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Advanced Seminar in Objectivist Studies

June 27–29, 2001

University of Pittsburgh—Johnstown
Johnstown, Pennsylvania

Wednesday, June 27

Morning

No Activities Scheduled

Afternoon

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| 1:00–5:00 | Registration |
| 5:30–6:00 | Orientation and dinner |
| 6:00–6:50 | Dinner |
| 7:00–9:30 | David Kelley: Theory of Propositions |

Thursday, June 28

Morning

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| 7:30–9:00 | Breakfast |
| 9:00–Noon | Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi: Ayn Rand's Theory of Art |

Afternoon

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|-----------|--|
| Noon–1:30 | Lunch |
| 1:30–4:30 | Michael Huemer: Is Benevolent Egoism Coherent? |
| 6:00–6:50 | Dinner |
| 7:00–9:30 | Allen Costell: Analyzing and Reinterpreting the Objectivist Ethics |

Friday, June 29

Morning

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| 7:30–9:00 | Breakfast |
| 9:00–Noon | Ken Livingston: Darwin Overbought: Evolution and Explanation in Psychology |

Afternoon

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| Noon–1:30 | Lunch |
| 1:30–4:30 | Christopher Robinson: How Expectancies Influence What We Remember |
| 7:00–10:00 | Final Dinner |

Theory of Propositions

David Kelley

Propositions are the form in which we identify facts—that all men are mortal, that the stick is 10 inches long, that punishing an innocent man is unjust, etc. This paper discusses two key epistemological issues regarding propositions: What is the cognitive process by which we integrate concepts into propositions? And how does a proposition relate to reality? A proposition is true if it states a fact, and the paper provides a theory of the ontological status of facts.

David Kelley is the Executive Director of The Objectivist Center. Dr. Kelley received his Ph.D. from Princeton University and has taught at Vassar College and Brandeis University. Dr. Kelley's books include *The Evidence of the Senses* (LSU: 1986), and *The Art of Reasoning* (3rd Rev. Ed., W.W. Norton: 1998).

Ayn Rand's Theory of Art

Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi

Since the mid twentieth century, estheticians have argued, in effect, that art cannot be defined—that anything is art if a purported artist says it is. In sharp contrast, Ayn Rand offers an objective theory (and definition) of art. Michelle Kamhi and Louis Torres will show that Rand's view, while rooted in the ancient Greek notion of the mimetic arts, and in the Enlightenment concept of the "fine arts"—i.e., painting, sculpture, drama, poetry, music, and dance—significantly improves upon traditional accounts. Unlike theorists who attempted to define art in terms of "beauty" or "expression," Rand, they will argue, provides a psychologically astute account of the broad cognitive and emotional function of art, which is largely corroborated

by recent work in such fields as anthropology, cognitive science, and psychology. As Ms. Kamhi and Mr. Torres will observe, however, Rand's *aesthetics* (which she considered the "fifth and last branch" of philosophy) is not without its problematic aspects—among them, her use of the term "metaphysical value-judgments" in the definition of art, and (of particular interest to Objectivists) her stipulation that architecture is "art," though it does not conform to her definition.

Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi are independent scholars and critics, and authors of *What Art Is: The Esthetic Theory of Ayn Rand* (<http://www.aristos.org/editors/booksumm.htm>), the first book-length study on Rand's theory of art. This session will discuss excerpts of *What Art Is*.

Applications due April 23, 2001. See reverse for full details.

Is Benevolent Egoism Coherent?

Michael Huemer

There is a *prima facie* tension between the following two principles, both of which appear fundamental to the Objectivist ethics: First, the principle of egoism, which states that the sole reason one can have for (or against) doing anything is that it will serve (or interfere with) one's own interests. Second, the principle, closely tied to the notion of individual rights, that one must not sacrifice others for the benefit of oneself. Huemer considers three arguments Rand offers for the second principle but finds that each involves either implausible empirical assumptions or assumptions that are incompatible with the principle of egoism. The paper goes on to consider the possibility that Rand was not in fact an ethical egoist in the usual sense of the term and that she held positions that, though easily confused with ethical egoism, are much more consistent with the second principle above. The textual evidence for this is surprisingly strong; moreover, the resulting theory is much more plausible.

Michael Huemer, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Analyzing and Reinterpreting the Objectivist Ethics

Allen Costell

The entire Objectivist ethics depends upon the Objectivist notion of man and man's life

— or, "man's life qua man." This paper critiques the dominant views offered by Objectivists regarding the nature of man's life, focusing in particular on the view that holds rationality as the primary virtue. An alternative interpretation of man's life is offered, along with a corresponding reexamination of nature and role of the major Objectivist virtues.

Allen Costell recently completed an MA in Philosophy with a concentration in Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

Darwin Overbought: Evolution and Explanation in Psychology

Ken Livingston

One of greatest intellectual leaps in all of human history was the realization by Darwin and Wallace that life on Earth had arisen and proliferated by a process of natural selection among varied competitors for specialized niches in the ecology. The set of ideas that comprise neo-Darwinism is of obvious importance to modern biology, but even Darwin himself saw the possibility of applying these concepts to the understanding of at least some human behaviors. In the last thirty years or so, increasing numbers of people have bought into an increasingly broad set of explanations for human behavior and cultural patterns that depends in crucial ways on such Darwinian concepts. Known as evolutionary psychology, this recently emergent approach to explaining how we think, feel, and act in the world is rapidly

becoming the focus of intense debate among psychologists, bio-psychologists, and cognitive scientists. This paper will characterize the crucial features of this debate, with a special focus on their implications for two related issues: (a) the relative contributions of deterministic versus volitional processes to human action, and (b) questions about the nature of explanation in the life sciences in general and the human sciences in particular.

Kenneth Livingston, Ph.D. is Professor of Psychology at Vassar College.

How Expectancies Influence What We Remember

Christopher Robinson

Traditionally, our senses are pictured as passive receivers and faithful transmitters of information about the external world. From sensation, we form memories that by and large represent what we actually perceived or experienced. This paper surveys recent studies that go beyond this passive model. Perception is not passive. The senses do not just take in information; they expect certain information. Our memories based on these expectancies become more and more like what we expected or how we categorized the event and less and less like what we actually saw or what actually happened.

Christopher Robinson is a student in the doctoral program in Cognitive Science at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, where he has taught Introductory Psychology and Evolutionary Psychology.



About the Advanced Seminar

The Advanced Seminar is TOC's venue for discussing pathbreaking new scholarly writings concerning Objectivism.

Each session is an organized, small-group discussion of a scholarly essay, preceded by a short summary presentation by the author. Advanced Seminar participants will receive the papers by early June, and are expected to read them carefully in advance. TOC Manager of Research and Training William Thomas, M.A., will moderate the discussions.

The Advanced Seminar is open to a limited number of applicants. For students and recent graduates, there is neither a fee nor room and board charges. Non-students pay only for room and board (\$152 for a dormitory single, or \$212 total for single or double accommodations in UP-J's Living/Learning Center). Participants are responsible for their travel to Johnstown and their incidental expenses. Participants should possess a systematic understanding of Objectivism and a professional interest in developing and applying objective methods of philosophic analysis.

To apply to attend the Advanced Seminar, complete the application that is included in the TOC Summer Seminar registration form, or send a letter, e-mail, or fax to TOC answering the following questions. Please be sure to include your name, age, address, email, and telephone number(s) with your application.

1. Please tell us your occupation and place of study or work.
2. Please outline your formal educational background, including your academic training in philosophy.
3. Please describe the extent of your familiarity with Objectivism, including the major works you have read and courses you have taken. Please be sure to note any occasions on which you have taken the "Logical Structure of Objectivism" course or participated in a Cyberseminar.
4. What scholarly writing have you done on philosophical topics? Please give us a brief list (no more than ten), starting with the works you deem most significant. Please give bibliographic information for your published work.
5. What are your plans for future scholarship?
6. What are the two issues in Objectivism that you would most like to see scholars address? Why are these of interest to you?

Applications must be received by April 23, 2001. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by May 4.