

the Undercurrent

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"It was as if an underground stream flowed through the country and broke out in sudden springs that shot to the surface at random, in unpredictable places." Ayn Rand

LEGALIZE THE AMERICAN DREAM

Despite claims to the contrary, illegal immigrants are a boon to the economy and to the country.

by Rebecca Knapp



Illegal immigrants are pouring into the United States. Pro-immigration rallies and anti-immigration rallies alternated with equal fervor this spring, while the number of illegals living in the country continued to grow towards 10 million. Pending legislation threatens to make illegal immigration a felony and to build a wall across the southern border. A group of armed civilians calling itself the Minutemen Project patrols areas where illegal immigrants frequently cross into America, while southwestern talk radio stations voice their shrill support for the Minutemen. Illegal immigration is present and it is growing. Americans need to decide what to do about it.

The arguments can be confusing. Anti-immigration groups ask us to consider our self-interest as Americans, claiming that illegal immigrants are stealing jobs and bene-

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OBJECTIVISM

The Undercurrent's cultural commentary is based on Ayn Rand's philosophy, Objectivism. Objectivism, which animates Ayn Rand's fiction, is a systematic philosophy of life.

It holds that the universe is orderly and comprehensible, that man survives by reason, that his life and happiness comprise his highest moral purpose, and that he flourishes only in a society that protects his individual rights.

In these pages we hope to defend these values. To learn more about the ideas behind them, you can begin by reading Ayn Rand's books, such as *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, or by visiting aynrand.org.

The U.S.-Israeli Suicide Pact

To end the threat of militant Islam, America and Israel must first stop appeasing the aggressors.

by Elan Jouno



The Iran-Hamas-Hezbollah axis was fully responsible for initiating the war on Israel, but the Islamists' aggression was the logical product of U.S.-Israeli policy. The longstanding commitment of Israel and America to "diplomatic engagement" with Palestinians and Islamists--a euphemism for appeasement--is suicidal.

For decades America has urged Israel to placate and surrender to our common enemy. The U.S.-endorsed "Road Map to Peace," like the "Peace Process" and sundry initia-

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Not All Constitutions Are Created Equal

The American Constitution upholds individual rights. The Iraqi constitution upholds tribalism and the supremacy of Islam.

by *Audra Hilse*



The American Constitution established individual rights as the founding legal and moral basis of this country. The result was a nation whose inhabitants have lived and prospered magnificently, because they were left free to do so. Today President Bush has heralded the establishment of the Iraqi constitution on the grounds that it is a step on Iraq's path toward freedom. But while all men are created equal, all constitutions are not.

Just as the mere holding of democratic elections does not make a country good or free, neither does the mere existence of a constitution make a country good or free. A constitution is a written statement of a country's fundamental laws. Such a statement is an indicator of liberty only when it is written and implemented for the sake of preserving liberty.

The Iraqi constitution was not written to

preserve liberty, but Iraqi tribalism and the supremacy of Islam.

The Iraqi constitution is a blend of vagueness and outright contradictions, none of which provide any semblance of protection for individual rights. Consider a clause such as this one: "Each person has the right to personal privacy as long as it does not violate the rights of others or *general morality*" (emphasis added). Certainly no person's rights should ever be violated by another. But what is the "general morality"? Does it mean public opinion about moral issues? Vague collective generalities of this nature can mean anything to anyone at any given time. A woman might go around without a head covering today, but what if tomorrow the "general morality" declares that she must wear one? Provisions such as this in the country's founding document leave the individual with no rights, but rather subject to the unrestrained whim of the majority.

But it is the second article of the Iraqi constitution that is most revealing. It states that no laws contradicting the religious law of Islam shall be passed. Contrast this to the U.S. constitution. The very first article of the Bill of Rights states clearly that all citi-

zens shall have the freedom to choose what (if any) religion they care to follow, and that the government will have nothing to do with any religion at all. Our Constitution was specifically set up to ensure that each individual would be free to find work that he deemed best for himself, to marry whomever he loved, and to get as far in life as his own mind and effort would let him, with no interference from the government or any church. The Iraqi constitution as it stands now is the antithesis of that.

But it was the United States that helped the Iraqis write and legitimize their constitution. Weren't we supposed to be helping to ensure their freedom? Why wasn't such an obvious contradiction corrected? Because we have forgotten that what the constitution says is more important than the mere fact of having one.

As it happens, there is an example of a time when we did do this right, with quite spectacular results: in post-World War II Japan.

Prior to the war, Japan had a constitution similar to Iraq's—i.e. without any of the explicit protection of individual rights that the

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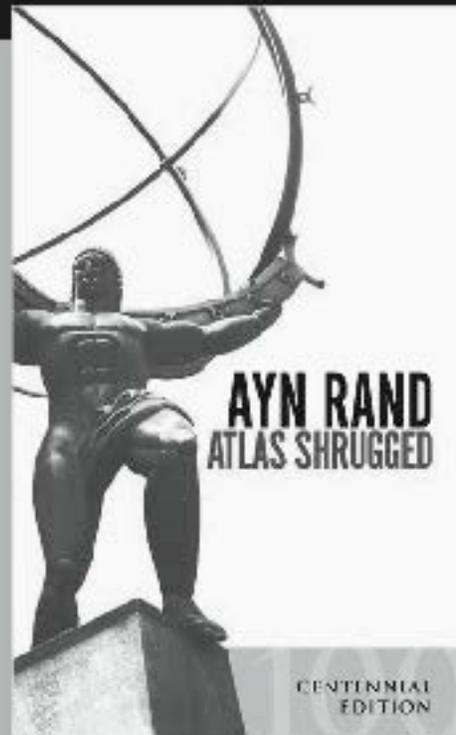
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Defending the Selfish Choice: Abortion Rights and the Morality of Egoism

The battle for abortion rights does not occur in a vacuum. It is part of a larger cultural battle between the principles of egoism and altruism.

by Ray Girn



The Left is losing the abortion battle on all fronts. In politics, once militantly pro-abortion Democrats like Hillary Clinton are toning down their positions for the sake of popular appeal. In the courts, after more than thirty years of relative stability, *Roe v. Wade* faces serious legal challenges. In the culture at large, more and more Americans support limiting abortion to special cases such as rape, incest, or life-threatening complications in pregnancy. Among women, many polls place that figure at over 50%.

This rise of anti-abortionism is surprising, considering how many people benefit from abortions. According to the most recent statistics, four out of every ten women in the US have an abortion before they turn 50. In the past year alone, well over a million pregnancies—about 1/5th of all pregnancies—were terminated by an abortion.

The basic argument against abortion is: an embryo is a human being, so a woman who gets an abortion is committing murder.

In other words: A woman accidentally gets pregnant. If she terminates that pregnancy, either by taking medication or by having a doctor remove some cell tissue from her uterus, then she murders a human being.

The obvious question is: By what reasoning is a small piece of embryonic tissue a human being? An embryo is a cluster of cells smaller than the tip of a ballpoint pen in the first week, and about the size of an ant after five weeks. How is that the same type of thing as the men, women, and children we observe around us?

It's not. An embryo may in due course become an independent human being. But the fact that it may become a human being does not mean that it already is one. To say otherwise would commit the error of confusing a potential thing with an actual thing; the fact that an acorn is a potential Oak tree does not make it an actual Oak tree—as demonstrated by the fact you don't see people trying to build cabinets out of acorns. In exactly the same way, the fact that a human embryo is a potential human being does not make it an actual human being.

There isn't any reason to be concerned about whether a woman's decision to abort is fair to the embryo, any more than one would worry about whether a haircut or manicure is fair to the hair cells or fingernails that get discarded.

So why do anti-abortionists insist adamantly that an embryo is a human being? For one reason only: the tiny mass of cells in a woman's body is human because God makes it human. God plants an eternal soul into the embryo at conception. That act of God, not any secular principle, is what renders the embryo sacred to the anti-abortionists. It is religion, not reason, which compels them to insist that we legally treat a pregnant woman as two human beings, not one.

While faith in Christian doctrine may explain the zeal of anti-abortionists activists,

The Religious Right would have women sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of the unborn. The defenders of abortion must challenge this morality of sacrifice.

abortion rights are actually anti-religious in a much deeper way: abortion entails an outright rejection of the central religious value of self-sacrifice.

Christianity upholds altruism—the idea that the good consists in sacrificing one's interests to others—as a moral ideal. Just as Jesus sacrificed his own life to save mankind, so a woman who becomes pregnant ought to give up her own dreams to save the unborn child that she could bear. That is the self-sacrificial thing to do.

A woman who instead gets an abortion rejects this principle of sacrifice. She chooses to abort because she wants to live for herself. Abortion is, as Christian commentators have repeatedly noted, “the selfish choice.”

Abortion is the selfish choice. The sex that makes the abortion necessary is selfish—it was enjoyed for pleasure and not procreation. The choice to pursue an education or career instead of motherhood is selfish—it's what would make the woman happy. Even the act of choosing to get an abortion is selfish—it involves a woman choosing to do what she wants rather than what her parents, friends, or Church demand.

Abortion is self-interested. Does that make it immoral?

When a student studies hard to get into

graduate school, he is not immoral. When a young couple saves money for years to buy their dream house, they are not immoral. When America's Founders rebelled against the British and enshrined the “the Pursuit of Happiness” as a political ideal, they were not immoral. All of these were self-interested actions, yet they are clearly moral. These individuals are pursuing long-term goals on principle, neither sacrificing themselves to others, nor sacrificing others to themselves. Nothing could be more moral than that.

When a woman goes against her entire culture and gets an abortion—because she doesn't want a child at this point in her life—her actions are similarly moral. She is choosing to value her own life, rather than to give in to familial or societal pressures to sacrifice her life because of scriptural dogma and raise a child she is not motivated to raise.

The battle for abortion rights does not occur in a vacuum. It is part of a larger cultural battle between the principles of egoism (self-interest) and altruism (self-sacrifice). The Religious Right would have women sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of the unborn. They believe that sacrifice is moral and just. The defenders of abortion must challenge this morality of sacrifice. They must explain why sacrifice is immoral and unjust. To defend abortion, it is the moral principle of egoism that they need to understand and defend.

Unfortunately, the traditional defenders of abortion, the political Left, themselves accept altruism as their moral ideal. Whether it is promoting volunteerism campaigns or attacking corporate greed, the Left makes common cause with religion in preaching altruism and condemning selfish materialism. The left has willingly and repeatedly sacrificed human life to animal life—e.g. in banning drugs such as DDT to protect bird eggs, an act which literally left millions of human beings to die of malaria. Is it any surprise their defense of abortion is so half-hearted?

Defenders of abortion need to challenge the Religious Right at its root. They need to challenge the morality of sacrifice. They need to embrace the fact that abortion is the selfish choice, and then explain that that's precisely why it is the moral choice.

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Legalize the American Dream

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fits from citizens. Pro-immigration groups, by default, concede the question of self-interest to their opponents. They ask Americans to consider the broken homes deported immigrants leave behind and the tragedy of those who die crossing the desert from Mexico. So which is it? Should we protect our jobs and our taxes, or be moved by the plight of those who seek refuge while we allow our country to be overrun?

It's a trick question.

In one respect, the anti-immigration groups are correct: Americans should consider their self-interest when deciding where they stand on immigration. But they are wrong that illegal immigrants are a drain or a scourge. Immigrants, illegal or otherwise, are a boon to the United States.

Consider the arguments to the contrary. The claim that illegal immigrants hurt the economy boils down to two allegations. The first is that immigrants steal jobs from Americans. The second is that they suck up welfare or benefits without paying enough taxes to cover themselves.

It is true that immigrants work when they get to America. They get jobs as soon as they can, and yes, they're willing to work cheaply. But they don't steal jobs. If you're paying the teenager who baby-sits your children \$15 an hour, and the girl across the street comes along and says, "I'll do it for \$10," has the new girl stolen anything when you hire her? Of course not. It's your money. You have no obligation to pay a higher price, if you can get the labor for a lower one. That doesn't change when the nationality of the cheaper babysitter happens to be Mexican. As long as the money that you worked for still belongs to you, you get to choose what to do with it.

It's easy to see that the employer benefits from having his property rights protected when he's hiring the cheapest babysitter or fruit picker. What everyone seems happy to ignore is that the other guy—the more expensive babysitter or fruit picker, the guy whose job was "stolen" from him—also benefits. He benefits from living in a society in which jobs are given to the most competitive job-seekers. He benefits because when goods can be produced at a cheaper price, the economy grows. He benefits because the owner of the orchard where he didn't get a job uses his savings to open a produce store or cultivate a new orchard and hires twice the workers he employed before. Or it allows him to spend more money on entertainment and the entertainment industry grows, or he banks the money and the bank invests it in new, productive industries which hire more

workers. Whatever the farmer does with his extra money, wealth increases, the economy improves, and the country becomes a better place to live.

Ask yourself: would you rather be out of a job in the land of opportunity, or guaranteed a job for the rest of your life in communist Russia or modern-day Cuba? That's the choice. There's no middle ground. Either citizens are free to spend their earnings as they choose, or—they aren't. The benefits of living in a country in which people are free to seek the best product for their money overwhelmingly outweigh the short-term inconvenience of losing one job and finding another. The result of that freedom is America: a country where your property and life are protected. A country full of beautiful

So which is it? Should we protect our jobs and our taxes, or be moved by the plight of those who seek refuge while we allow our country to be overrun?

houses, cutting-edge medical treatments, twenty-plex movie theaters, spotless supermarkets, Wal-Marts full of affordable merchandise, and cities sparkling with life and second-chances.

Immigrants don't "steal" jobs. In fact, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences (NRC) found that immigrants indirectly raise the incomes of U.S.-born workers by at least \$10 billion each year just by paying taxes and increasing the general productivity of the economy. Immigrants may change the market in certain ways, but their hard work at bargain prices is good for America.

As for the idea that immigrants are a drain on American tax-dollars—this isn't true either. Immigrants can't even apply for welfare for the first five years that they're in the country. Meanwhile, they're working. They buy clothes and food and televisions and houses, while paying sales tax on every bit of it and income tax on their salaries. The vast majority of them are only able to get jobs by purchasing fake social security cards, and their employers withhold the same deductions from their salaries as from their American counterparts. (A well-constructed guest-worker program could limit benefits available to immigrants at least as well as—but probably better than—the current policy.) According to the NRC, the typical immigrant family pays about \$80,000 more in taxes than all of its members together will ever receive in local, state, and federal benefits. An article in the *New York Times* profiles an illegal immigrant from Mexico who works 70 hours a week at \$8.50 an hour:

"Last year, Mr. Martínez paid about

\$2,000 toward Social Security and \$450 for Medicare through payroll taxes withheld from his wages. Yet unlike most Americans, who will receive some form of a public pension in retirement and will be eligible for Medicare as soon as they turn 65, Mr. Martínez is not entitled to benefits...The estimated seven million or so illegal immigrant workers in the United States are now providing the system with a subsidy of as much as \$7 billion a year."

Immigrants aren't a drain on government services, not as a whole. It is a fact that has been thoroughly proven by a score of independent research institutions. The most one could say is that it is not fair, in principle, for an American citizen's taxes to go towards supporting an illegal immigrant. But is it any fairer that his taxes should support another American? At the point where the government takes nearly half of one person's income away in order to pay for someone else to have knee surgery and send his child to elementary school, are you really worried about whether that someone is a white Protestant from Pennsylvania, or a Mexican landscaper from Nevada? The socialized elements of the United States economy amount to stealing, that's true. But the beneficiary is irrelevant. The problem is with these socialized elements, not immigration.

The groups that are so eager to save America from illegal immigrants don't present a very convincing case that America needs saving. Willing workers are flooding America, making production cheaper, better, and more efficient, and giving government programs whopping subsidies that they don't deserve. Meanwhile, they're bringing with them Latin dance clubs and Mexican restaurants and enthusiasm for life in America. Immigration is good for the country.

If anti-immigration groups are really after American self-interest, they should open their eyes to the tremendous benefits that free immigration offers to America. At what point does the refusal to see those benefits begin to smack of nothing more than an irrational prejudice against Latinos? Americans don't need protection from foreigners. We have welcomed throughout our history those who would embrace the ideals enshrined in our constitution, work for their own advancement, and uphold our right to work for ours. We should continue to do so. The country will be richer for it—in every sense of the word.

Rebecca Knapp is a graduate of the University of Chicago. She now attends law school at UCLA.

Joining Heart and Head: A Cure for the *House, M.D.* Blues

House, M.D. represents a widespread belief that rationality and happiness are incompatible.

by Gena Gorlin



It is a common view that the quest for truth breeds misery—as echoed lately in viewer responses to *House, MD*.

Raking in four Emmy nominations, including Best Dramatic Series, *House* has emerged as the most popular show on primetime TV. Its title character, Dr. Gregory House, is a brilliant, cynically sarcastic doctor described by many as an “exemplar of rationality” (*New York Times*). He is a genius of observation and logical deduction, investigating probable causes and hunting for clues in improbable places. He is also notoriously miserable, suffering from a painkiller addiction and a lackluster personal life. “Humanity is overrated,” he grumbles, before proceeding to save countless humans’ lives where other doctors have failed.

Commentators are struck by House’s virtues even as they note his vices. A reviewer for ScreenSelect raves that “Dr. Gregory House is the Doctor we all wish we had access to when we are ill. He has...the consummate genius to back up his inflated ego with cutting edge diagnosis that leaves you stunned at his brilliance.” Yet he is also “cranky and unlovable,” an IMDB reviewer writes, and, in the words of a BlogCritics.org reviewer, “keeps everyone at cane’s distance and flounders badly when his emotions are involved.” One Amazon critic comments that House “doesn’t

really ‘do’ emotion.” House himself says in one episode, responding to someone’s complaint that he never meets his patients, “It’s easy if you don’t give a crap about them...If emotions made you act rationally, then they wouldn’t be called emotions, would they?”

House is distinguished by his commitment to the truth at all costs, yet he also tries to distance himself from emotion at all costs. That our culture would produce such a protagonist is unsurprising. “Ignorance is bliss,” we often hear; better to tell a polite “white lie” than an offensive truth; choosing the red pill over the blue pill means inevitable martyrdom; those who listen only to their heads and not their hearts wind up miserable loners. Hence the popular view that all “geniuses” are “tortured;” House being a preeminent example. If such are the consequences of unyielding rationality, then no wonder House is allergic to emotion. On the popular view, no good emotion can come of his reason-

centered ethos.

But are emotions, in fact, at odds with rational truth-pursuit?

Granted, learning the truth can sometimes cause real pain. A husband who suspects that his beloved wife is cheating on him may dread further investigation. He knows that, should he discover that she is cheating, he will feel miserable and betrayed. However, consider the possible consequences of discovering the painful truth. On one hand, he can confront her, forcing an open discussion in place of the silent chasm that had been growing between them; if he has done something

to alienate her, he can now learn it and work to rectify his errors.

On the other hand, suppose that in fact she turns out to be dishonorable and unworthy of his love. In light of his new knowledge, his love—the emotion that now causes him such searing pain—will gradually

If such are the consequences of unyielding rationality, then no wonder House is allergic to emotion. On the popular view, no good emotion can come of his reason-centered ethos.

dissolve of its own accord. Supposing he stays rational and refuses to deceive himself, he will come to grips with the fact that her love is not the value he believed it was. Eventually, armed with that truth, he will be free to fall in love with someone new, someone who wins his affection on her genuine merits.

Contrary to Pascal, our hearts do not “have reasons that reason knows not.” Feelings are not impervious to the truth; on the contrary, they are responses to what we believe is true (given our prior knowledge and reasoning, or lack thereof). If we change our minds, our hearts naturally (though not always immediately) follow.

Take another case. Like the worried husband, a person who suspects he might have a debilitating disease, like cancer, may be reluctant to take the rational route and get tested. He knows that if the test should come out positive, he may be doomed to years of painful treatment—or worse, learn that his years are numbered. Indeed, that kind of discovery is bound to bring severe distress.

But consider the long-term emotional consequences of getting tested, as against the consequences of just staying home.

The man who chooses the former may indeed be devastated by news that he has a malignant tumor. But now, he faces specific options as to how he will deal with his cancer—and has crucial knowledge enabling him to plan a course of action. In light of the information his doctor gives him about chemotherapy and its effects, about the time course of cancer and the nature of its progressive symptoms, this patient can now weigh his priorities and decide what actions will be most conducive to his life—and his happiness. If he can find a brilliant doctor like Dr. House to investigate his case, he may even tackle his cancer and emerge unscathed (and how his emotions will be dancing that day!).

Even if the worst is true—if the test reveals that his cancer has metastasized, leaving the patient with only months to live—he is better off knowing the truth. That knowledge equips him to decide how to invest those final months. He may be far more emotionally at ease if he calls his best friend, or meets with his kids, in the last days of his life, than if he never speaks to them again—thinking, until it’s too late, that he has years to spare.

The man who chooses not to get tested, of course, does not reverse the course of his cancer; rather than get it treated or contained, if possible, he lets it fester and metastasize. Though he may feel warm and fuzzy for a while in his ignorance, the mounting agony of a cancer left untreated will soon trap him in an emotional and physical hell. Lacking knowledge of his problem, he will be powerless to solve it.

One would think such a man does not want to live—but he must, else he would not so dread the results of a cancer test. The only explanation is that he thinks his pleasant emotions can somehow cancel out the truth.

Joining Heart and Head: A Cure for the House, M.D. Blues

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Else he would realize that, regardless of his present feelings, an undetected cancer will eventually kill him. But such an idea is absurd; merely feeling fit and healthy does not make it true. It neither erases the consequences of ill health, nor offers protection from the immense pain one feels as those consequences come to pass. Both the patient who avoids learning that he has cancer, and the husband who

avoids learning that his wife cheats, are doomed to learn that wishing does not make it so. The mounting distrust and broken communication that will plague the marriage, as the wife invents new lies to conceal her adultery, may in time inflict nearly as much pain as a metastasized cancer.

Emotions proceed from one's ideas about the value (or disvalue) of a thing—whether a cancer patient's idea that a test is more dangerous than his ignorance, or a husband's idea that his wife is loving and virtuous. It is only by forming one's ideas rationally, in accordance with the truth, that one can achieve any kind of value

(whether building a successful relationship or restoring oneself to health). If Dr. House, or any man, realizes that his emotions are not inexplicable, incurable pests that sabotage his reason, but rather the fruits of his rational thinking, he would find no further reason for his misery. One can learn the truth about what one can and can't achieve, and what is and isn't worth achieving—and in time, one's emotions follow. In the long run, the truth does not hurt; it heals. Especially with geniuses like Dr. House on call to treat you. When you select your values rationally, in light of what is, in truth, possible and beneficial to your life, emotional fulfillment

is your natural prize.

Joy and happiness are the ends to which an unyielding commitment to reason is the means. If Dr. House were rational about his emotions, he would embrace personal values and meaningful relationships rather than shun them. And to the fans who admire his rationality but would scarcely emulate it, lest they contract his misery alongside it, I say: Fear not. It is only in dark unreason, not in the light of rational inquiry, that wretched misery festers.

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The U.S.-Israeli Suicide Pact

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tives before it, rationalized Palestinian terrorism as the result of a legitimate grievance. If only the Palestinians' wish for a civilized, peaceful state were fulfilled—Washington deluded itself into believing terrorism would end. And fulfilling this wish requires not smashing their terrorist infrastructure, but showering them with land and loot.

But the majority of Palestinians actually seek the destruction of Israel, and the slaughter of its people. Because they embrace this vicious goal, hordes of Palestinians idolized arch terrorist Yasser Arafat for waging a terrorist war to wipe out Israel and establish a nationalist dictatorship. They abetted Arafat's terrorism and celebrated his atrocities. They served as cheerleaders or recruits for terrorist groups—and when they had the chance, they embraced the even more militant religious zealots of Hamas. It is no surprise that, according to a recent poll, 77 percent of Palestinians support their government's kidnapping of an Israeli soldier and that 60 percent support the continued rocket fire from Gaza into Israel.

But even as Palestinians mounted more attacks, Washington pressed Israel for more concessions—and bolstered the terrorist-sponsoring Palestinian Authority with millions of dollars in aid. The U.S. forbade Israel from laying a finger on Arafat, and extended this tender solicitude to Hamas leaders. Washington actually whitewashed the blood-stained Arafat and his crony Abbas as peace-loving statesmen and invited them to the White House. And while Hez-

bollah fired rockets at major cities in northern Israel this summer, President Bush demanded that Israel show "restraint" and avoid toppling Lebanon's government—a government that includes Hezbollah and that allows the Islamist group to initiate war against Israel.

Depressingly, Israel has continually relented to American pressure to appease our common enemy. It has prostrated itself before the Palestinians, with flamboyantly self-sacrificial offers of land-for-peace; it has withdrawn from southern Lebanon, ceding ground necessary to its self-defense; it has withdrawn from Gaza, leaving its southern cities at the mercy of rocket fire from the Hamas-run territory.

Such U.S.-endorsed appeasement by Israel, across decades, has enabled Hezbollah and Hamas to mount their current attacks. Yet America remains undeterred in its commitment to appeasement.

The U.S. is now trying to woo Iran with endless offers of economic "incentives," if only Iran promises to stop chasing nuclear weapons. Evading Iran's lust to "wipe Israel off the map," evading its funding of Hezbollah and Hamas, evading its avowed enmity to America, evading its decades of fomenting and orchestrating a proxy terror war against American civilians—evading all of this, Washington deludes itself into believing that paying Iran off will, somehow, wipe out its hostility.

Inevitably, this encourages Iran to continue its aggressive support for terrorists and its fervent quest for nuclear weapons. Merely by prolonging the negotiations endlessly, Iran gains time to acquire a weapon to wield against its neighbors, to provide to Hamas and Hezbollah or to other proxies to use against the United States. And were Iran eventually to accept some deal, American aid would merely be sustaining Iran's regime--

and, inexorably, a covert nuclear program.

We are teaching the Islamic totalitarians in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran that their goal of destroying us is legitimate; that aggression is practical; that the more aggressive they are, the more we will surrender. U.S.-Israeli policy has demonstrated that we lack the intellectual self-confidence to name, let alone condemn, our enemies—and that we lack the will to deal with threats mercilessly. It vindicates the Islamists' premise that their religious worldview can bring a scientific, technologically advanced West to its knees.

To protect the lives of our citizens, America and Israel must stop evading the nature of the enemy's cause: our complete destruction. We must stop appeasing our common enemy—and embrace self-defense as a matter of intransigent principle. To put an end to the unabated threat of Islamic totalitarianism, America should urge Israel to annihilate the annihilators: Hamas and Hezbollah. And to thwart Iran's nuclear ambition, America must use as much military force as is necessary to dispose of that catastrophic threat and the regime responsible for it.

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Morality: Who Needs It

No one needs conventional morality—but everyone needs a morality of rational self-interest.

by Quinn Wyndham-Price



Do you lead a moral life? To many this may sound like an old-fashioned question. To them, “morality” connotes a series of stale, burdensome rules, usually urging chastity, renunciation, and tithing. Most people, of course, will refuse to break certain moral taboos, usually because of social pressure. But few thirst for living a moral life, which is thought to be impractical and at odds with modern life.

One thing is for sure: morality as it is understood conventionally is at odds with life, modern or otherwise. The advocates of conventional morality—preachers, prophets, and professors—have always embraced the impracticality of the moral life, urging that a willingness to sacrifice and suffer is precisely the mark of a superior character.

But why? Why would anyone regard the embrace of impracticality as a “superior” thing? Why does conventional morality require self-sacrifice? The answers have always been the same: God demands it, or society dictates it, or this is what your mother raised you to believe.

But why assume morality is defined by somebody else’s commandment? To live a moral life is just to live a good life, insofar as it is open to your choice. One philosopher, Ayn Rand, thought that the principles of leading a good life could be formulated in much the same way that principles of good health

or good nutrition are formulated: on the basis of natural, observable facts, rather than arbitrary edicts. On this basis, she argued that while we do not need conventional morality, we do need a new, unconventional one.

Ayn Rand observed that water and sunlight are good for a plant, that food and shelter are good for an animal. In general, an organism’s action is “good” whenever it results in that organism’s survival. She proceeded to apply this insight to the question of the human good. This unconventional approach resulted in an unconventional moral code, one that upheld self-interest, not self-sacrifice: “The purpose of morality,” she wrote in *Atlas Shrugged*, “is to teach you, not to suffer and die, but to enjoy yourself and live.”

Morality, on Ayn Rand’s view, is not a set of arbitrary, useless commandments, but a code of practical principles required for human life. But living practically is not as simple as embracing indiscriminately whatever money or sex conventional moralists have asked us to renounce. Ayn Rand reminds us in her book *The Virtue of Selfishness*: “Man cannot survive, like an animal, by acting on the range of the moment....[He] has to choose his course, his goals, his values in the context and terms of a lifetime.”

Most people already realize that in some parts of life, we must act on definite principles if we want to achieve a long-range goal, such as health or nutrition. But human life requires more than good health and good nutrition. We need not only a healthy body, but also a healthy mind, to aid us in creating our many physical necessities. We need a central productive purpose, to channel our many efforts efficiently. And we need sense of own efficacy, to sustain our motivation. Ayn Rand

summarized this, again in *The Virtue of Selfishness*: “The...values which, together, are the means to and the realization of one’s ultimate value, one’s own life—are: Reason, Purpose, Self-Esteem.”

Understanding how these values are not only means, but components of a human life, we can begin to see how Ayn Rand could regard selfishness as a virtue. Once we grasp that human life is more than health and nutrition, we see that some principles of action required for living selfishly are recognizable as long-cherished virtues, not as commandments, but as practical means to achieving selfish ends. Productiveness is a virtue because human beings survive by altering their environment, not by adapting to it. Honesty is a virtue because we cannot retain a healthy mind while faking reality, as by expecting others to produce for us. Justice is a virtue because we cannot live, learn, or prosper in a society without rewarding others for doing the same.

So who needs morality? Nobody needs the conventional morality of self-sacrifice, and its advocates have rarely pretended that anyone does. But Ayn Rand formulated a new code of morality, one that rejects the stale edicts of convention, while embracing the new responsibilities required by reason, purpose, and self-esteem. This is the kind of morality we need, the morality of rational selfishness. “If you wish to go on living,” Ayn Rand wrote in *Atlas Shrugged*, “what you now need is not to return to morality—you who have never known any—but to discover it.”

Quinn Wyndham-Price is a graduate student in Philosophy.

Not All Constitutions are Created Equal

CONTINUED FROM 2

U.S. Constitution held. Without that protection, the militant leaders who took control in the 1930s were able to shut down all dissenting voices; newspapers were stopped, censorship was common, and those writers, editors and thinkers who disagreed with the regime were thrown into jail indefinitely. The regime was then free to offer whatever propaganda it chose about the war to the Japanese people.

Only when the reality of their defeat was brought tangibly

home to the Japanese, with the dropping of the atomic bombs in 1945, did the propaganda become exposed as such. The Japanese surrendered unconditionally in the face of that reality, leaving it clear in the mind of each citizen that a militaristic approach to life had failed. In this setting, it was possible for General MacArthur and the U.S. forces designated to watch over the Japanese to draw up a draft constitution that followed the U.S. Constitution very closely (down to the basic language). They then handed it to the Japanese and instructed them to use it as the starting point for a new, freer government.

The purpose of the new Japanese constitution was freedom. The language, on the

model of the U.S. constitution, implemented this purpose faithfully. The results are clear: with each individual free to work for his own prosperity, Japan rose quickly from the ruins of war to be counted among the freest and most economically successful countries in the world, and remains one to this day.

It is to this kind of success story that we should be looking now to guide us in our Middle Eastern foreign policy. This is what should have been done in Iraq; first, a complete military defeat (as quickly and with as little loss of American life as possible), which would demonstrate fully and clearly to the country’s inhabitants that violent attacks and resistance are utterly

useless. Iraq’s legal and political infrastructure would have been destroyed and discredited in the eyes of Iraqis. Then, if it truly was in America’s self-interest to rebuild Iraq, we could hand them a constitution respecting individual rights.

We should remember that the constitution that came closest to fully upholding individual rights, America’s Constitution, has, in just two hundred years, created the freest, most prosperous nation in the history of mankind.

Audra Hilse is currently a junior at Lawrence University. She is studying history and minoring in Japanese. She likes to read and write fiction in her spare time.

SPEAKERS, EVENTS, MEETINGS

UNIVERSITY OBJECTIVIST CLUB EVENTS:

University of California,
Los Angeles
(Los Angeles, CA)

Announcement:

L.O.G.I.C. will hold weekly meetings this year.

When: Wednesdays, 7:30pm

Where: MS 31395H

Further info: Visit <http://www.ClubLogic.org> for more information. Time and location are tentative.

What: Tentative lecture Religion vs. Morality

When: TBA

Where: UCLA campus

Contact: <http://www.ClubLogic.org>

University of California,
Berkeley
(Berkeley, CA)

Announcement: The Objectivist Club of Berkeley will hold regular meetings this semester.

Further info: Contact Kate Brakora (kbrakora@berkeley.edu)

San Francisco State
University
(San Francisco, CA)

Announcement: SFSU Students of Objectivism will hold regular meetings this semester.

When: TBA

Where: Cesar Chavez Student Center

Further info: Contact aynrand@sfsu.edu

Harvard University
(Harvard, MA)

Announcement: The Harvard Objectivist Club will hold regular events this semester.

Further info: Contact hoc@hes.harvard.edu or visit <http://www.hes.harvard.edu/~hoc> for more information.

What: Public Lecture- The Fountainhead and the Spirit of Youth

Speaker: Mr. B. John Bayer

When: Sept. 21, 2006; Time TBA

Contact: hoc@hes.harvard.edu

Georgia Institute of
Technology
(Atlanta, GA)

Announcement: Georgia Tech Students of Objectivism will hold regular meetings this semester.

Further info: Visit <http://cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/aynrand>

Pennsylvania State
University
(State College, PA)

What: Public Lecture, "Global Capitalism: The Solution to World Oppression and Poverty"

Speaker: Dr. Andrew Bernstein

When: Sept 11, 2006; 7:30 pm

Where: Thomas Building, Penn State University, State College, PA, 16802

Contact: <http://psucapitalism.com>

New York University
(New York, NY)

Announcement: Regular Meetings for those with an interest in Ayn Rand! We have two groups: one for those committed to learning the philosophy and living life by its principles and one for those with a more introductory interest.

Further info: Contact Kara Zavarella (nyuoc_president@yahoo.com)

What: Public Lecture Five Years After 9/11: Why We are Losing the War

Speaker: Dr. John Lewis

When: Sept. 20, 2006; 7:30 PM

Where: Kimmel Center; 20 Washington Square South; New York, NY

Contact: nyuoc_president@yahoo.com

Tufts University
(Boston, MA)

Announcement: Public Lecture- The Fountainhead and the Spirit of Youth

Speaker: Mr. B. John Bayer

When: Sept. 21, 2006; Time TBA

Where: Tufts University, Barnum Hall Room 104

Contact: eugenia.gorlin@tufts.edu

gorlin@tufts.edu

Announcement: Public Lecture- Israel and the War on Islamic Totalitarianism

Speaker: Dr. Yaron Brook

When: Oct. 20, 2006; 7:30 PM

Where: Tufts University, Barnum Hall Room 008

Contact: eugenia.gorlin@tufts.edu

(daliatubis@yahoo.com) & Guy Barnett (guyusj@hotmail.com)

Announcement: The Lucidicus Project is offering free books to medical students interested in learning about the moral and economic case for capitalism.

Contact: Jared Rhoads (jared.rhoads@lucidicus.org)

Announcement: Third Wednesday of the Month dinner gatherings

Contact: Togplsgruchala@comcast.net

Announcement: A three-day conference event- The Jihad Against the West: The Real Threat and the Right Response.

Speakers: Daniel Pipes, Yaron Brook, Flemming Rose, Robert Spencer, Peter Schwartz, John Lewis

Where: Boston, MA- Tufts University, Ford Hall/Faneuil Hall, Boston World Trade Center

Further info: Visit <http://www.objectivist-conferences.com/fordhall06/>

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcement: OPAR Study Group

Contact: Dalia Tubis

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