

The Undercurrent

WINTER 2007 VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1 THE-UNDERCURRENT.COM

"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

THE BUSINESS OF HEALTHCARE



by *Laura Mazer*

The state of California has lost more than 90 emergency rooms since 1990—and with them, the ability to treat hundreds of thousands of patients. In New York City, eight hospitals have shut down since 2003 after facing a financial crisis. And in Atlanta, Grady Memorial Hospital is threatening to join their ranks. Grady is the only level 1 trauma center in the area, and if it closes, it will mean the loss of almost 1,000 beds, nine community health centers, and the training facilities for two medical schools.

The cause of these and other failures throughout the country is obvious. Hospitals are providing care without receiving payment. Like any other business, hospitals have a constant list of bills to pay every month, from diagnostic tests and drugs, to basic supplies and the salaries of sometimes thousands of people. And all too often, they receive no compensation in return.

What drives the nation's hospitals to operate at an obvious deficit, giving away for free a service that is neither cheap nor easy to produce? They do it in part because they are legally required to do so. In 1986, the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act made it illegal for a hospital to refuse care in an emergency setting, regardless of ability to pay. The Act essentially transformed emergency rooms into primary care facilities for the uninsured.

In other industries, services provided for free are considered voluntary charity. They are provided only as far as they can be supported by the business's other income, and they are neither legally nor morally required. But in healthcare, any suggestion that a hospital accept only the patients it can afford to treat is greeted with moral outrage.

Hospitals respond to this combination of legal requirements and community expectations by accepting an unsustainable patient mix that inevitably ends in crushing debt. Healthcare has become a multi-billion dollar industry incapable of demonstrating the kind of economic common sense a child with a lemonade stand instinctively displays.

Bankrupt hospitals are serving as eloquent testimony that the basic principles of economics are just as viable for healthcare as for any other industry. So why is it that fiscally responsible hospitals are considered immoral, and prosecuted as illegal? What is it that makes medicine unique?

The answer can be found in the consumer advocacy groups and professional societies that advocate for socialized medicine. In 2001, a task force assembled by the American Academy of Family Physicians proposed a system of 'free' healthcare for all Americans—to be paid for by Americans, with a payroll tax. They declared, "There

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

In Defense of Corporations	(3)
How Not to Lie With Statistics	(4)
Faith and Reason: Friends or Foes?	(5)
Anti-Smoking Paternalism	(6)
Speakers, Events, & Meetings	(8)

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM: A SACRIFICIAL WAR



by *Dan Edge*

At the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention on August 22, President Bush spoke about the lessons of World War II, arguing that the U.S. occupation of Japan serves as a model for the current conflict in the Middle East. But the terrible state of the Iraq War makes it clear that he has

not learned those lessons himself.

Here's what happened in WW II: On December 7, 1941, the United States was attacked by Japan, a nation of suicidal and religiously motivated warriors. Less than four years later, the Japanese Emperor Hirohito—his country in ruins and his people utterly demoralized—surrendered unconditionally. The subsequent U.S. occupation of Japan met little resistance, and state-sponsorship of the national Shinto religion was suppressed, allowing a smooth transition into a new government. The two countries have since become allies.

By contrast, it has now been over four years since the Iraq War began, and the death toll continues to mount.

(continued on page 7)

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 UNDERCURRENT

The Undercurrent is a student publication, produced and distributed by college students at campuses across North America.

All inquiries regarding contributing, distributing, and advertising should be directed to mail@the-undercurrent.com. For more information on *The Undercurrent*, back issues, additional resources, and further commentary, visit our website at the-undercurrent.com.

Managing Editor	Ray Girn
Editors	Stephen Donovan Dan Norton
Staff Writers	Kelly Cadenas Dan Edge Gena Gorlin Noah Stahl
Advisory Editors	Ned Chalmers Quinn Wyndham-Price
Project Manager	Rebecca Knapp
Layout & Design	Tori Press: Red Queen Design Studio
Webmaster & Business Manager	Jared Seehafer
Distribution Officers	Eric Brunner Arthur Lechtholz-Zey

SPONSORS OF THE WINTER ISSUE

Guy Barnett, Zev Barnett, Carl B. Barney, John Chappell, Prof. Allan Gotthelf, Ted Gray, Peter LePort, M.D.: General and Weight Loss Surgery, Maryallene and Don Otis, Rob Tarr.

Disclaimer. *The Undercurrent* is an independent student publication and does not necessarily represent, in whole or in part, the views of the Estate of Ayn Rand, or the Ayn Rand Institute. The views expressed and facts contained in each article are the responsibility of the author.

Copyrights. Copyright © 2007 *The Undercurrent*. Each article is the property of its author; all other content is the property of *The Undercurrent*. No portion may be reproduced in whole or in part without the express written consent of *The Undercurrent*. "Anti-Smoking Paternalism: A Cancer On American Liberty" is reprinted with permission from the Ayn Rand Institute. © 1995-2007 Ayn Rand® Institute (ARI).

THE BUSINESS OF HEALTHCARE

continued from page 1

are a set [sic] of basic services that most people are expected to utilize in their lifetime, and there should be no financial barrier to these."

This is the justification offered by all advocates of socialized medicine, in its various forms. Healthcare is required. It is a basic service. It is necessary for life. How can ability to pay determine access to a requirement for life? In a civilized, industrialized country, the argument goes, it is the government's duty to provide basic necessities to its citizens.

This argument relies on the assumption that healthcare is uniquely important for human survival, that while most industries provide optional goods—items that improve life, perhaps, but are not required for it—healthcare is not optional. To live, you must have access to life-saving or life-prolonging therapies.

It is true that healthcare is, in certain circumstances, required for life. A patient in renal failure will die without dialysis every week. A child with a bacterial infection needs antibiotics. But reformers forget that a lack of dialysis is not the only thing that can kill the kidney patient. A lack of food, clean water, shelter, or clothing in the winter will be as deadly to the child as a lack of antibiotics.

Medicine often focuses only on the physical act of living—breathing in and out, keeping the heart beating. But human life is more than the functioning of the moving parts. Although healthcare may be the only requirement for a brain-dead accident victim on life support, it is not the only requirement for the rest of us. To live, we need food, we need shelter, we need companionship, and work, and hundreds of other material and spiritual requirements. Healthcare is a necessity—and after a car accident, or during a flu infection, it may be the most important necessity. But it is not the only requirement for life.

When people talk about a 'right' to healthcare, they mean an entitlement to healthcare. They mean that unlike other goods and services that must be earned through individual work or trade, healthcare should be provided for

free.

Medicine is not the only industry that fulfills a necessity for life, so what entitles us to the products of this particular industry, and not others? Why not food or clothes? And why not those products that provide a good life—feather beds or paintings or tickets to the movies? Or are we entitled to those as well?

The issue goes far beyond healthcare. It is a question of what the government's role should be in providing for its citizens. Should the government collect taxes to provide citizens with whatever goods and services they deem 'necessary?' Or is it the responsibility of individual citizens to work for whichever products and services they can independently earn—with the government existing to secure their freedom to pursue these ends?

In other industries, Americans balk at the idea of the government stepping in to provide values to its citizens. The dangers and inefficiencies of government-run industries are well understood. We would not tolerate, for example, the government nationalizing the supermarkets. If a grocer decides to provide food to the hungry, most Americans understand that he does so voluntarily, and with his own money.

What we must understand now is that there is no reason to treat healthcare any differently.

American healthcare is failing. It's only a matter of time before hospitals around the country can no longer support themselves, and we are forced to change the system. The only solution is a means of exchange that does not rely on sacrificing the rights of some individuals to obtain values for others. The only solution is a free market.

If we want to save American healthcare, we have a moral and practical obligation to seek less government intervention—not more.

Laura Mazer is a second year medical student at Emory University. She has a BA in biology from the University of Chicago.

IN DEFENSE OF CORPORATIONS

To say “Corporate America” today is almost to say a dirty word. Corporations are viewed as organizations that systematically abuse consumers, fleece taxpayers, exploit employees, deceive investors, disrupt communities and poison the environment. CEOs and board members are portrayed as faceless men huddled in dark boardrooms, smoking cigars while colluding about how to redirect money into their own pockets. Employees in the corporate world are characterized as hapless drones mindlessly chasing raises and promotions in cramped cubicles. Corporations themselves are often spoken of not as organizations of individuals, but almost as entities with minds of their own.

Absent from these criticisms is any acknowledgement of the ways Corporate America has benefited our lives—for example, by making possible our abundant supplies of food and energy, efficient transportation, ubiquitous digital communication, comfortable clothing, effective painkillers, and an entire entertainment industry. Indeed, it’s difficult to find any valuable product or service that has *not* been made possible in some form by the existence of a corporation.

It is the corporate form that provides the means to transform the genius of a few into the convenience of many. The inventor alone, while deserving credit for his insight, cannot turn his lab prototype into a product on store shelves. To do so requires a further essential ingredient: enough money in the hands of that inventor to transform his invention into a marketable product. Things like oil wells and iPods cannot be created without *both* human ingenuity *and* material resources.

But these two ingredients rarely exist together. Those with creative ideas and skills often lack enough money to put their ideas into action, while many people with savings lack the ability to put their money to productive use.

This is precisely the problem the corporate form was created to solve. A corporation provides the framework to allow one group of people (investors) to provide the money for a business goal, and another group (management and employees) to provide the time and skill necessary to use the money to realize that goal. By separating ownership and control, the corporation allows two



by Noah Stahl

groups of people to do together what neither could do separately. Provided the business is a success, both gain; the investors receive a return on their money while those who work for the corporation make a living.

The value of the corporate form cannot be overstated. It is only because corporations exist on a large scale that the comforts of modern life are possible. Even the availability of a pack of gum in a convenience store—let alone a text message on a mountaintop—requires the convergence of a vast array of people and capital. Without the advent of the corporation, the existence of such things would not be merely unlikely, but impossible.

Given that corporations represent an enormous benefit to our lives, what then explains the hostility they are confronted with on a daily basis? Why do so many people despise and distrust all things corporate?

The common objections are not economic—that the corporate form is economically efficient is rarely debated. Rather, the complaint is a moral one. It centers on a single word—profit. The corporation was explicitly created to achieve a single goal: making a return on investment. Those who create and manage a corporation openly seek to turn their ideas into profits, and the investors they attract are openly motivated by the same purpose. Hence the common refrain of the critics: “all they care about is making money.”

In an important sense, the statement is true—the central goal of any (for-profit) corporation is to create a return for investors. It is the unspoken conclusion of that statement—“and that’s wrong”—that is fundamentally flawed. Those who condemn a corporation for seeking profits ignore the distinction between a businessman and a thief, not recognizing the fact that *making* money is far different and far more difficult than fooling one’s victim and mak-

ing a getaway. The success of prosperous corporations is ultimately built on quality, trust, long term planning, sound decision-making, and most importantly, on offering honest value to customers. It is virtue, not vice, that drives the profitability of successful businesses.

Contrary to common denunciations, making money is a rational, moral pursuit. It is the means by which we attain the material values necessary to sustain our lives and make possible the pursuit of happiness in whatever form we choose. For the rational individual, money is not an end in itself, but the means to making other values possible. This fact is crucial in defending the goodness of corporations, because while the corporate form itself holds profit as its fundamental goal, the people who make it up do not. Every individual involved, from the CEO to an entry-level employee and from the smallest stockholder to the wealthiest investment banker, is participating voluntarily in the pursuit of what he judges to be in the interest of his own life and happiness—whether that means a love for his job, a need for temporary income, or a means for retirement savings.

As such, the corporation is the quintessentially American institution. It makes possible the collaborative pursuit of goals and dreams by thousands of individuals, all expressing their right to freedom of association. This is the ultimate, inescapable justification for the existence of corporations. Corporations, like individual men, do not exist for the sake of consumers or society or the public good—they exist by right, not by permission.

Unfortunately, the tremendous value of Corporate America has been forgotten in a sea of ridicule. The media castigates CEOs for receiving “obscene” salaries—neglecting the magnitude of the decisions they face and the immense value they create by making the right ones. Politicians threaten to take away profits from companies that make “too much”—disregarding the owners’ right to their property and the effort it takes to achieve such a feat. Companies have been shackled with oppressive restrictions like Sarbanes-Oxley, which mandates corporations to comply with a slew of inefficient and costly requirements; such restrictions are advocated on the premise that all corpora-

(continued on page 7)

HOW NOT TO LIE WITH STATISTICS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE AVERAGE



by Gena Gorlin

The formula is painfully familiar—“According to a recent survey by X from the University of Y,” followed by a statement about married couples’ tendency to get bored with their sex lives (*ABC News*), or thin women’s tendency to think themselves fat (*Psychology Today*), or older people’s tendency to become increasingly religious (Harris Poll, 2006)—or any number of statistically proven and so presumably unquestionable claims about human nature.

But what are you really supposed to make of such claims? To take the first case, should you really avoid wedding bells like they toll the death of all fun?

Many of the reputable psychological surveys so often cited by the media seem to think so. The ABC News “sex survey” concludes that “sexual excitement declines with the duration of a marriage or committed relationship—losing the spark.” The evidence for this rather disheartening generalization? “Among couples who’ve been together less than three years, 58 percent call their sex lives very exciting. At more than 10 years, only half as many, 29 percent, say so.”

The statistical interpreters don’t seem to recognize that those other 29 percent are real people, in long-term committed relationships, who report exciting sex lives—

so clearly the “losing the spark” phenomenon is not universal or inevitable. Yet the mistake is common; readers see an article’s sweeping conclusion about the decline of sexual excitement with time, and perhaps come to fear (or even avoid) long-term committed relationships—thinking they know where it leads.

This assumption that statistical tendency equals human nature abounds in recent news: Science Daily reports that “men overcompensate when their masculinity is threatened” (all men?); Medical News To-

day maintains that people’s beliefs about food “can seldom be shaken by rational arguments” (all people?); *Associated Content* pontificates that the more time someone surfs the web, the more socially awkward he or she will be. But what do any of these claims *mean*?

To answer this question, we must distinguish between a statistic and a fact of human nature. Most psychological studies simply report such findings *as* statistical averages, without implying that they are universal. But then something happens: the media pundits who report the findings lose the distinction between statistical average and universal truth. What starts as a conclusion about the way most people happen to be, turns into a prognosis about the way *you* have to be.

The plain fact is, you *don’t* have to toe the line of the statistic. People can help their behavior. Plenty of women realize from common sense and observation that they don’t need a Mary-Kate Olsen waist to be attractive. Plenty of web surfing enthusiasts maintain bustling social lives without hiding behind their screens as a defense against confrontation. And as anyone knows who has ever browsed the stacks of a Barnes and Noble, the shelves overflow with advice and innumerable techniques for spicing up one’s sex life – so that any committed couple can enjoy decades of adventurous love-making.

This is not to deny that the statistical *tendencies* described by these studies do exist. It is true that, for instance, there is real potential for internet junkies to use the web as a crutch, avoiding live interaction in favor of the less stressful, more safely smokescreened medium of virtual communication. But while the internet offers this potentially enticing escape to those who choose to exploit it, the decision is up to every individual user. Cyber communication methods like AIM and Facebook can just as easily be used to supplement and enhance live social interaction as to replace it. Even the shyest among us, who sincerely dread the perils of a live conversation, can choose to confront their fears, and to reap the rewards that eventually follow. There is no cyber-menace stealing their will and compelling them to hide behind their text messages, avoiding the risk of genuine

intimacy. Unsurprisingly, however, a statistical majority choose the less risky (albeit less gratifying) route. This is the truth that’s captured by the article’s statistic.

What statistical surveys actually tell us, supposing they are accurate and scientifically valid, is what will happen if we let ourselves be driven by external influences—if we don’t judge the influences for ourselves and choose the best (if not easiest) ways in which to conduct our lives. The theoretical articles and newspaper op-eds that cite them should be conveying the opposite of their current message. Rather than imply that the statistics are inescapable, and then blame the external influences that allegedly determine human behavior, they should treat statistical trends as a reminder of the importance of independent thought: *if* and *when* you don’t consciously direct your life, external influences take over. People *should* be told that other people, on average, tend to absorb cultural standards unthinkingly—and then be taught that *they* are free to do otherwise.

You are not fated by statistics. You always have the choice of becoming one of the “outliers,” those independent thinkers who don’t just blindly fall where they will on the standard normal curve—but rather take control of the variables governing their destiny.

Gena is a senior undergraduate psychology major at Tufts university, currently working as a clinical and research intern at Mass General Hospital.

Romance Issues?

Free call – free advice

Ask Dr. Ellen Kenner
Clinical Psychologist
any personal question during
her radio talk show

The *Rational Basis of Happiness*®

877-Dr-Kenner

(877-375-3663)

Saturdays 11am-noon eastern

www.DrKenner.com

FAITH AND REASON: FRIENDS OR FOES?

Contrary to popular belief, faith and reason are incompatible.



by Kelly Cadenas

“The way to see by faith is to shut the eye of reason.” Like many before and after him, Benjamin Franklin recognized that faith and reason are opposites. Men, he thought, can seek truth by using either reason or faith, but not both. Many people today, however, do not believe that there is a conflict between faith and reason. They are quick to point out that faith has nothing to fear from reason because reason is not the enemy of faith, but its allied partner in a common search for truth. But serious practitioners of faith today are more than willing to shut their eyes when reason contradicts their beliefs, and as a result, censor those who exercise rational thought. The results of this conflict impact every aspect of human life. Today, more so than during Franklin’s time, faith is exerting an alarmingly strong influence in America’s culture.

For many decades, American universities—including religious ones—have chosen to subordinate faith to reason by stating in faculty contracts the rights of university professors to full freedom in research. However, a recent incident at Ashland University in Ohio points to an administration that has accepted such standards, but later chose to do otherwise. Professor John Lewis, for six years Assistant Professor of History at Ashland, was denied tenure this spring because, in the words of Provost Suggs, his “writings” show that Dr. Lewis’ “views [are] in direct opposition to Judeo-Christian principles,” principles which he claims constitute the very essence of the university’s mission.

The decision concerning Dr. Lewis’ future employment was the result of many back-and-forth disputes among faculty committees and three high-ranking administration officials. The committees, on

the one hand, voted to promote Dr. Lewis because of his exemplary past achievements. Not only was Dr. Lewis an active participant in many of the school’s academic affairs, but he was also a “well-prepared, respectful,” and “demanding” instructor who worked conscientiously to “meet the needs expressed by the students.” These credentials, along with Dr. Lewis’ scholarly achievements, were enough to convince committee members that Dr. Lewis was “a valuable member of the university community.”

But Dr. Lewis’ commendable portfolio did not satisfy three officials, who argued to deny Dr. Lewis tenure for reasons that went beyond his previous accomplishments—that is, for his religious beliefs. All three officials admitted to writing that Dr. Lewis “[exceeded] the standards set for promotion...as stated in the Rules and Regulations.” Six years worth of feedback from students, Provost Suggs admits, provided good evidence that “Dr. Lewis is not an ideologue” who preaches his atheist viewpoints, but “appears to set his beliefs aside while he teaches.” Dean John Bee agrees that Dr. Lewis’ scholarship is exemplary. In his evaluation letter, he affirms that “Dr. Lewis’ recently published book on Solon is...a sturdy work of scholarship” and “a fine display of [his] strong classical training.”

The problem with Dr. Lewis arose when they considered “[his] loyalty to and advocacy of Objectivism,” which surface in his writings published in *The Objective Standard* and *The Intellectual Activist*. In his summary letter, the university provost damned Dr. Lewis by directly quoting a passage from the Ayn Rand Institute website, which noted that, for Objectivism, “reason is man’s only proper judge of values and his only proper guide to action.” This, History and Political Science Department chair David Foster emphasized, “implies a rejection...of any superior being,” a view very much at odds with Ashland’s Judeo-Christian character and a compelling reason for Dr. Lewis’s dismissal.

In an interview with *The Undercurrent*, Dr. Lewis pointed out that the situation at Ashland University was different in

the recent past, especially during his five years as faculty member. President Benz, Ashland’s former president, interpreted the university’s mission statement primarily as an educational mission largely separate from religion. Faculty members were expected to respect the University’s values, but not to embrace them personally. In fact, the university administration was well aware of Dr. Lewis’ alignment with Objectivism, and gladly accepted a substantial grant from the Anthem Foundation for Objectivist Scholarship so that Dr. Lewis could devote part of his time specifically to the study of Objectivism. The new President, however, interprets the school’s mission primarily as a religious mission. Convinced by the arguments of the three administrators, he has cast aside as relatively unimportant all other criteria for tenure and fired Dr. Lewis for holding views contrary to Christianity.

The issue here is not whether a university has the right to hire or fire professors who support or fail to support certain values. University administrators do have the right to make hiring decisions, as long as they do not violate the requirements outlined in faculty contracts. What is important to grasp from this incident is the fundamental conflict between reason and faith. Reason, in essence, demands that one form conclusions and answer questions based on concrete, real-world observations. In the case of Dr. Lewis, his study of history has led him to criticize certain religious eras and doctrines. Faith—whether faith in God, another individual, or any entity—demands that one form conclusions based on another’s judgment and independent of evidence. Ashland’s administrators used a standard of faith to decide Dr. Lewis’ future employment. They ignored all evidence that pointed to Dr. Lewis’ competence as instructor and scholar and violated his contract simply because his conclusions, which are based on his study of history, conflict with their faith in religious doctrine.

In isolation, the incident at Ashland University may appear to have only local significance, but it takes only a quick glance at our culture to realize that the method of

(continued on page 7)

ANTI-SMOKING PATERNALISM: A CANCER ON AMERICAN LIBERTY

by *Don Watkins*

Across the country, state and local governments are banning smoking on private property, including bars, restaurants, and office buildings. This is just the latest step in the government's war on smoking—a coercive campaign that includes massive taxes on cigarettes, advertising bans, and endless multi-billion dollar lawsuits against tobacco companies. This war is infecting America with a political disease far worse than any health risk caused by smoking; it is destroying our freedom to make our own judgments and choices.

According to the anti-smoking movement, restricting people's freedom to smoke is justified by the necessity of combating the "epidemic" of smoking-related disease and death. Cigarettes, we are told, kill hundreds of thousands of helplessly addicted victims a year, and expose countless millions to unwanted and unhealthy secondhand smoke. Smoking, the anti-smoking movement says, in effect, is a plague, whose ravages can only be combatted through drastic government action.

But smoking is not some infectious disease that must be quarantined and destroyed by the government. Smoking is a voluntary activity that every individual is free to choose to abstain from (including by avoiding restaurants and other private establishments that permit smoking). And, contrary to those who regard any smoking as irrational on its face, cigarettes are a potential value that each individual must assess for himself. Of course, smoking can be harmful—in certain quantities, over a certain period of time, it can be habit forming and lead to disease or death. But many individuals understandably regard the risks of smoking as minimal

if one smokes relatively infrequently, and they see smoking as offering definite value, such as physical pleasure.

Are they right? Can it be a value to smoke cigarettes—and if so, in what quantity? This is the sort of judgment that properly belongs to every individual, based on his assessment of the evidence concerning smoking's benefits and risks, and taking into account his particular circumstances (age, family history, profession, tastes, etc.). If others believe the smoker is making a mistake, they are free to try to persuade him of their viewpoint. But they should not be free to dictate his decision on whether and to what extent to smoke, any more than they should be able to dictate his decision on whether and to what extent to drink alcohol or play poker. The fact that some individuals will smoke themselves into an early grave is no more justification for banning smoking than the existence of alcoholics is grounds for prohibiting you from enjoying a drink at dinner.

Implicit in the war on smoking, however, is the view that the government must dictate the individual's decisions with regard to smoking, because he is incapable of making them rationally. To the extent the anti-smoking movement succeeds in wielding the power of government coercion to impose on Americans its blanket opposition to smoking, it is entrenching paternalism: the view that individuals are incompetent to run their own lives, and thus require a nanny-state to control every aspect of those lives.

This state is well on its way: from trans-fat bans to bicycle helmet laws to prohibitions on gambling, the government is increasingly abridging our freedom on the grounds that we are not competent to make rational decisions in these areas—just as it has long done by

paternalistically dictating how we plan for retirement (Social Security) or what medicines we may take (the FDA).

Indeed, one of the main arguments used to bolster the anti-smoking agenda is the claim that smokers impose "social costs" on non-smokers, such as smoking-related medical expenses—an argument that perversely uses an injustice created by paternalism to support its expansion. The only reason non-smokers today are forced to foot the medical bills of smokers is that our government has virtually taken over the field of medicine, in order to relieve us inept Americans of the freedom to manage our own health care, and bear the costs of our own choices.

But contrary to paternalism, we are not congenitally irrational misfits. We are thinking beings for whom it is both possible and necessary to rationally judge which courses of action will serve our interests. The consequences of ignoring this fact range from denying us legitimate pleasures to literally killing us: from the healthy 26-year-old unable to enjoy a trans-fatty food, to the 75-year-old man unable to take an unapproved, experimental drug without which he will certainly die.

By employing government coercion to deprive us of the freedom to judge for ourselves what we inhale or consume, the anti-smoking movement has become an enemy, not an ally, in the quest for health and happiness.

Don Watkins is a writer and research specialist at the Ayn Rand Institute (www.AynRand.org) in Irvine, CA. The Institute promotes Objectivism, the philosophy of Ayn Rand—author of "Atlas Shrugged" and "The Fountainhead." Contact the writer at media@aynrand.org.

IRAQI FREEDOM

continued from page 1

Judged by the standard of World War II, Operation Iraqi Freedom has been an abysmal failure. Our lack of success is underscored by the fact that our military is vastly superior to the Iraqi opposition. The Japanese were a much more formidable foe, and yet the U.S. was able to achieve complete victory against them in less than four years. What is the difference?

The difference lies in the moral philosophy guiding our nation's leaders. WWII was a war of self-preservation, waged to protect the lives and interests of U.S. citizens. It would have been considered treasonous to call the U.S. operations in Japan, "Operation Japanese Freedom". Securing freedom for Americans, not the Japanese or German people, was the purpose of the war. That purpose guided every American decision, from which weapons to use to which constitution to impose on the defeated enemies. Even the U.S. reconstruction efforts in Japan after the war were aimed at keeping the Japanese permanently non-threatening.

What is the goal of the Iraq war? Is it to secure American freedom and relentlessly punish those who threaten it? No: "Our men and woman are fighting to secure the freedom of [Iraqis]," Bush has declared. Bush's aim is not to secure American freedom, but to engage in a worldwide crusade for democracy.

The moral foundation of this goal is the

ideal of altruism. Altruism is a moral code which judges an individual, or a nation, by the standard of how much one sacrifices to others. As an altruist, Bush believes that morality requires America to sacrifice for other nations. It requires that American soldiers be slaughtered in order rain gifts on the Iraqis.

One can see the stamp of altruism all over Operation Iraqi Freedom, from the publicly touted goals of the war, to the methods used to wage it. From the very beginning, U.S. forces have taken great care to minimize damage to Iraqi civilians, infrastructure, and even feelings. The rules of engagement forbid U.S. soldiers from attacking mosques—which our enemies often use as bases of operations—in order to avoid offending Iraqi religious sensibilities. New recruits must endure Islamic sensitivity training before they are deployed. All the while, American soldiers keep paying the price for these policies with their lives.

The U.S. military is functioning more like the Peace Corps than an occupation force. Allied soldiers build bridges, dig toilets, and secure public markets for Iraqi use. Many U.S. forces are engaged in protecting and supporting the impotent Iraqi government. As allied soldiers face daily attacks from insurgents, Iraqi politicians—some of which explicitly support the insurgents—bicker over which faction should benefit most from state-owned oil production.

These altruist goals and methods neces-

sarily conflict with the goal of national self-preservation. Iraqi insurgents—and terrorists around the world—are emboldened by every sacrifice offered to the Iraqi people. They hide in mosques and disappear into the civilian population, knowing they will not be pursued.

The true lesson of WWII is this: in order to defeat a powerfully motivated enemy, a nation must fight proudly and openly for its own self-defense, doing whatever is necessary to secure victory. And we must understand what victory truly means: the unconditional surrender of the enemy and the destruction of his ability to wage war.

A nation can either fight to defend its own citizens (as we did in WWII), or sacrifice for the benefit of enemy civilians (as we are doing in the Iraq War), but not both. If America is to enter a war, it should be for one reason only: to eliminate foreign dangers to American freedom. We should identify any threat to our national security, annihilate it as quickly as possible, and then bring our soldiers home.

Dan Edge is a 29-year old small business owner living in Pomona, NY. He earned his BA in Philosophy from the University of South Carolina, and he is currently a Sophomore at the Objectivist Academic Center. His academic interests include military history, psycho-epistemology, and romantic love psychology. His non-academic interests include fitness training, dining out, and swing dancing with his lovely fiancée, Kelly.

CORPORATIONS

continued from page 3

tions should be held guilty until they prove themselves innocent—an idea contrary to freedom and proper principles of justice.

This is not to say that no corporation has ever done wrong. There are clearly cases where corporate leaders have been guilty of offenses like fraud or negligence, and such crimes can and should be punished accordingly. But the degree of criticism does not match the degree of offense. The actions of

a few dishonest, irrational men in cases like Enron and WorldCom have been inflated to cast the businessman as conniving and immoral—ignoring the vast majority of honest and rational corporate leaders.

If we want to continue to enjoy the benefits that corporations offer us, we need to come to their defense and reverse the hostility that is unjustly directed towards them. We must remember that a corporation is nothing more—or less—than an ingeniously effective way of voluntarily bringing people with common goals together. We must re-

member how much Corporate America has created and what we enjoy as a result. And most importantly, we must remember why the corporation is good—because it epitomizes the American ideal of free individuals working cooperatively in pursuit of their values and happiness.

Noah Stahl, a recent graduate of Iowa State University, works as software engineer in St. Petersburg, Florida.

FAITH AND REASON

continued from page 5

faith used by Ashland's administration is shaping our policies, laws, and system of education. From President Bush's position against abortion to Governor Romney's opposition to gay marriage to the growing popularity of creationism and intelligent design in education—faith-based thinking is permeating the American scene. And in light of the fact that faith erodes reason,

this is a trend worthy of concern.

Benjamin Franklin was indeed right when he observed that those who "see by faith...shut the eye of reason." When a person attempts to use both eyes simultaneously to reach a decision on a particular issue, he discovers that the two eyes often see things differently. Ultimately, he either follows God—a feeling for which he has no evidence—or he follows reason. No other alternative is possible. Unfortunately, our culture is bag-full of people, especially

leaders, who choose the former course on a majority of very important issues. But the character of our culture can change, and its course will depend on which eye you, the reader, choose to use.

Kelly Cadenas is a fourth year undergraduate at Harvard University, where she currently pursues a degree in Biochemistry.

SPEAKERS, EVENTS, & MEETINGS

REGULAR OBJECTIVIST CLUB MEETINGS

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (NEW YORK, NY)

NYU Objectivist Club
What: Regular meetings
Contact: Kara Zawwarella
nyuoc_president@yahoo.com

HARVARD UNIVERSITY (CAMBRIDGE, MA)

Harvard Objectivist Club
What: Regular meetings, Mondays
Where: Loker Commons/Memorial Hall
Contact: Kelly Cadenas
hoc@hcs.harvard.edu
www.hcs.harvard.edu/~hoc

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES (LOS ANGELES, CA)

LOGIC
What: Weekly meetings
on UCLA campus
Where: Humanities A48
When: Wednesdays at 7:00 pm
Contact: www.ClubLogic.org
info@ClubLogic.org

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY (BERKELEY, CA)

Objectivist Club of Berkeley
What: Weekly meetings
Contact: Katie Brakora
kbrakora@berkeley.edu

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE (IRVINE, CA)

Objectivist Club at UCI
Contact: ebrunner@uci.edu
theobjectivistclubatuci.blogspot.com

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO (LA JOLLA, CA)

UCSD Objectivist Club
What: Weekly meetings
Where: Sequoia Room of Sierra Summit
When: Mondays at 7:00 pm
Contact: objectivist.ucsd@gmail.com

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY (SAN FRANCISCO, CA)

SFSU Students of Objectivism
What: Weekly meetings
Where: Cesar Chavez Student Center
Contact: aynrand@sfsu.edu

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA (GAINESVILLE, FL)

Ayn Rand Club
Contact:
aynrandclub@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND (COLLEGE PARK, MD)

Terrapin Objectivists
What: Weekly meetings
Contact:
terrapin-objectivists@googlegroups.com

GEORGIA TECH (ATLANTA, GA)

What: Weekly meetings
Contact: cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/aynrand

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER (BOULDER, CO)

What: Boulder Objectivist Club
Contact: jim.manley@objectivistclubs.org

TUFTS UNIVERSITY (BOSTON, MA)

Tufts Objectivist Club
What: Regular meetings
Where: Tufts University, Mayer Campus
Center
Contact: Gena Gorlin
gena.gorlin@gmail.com

METRO DETROIT

The Objectivist Group
What: Monthly meetings
When: Third Wednesday of each month
Contact:
togplsruchala@comcast.net

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Golden Gate Objectivists
Contact:
www.goldengateobjectivists.com
goldengateobjectivists@yahoo.com

WASHINGTON, DC

DC Objectivist Salon (DCOS)
What: Monthly study/discussion group
Contact: www.dcoobjectivistsaloon.org

TORONTO, ONTARIO

OPAR Study Group
Contact: Dalia Tubis
daliatubis@yahoo.com
& Guy Barnett
guyusj@hotmail.com

ONE-TIME EVENTS

FURMAN UNIVERSITY (GREENVILLE, SC)

"Global Capitalism: The Solution to World Oppression and Poverty" by Andrew Bernstein
Date: November 8, 2007
Location: Furman Hall #214
Campus Map: <http://www.furman.edu/general/campusmap.html>
Time: 7:00pm
Club Contact: Christopher Mills,
christopher.mills@furman.edu

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN (ANN ARBOR, MI)

"Atlas Shrugged and Ayn Rand's Morality of Egoism" by Craig Biddle
Date: November 14, 2007
Location: TBA
Time: TBA
Contact: University of Michigan
Objectivist Club (<http://www.umso.org/>)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES (LOS ANGELES, CA)

Affirmative Action Panel
Monday, November 5, 2007
UCLA Campus: Ackerman Grand
Ballroom
Panelists: Peter Schwartz, Ward Connerly,
Richard Sander
Hosted by LOGIC
<http://www.ClubLogic.org>

COSTA MESA, CA

Wednesday, November 7, 2007
ARI Public Lecture: "Religion vs. Self-Esteem" by Dr. Edwin A. Locke
Location and Details: Hilton Costa Mesa, 3050 Bristol Street, Costa Mesa, CA (At Bristol and the 405 Freeway), 714-540-7000
Time: 6:30 PM, bookstore opens; 7:30 PM, lecture; 8:30 PM, Q & A

HOLLYWOOD, CA

October 8th through December 11, 2007:
The Ideas of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, Commemorating the 50th anniversary of *Atlas Shrugged*, 1957-2007.
Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged* is the subject of a new exhibit to open on October 8, 2007, at the Frances Howard Goldwyn Hollywood Regional Library. Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the novel's publication, the exhibit is jointly sponsored by the Los Angeles Public Library and the Ayn Rand Institute, and is curated by Jeff Britting, archivist of the Ayn Rand

Archives, a special collection of the Ayn Rand Institute. The exhibit will include a reception open to the public on the date of the novel's fiftieth anniversary, October 10, 7 pm, as well as four public talks devoted to the ideas of *Atlas Shrugged* and their contemporary importance.
Exhibit space at: Frances Howard Goldwyn Hollywood Regional Library, 1623 N. Ivar Avenue, Hollywood, California.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE AYN RAND INSTITUTE

Free video and audio selections online:
www.aynrand.org

"The Road to 9/11: How America's Selfless Policies Unleashed the Jihadists," by Elan Jurno
"The Rise and Fall of Property Rights in America," by Adam Mossoff
"Totalitarian Islam's Threat to the West: A panel discussion featuring Yaron Brook, Daniel Pipes and Wafa Sultan
"The Separation of School and State: The Case for Abolishing America's Government Schools," by C. Bradley Thompson
"Atlas Shrugged—America's Second Declaration of Independence," by Onkar Gbate
"Religion and Morality," by Onkar Gbate
"Democracy vs. Victory: Why the 'Forward Strategy of Freedom' Had to Fail," by Yaron Brook
"Passing Judgment: Ayn Rand's View of Justice," by Tara Smith
Free Speech and the Danish Cartoons: A panel discussion featuring Yaron Brook and Daniel Pipes
"Why Conservatives Are Anti-Business," by Yaron Brook
"America's Foreign Policy: Self-Interest vs. Self-Sacrifice," by Peter Schwartz

THE LUCIDICUS PROJECT

Free books to medical students interested in learning about the moral and economic case for capitalism.
Contact: Jared Rhoads—jared.rhoads@lucidicus.org

layout & design for
The Undercurrent
provided by

red queen
DESIGN STUDIO
4 0 4 . 2 9 8 . 0 7 0 4
DESIGN@REDQUEENSTUDIO.COM

logos, letterheads, brochures,
business cards, websites, & more

WWW.REDQUEENSTUDIO.COM