

The Houston Objectivism Society Newsletter

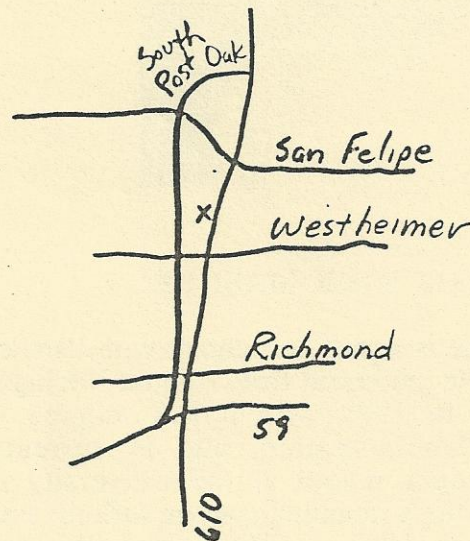
Vol.2, No. 3

June 1989

ESSAY CONTEST AWARDS DINNER

HOS is proud to announce its second The Fountainhead Contest Awards Dinner. Houston's first prize winner is Mary Blubaugh of St Agnes Academy, and the second prize winner is Irene Chang of Spring Woods High School.

The awards dinner will be held on Friday, July 21, at 7:30 pm at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, located at 2222 West Loop South (see map). The dinner will cost \$20 per person, and we ask that members RSVP using the enclosed form and envelope by July 10.



JAMES LENNOX LECTURE SUMMARY

Fourteen people attended the May 20 HOS meeting. The program was Dr. James Lennox's lecture "Understanding Evolutionary Theory".

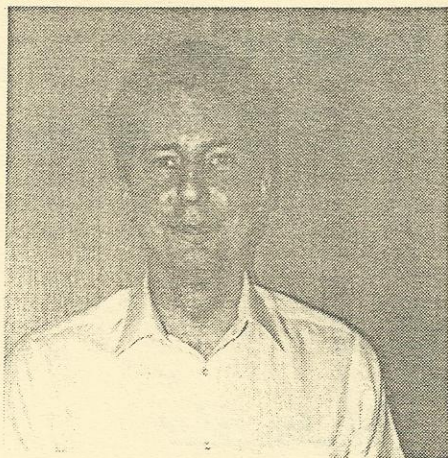
Evolutionary theory, Dr. Lennox explained, consists of four essential ideas: variation, heritability, competition, and differential fitness value. Variations are those differences in physical characteristics which occur within species of all living organisms. Some of these variations are more conducive to survival than others, and those who possess these traits are more likely to reproduce than those who don't (differential fitness). Therefore, the next generation is more likely to inherit those beneficial traits than traits that do not enhance survival. Over many generations, what were initially only small variations become significant. Dr. Lennox emphasized the overwhelming evidence in support of evolution, such as fossil records, plate tectonics, studies by Darwin and Kettlewell, and the development of the modern horse.

The second portion of Dr. Lennox's lecture focussed on creationism and the tactics used by "creation scientists". The most fundamental fact about the creationists is that they are not scientists but religious zealots. All members of the Institute for Creation Research are required to sign a document stating that the literal interpretation of the Bible is not open to question. The creationists

make two different, yet contradictory, critiques of evolution. Sometimes they argue that neither creationism nor evolution is scientific, that both are a matter of faith. Other times (particularly when they want to convince state legislatures to force schools to teach creationism) they argue that both creationism and evolution are sciences and that scientific evidence refutes evolution but supports creationism. Dr. Lennox then went on to explain how creationists intentionally misrepresent both evolution and science in an effort to support their own religious beliefs.

UPDATE ON THE TEXAS OBJECTIVIST CONFERENCE

A conference for Texas Objectivists is planned for the weekend of November 4 - 5 in Austin. At press time, the cost was estimated to be about \$50 per person, which would include two lunches, admission to the conference, and proceedings of the conference. All HOS members should have received a mailing regarding this conference. Those who have not should contact Warren Ross at 468-2256.



DR. PEIKOFF RESIGNS FROM ARI

Effective May 1, Dr. Leonard Peikoff resigned from the Board of Directors of the Ayn Rand Institute. This resignation results from Dr. Peikoff's desire to devote his time and energy to writing philosophy.

PROFILE OF KIRK MASHUE

Kirk Mashue is a staff accountant with Pandick Houston. He graduated from Central Michigan University in 1978 with a B.S. degree in Business Administration, and is currently attending night school at the University of Houston taking accounting courses with the goal of getting a C.P.A.. He is now the new president of the UH Students of Objectivism Club. Kirk's interests include basketball, racquetball and music.

Q: How and why did you first become interested in Objectivism?

KM: My interest in Ayn Rand and Objectivism began in 1975 after I had read The Fountainhead. It was unlike anything I had ever read before, and I was captivated by it from the start. At the time, I was looking for someone who knew how man's life should be lived and Ayn Rand was there to show me. She gave my life a purpose and direction that I wouldn't have had without her.

HOS President: Warren S. Ross

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Ayn Rand showed me that ideas are important and that one's premises determine the course of one's life. This is true for either a single man or an entire society. What I like about her philosophy is that it is reality based and a totally integrated system. The foundation of it is rooted in the real world and the rest of it is built on this foundation.

Q: How has Objectivism affected your life?

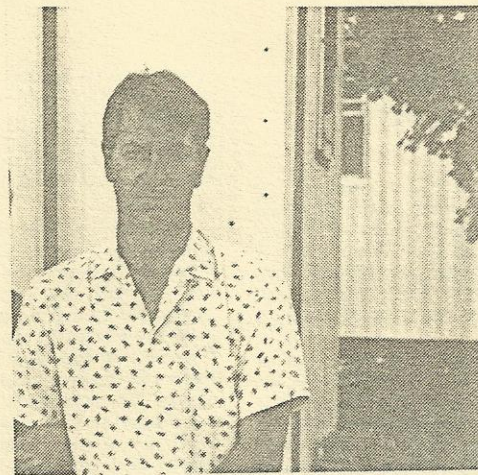
KM: One of the most pleasureable experiences I've had because of Objectivism was the Conceptual Conference in New York last year. I got to meet Objectivists from all over the country and the world. It was also exciting to meet and hear lectures from noted Objectivist philosophers like Harry Binswanger and Allan Gotthelf. It was probably the closest I'll ever get to something like 'Galt's Gulch'. It showed me that Objectivism is alive and well in the world.

Q: Do you have any plans for the UH student club?

KM: In regard to the UH club, I hope to use it as a means for an alternative source of ideas on campus. I think campus clubs are important because college students are generally more open to new ideas than the rest of the populace and many are unsatisfied with the collectivist or mystic views of life that they've been given. Also, many have just read Ayn Rand for the first time and want to know more about her. The club can be a source of information for them. I had read Ayn Rand for the first time in college, and I know that I would have loved to be able to talk to someone about her.

PROFILE OF DWYANE HICKS

Dwyane Hicks is a recent UH graduate in electrical engineering. Dwyane grew up on a farm in Kansas near a small town with a population of 5000. In high school, his primary interests were sports, chemistry, and girls. In college, he majored in chemistry because he thought it was the place to start in order to understand everything. He worked as a pilot in the Air Force during the Vietnam War and then briefly flew for commercial airlines. He then decided to return to school to study electrical engineering. While at UH, he founded and was president of the Students of Objectivism campus club.



Q: How were you first introduced to Objectivism and how did you approach learning about it?

DH: During my sophomore year in college, my "romantic" sister ordered me to read The Fountainhead. Usually I never followed her advice, but two weeks later, I was caught up in Roark's assertion of selfishness and independence. At an early age, I had accepted these virtues as common sense, but just prior to reading Rand, I had been wondering if they were practical. It seemed as if the "do-gooders", the "social metaphysicians", the kids who dishonestly obeyed and even emulated "adult" values - it seemed as if they were "getting on" while I existed in constant conflict. Roark was successfully challenging this, not as a furtive "rebellious youth", but in a serious, publically moral way. It was the first time I had seen my values defended, and I began to devour Rand's works.

For the next 5 years, I considered myself only a tentative Objectivist because I felt too ignorant to competently validate the philosophy. I was also uncomfortable about Libertarianism. It seemed to be a political implementation of Objectivism, yet Rand would tersely reject it in a way which was unintelligible to me.

While working as a pilot in the Air Force, I took several history courses and studied both Objectivism and Libertarianism. My tentative approach towards Objectivism paid off because now, when I firmly come down on the side of Objectivism and join the professional Objectivists in repudiating Libertarianism, I know that I am not indulging in dogma.

Q: You have studied Objectivism for over 20 years. What advice would you give to others just getting started?

DH: I've observed that too many people initially interested in Objectivism become too lazy to actually study it. It's easy to read the material and listen to Peikoff's tapes without really studying it in the way that one does for an educational course. Anyone who has taken a math or engineering class knows that working out problems at the end of the chapter is invaluable. The problems help point out what one has not learned and provide tools for what Rand described as "chewing". In the humanities, chewing is not as straightforward but just as necessary, and a person interested in Objectivism cannot allow himself to be lazy about this aspect. I also think it's very important to mentally put things in your own words and to recognize that which you do not understand.

Q: How has Objectivism helped you in your life?

DH: Aside from what Rand has taught me in content, she has made an enormous difference in my life by teaching me about method and the absolutism of reason. Whether I am faced with the option of a career change, daily choices, or complex current events, I don't throw up my hands in bewilderment or charge off after some guru or abandon truth by embracing subjectivism. With reason, I know that the world is intelligible - that I have the ability to resolve issues relevant to me and the knowledge that the rest is resolvable.

The most unchosen yet fortunate aspect of my life is that I was not born prior to the existence of Ayn Rand. I also feel a great debt to Leonard Peikoff and others for keeping Objectivism alive through their organization, further expression and application of the material.

Proposed Rule is Akin to Slavery

To the Editor:

I see that there is a provision for mandatory pro bono in the proposed Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct (see Rule 6.01). I wanted to express my outrage that an association of Americans, especially lawyers, would propose such an evil thing.

Practicing law is a right, not a privilege. It is a right that is inseparable from the right to exist. The argument that the practice of law is a mere privilege could be used with respect to every human activity and leads ultimately to the abolition of all rights, transforming all rights into privileges that can be burdened at the whim of the majority.

The exercise of the right to practice law does not impose any moral obligation on a lawyer to work for any-

one for whom he does not choose to work. Only a code of values that upholds the use of force and slavery as moral could hold that every lawyer has a moral obligation to provide legal services for those who cannot afford them.

Rule 6.01 of the proposed Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct provides in part that "a lawyer shall not seek to avoid appointment by a tribunal to represent a person except for good cause. . . ." Nowhere on the short list of "good" causes is: the lawyer does not want to accept the tribunal's appointment (for whatever reason, rational or not, arbitrary or not, reasonable or not, solely and exclusively within the discretion of the lawyer).

What motivates one man or group of men to propose slavery for themselves? I am not sure. Perhaps the proponents of Rule 6.01 feel that they are charging too much for the legal services they provide to their clients,

or perhaps they feel that they are taking fees that they do not deserve or they have not earned. If that is their motivation, then they should lower their rates, change their profession or make some other adjustment to resolve the root of their guilt. However, their solution should not be to enslave the rest of us who feel no guilt in practicing our chosen profession.

Motivations aside, proposed Rule 6.01 proposes slavery. All people, especially Americans and especially American lawyers, should be against proposed Rule 6.01.

On the referendum for slavery on May 19, 1989, I urge all Texas lawyers to vote against slavery.

Michael J. Mazzone
Dow, Cogburn & Friedman
Houston

Editor's note: Proposed Rule 6.01, on accepting appointments, states: "A lawyer shall not seek to avoid appointment by a tribunal to represent a

person except for good cause, such as:
"(1) representing the client is likely to result in violation of law or rules of professional conduct;

"(2) representing the client is likely to result in an unreasonable financial burden on the lawyer; or

"(3) the client or the cause is so repugnant to the lawyer as to be likely to impair the client-lawyer relationship or the lawyer's ability to represent the client."

Under the current Code of Professional Responsibility, Ethical Consideration 2-29 states that a lawyer "should not seek to be excused from undertaking the representation except for compelling reasons. Compelling reasons do not include such factors as the repugnance of the subject matter of the proceeding, the identity or position of a person involved in the case, the belief of the lawyer that the defendant in a criminal proceeding is guilty, or the belief of the lawyer regarding the merits of the civil case."

TEXAS LAWYER • APRIL 24, 1989

Education reform

WITH EACH passing year it becomes more apparent that our educational system is inadequate. Everyone — teachers, politicians, educational bureaucrats, parents — seems to have a suggestion on how to improve the system. Many "reforms" have been enacted, and yet the system is still crumbling.

Few people realize that education is essentially a government monopoly. And, as with all government monopolies, the result is poor quality and rising costs.

Meaningful education reform can occur only when the government's virtual monopoly is eliminated. Competition in education, like competition in all enterprises, would ultimately provide higher quality at lower prices.

The importance of education does not preclude it from the same market considerations as other consumer goods and services.

J. Brian Phillips
HOUSTON

The competition theory does not always work out in practice. Very often we get low quality at high prices instead of the reverse. — Editor.

The Houston Post

May 25, 1989

Response to violence by Chinese was weak

Will the land of the free support the home of the brave? There can be no doubt that Tiananmen Square is today's home of the brave. But what of the reaction by our administration?

A stern warning to the Chinese government might have prevented the slaughter. But shortly after the bloodshed began, Secretary of State James Baker was asked whether the United States would penalize the Chinese government. He declined to answer on the basis that it was a hypothetical question and he urged restraint on both sides.

If America means anything, it means a principled advocacy of freedom for all people. Our timid appeasement is a betrayal of the students' and of our own values.

Dwayne Hicks, Houston

Houston Chronicle

June 14, 1989

Cut all ties to China

The Chinese government — like all communist dictatorships — is tyrannical and murderous. Civilized nations have nothing to gain by associating with barbarians.

The United States should immediately end all diplomatic, cultural and economic relationships with the Chinese government.

J. Brian Phillips, Houston

Houston Chronicle

June 17, 1989

SURVEY

Included in this issue of the HOS Newsletter is a brief survey. We would like members to fill this out and return it, along with their RSVP for The Fountainhead Essay Contest Awards Dinner, in the enclosed envelope. The information obtained in the survey will help us improve the newsletter as well as provide lectures and other activities of interest to HOS members.