

The Houston Objectivism Society Newsletter

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NEXT MEETING - BEACH BASH

The March HOS meeting will be held on Galveston Beach on Saturday, March 25th at Pocket Park #2. We will meet at 11:30 am. The park has restrooms, shower facilities, BBQ pits, picnic tables, and a concession stand. HOS members are asked to bring their own food for the cook-out. Park admission fee is \$3 per car. The rain date will be April 1st (no fooling).

Anyone who owns a volleyball net and ball and would like to lend it to HOS for the day, please contact Warren at 468-2256. Those interested in car-pooling should also contact Warren.

A map showing Pocket Park is included in this newsletter. Take I-45 to the 61st St. exit in Galveston. Take 61st. St. to Seawall Blvd. Go west (right) onto Seawall Blvd. to FM 3005. Take FM 3005 till you reach "Nine and a Half Mile Road". West Beach Pocket Park #2 will be on the left. Park signs will be visible on the road. The park phone number is 737-1544.

WE THE LIVING COMES TO HOUSTON

The movie We the Living will be shown at the River Oaks Theater from March 10th through March 16th. An informal HOS "Night at the Movies" will be held Friday, March 10th at the 9:00 pm showing. The movie lasts approximately 3 hours. Members are invited to meet beforehand for dinner and conversation at "One's A Meal", a deli next door to the theater, at 7:30 pm.

Duncan Scott, the movie's producer, has announced that the video for the movie is in production and should be released right after the theaters are finished showing the movie. Advance order cards for the video may be available at the River Oaks Theater. Scott has also sent us posters and leaflets to be put up on college campuses to promote the movie.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS MEETING

On January 7th, the eighth HOS meeting was held at the University of Houston Student Center. 21 members showed up to watch the movie "Love Letters".

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE

This will be the last newsletter sent to those who have not renewed their HOS membership. To renew membership, send \$10 to HOS.

LETTER TO EDITOR WORKSHOP

A workshop was held January 14th to encourage HOS members to write letters to the editor in local newspapers. Five HOS members attended. The workshop, conducted by Brian Phillips, covered the benefits of letter writing, topic selection, length and tone, and other practical pointers. As an exercise, everyone at the workshop wrote a letter for the Saturday Forum in the Houston Chronicle: "Was Reagan a Good President?". As a result of this exercise, Brian Phillips and Warren Ross had their letters printed side-by-side in the Chronicle (Jan. 21, 1989).

The workshop will be offered again later in the year if interest is sufficient. To encourage greater participation in the letter writing project, we have enclosed reprints of letters that recently appeared in the local papers. We will continue to reprint letters in future newsletters.

DALLAS CONFERENCE

David Kelley, Allan Gotthelf and John Ridpath will present a series of lectures in Dallas, March 3-5th. Lecture topics are: "Universals and Induction", "Love and Philosophy: Aristotelian versus Platonic", "Teaching 'Introduction to Philosophy' in College", and "Gorbachev's Policies: Real Change or Surface Illusion?"

The conference will cost Houston-area residents \$120 prior to March 3rd and \$135 at the door. Payments should be mailed to: GKRH Lectures; #608-547 Belmont Ave. W.; Kitchener, Ontario, N2M 5G9 Canada. (Note: Postage to Canada is 30 cents.)

The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, 4099 Valley View Lane in Dallas. The hotel is offering conference attendees a nightly room rate of \$49. The hotel number is (214) 385-9000.

Students who would like to apply for a scholarship to the conference should contact Don Heath, Conference Director at (519) 744-9747. For students who would like to stay with local Objectivists rather than at the hotel, accommodations may be available. Contact Carol Lyn Deihl at (214) 943-5035.

ACCESS HOUSTON OPPORTUNITIES

Access Houston TV channel is allowing individuals and groups to air programs on their station for only an initial one-time \$60 training fee. Several HOS members have met to discuss the possibility of airing a program on Access Houston cable channel. Another meeting will be held at Brian Phillips house on Sunday, March 12th, at 2 pm to plan out possible programs. Anyone with either film and program production experience or with program ideas is welcome. For more information contact Brian Phillips at 896-9707.

THE KONZAK REPORT

The Konzak Report - In Defense of Freedom is a fairly new monthly newsletter covering issues in aerospace, defense and foreign policy. The editor and publisher, James P. Konzak, has extensive experience in the defense industry and has written for other publications such as: *The Intellectual Activist* and *Understanding Defense*. Subscription rates are: \$38 for one year, \$65 for two years, and student rates are \$25 for one year (requires photocopy of ID card). Back issues are available for \$3 per copy. Send to: The Konzak Report, P.O. Box 18272, Denver, CO 80218.

CAMPUS CLUBS

Rice University: The Rice Students of Objectivism held their first organizational meeting of the term on Tuesday, February 14th. Their next meeting will be on Monday, February 27th at 6:30 pm, when they will play an audiotape by Leonard Peikoff: "The Role of Philosophy in History." The meeting will be held in the Will Rice College Music Room. HOS members are welcome.

University of Houston: The UH Students of Objectivism is sponsoring the lecture series "Principles of Objectivism", Monday evenings.

For more information about campus clubs, call Anna Franco or Dwyane Hicks at 521-0012.

THE JEFFERSON SCHOOL CONFERENCE

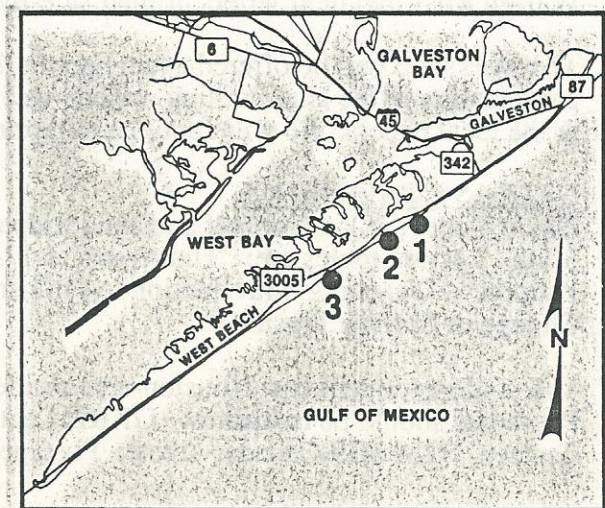
The TJS of Philosophy, Economics, and Psychology will hold its summer conference on the campus of the University of California, San Diego from August 6th to 20th, 1989. For more information, write to: The Jefferson School of Philosophy, Economics and Psychology; Post Office Box 2934; Laguna Hills, CA 92654.

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Greed is the thing that has made America great

By ROBERT O. KLEIN

IN the witch hunt against "corruption" on Wall Street and now in the futures pits on Chicago's LaSalle Street, the real targets of federal prosecutors are ambition and success. Authorities are prosecuting some investment bankers and traders for fraud, and these prosecutions are being used to smear everyone on Wall Street and LaSalle. Predictably, commentators blame this alleged widespread corruption on rampant materialism and greed.

James Gibney, managing editor of *The New Republic* magazine, illustrates this attitude, "... Part of me wants to see (Michael) Milken [Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc.'s pioneer in the junk bond market] suffer, not out of any high-falutin' sense of moral outrage over securities law violations: ... no, rather, I want Milken to suffer because he's filthy rich. What better way to close out an eight-year era of officially sponsored greed than to go after one of its prime movers." Few concepts have been as debased and confused as greed has been. Originally, "greed" meant "hunger." In time, with a growing hostility toward the objects of greed — material goods and wealth — its meaning evolved to "excessive desire" and "rapaciousness."

However, it is greed that has brought mankind out of the caves and into the 20th century. Moreover, the desire to make money does not cause corruption. Quite the opposite. To make money is to create value. The truly greedy person needs to be honest. If a businessman is dishonest, in time, he is shunned by other greedy people who do not want to be cheated.

Despite harangues by prosecutors and politi-

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cians, it is outrageous to conclude that fraud is widespread on Wall Street and LaSalle Street. Success in these fields demands honesty. On Wall Street, investors depend on the validity of financial statements and financiers make million-dollar transactions on a handshake. In the futures pits, brokers trade huge sums by hand signals. Neither Wall Street nor LaSalle Street has patience for cheats.

Rather than condemning the greed of stock and futures traders, we all should give silent thanks to Wall Street and LaSalle Street for their vital role in the creation of wealth. Wall Street guides people's savings to the most productive businessmen, who in turn have made America the richest country on Earth. The futures pits enable anyone to hedge against the perilous risk of commodity price swings. For example, wheat farmers depend on the futures market to hedge against a drop in the price of wheat prior to harvest. It is no coincidence that the backward countries do not have stock and futures exchanges.

The critics of greed are willing to sacrifice the general wealth and prosperity, as long as they can stop some people from getting very rich. Businessmen are constantly depicted as seething, money-grubbing vipers, who can't resist chasing a buck even if it means stealing it. Many people view money-making as crass or as a necessary evil.

Some of the animosity toward the rich results

from the misconception that life is a zero-sum game. By this view, there is a limited amount of wealth in the world, and one man's gain must be at the expense of someone else. This view was plausible in the Middle Ages, where to amass great wealth, one had to steal it. However, the Industrial Revolution proved that the amount of new wealth that can be created is limited only by our energy and intelligence. Men earned great fortunes by building transcontinental railroads or by mass-producing steel, achievements that have benefited everyone.

On a deeper level, this scorn for money and money-makers is rooted in medieval morality. For the medievals, the virtuous man renounced pleasure and happiness in this life to focus on a supernatural dimension and an afterlife. Materialistic activities such as money-lending and trading were viewed with suspicion and contempt. Medieval saints practiced the ideal of such asceticism: They beat themselves, slept on rocks, etc.

The "materialism" they damned is actually the commitment to improving the material aspect of one's life. It is a virtue. It means wanting good food, beautiful clothes, a luxurious home, proper medical care, etc. It means an unremitting effort to strive for the best in life. While ascetic, anti-materialistic philosophy was responsible for the unspeakable poverty and degradation of the Dark Ages, it is not and should not be the American dream!

In the end, the anti-materialists' campaign against fraud in the financial markets is a smoke screen for their real agenda: an assault on materialism and greed. This amounts to an attack on progress and life itself.

Religious leaders, apologists are fakes

By DWAYNE HICKS

I want to congratulate The Daily Cougar for its editorial condemning terrorists and their apologists.

While others have also condemned Khomeini's threats, they have simultaneously weakened their own statement by apologizing for any insult Salmon Rushdie's book (*The Satanic Verses*) might have brought on the religion of Islam. No such apology is warranted for any religion.

Religion is inherently antifreedom and anti-man since it begins by demanding that man surrender the sovereignty of his mind to the edicts of a mystic. A mystic claims to obtain conceptual knowledge passively — without means — in the same way that humans passively see objects on the perceptual level.

As Ayn Rand wrote in "Faith and Force: The Destroyers of the Modern World:"

"The conflict of reason versus mysticism is the issue of life or death, of freedom or slavery, of progress or stagnant brutality . . . Reason is the only objective means of communication and of understanding among men; when men deal with one another by means of reason, reality is their objective standard and frame of reference. But when men claim to possess supernatural means of knowledge, no persuasion, communication or understanding is possible."

The ultimate target of Khomeini's threat is not Rushdie's book, but reason and egoism and their effects: the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution and the right to your life, your liberty and the pursuit of your happiness. To think for oneself is fundamentally selfish; to refuse to sacrifice your judgment to the dictates of the supernatural is the fundamental source of "blasphemous" behavior.

The reaction to Khomeini from the American community has been disappointing, and it is no wonder.

Since conservatives are

dominated by the Religious Right, they have sought to impose their dogma by legislative fiat. Whether calling for prayer in school or for a "moment of silence," they demand homage from your child's mind to their supernatural entity. They praise science but demand that Darwin be removed or moderated by forcing a teacher, and his textbook, to mouth the dogma of creationism. And rebelling at the appearance of independent women living by their own effort, acting in their own interests and being freed from bondage to their own biological potential, they seek to outlaw abortion and protest contraception and the distribution of information about it. They claim that a wholly dependent and mindless fetus with only the potential of becoming a human being has intrinsic value, but that the interests of an actual, independent adult are secondary. It is not conservatives who will answer Khomeini; witness Bush's weak response and absence of action.

Likewise, liberals do not have clean hands with which to point. While the protests of writers is to be commended, other principles have dominated liberals for years. Agreeing with religionists that certainty is possible only if granted by the supernatural, and seeing none, they claim that absolutes are unknowable, whether of truth or of morality. Thus, the humanities are diffused with skepticism and moral relativism: "It may be true for Khomeini, but not for me." "Western civilization is no better than any village commune." "One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist."

If Khomeini views individual lives of secondary importance in comparison to his creed, so do our own liberals and socialists when they sympathize with this century's parade of collectivist regimes — from the Soviet Union to Nicaragua. They, too, have a creed whereby the interests of a mystical

entity called "the group" are all-important; and not enough oppression and bloodshed exists to convince them that something is wrong with their "ideals." Somehow, the next "People's State" will be benevolent, though it too will demand that individuals exist for the state and not vice-versa.

When people here condemn profit-seeking as greed and see "the public interest" or "the consensus" as demanding the sacrifice of individual rights, isn't this just the watered-down version of the same notions? How is it that some are fervently pro-freedom of expression until they're addressing the issues of commercial billboards, commercial advertising, feminist censorship of pornography or deregulation of the airwaves? Those who endlessly produce schemes for social engineering from the social "sciences" can have no response to the Khomeinis of this world. Would B.F. Skinner or John Rawls be the first to fight for freedom? They, too, like Khomeini, regard their feelings as primaries, as justification for legitimizing behavior.

If Khomeini, Gorbachev and the rulers of South Africa realize that political freedom depends on the existence of economic freedom, why can't a university professor or a "democratic" socialist do the same?

Those who are "civil" libertarians but encourage regulation and control of peaceful and non-sacrificial activity are frauds.

In the short term, a military response is required to answer Khomeini. Pacifism makes confident the aggressor and surrenders the world to those who initiate force.

In the long term, our intellectuals and universities need to rediscover reason, rational self-interest, rights and the concept of the individual as the unit of human existence.

Hicks is a post-baccalaureate student in electrical engineering.