

A BOOK OF
ETHICAL WISDOM

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Ethical Society of Boston

AN APPRECIATION

Ethical Societies experience religion as a conversation through the ages. From person to person, from generation to generation, there is a chain of caring about the important issues of each life-time. Felix Adler founded our Ethical Movement in order to give modern expression to the exploration of the meaning of life and the purpose of the new industrial society. Life was becoming urbanized and women and children had to be freed to learn, alongside of newly organized men, how to incorporate the new discoveries of science and the new social philosophies.

A second generation in Ethical Culture was led by John Lovejoy Elliott who communicated effectively about what democracy and respect for individuals means. He built communities and influenced the founding of the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples. Algernon Black was in the forefront of our third generation which emerged from the Great Depression and World War II with new concepts of freedom after the struggle against fascism and totalitarian government. With Gandhi and Martin Luther King, there was a rebirth of forces for equality that continues to this day.

In our generation, globalization followed the emergence of atomic energy, space travel, computers and high technology. Our generation knows our world is different from any that came before us. And yet the simple issues of living, and living with one another, underlie the whole new complexity of world civilization.

Given to us are the insights and inspirations that illuminated the spectacular lives of spiritual leaders such as these. The essence of lifetimes of thought has been preserved for us in their many books and memoirs. This book is a selection of choice expressions of those who shaped Ethical Culture and those who contributed so significantly to modern thought about life and its meaning. Many of these readings have been shared as Opening and Closing Words at meetings of various Ethical Societies. Others have been expressed cryptically as aphorisms that appear on weekly Program sheets at our meetings. A last section relates to insights into the meaning of life and the importance of individuality perceived most clearly at Memorial Meetings after the death of important people in our lives.

This is a collection of discoveries and values that distill what the generations offer one another. There is invaluable guidance in the sharing of personality and the insights of different cultures as the world learns how to live in a global society that must consider what is important in our personal lives and in our shared struggle for peace, justice and community.

This conversation between generations has been invaluable to this author. I appreciate what Algernon Black and each of these leaders have left to us. I hope this compact presentation makes their contributions to the conversation about religious values and life more accessible to readers of our next generation.

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PART 1

OPENING AND CLOSING WORDS

New York

FELIX ADLER

This is his 1926 "Statement of Purpose". Some contemporary phraseology is used in place of his original words in a few sentences.

The Ethical Movement affirms that to live ethically, is to fulfill one's own life by promoting what is best in the lives of others. Ethics is not life feeding on life; but life interlacing with life; each of us adding something to the lives of others.

Our Society does not establish a fixed creed or formula for living. We do not put forward an explicit religion for all to accept as their own. We share an implicit religion created by each person, following their own reason and experience; insight and understanding.

We seek to retain what is vitally true in the moral teachings of the past; but we restate what is morally true, in terms that are meaningful and relevant today. Religion is not only what was created in the past. Religion is alive and newly created each day.

The Ethical Movement seeks to prevent the ethical ideal from petrifying. No matter how sublime an ideal is for one time; it must be vivid in our own lives. The ethical ideal must ever be a growing ideal adapted to changes in society; changes in self; changes in the circumstances of life.

Societies for Ethical Culture exist to reinstate the essential motif of religion through the ages- the shared quest for a good life in a caring world.

They who take this creative ethical-task as their personal life long quest, will find the courage needed to meet life's challenges. They will find the strength to persist against inevitable obstacles. They will endure despite endless failures, and not be bemused by specious successes.

Ethical people find a finer happiness in life's simple joys and find greater strength in facing life's sorrows. They attain a deeper faith in people and look toward the future with hope.

Adler described the first meeting of the New York Society for Ethical Culture in the following words:

Perhaps a hundred people assembled one evening, May 15, 1876, at the time when the country was celebrating the hundredth anniversary of its political independence. The people who gathered had summoned me from Cornell University, where I was at that time a very young professor of religious history, in order to present to them the sketch of a religion but without the dogmas. After the address, the first Society for Ethical Culture was established in New York. There are now six vigorous societies in the United States...

The impulse that led originally to the formation of Ethical Societies sprang from the profound feeling that human life needs to be consecrated. Furthermore, the consecration cannot be derived from doctrines which, however vital they may have been in the past, however true they may still be for some, have ceased to be so, for oneself.

Among those who assembled that first evening, there was manifest, a desire to separate the grain from the chaff, but also a desire to preserve the grain. Not only to

preserve, but to plant it anew...The majority of those present were men and women of ordinary good education. The bulk of this first Society consisted of average people.

I cannot too strongly emphasize that the movement did not start among the so-called intelligentsia; that it was not a rationalistic movement; that it was not negative in its attitude; that the people interested in it were not concerned with such questions as the authenticity of the Scriptures or of miracles..

Turning away from such matters, they asked with intense feeling, what consecrating influence shall we bring into our own lives, and particularly into the lives of our children? This desire for a consecrating influence expressed itself in the formation of these societies.

Washington D.C.

GEORGE BEAUCHAMP

The most necessary of all faiths is a faith in people.
Faith that each individual can select their own aims,
better than any other person can select for them.

Not faith that people will be wise, for people are often foolish;
But faith that people at their best are capable of wisdom,
and that they can be taught to be wiser than they are.

Not faith that people will be good, for people are sometimes wicked;
but faith that people can be inspired to greater goodness and compassion.

Not faith that people will always be strong and brave,
for the best of people are often weak;
but faith that people are capable of strength,
and through faith in the potentialities of people,
comes multiplied strength and genuine firmness.

Not faith that people are wise, or good, or brave, or strong,
but that they are capable of becoming wise enough and good enough,
brave enough and strong enough to make a habitable and enjoyable world,
together.

New York

ALGERNON BLACK

Each of us seeks his own essence. Our realities are personal and unknown.
I am more than my beginning, but my beginning is a key. I will look to my roots.
I will search out strength. I will nourish the talents. I will be of many dimensions.
Do I stand aloof and alone? Or am I part of the forest?
I will reach out to all that is. The many-ness of the human family;
the many forms of being all over this dear earth.
So when you look at me; when you speak and touch me; be careful.

Be tender and gentle, if you love me.
Do not demand too much. I am trying to learn to live.

It is not enough to say we believe in people; or that we hold that ethics is the common ground for a human life worth living. When we use the word ethics, we mean that it is the way people treat each other; how we see ourselves and others; how we relate one to one; group to group. It means the struggle to liberate ourselves and others from fear, mistrust, bigotry; from lust for wealth and power.

When we say that we believe in people and that ethics is the heart of the religious problem; it is because we feel deeply the suffering of life; that so many millions die without ever having lived. Died without ever having learned to think; or to enjoy the life of the mind; or ever having had the experience of creating beauty; or appreciating the beauty in nature and in the works of humankind.

For no matter how great the achievements in science and the arts, nothing will matter, nothing will survive, and nothing will be fulfilled of the human potential unless we all move toward a more ethical condition in which everyone's worth and potential is respected and protected and nurtured.

We cannot make people live or want to live;
But we can create the conditions in which they will have more taste for life
and more faith in life.

We cannot make people free if they do not want to be free.
But we can remove the obstacles to their freedom
and help them learn to free themselves.

We cannot make people equal when they are unequal.
But we can help defend their rights and open opportunities.

We cannot make people like one another or love one another;
But we can reach out to others and help them communicate;
and understand each other.

We can nourish the feeling of community, the feeling of identity in the
common life. We can seek to create a climate of trust and good will
with those whose lives we touch.

This is the way to freedom and equality for all, and the hope of a sane
and happy world.

Dreams are among our most precious possessions. They grow in our
childhood years. Sometimes we lose them, as we deal with reality, but for some the
dreams never die. Indeed the life expectations grow; they grow until we are possessed
by them. We hold that dreams are not just for the night alone, but are the stuff of day light;
outreachings of a better self; of a better tomorrow.

Where our dreams meet, we may find one another, and a new life may be
born. We cannot make people love one another but we can bring people together. We can
break down some walls and believe and try.

Ethical fellowships exist, not to criticize faith in God, but rather to unite people in a faith in people. Religion should turn human beings toward, not away from one another. Religion should turn people's attention to life on this earth, not some other world.

We have the gift of human life, wherever it comes from, and the means of developing what is distinctively human. To live like animals would be to forfeit this gift. When we ask, "What does it mean to be human?", we find the answer in our ethical nature and in the cultivation of the gifts and possibilities of human beings. For it is the truth and beauty and goodness within human beings, that human beings must fulfill.

In our effort to grow and cultivate awareness and sensitivity in the individual, and to create a more ethical culture in our institutions and social order, we can unite no matter what our differences concerning the unknown. To rise above the laws of the jungle, of life feeding on life, and to live creatively with others, is a consecration which makes us worthy of the gift of life.

This is a call to the living,
 To those who refuse to make peace with evil,
 With the suffering and the waste of the world.
 This is a call to the human, not the perfect,
 To those who know their own prejudices,
 Who have no intention of becoming prisoners of their own limitations.
 This is a call to those who remember the dreams of their youth,
 Who know what it means to share food and shelter,
 The care of children and those who are troubled,
 To reach beyond the barriers of the past
 Bringing people into communion.
 This is a call to the never ending spirit
 Of the common man, his essential decency and integrity,
 His unending capacity to suffer and endure,
 To face death and destruction and to rise again
 And build from the ruins of life.
 This is the greatest call of all
 The call to a faith in people.

To believe in freedom, we have to believe in people.

New Jersey

JOSEPH CHUMAN

If you are looking for salvation which will guarantee you a place in Heaven,
 Ethical Culture cannot offer you this.
 If you are looking for a clearly delineated path by which to achieve perfect bliss,
 perfect freedom, and total ego-transcendence, you won't find it here.
 If you are looking for association with a clearly defined community with a deep
 reach of history that goes back thousands of years, you won't find it here

either; although the humanistic ideas for which Ethical Culture stands are very ancient.

If you are looking for a worship experience, or an ecstatic religious experience, you won't find it here.

If, in the process of ethical search, you wish to be assured that there is a divine plan established for the world which can serve as a guide for your actions, Ethical Culture, in all honesty, cannot provide this either.

But if you are looking for a philosophy which will always keep before you the idea that human life and human dignity are of inestimable value, then Ethical Culture can offer you that.

If you want a philosophy which will affirm all those values which have at their core, liberty, equality, justice and fundamental human rights, then you have found a home in Ethical Culture.

In this morally corrupting world, if you are looking for a standard of ideals by which to critique all that is degrading, demeaning, exploitative and dehumanizing, Ethical Culture will support you in that search.

If you are looking for a philosophy of life which encourages you to develop your thought in an atmosphere of freedom, but within the compass of ethical ideas, Ethical Culture will do that for you.

Ethical Culture will not give you the moon; it is merely the finger that points the way. The specific steps along that path are your own to discover and develop.

If you are looking for a philosophy which proclaims faith in the human future, Ethical Culture invites you to participate in helping to create that future.

And lastly, Ethical Culture invites you to live the strenuous life and dares you to confront an open universe in which, to great measure, the meaning you find will be the meaning you create.

But it encourages you to do so, not in isolation, but rather in community with others who share the same vision and have committed themselves to the same journey.

Princeton

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Without "ethical culture" there is no salvation for humanity.

From a 75th anniversary congratulatory letter.

New York

JOHN LOVEJOY ELLIOTT

People do not sufficiently believe that there is a spiritual power in the human beings about them. I believe it is there, because of the way I have seen people act.

We want to lift the weight from the shoulders of everyone and give an equal chance to all; because the life of all people is sacred. From the sense of the sacredness of human life, comes all moral and social progress.

The test as to whether people are religious has always been whether they did or did not believe in God. Now I should say there is a deeper test than that, and that is the belief in human beings, the belief in the spiritual nature of people.

I have known many good people who believed in God.

I have known many good people who did not believe in God..

But I have never known a human being who was good,
who did not believe in people.

The great personalities are those who have most truly sensed the interpenetration of life as its central factor. The greatest personalities that ever existed have been those who united human beings and put them on a road toward cooperation and effectiveness and peace. Those whom the world has held highest have helped to unite and not to sever this interconnectedness. They have not been the destroyers of differences but the harmonizers of differences. I believe that the power of seeing the worth and dignity inherent in human beings is the only power that can establish unity on the earth.

The truly good person is one who gives to those who live and work with her or him a justified faith in themselves; who increases the self-respect in other people by respecting them. The only person who can really help human beings is one who helps them to see themselves in a fine way.

My ultimate faith in the Ethical Movement and my hope for the future of religion in this world are founded in my associations with living men and women. Profound as the respect and reverence of any person must be for the religions of the past, I cannot stand in awe before them. But I am filled with the sense of wonder and awe in the presence of the spiritual nature as it manifests itself in the daily lives of men and women.

The only things I have found worth living for, and dying for, are love and friendship.

Washington D.C.

EDWARD ERICSON

Ethical Humanism is primarily an attitude about human beings, their worth, and the significance of their lives. It is concerned with the nature and quality of living; the character and creativity of our relationships. Because of this concern, humanism spontaneously flowers into a spiritual movement in its own right. Whether one professes it formally as a new conception of religion, without theology or scripture, or considers it

simply as a personal approach to living, humanism has become a powerful moral faith. The convinced ethical humanist can no more be indifferent to his or her moral vision than a devout Catholic or a dedicated Hindu can be indifferent to theirs. Such is the nature of a moral faith that it demands our best. It claims the very center of our lives. Or it is nothing.

The humanist believes

with Bertrand Russell that the good life is inspired by love and guided by knowledge; that the great use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it;
with Thoreau that one is rich whose needs are few;
with the author of Leviticus that you shall not seek vengeance or bear a grudge against your neighbor, but that you shall love your neighbor as yourself;
with Benjamin Franklin that where liberty is -there is my country;
with Thomas Paine that the world is my country and to do good is my religion.

The humanist affirms

with the Moslem that those are blessed whose wealth is the joy of giving and who, though deprived of goods are not lacking in uprightness;
with the Jew, to guard above all things your inner self, for so you live and prosper;
with the Christian that it is more blessed to give than to receive;
with the Buddhist that hatred is not diminished by hatred, but hatred is diminished by love.

The humanist affirms

with Gandhi that if we have no love for our neighbor, no change however revolutionary can do us any good;
and again with Gandhi that in violence, truth is the greatest sufferer;
and with Eugene Debs that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in jail, I am not free.

India

MOHANDAS GANDHI

This and this alone is true religion: to serve thy brethren.
This is sin above all other sin: to harm thy brethren.
In such a faith is happiness. In lack of it, is misery and pain.
Blessed is he who swerveth not aside from his straight path.
Blessed is he whose life is lived ceaselessly in serving;
Bearing others' burdens. And thus alone, is life, true life to be attained.
Nothing is hard to him who casting self aside thinks only this:
How may I serve my fellow people?

(Historical Note: Gandhi was so impressed by William Salter's 1900 book about Ethical Culture that he copied it down into his own journal word for word. Gandhi included Thoreau and Quaker concepts, as well, in his religious development while in England).

New York

HENRY GOLDING

In a profounder sense than we had ever fathomed, we are members one of another. No one can attain their full stature alone. Their highest good is a common good, which is not lessened, but enriched by being shared. For it consists in the effort to liberate and exalt life in all...The person who has truly come home to himself or herself has come home to humanity.

Ethical religion claims for all people freedom for growth. It challenges every authority that would fetter the human spirit, arraigns every form of power, ecclesiastical, political, social, economic or other that defaces people. The supreme task is to so transfigure human relations in the light of widening knowledge and deeper love of the right; that society shall no longer be the expression of conflicting egoism's, but shall be organized for unfolding the spiritual life of all its members. To lift people's eyes and turn their will toward that vision is the purpose of the Ethical Movement.

New York

MAX GROSSMAN

A stronger social conscience must be born, if an ethical culture is to be developed out of the crying need of humanity in agony. The individual in one's search for one's own soul can only find it in one's relationships- in the maturity of family responsibility, in one's duties as worker and citizen, in one's helping humanity wrestle with world problems ethically. It is then that the individual can stand erect, worthy of the divine spark, precious and irreplaceable.

Chicago

EUSTACE HAYDON

The Humanist rarely loses the feeling of perfect at homeness in the universe. The humanist is conscious of being an earth-child. There is a mystic glow in this sense of belonging. Memories of one's long ancestry still linger in muscle and nerve, in brain and germ cell. On moonlit nights, in the renewal of life in the springtime, before the glory of a sunset, in moments of swift insight, people feel the community of their own physical being with the body of mother earth. Rooted in millions of years of planetary history, the earthling has a secure feeling of being at home, and a consciousness of pride and dignity as a bearer of the heritage of the ages.

We shall have to recognize that human beings, all of us, are bound together in one bundle of life. We belong together. In the great task of making the human ideal actual on earth, we have only each other.

To guarantee the joy of living to everyone, we shall have to build the society in which human values are exalted above material, machines, money; where free opportunity for all has right of way over special privilege for a few; where democracy takes the place of entrenched authority of church or political and economic power. Society should be an invitation to joy in living.

Persons who have learned the art of meeting their fellows with characteristic responses of kindness, unselfishness, patience, courage, frankness and honesty, know the real joys of life. The prophets of the ancient religions were right when they identified the Good with love, sympathy, loyalty, justice, brotherhood, peace, generosity and self-sacrifice for others. These words woven into behavior mean happy human relations. Think of the experiences that add lilt to living; most precious among them will be the moments when lives intermingle—the clinging of hands of little children; the devotion of mothers; the dreams of lovers; the loyalty of co-workers.

People wedded to old beliefs, old methods, old institutions, may block the path to the future. The modern task calls for intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, daring, and most of all, devotion to the cause of humanity.

Humanism has faith in people and puts full responsibility upon individuals for imposing a human purpose upon the future flow of earthly events and for building into reality, their vision of the good society. One cannot wait for any god visualized in any of the religions, to do the work for people. Experience of the ages seems to show that if the social order people hope to enjoy is to be brought into being, it must be built by people, with people, for people. For the tough minded, there is a thrill in the thought that a person must be the creator and master of personal destiny. In the light of the past failure, it may seem to be a daring adventure. The humanist cannot be a mere spectator of the cosmic drama; nor be lulled to sleep in the arms of the absolute; nor can the humanist trust the ghost of the gods still lingering in modern theology. Humanists must go on in patient meliorism, confronting brute maladjustment's with smiling confidence in individuals and in human powers.

Chicago

M.M. MANGASORIAN

It is the aim of the Ethical Movement to reconcile ethics with religion. All faiths, all creeds, must make their peace with ethics. The gods must become moral, before they become immortal.

It is the mission of Ethical Culture to create and communicate new moral ideas. The moral world is the work of people. We do not make the physical forces; the laws which govern the constellations; the ebb and flow of the days.

The day dawns and the day draws to a close; the forests put on their foliage and in due time drop their leaves. We may all bandage our eyes and still the sun will shine. The shutting or opening of our eyes will have no effect upon the light.

But there will be no moral light, if our spiritual light be darkened. There will be no justice or goodness or truth in the world, if we do not create them; if we do not express them. When conscience sets, the light of the whole world is gone.

New York

ALFRED MARTIN

The Ethical Movement begins with the accepted norms of human conduct, with those which the consensus of civilized peoples have long since been put beyond the pale of further question. That we should be kind, just, honest, grateful, sympathetic to the unfortunate are moral beliefs about which people generally agree. Honor, justice and love bind us regardless of our explanation of them. Here then is our common ground. Here we come together and work together and push on into unexplored fields of the moral life.

We believe that by striving to get into right relations with others we shall find what these relations ought to be. Working toward an ideal of justice in social and business life, we shall learn what the true ideal really is. To know the spiritual meaning of love one must live the life of love.

New York

DAVID MUZZEY

We in the Ethical Movement stand for the doctrine that pursuit of ethical enlightenment is the supreme aim of life, but we also have faith in a person's capacity to pursue this aim quite independently of any theological creed or ceremonial ritual.

We are all together in this world of joy and sorrow; rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, exalted and humble, learned and simple. Seeking not to penetrate the impenetrable mysteries over which the theologians of the past have spent their mental energies, but to find a religion which will release our latent moral energies and give direction, purpose, poise and meaning to our lives. This is not the task of a consecrated clergy alone. It is our common social duty. Wherever and whenever any member of the human family makes his or her contribution to this fund of moral idealism, he or she is a true minister of religion.

New York

JEROME NATHANSON

Why live? The answer is, that in enduring the unendurable, people gain whatever spiritual heights they are able to scale. There is no choice. It is necessary for us to live with what we say, cannot be lived with. How can human beings live constantly subjected to bombings (as Londoners did in WW2); to starvation and to war? Yet, people emerge with the stature of victors. We live with our necessities; with our evils; and in the course of living with them, we affirm what ever it is we mean by the concept "human". We may not overcome anguish, but we can encompass it and surpass it. We may not overcome the evils of the world, but we can use them. From a religious standpoint, the only answer to the tragic view of life, is the heroic.

Brooklyn

HENRY NEUMAN

We believe that there are heroic depths in the human soul that never have been addressed as they deserve. The real greatness of human beings shows itself only when the heroic spirit is most challenged. And we are all of us capable of more than we ordinarily

suppose. There are depths upon depths in us, that we are never aware of, until we face unafraid, the difficulties we imagine we can never bear. It is marvelous what can be done by courage. The Ethical faith believes that the spirit of people, awake and aware of itself, is more than a match for whatever it is called upon to meet. We have no guarantee that this courage will prevail. It claims us not because it is bound to win, but because it richly deserves to win.

The essential task of our religion lies in constantly clearing up and refreshing our sense of the uniting reality: the inherent human greatness. This is a presence and a power which we sometimes call the true person within the person. We see this worth, when we protest against neglect and inhumanities. We see it when, in spite of poverty, or sickness, or mistreatment from others, or our own moral lapses, men and women rally themselves and act like high-grade people. The central function of Ethical fellowships will long need to be the charging and recharging of such vision with vitality.

Chicago

HAROLD QUIGLEY

History is filled with blueprints for ultimate solutions of people's problems. All one has to do, is accept The Way, The Truth, or The Light, or The Four Fold Plan; and Nirvana is around the corner. The dreamers though are not around to see that history has dealt rather harshly with their dreams. With the mockery of history apparent, what can one depend on? What really works? Is the world nothing but a mad house? What remains to be done is to accept the lessons of history, and to turn to the issue of how well and how creatively people can relate themselves, to one another. Ethical humanism is not a blueprint, a new Way, or Truth, or Life. It is a new hope about how people may learn to liberate one another. The way toward religious freedom, is the way toward becoming fully human.

The temptation has always existed, in any society, for the ruling class to look at the mob, and to draw the conclusion that society would be safe, prosperous, and reasonably peaceful if the many were transformed into the ONE. Religion then became the vehicle, what ever the words used, to get the many to think alike, work alike, feel alike, marry alike, fight alike, taste alike and behave alike. The theme: "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism".

Liberal religion has always resisted the temptation of creating one ideology as a means of making the society accommodate itself to the dominance of one group. It has proposed for a society's safety, health and well-being, freedom and pluralism. Objectivity is its great hope, so it insisted on competition of creeds. Fulfillment of each person has been its chief concern, so it has endorsed the theme of the worth of each person. Community is its deep purpose, rather than submissiveness to any class, so it has worked for balances of power, distribution of wealth, and justice for all.

Chicago

WILLIAM SALTER

Think of each day as in itself, a life; and say each morning, "I wake to do the work of a full person". Let this day's performance of duty be your religion. Such sentences as these reflect the spirit in which we would wish to live. Too readily does the true significance of our lives drop out of our thoughts. Too easily do we think that getting and spending are the chief things which we must concern ourselves for. May we be helped to remember that the chief thing is that in all circumstances we preserve the attitude and do the work of a truly human person.

Africa

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

When I look back upon my early years, I am stirred by the thought of the number of people whom I have to thank for what they gave me, or for what they were to me. At the same time I am haunted by an oppressive consciousness of the little gratitude I really showed them. How many of them have said farewell to life without my having made clear to them, what it meant to me, to receive from them, so much kindness, so much care? A great deal of water is flowing underground which never comes up as a spring. We must try to be such water, as it finds its way up. We must become a spring at which people may quench their thirst for gratitude.

Boston

STANLEY WAYNE

All religions and thoughtful people celebrate the gifts of life and freedom and hope. Humanists differ from traditional religionists in localizing the basis for religious experience. Not in tradition, not in the heavens, not in past exemplars of religion like Moses, Jesus or Mohammed; but religion exists in people alive today, here and now. We appreciate the legacy given to us by traditional religion. But we feel the search that moves us today is more crucial. We believe the meaning of religion is observed in human relationships as we face life, and as we confront current challenges and conflicts.

We affirm a faith in people. We believe people can create peace where there is war. We can create justice where there is exploitation. We can create respect and trust where there is hatred and ignorance.

Ethical Culture is not naive in thinking these solutions are near at hand or permanently established. But we affirm these goals and we accept these challenges.

We accept the human risk of making life better. And we accept the improvement of human relationships as a religious task that requires new insights, new learning's, new courage.

We regard each human being as precious, as in the course of our effort to evolve a better world, we hope each individual will make their unique, distinctive contribution to improving the human community. Adler saw our task as aiding one another: each individual brings out the best in others and thereby brings out the best in themselves.

This is our human, religious quest.

The Ethical Society occupies the place of a church or a synagogue in the lives of its members. It differs from traditional religious bodies in that ethical concern, rather than theological doctrine, is the basis for membership and fellowship.

We share a religion which is not based on myth or dogma but an affirmation of human worth. We share a respect for the individual and a commitment to use freedom and reason to improve human relationships, for our highest spiritual values are realized in the quality of our human relationships.

PART 2

SELECTIONS FROM FELIX ADLER

epl An Ethical Philosophy of Life

rd A Religion of Duty

ld Life and Destiny

rsi Reconstruction of the Spiritual Ideal

Act so as to elicit in others, the distinctive unique qualities in them. Bring out what is uniquely best in their character and thereby bring out the best in yourself. EPL 117

Living consists of influencing others. Our life consists of our influence. We live to the extent that we affect others. We live in our radiations. RD 133

When we review our life, how little occasion have we to be content with ourselves. How many wayside flowers have we trampled down? If we have not oppressed others, how often have we suppressed in them, powers and capabilities simply because they did not fit into the hard and fast frame of our opinions? How often has our course through life been like a locomotive through the western prairies in the dry summer, scattering sparks and cinders heedless of the conflagration it leaves behind? RD 137

I look to a time when all the relations of human beings toward one another, shall be spiritualized...One person influences another, life smiting on life, with a view to eliciting the hidden riches in the life of the other. RD 70

We grow in the attempt to help others to grow. Every human being is valuable, because in all dwells the same spiritual life. RD 139

In order to beneficently influence others, we must make a deliberate study of their characters. Character is always complex. We see the patches of one's character, looking at one fault, or looking later at one virtue. We must compose a total picture from those patches, seeing the lights and shadows together. Character study should be raised to the rank of duty. RD 139

No greater boon can any one receive from another than to be helped to think well of oneself. Spiritual appreciation, appreciation of the inner self (despite the mask) is the greatest of gifts. To manifest this appreciation, is the greatest of arts. EPL 232

To care for anyone else enough to make their problems one's own, is ever the beginning of one's real ethical development. LD 57

The question of paramount importance, to be kept ever before the mind, is this: How am I influencing the persons with whom I have contact? How as an employer, am I influencing my employees? How as a citizen, am I influencing my fellow citizens? How does the effect of my personality tell on my wife and children and friends? Am I helping them to make the most of them selves? LD 49

To put forth power in such a way as to be provocative of power in others, is the ethical aim in all our relations. The simplest expression is that people will not live by the law of the jungle with life subsisting on life. That law will be replaced by life enhancing life. LD 21

In an attempt to change others, we are compelled to change ourselves. The transformation undergone by a parent in the attempt to educate their child is an obvious example. The same is true for teachers and for a leader and the led. In all relationships that are beneficial, there is growth on both sides. EPL 222

Spiritual appreciation is the greatest of gifts. Spiritual appreciation is the art of going down to the human being in the ditch; to the human being in despair; and helping that person to think well of themselves because of possibilities in their nature, they themselves hardly surmise. It is also the art of helping the most sophisticated persons realize something finer, than what they have reached before. EPL 232

There is a new habit that ought to be supported by a practical philosophy of ethics. How to prize the distinctive difference of each individual. How to prize uniqueness. Not the conventional sameness of people. Not uniformity. But individuality. The ethical quality is that in which a person expresses uniqueness. The ethical act is the most individualized act.

Every person has an equal right to be different from others. Men and women; minorities and majorities; every one from every background has a right to develop a distinct personality. A right to contribute their particular ray to the white light of the spiritual life. EPL 142

This conception of worth, that a person is an end per se, is not a mere abstraction. Every outcry against the oppression of some people, is the affirmation of the principle that a human being is not to be violated. A human being is not to be handled as a tool, but is to be respected and revered.

Kant stands forth pre-eminent among all philosophers as the one who emphatically asserts the attribute of inviolability attaches to every human being. The grand conception of the moral worth of every person is especially connected with the name of Kant. EPL 73

May the humanity that is within every human being be held more and more precious; and be regarded with ever deepening reverence!

The vice that underlies all vices is that we are held cheap by others; and far worse, that in our inmost soul we think cheaply of ourselves. 1901 Lecture

Some people say each person has a soul. I would say each person comes into the world with the possibility of a soul. The aim of life is to change our potential soul into an actuality. The whole purpose of life is to become an individual: to become a personality; to acquire distinctive selfhood. RD 121

In aspiring to noble ends, the soul takes on something of the greatness of that which it truly admires. LD 30

In the moral life itself, in the moral experience itself, we possess religion. Religion is the connection of people's lives to larger laws and principles and purposes. Those who speak contemptuously of "mere morality" in contrast to religion, have in mind

the outside of morality, and give it only a limited meaning. But they ignore the inner depth of moral behavior, and its larger implications which relate to infinite, timeless and far reaching issues. Our behavior is a portion of a larger program and purpose. RD 94

The moral law is the law of our nature. We follow it even when we can not foresee its consequences. RD 96

A person in trouble generally feels as if no one understands their problem. Affliction seems to isolate us. We do not wholly understand ourselves. If someone understands us, if someone supports us through expecting us to act to the best of our ability, that person has given us the greatest good that another can give. No greater boon can anyone receive from another than to be helped to think well of oneself.

Morality directs that we should seek to understand others. Every human being is precious. The experiences of others are not to be ignored or taken for granted or dismissed with some platitude. We are not to wash our hands of concern for others with some pretext or phrase. We ought to enter into their situation in order to help. RD 173

The moral order never is, but is ever becoming. It grows with our growth.

In the moral act, we find religion. LD 33

There is as yet no civilized society, but only a society in the process of becoming civilized. There is as yet no civilized nation, but only nations in the process of becoming civilized. The task of humanity is to build a genuine civilization. RSI 162

Love is the expression of two natures in such fashion that each includes the other. Each is enriched by the other. We are not married on our wedding day. On that day we begin to be married. The true marriage is an endless process; the perpetual interlinking of two souls while life lasts. LD 43

When we have reached a certain stage of culture, genuine gratitude and the verbal expression of it are insufficient. We can say thanks for little gifts. But when the gift is great and the debt is exceedingly heavy- when we are full to overflowing of gratitude... then the only way to show our gratitude is in the use of the benefits we receive. LD 27

“What is the Ethical Movement?” The question will best be answered, and in the long run trully answered, by pointing to the lives of the men and women who belong to the Ethical Societies, saying: “The Ethical Movement is one that produces such lives as these”. Lecture

The Ethical Society shall be a school of moral idealism with no intellectual fetters. Everyone is free to come to the Ethical Society provided they come in the right spirit. Each person should realize their moral education is not yet finished. There is always a

need for further moral development. We always need more strength and more light for our growth as moral beings.

RD 196

There are two objectives to which the Ethical Society is consecrated. One is to help people do the good they already know. Every social relation needs the aid of ethical examination so that we carry our ideals into personal action, in marriage, in work, in politics, etc.

The other object is more important. To gain additional light about what is right. We need light on the great social problems of our times. We need to see far more distinctly than we do, what ought to be the relations between men and women; between what should citizens give and get from their community; how ought people to think about the larger human community; what ought to be the relations between those with advantages and those who are less advantaged. On these and a hundred other questions we need more light.

RD 198

The Ethical Movement does not see dogma as a precondition for goodness. We see dogma as a cause for wasteful conflict.

A shared creed need not be the basis for membership in a religion. The obligation to strive after the good is inherent in moral beings. It is part of human social nature. A high belief is the outcome of the effort toward goodness. The Ethical Society is an institution to help people make an effort to improve relationships without having any creed or formula. The effort after morality, alone, is the basis for fellowship.

RD 197

We are to go out as teachers among the people, discarding the limitations imposed by the theologies of the past, and holding up the moral ideal, pure and simple, as the ideal for all people. Our ideal is that no one and no class shall be the hewers of wood and drawers of water for others. No one shall be used as tools for lusts or ambitions or greed of others. Our ideal is that every human life, man, woman and child shall be esteemed as a sacred utterance of the infinite.

LD 71

The task of humanity is to advance towards personality. I, as an individual, am inextricably linked backward and forward with those who came before me and those who are to come after me. I can not take myself out of this web. The task laid upon human society as a whole, is also laid upon me. I am a conscious thread in a fabric that is still being woven.

EPL 241

There is something in religion besides its doctrines, its symbols, its ceremonies. There is something underlying all this which we can not afford to lose. What is precious in religion is the premise that life is worthwhile and meaningful. There is something greater of which our life is a part. We must find in our own life the facts which can be interpreted to create a useful religion.

RD 23

PART 3

APHORISMS

Addams, Jane

Civilization is a method of living, and an attitude of equal respect for all people.

Adler, Felix

Yes, I believe in "God" but I spell it "Good", with two "O's".

Our Society did not start from the narrowness of peoples' lives; but rather from the egregious shame of the social evils. Religion was needed as an engine to stop these evils.

Anonymous

Living is giving. We make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give.

The test of a religion is how it improves human relationships. Religion is not simply what we believe but how we live.

Who am I? A bit of every book I read. A bit of every place I visit. A bit of every person I love.

Ethics does not convert people. Ethical people are attracted to the causes and personalities of their times that make the world better.

Arendt, Hannah

Man's chief moral deficiency appears to be not his indiscretions, but his reticence.

Aristotle

What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies.

Aurelius, Marcus

Never value anything as profitable to you that makes you break your word or makes you lose your self-respect.

It is not death that a man should fear but he should fear never beginning to live.

Baldwin, James

Man cannot live by profit alone.

Bernard, Tristan

To live happily with other people, one should ask of them only what they can give.

Black, Algernon

Our friends see the best in us and by that very fact call forth the best from us.

Ethical members are non-joiners. They do not join the Ethical Society because they need the Society. They join because the Society needs them.

Buber, Martin

A person cannot approach the divine by reaching beyond the human.
 To become human, is what this individual person, has been
 created for.

Buddha

Believe nothing because a so-called wise man said it.
 Believe nothing because a belief is generally held.
 Believe nothing because it is said in ancient books.
 Believe nothing because it is said to be of divine origin.
 Believe nothing because someone else believes it.
 Believe only what you yourself judge to be true.

Camus, Albert

Our cause is sure of victory. Love and truth are as obstinate as Spring.
 In the midst of winter, I finally learned, that there was in me an
 invincible summer.

Channing, William Ellery

Every human being is intended to have a character;
 to be what no other is; to do what no other can.

Cicero

A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue; it is the parent of all
 the other virtues.
 The good of the people is the basis for law.
 It is as hard for the good to suspect evil, as it is for the bad to
 suspect good.
 The true medicine of the mind is philosophy.

Claudian

Nothing is more annoying than a low man raised to a high position.

Confucius

I am so absorbed in the wonder of the earth and the life upon it,
 that I cannot think of a heaven and angels.
 When you see a worthy person, endeavor to emulate him. When
 you see an unworthy person examine your self.
 If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the
 character;
 If there be beauty in the character, there will be
 harmony in the home;
 If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation;
 When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.
 Heaven and earth are separate, but the work they do is the same.

He who wishes to secure the good of others, has already secured his own.

Forget injuries; never forget kindness. Kindness is greater than the law.

The superior person knows what is right; the imperial person knows what pays.

The superior person makes demands upon himself; the imperial person makes demands upon others.

Dante

He who sees a need, and waits to be asked for help, is as unkind as if he had refused it.

Dickinson, Emily

Truth is such a rare thing, it is delightful to tell it. (Truth-telling).

If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain. If I can ease one life the aching; or cool one pain; or help one fainting robin into his nest again; I shall not live in vain.

Douglas, Frederick

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. This struggle may be a moral one or it may be a physical one or both; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

Drummond, Henry

You will find, if you think for a moment, that the people who influence you, are people who believe in you.

You will find that the moments when you really lived, are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love.

Edelman, Marian

We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.

Eden, Anthony

Corruption never has been compulsory.

Einstein, Albert

It is only to the individual that a soul was given.

Only a life in the service of others is worth living.

Worth should lie in what one gives; not in what one gets.

Today's problem is not atomic energy but the human heart.

Elliot, George

No soul is desolate as long as there is a human being for whom it can feel trust and reverence.

What do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?

Emerson, Ralph Waldo

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

The only way to have a friend is to be a friend.

Epictetus

He is not free, who is not master of himself.

He is wise, who does not grieve for things he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.

Feuerbach, Ludwig

Dogma is nothing but the express prohibition of thinking.

Fontane

The main thing is to hear life's music everywhere. So many people only hear the dissonance.

Frank, Anne

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

Franklin, Ben

You can bear your own faults; why not a fault in another?

Friess, Horace

The essence of humanism is a loyal devotion to men and women in both their frailty and strength.

Fromm, Erich

The danger of the past was that people became slaves. The danger of the future is that people may become robots.

Gandhi, Mohandis

Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics, do not understand religion. Nor do they understand politics.

Whatever you do may seem insignificant. But it is most important that you do it.

Hatred can be overcome only by love.

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

Civilization is the encouragement of differences. Force, violence, pressure or compulsion with a view to conformity is both uncivilized and undemocratic.

Gauvreau, Emile Henry

I was part of that strange race of people aptly described as spending their lives doing things they detest, to make money they don't want, to buy things they don't need, to impress people they dislike.

Gibran, Kahil

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself, that you truly give.

Gladstone, William

The function of government is to help people to do good. And to help people avoid doing what is bad.

Glasgow, Arnold

A true friend doesn't sympathize with your weakness. He/she helps summon your strength.

Goethe, Wolfgang

If we take people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat them as if they were what they should be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming.

The sublime mind does not find greatness in life; it creates the greatness in life.

Nothing strengthens a person more than the confidence shown in her/him.

Great necessity ennobles. Petty need humiliates.

We are shaped and fashioned by what we love.

A teacher who can arouse a feeling for one single good action, or one good poem, accomplishes more than he who fills our memory with rows and rows of objects classified with names and forms.

Hale, Edward Everett

I am only one; but I am one. I cannot do everything; but I can do something. I will not let what I cannot do cause me to refuse to do what I can.

Havel, Vaclar

The salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart; in the human power to reflect; in human meekness; and in human responsibility.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell

The way by which the so called "inevitable" comes to pass is by effort.

Horace

Nothing human is alien to me.

Hughes, Langston

Hold fast your dreams, for if dreams die, life is but a broken winged
bird, that cannot fly.

Hugo, Victor

Armies are useless against ideas.
Nothing can stop an idea whose time has come.

Indian Sayings

Help thy brothers boat across; and lo, thine own has reached the
shore.

Conquer a man who never gives by gifts. Subdue untruthful men by
truthfulness. Vanquish an angry man by gentleness. Overcome
the evil man by goodness.

Ingersoll, Robert

A good deed is the best prayer.
The hands that help are holier than the lips that pray.
An honest God is the noblest work of Man.

James, William

I am done with big institutions. I am for those tiny invisible moral
forces that work from individual to individual; creeping through
the crannies of the world like the capillary oozing of water
which, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments
of man's pride.

Dogmatizing is at the root of most human cruelties and injustices. It is
the human characteristic most likely to make the angels weep.

Jefferson, Thomas

In the book of wisdom, the first chapter is honesty.
If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was
and never will be.

Kant, Immanuel

There is only one true religion but there are many creeds.
Act as if the maxim from which you act were to become, through your
will, a universal law of nature.
Morality does not require us to do the impossible.
Morality is not properly the doctrine of how we make ourselves happy,
but how we make ourselves worthy of happiness.
Two things fill me with awe: the starry heavens above; and the moral
law within.

Kennedy, Robert

Each time one stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, one sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.

King, Martin Luther

I refuse to accept the view that peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.

Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

There is more power in socially organized masses on the march, than there is in guns in the hands of a few desperate men.

Lao-tse

The tree which needs two arms to span its girth, sprang from the tiniest shoot. Yon tower, nine stories high, rose from a little mound of earth. A journey of a thousand miles began with but a single step.

Lincoln, Abraham

I want it said of me, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower, where I thought a flower would grow.

Margolis, Hans

Most of what people do to create what is good and beautiful, is a response to the decent and the beautiful which they received from others. In fact, it is a labor of gratitude.

Markham, Edwin

He drew a circle that shut me out; Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win. We drew a circle that took him in.

Marshall, Thurgood

I do not believe that the meaning of the Constitution was forever fixed at the Philadelphia Convention. To the contrary; the government they devised was defective from the start; requiring several amendments, a Civil War, and momentous social transformation to attain the system of constitutional government, and its respect for the individual freedoms and human rights we hold as fundamental today.

Massachusetts Constitution

Government is instituted for the common good; for the protection, safety, prosperity and happiness of the people; and not for the profit of any one man, family or class.

Mc Elroy, Paul

Have you ever watched a stonecutter hammering away at a rock? A hundred blows of hammer on chisel, may make no visible difference. Yet perhaps with the one hundred and first blow the rock may suddenly split in two. It is not just the last blow that fractures the stone, but rather the accumulative effect of all the blows that went before. Every one of them counts.

McIntyre, Alasdair

Ignorance of what constitutes virtue and vice is not exculpatory. It is what constitutes vice.

Mead, Margaret

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed its the only thing that ever has.

Nehru, Jawaharlal,

Grownups have a strange way of putting themselves in compartments and groups. They build up barriers of religion, of caste, of color, of party, of nation, of province, of language, of custom, and of wealth and poverty. Thus they live in prisons of their own making.

Neruda, Pablo

I cannot be, without existing for all; for all who are silent and oppressed.

New York Society of Ethical Culture

Dedicated to the ever increasing knowledge, love and practice of the right.

Overstreet, Bonaro

You say the little efforts that I make will do no good; they never will prevail to tip the hovering scale where justice hangs in balance. But I am prejudiced beyond debate in favor of my right to chose which side shall feel the stubborn ounces of my weight.

Paine, Thomas

We live to improve, or we live in vain.

I believe in the equality of man and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow citizens happy.

My country is the world and my religion is to do good.
Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must undergo the
fatigue of supporting it.

Pestalozzi

What comes from the heart, will reach the heart.

Pindar

O my soul! Do not aspire to immortal life. Seek only to exhaust the
possible.

Radest, Howard

The most immoral thing I can conceive of, is to propound a theory
that suggests morality is just too good for human beings.

Rafton, Harold

Much still lies beyond our ken, but all the gods were made by men.

Rilke, Maria

Religion is not knowledge. Religion, at its best, is a direction of the
heart.

You see, we humans need a foothold in the dust. For trust can only
come of other's trust. All giving is no more than giving back.

Roosevelt, Franklin D.

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance
of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for
those who have too little.

Russell, Bertrand

The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge. Those
who best promote life, do not have life for their purpose. They
aim, rather at what seems like a gradual incarnation; bringing
into our human experience of something eternal.

Sandberg, Carl

People are born with rainbows in their hearts. You'll never read people
unless you consider rainbows.

Schopenhauer

Compassion is the basis of all morality.

Schweitzer, Albert

One's own example in influencing others is not the main thing. It is the
only thing.

The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the
will to help others.

Whoever is spared personal pain, must feel called to help in
diminishing the pain of others.

Do something for somebody every day, for which you do not get paid. There is no higher religion than human service. To work for the common good is the greatest creed.

Sometimes our inner light goes out but is blown again into flame by an encounter with another human being. Each of us owes the deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this inner light.

It is the riddle of religion that we experience God in ourselves differently from when He confronts us in nature. In nature we comprehend Him only as impersonal creative power, but in ourselves as ethical personality.

Let me give you the definition of ethics: It is good to maintain life and to further life. It is bad to damage and destroy life. And this ethic, profound and universal, has the significance of a religion. It is religion.

By ethical conduct toward all creatures, we enter into a spiritual relationship with the universal.

Seneca

We are members of one great body. Nature planted in us a mutual love, and fitted us for a social life. We must consider that we were born for the good of the whole.

It is with life as with a play: it matters not how long the action is spun out, but how good the story and the acting is.

He who does not prevent a crime when he can, encourages it.

Straightforwardness and simplicity are in keeping with goodness.

Rules make the learners path long; a person who is an example, makes a learner's path short and successful.

Drunkenness does not create vice; it merely brings it into view.

Who cares about fate. I will do my duty to life.

The true beneficiary is the one who always remembers the benefits one has received. The true benefactor is one who never remembers the benefits one has bestowed.

You should live for the other person if you wish to live for yourself.

I wasn't born for one corner of the world. The whole world is my home country. The good life can be lived everywhere.

What difference does it make, after all, what your position in life is if you dislike yourself. The wise man is content with himself.

Sheldon, Walter

It is good to have lived and loved and labored. It is good to be missed from the ranks while the march is going on. It is good to have worked with all the energy at our command. And it is good to rest, when the work is done.

Shirazi, Sa'di (Iran)

Human beings are members of one another. They are created from the same essence. When a member is in pain, other members will not rest. If you do not care about another's pain, you ought not to be called a human being.

Socrates

Neither in life, nor after death can evil befall a good person.
No evil can befall a virtuous person.
Better to be a miserable unhappy tortured human being than be a satisfied pig.

Solon

Justice will be achieved when those who are not injured, are as indignant as those who are.
Society is well governed when the people obey the magistrates and the magistrates obey the law.

Sophocles

The best that life has to offer, is a face glowing with happiness.
There are many wonders, but none is more wondrous than humanity.

Spetter, Matthew Ies

Not to believe in the miraculous, obligates one to the work of achieving a better world with the incomplete tools of human nature.
Our commitment is not to people in general, but to the humanity that needs awakening in each of us.

Spinoza

Freedom and happiness are within; and virtue is its own reward.
A free man meditates not about death. His wisdom is of and for life.
When setting out to understand human action, I have made a sedulous effort not to laugh, not to cry, not to denounce, but to understand.

All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.

Stevenson, Robert Louis

We were put here to do what service we can, for honor and not for hire. The soul of piety was killed long ago by the idea of reward.

Stone, I.F.

All this effort to reconcile illegalities with law (whether by officials or by mercenaries) is like trying to square a circle. You cannot have accountability, if you have secrecy. You cannot have secrecy without lying.

Ultimately every policy and every choice, every philosophy and every decision rests on faith. You get to a point where the choices you make are based not on something you can prove, but on something you deeply believe.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher

Common sense is seeing things as they are; and doing things as they ought to be.

Sullivan, Harry Stack

We are all more simply human than otherwise.

Tagore, Rabindranath

From now onward, the anxiety that each country has for its own safety, must embrace the welfare of the world.

Tai Ching

Mastering others requires force. Mastering yourself requires strength.

Talmud

Every man has his hour. Where there are no men be a man.
If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am for myself only, what am I? If not now, when?

Taylor, Jeremy

The best theology is a divine life, rather than a divine knowledge.

Terence

I am a man. Nothing human is alien to me.

Thoreau, Henry David

All that a man has to say or do that can possibly concern mankind, is in some shape or other, to tell the story of his love - to sing, and if he is fortunate and keeps alive, he will be forever in love.

Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.

There is the same ground for faith now, that ever there was: It needs only a little love in you who complain so to ground it on. The mason asks but a narrow shelf to spring his brick from. Man requires only an infinitely narrower one from which to spring the arch of faith.

There is no ill which may not be dissipated like the dark, if you let in a stronger light upon it.

However mean your life is, meet it and live it. Do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life.

A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can do without. In the long run, men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high. I wish to live ever as to derive my satisfactions and inspirations from the commonest events, every day phenomena, so that what my senses, my daily walk, the conversation of my neighbors, may inspire me, and I may dream of no heaven but that which lies about me.

I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor.

We must learn to reawaken, and to keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids but by an infinite expectation of the dawn.

In a pleasant spring morning all mens sins are forgiven. Through our own recovered innocence, we discern the innocence of our neighbors.

Tsongas, Paul

In the end there must be some purpose to our journey. Human endeavor cannot consist simply of random acts and happenstance. There needs to be meaning beyond self that gives our limited days definition and direction. And only within that meaning can the judgment rendered upon our lives have worth.

Vivekananda

Anyone that suffers is God's representative.

Voltaire

The world is my country. To do good is my religion.

Pity and justice are the foundations of society.

Perfection is attained by slow degrees; she requires the hand of time.

Walton, Alice (at 100)

I don't believe in the supernatural. For me religion is living the right way.

Washington, George

Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair.

The basis of our political system is the right of the people to make and alter their constitution of government.

Weiddeman, Kurt (an architect)

Without visions, you cannot be a realist.

White, William

Liberty is the one thing you can't have unless you give it to others.

Wiesel, Elie

Ethics is the awareness of someone else's pain.

There are times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

Wilcox, Ella Wheeler

So many gods, so many creeds;
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind,
Is all the sad world needs.

Xaro People

The worst thing is not giving gifts. We give to one another. We give what we have. This is the way to live together.

Xenophanes

Men have always made their gods in their images: the Greeks like the Greeks; the Ethiopians like the Ethiopians.

Zoroaster

Peace of mind can only be attained by one who does good. One can only do good if one thinks good. One can teach good, if one thinks and acts good. And only one who acts good and serves others, is really living the Right Way.

Part 4

LIFE INTERLACING WITH LIFE

LIFE IS A SPLENDID TORCH

FOR ME RELIGION IS LIVING THE RIGHT WAY

FELIX ADLER

We are at the mercy of nature, the earthquake, tidal wave, the famine and plague. Despite our medical science and protective and preventive efforts, every one of us has upon us a sentence of death. This we cannot avoid. We must prepare for it. But whatever the illimitable powers outside, we have the power to change ourselves inwardly; to become beings of dignity and integrity and to live with a certain noble courage in dealing with life and death.

BENIGNO AQUINO

I have returned on my own free will to join the ranks of those struggling to restore our rights and freedoms through nonviolence. I seek no confrontation. I only pray and will strive for a genuine national reconciliation founded on justice.

I am prepared for the worst. I have decided against the advice of my mother, my spiritual adviser, many of my friends and a few of my most valued political mentors. I have returned because I knew it was my duty to be here with my people.

A death sentence awaits me. I could have opted to remain in political asylum in America, but I feel it is the duty of every Filipino, to suffer with his people especially in a time of crisis.

According to Gandhi, the willing sacrifice of the innocent is the most powerful answer to insolent tyranny that has yet been conceived by God or man.

I return voluntarily armed only with a clear conscience and fortified in the faith that in the end justice will emerge triumphant.

Aquino was assassinated on arrival at the Manilla airport on August 22, 1983. A successful, peaceful revolution followed.

ALGERNON BLACK

The pity is not that people die.
The pity is if they had not lived.

Birth and death are part of the mystery of life, part of the human condition. The important thing is not to fear death, but to fear not living. The real tragedy would be that we had missed the most important thing in life; that we had wasted the years and had never used our gifts.

Every life is precious, every life in the world. But for each of us there are a few who have come very close; and have shared our life. Their lives are especially precious. We know that someday, we will lose those we love. And the more we love, the deeper our love, and the more intimately we share life, the more we suffer at death.

We do not refuse to love for fear of being hurt someday. We love passionately, trustingly, generously, and courageously, with all our being. Without love, life has no fulfillment or meaning.

How shall we make peace and accept the loss of those we love? We lose those we love but we must find ways of living on; treasuring their memory and their influence; striving to keep faith with what they stood for and lived for; and with what they wished for us.

John Lovejoy Elliott often spoke of the fact that we all are fortunate to have in our minds the images of a few favorite people who have influenced our lives profoundly. "May our friend's kindness, integrity, courage and love be a blessing in the life of every one of us to the end of our days".

We know our love and gratitude were not tied to the physical body. We give back to earth that which is of earthly origin. But we keep the most precious part: the influence of the personality; the memory of the strength of character; of a mind and sense of beauty; of the quality of relationships; and of the values which meant everything.

When we think of our own death, we might think of three wishes:

First, we would wish that those we love, should understand what we lived for; our values and intentions, what we meant by our life at our best.

Second, we would wish that our life had made a difference. We wish that because of us that the world might be a bit different and a better place for others.

Third, we would wish that those we love, should not be confused or depressed. Rather, we wish them the courage and faith to face the future.

For our life is tested in death by the way we prepared our loved ones to live without us, free and strong to make a life when we are no longer there beside them.

The Human Heart

The love of the human heart is the most real and the most
Beautiful of all the realities we know.

It is the richest gift of our manhood and womanhood.

It is the love that joins us together as lovers, as husband and wife,

As father and mother, as parent and child,

And as friends and neighbors.

Whatever the length of time may be, to have known something of this,

Is to have experienced the supreme privilege of being human.

The anguish of parting cannot destroy this most real of all realities.

The love has been.

The affection has existed.

The ties have been woven.

Life has been shared, the joys and the sorrows.

This has been as real and strong as anything in life.

The love that once was born can not die
 For it has become part of us, of our life,
 Woven into the very texture of our being.
 Each of us would wish to leave some part of ourselves,
 Yes, every one of us, some memory, some influence for good,
 So here and now we bear witness to the one we knew in life,
 Who now in death bequeaths a subtle part, precious and beloved,
 Which will be with us in truth and beauty,
 In dignity and courage and love
 To the end of our days.

People die but humankind lives on. Our immortality lies not in some myth of a nonphysical entity existing after death. It is a way of being, a character of living, that lives on in the lives of others. That is our immortality. And if we touch the life of others creatively and lovingly, we have a life after we are gone. This is a world of human beings, and it is through our relationship to others, and through the values we foster that we advance the unique potentialities of the human world for a higher civilization and a better life.

PEARL S. BUCK

To die a little later or a little sooner does not matter. But to live bravely; to love life; to see how beautiful the trees are and the mountains; yes, and even the sea; to enjoy work because it produces food for life. We love life! We do not fear death for we understand that life and death are necessary to each other. We love life!

THOMAS CAMPBELL

To live in hearts we leave behind
 Is not to die.

STANTON COIT

Blessed are we who cherish the sacred memory of those who walk with us no more, having achieved serenity in the knowledge that bereavement comes only where love abides. Out of this sorrow shall come understanding. Through sorrow we are joined with all who live.

The spirit of the departed shall live on in the lives made sweeter by its presence and its gracious influence. For love is stronger than death, and love shall build within the heart, a shrine where the true image of the departed shall shed its light in the days to come.

EPICTETUS

What would you wish to be doing when you are found by death? I for my part would wish to be found doing something that is beneficent, suitable to the general interest. If death surprises me when I am busy about these things (doing good for others), it is good enough for me. I could stretch out my arms and say: the means which I have received for helping the world, I have not neglected. I have not dishonored the world with my acts. I have been given life and I am thankful. If I have used well the powers which are mine, I am content and I give them back to the great life from which I came.

DUNCAN HOWLETT

Life is worth living. It is good and it is beautiful, in spite of the tragedies with which it is often beset. We glory in it, undergirt by the faith that its goodness is not the glittering shimmer of the surface alone, but that its goodness is pervasive- that it is of the essence of the nature of things. This is a profound faith- more profound than we realize, because it stands upon faith and faith alone. There is no proof of it; no objective test to support it except the living of life itself. But this the best test of all. Life is the only test! Living is the only proof!

And so we go on, those who have known sorrow and those who have not; strong in the faith that life is good, even though we do not understand it. We go on, no matter what befalls us, doing the right, following the true and the good. We do not falter when death crosses our path. We go on, living the only life we are given to live, knowing that it is somehow a good life, no matter how difficult it may at times seem to be. And in so living it, we shall find that our faith is not false, that life is good to those who live it with serenity and fortitude.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

Immortality is a word that Hope through all the ages has been whispering to Love. The miracle of thought we cannot understand. The mystery of life and death we cannot comprehend. The chaos called world has never been explained. The golden bridge of life from gloom emerges and on shadow rests.

Beyond this we do not know. Fate is speechless, destiny is dumb, and the secret of the future has never been told. We wait; we hope. The more we love, the more we fear. Upon the tenderest heart, the deepest shadows fall. All paths, whether filled with thorns or flowers, end here. Here success and failure are the same. The ray of wretchedness and the purple robe of power, all differences and distinction, lose in this democracy of death.

CHARACTER SURVIVES; GOODNESS LIVES; LOVE IS IMMORTAL.

The time to be happy is now. The place to be happy is here. The way to be happy is to make others so.

Of his brother:

He was a worshipper of liberty, a friend of the oppressed.
 A thousand times I have heard him quote these words:
 For Justice all place a temple
 And all season, summer.
 Happiness is the only good.
 Reason is the only torch.
 Justice is the only worship.
 Humanity is the only religion.
 Love is the only priest.
 He added to the sum of human joy,
 And if every one for whom he did some loving service
 Were to bring a blossom to his grave,
 He would sleep tonight beneath a wilderness of flowers.

HELEN KELLER

We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world; the company of those who have known suffering. When it seems that our sorrow is too great to be borne, let us think of the great family of the heavy-hearted into which our grief has given us entrance. Inevitably, we will feel about us, their arms, their sympathy, their understanding.

Believe, when you are most unhappy, that there is something for you to do in the world. So long as you can sweeten another's pain, your life is not in vain.

CORLISS LAMONT

We reflect upon human existence and its meaning. It is for us the living to dedicate ourselves anew to those great ethical aims and ideals that have long been part of our cultural heritage. We reaffirm that friendliness and sympathy toward our fellows is now and will always remain the foundation stone of the good society. We resolve anew to bend our minds and energies toward the pursuit of truth, the creation of beauty and the advancement of freedom. Beyond the welfare of our native land, we look to the world at large and seek the happiness and progress of all humanity upon the fruitful earth- to the end that everywhere people may have life and have it more abundantly.

May the human race ever flourish, ever grow in grace and wisdom and generosity. May generation after generation through eternity's of time come to know the sweetness of living and rejoice in the inexhaustible beauties of this universe. For the best of all answers to death is the wholehearted and continuing affirmation of life.

MARCUS AURELIUS

We should not fear death but fear not living life well.

MEXICAN NAHUATL SONG

Some things we will own forever
 The memory of the just;
 The remembrance of a good act;
 The good remembrance of the beauty of a friend;
 This will never be taken from us;
 This we will never give away.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death.
 I hear him leading his horse out of the stall: I hear the clatter on the barn-floor.
 He is in haste; he has business in Cuba, business in the Balkans, many calls to make
 this morning.
 But I will not hold the bridle while he cinches the girth.
 And he may mount by himself: I will not give him a leg up.

Though he flick my shoulders with his whip, I will not tell him which way the fox
 ran.

With his hoof on my breast, I will not tell him where the black boy hides in the
 swamp.

I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death;
 I am not on his pay-roll.

I will not tell him the whereabouts of my friends nor of my enemies either.
 Though he promises so much, I will not map him the route to any man's door.
 Am I a spy in the land of the living, that I should deliver men to Death?
 Brother, the password and the plans of our city are safe with me; never through me
 Shall you be overcome.

LEWIS MUMFORD

Our human destiny is a great one because the essence of it, is tragic. All that we
 build crumbles. All that embodies our plans and our civilization, turns to dust. All that we
 love most, we must someday give up or lose. That which alone endures on earth is the
 spirit in which we understand and meet our fate. We pass that spirit on to our children and
 our friends. Our legacy is only a breath, indeed, but it is the breath of life.

JEROME NATHANSON

Sometime or other, somehow or other, we have to ask ourselves what it is we should like to pass on to others, chiefly to those closest to us. Again, I cannot speak for others. But what I would like to pass on is:

First, a sense of one's own self-respect, one's dignity, one's worthiness; a sense that no matter what the ups and downs of life may be, one could hold up his head and earn his way in the world.

Next I think there ought to be a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the affection other people have shown us.

Then there is the feeling, sometimes overwhelming, of how grateful we are for having been given the chance to love them. For if being loved is the greatest of needs, as I think it is, so being able to love is the greatest of blessings.

And what else should we want to pass on? What else should survive? Only one thing more, I think, life being as difficult as it is. When we are young, by and large, we are driven by desire; desire being almost our chief driving force. But with the passage of time, we move not from desire to desire but from obligation to obligation.

Certain things are asked or expected of us and we must do them. The various duties which fix themselves upon us become stepping-stones to our own life's prolongation. We work to make the character of our lives endure. Sheer enduring requires moral fiber; for only out of this soil can good possibly grow. And the ability so to endure, not to be overcome, not ever to let the light of our moral insights and discoveries be lost, this in the end may be the most valid testament to life that we have to pass on to those we love.

So we try to pass on something of the morality, the moral examples that were most crucial in our lives. Those carry the essence of our being and we pass that on to the ones we love.

J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER

This cannot be an easy life. We shall have a rugged time of it to keep our minds open and to keep them deep. We shall have a rugged time to keep our sense of beauty and our ability to create beauty, and our occasional ability to see it in places remote and strange and unfamiliar. We shall have a rugged time of it, all of us, in keeping the gardens in our villages, in keeping open the manifold, intricate, casual paths, and to keep these flourishing in a great, open, windy world. But this, as I see it, is the human condition and this is the work we must do as citizens and as human beings. We can do some good, in this rugged time because we can love one another.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Three passions simple but overwhelmingly strong have governed my life: the longing for love; the search for knowledge; and unbearable pity for the suffering of humankind.

These passions like great winds have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair. Love and knowledge, so far as they are possible, led me toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth.

Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain; these make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered to me.

Yet by death, by illness, by poverty, or by the voice of duty, we must learn each one of us, that the world was not made for us. However beautiful may be the things we crave, fate may nevertheless forbid them. It is the heart of courage, when misfortune comes, to bear without repining, the ruin of our hopes, to turn away our thoughts from vain regrets.

Some old people are oppressed by the fear of death. In the young there is a justification for this feeling. Young people who have reason to fear that they will be killed in battle may justifiably feel bitter in the thought that they have been cheated of the best things that life has to offer. But in an old person who has known human joys and sorrows, and who has achieved whatever work that had to be done, the fear of death is somewhat abject and ignoble. The best way to overcome it- so at least it seems to me- is to make your interests gradually wider and more impersonal, until bit by bit the walls of the ego recede, and your life becomes increasingly merged in the universal life.

An individual human existence should be like a river- small at first, narrowly contained within its banks, and rushing passionately past boulders and over waterfalls. Gradually the river grows wider, the banks recede, the waters flow more quietly, and in the end, without any visible break, they belong merged in the sea, and painlessly lose their individual being.

The person who, in old age can see life in this way, will not suffer from the fear of death, since the things one cares for will continue. And if, with the decay of vitality, weariness increases, the thought of rest will be not unwelcome. The wise should wish to die while still at work, knowing that others will carry on what one can no longer do. The wise are content in the thought that what was possible has been done.

SENECA

Next to the encounter of death in our own bodies, the most sensible calamity to an honest person is the death of a friend. The comfort of having a friend may be taken away, but not that of having had one. Shall a person bury friendship along with a friend's body?

Thinking of departed friends is to me something sweet and mellow. For when I had them with me it was with the feeling that I was going to lose them; and now that I have lost them, I keep the feeling that I have them with me still.

Every life without exception is a short one.... but life is never incomplete if it is an honorable one. As it is with a play, so it is with life. What matters is not how long the acting lasts, but how good it is.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

MRS. ARTHUR STANLEY

One has achieved success

who has lived well, laughed often and loved much.

who has gained the respect of intelligent people and the love of
little children

who has filled a niche and accomplished a task

who has left the world better than it was when found, whether by
an improved poppy, a perfect poem or a rescued soul

who has never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty

who has looked for the best in others and

who has given the best one had.

whose life was an inspiration

whose memory is a benediction.

BARTOLOMEO VANZETTI

If it had not been for these things I might have lived out my life talking at street
corners to scorning men.

I might have died, unmarked, unknown, a failure.

Now we are not a failure.

This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life could we have hoped to
do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man, as
now by accident.

Our words, our love, our pains- nothing.
 The taking of our lives- lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fishpeddler- all.
 The last moment belongs to us- that agony is our triumph.

These words are from the last speech in court in the trial of Sacco and
 Vanzetti. They were executed in 1927 in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

ALICE WALTON

Alice Walton used these selections on holiday greeting cards that she sent each year:

Our lives, as we live them, are passed on to others, whether in physical or mental
 forms, tingeing all future lives forever. Luther Burbank

I do not fear tomorrow, because I have seen yesterday. And I love today.
William Allen White

Much still lies beyond our ken, but all the gods were made by men.
Harold Rafton

A mariner of old spoke thus to Neptune in a geat tempest: "O God! Thou mayst
 save me if thou wilt; and if thou wilt, thou mayst destroy me; but whether or no,
 I will steer my rudder true". Montaigne

Enough and more than enough has your kindness enriched me. Horace

The salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart;
 in the human power to reflect; in human meekness; and in human responsibility.
Vaclav Havel

What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what
 lies within us. Ralph Waldo Emerson

No man to to me is an alien if he be good. Nature is one for all men and it is
 character that creates kinship. Menander

Morality is not the doctrine of how we make ourselves happy, but how we may
 make ourselves worthy of happiness. Immanuel Kant

Truth is not changed because it is, or is not, believed by the majority of the people.
Giordano Bruno

Every reform was once a private opinion, and when it shall be a private opinion
 again, it will solve the problem of the age. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our collective fate in the end depends on the irrepressible fertility of the individual
and the finality of what he chooses to call good. Learned Hand

I don't believe in the supernatural. For me religion is living the right way.
Alice Walton at 100

A 19TH CENTURY GERMAN/ UNIVERSAL SONG OF FREEDOM

Die Gedanken Sind Frie

I think as I please
And this gives me pleasure,
My conscience decrees
This right I must treasure.
My thoughts will not cater
To duke or dictator
No man can deny-
Die Gedanken sind frei!

My thoughts are as free
As wind o'er the ocean
And no one can see
Their form or their motion.
No hunter can find them
No trap ever bind them
My lips may be still
But I think as I will.

And should tyrants take me
And throw me in prison,
My thoughts will burst free
Like blossoms in season.
Foundations will crumble
And structures will tumble,
And free men will cry-
Die Gedanken sind frei!

My wish and desire
For freedom are calling
From liberty's fire,
The sparks now are falling.
To life that is free,
In the days that shall be.
No one can deny,
Die Gedanken sind frei!

THE ETHICAL SOCIETY OF BOSTON

William James, the founder of American Psychology, presented his first chapters of "The Varieties of Religious Experience" in 1895 at the School for Ethics in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The School was created by Felix Adler and included Jane Addams and Woodrow Wilson among its lecturers. The first Ethical Society in Boston was organized at Harvard University by the Philosopher Morris Raphael Cohen and it continued there until WWI. The second Ethical Society in Boston was founded in 1920 and continued until WWII. In 1955, Algernon Black, Leader of the New York Society for Ethical Culture, whose writings are so much a part of this book, visited Boston frequently to help to organize the present Society which began meeting at Commonwealth Avenue, Boston. The Society moved back to Cambridge in 1995.

The Society meets every Sunday morning and begins its meeting with "A Moment of Greeting". This local tradition, shared with only a few other American Societies, began during the VietNam War as an expression that ethics begins with friendly communication. Our meetings begin and end with readings and music. These traditions structure our weekly meetings and express the religious and reflective character of a community striving to improve the world and to raise the level of our human relationships.

In 1974, we presented our first annual Humanist of the Year Award. The award recognizes a distinctive contribution to the moral life of New England. The Award recognizes achievement in the service to the poor, homeless, children or to the causes of peace and justice. Some recipients have been "whistleblowers", investigative reporters, unusual political figures, medical personnel, educators and cultural leaders who helped support individuality and freedom in making life choices. In 2001, our recipient was "Granny D" - Doris Haddock, age 93, who walked across America for "Clean Elections".

In 1992, we began a School for Ethics which meets each Spring for a series of weeks on subjects of Philosophy and Religion, Literature, Economics, Personal and Interpersonal Relationships, and issues of current interest. These courses afford a longer period of time for consideration of issues than is possible in our usual Sunday meetings on a given subject.

Ethical Societies, in a past phraseology, have been described as "communities of seekers after righteousness". Many Societies feature a dedication over their platform in these words: "The place where people meet to seek the highest is holy ground".

The Ethical Society of Boston is a member of the American Ethical Union. This book contains words, thoughts and sentiments that are expressed at 23 Societies and numerous Humanist organizations found in America and in the International Humanist and Ethical Union with chapters in about 75 nations around the globe.