

Annals
of the
Ethical Culture Institute
at the
New York Society for Ethical Culture



Volume 2/Issue 2
Summer, 2026

The Annals of the Ethical Culture Institute at NYSEC

Published quarterly.

Readers are invited to subscribe to future issues of *The Annals* by writing to
institute @ nysec.org
or completing [this form](#).
The subscription is free.

Editor

Carolyn A. Parker

Contributing Editors

Curt Collier
Richard Koral

Visit us at nysec.org/institute
to find out more about the Institute
and read past issues of *The Annals*

The Annals of the Ethical Culture Institute at the
New York Society for Ethical Culture
New York, New York
All rights reserved
Copyright 2026



Annals of the Ethical Culture Institute

at the New York Society for Ethical Culture

Volume 2/Issue 2

Summer, 2026

Contents

From the Editor

Welcome to Summer!?. 3

Ethical Report

150 & 111: The Challenges of Walking and Talking at the Same Time
Carolyn A. Parker, PhD 5

Ethical Focus

NYSEC 150th Anniversary

150th Anniversary Celebration and Gala 7

Anniversary Address
Curt Collier 9

Keynote Address
Felipe Luciano 13

150th Anniversary Platform 15

Ethical Culture at the Crossroads
Joseph Chuman, PhD. 17

Encampment for Citizenship 80th Anniversary

The Encampment at Eighty	
Anne Klaeyssen, DMin	23

Felix Adler's 175th Birthday

Felix Adler's 175th Birthday: In Praise of Audacity	
Carolyn A. Parker, PhD	29

Ethical Expression

Jody Sperling and Time Lapse Dance: Our Embodied Treeness	
Carolyn A. Parker, PhD	33

Ethical Notes and News

News, Acknowledgements, Call for Papers	36
---	----

Welcome to Summer!?

As time passes, it seems to do so with wings, and this summer of 2026 has flown by quickly, filled with important milestones in Ethical Culture. Welcome to the Summer/Anniversary Issue of the *Annals* and to a review of some of those milestones.

The milestone we most celebrated was the **150th Anniversary** of the founding of the New York Society for Ethical Culture (NYSEC) and, thereby, the founding of the Ethical Culture Movement. NYSEC marked that anniversary with celebrations on the anniversary day (May 15) as well as with a celebratory platform the following Sunday. We include here some of the addresses given on both occasions with links to additional anniversary lectures and celebrations from the past.

Another milestone was the return of the American Ethical Union (AEU) to NYSEC. The AEU held its **111th Assembly** in the NYSEC Meeting House July 24 - 26, using the theme: “Eliciting the Best: Past, Present, and Always.” Since the AEU’s founding in 1889, delegates from its member Societies have, of course, gathered at the “mother” Society numerous times, but this anniversary year provided the opportunity for a movement-wide commemoration of the Movement’s beginnings in 1876. We mention the Assembly’s keynote address in our *Ethical Report* and, as *Ethical Expression*, recognition of Jody Sperling and the Time Lapse Dance company’s excellent addition to the concept of roots.

Yet a third milestone, marked during NYSEC’s celebration, is the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the **Encampment for Citizenship**. Dr. Anne Klaeyen, NYSEC Leader Emerita, led an informative and inspiring panel discussion by Encampment alumnae. We include here her personal narrative of her experience and commitment to the Encampment, which highlights her crucial role in reconstituting the Encampment after several years of hiatus.

The final milestone to be noted in this issue of the *Annals* is Felix Adler’s birthday. Born August 13, 1851, in Alzey, Germany, this midsummer date in 2026 was Adler’s **175th birthday**. Since Adler is neither deity nor saint, some Ethical Societies celebrate the day of founding (May 15) as Founder’s Day rather than the days of his birth or death. Founder’s Day honors his extraordinary role in inspiring the beginning of this Movement when he was only 25 years old. To mark this milestone year, both as an anniversary of the Movement and of a remarkable life, we provide excerpts from the personal reminiscences of his assistant, Ernest Jacques, during the last years of that life.

We welcome you to this issue of the *Annals*. We invite you to follow the links that we provide to online resources for further reading. We invite *your* further participation by letter (addressed to institute @ nysec.org), by your Ethical Expression(s), or by participating in our upcoming events.

Carolyn A. Parker, PhD
Editor



Ethical Report

150 & 111: The Challenges of Walking and Talking at the Same Time

Carolyn A. Parker, PhD
Senior Research Fellow

As the New York Society and, eventually, the larger membership of the Ethical Culture Movement focused on the 150th Anniversary, so too did the Ethical Culture Institute devote both time and attention to this milestone. Our activities shifted from logistics to research (and vice versa), from writing to ad libbing off the cuff and on the run (so to speak), and to the (sometimes breathless) realization that, when it takes a village to get things done, we have a pretty good one at 64th Street. Here's what we've been doing:

- Participation on the planning committees for both the NYSEC 150 Gala and for AEU's 111th Assembly;
- Planning and presenting the 150th Anniversary Platform with an address from ECI Team Member, Dr. Richard Koral;¹
- Delivering the Keynote Address ("Understanding Our Roots: What We Can Take from the *Past* to Support the *Present* and Build the *Future*") for AEU's Assembly;²
- Presenting an Assembly workshop entitled: "Ethical Culture and the Right to Know." Inspired in part by Jonathan Rauch's book, *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth*,³ Richard Koral and I discussed that idea that Ethical Culture, in its respect both for the worth of the individual and the value



¹ See the video here: https://youtu.be/ai-N-4yirkA?si=bUUHKUd-XmNQ34A_.

² See the video here: <https://youtu.be/KyAxBGvZ60?si=AAJCSIdZMrLMjvz7>. Read the address here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wIcrb7LFbxZeANqrLhNRIUy2yn8GJboj/view?usp=drive_link

of relationships in cultivating our understanding of ethics and its place in those relationships, requires a broader definition of the right to know as a defense of truth than current trends seem to allow.



Following a lively discussion with excellent engagement from the audience, it seems likely that this topic will recur in other settings.

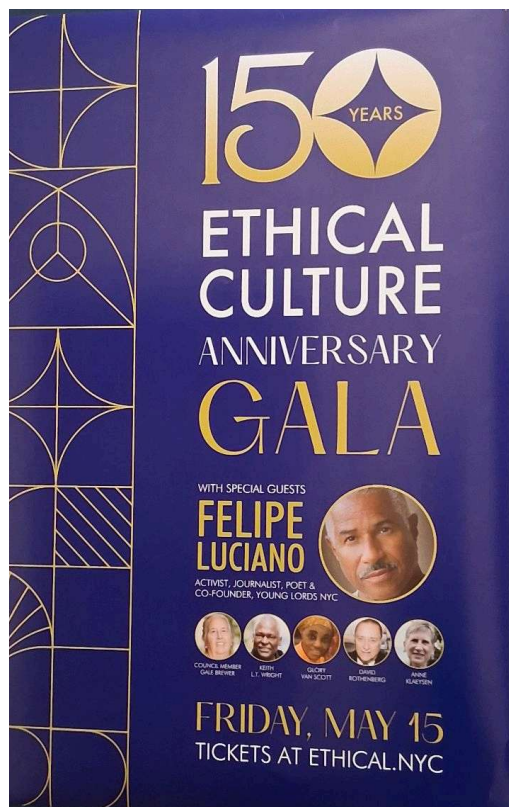


Ethical Focus

150th Anniversary Celebration and Gala

New York Society for Ethical Culture

May 15, 2026

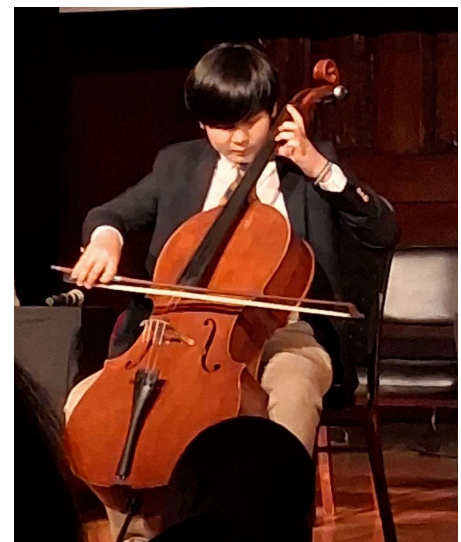


The New York Society for Ethical Culture celebrated its 150th Anniversary on May 15, 2026, with special events for the community and celebratory toasts and tastes for members and guests.

The day was a busy one for the NYSEC Meeting House (built in 1910), beginning with an afternoon of Ethical Experiences. **Dr. Richard Koral**, Ethical Culture Leader, led two sessions of “colloquy,” a form of meeting where participants discuss an ethical topic from their own lived experience, listening to others without judging or interpreting. **Elinore Kaplan**, NYSEC member and leader of the Ethics in Poetry group, led two sessions of poetry reading and discussion. **Jody Sperling**, NYSEC Eco-Artist-in-Residence and

Founder of Time Lapse Dance, held two sessions for discussion and practice of “Ethical Movement Experience.”

In the early evening, the community gathered in Adler Hall, where NYSEC Vice-President, **Steven Serling**, served as Master of Ceremonies for a series of speakers and panelists. **Josh Elson** provided opening music on the Hall’s



grand piano, followed by a solo performance on the cello by **Nathaniel Kuo-Hsu** (pictured above), performing Bach, “Cello Suite No. 1.”

NYSEC President, **Elizabeth Singer**, opened the evening’s commemoration with a brief welcome, followed by Ethical Culture Leader **Curt Collier**, who provided historical background for the celebration in his “150th Anniversary Address” (see page 7).

Activist, poet, journalist, and co-founder of Young Lords NYC, **Felipe Luciano**, gave the keynote address (see page 11). He spoke of a lifetime of working for justice and praised NYSEC and Ethical Culture for doing the same.



Dr. Anne Klaeysen, NYSEC Leader Emerita, followed with a brief introduction of her panel of “graduates” of the Encampment for Citizenship (called “Encampers”). Pictured (left to right) are Klaeysen; **Gale Brewer**, New York City Council Member; **Keith L.T. Wright**, leader of New York County Democrats, former member of New York Assembly; **Angelina Martinez** and **Annie Sinsen**, recent Encampers; **Glory Van Scott**, educator, dancer, actress, writer; **David Rothenberg**, Broadway producer and founder of the Fortune Society.

The evening concluded with a reception in Social Hall with toasts and congratulatory speeches from: **Eric Arnum**, 350NYC; **Kyndell Reid**, Mid-Manhattan NAACP; **Patricia and Charles Debrovner**, NYSEC Members; **Ada and Oberon**, NYSEC Youth.



150th Anniversary Address³

Curt Collier

Ethical Culture Leader
New York Society for Ethical Culture
Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County

Felix Adler, the founder of this amazing way of life, is not always an easy read. His prose can feel distant to modern audiences—dense, formal, shaped by the intellectual culture of the late nineteenth century. He wrote for readers steeped in philosophy, theology, and the moral debates of his era. And yet beneath that language is something remarkably alive. Because Adler was not simply refining an old tradition; he was attempting to build something entirely new.

Born in Germany in 1851, Adler was the son of Rabbi Samuel Adler of Temple Emanu-El in New York. From an early age, he was expected to follow in his father's footsteps. He studied in Germany, where he encountered philosophy, historical criticism, and new ways of thinking about religion—not as fixed revelation, but as something shaped through history and human experience.

When he returned to New York, he delivered a sermon at his father's congregation titled "The Judaism of the Future." It shocked the audience. Adler spoke about ethics, human dignity, and moral responsibility, but he never mentioned God. For many, it was incomprehensible. For

³ Address given at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, May 15, 2026.

Adler, it was the beginning of a realization that would define the rest of his life: ethical life could not rest solely on doctrine or belief. It had to be lived.

That realization would eventually lead, on May 15, 1876, to the founding of the Society for Ethical Culture. Adler was only twenty-five years old when he delivered the address that launched the movement, and in it he articulated the principle that still defines Ethical Culture today: “Believe or disbelieve as ye list—we shall at all times respect every honest conviction. But be one with us where there is nothing to divide—in action. Diversity in the creed, unanimity in the deed.”

That was the revolution.

Ethical Culture was never intended to become simply another denomination competing for followers. Adler envisioned something far more ambitious: a moral community organized not around shared theology, but around shared ethical action.

And this vision did not emerge in abstraction. As a child, Adler had accompanied his mother into crowded tenement neighborhoods in New York City, where he witnessed poverty, illness, and exclusion firsthand. He saw clearly that suffering was not simply the result of individual failure, but often the product of larger social conditions that constrained human possibility.

So Ethical Culture did not merely preach morality, it strove to build a greater society in which human worth and dignity is part of the infrastructure of society, not an addition to it. It built institutions. Ethical Culturists founded schools, established settlement houses, supported labor reform, advanced public health initiatives, fought child labor, and helped shape organizations that became part of the civic backbone of American life, including the Legal Aid Society and the Visiting Nurse Service of New York. They understood something profound: if you want people to flourish, you must help create the conditions under which flourishing becomes possible.

That insight remains revolutionary even now.

Adler eventually summarized the movement in two guiding commitments. The first was “Deed before creed.” The second was perhaps even more profound: “Act so as to elicit the best in others, and thereby in oneself.”

It is difficult for us today to fully appreciate how radical that first principle truly was. For centuries, religions had largely defined themselves through shared doctrines, theological claims, sacred texts, and statements of belief. Adler proposed something astonishingly new: that a religious community could organize itself not around agreement in thought, but around cooperation in ethical action. What ultimately mattered was not whether people arrived at the same metaphysical conclusions, but whether they could work together to advance human dignity and bring out the best in one another. It was a profound reimagining of religious life—not creed

first, but conduct first; not uniformity of belief, but a shared responsibility for the world we create together.

What made Adler's second insight equally remarkable was his belief that ethics does not emerge primarily through debate, ideology, or persuasion alone. Instead, he believed ethics emerges through relationships, participation, institutions, and the environments we create together. We do not simply learn ethics as an abstract system of ideas; we practice it through the way we live with one another. And when we create conditions that call forth dignity, compassion, courage, and responsibility in others, those same qualities become strengthened within ourselves.

That insight has deeply shaped my own work as an environmentalist. Environmental work is not simply about protecting rivers, forests, or species—though all of that matters deeply. It is also about transforming the assumptions, systems, and habits of thought that made environmental destruction possible in the first place. In the same way, Ethical Culture was never simply about helping people survive. It was about helping humanity recover an orientation toward life itself—one grounded in relationship, responsibility, and the recognition that human flourishing and the flourishing of the larger living world are inseparable. Our task is not only to care for one another, but to participate in building a culture that affirms the intrinsic worth and dignity of life in all its forms, and to continue moving that vision forward together.

And now, 150 years later, this tiny religion's mission matters more than ever.

We are living through an age marked by polarization, fragmentation, loneliness, distrust, ecological crisis, and fear. People are searching for meaning, for belonging, and for moral clarity. What Ethical Culture offers is something increasingly rare: a community centered not on dogma, but on human worth and dignity; not on certainty, but on responsibility; not on ideological purity, but on ethical participation.

But anniversaries are not only moments for celebration. They are also moments for truth-telling. Because our task is not merely to admire this legacy. Our task is to continue it. Adler did not build a museum piece. He built a living movement—a movement meant to evolve, to respond, and to act.

And so the question before us tonight is not simply whether we honor our history. The question is whether we will be bold enough to deserve it. Will we merely inherit Ethical Culture? Or will we build it anew for the next generation?

When I worked at the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture, there was a quote on the wall from my predecessor, Dr. Matthew Ies Spetter, that I have never forgotten: "Hope is not a place you find like some undiscovered country, but a place you build."

That, to me, captures the spirit of Ethical Culture perfectly.

Hope is not passive. It is constructed. It is built through schools, communities, relationships, acts of courage, and institutions that call forth the best in people. That is what Ethical Culture has done for 150 years. And now it is our turn.

So I want to leave you with this: let us not become merely caretakers of a legacy. Let us become architects of the future. Let us build communities where dignity is not simply an ideal, but a lived reality. Let us build institutions that bring out humanity's best rather than its worst. Let us build a culture where people are not reduced to tribes, labels, or ideologies, but are recognized in their full human worth.

And today, that moral vision must extend beyond the human sphere alone. We are beginning to understand more deeply that humanity and the natural world are not separate destinies, but part of the same living reality. The fate of humanity and the fate of nature are bound together. An ethical life, therefore, cannot end at the boundaries of our own species. It must also recognize the intrinsic worth and dignity of the larger community of life of which we are but a part.

If Ethical Culture calls us to elicit the best in one another, then in our own time it must also call us to build a world in which both humanity and the living systems that sustain us may flourish together.

And let us make sure that when future generations look back on this moment, they will be able to say not simply that we celebrated Ethical Culture, but that we continued its work—that together, we helped build a more hopeful world.





Keynote Address⁴

Felipe Luciano

Good evening, everyone, it is my honor to join you today as you celebrate 150 years.

It is the Ethical Society that helps us all fight for injustice.

I have lived my entire life fighting for justice.

As a young man, it was the movement of the Black Panther Party that inspired me to become a warrior for the people. Their courage, discipline, and commitment to community opened my eyes to what resistance truly meant. That inspiration led me to serve as Chairman of the Young Lords, where we fought not for recognition, but for survival, dignity, and equality. We fought to make sure children had breakfast before school. We fought to ensure our communities received immunizations and healthcare. We fought to demand that the government finally give a damn about the Puerto Rican community and the suffering that had been ignored for generations.

And for standing up, we paid a price. I was beaten. I was arrested. I was marked by the FBI. But even through the intimidation, the surveillance, and the violence, fighting for what was right was never a choice for me—it was the only option. So I kept moving forward.

I continued my work as a revolutionary, using spoken word to awaken people's consciousness and spread the message of justice. I used my platform as a journalist to tell the

⁴ Address given before the New York Society for Ethical Culture, May 15, 2026.

stories no one else wanted to tell—the stories of our people being neglected, mistreated, silenced, and forgotten. Because journalism, at its best, is truth-telling. And truth-telling is an act of resistance.

And throughout these struggles, the Ethical Society has played a critical role in standing for justice, human dignity, and moral courage. As you celebrate 150 years of lifting up the principles of equality and humanity, your mission is more important today than ever before. For 150 years, the Ethical Society has challenged people not simply to speak about justice, but to live it. To defend the vulnerable. To confront injustice. To protect democracy. And to remind us that ethics without action mean nothing.

Today, we are once again standing at a dangerous crossroads in this country. In today's society, under an unhinged administration, many people feel their voices are being silenced, their rights threatened, and their humanity diminished. Fear and division are being used as weapons. Our democracy—the very foundation generations fought and bled for—is being dismantled piece by piece before our eyes.

But history teaches us something powerful: We have been here before. The uncertainty we feel today mirrors the struggles of the past. And just as we fought then, we must fight now—not with hatred, but with courage; not with division, but with unity. Because unity is our greatest weapon. Unity across race. Unity across color. Unity across creed. Unity across communities.

The old saying that there is strength in numbers has never been more relevant than it is right now. No one group can preserve justice alone. No one community can defend democracy alone.

We must stand together and recognize that an attack on one community is an attack on all communities. Our human rights matter. Our dignity matters. And our freedom of speech is sacred. We cannot allow fear to silence us. We cannot allow history to repeat itself because good people chose comfort over courage.

This is the moment for us to rise louder than ever before. To organize. To educate. To vote. To speak. To march. To protect one another. And most importantly, to never lose faith in the power of collective action. Because every major step toward justice in this country was achieved because ordinary people stood together and demanded change. I still believe in that power. I still believe in the people. And I still believe that justice, though delayed, is always worth fighting for.

Thank you.



150th Anniversary Platform⁵

New York Society for Ethical Culture

May 17, 2026

The New York Society for Ethical Culture gathered in Ceremonial Hall on May 17, 2026, to celebrate its 150th anniversary with music, historical readings, and special addresses from Ethical Culture Leader **Dr. Richard Koral** and Leader Emeritus **Dr. Joseph Chuman**. **Dr. Carolyn A. Parker**, Senior Research Fellow for the Ethical Culture Institute, presided. A special program booklet was prepared to guide those present through the day's "exercises," as Felix Adler was wont to label the Sunday gatherings.⁶

Following introductory remarks by Parker and a welcome address from **Elizabeth Singer**, NYSEC President, members of the Society read selected excerpts from past anniversary celebrations. The first reading, taken from the "First Anniversary Address" by Felix Adler, was read by **Patricia Debrovner**, director of the Ethics in the Theater program.

The first of the 150th Anniversary addresses was delivered by Koral, who reminded listeners that ethics must be more than theory; it must be applied to the events and concerns of the day. He took war as one of the central challenges to Society members and to democracy itself. Drawing on the history of the Ethical Culture Movement during World War I as described by Howard Radest,⁷ he emphasized freedom of thought and the protection of civil liberties as concerns in the past as well as in the present. Koral argued that our contribution to the present would come from our application of ethics to these concerns.

⁵ Video available on YouTube: https://youtu.be/ai-N-4yirkA?si=47VRBwtOTAAqWC_I.

⁶ Available online at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wdC4HwiCDeda32fqGuPOvNuCtTRZgrwQ/view?usp=drive_link.

⁷ *Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: American Ethical Union, 2015), see Chapter XVI.

The second reading, taken from “On the Eve of the Centennial” by Paul R. Migliore, was read by **Danny Hanson**, member of the NYSEC Archives Committee. Chuman then delivered the second anniversary address: “Ethical Culture at the Crossroads.” He emphasized the need for community to be more than simply gathering to discuss or do as a congregation. A more intense form of community is now needed to counteract the increasing trend in the US toward hyperindividualism and the resulting “plague of loneliness and isolation.” Our duty, Chuman argued, was to become more actively engaged in each other’s lives to strengthen the social bond within Ethical.

The third and final reading of the day was taken from the address given by Khoren Arisian as part of the 2002 Founder’s Day platform. His address, entitled “Religion of the Deed: Ethical Culture as a Reform Movement,” was read by **Bonny Bean**, member Ethics in the theater and the Social Service Board. Parker closed the meeting with an invitation to join in a joyful singing of Beethoven's “Ode to Joy” with lyrics by Pete Seeger and Ethical Culture Leader Bart Worden.



Ethical Culture at the Crossroads: Looking Ahead and a Glance Within⁸

Joseph Chuman, PhD
NYSEC Leader Emeritus

It was fifty years ago, in 1976, when I stood here at the New York Ethical Society to speak as part of a gathering to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of our movement. It is fifty years later, and I am still here, and so are we. May Ethical Culture be here in 2076, so that our followers will be able to celebrate the advent of its third century.

Ethical Culture is the only religion of humanity founded in the 19th century that has survived into the 21st. It has done so, in great measure, I believe, because it places in the forefront ideals that are eternal to the human experience and remain of paramount importance. It is our task to remain dedicated to those ideals.

As we all know, we live in very dark times. Our democracy is severely threatened. American society is riven by division, hatred, a resurgence of racism, the retrograde presence of misogyny, extremist fringe ideas and movements that have become increasingly normative, an upsurge of antisemitism, and multiple manifestations of xenophobia. But beyond these political realities, the dark forces aligned with autocracy penetrate even more deeply to erode the very foundations that make human and social existence possible. In short order, we witness an assault on decency and kindness, on expertise, on learning and knowledge, and even on reason itself.

Ethical Culture has always been engaged with its times. I came of age in Ethical Culture from the late 1960s on, when, in the post-War years, the reigning American philosophy was that of Cold War liberalism. Ethical Culture reflected the ethos of those times. Ethical Culture was founded as a democratic movement and has implicitly understood that it can only exist within a democratic environment. It has steadfastly stood for democracy. It has robustly committed itself to freedom and the protection of individual rights and to the creation of a society in which the downtrodden will be uplifted, equality will be realized, and justice fulfilled.

As I look ahead, I look back to the philosophy of Felix Adler, who founded Ethical Culture and set its course for the future. At the center of his philosophy, which he continually

⁸ Address given at New York Society for Ethical Culture, May 17, 2026

articulated in word and deed, is the unqualified respect for the inherent dignity of every man and woman, regardless of the attributes of ethnicity or religion, wealth or status, or social usefulness. This central ideal, Adler held, is absolute and universal.

Adler established Ethical Culture as a movement dedicated to social practice. We are to take the ideal of human dignity and apply it to transform society by the light of that ideal. Hence, Ethical Culture looks to the future and remains essentially committed to the project of social justice.

As we take account of the threats we encounter in the current moment, the threat to democracy, to freedom, to fundamental rights, to equality, to decency, and the assault on our humanitarian instincts, the ideals and values of Ethical Culture are arguably more relevant than they ever have been. As we look to the future, Ethical Culture needs to continue and expand on its venerable history of striving to create a just world. It needs to do so through relentless advocacy, through education, and through those humanitarian efforts which improve the welfare of our neighbors on the ground. Ethical Culture, and this Society in particular, needs to be a bright light that shines through the darkness. We need to continue to be a powerful voice for democracy and enlightened, progressive values in New York City. This is the mission of Ethical Culture that looks outward to the world.

Ethical Culture, however, has a second mission that looks inward, to itself. It is relatively unseen and not as dramatic, and, I would contend, it is more difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, I believe it is essential to Ethical Culture if it is to realize itself.

Some might be surprised to know that Ethical Culture, despite its notable public achievements, is not primarily a social justice organization. It is foremost a religio-philosophical movement of which pursuing social justice is an essential component. The pursuit of social justice is a derivative, but not the primary, purpose of Ethical Culture.

I look, again, to our founder. When Felix Adler was asked what the purpose of Ethical Culture is, he responded that its purpose is the creation of what he referred to as “ethical personality.”⁹ In short, Ethical Culture exists to heighten our ethical sensitivities. It exists to bring out and help nurture what is unique and best in all of us. It exists to enable us to recognize the indwelling humanity of each and all. For Adler, this end is to be realized within a specific framework, of which Ethical Societies are to be living embodiments.

Adler believed, and so do I, that, in our humanity, we are profoundly and pervasively social beings. Another 19th-century philosopher observed that the self is an ensemble of our social relations.¹⁰ There is no such thing as an individual alone. We are all mutually interrelated

⁹ *An Ethical Philosophy of Life, Presented in Its Main Outlines* (New York: D. Appleton, 1920), *passim*.

¹⁰ See Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, No. 6, first published 1845 ([Hanover University History Department](#)).

and interdependent. Adler spoke in cosmic terms. In accordance with his idealistic metaphysical views, we are all members of a vast family joined together in a vast spiritual web, so that any action we engage in reaches outward to influence others. In Adler's colorful language, “we live in our radiations”¹¹—in what we send out to others, and what we receive in return.

Adler's ideal scheme led him to create Ethical Culture as a congregational movement, and not merely as a membership organization. It is here, in community, that we can engage in face-to-face relations and strive to bring out the best in one another, and when we do, we bring out the best in ourselves.

This commitment, which highlights our social and communal natures, points to an essential aspect of Ethical Culture that requires far more attention and appreciation in my view. Adler referred to Ethical Culture as “the religion of Duty.” “Duty” is a term that may be off-putting and priggish to modern ears. Society at-large, and Ethical Culture, no less, places great emphasis on the individual and individualism. This emphasis is necessary to protect fundamental rights and freedoms. But it is my view that the preoccupation with individualism in contemporary America has morphed into hyperindividualism. This, in turn, has led not only to rampant privatization that separates people from each other by wealth and class, but also to the breakdown of social organizations and a plague of loneliness and isolation. What is too readily forgotten is that the flip side of individual rights and freedom is responsibility—duty, if you will—to one another.

In my humble opinion, as Ethical Culture moves into the future, we need to find ways in our societies to strengthen our social bonds. We need to move Ethical Culture beyond merely involving our members and friends in attending events, however interesting, engaging, and enriching. We need, I believe, to develop a communal sensibility in which we see ourselves, not merely as a congeries of separate individuals, but as people with a common world-view joined together first as members of a community, so that in substance and practice we will be a society in more than name only. This means that we need to find ways that recognize our responsibilities—our duties—as fundamental to what Ethical Culture is and then find ways to embody these duties in our lives. We need to find ways to more deeply engage with one another. And we need to develop modalities of mutual support that go beyond tokenism and reach deeply into the needs of fellow members and others we bring into our circle.

Such a transformation of our culture will involve thought and planning.

We can start with additional Sunday platforms that deal more directly with Ethical Culture and its philosophy, so that people come together under an umbrella of common

¹¹ *The Religion of Duty* (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1905), p. 134.

principles and ideas that will help to bind us together into a group. We need programs dedicated to the art, ethics, and practice of human relations.

More importantly, we need to provide structures of mutual support to meaningfully help one another in times of need. For example, we might dedicate part of our Society's notable financial resources to assist people in time of need, in unemployment, in illness, or at other moments of personal tragedy. We could set up a system of interest-free loans to aid in that assistance. Members can, as a matter of course, extend their professional skills to support one another. Physicians who are members may be free to lend second opinions, lawyers pro bono advice, and teachers tutoring for the children of fellow members when there is a need. Perhaps we can set up a system whereby grandparents can care for the young children of fellow members when there is a need.

We can expand and deepen our personal support for one another. We can assist in the home when illness occurs, and be at the bedside when people are hospitalized. We can develop social groups for people to meet, to develop friendships, and to find ways to thicken their relationships in meaningful ways. Clearly, we do some of this now, but I am thinking of a Society in which we do this more, and in which such interdependent relations are woven into the fabric and character of our community.

I think we also need to find ways in which Ethical Culture can more effectively remember and honor the memory of those who gave much of themselves to this Society and then passed on. I think they are too readily forgotten. I believe that by recognizing the lives and contributions of those in past years, we recognize the continuity of our ideals through time and strengthen the bonds of our community even now. Moreover, I believe that by honoring the dead, we also bring honor to the living.

Changing our culture so that we consider ourselves communally first and not as a group of separate individuals, so that we emerge not merely as a community in name only, will not be easy to do. It will involve creative thinking and work dedicated to creating new structures and much education.

This is a hard time for religion. Most religions are losing members, and it is a mark of the times that people are shedding their affiliation with organizations of virtually all types. Regardless of Ethical Culture's beliefs, we are sociologically not different from other religions and are subject to the larger society forces that we encounter.

These are also assuredly hard times for American democracy and the best of American values that have socialized us and which we cherish.

Ethical Culture, I believe, is at the same crossroad that faces many across our country. However, I believe that Ethical Culture can succeed by meeting the challenges by strengthening our social bonds in the face of depersonalizing technologies, economic oppression, and strident political divisions. Let us do so with confidence and hope.

References and Additional Readings¹²

- Adler, Felix. "First Anniversary Address," *Creed and Deed*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1877: 167 - 179. <https://archive.org/details/creeddeed00adle/page/166/mode/2up>
- _____. *The Religion of Duty*. New York: McClure, Phillips, 1905.
<https://archive.org/details/religionofduty0000adle/page/n7/mode/2up>
- _____. *An Ethical Philosophy of Life, Presented in Its Main Outlines*. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1946 (1918).
<https://archive.org/details/ethicalphilosoph0000feli/page/n5/mode/2up>
- Arisian, Khoren, et al. "Religion of the Deed: Ethical Culture as a Reform Movement." *The Ethical Platform* (May 12, 2002): 1 - 5.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MyIbJTQR3kbVjFi3zCXPGyCPSnxFnHq6/view?usp=drive_link
- Black, Algernon D. "Three Tributes to the Ethical Movement on Its Ninetieth Anniversary." *The Ethical Platform* (May 15, 1966).
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RapMWYVKtvG57wQ7rILw58XCZ5IFSz37/view?usp=drive_link
- Golding, Henry J., ed. *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Ethical Movement: 1876 - 1926*. New York: D. Appleton, 1926.
https://archive.org/details/fiftiethannivers0000unse_z6e8/page/n7/mode/2up
- Migliore, Paul R. "On the Eve of the Centennial: A New Year's Address." *The Ethical Platform* (December 29, 1974).
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S_8A6urs-VjVEawfgOrzfr4qbdlgsMWn/view?usp=drive_link
- Radest, Howard B. *Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States*. 3rd ed. New York: American Ethical Union, 2015 (1969).

¹² Links are provided to online versions, when available, at the Internet Archive (IA) and the (still temporary) Ethical Culture Online Library (ECOL).

"We should teach our children nothing
which they shall ever need to unlearn;
we should strive to transmit to them
the best possessions,
the truest thought,
the noblest sentiments
of the age in which we live."

Felix Adler. *Life and Destiny*, 1903.

The Encampment at 80

Anne Klaeysen

Leader Emerita

New York Society for Ethical Culture

Introduction – Uncovering the Past

I learned about The Encampment for Citizenship (EFC or The Encampment) from my dear friend Muriel Neufeld, whose sons Peter and Russell attended as teenagers. I was Leader of the Long Island Ethical Humanist Society, and we were discussing platform ideas for Women's History Month when she suggested that I talk about an unsung heroine of the Ethical Movement: Alice "Nanny" Kohn Pollitzer. Together with Ethical Culture Leader Algernon Black, she founded The Encampment in 1946 when she was 75 years old. She served as EFC board chair for 20 years, meeting hundreds of students and raising thousands of dollars, calling it her "life's work."

It was Nanny, Muriel told me, who encouraged her sons to apply to EFC. One evening she came to dinner and, ignoring Muriel and her husband Stanley, gave all her attention to their young boys. What were they studying? Who were their friends? What books did they read? What music did they listen to? What were their opinions on politics, the world, *everything*? Muriel's sons never forgot that evening. Years later, Russell attended a concert and wept when Pete Seeger dedicated "We Shall Overcome" to Nanny's memory.

I think again about Nanny now as the EFC Board plans our 80th anniversary. She was one of many people who made a dream of offering an opportunity for young adults of different religious, racial, social, and ethnic backgrounds to learn principles and techniques of citizenship through lived experience a reality. In March 2005, I concluded a platform talk about Nanny with a reminder that, while neither she nor The Encampment were still alive, they had been a tremendous influence on the lives of others, as even a cursory internet search had revealed in the biographies of alumni.

Determined not to end with an epitaph, I continued to uncover EFC's past and search for alumni who would join me in breathing on its embers, willing it back to life. It took four years. On Saturday, May 16, 2009, when I was Leader at the NY Society for Ethical Culture (NYSEC), we hosted a reunion for Encampment alumni. Three decisions were made that evening: to form an alumni association, to find a secure place for the archives, and to resurrect the Encampment

for a new generation. The next day I gave the first of what would be many platforms about EFC across the Ethical Movement. At NYSEC's 150th Anniversary Gala on May 15, 2026—having realized all those reunion goals—we brought together alumni and current Encampers on the stage in Adler Hall to celebrate and raise awareness among a new generation.

Brief history – How It Began

Let's back up and review the early history that I uncovered.

As NYSEC's 70th anniversary approached in 1946, Leader Algernon Black, having condemned fascism in the mid-thirties and following the chaos and horror of the second World War, believed that change would only come through education and the lived experience of self-governance in a racially diverse community. The experience he proposed would be one of true equality, and it would be transformative. While he was inspired by the Civilian Conservation Corps and American Friends Service Committee, he thought those programs lacked both diversity and an emphasis on the meaning of democracy. Young people could be a positive force in their communities if they developed critical thinking skills, youth activism, leadership qualities, and the courage to break free from stereotypes. In addition to NYSEC, sponsorship was secured from the American Ethical Union and its affiliated Societies, and The Encampment for Citizenship was launched in the summer of 1946 on the Fieldston school campus (where it would remain for 20 years).

The first prospectus read:

The Encampment program is based upon the assumption that to learn to be a citizen the individual must have an actual experience in democratic living and citizenship in a democratic community. The Encampment must afford the individual an exemplification of democratic living. It is not enough to learn the principles and ideals of democracy. It is not enough to be trained in the techniques of democratic action. We learn democracy by living it. We learn citizenship by practicing the role of being a citizen.

The 128 young people who arrived on June 30, 1946, came from 27 states across the US and several other countries and were sponsored by groups as diverse as the Farmers' Union and the Federation of Women's Clubs. They were Black, White, Native American, Japanese-American, and Mexican-American; Christian and Jew; farmer, office and factory worker, miner, veteran, student—all were represented and lived together for six weeks in classrooms turned into dormitories.

Eleanor Roosevelt, a staunch supporter, served as honorary chair from 1946 until her death in 1962. She invited Encampers to her Hyde Park estate every summer for discussions,

workshops, and her famous barbecues. When the program was attacked by McCarthyite forces in the early 1950s, she vigorously defended it. “The reason I think these Encampments are so important,” she wrote, “is that they are attended by citizens of different races and groups. They prepare people for thinking in terms of all people and not in terms of a selected few. Not only we in the US, but people all over the world, need young people trained to be good citizens with an ability to think with an open mind.”

President John F. Kennedy was an admirer. In a telegram to William Haddad, an EFC 1950 alumnus who was director under Sargent Shriver at the Peace Corps, he wrote:

The Encampment has been an effective pioneering project in citizenship education for seventeen years. In that time it has helped train people for all walks of American life. Our government, and now the Peace Corps, have reaped the harvest of your work. It is a pleasure to commend the Encampment for its past work and look forward with you to major task that lies ahead not only for those who have the responsibility for running the Encampment, but for your alumni as they carry out the lessons learned at the Encampment.

Haddad himself said, “Many of us conceive of the Peace Corps as an expansion of some of the ideas outlined at the Encampment.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. not only addressed Encampers on July 26, 1957, he also actively recruited students earlier that spring in Montgomery. And I recall an alumnus telling me at a reunion that he and a few friends traveled from the Fieldston campus to Columbus Circle to hear Malcolm X speak and invited him to return with them to address their colleagues.

Through the years, EFC adapted to changes in American society while holding fast to its core mission to create a life-changing summer experience in democratic citizenship. By 1996, over 7,000 young people had attended Encampment programs at sites across the United States, including in the NYC area and Adirondacks, Puerto Rico, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Kentucky, Montana, Colorado, the Navajo Nation, and Washington, DC. The program site influenced the focus of a given Encampment, e.g., conservation and environmental issues in the Adirondacks, urban social issues in the cities, coal-mining in Kentucky, and farmworker issues in California.

Some notable alumni include:

- Gale Brewer, New York City council member, former Manhattan Borough President
- Ada Deer, former Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior for Indian Affairs

- Eleanor Holmes Norton, civil rights activist and longstanding US Congressional representative from DC
- Peter Neufeld, co-founder of the Innocence Project
- Miles S. Rappaport, former president, Demos and Common Cause
- David Rothenberg, founder of The Fortune Society
- Alex Tom, former Executive Director of Chinese Progressive Association and current Executive Director of the Center for Empowered Politics
- Glory Van Scott, dancer, performer, and civil rights activist
- Jason Warwin, co-founder of The Brotherhood Sister Sol
- Keith Wright, former NYS Assemblyman

Alas, by the next year, EFC was no longer sustainable, and the program experienced a hiatus until a 2-week pilot program was launched at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, in the summer of 2013. The alumni association formed at the May 2009 reunion had also found a home for the archives at the James Branch Cabell Library Special Collections and Archives at Virginia Commonwealth University. Finally, all three goals were fulfilled.

Today – Reuniting and Rebuilding

The alumni who gathered in May 2009 reminisced about their transformative summer experiences, but they also reflected upon what had been challenges for them when they returned home. Some groups stayed in touch and produced newsletters; others lost contact altogether. Some engaged in social justice activism; others struggled to find support in their communities. With email and the internet, alumni now had better communication resources at their disposal, and they immediately put them to good use. More in-person reunions were held across the country, and a new board was formed in 2011 with Executive Director Margot Gibney, who had attended The Encampment in 1971, at the helm.

Although we no longer had the deep pockets and connections of the first Encampment generation, and few people outside the alumni circle knew who we were, we decided to frame this as an opportunity to preserve what had been best about this participatory democracy youth leadership program and change what had been a top down organizational structure into something more reflective of The Encampment: diverse, inclusive, and intergenerational. No longer would young people experience a transformative summer only to be sent home without any support. We would offer year-round engagement with current Encampers and older alumni. We would become a real community! That meant rolling up our sleeves to raise funds, volunteer for board and committee positions, staff a programming team, recruit students, and learn more about one another. Who doesn't love a big challenge?

The newly re-established board quickly launched a website —<https://encampmentforcitizenship.org>—where information could be found by a new generation and older generations could share their stories. The site includes information about The Encampment’s mission, its strategies for engaging and training new Encampers, as well as a rich compilation of photographs and Encamper-created manuals and workbooks. As well, we emphasize EFC’s commitment to developing young leaders for justice:

We believe community is at the heart of all social justice movements and the vehicle by which we access our common humanity. We know that the work for justice takes on many forms and we expose young people to many ways one can work for justice.

Conclusion – Celebrating Our Future

And now we face a transition to a new Executive Director, Dr. Faith Kares, whom Margot Gibney lovingly mentored for a year. As a board, we not only carry on vital organizational work, we also celebrate one another’s joys and grieve our sorrows. My role over the years, as an Encamper wannabe, has been to reach out to the American Ethical Union and affiliated Societies to spread the word, recruit Encampers, and raise funds for scholarships. The Encampment for Citizenship is an important part of our history, but it can also be an important part of our future.

Additional Reading

- Black, Algernon D. *The Young Citizens: The Story of Encampment for Citizenship*. New York: Ungar, 1962. <https://archive.org/details/youngcitizenssto0000blac/page/n5/mode/2up>
- Black, Algernon D. "Algernon D. Black Papers 4079285." Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library. <https://findingaids.library.columbia.edu/pdf/cul-4079285.pdf>.
- "Ethical Culture, 1876-1946." *New York Times* (May 15, 1976). <https://nyti.ms/4xLhP9o>.
- "Encampment for Citizenship: 75 Years of Strengthening Democracy by Creating Community." Commemorative Program. Virtual: October 16, 2021. <https://encampmentforcitizenship.org/flipbook/?page=1>
- "Encampment for Citizenship: Education for Democratic Living." VCU Libraries Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University. <https://gallery.library.vcu.edu/exhibits/show/encampment-for-citizenship>
- "Encampment for Citizenship, M 391." James Branch Cabell Library Special Collections, Virginia Commonwealth University. <https://archives.library.vcu.edu/search?utf8=&check&op%5B%5D=&q%5B%5D=encampment%20for%20citizenship>
- Hyman, Herbert H., Charles R. Wright, and Terence K. Hopkins. *Applications of Methods of Evaluation: Four Studies of the Encampment for Citizenship*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.7968116>
- Nemy, Enid. "Centennarian Recalls Suffragette Days." *New York Times* (May, 18 1970). <https://nyti.ms/4xNO6wn>.

Felix Adler's 175th Birthday: In Praise of Audacity

Carolyn A. Parker
Senior Research Fellow



Felix Adler's 175th birthday passed largely unobserved on August 13, 2026. In Ethical Culture the tradition is to celebrate the date of founding—May 15, 1876—as Founder's Day, honoring both Adler and his determination to cultivate a moral ideal free of religious dogma. In a letter written to the citizens of Alzey, Adler's birthplace in Germany, on the occasion of their dedication of a plaque to be placed on his former home, Dr. Richard Koral, then president of the American Ethical Union, said of Adler's work:

Felix Adler gave us a unique creation—a social movement in which people are encouraged to appreciate the spiritual quality in the interdependence of all life, to reject divisive and dogmatic theologies, and to accept the centrality of ethics in all our relationships and in all our deeds. If ethics were the primary guidepost in all we do, the world's civilization would be more just, more equitable and more sustainable for all peoples.¹³

Others have written extensively about Adler's work and his contributions to the Ethical Culture Movement, to philosophy and



¹³ Unpublished letter (November 2, 2014), shared by Koral.

education, to the world around him. A closer view of Adler as a person comes from the man who worked with him daily for twenty years: Ernest Jacques.

Howard Radest described Jacques as a “self-effacing man,”¹⁴ who documented Adler’s every word in his latter years in a record “so complete as to be overwhelming.”¹⁵ Jacques himself wrote about his years working for Adler as his secretary, revealing some of his personal history and thoughts in the process, in his unpublished memoir: “Scattered Reminiscences of Twenty Years with Dr. Felix Adler.” One passage reflects both the relationship between the two men and Adler’s characteristic drive to achieve his goals:

The one quality in Dr. Adler’s mental make-up that perhaps impressed me most of all, because it came out constantly, in things both small and great, was what I can only characterize by the word “audacity.” He was literally afraid of nothing; but it was something more than courage, though it had in it no element of rashness. It involved a degree of moral steadfastness and intrepidity at which I never ceased to marvel. I do not mean that Dr. Adler was lacking in humility. He was humble before the facts of life, the laws of nature, even in the presence of children, or in facing a malefactor. But “Blessed are the poor in spirit”—No. He repeatedly said “Get thee a master”; but he also said there was a trace of flunkeyism in the English character. That might apply to me. “What are you afraid of? Rules are made to be broken. ‘The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’” I was not sufficiently aggressive. His injunction that I should interview the chief librarian was typical. It might be the director of a moving picture studio. Important people are not easily accessible, and a shudder would go down my spine when told to get the president of a railroad, or a bank, or the adjutant general at Washington, on the telephone. “Always go to the fountain-head,” he would say, “don’t waste time on subordinates.” It often worked; if it did not, he took it with a grain of salt, as it were, without surprise or embarrassment. He thought it worth while to see President Wilson in the interest of Child Labor legislation. When he wanted a contribution he asked Mr. Rockefeller to call and see him. I have heard him upbraid wealthy men for small gifts. These are small matters, minor illustrations. If it needed audacity to face people in authority in government, in civil and military life, what shall we say of the criticism of his own great master, Kant, his fearless analysis of the teachings of Jesus, his standing up in the public forum to announce revolutionary ideas in ethics and religion? Did not this require something like the heroism and hardihood of Luther when he nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg?¹⁶

¹⁴ *Op cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Unpublished MS, NYSEC Archives, pp. 50-52. Our thanks to Kirk Ruebenson for locating and digitizing this special text.

In Jacques' use of the word "audacity," the intent is positive rather than negative. In his framing, "audacity" is accompanied by "afraid of nothing," "courage," "steadfastness," "intrepidity," "fearless," "standing up," "heroism," and "hardihood." Jacques is framing Adler's break from norms as taking bold—and admirable—action, rather than using the negative connotation of behaving rudely or disrespectfully.

Adler's audacity in his later years is similar to that of his youth, when he challenged the audience in his father's temple to look to the future of Judaism as a religion for all of humanity.¹⁷ Or, ten years later, Adler's audacity in challenging the Free Religious Association to act instead of talking about action.¹⁸ Or Adler's audacity in his middle years when he joined with others to take on Tammany Hall.¹⁹ The audacity to support the spread of the Ethical Culture Movement to Europe and Asia as a means to live one's life centered on ethics and not "mere good works."²⁰ And, throughout his life, the audacity to refine the philosophies of the past and his present in order to draw them out of the academy into the home and the school and the factory and the public square. The audacity, that is, to put his own words into action. It is that audacity that has given us these milestones that we celebrate and challenges us to continue to make progress in bringing ethical consideration to the needs of the day.

¹⁷ Felix Adler, "The Temple of the Future," October 11, 1873. NYSEC Archives.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OXpQ3minq_Ptn5fpLrJ1-l1fLtOqQYt5/view?usp=sharing.

¹⁸ Radest, pp. 58 - 60. <https://archive.org/details/towardcommonrou00rade/page/58/mode/2up>.

¹⁹ "New-York has got what it deserves," *New York Times*, October 29, 1894. <https://nyti.ms/47fB4xF>.

²⁰ Felix Adler, "The Recent Congress of American and European Ethical Societies at Zurich," in *Ethical Addresses*, Third Series (Philadelphia: S. Burns Weston, 1897): 133-150. <https://archive.org/details/ethicaladdresses03ameruoft/page/n3/mode/2up>.

References and Further Reading

[No author]. “New-York has got what it deserves,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1894.
<https://nyti.ms/47fB4xF>.

Adler, Felix. “The Temple of the Future.” October 11, 1873. NYSEC Archives.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OXpQ3minq_Ptn5fpLrJl-1l1fLtOqQYt5/view?usp=sharing.

_____. “The Recent Congress of American and European Ethical Societies at Zurich,” in *Ethical Addresses*, Third Series. 133-150. Philadelphia: S. Burns Weston, 1897.
<https://archive.org/details/ethicaladdresses03ameruoft/page/n3/mode/2up>.

Friess, Horace L. *Felix Adler and Ethical Culture: Memories and Studies*. Edited by Fannia Weingartner. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.
<https://archive.org/details/felixadlerethica0000frie/page/n7/mode/2up>.

Guttchen, Robert S. *Felix Adler*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974.

Kraut, Benny. *From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1979.

Persons, Stow. *Free Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947.

Radest, Howard B. *Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1969.

_____. *Felix Adler: An Ethical Culture*. American Liberal Religious Thought, Vol 5. New York: Peter Lang, 1998.



Ethical Expression

Jody Sperling and Time Lapse Dance: Our Embodied Treeness

Carolyn A. Parker

Senior Research Fellow

Jody Sperling is Eco-Artist-in-Residence at the New York Society for Ethical Culture and founder of the Time Lapse Dance Company. If you visit the Company's website—<https://www.timelapsedance.com>—you immediately see a figure dancing across a frozen wasteland in a stunning costume and the caption: “We believe dance can be a powerful force moving us toward a more embodied, sustainable and equitable future.” As a philosophy and a religion, Ethical Culture espouses sustainability and equity among other concepts that reflect our respect for the inherent worth of every human and our understanding that, in order to cultivate our own understanding of ethics, we must do so in relationship to others. Embodiment is a more recent addition to the discussion of ethics, and Sperling's work has helped that addition gain clarity and, now, currency.

Sperling and her company joined in celebrating the milestones of this summer of 2026, first, by offering the Ethical Experience of Ethical Movement as a prelude to the 150th Anniversary Celebration and Gala on May 15.

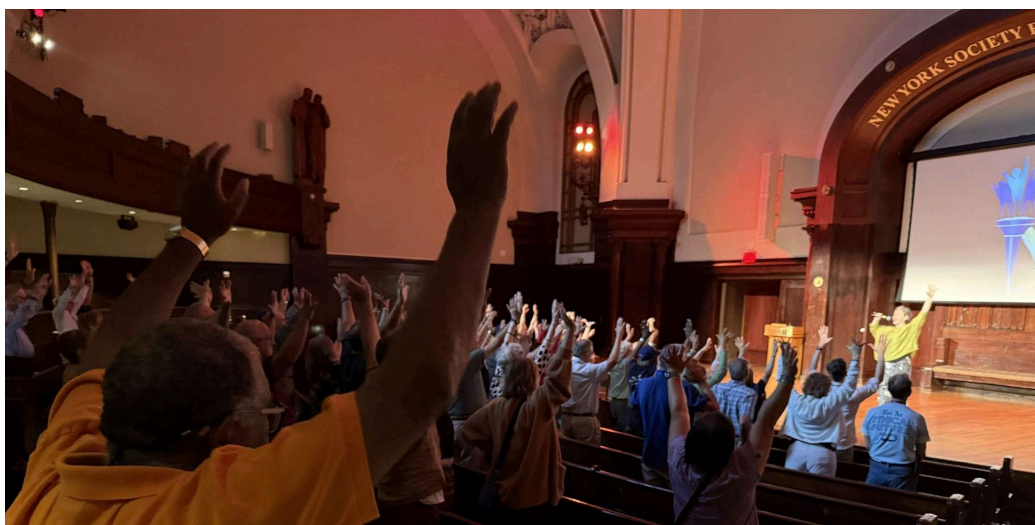


A few weeks later, Sperling and the Company followed the keynote address (“Caring for Our Roots”) at the Opening Ceremony of the 111th AEU Assembly with two performances and a special embodiment exercise for the audience.²¹ As part of that event, Sperling spoke of dance as an ethical action and the performance of two segments of the “Arbor”²² as both an expression of community and opportunity to feel our kinship with trees.

Company members Maki Kitahara, Lo Poppy, and Rathi Varma began the performance with “Trunk.”



Sperling then led the audience in the creation of a “communi-tree,” an exercise to “feel our embodied treeness.”



²¹ <https://youtu.be/KyAxBCGvZ60?si=pf0SFRlKtnOHunBN&t=2274>.

²² “Arbor (2023)” <https://www.timelapsdance.com/arbor>.

The final performance, by Kitahara, Sarah Tracy, and Varma was of the “Arbor” segment entitled “Canopy.”



Sperling continued her contribution to the Assembly by addressing those gathered for the final session on Sunday as part of the platform presented by the AEU’s National Leaders Council: “Embodied Belonging, Ethical Becoming.”

As Ethical Expression, Jody Sperling and the Time Lapse Dance Company provide deliberate and purposeful expression of the connection between humans and the planet on which they evolved. As urban development sprawls across the landscape, as technology distances us from reality and community, as humans are increasingly identified as mere units of inefficiency and relegated to the status of consumer, reminders of our connections to each other and to the planet become increasingly important. “Arbor” is but one of several works created to provide such a reminder. That the elegance and flow of the dance and the creative design of the costumes could not overwhelm the humans at the heart of the performance is yet another expression of the ethics of connection.

Ethical News and Notes

ECI News

Spring Session: The ECI is now in the planning stages of developing an educational program for those who seek more intensive study of the history of thought in Ethical Culture. Tentative plans are being developed for the first seminar to begin mid-January. Check the ECI webpage for more news as planning progresses.

Henry J. Golding Memorial Library: The ECI, working with many volunteers for the NYSEC Archives Committee, is pleased to report progress in identifying (completed), gathering (in progress), and displaying (partially complete) the collection created nearly a century ago to honor Henry J. Golding, an associate leader at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, who was thought to be Felix Adler's choice to be his successor. Visitors to the Adler Study (Room 514) at NYSEC will find a preview of the collection near the fireplace.

Acknowledgements

The Editors thank the **NYSEC Board of Trustees** for their trust and support as we continue on this journey of discovery in Ethical Culture. We also thank:

- ❖ **Our donors**, whose generous support will help us develop more research and publications to serve and promote Ethical Culture;
- ❖ **Our contributors**, including **Curt Collier**, **Joseph Chuman**, **Anne Klaeyen**, **Steven Serling** (photos), and **Kirk Ruebenson** (photos and research).
- ❖ **Cynthia Ng**, **Elizabeth Broekman**, and **Amy Schwarz** for their willingness to devote their time and talents to the work of the Institute;
- ❖ **NYSEC staff** for their technical support in the production of this issue and the ECI web page; and
- ❖ **You**, our readers.

Call for Papers

The ECI calls for papers for *The Annals*. Please consult the [ECI Guidelines for Submission](#) when preparing your manuscript.