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Advanced Seminar in Objectivist Studies

June 30–July 2, 2004

The University of British Columbia

Vancouver, BC, Canada

Applications due date: April 23

Wednesday, June 30

Morning

No Activities Scheduled

Afternoon

3:00–5:00

Registration (room check-in from 3 PM on)

5:30–6:00

Orientation

6:00–6:50

Dinner

7:00–9:00

David Kelley: What is Knowledge?

Thursday, July 1

Morning

7:30–9:00 Breakfast

9:00–Noon **Heather Demarest: Rand and Mack on Teleology and Value**

Noon–1:30 Lunch

Afternoon

1:30–4:00

Paul Vanderveen: Formation of the Concept of Mind

6:00–6:50

Dinner

7:00–9:00

Edward Hudgins: Is There a Dual Aspect of Free Will?

Friday, July 2

Morning

7:30–9:00 Breakfast

9:00–10:00 **Discussion: Publishing Objectivism**

10:15–Noon **William Thomas: Ayn Rand's Theory of Concepts**

Afternoon

Noon–1:30

Lunch

1:30–4:00

Merlin Jetton: Omissions and Measurement

7:00–10:00

Final Dinner

What is Knowledge?

David Kelley

The traditional definition of knowledge as “justified true belief” can be traced back to Plato’s *Theaetetus*. For several decades, contemporary epistemologists have tried to avoid various problems with this definition by amending it. But the definition is flawed at a more fundamental level: it reflects a representationalist view of knowledge that is incompatible with the primacy of existence. In that respect, the definition is also circular: the concepts of justification, truth, and belief themselves presuppose and must be defined in terms of the concept of knowledge. This paper will explain these flaws in the traditional definition and outline the proper approach to a valid definition.

David Kelley’s writings on epistemology include *The Evidence of the Senses*, “A Theory of Abstraction,” and “Evidence and Justification.”

Rand and Mack on Teleology and Value

Heather Demarest

Eric Mack, in his essay “Rand’s Theory of Rights” in *The Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand*, offers an interesting teleological interpretation of Rand and suggests how it might justify her ethics. This paper contrasts Mack’s notion of teleology (that a thing’s function is the satisfaction of whatever need explains its existence) with Aristotle’s notion. It shows where Mack’s theory is consistent with Rand’s meta-ethical theory and where they conflict. Combined, do they bridge the is-ought gap?

Heather Demarest is a fifth-year senior at the University of Colorado at Boulder finishing degrees with honors in Philosophy and Physics.

Formation of the Concept of Mind

Paul Vanderveen

Research shows that learning about others is essential to a child’s eventually reaching the concept of mind. This is because the concept of mind is a mental integration of two or more units (as are all concepts) and the mind which the child directly experiences constitutes only one of these units. To understand this developmental process, we must consider the hierarchical nature of conceptual knowledge and the difficulties we face using an adult conceptual system to describe a child’s experience.

Paul Vanderveen works in the clinical management of mental health counseling, family therapy, and psychiatric emergency services. He has an M.A. in Philosophy from U.C. Santa Barbara and an M.S. in Education from Purdue University.

Applications are due April 23, 2004. See reverse for full details.

Is There a Dual Aspect of Free Will?

Edward Hudgins

Ayn Rand maintains that the first act of will is to focus or not focus one's mind. But this suggests that there are two aspects of the will: a higher will that has the quality of honesty and openness to the truth; and a lower will that has the quality of evasion, of wanting to blank out uncomfortable facts. Further, one knows in the act of willing whether the will is higher or lower. Thus will might be thought of as a moral intuition that is its own reward or punishment. This conception of will is useful in explaining the nature of moral contradictions and why we sometimes act against our self-interest.

Edward Hudgins is Senior Fellow and Washington Director at the Center. He has a Ph.D. in political philosophy from Catholic University and numerous publications.

Publishing Objectivism

This round-table discussion will focus on how and where to publish Objectivist views. It will also focus on what means are best for increasing academic acceptance of scholarship on Ayn Rand and Objectivism.

Ayn Rand's Theory of Concepts

William Thomas

To set the stage for a discussion of Merlin Jetton's critical examination of the measurement-omission theory of concept formation, William Thomas will offer an overview of the theory with the aim of clarifying its meaning and helping non-specialists understand Rand's purpose and claims. The background for this lecture and discussion session will be Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, which participants are requested to review.

William Thomas is Director of Programs at The Objectivist Center. He has an M.A. in Economics from the University of Michigan and speaks and publishes regularly on Ayn Rand's thought. His essay "Ayn Rand: Radical for Capitalism" recently appeared in *History of American Political Thought*, Frost and Sikkenga, eds. (Lexington, 2003).

Omissions and Measurement

Merlin Jetton

Ayn Rand famously said that measurement omission is an essential part of concept formation. This essay will challenge that. It will be argued that something else is omitted much, even most, of the time. Since a clear understanding of the nature of measurement is a prerequisite for this argument, such nature will be explored. This will include its meaning in science, comparing it to ordinal ranking and young children's ability to measure. It will conclude with possible substitutes for "measurements omitted."

Merlin Jetton is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries. He recently retired after a 28 year career as an actuary and financial engineer, having specialized in asset-liability management the last dozen years. His scholarly work in philosophy has been published in *Objectivity* and elsewhere.

About the Advanced Seminar

The Advanced Seminar focuses on developing pathbreaking new scholarly writings concerning Objectivism, the philosophy founded by Ayn Rand. It is a meeting place for a growing community of Objectivist scholars. Most sessions are extended small-group discussions of scholarly essays, preceded by short summary presentations by the authors.



Participants will receive the papers by the end of May and should read them carefully in advance. Participants may be asked to prepare comments. TOC Director of Programs William Thomas administers the seminar and will moderate the discussions.

To allow for productive discussions, the Advanced Seminar is open to only a limited number of applicants. Participants should possess a systematic understanding of Objectivism and a professional interest in developing and applying objective methods of philosophic analysis. For students, recent graduates, and faculty there is neither a fee nor room and board charges. Those who are neither students nor professional scholars pay \$80 for meals and their cost of lodging per room for 3 nights is: Standard dorm single \$99, Premium dorm single \$129, Studio suite \$237, One-Bedroom suite \$327, or West Coast suite \$363. (See the TOC Summer Seminar brochure for details on the room options.) Participants are responsible for their travel to the Vancouver area and incidental expenses. Seminar board includes all meals listed on the schedule as well as breakfast and lunch on July 3.

Advanced Seminar Application

Please 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 outline your formal educational background and, if in school, your field, degree in progress, and expected date of graduation.
2. Please describe the extent of your familiarity with Objectivism, including the major works you have read and courses you have taken.
3. Please describe any involvement you have had in the Objectivist movement, including attendance at conferences and participation in local discussion groups, Internet newsgroups, e-mail lists, etc.

A1. Are you a full-time student or scholar? If NOT you will need to pay for your room and board while at the Advanced Seminar.

A2. What academic training do you have in philosophy?

A3. 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.

A4. What are your plans for future scholarship? How do you see yourself contributing the study of or development of Objectivism?

A5. 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, 2004. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by May 7.