

Houston Objectivism Society



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Newsletter

Special London Edition

Judgment Night

At the September meeting, The Honorable Pat Lykos, judge for the 180th District Court, spoke to HOS members on the subject of the Texas parole system. Since her days as a college undergraduate, Judge Lykos has been a fan of Ayn Rand.

A summary of her presentation will appear in the next newsletter.

Bernstein and the Right to Abortion at U of Houston

On October 18, Dr. Andrew Bernstein, a member of the Ayn Rand Institute's Speakers Bureau, will address a University of Houston audience on "The Philosophical Basis of a Woman's Right to Abortion." Dr. Bernstein teaches Objectivism at the New School for Social Research in New York City and is an Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at Pace University, Iona College, and at the State University of New York at Purchase.

Perhaps no other issue is so controversial, today, and yet both attacked and defended on a confused and illegitimate basis. It is also an issue which promptly requires reference to more fundamental issues, such as the nature of rights and one's view of man's nature, therefore, providing a fertile ground for stimulating serious minds to inquire further.

The speech is being sponsored by the Objectivist student club at the University of Houston, recently started anew by Sean Rainer and Jerry Smith.

The speech will be given at 7 pm in Room 102 of the Social Work building. Non-students will pay \$5 at the door. In

Essayists Awarded



Emily Kennedy, Warren Ross, Courtney Van Zandt, Brittany Perez

On August 20, HOS held a reception at the University of Houston for the winners of *The Fountainhead* and the *Anthem* essay contests and their families and friends.

Courtney Van Zandt, a senior last year at J.L. McCullough High School and a freshman at A&M this Fall, received first prize for her *Fountainhead* essay. She was awarded a plaque, a copy of *Atlas Shrugged* and \$1000.

Emily Kennedy, a senior this year at Memorial Senior High School, received second prize for her *Fountainhead* essay and was awarded a certificate of achievement, a copy of *Atlas Shrugged* and \$250.

Brittany Perez, a sophomore this year at Klein Oak High School, won the *Anthem* essay contest and was awarded a certificate of achievement, a set of Ayn Rand's non-fictional books and \$250.

We congratulate the winners, and we would like to thank their parents and teachers. Thanks are due also to Warren Ross for his work for *The Fountainhead* contest, to Alice Ross for her design of the plaque, to Jim and Sandi Brents for their work for the *Anthem* contest and to HOS members for their contributions.

addition, prior to the speech at 5 pm, a dinner for Dr. Bernstein will be held at the Hilton, opposite the Student Center. Attendees are asked to contribute \$10 to the student club.

How Teachers are Taught to Teach

At the August HOS meeting, Janet Wich, a teacher of English in the Richmond/Rosenberg area, regaled us with her encounters with schools of education—at the University of Michigan as an undergraduate, but

mainly at the University of Houston as a graduate student during recent summers.

Janet provided us with examples of material from three different graduate school courses and asked the audience to participate in integrating their common characteristics. Finding methods and approaches antithetical to learning in these courses, she then investigated as to the underlying ideas which gave rise to such methods and presented her conclusions to the meeting. But Miss Wich first began her presentation by letting us read a not uncommon example of what such courses ultimately produce. The following excerpt of a review of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is the final draft by a high school senior:

The ancient mariner do not want nothing, bad

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to happen to him. The ancient mariner want to change from a evil guy to a nice person, "A sadder and a wiser man, He rose the morrow morn. He want everyone to love each cause god maked us to love.

In concluding, the ancient mariner start off killing the albatross, but god punishment him for that. Now he want everybody to love each friend and bady, that god make us. He think about, all the things that happen to him, cause god was watching him, that make the ancient mariner wise up.

In her effort to wise us up, Janet first presented three aspects of a course she took called Linguistic Methodology, K through 12. To illustrate the first of these aspects, Janet handed out various "cross-picture" puzzles, the solving of which usually consumed the first 45 to 60 minutes of each period. One such puzzle consisted of rows of symbols, any three or four of which, could be mentally aligned horizontally, vertically or diagonally to reveal a recognizable phase, such as "school-teacher-turkey". The purpose of these puzzles was not discussed, nor were they related to reading—they were simply worked in class.

A second aspect of the course consisted of presentations by students concerning illusions, word games and music or figures of speech. The professor was careful to caution presenters: "I do not want anyone to give a lecture. We want activities and fun."

The third aspect of the course was reading the textbook *Understanding Reading*, by Frank Smith. In this book, the following quote illustrates the "whole language" approach to reading:

Reading is not a matter of identifying letters in order to recognize words in order to get the meaning of sentences. Meaning identification does not require the identification of individual words, just as word identification does not require the identification of letters. [editor: Fans of the fallacy of the stolen concept should note that this quote can be understand only if one accepts the reverse of its content.]

Janet's second course was Remedial Reading. The teacher would typically begin class by holding up a children's book, showing the large pictures to the class of teachers as if they were the remedial students and pointing out possible connections between the pictures and the words.

The class was asked to read a textbook on remedial reading. But instead of discussing the book at the next class session, they were divided into groups and asked to draw pictures which illustrated the meaning of the chapters.

For the final exam, a student asked the professor whether it might be conducted orally or by group instead of by individual effort. The professor thought that an oral exam would take too much time but that a

group exam process would be a very good idea. When Janet asked if she could take the exam alone, the professor assured Janet and the class that that would be fine since not everyone could be expected to get together for study, thus graciously sparing Janet from being branded as an individualist.

Teaching English for Secondary Students was the last course presented by Janet as an instruction about teacher education. As an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, she had taken a similar course, a seminar taught by two teachers and three teaching assistants, and had been disappointed in learning nothing. But in picking up books for the University of Houston course, she noticed that the names of the five authors for one of the required textbooks looked very familiar and, indeed, were the same professors and teaching assistants encountered in her earlier seminar at the University of Michigan. They had based this textbook on the same seminar taken earlier by Janet.

The textbook examined several "models" of teaching English, with one professor's favorite being Language and Social Construct, the author of which had written: "The primary goal of this perspective is to empower students to develop their own voices but in a potentially more culturally critical way. With emphasis on the social way that students learn, it also stresses the need for interaction and collaboration. This perspective rejects the notion of the individual in isolation, emphasizing the individual as a member..."

Another book, *Perspectives on Talk and Learning*, emphasized the value of grading papers by averaging grades assigned by one's peers, a process which would enhance the self-esteem of the students by appreciating their evaluations.

After reading *Lives on the Boundary*, the students in Janet's class were asked to find a sentence in each chapter which best encapsulated its message. Janet's peers picked this one for chapter three: "We live

in America with so many platitudes about motivation and self-reliance and individualism and myths spun from them, like Horatio Alger, that we find it hard to accept the fact that they are serious nonsense." Janet was the only person in her class who objected to this quote and spoke out against it.

Janet summarized her experiences with these courses by noting what was *Out* and *In* in schools of education.

Out: Lectures, teachers as conveyors of knowledge, individual work and effort—all leading to the expectation that children should gain a certain body of knowledge and be able to meet certain standards.

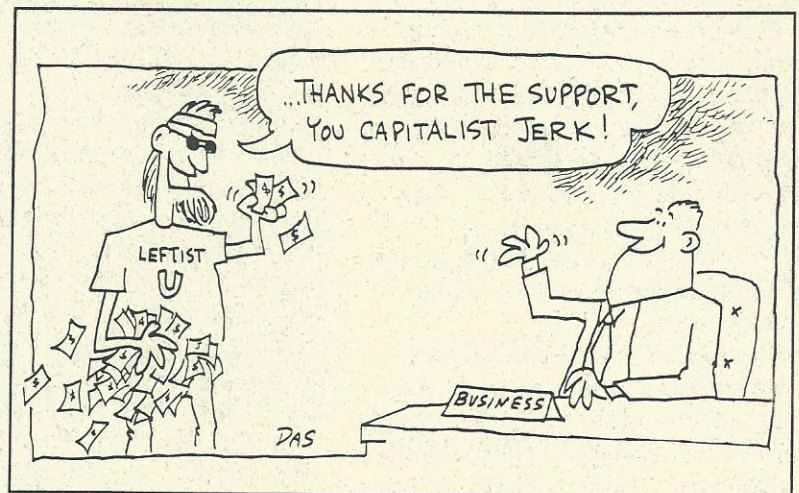
In: Games and group discussions, teachers as "facilitators" and group projects—all leading to the socializing of children and the attempt to make them feel good.

Janet noted that Rita Kramer, author of *Education School Follies: The Miseducation of America's Teachers*, found the same policies and practices in educational schools all over the country; thus, Janet's experience was not an isolated one. While giving a review of Kramer's book, in another course taken by Janet, Teaching Composition, Janet presented the following quote by Kramer, taken from the chapter which focussed on the University of Houston:

There are many in the educational establishment and in academia generally, particularly in the social sciences, who have an investment in schooling and social engineering, that believe that using the schools to teach children to get along with all kinds of people should take precedence over teaching them about the civilization of which they are the inheritors. They are comfortable with using the schools as a means of social leveling through intellectual leveling. If the course is too hard for some, water it down. If some can't pass the test, throw it out.

At the end of her book, Kramer also

Yuks by David Smith



writes:

Hardly anywhere did I find a sense that any kind of knowledge is valuable in itself or more valuable than any other, a fact which ceased to surprise me once it became clear that among teacher educators, today, the goal of schooling is not considered to be instructional, let alone intellectual, but political. The aim is not to produce individuals capable of effort and mastery, but to make sure everyone gets a passing grade. Meanwhile, any criticism of this state of affairs is met with the charge of elitism, or worse still, racism.

But as good as Kramer's book is, she does not identify the underlying causes, i.e., the philosophical ideas producing this tragedy in American education. Janet said that her examination of the traditional approach to teaching versus the writing process approach helped to explain these underlying ideas.

The traditional approach teaches that writing is an individual endeavor and that one must learn in an hierarchical sequence the rules of grammar and certain writing skills. The traditional approach has a definite procedure in producing a work of writing: thinking about a subject, outlining it, completing rough draft, revising it and, finally, producing a finished work.

On the other hand, the writing process approach teaches that writing is a social or group endeavor and that many processes exist to learn to write and to produce a work: it depends on each individual. One must let them "do their own thing" while helping them along.

In this same course, Janet was required to read a book which explicitly presented ideas underlying the writing process approach, *Eating on the Streets* by David Schaafsma, from which she quoted: "Stories are representations of a negotiable reality."

Also: "Stories may become one means of shaping relationships in a community, or possible worlds. One's own language, then, within this kind of world-making is never a single language."

Blatantly obvious in this point of view is the personal form of what Ayn Rand identified as the primacy of consciousness, the view that consciousness has the power to create or change reality, as opposed to the primacy of

existence view that the role of consciousness is to perceive reality and is therefore metaphysically dependent.

The epistemological implication of the primacy of consciousness view is that every different consciousness creates a different reality for itself; thus, there is no one reality the facts of which one can learn.

Predictably, Schaafsma writes: "Human beings...are essentially networks of beliefs and desires. Within such a perspective on language, the intellectual history that humans tell is essentially a history of metaphors or fiction about those beliefs and desires. Theories, concepts and ideas, including the things our students learn in school, are metaphors, not facts."

Schaafsma also points out that philosophers such as Wittgenstein "questioned whether verification or certainty is even possible." Also, "Foucault decries the notion of 'certainty'; he opposes the 'exclusionary monologue of reason.'"

Janet showed the effect of this view on a teacher: A teacher can't be so "presumptuous" to assume that she can "teach" facts or knowledge to students or that she can use one method to "teach" all students. Why waste time on "facts or theory"? Focus on social experiences of children. Let them express their feelings and learn cooperative skills.

But the traditionalist approach arrives at different conclusions based on much different premises. Granted the primacy of existence, the role of consciousness is to be conscious of reality. The Law of Identity tells us that everything has its own identity and no other. That the mind also has an identity and that learning can only occur in accordance to the nature of the mind, a faculty which all human beings have but which must be exercised volitionally in a certain manner. Thus, knowledge of reality, using reason, is possible and is the proper goal of education. Children should be taught a body of facts and how to use their minds to find out more about reality on their own. In addition, since all human beings have the faculty of reason, they can success-

fully be taught in the same way. Contrary to the subjectivist view, which speaks interminably of social skills and of cooperation while irrevocably cutting off everyone from everyone metaphysically, the primacy of existence and the universal faculty of reason bring universal access to reality and to one another on the basis of understanding.

Janet concluded her speech by saying that this experience was her own personal confirmation of the crucial importance of philosophy, particularly of metaphysics and of epistemology, in our lives. Her audience was very appreciative for her presentation.

Dr. Kevorkian's Cure

by
J. Brian Phillips

On June 4, 1990, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a retired pathologist, helped Janet Adkins commit suicide inside Kevorkian's Volkswagen van. Adkins, suffering from Alzheimer's disease, was the first of twenty people Kevorkian would help commit suicide over the next forty two months.

Kevorkian's critics have called him a medical exhibitionist and "Jeffrey Dahmer in a lab coat." Legislators in Michigan passed a law prohibiting assisted suicides explicitly to stop Kevorkian. He has twice been arrested and once prosecuted (he was acquitted) for murder. To many, Dr. Kevorkian is an evil monster who must be stopped. Kevorkian responds by calling doctors who oppose him "idiots" and says that his primary opponents are "right-wing religious fanatics." "I don't care about the law. I don't care about injunctions. I don't care about legislators," he told Newsweek. "I have never cared about anything but the welfare of the patient in front of me." When arrested in December, 1993, the 65 year-old doctor undertook a hunger strike to protest his incarceration. "My liberty has been unjustly stolen," he told an interviewer. "Liberty means more to me than life itself."

It is such words and actions that

makes Kevoorkian a hero to many.

Much of the opposition to euthanasia comes from the religious conservatives, who hold that life (and thus rights) is a gift which only God can bestow and which only God can end. In regard to abortion, they argue that life begins at conception—i.e., when God implants a human soul into inanimate material. In regard to euthanasia, they argue that life ends when God chooses to reclaim that soul. Thus, human life begins and ends when God wills it. (Religionists argue that animals do not have a soul; thus, they have no rights.)

Religionists essentially define human life in Platonic terms. They regard any joining of human sperm and egg as an actual human being—every other fact about that joining is irrelevant. Consequently, a two-hour old zygote, a healthy college athlete, and an 80-year old comatose stroke victim are regarded as equally human, and thus each possesses the same rights.

This argument is founded on intrinsicist metaphysics. When applied to ethics, this leads to the view that, as Ayn Rand wrote, “the good is inherent in certain things or actions as such, regardless of their context and consequences, regardless of any benefit or injury they may cause to the actors and subjects involved.”

To destroy a human life is “an abomination to God.” The actual context is disregarded and/or ignored. The intrinsicist insists on strict obedience to specific rules, and neither the context nor the results are a consideration.

Thus, if one has a terminal disease, it is one’s duty to bear the pain and misery which accompanies a slow, agonizing death. And if one will not do so willingly, the “enlightened” have often been ready to inflict suffering—e.g., in the 19th century religionists campaigned against the use of anesthesia.

In earlier times, those who defied God’s will were tortured and put to death; today there are those who insist on torturing such individuals by forcing them to live. (It should be noted that terminal diseases also inflict pain and suffering on family and friends who must witness the slow, agonizing death of a loved one. There are many stories of individuals who have killed a loved one, rather than allow the senseless torture to continue.)

Fear and guilt often serve as powerful psychological weapons to enforce obedience to the dictates of religion. Guilt results when an individual accepts a certain code of conduct, but finds himself unable to live by its dictates; fear results from the belief of what awaits beyond the grave.

An individual who accepts this doctrine, and then finds himself suffering with a terminal disease, such as cancer, must choose between agony and damnation. He must choose between unimaginable pain and the threat of eternity in hell. Ironically, this threat of hell forces many to accept it in their final weeks, months, and perhaps years, here on earth.

It is understandable when religionists accept such ideas. It is frightening when many members of a profession which demands meticulous rationality—the medical profession—does as well.

Many physicians argue that doctor-assisted suicides corrupt the profession, contradict the Hippocratic Oath, and open the door to Nazi-style experimentation. They claim that their mission is to heal, not to kill. (This of course, is the view of professionals who are con-

tinually bombarded with altruism. The use of terms such as “mission” and “calling” to describe their work suggests the residue of a strong religious influence.)

In fact, a physician has two essential tasks. (Both of these tasks are based on man’s life as the standard of value, about which I will say more later in this article.) His primary task is to restore or maintain health. Usually, this means identifying the cause of an ailment and recommending a course of action, e.g., surgery, the taking of medicine, modification of behavior, etc.

A physician’s secondary task is to alleviate suffering, which is derived from the relationship between health and pain. Pain serves as an automatic warning that *something* is wrong, but it does not tell us *what* is wrong or what action is necessary to relieve it. While an animal can only attempt to avoid pain, man must identify pain as a derivative. Consequently, identifying the cause and eliminating it—i.e., restoring health—alleviates the pain and suffering. It should be noted that in the short-term, alleviating pain is subservient to restoring health. For example, shots and operations result in short-term pain, but ultimately lead to the restoration of health.

In the context of the terminally ill and of those with incurable diseases, however, the primary purpose of restoring health is impossible, and the issue of suffering becomes more important. In such cases, a doctor can only reduce or minimize the suffering experienced by the patient.

Euthanasia, many in the medical community argue, turns a doctor into a killer who “will never again be worthy of trust and respect as healer and comforter and protector of life in all its frailty.” (*Euthanasia: The Moral Issues*, page 27) Furthermore, they claim, euthanasia was practiced by the Nazis in their concentration camps. (Interestingly, anti-abortionists often refer to abortion as “America’s Holocaust”.)

To equate euthanasia (or abortion) with the gas chambers of Nazi Germany is an appeal to emotions and a massive dropping of context. The Nazis engaged in deliberate, cold-blooded



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murder of living human beings. They executed healthy individuals against their will and in violation of their rights.

Identifying the Issue

Such arguments illustrate the need to further clarify the nature of the controversy surrounding Jack Kevorkian. Euthanasia, from the Greek "easy death", is the practice of killing persons or domestic animals, for reasons of mercy, that are hopelessly sick or injured. While euthanasia is an important issue, it is a concept much too broad to describe what Kevorkian is doing and what people find controversial about it. While suicide is a self-initiated act; euthanasia is not necessarily so, which makes its nature more open to question.

Dr. Kevorkian's actions can best be described as physician-assisted suicide, which makes suicide, rather than murder, the real issue. By misrepresenting the issue, in terms of euthanasia, references to murder seem plausible, which may be part of the reason for the misrepresentation.

In regard to the terminally ill, physicians argue that they should alleviate suffering but that they would be immoral to end it. Consequently, such doctors would have a dying man suffer in agony rather than end his misery with an injection. The results, real and potential (prolonged suffering, emotional distress, financial ruin), have no significance, for the doctors have done "the right thing". They have acted "morally", and the consequence is pointless human suffering. Intrinsicism serves as the justification—the doctor has acted according to a prescribed guide. He has dropped the context and applied the rules of a different context (i.e., a patient who might recover his health). While controversy is avoided, the patient is forced to suffer.

Kevorkian's Argument

Dr. Kevorkian argues that an ethical vacuum has been created by these rigid rules of conduct. Quoting the theologian Joseph Fletcher in his book, *Prescription: Medicide*, Kevorkian writes

that "rule ethics mandates *a priori* what one must do 'according to some pre-determined precept or categorical imperative.' It is a coercive, nondiscriminatory, 'doctrinaire or ideological method of deciding what is right.'" While this position is correct (and a breath of fresh air), Dr. Kevorkian's ethical views are no better than the intrinsicists he attacks.

Kevorkian goes on to write: "On the other hand, *situation ethics* is a *posteriori*, relative, flexible, and changeable according to variables (from which) the moral agent, decision maker, judges what is best in the circumstances and in the view of foreseeable consequences." (p. 171)

Admittedly, such statements could be considered ambiguous when made by someone untrained in philosophy. Kevorkian could simply be using fancy language to say, in effect, "We must abandon these arbitrary rules and use common sense and compassion to deal with these real life problems." However, Kevorkian's position becomes clear when he writes that doctors "can handle any medical challenge without having to solicit or depend upon extraneous ethical advice." But this can occur only "if one essential principle remains uppermost and permanently honored in the mind of every doctor: the highest respect for the personal *autonomy or self-determination* of every patient—for what the patient deems best for his or her own earthly experience. Personal autonomy is paramount for Dr. Heyd, professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who wrote that 'the individual alone gives meaning to his life and decides whether his life is good and worth living, or not... The meaning of life is a matter of decision rather than knowledge; for in fact there is nothing to be known here.'" (p. 174)

Thus, Kevorkian presents us with the false choice between arbitrary rules, which prohibit options and choice, and the view that everything is optional and a matter of choice.

In his essay "The Analytic-Synthetic Dichotomy" in *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, Dr. Peikoff addressed the false alternative between

a priori truths and *a posteriori* truths. *A priori* refers to analytic truths, i.e., knowledge derived from logic without reference to sensory data (e.g., a bachelor is an unmarried man.); *a posteriori* refers to synthetic truths, i.e., knowledge derived solely from observation. (e.g., the rock is cold.)

In his essay Dr. Peikoff writes, "Analytic truths, it is held, are created and sustained by men's arbitrary decision to use words (or concepts) in a certain fashion..." Such truths are considered logical but do not pertain to reality. "Synthetic truths, on the other hand, *are* factual—and for this, man pays a price. The price is that they are contingent, uncertain, and unprovable."

Consequently, man is faced with the false alternative between "logical truths", which are arbitrary human inventions and have nothing to do with reality, and "factual truths", which cannot be proven.

Kevorkian shows further evidence of his flawed view of knowledge when he writes that the execution of a criminal is a sacrifice "to appease the minor deity of abstract law." "Such an epochal event should serve as a means of elucidating the what, why, and how of human thought and action—especially those of a criminal nature—and of health and disease, and of life and death. In contrast to invented law, these are all inscrutable, preexistent phenomena of nature arbitrarily (and ineptly) conceptualized by man." (p. 68)

Kevorkian rejects concepts as valid—they are arbitrary and have nothing to do with the "inscrutable, preexistent phenomena of nature." How then, are we to discover "the what, why, and how of human thought and action"? Kevorkian provides the same answer as the post-Kantian Pragmatists: "[T]he ultimate wellspring of morality is the mores of a people. As new conditions of life arise from the burgeoning conquests of parts of nature by science, technology, and even art, the mores adapt almost automatically." (p. 181)

According to Kevorkian, morality is a social issue, i.e., it is determined subjectively and automatically by society.

There are no universal moral truths, he claims: they change from culture to culture, from generation to generation. This is simply the social version of subjectivism. (It is interesting to note the element of intrinsicism in Kevorkian's argument: Passive exposure to new discoveries results in an automatic change in a culture's mores. No method or effort is needed for these changes to occur—ideas are a result of mere exposure to reality.)

Whereas his opponents insist on pursuing morality despite its impractical results, Kevorkian insists on abandoning ideas in pursuit of "practical" results. Kevorkian rejects his opponents' call to follow the will of God (or Hippocrates) and offers as an alternative only this: Follow the will of the people. As Dr. Peikoff writes in *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*: "To secularize an error is still to commit it."

In the lecture series *Understanding Objectivism*, Dr. Peikoff points out that intrinsicists consider any element of choice or option to be an open door to subjectivism. In other words, if there aren't absolute rules of conduct, then anything goes. Consequently, the intrinsicist regards morality as a list of rules (e.g., the Ten Commandments) which must be followed regardless of the context.

On the other hand, subjectivists reject the entire idea of principled action—they regard principles as dogmatic, stifling, impractical. They argue that we should be flexible, i.e., be willing to try different things until the desired results are attained. The subjectivist regards morality as relative—there is no universally true guide to action.

A Rational Defense

Objectivism regards ethics as a necessity required by man's nature. Man is not born with an automatic knowledge of the actions necessary to sustain and enjoy his life, and yet he must act in a certain way if he is to live. However, "to live" does not simply mean to exist in any manner or by any means. Man cannot live by unintegrated "experience", nor can he be guided by arbitrary rules which must be applied regardless of context.

Man needs an objective code of values, i.e., a code of values based on facts (experience) and appropriate to man's cognitive faculty (reason), with man's life as the standard. Which means, man needs principles by which to live.

In "The Objectivist Ethics" Ayn Rand writes: "The standard of value of the Objectivist ethics—the standard by which one judges what is good or evil—is *man's life*, or: that which is required for man's survival *qua* man.

Since reason is man's basic means of survival, that which is proper to the life of a rational being is the good, that which negates, opposes or destroys it is the evil."

In the same essay, she later writes: "Man's survival *qua* man' means the terms, methods, conditions and goals required for the survival of a rational being through the whole of his lifespan—in all those aspects of existence open to his choice."

In those cultures where men have the longest, happiest, most productive lives, this is the standard by which they live, if only implicitly. Similarly, those professions which have produced the most amazing and beneficial discoveries have also accepted this standard, if only implicitly. Perhaps no profession is more indicative of this than the medical profession.

A physician who attempts to cure a patient accepts (if only im-

PLICITLY) man's life as his standard in his professional conduct. It is this standard which determines health and illness. It is this standard which dictates what course of action is necessary to sustain health or to recover it. Without such a standard, the concept of health and the actions required to sustain it are as indiscernible to a doctor as they are to the child who would flee from receiving a painful shot.

While the link between man's life as a standard of value and the business of medicine may seem obvious, remember that for most of history the concepts "witch" and "doctor" have not been distinguished from one another; furthermore, human sacrifice is usually part of the witch doctor's job description. And even today, we are often told that African superstitions (or Christian prayers) should not be superseded by modern medicine.

A physician's job, then, is not to blindly apply arbitrary rules irrespective of context nor to follow his whim. A physician's job is to follow certain principles established by man's life as the standard and applied within the context of the patient. The fact that this standard has been only implicit, rather than explicit, is part of the reason why issues of medical ethics are so vulnerable to the advocates of subjectivism.

Man's life as the standard of value provides a guide in both a positive and a negative sense in regard to illness and injury. In a positive sense, this standard can serve to motivate one to fight for life—to endure pain, to try experimental treatments, etc. In a negative sense, it determines the conditions under which one cannot live. For both the patient and the doctor providing suicide-assistance, such issues are fraught with ethical and legal questions, questions which cannot be answered in the back of a Volkswagen van.

Contrary to Kevorkian's contempt for the law as a "minor deity", it is clear that objective law should be applied to the issue of assisted suicide, because suicide can be both a moral and a vital alternative. Objective law is particularly needed to ensure that suicide-assistance be *only* assistance, i.e., that a procedure for suicide be estab-

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lished which is self-initiated, fool-proof, and includes proper witnesses to ensure that the "patient" is fully aware of the consequences of his actions.

(This raises the issue of individuals who are physically healthy, but wish to commit suicide with the assistance from others, e.g., a despondent teenager, a condemned prisoner or an adult with no ambition. Such a destructive act defies the very basis of morality and law. This issue, however, goes far beyond the current topic.)

Despite his admirable courage and dedication to helping those who are suffering great pain, Jack Kevorkian's only significant "achievement" in this issue has been to make us aware of the need for rational, objective principles in medicine and for objective law in dealing with suicide. Kevorkian has shown us that we have a problem...and that we dare not listen to his advice about it. His cure is worse than the disease—in fact, his cure is a greater dose of the disease, subjectivism. For it is subjectivism which has convinced professionals in all fields that objective standards are unachievable, leaving them vulnerable to consensus and arbitrary authority as solutions. \$

Calender of HOS Events

October 8: Arguing ideas—Clark Hamilton.

October 18: Dr. Bernstein.

Study Group: Call Brian Phillips at 271-5145.

October 27: Lady Wyndham's Tea, featuring scones with Devonshire clotted cream & preserves (London).

February 10: Lyceum conference in Houston. For details, (206) 876-5868.

May 26: Lyceum conference in London.

Mailbag



To the editor of The Liberty Gazette—July 27, 1994 The 25th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing prompts

many to remember where they were at that moment, but if one is old enough one can also recall events that contrasted greatly with the landing, like the Woodstock rock festival (also the subject of anniversary comment). Writing in 1969 in an article still in print, novelist/philosopher Ayn Rand saw the two events in a way apparently unnoticed by other commentators of the time. In "Apollo and Dionysus," she examines the character of the crowd of onlookers at the launch versus the crowd at the concert, styling the first with reference to the Greek god of light and the second with reference to the Greek god of drunkenness. Unlike the Woodstock people, the NASA spectators "did not wreck the Florida communities, they did not devastate the countryside...they came as responsible individuals able to project the reality of two or three days ahead and to provide for their own needs." The moon shot produced a public spectacle of responsibility, she observes, while the infamous concert produced quite the opposite, events that say volumes about opposing currents in our culture.

Such observations are good to read or reread in these post-rap, post-punk rock latter days.

Pete Jamison

Houston Business Journal—July 22-28, 1994. There are many options put forward now for health care reform. There is, however, only one clear solution—junk the whole initiative in favor of market forces because nobody has the right to health care at public expense.

Businesspeople should oppose all plans because the voters who think that the world owes them a living (or health care) want businesses to be forced to foot the bill for such wishes.

Let's make voters buy their Cadillacs (or health plans, which wouldn't be any cheaper) with their own nickel, not the nickel of the business community (which has rights) or the workers that business would have to lay off to comply with a comprehensive health plan.

Pete Jamison

Hear ye, hear ye...



Be it known throughout the land that Dwyane Hicks and Jeri Eagan have joined hands in sweet and sacred matrimony, that beneath the stars they have spoken words of admiration and love and have exchanged bands of gold in order that they might enter into the relationship of husband and wife.

Announcements

This is the last HOS newsletter of which I am the editor; for not only have Jeri and I married but also moved to London where we will spend a few years on our honeymoon. Brian Phillips will now take over as editor of the newsletter, which he started seven years ago. I hope that you will help him with your active support.

When I arrived in Houston over a decade ago, there was no HOS, but Kathryn Dawson was hosting the first of many taped lecture courses by Dr. Leonard Peikoff. I had been unable to hear the tapes previously because of my travels, and I relished the opportunity.

For beginners or veterans of Objectivism, I believe these tapes are treasures, which should be utilized more. They are a means of discovering in Ayn Rand's thought what was previously unrealized through reading, since one's context of knowledge changes dramatically during such reading; they are a means also of mentally organizing and integrating a vast amount of knowledge. *The History of Philosophy* tapes acquaint one intimately with the issues

addressed by Ayn Rand, and one's appreciation of her thought grows with this context of knowledge. Finally, Dr. Peikoff's examination of rationalism, and other issues, in *Understanding Objectivism*, is needed as much today as it ever was.

HOS was formed by Warren Ross, Joe Blackburn, Brian Phillips and Anna Franco, in California; and I believe it has proved of great benefit. I hope that you will continue to support it with your active participation. A philosophy not applied nor enjoyed, however loved in the past, will wither in the context of contemporary culture. It is for this reason that one often encounters fans of Ayn Rand who now pass on conventional clichés as their opinion and drop fundamentals when encountering new concrete issues. Ideas, too, must be gained and kept, and organizations like HOS help to motivate and sustain that process. HOS also acquaints beginners with those who have studied Objectivism for years, concretizing and making real certain personal values.

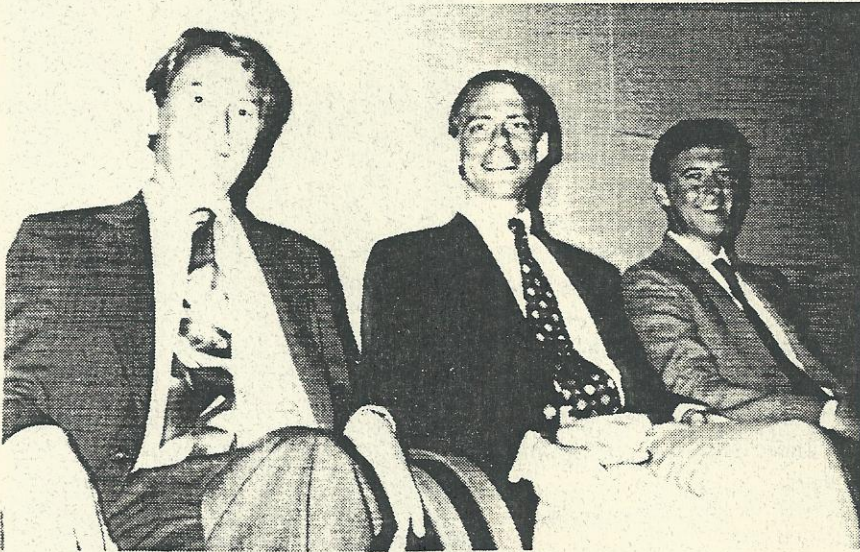
Those values are also made available to share socially, and I have been enriched by the friendships initiated through HOS. Especially warming to Jeri and me was the send-off we received for our journey into marriage and to London. Such appreciation and benevolence from others as an adult is what one expects in childhood but rarely enjoys.

I want to thank the contributors to the newsletter, especially Brian Phillips, Jeri Eagan, Warren Ross, Dawn Phillips and Bennett Karp, and to those who continuously helped to produce it. Richard Beals assiduously made the final copies and often stuffed envelopes in his unique living room. Jeri Eagan and Warren Ross edited my editing.

As to the club, there are many to thank for its success, but I especially want to recognize the following: Joe Blackburn first suggested it and contributed in many ways—he also showed us that we can make our dreams come true, Janet Wich invigorated it with her arrival from Michigan, Chris Land has expanded it by introducing many in Clear Lake to Objectivism, Jeri Eagan contributed substantively and regularly to the activities and Michael Mazzone inspired us with his legal undertakings. Brian Phillips has been the workhorse of the club and has inspired others by taking ideas and activities seriously. Finally, Warren Ross has elegantly and articulately guided the club and maintained standards appropriate to a great philosophy.

I will occasionally submit a letter-from-London to your new editor. In addition, we will be pleased to offer you a cup of tea, should you find yourself in the neighborhood.

Until then, may a fair wind fill your sail.



Dwyane, Warren, Brian

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