12/19

Tuesday, 12/14

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

Wednesday 12/15

7:30-9PM: *Games Galore Night*. Family entertainment with games and light refreshments. Admission \$8 per person or \$6 if you bring your own game. Call Bruce Leibowitz at 336-3683 for information.

7:30-9PM: *Faith Conversations*.

Thursday 12/16

7-9PM: T'ai Chi Chuan.

Friday, 12/17

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Third Friday with the Park Slope Food Coop: Matt Mitler and the theater group *Dzieci* performing *A Fool's Mass*, an evening of buffoonery, choral hymn singing and chants from the 8th through the 16th centuries. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 12/18

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

Sunday 12/19

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

10-11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Holiday Colloquy.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

12/20 – 1/2

Tuesday 12/21

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

Wednesday 12/22

6:30-8PM: **Newcomers' Workshop:** *The Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture*.

8PM: **Core Values Workshop**, with Leader Lisel Burns and Anne Klaeyesen.

Thursday 12/23

7PM: The Richard Price Book Discussion Group discusses *An Ocean in Iowa* by Peter Hedges. Call 331-1137 for information.

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

Sunday 12/26

NO Sunday Assembly or Platform

Tuesday, 12/28

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

Friday 12/31

6PM - 1AM: *New Year's Eve Party*.

Sunday 1/2

NO Sunday School Classes: Winter Break

11AM: Sunday Platform with Leader Lisel Burns.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

December Platforms

December 5: *What Are My First Things? Personal Priorities for the Next Millennium*
With BSEC Leader Lisel Burns. Setting up a life so that our most cherished values are honored first requires foresight, insight, courage, and discipline. What conditions can we create to elicit these qualities in each other?

December 12: *Winter Festival*
With Remi Gay and the students of the Childrens' Sunday Assembly in an intergenerational celebration of the season.

December 19: *Holiday Colloquy*

December 26: No Platform.

January 2:
Hard Choices and Their Consequences
With BSEC Leader Lisel Burns. Raising key distinctions between the life images of crossroads and "the road not taken" versus the multi-tasking view that we can have and do and be everything at once. Authenticity involves finding and following one's own path to the neglect of other desirable ones.

Coming in January:
Bergen Ethical Society Leader Joseph Chuman; Martin Luther King Legacy; AEU President Ellen McBride; Mark Bernstein on Felix Adler and Algernon Black.

This Season's Platform Theme is *Finding Rooted, Responsible, and Reflective Ways of Living Amid the Challenges of the Year 2000.*

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

Wednesday Nights at BSEC: Deepening the Discussion

Wednesday nights are a chance for members and friends of BSEC to share in conversations that go a bit deeper than the run of the mill. Here's what you can expect each month:

First Wednesdays

But Is It Right? Discussions on how to be moral in a difficult world.

The Creative Process Artists, writers, and musicians share their insights.

Second Wednesdays

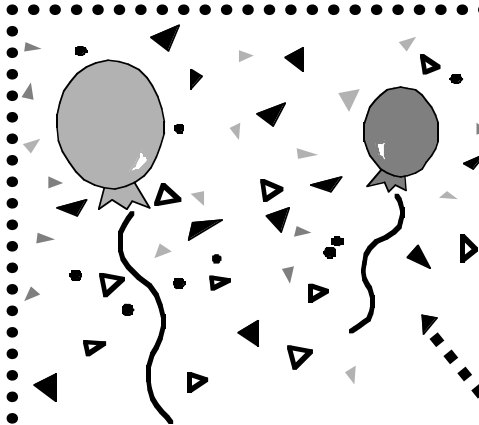
Couples Workshops and Community Development Matchmaking.

Third Wednesdays

Faith Conversations Discussions on religion and faith from a humanist perspective.

Fourth Wednesdays

Newcomers Workshops and Core Values Discussions for new and old members.



New Year's Eve Gala Ring in the New Millennium at BSEC!

A very special event for a very special occasion. Here's the program:

- 9 PM: Hors D'oeuvres
- 10 PM: Gourmet Dinner
- 10:30 PM: Entertainment
- 11:45 PM: Champagne Toast
- Midnight: Gala Fireworks
- 12:20 AM: Candlelight ceremony
- 12:30 AM: Dancing, Dancing!
- 2:00 AM: Safe trip home!

Highlights of the program:

- Dress Theme: black & white (casual or formal)
- Fancy buffet dinner prepared by BSEC's master chef, Emanuel Akoun
- Master of Ceremonies: Tony Severo
- Entertainment: the wonderfully talented professional cabaret singer Ann McCormack, performing a variety of well-known tunes spanning the century.
- Brooklyn's traditional fireworks display in Prospect Park
- Post-millennium reflections led by Remi Gay
- Dancing until 2AM, Sheila Jean-Baptiste Kosoff, D.J.
- This event is a fundraiser for the renovation & repair of our beautiful Landmark Building. Admission is \$45/person, or \$80/couple (bring a friend). Seating is limited, and **reservations are required.** Call 768-2972 to make your reservation today!

Childcare will be provided. Make sure to **send in your reservations by December 15.** Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime event!



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture
53 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, New York 11215

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