

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

TWO WEST 64TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10023 TEL.212 874-5210 E-MAIL OFFICE@NYSEC.ORG

Sunday Programs
(for details see page 2)

March 2
**NEW MEMBERS
RECOGNITION SUNDAY**
"Earth's the Best Place for Love:
Celebrating Our Place in
Nature"

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader
Ben Bean Presides

March 9
**THE ETHICAL HUMANIST
AWARD CEREMONY**

Senator James M. Jeffords,
Award Recipient
Dr. Khoren Arisian Presides

March 16
"All Gods Finally Fail, Only To
Be Replaced"

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader
Patricia Bruder Debrovner Presides

March 23
FAMILY & FRIENDS DAY
"New Developments in
Cloning"

Dr. Charles H. Debrovner
Latanya Frazier Presides

March 30
"Hold the Hemlock: Alternatives
in End-of-Life Care"

Dr. Richard Bernstein
Dr. Judith D. Wallach Presides

WQXR-FM (96.3)

Broadcasts

1st and 3rd Sundays of
the month at 7:30 am

March 2
"Benjamin Franklin: The First
American & The First Ethical
Humanist"

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader

March 16
"Is This All There Is? Life's First
Discoveries"

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader

Sunday, March 9, 11:30 am

**U.S. Senator
James M. Jeffords**

to receive

Ethical Humanist Award

*for his courageous action
in switching his party
affiliation from Republi-
can to independent, thus
changing the balance of
power in the Senate*



Free Admission
**New York Society for
Ethical Culture**
2 West 64th Street, New York, NY

**For reception to follow, reservations are
required; call Ben Bean at (212) 874-5210.**

Sunday Morning Meetings

March 2—NEW MEMBERS RECOGNITION SUNDAY

“Earth’s the Best Place for Love: Celebrating Our Place in Nature”

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader

Nature is neutral but not in our human interpretation of its ever-shifting moods. Probably no one in the last 200 years has been more commonsensically enthralled by and a student of nature than Henry David Thoreau. His prose is as sturdy as his understanding that we are, first of all, inhabitants of the natural world and, only secondarily, members of society. Granted Thoreau was not the most sociable of people, he still has a point that in our fast paced, technologically dominant age we often forget that our spiritual and moral nature is part and parcel of our earthling sensibility. Technology can estrange us from nature with our barely being aware of it. Does any human activity do more lasting damage to the earth than modern warfare? Meanwhile an ecological apocalypse is steadily in the making. Like many 19th century individuals, Felix Adler, for all his lofty philosophic musings and dedication to the humanization of industrialism, was a great hiker throughout his adult years and did his most focused thinking and writing during summers spent either in Switzerland or at the family cabin in the Adirondacks. All that Ethical Culture needs to complete its humanist religious domain is a philosophy of nature.

March 9—THE ETHICAL HUMANIST AWARD CEREMONY

Senator James M. Jeffords

Senator Jeffords will receive the Ethical Humanist Award for his courageous action in switching his party affiliation from Republican to Independent in 2001, thus changing the balance of power in the Senate. The Award honors an individual who “has acted with extraordinary moral courage, without regard for the sanction or acclaim of his or her peers, and whose actions have had broad humanizing implications.” Society President Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh will present the Award to Senator Jeffords, whose books, *My Declaration of Independence* and the newly published *Independent Man*, will be available for purchase.

March 16—“All Gods Finally Fail, Only To Be Replaced”

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader

The varieties of theism, *monotheism* particularly, as manifested in the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are back in a big way. We as a world are moving into ludicrously dark times and it is of our own making—the demons and deities of our own imagining are driving us. When fear reigns, as all of a sudden it so seems in light of that iconic date, 9/11, thinking suffers and emotion triumphs. But does it? The opposite of reason is not emotion, after all, but stupidity. Reason’s root is freedom, the central positive trait of being human. So why is it that all gods fail? Because

we transfer too much of ourselves onto these fictive creations and expect too much from them. We keep replacing gods that fail because we have great difficulty accepting total responsibility for our own lives. Could it be, then, that the primal problem of our conflicted age is that we have substituted stupidity for intelligence? Inquiring minds want to know!

March 23—FAMILY & FRIENDS DAY

“New Developments in Cloning”

Dr. Charles H. Debrovner

Dr. Debrovner will discuss new developments in cloning and the exciting possibilities of post-millennium motherhood. He will address the ethical implications of cloning. Dr. Debrovner is a fertility specialist and past Society president. He has previously spoken to us on cloning and on stem cells, among other topics.

March 30—“Hold the Hemlock: Alternatives in End-of-Life Care”

Dr. Richard Bernstein

While physician assisted suicide and euthanasia are being advocated and addressed as critical to preserve autonomy and choice at the end of life, it is crucial to understand alternative approaches, which are legal, ethical and widely available.

Richard Bernstein is a practicing internist at Mt. Sinai Hospital and a member of the Ethical Society of Bergen County. He has spoken at national and international meetings on palliative care, medical ethics, and business ethics.

Ethical Action Committee

Christine Swann

Our DNA Testing Fundraising goes on apace. Our next event is a Book Sale on March 30th. Please check your shelves (sure you need space for new books!). We will be grateful for books in good condition, preferably hard backs. Please give them to Ben Bean. Also, there will be collection boxes in the lobby starting in March.

We continue to support New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty in its efforts to get a moratorium pending further studies. You can help NYADP and have an enjoyable time by attending their next fundraiser on Saturday, March 15. It will include tickets to *The Exonerated*, a beautifully performed and moving play based on real stories of people released from Death Row, and a pre-performance reception in a great loft home with wonderful food and interesting talk. Tickets are \$75 of which \$25 is tax-deductible.

Together with other groups we will make our voice heard to protest war without a UN Resolution calling for it. Watch for e-mails, call-outs, letter writing and grab your Ethical Culture Society hats and buttons and join us at demonstrations.... A petition to rescind the Bush tax cuts also has our full support.... Now that Congress is back in session we have restarted letter writing on a variety of issues—Women’s Reproductive Rights, Civil Liberties, local NY issues, and more. Please use this easy way of making your views

known to our legislature.... Please see the Board Report on approval of resolutions put forward by Ethical Action Committee members regarding projects described above. We now have the support of the Board for our campaigns!

We meet on the last Thursday of every month at 6:00 pm at the Society. Join us.

From the Board

Christine Swann

The Board passed 3 resolutions making formal their support for

- a moratorium on the Death Penalty
- a petition to rescind the second installment of the Administration’s tax cuts
- a stand against the War in Iraq without a UN resolution

This means that the Ethical Action Committee and others can move on these issues with approval of the Board.

The full report will appear in the April issue of this newsletter.

Membership Services Committee

Barbara Levenson

New Members Recognition Day

Sunday, March 2 will be a special day of welcome to all our newest members who have joined the Society within the last year. There will be a special recognition ceremony during the morning service when each new member will be intro-

duced to the congregation. Following lunch, a dessert reception will be held in their honor. Join us in welcoming the newest members of our Society.

March Potluck Supper

Set aside Friday evening March 14 and enjoy a potluck supper at the Society. If you weren’t there last year you missed a good time, so why not join us this year? For further details look for the flyers or call Barbara Levenson (212) 799-2920 or Ben Bean (212) 874-5210, ext. 113.

Film Forum

On Friday, March 21 the Film Forum welcomes Spring with a presentation of *The Good Girl* starring Jennifer Aniston in a breakthrough performance and Jake Gyllenhaal. A story of alienation in American suburbia, the film asks if it is really necessary to give up your dreams as you grow older? The dark comedy provides no easy answers, so join us for the stimulating discussion that is sure to follow. Doors open at 6:30 pm and the film begins at 7:00 pm. Admission: \$3.00 for members and \$4.00 for non-members, popcorn and beverages included.

SPRING FRIENDS & FAMILY DAY

Members are encouraged to bring guests on March 23!

- Morning Meeting on cloning presented by Dr. Charles Debrovner
- Spring Lunch
- Film screening of *Norma Rae* in honor of Women’s History Month

Our Ethical Family

Ben Bean and Members

New Members

Helene Basist, is a retired art educator. A friend introduced her to our Society and she appreciates the Sunday meetings, yoga meditation and other ethical activities.

Robin Burnosky, is an NBC Olympics Manager and is trained as an events manager. She attended some of the outside events held here at the Society and gained most of her initial information from our web site. She co-chairs our new monthly Salon at which the impact of ethics on everyday life is explored. She enjoys the Sunday Meetings.

Cyla Gurewicz, an administrator/bookkeeper and massage therapist, is multilingual. She was drawn to the Society by the word "Ethics." She has many ideas and will be an active volunteer.

Christina Nargolwala is an attorney (Federal Court mediator) and found us through the talk co-sponsored by the *Nation* featuring Robert Fisk last November. She enjoys the Sunday Meetings, and the orientation was the icing on the cake. Christina also attended the last party held at Jean Kotkin's apartment.

Lance Silverman, is a Professor of Chemistry at Yeshiva University. He had joined the Society years ago and now has returned.

Lizzy Soenarjati, is a computer specialist who came to the Society as a result of David Sutcliff's encouragement to visit on a Sunday. Lizzy is multilingual and does computer animation and web graphics. She was attracted to the open-

ness of the members and our Sunday Meetings.

Harriet Vicente is a manager whose daughter attended the Ethical Culture School. Harriet found us through a friend.

Members Resigned

Ann Lieber has difficulties with transportation.

Anne Mackler joined another church.

Bettyjane Reiss has returned to the Unitarians.

Barry Solow has returned to his temple.

March Calendar

Support Group
Fridays, 6:30 pm

Supervised Visitation
Saturdays, 9:30 am & 1:30 pm

Ethics for Children
Sundays, 11:00 am

Morning Meetings
Sundays, 11:30 am

Shelter
Sunday-Thursday, 7:30 pm

WQXR-FM (96.3)
Sunday, March 2 & 16, 7:30 am

Newsletter Deadline
Monday, March 3

Board of Trustees
Monday, March 3, 6:00 pm

Men's Group
Wednesday, March 5, 6:00 pm

Caring Committee
Monday, March 10, 5:00 pm

Salon: Ethical Education
Monday, March 10, 7:00 pm

Women's Group
Tuesday, March 11, 6:00 pm

Pot Luck Supper
Friday, March 14, 6:30 pm

Society offices closed
Monday, March 17

Membership Committee
Wednesday, March 19, 6:00 pm

Social Service Board
Wednesday, March 19, 6:30 pm

Film Forum
Friday, March 21, 7:00 pm

Ethical Action Committee
Thursday, March 27, 6:00 pm

Strathmere Ensemble
Thursday, March 27, 8:00 pm

Spring Folk Music Concert
Saturday, March 29, 4:30 pm

Book Sale – Fundraiser
Sunday, March 30, 1:00 pm

Reading Programs

Great Books Discussion Series
Wednesday, March 5, 7:30 pm
Mill, Utilitarianism
Plato, *Symposium*

Ethical Culture Retirement Activities
Wednesday, March 12, 3:00 pm
Annie E. Proulx, *The Shipping News*

*Great Books Discussion Series –
Fiftieth Anniversary Series*
The Evil and The Guilty
Wednesday, March 19, 7:30 pm
Marguerite Yourcenar, *Coup De Grâce*

Sundays at the Society

Mornings:

Mar. 2	Leaders' Writings	10:15 am
Mar. 9	Colloquy	10:30 am
Mar. 16	Poetry Reading	10:30 am
Mar. 23	Yoga Meditation	10:30 am
Mar. 30	Coffee Hour	10:30 am

Afternoon Programs:

Mar. 2	Ethics in the News	1:30 pm
Mar. 9	Ethics Study	1:30 pm
Mar. 16	Orientation	1:00 pm
Mar. 23	Spring Lunch	1:00 pm
	Film	2:00 pm
Mar. 30	Book Sale	1:30 pm

OF MORALS AND NONTHEISTIC RELIGION: A PRIMER

"Vital religion has always suffered when orthodoxy was more regarded than virtue." –Ben Franklin

Five Tuesdays in April, 2003, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Ceremonial Hall, New York Society for Ethical Culture

Facilitator: Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture

**Society Members \$35; Non-members \$50; Single Admission \$10.00 Members
\$15.00 Non-members
\$5.00 Students**

- April 1 *"An Oft Untold Story: Agnosticism, Atheism, and Non-Creedal Religion"*
Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader
- April 8 *"The Neglected History of America's Real Religion"*
Robert B. Tapp, PhD.
Emeritus Professor of Humanities, Religious Studies, and South Asian Studies,
University of Minnesota; presently Dean, Humanist Institute, New York City
- April 15 *"The Deistic Revolution: Between Secularism and Supernaturalism"*
Joseph Chuman, PhD.
Leader, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, New Jersey; Adjunct
Professor of Religion, Columbia University
- April 22 *"The Fate of Secularity in A Fundamentalist World"*
Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader
- April 29 *"The Defining Factor: From Skepticism to Philosophic and Pragmatic Naturalism"*
Paul Kurtz, PhD.
Chair, Center for Free Inquiry – International, Buffalo, New York; Emeritus
Professor of Philosophy, SUNY at Buffalo; President, Prometheus Books

To register call Nicola Dempsey at (212) 874-5210.

Child care available if requested in advance with registration.

Salon: Ethical Education

Mary Domowicz

Join my co-chair Robin Burnosky and me for personally resonant dialogue on how ethics impact everyday thoughts and actions. Consider your perceptions, share your experiences, and examine your current behavior.

Please note: Due to scheduling conflicts, we have switched our monthly meetings to Second Mondays.

This month's topic is Ethical Education: What are some ethical challenges you have faced as an educator, parent or relative (of a child, teenager, or college student)? What would you do differently? What were some of your educational experiences growing up? How can you affect social conditions that thwart moral growth?

Monday, March 10, 7:00-8:30 pm, Room 514. Register with Ben Bean at (212) 874-5210, ext 113. Please bring friends who are not members, as lively debate is our goal! April's topic: Ethics in Relationships.

Spring Concert Reminder

March 29, 4:30 pm, our second annual Spring Folk Music Concert will feature the Walkabout Clearwater Chorus, folk trio Stone Soup, and singer/songwriter James Durst. Oscar Brand, legendary WNYC radio personality, will host. A celebration supper with the performers will follow. Purchase tickets in the cafeteria on Sundays or contact Ben Bean in the membership office, (212) 874-5210, ext. 113.

Remembering Jean Somerville Kotkin



by Frank Susa
with Jon
Liechty

Jean Somerville Kotkin is not the kind of person one can easily memo-

rialize. Her influence in society was so vast and her impact on others so great that we will never quite know the full extent of it all. And it is certainly not possible to recall all that she accom-

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plished as a Leader of the American Ethical Union and the New York Society for Ethical Culture, Vice President of the American Humanist Association, administrator of the Humanist Institute, and executive director of the American Ethical Union. She was a longtime trustee of the New York Society and served on the boards of the Ethical Culture Fieldston School and the Encampment for Citizenship. Her life was full with one achievement after another. More important to those who remember her dearly, though, were the countless acts of service that Jean was continuously leading, and successfully enlisting others to join in.

There are all the little facts about her to recall, as well. She loved the color purple. She snored. She did the puzzles

in the *New York Times* whenever she could. She completed high school at 16 and went on to earn a certificate in teaching from McGill University and, much later, a degree in Religious Studies from Fordham University; she completed training as a pastoral counselor and as a Humanist leader, both in her 60s, and was certified as a Humanist Counselor in her 70s. Born a Canadian, Jean never became an American citizen, and was proud of her national heritage. She married twice and had three children—Jon, Beth and Garth.

Jean had a difficult childhood. Her mother died when Jean was just three, and her father passed away when she was 12. One of her brothers died in WWII and another of cancer in the 1960s. Sadly, one of the utmost losses in Jean's life occurred when her son Garth disappeared without a trace, and without explanation, in 1980. Despite her innumerable attempts to find him, he never returned.

All of these experiences toughened her and taught her self-reliance. In turn, she sought to teach others the value of personal responsibility, exemplifying in her daily life exactly what it means to live by sound moral principles. Jean also strongly believed in giving back to people. Her son Jon observed, "She had an interesting mix of values—that

Horatio Alger ethic of independence and self-sufficiency combined with a real commitment to social justice and helping the underserved.”

Jean believed in a human “spirit,” that there is an indomitable spiritual element to being human, and she felt strongly about it. It is in our natures to find the good, to do the good, she taught. This was a very significant perspective on life and humanity that influenced others around her throughout her life.

Jean made a family out of her friends. Until about nine years ago, Jean lived a block away from the New York Society in an apartment on Central Park West. In many ways, Jean’s apartment served as an annex to the Society and to the American Ethical Union. Often, AEU Board members would wind up sleeping at her home when they came into town for meetings. It was as if “every committee meeting would turn into a party,” recalls Muriel Neufeld, who served alongside Jean for many years as a board member and President of the AEU.

Jean’s former apartment faced Central Park. Every year at Thanksgiving, Jean would open her home to as many as 30 or 40 people so that kids, both big and little, from the Society, and from the Ethical Culture School and the neighborhood, could watch the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. Jean continued this beloved tradition for as many as 40 years.

Jean officiated at countless weddings through the years, both as an Ethical

Culture Leader and as a Humanist Counselor. She frequently held parties for the couples she had married, attempting, as always, to entice them into the Ethical fold.

Jean was extremely conscientious about any work she took on. Whether as a teacher, a leader, organizer, or administrator, she will be remembered as both well organized and effective. Even though she could come across sternly, the only people who didn’t appreciate her were the ones she came after to get them to work, to follow through on commitments that they had made but not met.

Her toughness and resoluteness truly benefited the Ethical Societies she served, especially when it came to fundraising. As executive director of the AEU, she helped many small groups get their start. She founded

...she sought to teach others the value of personal responsibility, exemplifying in her daily life exactly what it means to live by sound moral principles.

the Princeton Fellowship and several Societies in the South. But the annual fundraising events at New York’s Plaza Hotel for the Encampment for Citizenship are what many recall as among her greatest successes.

Jean’s commitment to the Encampment was obvious. One main purpose of the Encampment was to present young people with experience and understanding of the enormous variation in values within American culture.

And it sought to help the young leaders who attended come to conclusion about their own values while learning tolerance for others who see the world differently.

Jean felt strongly that young leaders were essential to social change, and vital for the future of the Ethical Movement. This is undoubtedly why she was so involved in raising funds for the Encampment. She tried to sponsor and help many young people learn leadership skills. Her son Jon recalls the 1965 Encampment in Berkeley California as being one of the most important experiences in his life, recalling that he participated in a project with Cesar Chavez, picking strawberries at the time Chavez was organizing the United Farmworkers Union.

Jean died on January 4, 2003 at Roosevelt Hospital. She was 80 years old.

Bob Kaufmann, recent Interim Leader of the New York Society, described Jean as “the kind of pain in the butt that humanity desperately

needs.” Ben Bean would kid her about being as important to the Society as a gunny sergeant. “In the Corps, the junior officers do all the huffing and puffing in front of the troops, but the gunnies really run things. Jean was our gunny sergeant.” Jean lived as one against the universe, but with everyone on her side.

Ethical Culture is a humanistic religious and philosophical movement in which people share a core of common values: the worth of each individual, ethics as central to our lives, eliciting the best from each other and doing good in the world.

We seek truth as a growing, changing body of knowledge based on experience, reason and scientific observation, and seek to use it in support of human well-being.

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR
**ETHICAL
CULTURE** 

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