



Center ©
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MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

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Plays for Living

Family Service of Memphis has been awarded a grant by the Tennessee Committee for the Humanities to fund 50 free performances for its *Plays for Living* Program. The Tennessee Committee is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, established to encourage the undertaking and use of humanistic knowledge at all levels of community and national life.

Plays for Living is a part of the Family Service Family Life Education series, which has been operating since about 1948. Each script is especially written by professional playwrights to highlight specific problems of family and community life. Each performance is followed by a discussion period led by a trained leader from Family Service.

Family Service will be offering four different plays. They are: "We the Family", which deals with the problems of three different generations living in the same house; "There Was a Little Boy", which focuses on parent-child relations; "The Man Nobody Saw", on racism and minority hiring practices; and "Fences", on school integration.

The plays are being done by local theatre groups in the community. They can be done anywhere. A stage is not necessary, only a table and a few chairs.

The 50 free performances are for low income areas in the community. Other performances carry fees based on the ability of sponsoring groups to pay. To book a performance call Family Service of Memphis, 525-1681, and ask for Ann McComic, project coordinator.

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COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMPHIS FILM SERIES

Memphis Public Library

December 13 - "Flying Deuces"

Brooks Memorial Art Gallery

December 15 - "King of Kings"

Lyceum Film Theatre

December 17 - "Ninotchka"

Memphis Public Library

December 20 - "Sons of the Desert"

Memphis Public Library

December 27 - "Way Out West"

Discourse on Ethics:

the Introduction

by the Editor

Concerns have arisen lately as to the stability of the ethical basis of our society. CENTER CITY will for the next weeks present a dialogue on the ethical problems of today, while simultaneously groping for the ethic that will be required to surpass these situations. We will feature essays and interviews consisting of the thoughts of Memphians specializing in the ethical problems of various segments of our contemporary society.

CENTER CITY is asking if something more substantial than political demagoguery will follow the recognition of looming dilemmas in our personal, cultural and institutional lives. With growing acknowledgement of scarcities, increasing crime and other unsettling factors of our present day culture, CENTER CITY feels that it is important to re-examine the comprehensiveness and strength of our ethical capabilities.

What is "ethics"? How do we relate to and interact with other humans and objects in our environment? What ultimately is the "good life"? How can we define "good" and "evil"? How can we systematically, and fairly ration our activities and consumption so as not to deprive ourselves and others of necessities? These and other questions will in some way be discussed, and from differing points of view; but we will always be dissecting and transforming, probing for the standards of a code of conduct, and equally as important, for effective action in support of these principles. Do we as individuals and as a community have the intellect and stamina to stand the test humanely, or will we revert to a raw struggle for survival? Has our unlimited faith in the salvation of technology been so luxurious as to debilitate our power of self-discipline?

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

It is only fair that I be first, as a layman and impresario of this venture, to expose my vulnerability in this matter by briefly discussing my personal views as to the basis upon which a modern ethic may be formulated. Rather than essay the most difficult, prescribing sets of behavior for examples of problematic situations, I prefer to set out guidelines which must be considered by any rational system. These, I hope, will provide an outline for a common ethic.

There has been created a tremendous tension between our cultural ideals and principles, and economic and cultural actualities; we need an articulate system of effective, proper action: an ethic. I am of the opinion that, in lieu of the monumental dilemmas which served as pivots for the great tragedies of history, our extensive awareness of minute connections and consequences makes virtually every movement of our lives—once taken for granted—strenuous ethical situations. For example, how we earn and spend our money is probably our most potent vote in this vast democracy, as well as one of our most important ethical—or unethical—activities; and unfortunately, it is as with the law: ignorant detachment fails to exonerate our errors. This then is the justification for our venturing on this form of a popular critique of ethics: the individual is an integral force in the aggregate, as well as the very unit of meaning.

The foundation of ethical action is an aesthetic one: an idea of appropriateness—fitness of behavior as to style and situation; but this idea must be something broader than the traditional ideas of blood superiority and combative honor: it must evoke a sense of discipline, moderation and refine-

ment of form: it must be of a humanity which recognizes its self-interests in a diverse and heightened civilization, while at the same time satisfying the instinct of pride. As inferred, our first premise will eliminate much needless controversy: at base all human activity is in some way self-serving; however, anything detrimental to one's society should be viewed as being of harm to personal opportunities and ultimate values. Secondly, we should go beyond the Decalogue, the strict letter of common law and societal mores; so I will speak of the critical elements of our civilization, and a spirituality deriving from the rudimentary need for organization and unity: a wedding of the practical and the aesthetic.

It may happen that these essays will appear to "make virtues of necessities", but I assert that we should indeed keep as much as is possible to a secular ethic, which in my opinion should consist primarily of virtues—the necessities of which have long been obscured in the passage of time. Castiglione, in his 15th century handbook, The Courtier, tells us that unaffected grace in service of itself and a worthy end (good government) is the noblest measure of behavior. Thus, there is an essential quality of an ethic which lies in the manner of an act itself, not simply restricted to the material proceeds gained therefrom; however, intention alone does not suffice: effective and appropriate action is optimal: gain is but a means to good accomplishments. Of passing interest then is the medieval notion of tenure, under which one only holds a lease on possessions, gaining in return certain operational obligations due his society. We need to combine with our knowledge of economics and science and our yet viable institutions, the intense awareness of the interdependence of things, placing the burden of responsibility back on the individual.

It is not for nothing that persons discomforted with what-is cry that there is a certain commonality in this life, for there are common elements upon which we all depend. Therefore, when one segment is out of sequence, another may be disturbed. Though all but the most sincere cynics will speak of order, most will in fact falter or renege on their moral conclusions — and thus actual adjustments — when these touch on fundamental beliefs, for instance, the inviolability of property; yet it is this very connection between the concrete and the person with which we are dealing. A particularly irksome insult to the stature of man is the most

common of all transgressions, the lie: persons actually living in direct opposition to those ideas they so proudly espouse. This dissonance of commitments is often conveniently rationalized, but if we continue to neglect the unwritten laws of behavior, the general erosion of our written codes will soon follow. If the foundations of ethical action are dimly seen, then businessmen, politicians, academicians, voters, and consumers will sometimes perpetrate acts far more damaging and degrading to man than the lowly crimes of hardened criminals. It is hoped that the skirmishes of the past quarter century will logically develop into a legal debate which will serve to delineate a national and international ethic which will determine the limits of extreme social license. What then are the ramifications of our acts?

Then the idea that the "good" is that which upholds and furthers the dignity and integrity of the individual, and the cohesiveness and creativity of society, is the construct I offer to outline a common ethic. The derivations of sound aesthetic judgement required for this purpose will be difficult to determine; but in dissecting the term "ethics" and the realities of contemporary life we will at least begin to do so. (I do not imply that aesthetics are so objectively known and universally accepted as to solve our problem quickly; in fact, the opposite is probably true: aesthetics are less socially developed than moral philosophy — one has only to stroll a city street to observe the diversity of tastes. But with arduous research and assessment, a generally applicable description of beautiful expression and our apprehension of it — a science of propriety and sensibility beyond static convention—— should be obtainable as a basis for a modern ethic.)

It must be clarified that in this brand of ethic, even though communion with the universe and one's self is a vital educative process, ultimately self-sufficiency has no bearing on an ethical system: ethics implies interaction. However, if one augments rather than diminishes the quality of life, he exhibits a basic ethical act. Intention accompanied by a total dearth of practical sense, which may effect contrary results, or when proceeded by inaction, is of lesser worth than beautiful activity for the pure art and enjoyment of it, which, if not productive, might at least tend to educate habits.

(Continued on last page)

ETHICS

Generally, habituation plays a greater role in behavior – even of ethical import – than does purely conscious, reasonable deliberation. One might well ask what habit has to do with ethical judgment, or even conscience. Our conscience, in my estimation, is the crystalized residue of customary mores, and habituated thought and behavioral patterns; so, one might well act in good conscience, yet unethically. In providing a method for formulating an ethic, I would suggest that ethical transformation by a thoughtful person is the bit by bit reexamination and reconstruction of all daily activities, joined with an earnest contemplation of ultimate ends (preferably earthly), and a thorough analysis of effective and appropriate actions for probable and special situations; the final goal being a system that is both valid and viable.

END

The art display in the lobby of the Sterick Building for December is the work of David Young, employed by the Shelby County Government. His art work heretofore has been for his own relaxation and entertainment; but viewers will welcome his very first public exhibition.

Center City

First Presbyterian Church
166 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

The First National Bank of Memphis will host, from December 3 through December 31, an exhibition of wildlife paintings and bronze sculptures by four of the nation's leading outdoor artists. The collection will be on display at the bank's Main Office at 165 Madison Avenue.

The exhibit, on loan from the American Masters Foundation of Houston, Texas will feature wildlife paintings by John O'Neill, Larry Toschik and Guy Coliagge and wildlife bronze sculptures by Clark Bronson.

CIVIC CENTER COMMUNITY CULINARY CLUB

Serving from 11:30 to 1:00

First Presbyterian Church, 166 Poplar Avenue

PRICE: \$1.50 per serving, including drink

MENU FOR DECEMBER 12 - DECEMBER 20

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12

Ham, Sweet Potatoes, Lima Beans and rolls

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13

Turkey and Dressing, English Peas, Cranberry Sauce and rolls

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16

Salmon Croquettes, Has Browned Potatoes, Tossed Salad and rolls

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

Roast Beef, Whipped Potatoes, English Peas and rolls

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18

Spaghetti, Cole Slaw, and French Bread

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19

Fried Chicken, Rice and Gray, Squash and rolls

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20

Meat Loaf, Potatoes Au gratin, Lima Beans and rolls

*Second-class
postage paid at
Memphis, Tennessee*