

# Houston Objectivism Society Newsletter

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The Houston Objectivism Society supports Objectivism and the Ayn Rand Institute; however, we do not purport to represent or speak for the same. The HOS Newsletter is published bi-monthly for members for \$15 per year. Student dues are \$5 per year.

## INTELLECTUAL ACTIVISM

by J. Brian Phillips

Ten months ago, if a candidate for President of the United States called for an end to affirmative action, he would have been quickly dismissed and labeled a racist. Today, not only are Presidential candidates such as Phil Gramm and Lamar Alexander leading a debate previously thought impossible, but a liberal Democratic President is also calling for a reevaluation of affirmative action and set asides.

Sen. Gramm and other Republicans are leading an admirable, and often heroic, charge against the welfare state and its many manifestations; however, they are not attacking the fundamental ideas which underlie those policies and programs.

The battle for freedom requires more than rejecting affirmative action and the welfare state. It requires a rejection of the ideas which give rise to such policies. And more importantly, it requires the recognition and acceptance of the ideas which give rise to freedom.

The November election demonstrated that the nation's voters clearly want something other than liberalism; however, the conservatives are not going to offer it. Replacing calls for sacrifice to "the public welfare" with calls for sacrifice to God is not a legitimate alternative. Only Objectivism offers a real alternative, because only Objectivism offers an ethical foundation for freedom. As Leonard Peikoff states in "The History of Philosophy", it is a philosophy's ethics which determines its historical significance.

Following the November election, Warren Ross noted that the success of the "Republican Revolution" depends upon how well we do our jobs. If the trend toward freedom is to continue, those who embrace its moral foundation must continue, and intensify, their advocacy, i.e., intellectual activism.

One of the primary purposes of the

Houston Objectivism Society is to encourage, coordinate, and support intellectual activism. In the past, the club has sponsored workshops (letter writing and pamphleteering), founded a property rights organization (Committee for Property Rights), engaged in an ongoing pamphleteering campaign, as well as supported many other activities as a club and as individuals.

These efforts often do not produce immediate results, but one never knows when he will reach a receptive mind. For example, a letter by Dwyane Hicks was published in the Houston Chronicle and read by Dale Schwartz, who subsequently discovered the existence of HOS and joined the club.

Intellectual activism can take many forms, from handing a copy of *Atlas Shrugged* to a friend to sending pamphlets to those threatened by socialized medicine.

HOS members regularly engage in intellectual activism. One of my goals as editor of this newsletter is to publicize those efforts.

In the past month at least three HOS members have engaged in intellectual activism. Their actions varied, as did their audience, but the cumulative result is that thousands of people have been exposed to rational ideas and a legitimate alternative.

A letter by Warren Ross was published in the March 13 edition of *Time* magazine. A letter by Pete Jamison was printed in the February 1 issue of the Liberty (TX) Vindicator. These two letters are reprinted in this newsletter.

On February 21, I testified to City Council on a proposed "historic preservation" ordinance. Both the audience and City Council were clearly in favor of the ordinance. Nearly 25% of the audience wore stickers which proclaimed: "Preservation gets my vote."

## APRIL MEETING: ARCHITECTURE

Houston is a city rich in architectural splendor, as well as architectural mixed cases and outright mistakes.

At the April HOS meeting, Pete Jamison will make a slide presentation entitled "Toward an Architectural Esthetic". This presentation will allow the audience to examine the subject from the standpoint of examples in the Houston area.

Pete will explore the ideas expressed and suggested in The Fountainhead as the source of a new philosophy of architectural esthetics. He will also compare this view with those expressed by Frank Lloyd Wright and Walter Gropius.

The slide presentation will allow the audience to take a tour of good Houston architecture, with a framework in place as to how such an evaluation can be made.

The April HOS meeting will be held on April 8 at 6:30 pm in the Telegraph Hill Apartment club room. The club room is located at 6500 Dunlap, #114. The gate code is #1793. For directions contact Brian Phillips at 271-5145.

The first 16 speakers were in favor of the ordinance, which would impose a 90-day waiting period before buildings deemed "historic" could be altered or demolished. Several Council members praised the efforts of many of those who testified in favor of the ordinance. I was the first to oppose the ordinance. The following is the text of my testimony:

*Advocates of the historic preservation ordinance have argued that we must protect our heritage. I completely concur with them on that matter. However, I do not believe that our heritage consists of buildings, but of principles. Our heritage does not consist of a particular architectural style, but of certain ideas.*

*People do not come to America, or Houston, because of our architecture, or the number of old buildings we have. Eastern Europe is full of old buildings, but people have risked their lives to leave those buildings behind.*

*America's heritage-- and Houston's as well-- is one of freedom. Freedom means the right to pursue one's values without the intervention of others, so long as you respect the mutual rights of others. This is why people come to America, and this is our true heritage.*

*The ordinance you are considering is a direct attack on this heritage. It is destructive to freedom, and an assault on the rights of every Houstonian.*

*If you truly wish to preserve our heritage, you must begin by recognizing that our heritage does not consist of concrete, lumber, and glass, but of the ideas which give individuals the freedom to use these materials in the pursuit of their values. One hundred years ago, people said that skyscrapers couldn't be built. But because individuals like Louis Sullivan lived in a society which recognized their rights, Mr. Sullivan and his colleagues were able to act on their own judgment and prove the world wrong. That is our heritage-- do not destroy it by protecting some old buildings.*

Following my testimony, I was questioned by Councilmen Lloyd Kelley and John Kelley. A transcript of the questions and answers follows.

Lloyd Kelley: Would it be your position that buildings like Mt. Vernon, Monticello, Sam Houston's home up in Huntsville, you would find that those buildings would be of no significance?

Brian: They are of great significance...

Lloyd Kelley: So you would have no problem leveling those?

Brian: The owners...

Lloyd Kelley: Your argument is that buildings have no significance, it's only principles. But sometimes buildings can remind us of certain principles and values that we have and they are also a teaching aid. People often forget the teaching aid of historic museums and other foundations. Would you also say that museums are of no value since... It seems like you're saying that only the abstract principle is of any value.

Brian: No. That is not what I'm meaning to say...

Lloyd Kelley: Your argument then is that there are some buildings of historic value?

Brian: Yes. And I am not arguing against historic preservation, as long as it is completely voluntary. I don't think the ordinance you are considering is any of your business. I think that the owners of the property should be able to use their property as they choose.

Lloyd Kelley: So the Monticello, Mt. Vernon, and Sam Houston's home, had the owners desired, you would have no problem if the owners leveled them?

Brian: I would have a problem, but it would be the owner's right to do that. Part of living in a free society is permitting people to do things with which we may or may not agree. I'm not always going to agree with what people do, but as long as they are not forcing their values upon me, making me act in a manner that I don't choose to act, or prohibiting me from acting in a manner that I choose to act, then I really have no position to stop them.

Lloyd Kelley: It would appear that every law on the books is some value statement making somebody else live according to some principle that they may or may not agree with. Would you agree with that? I mean, you don't get to voluntarily comply with the homicide rule.

Brian: But homicide is using force against another individual by killing him. You are depriving him of his life without his consent.

Lloyd Kelley: I guess then, ok. Then we'll go to the vice laws. What about prostitution, drugs?

Brian: Now we're way off of the subject, but I would argue that such laws are not appropriate.

Mayor Lanier: Mr. John Kelley wishes to pursue this meaningful conversation.

John Kelley: I'd just like to make a point. Would you agree with the group that is for the 90-day cooling off period?

Brian: No, I do not. In principle that is a violation of the owner's property rights. For 90 days you are saying that he cannot use his property as he chooses. There is nothing to stop this council, or another council in the future from making this 180 days, or 360 days, or saying, "Well, we're not able to convince owners to do what we want, we're not able to get them to see the light and preserve their property, therefore we're going to put a moratorium on all demolition of all historic buildings." In principle, you are saying that you have a right to tell property owners how they can use their property. Not only is this wrong, it is immoral.

John Kelley: Well, I don't have any idea what they'll be doing 100 years from now on council, how many days they'll have. But a lot of people have a lot of work about this, have the same ideas that you do, the other side has some ideas, and they've worked awful hard to try to reach some kind of conclusion. So if you were at the bargaining table, you wouldn't give an inch to get the arbitration worked out?

Brian I would not compromise on principles. So the answer would be no.

John Kelley: So maybe we'd never have baseball again.

Brian: I don't think that is relevant to this.

Mayor Lanier: Baseball and prostitution. Let me recess while I work this out in my mind.

Approximately one hour after my testimony, Barry Klein, President of Houston Property Rights Association (HPRA), spoke. (For a more detailed examination of HPRA and Klein, see the March 1993 issue of this newsletter.) While refraining from endorsing the ordinance, Klein said that his organization would probably endorse the ordinance if an "opt-out" provision were included. (This provision would allow property owners to choose to reject the historic designation, and therefore declare the ordinance not applicable to their property. While the "opt-out" provision makes the ordinance less destructive, it should not be necessary-- the ordinance should not exist.)

Klein then answered several questions regarding HPRA's stance on the ordinance, as well as a few points about economic consequences. At the conclusion of the question period, Klein said, "I would like to note that our true heritage is freedom."

Klein's testimony in general, and his last statement in particular, was revealing. First, Klein did not challenge the fundamental premises underlying the proposed ordinance. He conceded those premises and sought to mitigate their destructiveness. Second, Klein's most intellectual statement during his testimony consisted of repeating what I had said earlier.

While I greatly admire the work Klein has done in fighting zoning and other ordinances, he is doomed to ultimate failure. He does not challenge zoning on fundamental philosophic grounds. He has conceded the moral high ground, and is left to argue over details. (Klein has been exposed to the proper ideas-- on May 14, 1993 I delivered a speech at HPRA's weekly

luncheon. In that speech, which was printed in the May 1993 HOS Newsletter, I argued that without a moral defense, capitalism and the anti-zoning movement would ultimately lose.)

The day I testified, Channel 11 included one of my comments in its evening news coverage of the issue. Perhaps more significantly, the reporter concluded his report by saying, "This ordinance is pitting preservation against the rights of property owners." Most likely, this remark would not have been made if the reporter had not heard me speak.

The following day, KTRH radio included my comments in its coverage of the issue. My testimony was broadcast live on the Municipal Cable Channel and repeated on two separate occasions. This media exposure is significant in two regards.

First, tens of thousands of Houstonians were exposed to rational ideas, perhaps for the first time. Potential allies were made aware of the existence of the Committee for Property Rights. And our foes were served notice that their statist schemes will not go unchallenged.

Second, it goes a long way toward establishing CPR as the principled defenders of property rights in Houston. To the best of my knowledge, I was the only person to testify against the ordinance. While others (members of HPRA) opposed the ordinance if the opt-out provision were not included, they accepted the premise that the city had a right to even consider such a law.

This second point is particularly important. In the last debate over zoning, zoning advocates attempted to lump all opponents together. They then addressed the unprincipled arguments of Citizens for a Better Houston (CBH), who argued that "zoning without planning is worse than no zoning at all." Both the media and the public must understand that CBH and HPRA are not principled defenders of property rights.

If this can be accomplished, and CPR is recognized as the principled defenders of property rights, the debate will shift from details to principles. And if the debate centers on the principles which underlie zoning, we will win the battle. In other words, so long as pragmatists are considered to be principled spokesmen for property rights, the real issues cannot be addressed.

It is doubtful that my testimony changed anyone's mind-- Council approved the ordinance the following week by a 13-1 vote. But it was a victory nonetheless, for the moral certainty of our opponents was greatly undermined. I challenged and rejected the moral premises of the preservationists.

To quote Ayn Rand: "It is a mistake to think that an intellectual movement requires some special duty or self-sacrificial effort on your part. It requires something much more difficult: a profound conviction that ideas are important to *you* and to your own life. If you integrate that conviction to every aspect of your life, you will find many opportunities to enlighten others."

I applaud the continuing efforts of HOS members to changing our culture, both publicly and privately. I encourage members to intensify this effort to capitalize on the opportunity presented by the recent turn to the right.

# LYCEUM IN REVIEW: ANDREW BERNSTEIN

## Literary Analysis as Objective

by Warren S. Ross

It is probably best to illustrate Dr. Bernstein's lectures by contrasting them with what one typically gets in a college classroom on literature. One professor will be reading Marxism into everything -- Homer's *Iliad* as well as Melville's *Moby Dick*. Another professor will interpret characters as Freudian misfits. Most today will "deconstruct" the text of a literary work, denying there is any meaning independent of the reader, and will encourage student outpourings of feelings, reactions and theorizing on the meaning *they* bring to the text. The result? Students have no concept of what it means to be *objective* in analysis of a work of literature. They are taught to interpret everything via intrinsic "models of the world" (Marxism, Christianity, Freudianism, feminism) or subjective feeling.

Enter Andrew Bernstein. He sweeps all this away and, following Ayn Rand, insists that there is no room for the arbitrary in *any* field. He has spent years developing an objective methodology for literary analysis, and during his Lyceum lectures we were treated to a tour-de-force on what such a methodology can produce: new knowledge and new insights with a rigorous grounding in facts. Using textual references as the data, the facts, the "concretes", Dr. Bernstein analyzed the characters in *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* and identified the philosophic principle in each. He quoted extensively, and it was remarkable how each quote supported and enriched the integration he was presenting (of course, he is analyzing the work of a great writer, who herself left nothing to accident and produced completely integrated novels).

For example, in support of the conclusion that Ragnar Daneskjold represents the Objectivist virtue of justice, Bernstein quoted from the scene in which Ragnar and Rearden meet for the first time. Among other quotes:

Ragnar: "...when they took Rearden Metal away from you, it was too much, even for me. I know that you don't need this gold at present. What you need is the justice which it represents, and the knowledge that there are men who care for justice..."

Rearden: "...but what sort of life have you chosen? To what purpose are you giving your mind?"

Ragnar: "To the cause of my love."

Rearden: "Which is what?"

Ragnar: "Justice... What I actually am, Mr. Rearden, is a policeman. It is a policeman's duty to protect men from criminals-- criminals being those who seize wealth by force."

Dr. Bernstein's integrations were three-fold: He integrated the events of the story to identify the essential characterization, then he integrated this characterization to philosophical principles. Finally he integrated the various characters to each other. His lectures made it clear that Bernstein has already internalized and been practicing for years what Gary Hull was teaching us this weekend about integrating.

One example of Bernstein's methodology: Gail Wynand as Nietzschean egoist. Bernstein developed his theme by giving examples proving Wynand was a first hander in his private life: He loved Roark's buildings, he loved Dominique, he loved great art. He despised the commonplace and the incompetent. He was in every sense Nietzsche's "noble soul". But he accepted in his public life that it is eat or be eaten. In effect, he agreed with Nietzsche (and Machiavelli and Hobbes prior to that) that power over others is a primary, and that the "aristocratic" soul has the moral license to dominate people. From his attempt to answer others by naming his yacht "I do" [meaning "I do run things around here"], to his attempts to break independent men, to his pandering to the public so he can control them (he thinks), to his financially ruining a person for a casual insult, his focus is entirely second hand. As Bernstein argues, the tragedy of his character (and all those who have attempted his approach) is that there are only two kinds of power - the power to create (typified by Howard Roark) and the power to destroy. The attempt to gain power over other men ultimately gives them power over you. One can only succeed in destroying the good, and oneself, by this process (which is what happens to Wynand). Bernstein's final integration in regard to Wynand was to connect him to Dominique, identifying him as sharing her premise of a malevolent universe, but wishing to act in the world instead of withdrawing.

Bernstein analyzed each of the main and some of the minor characters in *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas*. Three other examples of Bernstein's insights: His demonstration by textual reference that Guy Francon was the best of the second handers, his analysis of the question of whether Dominique was really raped (the answer is unequivocally *no*), and his identification that the characters in *Atlas* represent different perspectives on the virtue of rationality.

Those who attended Lyceum derived a two-fold benefit: 1) the experience of a superb teacher and integrator, with a dynamic and passionate lecturing style, presenting his identifications *objectively*, and 2) the experience (in condensed form) of Ayn Rand's universe. These lectures were a critical contribution to an intellectually and emotionally stimulating weekend.

## BOOKS: TOILERS OF THE SEA

by Warren S. Ross

*Toilers of the Sea*; by Victor Hugo  
Translated by Isabel F. Hapgood  
Edited by Patricia LeChevalier  
Atlantean Press, 1993. 356 pages

Are you looking for inspiration? Do you sometimes ask: "How can I refuel myself?" For those pursuing productive goals, there are few, if any, books written today that concretize the struggle for values and the virtues required to attain them. Fortunately for those of us who admire Ayn Rand, we have her magnificent novels. But there is a limit to how often we can reread *Atlas Shrugged*. Isn't there anything new?

Although *Toilers of the Sea* is not new -- it was written by Victor Hugo 128 years ago -- what is new is the recently published English translation. It is not the first such translation, but it is an excellent one, which makes this colossal adventure readily available to modern readers.

*Toilers of the Sea* portrays one man's efforts to salvage a shipwrecked steamship's engine. The hero, Gilliatt, risks his life for ten weeks to achieve what seems impossible: to singlehandedly separate the multi-ton engine from the demolished carcass of the ship, then secure and transport it back to its owner. In the course of his efforts, with nothing but simple tools and the detritus from the wreckage, he builds two breakwaters and an ingenious hoist. He fights the ravages of the open sea on an exposed reef - including a twenty hour ocean storm and attack by a terrifying sea creature -- suffering starvation, thirst and fatigue.

The story has similarities to the greatest of adventure stories, the main one being that it concretizes the virtue of perseverance and purposeful action. Hugo constructs the plot in such a way that Gilliatt is faced with one horror of the sea after another, subjected to the next trial as soon as he has achieved some success in the present one. It is Gilliatt's tenacity and will that ensures his triumph. "Whatever the goal may be," Hugo says, "the whole secret lies in proceeding to that goal...The mediocre allow themselves to be dissuaded by a specious obstacle: the strong do not."

More than that, however, Gilliatt is a proud man who has a self-conscious delight in "snatch[ing] the means of safety from the danger itself," i.e. using nature's powers, apparently allied against him, for his own purposes. In a number of cases, Gilliatt saves himself and his mission by thinking of a method of using the wind or the waves to achieve his goals. As Hugo says, "It is an ironical joy for the combating intelligence to prove the vast stupidity of furious forces by making them render service."

Hugo is a master at plot construction, able to dramatize the perseverance and the resulting pride as

few adventure writers have done.

What is truly distinctive in an adventure novel, however, is the emphasis on the "combating intelligence", "*specifically the concretization of a rational thought process*". Hugo presents essentialized versions of Gilliatt's actual thought processes in solving the innumerable problems he faces. In so doing, Hugo not only lets the reader experience (and learn from) a proper psycho-epistemology but he also implicitly refutes the view that physical labor is mindless. Those passages that display Gilliatt's thought processes cannot be presented in a short review, but the reader will recognize them most clearly in the two chapters "A stable for the horse," and "A room for the traveler" (Part II, Book 1, chapters 6 and 7). The reader will also appreciate Hugo's wit in giving mundane titles to chapters depicting extraordinary efforts.

A writer who is able to understand rational thinking as well as Hugo will know that it is not automatic. Hence he will dramatize the issue of choice, and admire the practitioners of rational thought. Hugo explicitly expresses the issue of choice and holds a positive moral estimate of Gilliatt for exercising it: "He added to strength, which is physical, energy, which is moral force." And: "Exhaustion of strength does not exhaust the will. The proverbial mountains faith moves are nothing besides that which the will accomplishes...Will intoxicates. One can become intoxicated with one's own soul. This intoxication is called heroism."

Hugo goes even further and emphasizes that Gilliatt does what he does for his own benefit, not as a sacrificial martyr but for a goal he passionately desires. "The overwhelming enterprise, risk, danger, toil multiplied by itself, the possible engulfing of the rescuer by what he was rescuing, starvation, fever, destitution, distress -- *he had taken all those upon himself alone. Such was his selfishness.*" [Emphasis added.]

These characteristics -- the dramatization of moral virtue, of intelligence, of problem-solving, of purpose, of choice -- are the overriding values of this novel. Sadly, however, there are three flaws that mar the book. The first is an occasional passage of too-lengthy (and hence boring) description. Although Hugo's descriptive technique is masterful, adding color and richness to the novel, these descriptive interludes retard the plot development.

A more important flaw is Hugo's lapses into mysticism. The focus on "the mysterious" and "the unknown" forces of nature and "heaven" crops up in a number of places in the novel, starting with Gilliatt's (mostly excellent) characterization in the early chapters. At one place in the book, the mysticism degenerates into complete unintelligibility. It is especially intolerable at

that point because this chapter follows one of the best, most man-worshipping, chapters in the book, and severely attenuates that chapter's emotional impact.

The third flaw is the tragic ending, which hit me like a gut punch even though I was expecting it. Unfortunately, tragedy is frequent in Hugo's novels. As Ayn Rand has observed, Hugo's philosophic errors made him incapable of completely and consistently projecting a hero who is successful. However, unlike *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, in which the nature of the society and the logic of the events make tragedy dramatically inevitable, the tragedy at the end of some of Hugo's novels seems grafted on, in a way that makes it easily possible to imagine other outcomes. *Toilers of the Sea* (and also the recently translated *The Man Who Laughs*) is definitely in this category. Also, although the ending of *Toilers* is extremely disappointing, Hugo makes the calamity a supreme act of choice, and even *planning*, on the part of the hero, thus emphasizing in an inverted way the importance of values and the primacy of a heroic will.

Happily, there are the outstanding virtues in *Toilers of the Sea*, which make the above three flaws worth enduring. Aside from the virtues already mentioned, there is the fully integrated plot (with the exception of the ending). This review has concentrated on the middle third of the book. The entire first third establishes the situation that makes the engine rescue necessary. The first third also presents the crystal-clear, essentialized, characterizations that Hugo is known for, including that of Gilliatt, that of the owner of the ship and that of the captain who wrecked the ship.

What one most fundamentally takes away from the novel is Hugo's theme: Man, even a rough and ready laboring man like a sailor, is a being who thinks, then acts. Such a being, when he chooses to be, is capable of using his "combating intelligence" to shape events and the forces of nature to his will. For that capacity, when it is exercised, this being deserves to be exalted.

Such a view is rare in all literature, and nonexistent today. The experience of this view via Hugo's lofty universe is both pleasurable and highly motivating.

## INTELLECTUAL ACTIVISM

Liberty(TX) Vidicator  
February 1, 1995

Regarding the current debate over national arts funding, we should remember that "to support the arts" does not mean "to subsidize the arts". Government activities only support a microscopic percentage of artists, while funding a vastly larger arts bureaucracy which serves no purpose but its own. Furthermore, its support of those few artists is erratic, while support of bureaus, commissions and such occurs every payday. So, government effect upon the well-being of the arts is almost nil.

Add in the matter of the subsidy funds coming from the tax money of those who don't like the same artists the bureaucrats do, and you have a violation of property rights on a massive scale. (And this would occur regardless of whether Jesse Helms or Bella Abzug was holding the reins of the programs. You and I may not like Frida Kahlo OR Goya.)

A further difficulty: artistic matters address the realm of ideas, and government involvement in such matters means government involvement in that realm. This is a dangerous precedent because when ideas (value judgements specifically) are subsidized, they become propaganda.

We should separate art and state for the same reasons we separate church and state.

The only solution is this: put your money where your mouth is. If you think that Robert Mapplethorpe is a good artist, BUY a Mapplethorpe (or print or reproduction thereof). If you think Barry Manilow is a bad singer, don't go around buying his stuff. Do you like the symphony, but it's been awhile since you went? Turn off the TV and go. Don't contribute to political arguments over how your neighbor's arts dollar is spent; contribute to worthy artists directly.

Pete Jamison

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## INTELLECTUAL ACTIVISM

*Time*

March 13, 1995

In his admiring piece about Graham Greene and his commitment to understand every position and even sympathize with an enemy (ESSAY, Feb. 20), Pico Iyer reveals both the implications and the presuppositions of the modern relativist view. It is no surprise that placing mercy over justice would lead a man to uphold someone like Soviet double agent Kim Philby, an operative of the bloodiest dictatorship in history, and receive no moral condemnation for it. What may not be obvious, though, is how the lack of moral integrity today stems from an intellectual failure, the epistemological humility that refuses to hold anything as certain. Greene's noted ambiguity and his writing of plays like *Yes* and *No* are just two examples. The thinker Ayn Rand held that philosophy is an integrated total. If one finds a person negating what is good in morality, one will always find him at a deeper level negating knowledge and reason. Greene makes this view concrete.

Warren Ross

## HOS MEETING SUMMARIES

by Sean M. Rainer

Members might well have donned capes and smoked pipes at the March HOS meeting where the topic was "Philosophical Detection." Using a philosophical magnifying glass, Johnnie McCulloch moderated the meeting that was held in Brian Phillips' apartment. Donald Granberry provided the refreshments. In addition, members were treated to a video by Brian and a short presentation by Matt Gerber. The video was a recording of Brian, Chairman of the Committee for Property Rights, testifying to City Council in opposition to proposed legislation concerning historical preservations.

Matt's presentation also concerned property rights. Specifically, Matt discussed the feasibility of filing a lawsuit in an attempt to challenge a number of precedents upon which zoning laws are based. He gave a brief legal history of zoning and suggested several strategies for fighting for property rights through the courts. Johnnie began the main event by outlining the method of analyzing catch phrases used by Ayn Rand in her article "Philosophical Detection." Miss Rand advises that 1) "you must attach clear, specific meanings to words," 2) "take it literally," and 3) "ask yourself what a given theory, if accepted, would do to a human life, starting with your own."

With this method in mind, members practiced their own detective skills with quotes from various sources. Johnnie began the discussion with a quote from Mark Twain. The method was used as Johnnie made sure all the words were clearly defined, took the quote at face value, then found its philosophical premises and the ideas that it would lead to. Consider the following quote by Cicero: "I prefer the most unfair peace to the most righteous war."

First, define the terms and decide what they mean in this context. Unfair means not just or evenhanded. "Most unfair" extends to the widest of atrocities, including enslavement and despotism. Conversely, righteous means morally right; just. So, the speaker is stating explicitly his views on the ethical principle of justice.

Miss Rand next advises that we take the quote literally. Don't "endow it with some whitewashed meaning of your own." In this quote, one might be tempted to say, "Well, he probably didn't mean anything that bad when he said 'unjust.'"

But that is not what the quote says. The wording does mean, and can only mean, 'the worst possible injustice.' Finally, what would this quote mean if you were to accept it and attempt to live by it? What would happen if you were to grant validity to this view of "peace at any price"? Notice that the speaker treats peace as though it were an intrinsic good, much like the "turn the other cheek" mentality of Christians. Imagine if you tried to derive all of your moral principles in this fashion: without reference to the harm or benefit it would cause you. Here, because Cicero is speaking about war, the subject is literally life and death. The British discovered this during World War II after Neville Chamberlain appeased Hitler in regard to Czechoslovakia. The consequences of accepting such an idea as this could be fatal. So much for this philosophical catch phrase.

Other quotes from Francis Bacon, Confucius and a modern logic professor followed and also were successfully dissected.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

§ The ancient philosophy study group meets every Sunday (except Sundays after an HOS meeting) at 10 a.m. The study group meets in various homes in southwest Houston. For information, contact Brian Phillips at 271-5145.

§ The HOS Executive Committee would like to publish a Directory of Members in the spring. Members will be included only if they request so. The directory will be distributed only to those who are included in the directory. The cost will be \$1 per copy. The directory is being published to facilitate member contact and to help members utilize the professional services of other members, as well as find members who share interests. Those wishing to be included in the directory should send the following information to Brian Phillips: occupation, professional services offered, and a list of interests.

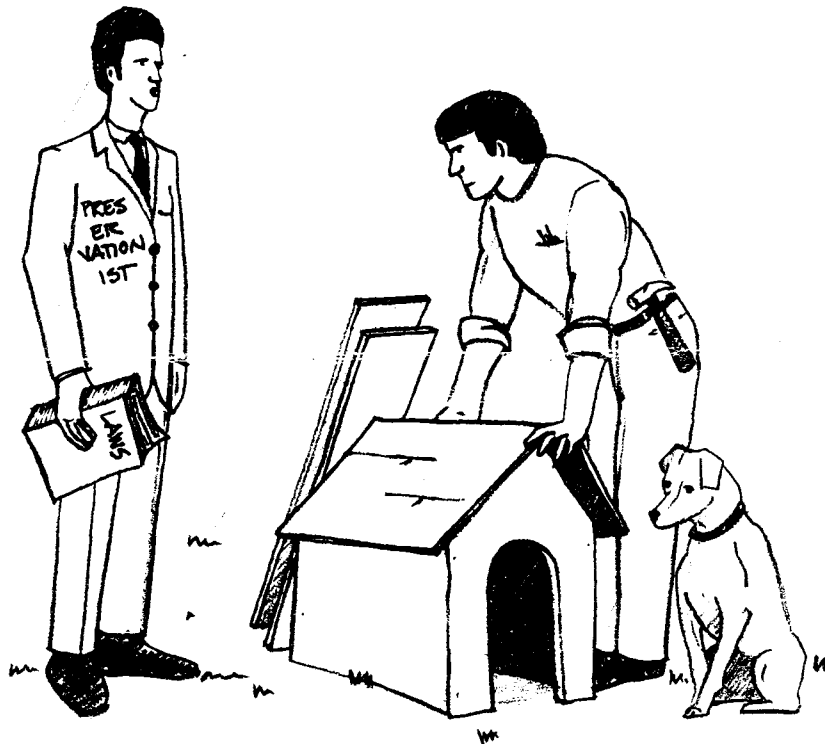
§ Chris Land has organized a study group to discuss *The Fountainhead*. The group will meet on Friday nights in various homes in the Clear Lake City area. For more information, call Chris at 335-1584.

§ Dwyane Hicks is currently hosting an OPAR study group every Saturday afternoon at 5:30 p.m. (GMT). The address is 4 Prince's Tower, 93-97 Rotherhithe Street, London, England.

§ On April 23 Dr. Leonard Peikoff will address the Ford Hall Forum in Boston. His topic is "What to do about Crime." "Most crimes are committed by hardened career criminals who started their sprees very young. Tonight, philosopher Leonard Peikoff discusses the essence of 'the criminal mind,' it's historical causes in the teachings of our universities, and the proper nature of rehabilitation, which is not mere schooling or psychotherapy, but changing the culprit's thinking patterns at the deepest level." (From the Ford Hall Forum brochure.)

**YUKS**

by Jeff Phillips and Brian Phillips



I am sorry, but we must reject your request. The renovations you are proposing will alter the historical integrity of this structure.