

# The Houston Objectivism Society Newsletter

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April 1989

## JAMES LENNOX AND "UNDERSTANDING EVOLUTIONARY THEORY"

The next HOS meeting will be held on a Saturday (instead of the usual Friday), on May 20th at 7:30 pm in the Pacific Room in the University of Houston Student Center. We will play an audiotape by James Lennox, Philosopher of Science at the University of Pittsburgh, on "Understanding Evolutionary Theory."

This theory has been questioned and misunderstood since its inception. As a member of HOS, you no doubt favor evolution, but can you explain evolution to those who are inclined to a pro-reason approach? Come hear Professor Lennox explain evolution and refute attempts by Creationist "scientists" to discredit evolution.

Refreshments will be served during and after the meeting. Come and Enjoy!

## MONTESSORI: THE FILM

Four members of HOS are co-producing a videotape on Montessori education. This video will initially air on Access Houston, the public access cable channel. Dawn Poeppel has completed camera and editing training at Access Houston, and Brian Phillips is writing the script. Anna Franco is in charge of music and is helping with technical matters. Jeff Crow, who has produced training films for Houston Community College, is providing his expertise in pre-production and production.

Warren Ross, who taught a math class at a local Montessori training center, will be interviewed on the philosophy of education. Professional disk jockey Pete Jamison will be the narrator of this video.

The budget for this video is currently \$660. HOS members who would like to contribute money for the video production are invited to do so. For more information, contact Jeff Crow at 688-5901 or Brian Phillips at 896-9707.



## TEXAS OBJECTIVIST CONFERENCE

Plans are underway for a conference for Texas Objectivists. The conference is tentatively scheduled for this Fall in Austin. Activities will include presentations of papers, workshops, performances and presentations by artists and musicians, sporting events, and socializing.

Individuals interested in contributing papers, conducting a workshop, or performing at the conference are encouraged to develop their ideas. Further details about the conference and a formal request for presentations will be forthcoming in a special letter once details are finalized.



## MEMBER PROFILES

In upcoming issues of the newsletter, we will include profiles of HOS members. We would like all members to send us a brief biographical sketch and a small photograph. Information can include: interests, hobbies, career, interesting stories on how Objectivism influenced you, etc....

This forum will help us get to know one another, as well as encourage greater interaction between HOS members.

## THE RUSHDIE AFFAIR

An advertisement denouncing the Ayatollah Khomeini and his death threat on Salaman Rushdie appeared in the March 21st issue of the New York Times. A copy of this ad is enclosed in this newsletter.

Copies of this ad were also distributed on the UH and Rice campuses. HOS member Dwyane Hicks wrote a strong article on the issue which appeared in the UH Cougar newspaper (circulation 20,000). A copy of this article is also enclosed.

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## PAST MEETINGS

About 20 HOS members and guests attended the Houston premiere of *We The Living* at River Oaks Theater on March 10.

The Beach Bash attracted 11 members and guests. Some were braver than others in their water-related activities. A tense volleyball competition separated the yay-sayers from the nay-sayers.

## HOS NEWSLETTER IMPROVEMENTS

As you may have noticed, the HOS Newsletter is new and improved. Our expanded size will let us bring you more news about Objectivism and Objectivists in Houston. Our new layout and color will add interest and eye-appeal. In future issues, we will be making additional changes. We hope you find these changes to be an improvement, and welcome any comments you might have.



## MEETING OF THE MINDS: A SUMMARY OF THE DALLAS CONFERENCE

About 12 HOS members attended the March *Meeting of the Minds* in Dallas. In addition to the formal lectures and an open forum question period, conference attendees were treated to a performance of Renaissance music and a dance on Saturday night. On a more meteorological note, a winter storm struck Dallas during the conference, causing many HOS members to spend an extra night in Texas' winter paradise. Below are brief summaries of the lectures presented at the conference.

**Dr. David Kelley** lectured on "The Problem of Universals" and "The Problem of Induction". The essence of man's cognitive abilities is generalization. How we generalize and categorize is a crucial epistemological issue, i.e., the problem of universals. After refuting the intrinsic (Realism) and subjective (Nominalism) theories of abstraction, Dr. Kelley explained the objective theory of concept-formation as formulated by Ayn Rand. Dr. Kelley's second lecture dealt specifically with causality, and its relationship to induction. He also presented "Mill's Methods"- a set of rules for testing the validity of inductive conclusions.

**Professor Allan Gotthelf** lectured on "Love and Philosophy: Aristotelean vs. Platonic" and "Teaching 'Introduction to Philosophy' in college: Experiences of an Objectivist". The Platonist theory of love, usually viewed as non-romantic and non-sexual, is fundamentally a belief that humans are incomplete and that love is the attempt to find completeness through another person. Using this broader interpretation of love, Professor Gotthelf showed how promiscuous sex is a kind of Platonic love. Professor Gotthelf contrasted Platonic love with Aristotle's theory of love, which holds that love is possible only to an

individual who is complete, i.e., a person who first loves himself. Love, to Aristotle, is the recognition of one's values in another person.

In his second lecture, Professor Gotthelf explained how he teaches Philosophy 101 to non-philosophical students. Using many aspects of popular culture, (e.g., music and movies) he demonstrates to his students the influence and importance of philosophy in our lives. He also teaches essential metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical issues, e.g., benevolent vs. malevolent universe, reason vs. irrationalism, egoism vs. self-sacrifice.

**Professor John Ridpath** lectured on "Gorbachev's Policies: Real Change or Surface Illusion." Tracing the nature and history of Marxist-Leninist ideology, Professor Ridpath concluded that Gorbachev is simply a good communist, firmly committed to saving the revolution, not effecting a new one. The West misunderstands concepts like "glasnost"; "openness" does not mean tolerating dissent, but rather, the desire of the Party to get the information it needs from various segments of society. Similar periods in Soviet history, e.g., Lenin's New Economic Plan of the 1920's and Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in the 1950's, failed to produce fundamental change. Both of these previous "experiments" with "openness" were met with great fanfare and high expectations in the West.





## OP/ED AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

As announced in the last newsletter, with each newsletter, we are including copies of letters to the editor written by HOS members. This issue, we have also included an article written by HOS member Dwyane Hicks, and an Op/Ed article written by California Objectivist Robert O. Klein which appeared in the Houston CHRONICLE.

### Thanks for rare moral defense of capitalism

Thank you very much for printing the article by Robert O. Klein entitled "Greed is the thing that made America great" (Outlook, March 30). It is one of the greatest and most needed articles I have ever read in a newspaper. It is unusual to see a rational, moral defense of capitalism.

Ron Shoemaker, League City

### BITS AND PIECES

HOS members Dawn Poeppel and Brian Phillips were married on April 21st. Congratulations!

HOS member, Anna Franco will graduate from Rice with an MBA on May 13th. Since so many members of the Rice Students of Objectivism club are graduating this May, it is unlikely that the club will be around next year.

HOS member Dwyane Hicks will graduate from UH with a Bachelors of Science in electrical engineering on May 13th. The UH Students of Objectivism will now be run by Kirk Mashue.

## Health care

T. Rice (S-O Feb. 23) writes that physicians are against a system of national health care, but their desires should be disregarded because middle-income Americans "are for it because they need it desperately."

This attitude demonstrates precisely what is wrong in America today. First, it regards one man's need as a legitimate claim on the property of another. Second, it regards individuals as nothing more than sacrificial animals.

To take property from individuals against their will, regardless of the reason, is robbery. To implement a national health care system against the wishes of those who will provide that care is tantamount to slavery.

Neither need nor public opinion can justify robbery and slavery.

J. Brian Phillips

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**Legally, taxes are neither. And Congress will always add new programs and new taxes as it pleases, not as those who are taxed would please. — Editor.**

## Unemployment will rise

Raising the minimum wage will result in inflation and greater unemployment. It is an economic fact that an employer will go out of business if he pays his employees more than their labor is worth.

A minimum wage restricts the employer's freedom to employ unskilled labor, which severely limits the job opportunities for unskilled people. Also, when the minimum wage is increased, the country's total wages must employ relatively fewer people. This results in relatively fewer goods and services being chased by each dollar of income, which is inflation.

Ron Shoemaker, League City