

AESTHETIC REALISM FOUNDATION

141 Greene Street ☞ New York, NY 10012

Summer 2016

Dear Friend,

I am [Nancy Huntting](#), Aesthetic Realism consultant, and I'm writing about the enormously important work of the not-for-profit Aesthetic Realism Foundation. It is my opinion, careful and passionate, that there is nothing more urgently needed by everyone and by the world itself than the education of Aesthetic Realism, founded by the American poet and philosopher [Eli Siegel](#). I say this after years of testing it, teaching it, and seeing its immense value.

Aesthetic Realism explains two huge things that have been seen as inexplicable: what makes for beauty, and what makes for cruelty—including the cruelty of racism, and of economic injustice and brutality. Eli Siegel is the philosopher who showed that the cause of every injustice that has ever taken place is *contempt*, “the lessening of what is different from oneself as a means of self-increase as one sees it.” Contempt is a tremendous desire in every person. It is the worst thing in us and the thing that weakens our lives. It makes for everyday boredom, narrowness, snobbishness, coldness; but the feeling one is big if one can lessen someone else is also the central cause of (for example) a young person's going to school with a gun and killing others there.

Aesthetic Realism is magnificent in showing there's a fight going on in everyone all the time between contempt and our deepest desire: “to like the world on an honest or accurate basis”—to see reality and people truly. Because Aesthetic Realism explains this fight, not only can the things most tormenting humanity be understood and end, but people can have in their everyday lives a pride, happiness, kindness, and excitement they didn't think were possible. That is what happened to me.

I'll mention soon some of what I learned about myself. But first, I want to quote the Aesthetic Realism principle which explains what beauty is and what it has to do with every person: “*All beauty*,” Eli Siegel wrote, “*is a making one of opposites, and the making one of opposites is what we are going after in ourselves.*” That historic principle is the basis of all that takes place at the Aesthetic Realism Foundation—the dramatic presentations; public seminars; individual [consultations](#); [Terrain Gallery](#) exhibitions; classes in subjects from poetry to anthropology, marriage to music, education to acting and the visual arts—as well as our [outreach programs](#). The [Mission Statement](#) accompanying my letter describes all of these, and each is a new combination of practicality and grandeur.

I Learned This

I once felt that the world was a mean, frightening place from which I had to protect myself. What I considered good and beautiful—art and music, and a few courageous people (mainly of the past)—didn't come to that much, I thought, or was far outweighed by uglier “realities,” including most of my fellow humans. To my surprise and enormous good fortune, I learned

otherwise as I studied Aesthetic Realism. One of the things I learned was that I got a triumph in disliking the world, seeing it as unworthy of me: the triumph of contempt. I consider the following sentences by Eli Siegel some of the most important ever written. They're about the two pleasures—those of contempt and respect—which fight in everyone. In order for humanity to be civilized, kind, and truly intelligent and proud, we have to learn what Mr. Siegel explains in these sentences—and “we” includes everyone in government:

Man has had pleasure from seeing a sunset; from Handel's *Messiah*; from seeing courage in someone; from a great rhythm in words. He has also had pleasure from making everything he can meaningless; from changing architecture into broken eggshells; from making the mighty malodorous; from trivializing.

Contempt and Economics

There is terrific anger in our country right now, and very much of it is about economics. There is agony about money, with millions of lost jobs, massive credit card and college debt, the lack of job security and benefits. Eli Siegel is the historian and economist who explained that the main thing in economics is ethics: how fairly people see other people. And he showed that the profit system itself is unethical, that it's based on contempt: seeing other people, their labor, their needs, as a means of one's own financial gain.

Though I was not in the position of a boss who made workers' humanity unreal so as to build up himself—a similar contempt was in me when, as a child, my family drove through a poor area of West Virginia. I saw other children playing in the dirt yards of unpainted shacks, and I smugly told myself it was the families' own fault: they didn't have the intelligence to make a better life for themselves. I am ashamed of having this brutal, ignorant contempt. Eli Siegel explained that if people had really wanted poverty to end, it would have; it exists because people like feeling superior—as I did. It was my honor to study with Mr. Siegel, and to see his constant good will, his unprecedented, unlimited desire to know—his justice to every person he spoke to and about, and every subject.

In his landmark *Goodbye Profit System* lectures, beginning in 1970, Mr. Siegel showed that economics based on ill will was no longer able to succeed. Economics in America, he made clear, will recover only when its basis is *ethics*—when it's based on the question “*What does a person deserve by being alive?*” I love his passion about economic justice. And I've seen as true what [Ellen Reiss](#), the Aesthetic Realism Chairman of Education, has explained: even as there are people today objecting admirably to the cruelty of income inequality, “we won't be able to fight injustice with fullness and true efficiency unless we're really *against contempt—including in ourselves.*” That is one of the biggest reasons America needs Aesthetic Realism!

Consultations: The Real Understanding of Ourselves

I am very proud to be an Aesthetic Realism consultant: to take part, with my colleagues, in the education that is TRUE about the human self, as we teach women in consultations and seminars. I began my own study of Aesthetic Realism in consultations when I was 27 years old, after coming to New York from Cincinnati. I'd worked at *Newsweek* magazine, then opened an antique store in the East Village. But I felt heavy and stuck, and felt both angry with

and guilty about the man I was close to. The transcript of my first consultation is online at <http://bit.ly/1ObtYvD>. I felt after it what people feel today through the questions, principles, logic, and comprehension they meet in consultations: I felt understood at last, and saw that I could learn to know myself, on a logical basis.

I learned, for example, that the self is fundamentally ethical: when we're unfair to the outside world we can't like ourselves. It was my false, snobbish sense of superiority that made me feel so painfully stuck in myself—made me both lethargic and mean-tempered. A huge change in me, representing so many other changes, was in how I saw my mother, Jean Huntting. Though I would never have made the relation, I looked down on her pretty much as I had looked down on those poor children in West Virginia. I was scornful of her. She doted on me and I thought she was foolish. I also felt guilty about her. Then, through questions I heard in consultations and assignments I was given, I studied the great principle I quoted earlier, in relation to Jean Huntting: I saw that she was trying to put together opposites that are one in a good painting, beautiful music, the literature I cared for: energy and repose, feeling and logic, intensity and gentleness. As I came to respect my mother's depths and to see wonder in her, we were able to have conversations—in which I *listened* to her as never before. We became friends. This means so much to me. She wrote to Mr. Siegel:

How is it I am so fortunate to have so much—a new life that I never dreamed of, my daughter caring so much to make this possible for me—the closeness that has come about? It certainly has been because you have taught [people] to see their lives in a new way, therefore enriching mine. I foresee a great, new, happier future for the Hunttings, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

A Periodical Represents What People Are Hoping For

I am honored to be one of the coordinators of the journal *The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known*, which had its 43rd anniversary this year. I want to say something about it here, because it represents what is taught at the Aesthetic Realism Foundation.

I love this journal, founded by Eli Siegel and continued by Ellen Reiss as its editor. Every issue is a mighty instance of the truth and beauty of Aesthetic Realism—of Eli Siegel's kindness, courage, and greatness of thought. *The Right Of*, or TRO, has a diversity and depth that, I believe, no journal before it ever had, because it presents the diversity and depth of Aesthetic Realism itself. Every issue is—like Aesthetic Realism—both personal and impersonal, intimate and wide, in a way that's new in history. The richness of the subjects Aesthetic Realism explains can be seen in some of TRO's titles from this past year alone: “[Unions, America, & William Cullen Bryant](#)”; “[Justice: As Real as the Sidewalks](#)”; “[Arrogance & the Self—Beautifully Understood](#)”; “[Day & Night, Awake & Asleep—We Are Related](#)”; “[Art versus Racism](#)”; “[What the Schools of America Need Most!](#)”; “[What Marriage Is Really For.](#)”

People meet Eli Siegel's unprecedented, kind perception in TRO—in his poems, his lectures, his essays, his reviews. Some of the finest prose in America is in TRO: Eli Siegel's certainly; and that of Ellen Reiss, who in her commentaries explains the biggest concerns of people now and what these have to do with art and history. I consider myself very fortunate

to study in the classes for consultants and associates that she teaches as the Aesthetic Realism Chairman of Education. With her scholarship, knowledge, and integrity, she is the most important educator in the world today.

Articles arising from papers presented at the Foundation's great public seminars appear in TRO. In recent months, there were such articles as "Self-Confidence vs. Conceit," by Dr. Jaime R. Torres; "To Bring Out the Best in People," by Derek Mali; and "Managing & Yielding: The Mix-Up," by Devorah Tarrow.

Yes, TRO represents the knowledge the people of the world most hope for and need. That knowledge is Aesthetic Realism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy Huntting". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nancy Huntting
Aesthetic Realism Consultant