

BESpeak

MAY 2014

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

The Dance of Change

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

I read BES President Emil Volcheck's column in last month's *BESpeak* with great interest. Entitled "Demographic Change," he discussed some of the challenges that growth brings to any small community like BES. As we eagerly open our doors to share Ethical Culture with as many people as possible, we also desire stability and familiarity. Personal relationships of trust and friendship facilitate bringing out the best in new energy and ideas. I hope to help these two dance partners – familiarity and change – coordinate their movements in a joyous "dance of change" where all feel welcome.

I wrote about "growing pains" in *BESpeak* last summer. In that article I celebrated our 24 new members and praised all who volunteered their time to lay leadership. As we approach completion of another successful program year, while we can always use more helping hands, I continue to be impressed with how many have responded to the call of leadership at BES.

This month I want to share more existential reflections about change, a deeply paradoxical experience. In so many ways, it's what we most strive for. Change allows for new experiences, dynamic growth, and flourishing life. Much of nature is about change – the seasons, the planting of a seed, growth, death, decay, and new life again. Without change, life is static, and, in a way, dead. On the other hand, change can be scary. At times change is the thing we most want to avoid!

This paradox is behind one of life's most existential characteristics – the fact that we are often so eager for tomorrow that it's hard to live for today. We often desire the future and when we get to the future we yearn for the past. In maturity we pine for youth. Change is a challenging part of life.

Change is, however, at the heart of Ethical Culture. Change is what Felix Adler wanted when he founded the *New York Society for Ethical Culture* in 1876. He saw all around him tremendous human suffering caused by poverty, disease, and crime. He hoped that his alternative to traditional religion might transform the present into a better future. That's my goal. I hope it's yours.

Besides, change is inevitable. The world is changing around us, and if we don't



SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

MAY 4

"The Ethical Journey from Punitive to Unitive Justice"

Sylvia Clute

Alliance for Unitive Justice

MAY 11

"The Ethical Culture Story"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

MAY 18

"Organizing Adjunct Faculty at MICA"

Panelists To Be Announced

MAY 25

"Memorial Day Remembrance"

Hosted by Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

Every Sunday

10:30 a.m. – Noon

Children of all ages are welcomed.

NOTE: May 25 will be the last day of class before summer break.

TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided for preschoolers between the ages of one and four.

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Fritz Williams *Leader Emeritus*

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by @bmoreethical.org. For general
questions: ask@bmoreethical.org.

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The Baltimore Ethical Center

by *Emil Volcheck, BES President*

Back in January, BES member Janey Solwold made a passing reference to our society as the “Baltimore Ethical Center” in a pledge committee email. Her phrase resonated with me. BES is becoming a center of ethical activity in our city that goes beyond just our society. Engaging more with compatible organizations and hosting more activities and events will help our society to grow and might provide a fundraising opportunity, if presented properly. We can learn from the examples of the Humanist Community at Harvard, the Conway Hall Ethical Society, and the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

The Humanist Community at Harvard (HCH) has been very successful in its growth and level of activities. (See <http://harvardhumanist.org>) Harvard was the first university to have a Humanist chaplain. HCH grew out of the Humanist chaplaincy founded by Thomas Ferrick, past Leader of the Ethical Society of Boston (ESB). As HCH grew, they needed more space. Greg Epstein, the current Humanist chaplain at Harvard, led the establishment of a Humanist community center they called the “Humanist Hub.” They promoted it as “Boston’s first atheist community center” and raised over \$42,000 for its launch. The HCH hosts many events at the Hub, including Sunday lectures and their Values in Action (VIA) social services program. The ESB now rents space there, so the Hub has extended beyond the HCH.

The Conway Hall Ethical Society (CHES) in London holds Sunday lectures, concerts, and “Rational Parliament” debates. They hold joint meetings with the Centre for Inquiry UK and the National Secular Society. The Sunday Assembly London recently selected Conway Hall for their meetings. Last Fall I spoke to Anne Klaeyen, Leader of the New York Society for Ethical Culture (NYSEC), about the Sunday Assembly New York. She encouraged and arranged for the Sunday Assembly to meet at NYSEC. She looked to CHES for inspiration and hoped that bringing the Sunday Assembly to NYSEC would help their building become a “House of Ethics” even more. NYSEC has an impressive range of activities that includes Sunday platforms, film club, moral philosophy class, and a world affairs discussion group. NYSEC hosts events in their auditorium, partnering with organizations like the Nation Magazine and the Friends of Clearwater, a Pete Seeger environmental charity.

BES offers our space to organizations whose goals we support. Organizations that have regularly used our space include the African American Humanist Society Meetup, Baltimore NOW, the Baltimore Time Bank, and the LGBTQ Humanist Council of Baltimore. BES could come to see itself as a center of ethics for the city and try to bring in even more organizations to use our space and possibly collaborate with us. One possible framework for a fundraising campaign would be to promote the “Baltimore Ethical Center” as a community center that provides a valuable nexus for social justice and innovation that is more than BES.



SUBMISSIONS FOR SUMMER SUNDAYS

During the summer months, BES Sunday morning meetings feature talks that are less formal than platform addresses. These talks run 10-30 minutes in length and are commonly offered by BES members or friends. The speaker usually invites discussion following their talk. The Program Committee encourages BES members and friends to suggest topics for talks they'd like to give and invites you to contact Joe Adams, Ronit Klemens, Angad Singh, Jayme Smith, Hugh Taft-Morales, or Emil Volcheck with your ideas and suggestions.

Cosmic Quality

by Wayne Laufert, BES Member

Can a commercial television program treat science properly and uphold the legacy of Carl Sagan? Apparently, it can, at least judging by the initial entry in the *Cosmos* relaunch, which aired March 9 on Fox and the next day on the National Geographic Channel.

The shows host, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, establishes ground rules right off the bat, saying, essentially, that he'll start with the scientific method—the best way we know to figure things out—and then lead us on a tremendous journey of discovery. “Accept these terms,” he says, “and the cosmos is yours.” Some eye-popping special effects take the viewer on that journey, with Tyson piloting a sleek flying saucer to the edge of the known universe. It looks especially good in HD.

Later Tyson spends several minutes discussing not Copernicus or Galileo—scientists whom the general public has actually heard of—but 16th century astrologer/mystic Giordano Bruno. The image I'd had of Bruno was a man turning his head from a crucifix just before being burned at the stake, and that's exactly what *Cosmos* depicts,

with cross-wearing clerics as villains.

Tyson makes it clear that Bruno was not a scientist and that in fact Bruno's embrace of the Copernican heliocentric model was only part of the expansive but still God-fearing sacrilege that led to his demise. I did not expect to see that perspective explored on a Sunday-night show on a major network.

Between the flashy graphics and the exploration of actual ideas, *Cosmos* is bound to make some young viewers go “Wow!” and inspire them to become scientists. Others, who believe that, say, the Earth is about 9,000 years old, will find more big-media Lies from the Pit of Hell to rail against. I expect Tyson, series executive producer Seth MacFarlane (yes, the *Family Guy* guy) and the series' writers (including Sagan's widow, Ann Druyan) to keep advancing those “lies.”

So-called debates founded on false dichotomies surely will follow as a reaction to/against *Cosmos: A Space-time Odyssey*. But there's a refreshingly likely chance that for many people a deeper sense of wonder will result. Not a bad accomplishment for the teevee.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, May 4, 9:30 a.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, May 8, 5:45 p.m.

Board Meeting

Saturday, May 10, 12:00 p.m.

Second Annual African American Children's Book Festival

Saturday, May 10, 1:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, May 11, 9:30 a.m.

Explorations in Bioethics and Medicine

Sunday, May 11, 4:00 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, May 18, 9:15 a.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, May 18, 12:30 p.m.

BES Eatery Social (B.E.S.)

Sunday, May 18, 1:00 p.m.

Family Board and Card Games Party

Sunday, May 18, 3:00 p.m.

Memorial Weekend Picnic

Sunday, May 25, 12:00 p.m.

BES Ironweed Film Club

Wednesday, May 28, 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

All are invited to bring snacks for our coffee hour following platform. Snacks are especially welcome from those whose last names start with:

A to F	May 4
G to L	May 11
M to R	May 18
S to Z	May 25

All snacks are welcomed but especially the inventive and healthy.

MAY 4

“The Ethical Journey from Punitive to Unitive Justice”

Sylvia Clute

Alliance for Unitive Justice

Common phrases, like “the punishment must fit the crime,” “I want to get even,” or “an eye for an eye” are actually describing proportional revenge, the moral principle that underpins the punitive western model of justice. Answering harm with more harm is deemed moral, so long as the harm you do is proportional to the harm done to you. Two moral standards are required for proportional revenge to work, one that says the harm done by us, the “good” people, is moral, while condemning the harm done by those whom we have deemed “evil” or “immoral” – even when both are doing essentially the same thing. It is our system of punitive justice that has brought about mass incarceration in the U.S. – one out of every 100 adults in the US is presently incarcerated, and for minorities the rate is much higher. But we have another choice: unitive justice.

Unitive justice is based on the moral principle of loving-kindness and it applies equally to everyone. Whatever the circumstances, harm to another is not condoned as moral. The power of unitive justice lies in this internal moral consistency, a power demonstrated in the movements led by Gandhi, King and Mandela. Safety is achieved, not by physical force, but by creating a system owned by the community in which harm is not condoned. Worldwide, the punitive model of justice is being supplanted by new ways of implementing justice. This discussion will consider the ethical differences between punitive and unitive justice, and the ways in which unitive justice is presently being implemented as an answer to the broken punitive system, the mass incarceration that now pervades the U.S. criminal system, and the school-to-prison pipeline that has resulted from the policy of “zero tolerance”. We can do better!

Sylvia Clute, Program Coordinator for the Alliance for Unitive Justice, is a former trial attorney. For over twenty-five years she has been researching and developing “unitive justice” as a parallel model of justice and a structure for community organization. While unitive justice has ancient roots (loving-kindness, the Golden Rule, non-violence), Sylvia

teaches how it may be adapted to today’s culture and needs. Recently, she spent two years creating and implementing a restorative justice program based on unitive justice principles at a Richmond, Va. high school, and is now implementing the program in a middle school. She writes and lectures on unitive justice and has authored two books, *Beyond Vengeance*, *Beyond Duality: A Call for a Compassionate Revolution* and the novel, *Destiny Unveiled*. She holds graduate degrees from Harvard Kennedy School of Government (MPA), Boston University School of Law (JD) and the Univ. of California at Berkeley (MPA). A former Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal, she was co-founder and Chair of the Board of Women’s Bank and has been active in community service throughout her career.

MAY 11

“The Ethical Culture Story”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Founded by Felix Adler in 1876, Ethical Culture has philosophical roots that reach back into humanity’s earliest attempts to make meaning and construct community. Ancient western religions established the common polarities of good and evil, divine and mundane. Dominating religious paradigms, from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, embraced dualism and offered differing ways for mortals to attain eternal life.

As inheritors of the scientific revolution, Ethical Culture sought better ways to live in modernity, in the here and now. Fresh off his attendance at Ethical Culture’s annual national gathering, Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will talk about our brand of Humanism and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Hugh Taft-Morales joined the Baltimore Ethical Society as its professional leader in 2010, the same year he was certified by the American Ethical Union as an Ethical Culture Leader. He also serves as Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. His presence in Ethical Culture has been termed “invigorating.” Taft-Morales lives in Takoma Park, Maryland, with his wife Maureen, a Latin American Analyst with the Congressional Research Service, with whom he has three beloved children, Sean, Maya, and Justin.

MAY 18

“Organizing Adjunct Faculty at MICA”

Panelists To Be Announced

Adjunct faculty at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) have been organizing for better working conditions, compensation, and security of employment. Their organizing drive culminates with an election at the end of April. This panel of adjunct faculty activists will report on the campaign and directions forward. Panelists will share their views on the role of adjunct faculty in the academic community and related ethical issues.

MAY 25

“Memorial Day Remembrance”

Hosted by Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Our Memorial Day Remembrance Sunday is a chance for BES members and guests to remember those who have died. Sharing memories can inspire us, warm our hearts, and ease the pain of loss. Whether we are thinking of loved ones, historical heroes no longer with us, or those who died in military service to our nation, we are left to honor these precious parts of our lives by bringing out their best. It is up to each of us to make the most of our memories, and today we do so as a community.

During the program members and guests are invited to place a flower, provided by BES, into a vase in memory of someone (a relative, friend, mentor, or hero). They may share a few words about this person or simply place a flower in the vase silently.

This program will be shorter than usual, ending at about 11:30 am without a Q&A period so that members can join our Memorial Weekend picnic.

SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

The Baltimore Ethical Society has a Leader and a team of officiants who are trained and licensed to conduct weddings, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For more information, contact our Officiant Team Coordinator at weddings@bmoreethical.org.

YOUNG ADULT BOOK CLUB

Join our new Young Adult (YA) book club as we begin reading Cory Doctorow's novel *For The Win*. Download the PDF for free at <http://craphound.com/ftw/>. This book is engaging for both youth and adults and deals with thought-provoking themes of labor struggles in a global Internet economy. Kathleen Wilsbach will introduce the book, and Andy Brokaw will facilitate discussion. The April meeting was postponed due to illness. The new meeting time will be announced. Please see Argentine Craig or Emil Volcheck for any questions or to join.

CARING COMMITTEE SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

Do you have time to make a phone call or send a Get Well card? Then think about joining the Caring Committee. The Caring Committee helps members who experience illness or other health problems. If you're sick or in the hospital, the committee will send a card or flowers, and make sure other members know you might need help. We have some senior members who can no longer travel to BES on a regular basis. The Caring Committee calls them, shares news, and tries to help them stay in touch with us. If someone needs a lift to BES, the committee will try to arrange that. If you'd like to help with the caring work of this committee, please speak to Kirk, Judy, or Emil.

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THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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blue, and white

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IRONWEED

film

CLUB PRESENTS

"YEARS OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY"

**Wednesday, May 28,
7:30 p.m.**

This month we join the Rainforest Action Network for a screening of the first episode of a new TV program on Showtime called "Years of Living Dangerously." The show features a star-studded cast and focuses on the devastating social justice impacts that will occur from climate change. It touches on one major aspect that is contributing to that – clear cutting the rainforest for palm oil production.

View the trailer: <http://yearsof-livingdangerously.com>.

Would you like to select films or help run the club? Please ask Emil (email volcheck@acm.org, or call 410/929-3399).

As of February 1st, BES has obtained an umbrella license from the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation (MPLC), which will allow us to screen a wider range of films. (Thanks to Richard Campbell for telling us about MPLC!)

BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, May 8, 5:45–8:00 p.m.

Join BES members and others for this enjoyable outing at a great organization – check out their website at www.mfeast.org. Let Lisa Alderson know you are coming (lialderson@gmail.com) and show up at Moveable Feast, 901 N. Milton Ave., Baltimore, MD, at 5:45 p.m. Park in front of building and enter through the door closest to Ashland Street. Let Lisa know if you'd like to car-pool, and she'll try to match you up with another BES participant.

BES EATERY SOCIAL (B.E.S.)

Sunday, May 18, 1:00 p.m.

Members and friends are invited to go out together for lunch. We'll gather in the lobby at about 12:45 p.m. following post-platform snacks to decide what restaurant to visit. Everyone is encouraged to wear their BES shirts or other items to help promote the society. BES Eatery Social is held on a different Sunday each month to better provide members with the opportunity to attend. If you have any questions, please contact Adam at synxr0nic@yahoo.com.

MEMORIAL WEEKEND PICNIC

Sunday, May 25, 12:00 p.m. at the home of Dianne and Stuart Hirsch

Join us for food, fun, and fellowship following the Remembrance Sunday program at BES, which will end earlier than usual at approximately 11:30 a.m. Members Dianne and Stuart Hirsch have graciously agreed to open their home (and yard) to us once again and so we will gather for our annual Memorial Sunday picnic from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The picnic is potluck so please bring a dish to contribute. Directions will be handed out and/or provided on request.





Explorations in Bioethics and Medicine

CARING MOTHER EARTH: A MOTHER'S DAY CONVERSATION

Sunday, May 11, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

For the last of our series of spring "Explorations in Bioethics and Medicine" we will be focusing on environmental stewardship and feeding a hungry planet.

The pace of technological innovation seems to outpace growth of ethical responsibility in creating sustainable public policy. The planet is being poisoned and warmed, seas are rising, and hunger – while potentially eradicable – continues to haunt billions of people.

What are the greatest ethical challenges and opportunities confronting us today?

FAMILY BOARD & CARD GAMES PARTY

Sunday, May 18, 3:00-6:45 p.m. at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic

Join members of the Baltimore Parenting Beyond Belief Meetup for a board and card games party at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic in Howard County. Feel free to bring a game or play one of the many there. Please bring a snack or drink to share (or a small monetary contribution for the host instead). Come when you can, while the party lasts. Ms. Cedilnic is the lead organizer of the Maryland Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Address and directions provided when you RSVP. For questions, please call her at 301-642-1065. Join the Meetup at <http://meetu.ps/1vtyF0>.

The Dance of Change

(continued from page 1)

change with it, we will not be as effective in our mission. We will not communicate as well to the variety of people seeking a humanist home. I'm confident that we will continue to grow stronger and more vibrant. I'm sure we will incorporate and negotiate differences creatively so as to better serve both current members and future members. We'll continue to grow a community that is welcoming, inclusive, and safe for humanists of all ages, races, socio-economic background, and previous religious experience.

The change we should embrace, however, is not blind, arbitrary change. We need change informed by our history and shared values – change that helps us better honor the inherent worth of people; that helps us defend the worth of each and every person around the globe through ethical action and social justice work. We want change based on ethical relationships – respectful, compassionate and open face-to-face interaction that brings out the best in everyone. That is a type of change that I find invigorating, challenging, but essential to bringing out the best in BES and Ethical Culture. Welcome to the dance of change!

2ND ANNUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL

Saturday, May 10, 1:00-4:00 p.m. at the Lewis Museum, 830 E. Pratt St.

Enjoy readings by authors, talks with illustrators, cultural performances, an interactive storytelling workshop by a griot performer, and craft activities to include bookbinding demonstrations by local book artists. Special guests include illustrator and Maryland native Bryan Collier as he presents his latest book, *Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream For Me*. The book earned Collier the 2014 Coretta Scott King Book Award for Illustration. There will be a special guest reading by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. This program is presented in partnership with Baltimore City Schools and the Enoch Pratt Free Library. Free museum admission. For all ages! RSVP and more information at <http://ur1.ca/h4vw7>. If you are interested in attending, please see Argentine Craig or Emil Volcheck.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

306 W. Franklin Street, Suite 102, Baltimore, MD 21201-4661

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, May 18, 9:15–10:15 a.m.

Come help plan the Ethical Action strategy for the Baltimore Ethical Society!

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, May 18, 12:30 p.m.

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Attended a meeting or two? Thinking about joining? Come to the Newcomers Meeting, held following the last platform of every month, and learn more about Ethical Culture and about our Society – its history, its philosophy, and its organization. Meetings last about one hour and attendance is recommended before becoming a member. See Judy Katz or Emil Volcheck for more information.

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, May 11, 9:30 a.m.

Mindfulness is a tool we can use in our daily lives to act in a more ethical way. We practice mindfulness meditation so that it comes naturally in stressful times. Join us as we sit (on chairs) and breathe (just the way it comes naturally) and listen to the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the world's best-known teachers of mindfulness.

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