LITTLE HEROES
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Ethical Humanist
Society/Cross-Cultural
Communications
Salvation comes as each becomes a hero in her own right. Not a superhero of inhuman proportions. Rather a little hero of human dimensions. Little heroes whose names are forgotten in history. Little heroes who stuff envelopes, talk to neighbors, touch another, share a thought. The material of little heroes lies within each of us. And it is the little heroes who in the long run make the difference.

Children need to be given real responsibilities. Otherwise they are merely pets kept for our own amusement.

International economics and trade work to the advantage of the rich and disadvantage of the poor. What kind of person does it make us when the high level of living is derived from another's misery?

Ceremonies are passionate expressions of the longing for connection. Celebrating together and suffering with one another lays the groundwork for our ethical principles and guides us in unselfish acts.
The high standard of living has given us much that is desirable. But it also has had its cost. Little pleasure is taken in the present since we worry about having as much in the future. We want to protect what we have, and the accumulation of goods, the consumption of pleasure takes precedence over relationships. Instead of sharing, we want to horde; instead of giving, we want to keep.

The road to growth, authenticity and empathy is not the road to happiness. It is a path full of conflict, pain and even suffering. But to eliminate these from life would be to deny the fullness and richness that life offers.

It is not enough to know what is right. Courage also is needed to do what is right.

Liberated women need liberated men.

All life is filled with frustration. Only the dead have the excuse of silence.
Empathy frees me from fear for I know others are nearby.

If I view my body as a mere container in which to carry my thoughts and feelings, I am in the same position as those who believe the body is the root of torment and that only the soul counts for good.

Am I a worthy heir of the revolutionaries who pledged their honor, fortune and lives for the betterment of the human condition? To live in their tradition is the mark of a true patriot.

The distinction between the private and the public life is an illusion. Is it possible to be heartless in the market place but loving at home, competitive at work but cooperative in the family? How can we have a fulfilled personal life when all around is cruelty and violence? Will there ever be a true revolution if we ourselves are not transformed?

Do you fight injustice? Of course. Do you speak out against corruption and brutality? Yes. But you cannot always be an adversary. There are things to love. The hard-edge of protest and reform needs the softer elements of compassion and tenderness. The sun shines and the flowers bloom even today.
We don't have to accept people as they present themselves. People can always change and develop. Understand, but don't make excuses for those elements which block further growth.

Before you are frank with another, ask yourself "why?" Is it to diminish the other, to make yourself feel better at his expense? The ethical question is to ask: will this foster the relationship? There is always a way to be honest without being brutal.

Perfection is unattainable. But it is possible to improve conditions. The quality of life can be elevated. Rather than being disheartened by limitations, I see the constant attempt at creating a better world as an indication of the human impulse towards generosity.

What is virtue? It is to hold yourself to your fullest development as a person and as a responsible member of the human community.

The height of selfishness is to mistreat my body. I owe it to those who depend upon me to take care of my health and to prevent illness or injury if possible. I have no right to abandon my children or wife because I refuse to take care of myself.
Undoubtedly some reach self-awareness on mountain tops. But most of us are not monks or gurus. More realistically, a fuller understanding of ourselves comes through other people. As we cannot see our faces without a mirror, we cannot see our inner selves without the honest reflection of a friend.

Self-awareness is a freeing experience. Choices become conscious and rational rather than unconscious strivings.

We teach children the 3 R’s so they can function later in life. We need to teach another R: relationships. Living with others requires skill and knowledge as much as any task. Yet most people lack the rudiments of talking clearly, stating their needs and desires forthrightly, or listening carefully. A major cause of failure in relationships is the lack of skills, not the incompatability of the partners.

Where there’s honest concern there is both love and judgment. One purpose of a relationship is to bring each person to higher levels of spiritual development. Blind love cannot do this. But along with critical judgment must be large doses of forgiveness.

There is no answer; only answers.
Parents are bound to love their children as a gardener cares for flowers, but the feelings of children towards their parents are not of the same order.

We cannot command affection from our children. Love issues from within. Far more important than knowing whether or not love exists across the generations is the consistent support that can be given by one human being to another. It is the quality of loyalty that out-weighs the one of love.

If we are serious about equal rights between men and women, then men too need to have a say in whether or not a woman carries to full-term pregnancy.

We hold precious our freedom of speech and the right to strike. Yet the freedom of speech does not grant a person the right to shout fire in a crowded theater. And the right to strike does not grant a fireman the right to refuse to put out the fire.

Both the homemaker and the breadwinner find their lives focused around their work. It is this experience that occupies our major interest. Politics is peripheral. No wonder citizens have to be persuaded to go to the polls on election day. If politics were truly related to the people, no one would have to be persuaded to cast a ballot.
When Indians met to make decisions, they sat on the ground, to listen to the voice of the Great Mother. Some went to mountain tops, talking to eagles and the sky. Trees talked too, to those who knew how to listen.

Nature is a source of strength. We know the sunshine and touch the earth. We have ears to listen to the secrets. We need only to learn how.

Economics is only partly an economic problem. It also is a question of fair treatment, power and values. Who suffers, who gains? Who pays, who benefits? These are matters of justice. And justice is in the realm of ethics.

Never make less of yourself than you are. Be competent and forceful. Utilize your talents and abilities. Don't play coy. A woman can drive a hammer as well as any man; a man can feel as deeply as any woman.

Without feeling insight is useless.
Is there a common set of ethical standards found throughout the world? I believe that the following are universally held by the wise in each culture:

Do no harm to the earth; she is your mother.

Being is more important than having.

Never promote yourself at another’s expense.

Hold life as sacred; treat it with reverence.

Allow each person the dignity of his or her labor.

Open your home to the wayfarer.

Be ready to receive your deepest dreams; sometimes they are the speech of unblighted conscience.

Always make restoration to the ones you have harmed.

Never think less of yourself than you are; never think that you are more than another.

News is only surface matter. It describes but does not explain; it is fascinating but it is shallow. Reading one novel may do more than a week of newspapers, one poem more than a month of tv news, one hour in the sun with nothing to do more than a ream of reports.
Marriage manuals don't mention the effect of watching the late-night news upon our love lives, but I suspect that it has been devastating. From horror-thinking to love-making is too great a transition. Either the horror becomes trivial or our love-making becomes horrible.

As humanists we have no creed; but we do have principles, guidelines and faith. We believe in the dignity and worth of each individual. This is an article of faith, an assumption about the basic nature of people.

A humanist values life, sees it as precious and irreplaceable. Our aim is to live in a world where each life enhances another.

A humanist attempts to do the best that he or she can during this life-time. We try to create an environment where every person is afforded the opportunity to reach his or her full potential.

A humanist attempts to approach life openly and honestly.

We hold that within each person there is a seed of genius and with right human relations it will gloriously flower.

Much of the anguish of modern life is related to the deterioration of community. We all face inevitable hazards: accident and illness, separation and death. It is only in a caring community that we can receive the support that will help us through.
Mostly, friends need to walk side by side, not leading nor following. But in lasting friendships, each needs to lead first in this, then follow in that. It is strength drawing out strength. No friendship can last in which one friend thinks strength resides exclusively in the other.

Should people be free to choose to have a baby or not because there is an indication that the baby will be less than "normal"? If such freedom is offered, more and more people might insist upon having only "normal" children. But we are not sure what normal means or what the world would be like if we established a universal normality for all.

Caring and kindness are not related to chromosomes but to character. Venality is not a genetic malfunction. And much of the world's great beauty and inspiration has been provided by the "abnormal."

Choosing is, in part, what makes us human. There is no freedom or ethics without choice.

A generous spirit needs to be as open to receiving as to giving.
Everything is interchangeable but nothing is replaceable.

The labelling of disagreeable or reprehensible behavior as 'sick' is a dangerous practice. It eliminates ethical judgments for nothing is then right or wrong, only healthy or sick. All acts of conscience are reduced to scientific terms, as though your soul could be weighed up, measured and dispensed with.

The quest for romance is erasing love from our lives. It is a false foundation for marriage. Integrity, cooperation, self-respect and mutual regard are the true touchstones of marriage. That, and the ability to forgive your partner and yourself as well.

When being is more important than having, when I invest myself in enduring relationships, when I reveal myself in intimacy and trust, when I recognize that everyone is entitled to a decent life and I have to fight on behalf of the disadvantaged, then I can begin to construct a world that is fit to be inhabited.

We are all born with a voice that is ours alone. The most precious thing we can do for each other is to develop the authentic differences between us.
The search for personal fulfillment has often come to mean self-fulfillment. The emphasis is upon the individual’s own needs, desires, pleasure and wants. Self-fulfillment is a dead-end, for it finally leads to the dissolution of the human community, while personal fulfillment is found in the active participation in the life of others.

Many people see their homes as a respite from the grinding mill of work. At home they want to relax. Yet in truth, it is in those places where people are meant to be most close to us that the hardest work is to be done. Not that all life is a struggle, but we do get out of it what we put into it.

It is in the nature of people to search for a meaning larger than their individual lives. If we don’t as a society provide that impulse with useful, constructive outlets, it will find its release in war and destruction.

Not everything can be solved rationally. We are more than thinking animals only. Sentiment and feeling, creative impulses and imagination together combine to make us human.
Whatever good there is in the world I inherit from the courage and work of those who went before me. I, in turn, have a responsibility to make things better for those who will inherit the earth from me.

We have made the prisons what they are. And we have made the prisoners what they are. They will kill, they will torture, they will become perverted.

None of us is born that way. Institutions help mold and shape people. But some systems warp and misshape. It is one thing to accuse others of creating conditions. It is another to do something to change them.

I am part of the universe — not the beginning nor the end itself.

Each encounter, each experience, is potentially sacred if I use it to find the highest in life. All the gods and wonders of the world are within us, latent in each meeting.

By adhering to the goal of seeking the highest in all people, I find the highest in myself. We bring power to our lives by bringing forth power from the lives of others.
The person who is most him- or herself is the autonomous person, the one who has developed her own specialness. This is different than individuality which sees people as independent units. Autonomy is cultivated with others, in settings in which you feel secure and cared for, and where you have the ability to make a difference.

In a good relationship you are more yourself, not less.

Sometimes ethics follows law. Such was the argument for desegregation and it has been essentially correct. The same logic ought to be applied to our elected officials. If we can’t count on their good will to be ethical, we need to create laws which would make it illegal to be unethical.

Some of the most difficult ethical issues concern our attitudes to those who are most close to us. Anger, exploitation, resentment and fear are daily poisons. To constructively dissipate these feelings is a challenge to ethical behavior.

Without discipline the spontaneous outpouring of emotions is like the person who picks up a violin for the first time — there is noise but no music.
It is easier to see another person's deceit than your own. But when self-deception goes unchecked and rationalized, it tarnishes the character. If I delude myself, lie to myself, or hide from my inner motives, I will never be able to correct the wrongs I have done. I will have convinced myself that I have done no wrong.

A good sweat, with the blood pounding through my body makes me feel alive, revitalized. I gain a sense of mastery and assurance. I feel good about myself. Then I can feel good about others.

I need a respite, a time to express my gratitude, to recognize my benefits, to know that I am privileged to be alive. I need a chance to step out of the daily routine and catch a glimpse of the glory and beauty of this earth.

A pre-occupation with the self keeps others away and adds to a sense of loneliness. In stepping outside of the self and working for the common good a solidarity with others is affirmed. This affirmation is a bond of liberation.
Being vulnerable is not a sign of weakness. It is an act of strength. We could all do with a little help.

I know of only two animals that will eat themselves to death. A turkey will consume all the food put in front of it, eating non-stop until it dies. But you’d think that people would have more sense than turkeys.

Stand with another — that is holiness. Be open to the grandeur of nature — that is sublime.

Ethical purity is pious nonsense. Ethics needs the teeth of politics.

Touch. There is no more.