



CHICAGO ETHICAL HUMANIST

Newsletter of the ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF CHICAGO

September 2011

Welcome to Our Season-Opening Sunday Morning Programs

S. JAY OLSHANSKY, a professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Illinois in Chicago, speaks **Sunday, September 11th**, on “**The Quest for Immortality: Science at the Frontiers of Aging.**” A sociologist and researcher in the field of aging, Olshansky suggests that a modest but scientifically attainable extension of human life may be possible. He will discuss what a world in which we all live significantly longer would look like.

MASSIMO PIGLIUCCI, professor of philosophy at the City University of New York, speaks **Sunday, September 18th**, on “**The Intelligent Person’s Guide to the Meaning**

of Life.” A genetic biologist and advocate of science education, Pigliucci will discuss the concept of “sci-phi,” which combines science’s empiricism with philosophy’s rationalism to form a unified, inclusive search for knowledge and the meaning and value of human life.

ROHINA MALIK, a Goodman Theater playwright of South Asian heritage who was born and grew up in London, presents her acclaimed one-woman play, *Unveiled*, on **Sunday, September 25th**. Malik portrays five veiled Muslim women whose vivid personal stories after the attacks of 9/11 reveal what lies beneath their veils.

Coming Society Events

• Our **Sunday Morning Colloquies** are back. Led by Ken Novak, our small nonjudgmental group examines how we feel about our lives. The topics this month are *Remembering* on Sept. 11th, *Hate* on Sept. 18th, and *Honesty* on Sept. 25th. We meet in the library, 9:30–10 a.m.

• Our **Second Saturday Coffeehouse**, hosted by Vicki Elberfeld, is on **September 10th** at 8 p.m. Award-winning story-and-theater artist **Megan Wells** will perform her one-woman show based on Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, narrating directly from the classic gothic novel and incarnating the unforgettable characters. The \$8 charge includes refreshments. The doors open at 7:30 p.m.

• Our regular **Fiction Circle**, led by Ken Novak, resumes on **Sunday, September 11th**, at 12:15 p.m. We’ll discuss Carson McCuller’s novella *The Ballad of Sad Café*, with its themes of gender roles, isolation, and love. The book is available at libraries. For an audio version, contact Ken Novak at kennovak@gmail.com.

• Our **Ethnic Dinners Out** resume on **Saturday, September 17th**. We’ll enjoy a fine Italian meal at **La Villa**, at 3638 N. Pulaski, in Chicago, and recently featured on *Check Please*. The unique salad bar is to die for—and don’t be surprised if you can’t finish one of the substantial meals. The restaurant has a free parking lot. We order at 5:30 p.m. Please RSVP to Richard Curren at richard_curren@yahoo.com or 773-743-7976, or see him at a Sunday platform.

• A **Critical Thinking Workshop**, led by **Massimo Pigliucci**, our platform speaker the next morning, convenes on **Saturday, September 17th**, from 3 to 6 p.m. As an exercise in “intellectual self-defense,” we will explore the meaning

and process of critical thinking, examine common logical fallacies, and ask why we have difficulty with numbers and statistics. We will discuss the limits of human reason—and how to understand the world better and deal with each other more rationally. We will ask a goodwill offering. Call or email Ken Novak if you plan to attend.

• Our **Film Discussion Group**, led by John Ungashick, meets **Monday, September 19th**, at 7:15 p.m. We’ve chosen two current movies. *The Help* portrays the intermingled lives of blacks and whites in 1960s Mississippi. It was directed by Tate Taylor and stars Viola Davis, with Allison Janney, Cicely Tyson, and Sissy Spacek. *The Guard* is a crime comedy set in Ireland. It was directed by John Michael McDonagh, with Don Cheadle and Brendan Gleason. Last month we discussed *The Tree of Life* and *Tabloid*.

• Our **Creative Writers** group, led by John Taylor, meets on **Sunday, September 25th**, at 12:15 p.m.,. Come and share your short, original works with us.

• Our next **Ethical Humanities** discussion is on **Sunday, October 2nd**, at 12:30 p.m. We’ll discuss *To Teach: The Journey, in Comics*, a literally graphic treatment of the ideals and realities of teaching, by William Ayers and Ryan Alexander-Tanner. Teachers especially are urged to come. Several free copies of the book are available. Check with Ken Novak.

The meetinghouse of the Society is at **7574 N. Lincoln Ave., Skokie**. Our Sunday programs and Sunday School start at **10:30 a.m.** Childcare is available. A social hour follows. There is parking in our lot, on Jerome St. or Howard St., and at the nearby Albany Bank. If you need transportation, call the office by 1 p.m. Friday—we’ll try to get a ride for you.

Recent Sunday Programs

• The **2010 American Ethical Union Assembly**, held a week earlier in Columbus, Ohio, was the subject of a report-back program on **June 26th** given by a panel of Society members—*Scott Walton, Tom Hoepfner, Steve Julstrom, Aimee Neumann, Sue Walton, and Ken Novak*,

Scott, an AEU Director, reported that while nationwide membership in Ethical Societies has been falling, our Society “is doing fairly well,” growing from only 40 to over 100 members in recent years. Tom, chair of the AEU membership committee, pointed out that a good Sunday School program helps boost membership. Steve said that the AEU plans “more of a national presence” on political issues such as gay marriage.

Aimee, AEU director of religious education, noted the national RE and YES conferences in November. Sue praised a “very dynamic” strategic planning session she attended. Ken discussed workshops he attended on social media, ethical action, and adult programming.

• **Dan Kaplan**, a Society member, gave a program he called “**Journeys with Kurt Vonnegut**” on **July 10th**. Ed McManus was the moderator.

Dan said Kurt Vonnegut’s autobiographical collage *Palm Sunday* “was my traveling companion” during a month-long trek in the towering Annapurna Range of Nepal in 1985. “It was a wonderful experience,” he added, combining the awesome grandeur of nature with his learning of the varied life experiences and comments on “natural law and liberty” by Vonnegut, an outspoken freethinker.

Dan described Vonnegut as “a skeptic talking about his crisis in faith.” I was “outrageously happy” on my trek, Dan said. I too didn’t “have to believe in God to enjoy the moment.” I realized “the need for a heartfelt moral code” and a belief in “the humanity of other people,” he added.

• **Ken Novak**, a Society member, led a discussion of *Sense and Sensibility*, the first novel by Jane Austen, in a special Fiction Circle program on **July 17th**, Ken began with a detailed summary of the story, set among the English landed gentry of 1800. We discussed the relationships of the various characters, focusing on the lives of two sisters and how they dealt with the conflicting desires for both romance and security. We pointed to the realistic “sense” of one, the more emotional “sensibility” of the other.

We called the novel a soap opera, a morality play, and a reflection of the author’s possible bitterness with her own life but a belief that character can win out over circumstance. We pointed to the power of inherited money. We noted the limited expectations and choices of women in that upper class society, some of us insisting “nothing has changed for women in 200 years.” We also compared the novel with the more recent filmed versions.

• **John Ungashick**, a Society member and history buff, spoke **July 24th** on “**The Myths of World War II.**” Yefim Kotlyar was the moderator.

John rejected any possibility that Germany and Japan could have won the war, insisting that “disastrous decisions” by the Axis powers made an Allied victory “a foregone conclusion.” He said Japan was hobbled by an inflexible bushido code of honor and by a lack of trained pilots to replace the heavy losses in its small, elitist air force. He also pointed to an “irrational” Hitler who, continually overruling his generals, made “catastrophic mistakes” in declaring war on the U.S. and invading the Soviet Union instead of Britain.

John described the main military actions, especially the air and naval war in the Pacific. Among strategic factors he cited for the Allied victory were the superior economic power of the Allies and the shortage of raw materials for the Axis. Decisive political factors, he noted, were the rallying of the Soviet people in “defense of the motherland” and the “anger of the American people” at the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

• **Susan and Joe Burck**, Society members, presented a program, “**Life’s Ethical Dilemmas**” on **July 31st**. Like in earlier similar programs, we gave our opinions on the tough decisions to be made in several real-life situations.

One ethical dilemma was on who should pay for damage from a water overflow in an apartment building. A second dilemma was whether to object to a repugnant comment at work when it might endanger one’s job. A third one was whether to accept a high-paying job for a repressive overseas regime. A fourth dilemma was whether a gardener should honor the legal right of an organization to restrict who can plant the seeds of an endangered tree species.

Another dilemma was whether a lawyer preparing a will should report that their client might be planning suicide. A further one was whether the buyer of a dog, suspecting the seller was not the owner, should search for the rightful owner and risk losing the dog. Another was whether to tell a friend they might have a terminal illness, causing them unneeded worry. A final dilemma was whether, after accepting a job offer, one should take a better job just a few days later.

The **Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago**, founded in 1882, is a member of the American Ethical Union and a chapter of the American Humanist Association.

Officers & Trustees: Steve Julstrom, President; Ed McManus, Vice President; Sue Walton, Secretary; John Ungashick, Treasurer; Sheila Caplan Curren, Lisa Crowe, Laura Drower, Tom Hoepfner, Evan Kane, Alan Kimmel, Jan Kuhn, Oliver Pergams

Sunday School Director: Sharon Appelquist

YES Advisors: Katie Merrell, Melanie Neal

Newsletter Editor: Alan Kimmel

Ethical Officers: JoAnn Hoepfner, Tom Hoepfner, Ellen McManus, Ken Novak

Activities and Announcements

• **Ethical Action** is a big part of what the Society does. On *Monday, September 26th*, we will again be preparing and serving lunch, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at the Evanston Baptist Church, 1717 Benson. To volunteer for this vital outreach to the homeless and the hungry, contact *Marilee Cole* at *Marileesgarden@comcast.net* or 847-853-8050.

We'll also be preparing and serving dinner for 200 of the needy at the Night Ministry, 4711 N. Ravenswood, in Chicago, on *Friday, September 30th*. Preparation begins at the Society at 3 p.m. Volunteers should contact Ken Novak at 847-414-4314 or *kennovak@gmail.com*.

Our Ethical Action Committee thanks those who have been helping the Sunday School prepare sack lunches for the Lincoln Park Shelter. The committee also has announced that ten percent of recent Sunday collections has been given to Wings, the Palatine women's shelter, and to Cabrini Connections, a provider of tutoring and mentoring services for young people.

• **Friendship Dinners** are being planned by our Hospitality Committee, beginning in October. But first we need to know who is willing to host these small, family-style get-togethers in their home or apartment. You can sign up on the volunteer board in the hallway. For details please contact *Sue Walton* or *Marilee Cole*. Thanks!

• Our regular **Coffee and Social Hour**, which resumes this month, depends on the bite-sized snacks we bring on Sunday morning. Organizers *Judy Carney* and *Sue Walton* ask us to follow a monthly schedule corresponding to our last names: 1st Sun. A to D; 2nd Sun. E to K; 3rd Sun. L to P; 4th Sun. Q to Z; 5th Sun. all.

• **Celebrate Labor Day** with us at our clean-up party on *Sunday, September 4th*, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. There are windows to wash, seats to clean, a basement to straighten, and kitchen and library to organize. We'll start with coffee and sweets and later call out for pizza and salad. If you can help, please contact *Scott Walton* at 847-475-0391 or *Ed Thompson* at 847-239-4751. Thanks!

Our People . . .

• **Sharon Appelquist**, our Sunday School director and office manager, was married on August 20th to Dennis Harpole. Our warmest, heartfelt congratulations, Sharon and Dennis!

• **Leif Zerkin**, longtime member of the Society and son of Claire and Milt Zerkin, died on July 4th at the age of 62. He grew up in New Jersey and spent many years in the Ethical movement. Our condolences to Claire and Milt on their sad loss. A memorial is planned at the Society on October 2nd.

• **Kay Nelson**, also a longtime member, died on July 25th at the age of 65. Kay was a native of Wisconsin and worked many years as a professional nurse. A memorial is planned at the Society on October 23rd.

From the President . . .

As our summer of heat and rain blends into fall, it's only natural for our musings to turn to life's transitions. For the Julstrom/ Agoyo Silva household, the transition is one of entering the "empty nest" stage. Our daughter Julia has joined our son Wade at college, leaving Carmen and me to worry from a distance. We can remind ourselves though that they are graduates of the Golden Rule Sunday School and YES group, so they carry with them into their adult lives the ethical grounding, inquisitiveness, caring, and friends their experiences here have gained them.

At the Society we transition from an impressive summer of home-grown platforms to another exciting and challenging season of Sunday presenters, along with the return of our Sunday School and many other activities. To all our members and friends, welcome to another great year of intellectual challenges, personal growth, and fellowship.

—Steve Julstrom

Sunday School Scoop . . .

A warm welcome to all our new and returning families for the Fall 2011 season of the Golden Rule Sunday School! We'll be back with some new energy and ideas, as well as many of our old traditions, on September 11th. We have a wonderful lineup of teachers again this year. JoAnn Hoepfner, Amylynn Hiser, Aimee Neumann, Mignon De Klerk, Gina Rosado, and I will teach the six age-level classes. Mignon will also serve as Sunday School chair.

Our Back To Sunday School Potluck Picnic will be on Saturday, September 10th, at the home of Mignon and Leonard De Klerk. On September 18th, Mike Rush will return to lead us on another "Bug Walk" at Emily Oaks Nature Center. It's going to be another great year—see you in Sunday School!

—Sharon Appelquist, Director

Tribute Fund

- *A thank you to all who sent condolence cards on the death of our son, Leif. They helped to wipe away the tears.*
—from CLAIRE & MILT ZERKIN
- *Condolences to Milt and Claire Zerkin on the recent death of their son, Leif.*
—from MATT & MARILEE COLE
- *Sorry, Claire and Milt, for the loss of your son, Leif.*
—from ALAN KIMMEL
- *In memory of Jay Moses Woldenberg*
—from NANCY & DON BORZAK

The **Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago** is a democratic fellowship and spiritual home for those who seek a rational, compassionate philosophy of life without regard to belief in a supreme being. We value the importance of living an ethical, responsible, and joyful life.

Like traditional religious communities, we celebrate births, conduct wedding ceremonies, host memorial services, and provide for the caring, ethical education of our children. We believe in deed beyond creed and in working for a better world.

ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2011 CALENDAR

The office of the Society is open every weekday - 10 am to 2 pm.
Call 847-677-3334 with any questions.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
No PROGRAM 10 a.m.–2 p.m. - Building Clean-up	4	5	6	7	8	9
						2ND SATURDAY COFFEEHOUSE 8:00 p.m.
10:30 S. JAY OLSHANSKY “The Quest for Immortality: Science at the Frontiers of Aging” 12:15 - Newcomers Orientation - Fiction Circle	11	12	13	BOARD OF TRUSTEES 7:15 p.m.	14	15
						ETHNIC DINNER OUT 5:30 p.m. <hr/> CRITICAL THINKING WORKSHOP 3–6 P.M.
10:30 MASSIMO PIGLIUCCI “The Intelligent Person’s Guide to the Meaning of Life” 9:30 a.m. - Sunday School Parents Meeting	18	FILM DISCUSSION GROUP 7:15 p.m.	19	20	21	22
						23
						Sunday Colloquies (9:30–10:00 a.m.) “Remembering” 9/11; “Hate” 9/18; “Honesty” 9/25
10:30 ROHINA MALIK “Unveiled” 12:15 - Creative Writers	25	26	27			24
						Golden Rule Sunday School: Sundays, 10:30 a.m. to Noon

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