

# REASON PAPERS

*A Journal of Interdisciplinary Normative Studies*

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Resolving the Tension in Aristotle's Ethic: The Balance Between  
Naturalism and Responsibility ..... *David E. W. Fenner*  
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# On the Fit between Egoism and Rights<sup>1</sup>

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The doctrine of egoism endorses each individual's pursuit of self-interest or individual well-being. The doctrine of rights attributes to individuals moral rights which others are obligated to respect. The doctrine of egoism seems to be a consequentialist principle which tells people what they should go for in life, viz., each should go for his own well-being. The doctrine of rights seems to be a deontic principle which tells people what restrictions they must abide by in the course of their lives, viz., that they may not (except, perhaps, in very special circumstances) pursue their ends in ways that violate other people's rights. These doctrines seem to be distinct from one another and even, in the eyes of some observers, theoretically and practically incompatible. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon to find one and the same theorist endorsing both the value individualism manifest within the doctrine of egoism and the (at least apparently) deontic individualism manifest within the doctrine of rights. Indeed, various advocates of normative individualism have held that there is a special coherence or "fit" between these doctrines such that, if one adopts the value individualism manifest in the doctrine of egoism, it is in some way rationally incumbent upon one to accept the doctrine of rights as well. One such individualist theorist was Ayn Rand, who clearly endorsed the doctrine of egoism, the doctrine of rights, and what we may call "the rational incumbency thesis," viz., that the adoption of egoism makes it rationally incumbent upon one to adopt rights as well.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay, I want to explore three different ways of understanding the rational incumbency thesis. These are what I shall call "the agent well-being view," "the recipient well-being view," and "the coordinate view." Each of these three views – which will be spelled out momentarily – constitutes a proposed explanation for why the acceptance of egoism makes it rationally incumbent upon one to accept rights. I shall argue that only on the last of these understandings – the coordinate view – is the rational incumbency thesis plausible. The articulation of these three versions of the rational incumbency thesis and the identification of the

coordinate view as the only plausible version is interwoven, in this paper, with a discussion of Rand's position with regard to the relationship between the doctrine of egoism and the doctrine of rights. We shall see is that each of these three understandings of the rational incumbency thesis is present to some degree in Rand's writings. Furthermore, once one sees the philosophical inadequacy of the agent well-being view and the recipient well-being view and the philosophical fertility of the coordinate view, one sees that it would have been better for Rand to have concentrated her philosophical efforts on articulating this last understanding of the rational incumbency thesis. For the same reasons, it would behoove those who seek to develop and extend Rand's insights – especially her insight about there being a special coherence between the doctrine of egoism and the doctrine of rights – to focus their attention and effort upon the coordinate view and its elaboration.

One's investigation of how the acceptance of egoism makes it rationally incumbent upon one to accept rights has one further dimension that needs mentioning here. If in some way egoism provides a grounding for the rational attribution of rights, this grounding must be consistent with, and even help to explain, certain special features which moral rights possess. These features include the fact that an individual's rights represent moral claims that the right-holder possesses against the subject of those rights. They are claims that obtain in virtue of the nature of the right-holder. They are claims compliance with which is owed to the right-holder. For those who are subject to these rights, the enunciation of these claims is not a matter of advice to them about how best to advance their interests, but rather a statement of the moral constraints they must abide by in the course of their interaction with other persons. So what is needed is an understanding of how the acceptance of egoism makes it rationally incumbent upon one to acknowledge rights that have these special normative features.

Let me characterize the three views that are to be examined in terms of agent A who is our actor and who will be either abiding by or not abiding by certain constraints (e.g., a constraint against killing other people) in his conduct toward recipient B who has, or is thought to have, rights to A's abiding by those constraints. The agent well-being view is that the source of B's rights against A that A abide by those constraints is the conduciveness to agent A's well-being of A's abiding by those constraints. The recipient well-being view is that the source of B's rights against A that A abide by those constraints is the conduciveness to recipient B's well-being of A's abiding by those constraints. On both of these views pride of

place goes to considerations of conduciveness to well-being and, in this way, the doctrine of egoism is given priority over the doctrine of rights.<sup>3</sup> On both views, egoism is the root of rights.

In contrast, on the coordinate view egoism is not the root of rights. How, then, do egoism and rights fit together? The basic idea is that the doctrine of egoism and the doctrine of rights are complementary principles within an ethic which is rational precisely because it includes both of these complementary elements. This basic idea can be spelled out in a number of distinct ways. One possibility is that the doctrine of egoism and the doctrine of rights have a common root; they each articulate a facet of some yet more fundamental normative truth. Another similar possibility is that the rationale for including one or the other doctrine within moral theory is such that it (the rationale) is not satisfied unless the other doctrine also is included within moral theory. In effect, the rationality of endorsing the doctrine of egoism is conditional upon the endorsement also of the doctrine of rights (and/or *visa versa*).

The present essay will be more devoted to the negative task of disposing of the agent well-being and recipient well-being views than to the more complex positive task of establishing the coordinate view. The systematic defense of the coordinate is a larger endeavor than can be accomplished here. Nevertheless that larger endeavor is considerably advanced by means of the critique of the agent well-being and recipient well-being views. For this critique highlights crucial characteristics of rights, eliminates the coordinate view's competitors, and delineates important philosophical difficulties which only the coordinate view promises to overcome. Disposing of the agent well-being and recipient well-being views corrects what seems to me to be the pervasive error within much of Rand's and other Objectivist thinking about rights, viz., taking the doctrine of egoism to have priority over the doctrine of rights. I conjecture that the strong tendency among Objectivists to think that the doctrine of egoism has to have priority over the doctrine of rights reflects two mistaken beliefs. One is the mistaken belief, which is shared with utilitarian theorists, that all reasoning about the rightness or wrongness of actions has to be instrumental; actions always have to be evaluated on the basis of the value or disvalue of their consequences and never on the basis of their inherent character. The other is the mistaken belief that acknowledging constraining rights that are not conceptually subordinate to the doctrine of egoism somehow endangers or compromises the self. The belief seems to be that any concession that others possess a moral status that requires that one be circumspect in one's treatment of them amounts to

some sort of subordination of oneself to others. I shall not here directly address either of these beliefs. Nevertheless, my critique of the agent well-being and recipient well-being views and my comments in support of the coordinate view amount to an indirect challenge of these two beliefs.

The agent well-being view tends to be salient in Objectivist discussions when the question is: Why, when all is said and done, should A abide by B's rights? So let us begin with a fuller statement of this view. For each individual (in all but the most extraordinary circumstances), certain patterns of constraint in that individual's behavior toward other people are, or are very likely to be, conducive to that individual's well-being. These patterns of constraint – such as not killing or enslaving other people and not seizing the products of their labor – are among the necessary means to each individual's well-being.<sup>4</sup> Hence, if one ought to achieve one's well-being, one ought to abide by these patterns of constraint – and others' rights are the correlatives of these guidelines for good living. On this understanding of the fit between the doctrine of egoism and the doctrine of rights, the fit is that compliance with what we call other people's rights is a crucial method for advancing one's own well-being. Compliance with what we call other people's rights is simply part of the enlightened application in one's own life of the doctrine of egoism. That is why, on the agent well-being view, the acceptance of egoism makes it rationally incumbent upon one to accept rights. On this understanding, rights are subordinate to the endorsement of the pursuit of self-interest in the sense that B's rights against individual A are a function of (or consist in) the fact that certain ways of A's treating B are disadvantageous to A.

To begin our assessment of the agent well-being view, imagine that A has been thinking about killing B so as to make off with all of the accumulated fruits of B's labors. Fortunately, before doing so, B reads the relevant sections of "The Objectivist Ethics" and concludes that it would be contrary to his survival qua man to do so. Since it is his "first duty"<sup>5</sup> to promote his survival qua man, A concludes that he ought not to kill B or even make off with the fruits of B's labors. Furthermore, A reasons that all obligations to others must be derivative of this first duty to himself. Hence, he draws the further conclusion that B's rights against him (A) not to be killed and not to be dispossessed are a function of its being conducive to A's true well-being for A to eschew killing B and seizing B's products.

The problem here is that, although we have given an account of A's having reason on the basis of his self-interest not to kill B, we have not given an account of B's having a right against being killed. If I have a goose that lays golden eggs and a duty to myself to advance my well-being, then I

have reason not to kill that goose. But my having that reason on the basis of my self-interest not to kill this goose hardly amounts to an account of the goose's having a right against me not to be killed!

How far off the mark the agent well-being view is can be brought out by the conversation that might ensue upon B's congratulating A for not having killed him.

B says to A, "You could have killed me, but you didn't. Good for you. You clearly have a regard for others' rights."

But A answers, "Well you know it would have been harmful to my self-interest to kill you; so I didn't."

And this leads the somewhat puzzled B to ask, "Do you mean that your only reason for not killing me was that it would have been contrary to your self-interest? Do you, therefore, also mean that, were killing me conducive to your interest, you would have no reason at all not to kill me?"

To which A answers, "Of course I mean that. There is only one fundamental moral principle, each is to promote his own well-being, and all other norms and injunctions must be subordinate to that.

At this point the philosophically astute B says, "Ah! I will continue to deal with you because it is safe for me to deal with people who are motivated by the conception of well-being that you entertain – just as it's safe for the goose to remain in contact with its enlightened owner. But I withdraw my congratulations to you for being a resolute observer of rights. For that congratulations was based upon my belief that you took me to possess a right not to be killed – a right that implies your having an obligation to me not to take my life. But now I see that you wholly lack the concept of rights as interpersonal principles having any independent meaning or force. So you can hardly be congratulated for your commitment to respecting rights."

Having worked himself into a righteous philosophical funk, B adds, "Respecting other people's rights is a matter of recognizing them as moral ends-in-themselves, as beings who, because they are moral ends-in-themselves, are not morally available means to your ends. You, Mr. A, have confessed that this recognition of me as a moral end-in-myself played no role in your deciding not to kill me. The only reason you had not to kill me was entirely parallel to the reason that the prudent farmer has not to kill his goose. And we all recognize that the conduciveness to the farmer's interest of his not killing that goose does not account for the goose's right not to be killed – because the goose has no such right."

And here is B's final intellectual shot at A and his agent well-being view: "On your view, A, the only person who would have been wronged



had you killed me would have been you. On your view, the only reason a murderer acts wrongfully is that engaging in murder is contrary to the murderer's well-being. Because the agent well-being view involves an exclusively self-regarding explanation for the wrongfulness of the agent's action, the agent well-being view cannot capture the core fact that the victim is the recipient of the fatal action, not the performer of, that action."<sup>6</sup>

B's remarks are indeed philosophically astute. They articulate what I take Rand herself to have in mind when she says that "man's life is his by right (which means: by moral principle and by his nature)" and that "a right is the property of an individual."<sup>7</sup> And I will reinforce this critique by asking you to think about two examples from Rand's own fiction. But, before proceeding further, let me make sure that one thing perfectly clear. My complaint here is not with the proposition that it is always (except in "emergency" cases) congruent with A's good that A abide by B's rights. I think that one can raise questions about this proposition and ask for a marshalling of evidence on its behalf. And one has to be careful that one doesn't defend this proposition of merely stipulating that everyone's well-being consists in part in abiding by everyone else's rights.<sup>8</sup> But, I'm not challenging this congruence claim here. Rather, I am objecting to a particular philosophical analysis according to which B's rights against A are a function of its being advantageous to A to constrain himself in the way in which he treats B.

We have just looked at the agent well-being view in terms of whether it accords with rightholder B's perception of his moral relationship to individual A who is said to be subject to B's rights. Now let us, in effect, look at it in terms of the moral perception of the rights-respecting agent. The main point here is that the morally perceptive agent recognizes the propriety of his constraining in his behavior toward other persons quite independently of any calculus of the agent's self-interest or well-being. The rights-respecting individual's recognition that he has reason not to kill and prey upon others does not wait upon a complex and highly speculative line of psychological, sociological, economic, and historical argument which is designed to show that it will (almost) never be truly expedient for that individual to kill or prey upon others.

Consider, then, morally perceptive Howard Roark. Why, when he is planning the destruction of Cortlandt Homes, does Roark go to the trouble of insuring that the nightwatchman will not be killed? Of course the clever answer is: Because Roark is an advocate of the nightwatchman state. But let us rise above such cleverness. And let us put aside

inessentials. Planning to save the nightwatchman provides an opportunity for Roark to offer Dominique a chance to join him in his stance against the world of the second-handers. But surely, even if this special feature were absent, Roark would have found some way to insure the safety of that nightwatchman. He would have rejected out of hand, as not among his morally possible choices, any plan which would have caused the death of the nightwatchman. Indeed, if Roark were to have discovered at the eleventh hour that his stratagem to lure the nightwatchman to safety had failed, surely he would not have proceeded with the destruction of Cortlandt. Surely, he would have postponed that destruction until he had come up with some other way to proceed without killing (or even injuring) the watchman.

Why? The answer cannot be that killing the nightwatchman would be damning publicity for Roark. For this demands that we ask why killing the watchman would be damning publicity – as opposed to merely bad publicity, which Roark was never worried about. No appeal to bad publicity or the idea that killing the watchman would unduly complicate the trial gets to the core fact. Nor does Roark avoid killing the nightwatchman because he has engaged in some other complex calculus which reveals that the unprovoked killing of people or this man in particular will be damaging to his (independently specified<sup>9</sup>) interests. Roark avoids killing the nightwatchman because doing so would wrong the watchman. It would infringe upon the watchman's right to his own life which the watchman possesses just as surely as Roark<sup>10</sup> possesses a right to every minute of his life and to all parts of his energy. This right of the watchman against Roark can no more adequately be accounted for in terms of its being contrary to Roark's well-being to kill him than Roark's right against the nightwatchman or anyone else to his (Roark's) life can be accounted for in terms of its being contrary to their self-interest to kill him.<sup>11</sup>

Let us, just for a moment, move back to the perspective of the rightholder – in particular the rightholder in chief of *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt. Let us imagine some communication, right after the final scene of *Atlas Shrugged*, concerning practical details about the return of the inhabitants of Galt's Gulch to the larger and now chastened society. John Galt says to "society's" representative, "Let's be perfectly clear, we are returning only because you now recognize our rights over our own lives, and over the fruits of our labor, and to determine on the basis of our own chosen purposes what we shall do with our lives, our labor, and our products." In response the representative says, "That's right. We have

learned our lesson. We now see that it is highly disadvantageous to us to try to control your lives, your holdings, and your decisions, and for that reason we are resolved never again to try to do so. We almost killed the geese that lay the golden eggs. Come back to the barnyard geese, and we will be much more prudent in our treatment of you.” And John Galt (rightly) says, “!#! off.”

Or, if he were willing to make one more speech, he would say, “Listen representative, you have only grasped one of the lessons that you should have learned and it’s the less morally fundamental one. The lesson that you have grasped is that it’s not really in your interest to seek to exercise control over our lives, holdings and decisions. The lesson that you have not grasped is that we have rights over our own lives, holdings, and decision-making capacities such that we don’t have to justify ourselves and our freedom to you in terms of how well we and our freedom will serve you. Our fundamental moral point is that we have no intention of justifying ourselves and our freedom to you in terms of how well we and our freedom serve you.”

Part of what Galt would be pointing out is that rights have their primary basis in properties of the right-holder. Those properties obligate others to constrain their conduct toward the right-holder in certain ways. That’s why compliance with the right is owed to the right-holder. That’s why it is the right-holder who is wronged when the right is violated, not the agent of that violation. The rights of individuals are not a function of the advantages to others of abiding by those rights.<sup>12</sup>

The recipient well-being view seems to accommodate this focus upon the victim. On this view, it is because constraint on A’s part is a necessary condition of B’s well-being that B has a right against A to that constraint. “Rights are conditions of existence required by man’s nature for his proper survival.” Since B requires non-coercion on the part of A (and all other persons) for his proper survival, since he “cannot function successfully under coercion,” he has rights against A and all others not to be subjected to coercion.<sup>13</sup> This grounding of B’s right not to be coercively interfered with in using his mind, in acting on his own judgment, etc. upon the rightness of B’s using his mind, acting on his own judgment, etc. seems to be the point of Rand’s claim that,

If man is to live on earth, it is right for him to use his mind, it is right to act on his own free judgment, it is right to work for his values and to keep the product of his work. If life on

earth is his purpose, he has a right to live as a rational being. .  
<sup>14</sup>

The common criticism of this passage focuses on its apparent inference from propositions about how it is right for B to act to a proposition about B's rights against other parties. But I want to put matters slightly differently – in a way that speaks generally to the recipient well-being view. To assert that B has a right against A is to assert that A has some sort of reason – at least normally a decisive reason – to constrain his conduct toward B in certain ways. But how can the fact that it's valuable for B to use his own mind, to act on his own judgment, etc. itself provide reason for A – at least normally a decisive reason – to avoid preventing B from using his own mind, preventing his from acting on her own judgment, etc.?

A hallmark of any coherent egoist theory is the theorem that, from the fact that some condition or form of activity is valuable for individual B and that B has reason to promote that action or activity, it does not follow that any other individual has reason to promote or even not thwart that action or activity.<sup>15</sup> It will be extremely valuable for me to get to the summit of Kit Carson Peak next time I try and I have good reason to devote my resources and efforts toward this activity. But, within any coherent egoist theory, nothing follows from this about my getting to the summit being valuable for anyone else. Nothing follows about anyone else having reason to assist me or even having reason not prevent me from reaching the summit. The problem is that propositions about what conditions are conducive to recipient B's well-being simply don't speak to the issue of whether B has rights (inherently interpersonal claims) against others. They do not speak to the issue of whether others are subject to some obligation to B such that, if they do not constrain their behavior in certain ways, they will wrong B.<sup>16</sup> This is the fatal flaw in the recipient well-being view.

Now let us turn briefly to the coordinate view. Consider the following claim from "The Objectivist Ethics."

. . . every living human being is an end in himself, not the means to the ends or welfare of others – and, therefore, . . . man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to him. (p.30)

While this passage is subject to a number of different readings, one thing that is almost indubitable is that it offers the idea of each person's being a moral end-in-himself as the source of two distinction injunctions.<sup>17</sup> The first is the injunction that one ought not to sacrifice oneself to others. The second is the injunction that one ought not to sacrifice others to oneself. It is about as clear as these things can be that the second injunction is not offered merely as a particularly important implication or application of the first. Rather it is offered as a co-equal component in the articulation of the idea that each individual is an end-in-himself.

This "two-pronged"<sup>18</sup> understanding of an ethic that thoroughly rejects the vision of man as a sacrificial being is also at the very core of the oath that Galt and his fellow strikers take in *Atlas Shrugged*. "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man nor ask another man to live for mine."<sup>19</sup> Here again there are two dicta; one should not live for the sake of others and one should not force or even suggest the propriety of others living for one's own sake. And, once again, the second dictum appears as a co-equal element within the oath. It is not at all represented as an implication or application of the first dictum. Both the passage from "The Objectivist Ethics" and the oath from *Atlas Shrugged* express a two-faceted ethic which, at its core, prescribes each person's pursuit of his own life and well-being and proscribes the pursuit of one's ends in ways that treat others as sacrificial beings.<sup>20</sup>

So the following seems to be a plausible unpacking of the passage from "The Objectivist Ethics."

Every living human being is an end-in-himself. This is a claim more fundamental than either the doctrine of egoism or the doctrine of rights. Since this is a claim about every human being, for each human being it has two main implications. It has an implication for each person vis-a-vis his disposition of his person and life; and it has an implication for each person vis-a-vis his disposition of other persons and their lives. The first implication is that this person ought to discover, promote, and sustain his well-being, the well-being which is of ultimate value for this agent. The second implication of each persons' being an end-in-himself is that no agent ought to treat any other individual as a means to his ends – however sound those ends otherwise are. To do so would be to presume that others, unlike oneself, exist for the sake of ends outside of themselves. To recognize that one is

morally excluded from treating others as means to one's ends – excluded by the crucial fact about others that they too are moral ends-in-themselves<sup>21</sup> – is to recognize that others have (exclusive) moral jurisdiction over themselves. Others have rights over themselves and, correlatively, each individual is bound to comply with those rights. So the second more specific articulation of the core idea that every person is a moral end-in-himself is that each person possesses rights over himself which others are obligated to respect.

Neither the doctrine of egoism nor the doctrine of rights have priority over the other. And because they are distinct implications or specifications of the understanding that each person is a moral end-in-himself, neither doctrine is reducible to the other. Each prong of this anti-sacrificial ethic provides agents with reason for engaging in or avoiding various courses of action. For instance, the first prong calls upon A not to kill B because doing so would be disadvantageous to A while the second prong calls upon A not to kill B because this would violate B's rights.<sup>22</sup>

Although these two sorts of reason will, if the Objectivist view of the world is correct, coincide and reinforce one another (except in extreme emergency situations), they remain reasons of two different sorts. The first sort are essentially self-regarding; the second sort are essentially other-regarding. The first sort reflect the agent's reality as an end-in-himself; the second sort reflect the reality of other persons as also being ends-in-themselves. This recognition of essentially other-regarding reasons is no more than the rejection of normative solipcism. It is no more than the acknowledgement that other persons have moral significance in their own right and, hence, are not subject to one's use and exploitation as are entities that lack rational ultimate ends of their own.

This rejection of normative solipcism ought not to be confused with any suggestion that A is called upon to sacrifice his well-being for the sake of B's well-being. A's recognition of the reality of B as a moral end-in-himself does not involve A's adoption of B's well-being as part of his (A's) ultimate end. It does not involve to the slightest degree the idea that it is rational for A to compromise himself or his well-being for the sake of B's. This is because the ultimate value of B's well-being which is involved in B's being a moral end-in-himself and which is acknowledged by A is ultimate value for B.<sup>23</sup> Thus, A's essentially other-regarding reason is not what we may call an "end-revealing" reason. It is instead what we may call a "means-precluding" or "boundary-setting" reason. This is the sort of reason

that is operating when Roark rejects out of hand any method of destroying Cortlandt that would involving causing the death of the nightwatchman. It is the sort of reason Galt expects the world to acknowledge before he and his fellow strikers return.

Unfortunately, I have only provided here an intimation of the coordinate view. But, before explaining why it is only an intimation, I want to make two further constructive points. The first brings us back to the original question of why it is rationally incumbent upon the person who accepts the doctrine of egoism also to accept the doctrine of rights. The answer within the intimated coordinate view is not that the latter is some sort of application of the former. Rather, the answer is that the underlying rationale for the doctrine of egoism -- which is presupposed in the adoption of that doctrine -- commits one also to the doctrine of rights. The second point is that there is an important further sense in which the two distinct implications or specifications of the core proposition that every person is a moral end-in-himself are coordinate.

It is highly advantageous for each of us to live in a world in which rights are scrupulously observed. But rights will not be scrupulously observed if each of us thinks that the only reason any given individual has for abiding by "rights" is the enhanced well-being that the individual anticipates through compliance. The point here is a game-theoretic point about the rational propensity of each agent to defect from the compliance game when everyone (or nearly everyone) has reason to believe that everyone (or nearly everyone) will be deciding whether to comply with "rights" solely on the basis of whether they individually anticipate such compliance to be advantageous to them.<sup>24</sup> To get mutual assurance and convergence upon a regime of general compliance with rights people have to believe in rights and believe that others believe in rights.<sup>25</sup> That is, they have to believe and believe that others believe that they have reason to constrain their conduct toward one another that does not arise solely through assessments of whether this or that act of constraint or policy of constraint serves the well-being of the agent involved. The mutual advantageousness of a regime of compliance with rights depends upon belief that those rights demand compliance independently of the advantages that accrue through compliance. Only if the doctrine of rights is not taken to be reducible to the doctrine of egoism will a regime of rights which serves people's interests obtain.

Now, why have I provided only an intimation of the coordinate view? Consider this discomfoting question: Which comes first, the rational endorsement of the protean proposition that each person is a moral

end-in-himself or the rational endorsement of each of the specifications of that proposition, i.e., the rational endorsement of the doctrines of egoism and of rights? On the one hand, if we say that the protean affirmation comes first, we are faced with the question: Why is this protean affirmation rational? On the other hand, we may say that the rationality of each of the two doctrines comes first and, with these two doctrines at hand, we construct the protean proposition that each is a moral end-in-himself. But if we say this, then we have to provide justifications for each of the two doctrines without engaging in a question-begging appeal to the protean proposition. The astute reader will notice that we have circled back towards where we began!

But not entirely. For we have: (1) disposed of the agent well-being and recipient well-being views; (2) sharpened our understanding of what rights are and of the ways in which egoism and rights are coordinate phenomena; and (3) seen how Rand's appeal to the idea of persons' being moral ends-in-themselves suggests her own subscription to the coordinate view. Nor are matters at all philosophically bleak. There are, I think, good arguments justifying the move from the endorsement of egoism to the endorsement of rights – arguments that are not subject to the problems of the agent well-being and recipient well-being views.

Here is a sketch of one such argument, which I call the Prerogative Argument.<sup>26</sup> A moral theory that recognizes the fact that, for each person, his own well-being is the end of ultimate value must incorporate a robust individualist prerogative which says something like this: It is reasonable and proper for each individual to reject moral demands that he sacrifice his own well-being for the sake of advancing the ends of others. It is reasonable and proper for each individual to devote himself to the discovery, promotion, and sustenance of his own well-being – even if others call upon him, instead, to serve their ends. Only if a moral system includes such a robust individualist prerogative will it protect individuals against being unduly morally subject to the ends of others. But, although such a prerogative is necessary within a moral theory to preclude individuals from being unduly morally subject to the ends of others, it is not sufficient to preclude moral subjugation.

The reason is that an individual can become subject to the ends of others not merely through his own choice – through his choosing to sacrifice his well-being for the sake of others – but also through his being prevented from devoting himself to the discovery, promotion, and sustenance of his well-being by the interference of others. We are vulnerable not merely to our own betrayal of our well-being, but also to



others' interfering with our chosen exercise of our individualist prerogative. We are each pervasively vulnerable to such interference whether it be undertaken in the name of some alleged common good or in the name of the personal good of the interferer. Each individual's prerogative of devoting himself to his own good will be rendered nugatory and the rationale behind that prerogative – viz., that the moral subjugation of individuals to the ends of others be precluded – will be defeated unless the moral system which includes this prerogative also includes moral restrictions against interferences with the exercise of this prerogative. In order for the prerogative not to be rendered nugatory and for its underlying rationale to be served, the moral system also has to include the attribution to each individual of a right to exercise that prerogative, i.e., a right to devote himself, in his chosen ways, to the discovery, promotion, and sustenance of his well-being. The attribution of this protective right to each individual against each other individual is a condition of the rationality of attributing to each individual the reasonableness and propriety of pursuing and maintaining his own well-being. The reason that the adoption of the doctrine of egoism makes the adoption of the doctrine of rights rationally incumbent is that the adoption of the latter is a condition of the rationality of the adoption of the former.

Conceivably, but barely conceivably, this argument can be read back into Rand's remark that,

“Rights” are a moral concept – the concept that provides a logical transition from the principles guiding an individual's actions to the principles guiding his relationship with others -- the concept that preserves and protects individual morality in a social context.<sup>2</sup>

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1. This essay is a revised version of a presentation made on July 6, 1998 in Boulder CO to the ninth annual Summer Seminar of the Institute for Objectivist Studies.

2. For reasons that are not relevant to the present discussion, I describe my own position, not as a species of egoism, but rather as “moral individualism.” This position includes the advocacy of “value individualism,” at the core of which is the assertion that, for each individual, the ultimate value is his well-

being. What I say in this paper about the fit between “egoism” and rights, I would usually cast in terms of the fit between “value individualism” and rights.

3. The agent well-being view is the egoistic counterpart of what is often referred to as the Benefit theory of rights. According to this view, B has a right to condition C if it is advantageous to society that B be protected in his possession of C. (Cf., chapter five of J. S. Mill’s *Utilitarianism*.) The recipient well-being view is the counterpart to what is often referred to as the Interest theory of rights. (Cf., the chapter on the nature of rights in J. Raz’ *The Morality of Freedom*.) I survey and critique the Benefit theory, the Interest theory, and also the Choice theory and support what I call the Jurisdiction theory in my paper, “In Defense of the Jurisdiction Theory of Rights.” (forthcoming)

4. Cf., the arguments in “The Objectivist Ethics” for why parasitism cannot be a means to one’s survival or one’s well-being, i.e., one’s “survival *qua* man.” (pp. 24-27) I think that these arguments fail for two main reasons. (1) They rely on the mistaken (and very non-Objectivist) principle that, if things would work out badly for you if *everyone* were to act in a certain way, then you shouldn’t act in that way even if others won’t be acting in that way. (2) They rely on the mere stipulation that to survive by certain means is not to survive as a rational being (and, hence, is not to “survive *qua* man”) whereas the issue at hand is precisely whether it is rational to survive by those means.

5. *The Fountainhead*, p.683.

6. The agent well-being view construes the rights that entities have against agent A to consist in the expediency for A of constraining his conduct toward those entities. For this reason, if there were entities – even non-conscious, non-purposive entities – such that it would be expedient for A to constrain his conduct toward them in the same way as it is expedient for A to constrain his conduct toward persons, the advocate of this view will have to attribute to the same rights to those entities as are attributed to persons. Imagine, e.g., that there were a group of non-conscious, non-purposive robots who were, however, programmed to act and react exactly as people would both to “dangers” and to “opportunities.” They are programmed with lots of skills and have their glitch-less “truck, barter, and trade” software up and running. By hypothesis, the same patterns of conduct that are conducive to A’s well-being in his interaction with persons would be conducive to his well-being in his interaction with these robots. And, for this reason, the friend of the agent

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well-being view *must* say that these robots would have the same rights against A that people have. But this, of course, is absurd. Non-conscious, non-purposive entities like these robots cannot have rights. Why does the agent well-being view yield this absurd conclusion? The answer is, because of its single-minded focus on the conduciveness of various actions or patterns of conduct to the agent's well-being and, hence, its failure to focus on the presence or absence of morally fertile properties in those entities the agent acts upon – properties which, if present, account for those entities' having rights.

7. "Man's Rights," p. 110.

8. Nor can one argue: (1) it is in one's interest to be rational; (2) it is always rational to abide by what has been identified as other people's rights; (3) therefore, it is always in one's interest to abide by what has been identified as other people's rights. For whether (2) is true (in the sense that abiding by what has been identified as other people's rights is always in one's self-interest), is precisely the question at hand.

9. It will not do to pack respect for others' rights – or living in accord with the principle that one should not prey upon others – into Roark's conception of his interests. One can only incorporate compliance with such dicta into Roark's self-interest if one has successfully gone through that complex and speculative line of psychological, sociological, economic, and historical reasoning which is supposed to show that it is (almost) never in one's true interest to prey upon others. In the case at hand, Roark's moral reasoning is *not* tied to this sort of ratiocination. (And even an instrumentalist case against *preying* on others would not preclude Roark's *indifferently* killing the nightwatchman in the course of destroying Cordtland. See note 11.)

10. *The Fountainhead*, p. 686.

11. One should not expect and one won't find much of a *theory* of rights in *The Fountainhead*. Nevertheless Rand more than hints at a version of the agent well-being view. Her position is something like this: (1) One's "first duty" is to oneself. (p. 683); (2) It is essential to one's self (and hence to the well-being of one's self) that one not be dependent upon others, that one not live through others; (3) Any act in which you victimize another involves dependency. (cf., p. 683); (4) Therefore, one ought to avoid victimizing others so as to fulfill one's duty to oneself of preserving and enhancing one's well-being. Needless

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to say, the crucial weaknesses lie in premise (3). First, it is not at all clear how victimizing another through, e.g., robbing or enslaving him, involves more dependency or worse dependency than enriching oneself through highly specialized, complex market interactions. In neither case, contrary to Rand, is one as dependent as "the beggar" (p. 684). Second, (3) falsely presupposes that all victimization involves centering one's action on the victim (and, in this sense at least, becoming dependent upon the victim). But this is mistaken -- as the nightwatchman case illustrates. If Roark were to kill the watchman, his doing so would not be a matter of centering on him, but rather a matter of *totally disregarding* him. Surely acting in total disregard of other people is not a form of dependency. Notice also that Rand's conclusion has the consequence of any version of the agent well-being view. This is that the agent wrongs himself; the so-called victim is only wronged in some derivative sense.

12. The most philosophically elaborate and sophisticated version of what I have called the agent well-being view is developed in Douglas DenUyl and Douglas Rasmussen's *Liberty and Nature: An Aristotelian Defense of Liberal Order* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1991). I discuss this work in "Rasmussen and DenUyl on Natural Rights" in *Reason Papers*, no. 18 (Fall 1993), pp. 89-99 and the authors respond on pp. 123-128 of that volume. For a position that seems to me to blend insights of both the agent well-being and recipient well-being views, see Tibor Machan, *Individuals and their Rights* (LaSalle IL: Open Court, 1989).

13. "Man's Rights," p. 111.

14. "Man's Rights," p. 111, originally from *Atlas Shrugged*.

15. The best statement of the logical structure of a coherent egoism remains Jesse Kalin's "Two Types of Moral Reasoning: Egoism as a Moral Theory," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (November 1975), pp. 323-356. The basis of this structure is egoism's assertion that all values and all value-based reasons for action are "agent-relative." Thus, this logical structure is shared by all normative theories that are agent-relativist. One place where I invoke this structure and defend the agent-relativist view about the nature of value is "Moral Individualism: Agent-Relativity and Deontic Restrictions," *Social Philosophy and Policy* (Autumn 1989), pp. 81-111. In "Deontic Restrictions are

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not Agent-Relative Restrictions” in *Social Philosophy and Policy* (forthcoming) I point to a pervasive misuse of the concept of “agent-relative.”

16. Even if the inference at the core of the recipient well-being view were sound at least one major problem would remain. B’s rights against interference with his choices and actions will have been so tightly linked to the *rightness* of his choices and actions that there will be no room for *principled* anti-paternalism. That is, there will be no room for B’s having a *right* to engage in choices and actions that are known to be self-harming.

17. I think that it is pretty clear that Rand takes the concept of “end-in-itself” to apply only to “living human beings” or other rational and volitional creatures; it is pretty clear that she does not intend it to apply to clumps of grass or termites or cows. Thus, grounding rights on a being’s status as an end-in-itself is not subject to the charge that it amounts to asserting the rights of clumps of grass, termites, and cows. To preclude this too broad construal of the concept of end-in-itself, i.e., to indicate its application only to rational and volitional beings, I shall often talk of persons as being “*moral* ends-in-themselves” and as having, in their own lives and well-being, ultimate *rational* ends.

18. The helpful phrase, “two-pronged,” comes from John Hospers’ characterization of Rand’s ethics in his presentation on July 6, 1998, in Boulder Co, at the ninth annual Institute for Objectivist Studies Summer Seminar.

19. *Atlas Shrugged*, recent paperback edition, p. 676.

20. These passages and the repeated insistence of Rand’s heroes that there is a principled and not merely instrumental reason for others to stay out of their way should give very long pause to those who take up the defence of the agent well-being view because they think that Rand clearly favored this alternative.

21. The appeal here is to man’s *normative* nature as a being with ultimate rational ends of his own. This, I believe, is the crucial sort of appeal to man’s “nature” within arguments for rights. The other sort of appeal to man’s nature is especially prominent in Rand’s expression of the recipient well-being view. Here the claim is that “the source of rights is man’s nature” in the sense that individuals have to be allowed certain freedoms if, given their nature, they are to “function successfully” (“Man’s Rights,” p. 111).

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22. Surely Hank Rearden's assertion that "no man has the right to seek his good through the violation of the rights of another" manifests the idea of rights as moral constraints upon man's pursuit of his good that are not reducible to maxims about how most fully and/or reliably to attain one's good (*Atlas Shrugged*, p. 444, recent paperback edition).

23. The *value* of B's well-being is value *for* B; the value of that well-being is "agent-relative." But it is not true that the *fact* that B is a moral end-in-himself is agent-relative. This is a fact about reality. And, if rationality involves responsiveness to realities that confront us, rationality requires that we be responsive to the fact that some of the entities we encounter are moral ends-in-themselves.

24. For a wonderful description of something like this process of mutually reinforcing pre-emptive defection see Rand's description of the events leading up to the destruction of the Taggart Tunnel (*Atlas Shrugged*, pp. 544-562, recent paperback edition).

25. If they are in a state of nature, they have to take themselves -- and take others to take themselves -- to be in a Lockean state of nature rather than a Hobbesian state of nature.

26. The name derives from the use of the term "prerogative" in Samuel Scheffler's *The Rejection of Consequentialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) and in the philosophical literature that has developed from that work.

27. "Man's Rights," p. 108.

# Resolving the Tension in Aristotle's Ethic: The Balance Between Naturalism and Responsibility

David E. W. Fenner

Aristotle's ethic is based on two elements: character and decision-making. But sometimes these two elements can conflict. The following scene, taken from John Huston's film "Key Largo," describes such a conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Gaye: Hey, fella, what'ya gonna do? Don't go with them. They'd wait until you get them inside of Cuba, and then they'd kill you. You'd never walk off that boat.

Nora: She's right, Frank. Tell them you'll go, and they'll hurt you. And then when you get outside in the dark, make a break. Run. Try to get away.

Gaye: It's your only chance, fella.

[Pause.]

Nora: Frank, what are you thinking?

Frank: You were right. When your head says one thing and your whole life says another, your head always loses.

Gaye: Out there in the dark, make a break for it. Run!

Frank: Yeah, that's what my head says.

Temple: You gonna make a fight of it, Frank?

Frank: Got to. Not that one Rocko more or less makes any difference in this world. What I said upstairs still goes. I haven't changed my tune. It's just that... I've got to.

Temple: Well, if you're a fighter, you can't walk away from a fight. That's the answer, I guess.

## I

What advice would Aristotle have given Frank? The end, which is to say the conclusion to Frank's actions, is, as Aristotle points out, not a matter of decision.<sup>2</sup> The specific end here is to survive and to rescue Nora, Temple and Gaye. The means, says Aristotle, are the only things under deliberative consideration. And Frank has accomplished that deliberation (*proairesis*). His head tells him he should run. But will he run? No. This is because his character, his "whole life," informed by and constituted of certain virtues, demands that he do otherwise: as Frank is a fighter, and since he is clearly on the side of right, so must he fight.

If Aristotle were to counsel Frank to fight, then Aristotle would seem to be disregarding the deliberative consideration that each ethical dilemma must occasion for the outcome of that decision to be one which is voluntary and a matter of responsibility for the deliberating agent. If Aristotle were to counsel Frank to run, then Aristotle would seem to be ignoring the power of the entrenchment that typifies the states of character, the virtues, that inform Frank's character. Without that goodness of character, all the deliberation in the world, says Aristotle, would not make a bit of difference. A character informed by virtue (*arete*) is necessary to ground the deliberative activity, to insure that such activity will aim away from extremes of activity and toward the mean. Without such a character, the thought behind the action would not be the deliberation that occasions ethical behavior. It would be mere cleverness.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, a character without, at the appropriate times, due deliberation, renders the agent carrying out the ensuing actions ultimately blameless and praiseless for the behaviors performed. Indeed, this is the central problem found in any naive naturalist portrayal of ethics. If one is fated to do what he does because those behaviors necessarily flow from that agent's specific and established character, then he can hardly be held accountable for those behaviors. The behaviors were, at base, just a matter of following out a certain program, one which was introduced to him by his parents, both instructive and genetic, and his environment – in short, by nature and by nurture. He cannot, so would say the naive naturalist, do otherwise than his program demands. So the difficulty, then, is obvious: how can he be at all responsible for any of his actions?

Naturalism may entail behavioral determinism. I would argue<sup>4</sup> that in classic mechanist versions of naturalism, there is no place for freedom of the will. Consider the system of the Epicureans, for example. Epicurus described an ethical or behavioral system which was based on the



natural attraction of human beings to pleasure and the natural detraction from pain. Consider that if one's program is to seek pleasure, then one will seek pleasure in just the same way that a toaster will toast toast and not serve at all in the washing up of the dishes. Epicurus' system, one purely materialist, it may be added, would have been fully determinist<sup>5</sup> were it not for a crucially important, though sometimes taken for granted, element in his ontology. Though Epicurus believed in an atomist ontology, the one essentially described by Democritus, Epicurus was careful to include in his atomism the notion that the atoms which make up the human soul have the power or property of swerving from their paths. Were it not for this simple swerve, the materialist ontology that Epicurus describes, and the naturalist ethic entailed therein, would be entirely determined. And with behavioral determinism comes the inevitable position that humans simply run out their programs and are as responsible, as praiseworthy or blameworthy, for their behaviors as the toaster is for toasting toast.

If Aristotle is wedded to an ethic based on the establishment of an entrenched character in an individual, and so he is, then how is it that he is to avoid being a behavioral determinist? Swerving atoms? Wrong ontology.

Responsibility for behaviors is introduced in the Aristotelian ethic through Aristotle's discussion of the freedom of action. Voluntary actions are those which are not compelled by any external force, but whose cause is a movement within an informed<sup>6</sup> and considerate or deliberative agent (cf. 1111a23 and 1113b). For Aristotle, if actions are voluntary, they are subjects of blame or praise:

Since virtue is concerned with passions and actions, and on voluntary passions and actions praise and blame are bestowed, on those that are involuntary pardon, and sometimes also pity. . . (1109b30).

And conversely, if actions are not voluntary, they are not a matter of assignment of blame or praise:

But no one is encouraged to do the things that are neither in our power nor voluntary; it is assumed that there is no gain in being persuaded not to be hot or in pain or hungry of the like, since we shall experience these feelings none the less (1113b29-31).

But this brings us back to the point about how Aristotle would have counseled Frank.

If he said for Frank to run, he would have made situation deliberation of central importance, and when the outcome of that deliberation falls in conflict with the agent's character, then one is in the position of having to wonder on what grounds, through what methods, Frank is supposed to deliberate the best means to an essentially unidentified ends. That is, without the underpinning of Frank's character as a guide to Frank's deliberations, we are left clueless as to how we -- or more importantly, Frank -- is to judge the correct course of action. Without the development and grounding of an established character, Aristotle is left, essentially, without an ethic.

If, on the other hand, Aristotle would have said that Frank should fight, then given the sole motivation for Frank's fighting being Frank's character, Frank's agency is rendered redundant. Why should he have sat in that room deliberating with his friends, trying to reconcile his actions upstairs with what he was now contemplating doing, if he truly had no choice but to play out the program of his character?

Indeed, this last problem is even more interesting when we think of Frank as simply being a role written by a playwright, being acted out by Humphrey Bogart. One can watch the film a thousand times, and every time Frank will end up going onto the boat with Rocko. Bogart could have rehearsed that scene a hundred times, and each time the outcome would have been the same. It was a part written by a playwright. Though it appears in the film that Frank had a choice about whether to run or fight, *Bogart* had no choice at all.

Are human characters scripted in this way? Skinner thought so. And today society at large tends toward the understanding of a person's behaviors flowing out of situations and genes beyond his or her control. We are driven to understand the backgrounds of Hitler, Stalin, Jeffrey Dahmer, Lorena Bobbit and the Menendez brothers: Dahmer was abused as a child; Bobbit was abused by her husband; the Menendezes were abused by their parents. Naive naturalism allows us to excuse them all -- and not just them, but ourselves as well -- because scripted behavior is not free action. And so goes the ethic.

This is the problem. How was Aristotle able to construct a system which was essentially naturalist,<sup>7</sup> while at the same time ensuring reasonable and meaningful assignment of blame and praise? How can these two traditionally diametrically opposed positions be melded together into a single coherent and consistent ethical system? Aristotle thought he did

this, and in the next section of this paper, I will examine his case, as expressed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*<sup>8</sup>, for the compatibility of the two. I believe, however, that Aristotle's stated position is problematic, and so following the discussion of Aristotle I will offer a strategy coming out of Aristotle's work that offers hope.

## II

Aristotle does not argue specifically about the compatibility of established character and voluntary action. Indeed, he believed that *if* it were the case that the character were given or set by nature, as it is in our nature as human beings not to fly under our own natural power, then all action would be essentially involuntary (cf. 1103a19-25 and 1110b9-15). So his position is not one of attempting to reconcile a pre-determined character, as it were, with freedom of will. Aristotle's position is to argue that the character itself, its development and establishment through reinforcement and habit, is itself voluntary. In other words, we are each individually responsible for our own characters.

But are we really responsible for our characters? If the answer to this question is definitely yes, then we will not be able to fault Aristotle for falling prey to behavioral determinism and the ensuing loss of responsibility. If the answer to the question is either no or is in doubt, then Aristotle's salvation vis-a-vis his ascription of freedom to actions which flow from a firmly established character may be in jeopardy.

Aristotle argues that we are responsible for our characters not in the abstract sense that we intricately plan the development and direction of our characters and not in the sense that we chart the course of our characters from infancy to maturity. Rather, we must understand that an individual character is established through habituation and practice, with each moral event strengthening some excellence or some defect in that character. And while one is not responsible for charting the path of his or her character, one is responsible for each individual action, each moral decision, that leads to the character's establishment. Each time one chooses to act generously in a particular situation, one strengthens one's virtue of generosity. And each time one chooses to act unjustly, one fortifies the vice of injustice in one's character.

... for we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts, but though we control the beginning of our states of character the gradual

progress is not obvious, any more than it is in illnesses; because it was in our power, however, to act in this way or not in this way, therefore the states are voluntary (1114b31-1115a3).

Later, Aristotle writes

For all men think that each type of character belongs to its possessors in some sense by nature; for from the very moment of birth we are just or fitted for self-control or brave or have the other moral qualities; but yet we seek something else as that which is good in the strict sense – we seek for the presence of such qualities in another way. For both children and brutes have the natural dispositions to these qualities, but without reason these are evidently hurtful (1144b2-9).

Therefore, as in the part of us which forms opinions there are two types, cleverness and practical wisdom, so too in the moral part there are two types, natural virtue and virtue in the strict sense, and of these the latter involves practical wisdom (1144b14-15).

Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit (1103a24).

If we choose, at some point when it is in our power to choose the right thing over the wrong, or the virtuous action over the vicious, and we choose the vicious action, that decision and ensuing action are voluntary and fully our responsibility. So it is, then, that as we are responsible at each individual decision for that decision, so it is, transitively, since the character is developed and established solely on the basis of repeated activity, that we are responsible for the formation of our characters, whether to the good or to the bad. Aristotle writes,

[P]erhaps a man is the kind of man not to take care. Still they are themselves by their slack lives responsible for becoming men of that kind, and men make themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in the one case by cheating and in the other by spending their time on drinking bouts and the

like; for it is activities exercised on particular objects that make the corresponding character.... Now not to know that it is from the exercise of activities on particular objects that states of character are produced is the mark of a thoroughly senseless person. Again, it is irrational to suppose that a man who act unjustly does not wish to be unjust or a man who acts self-indulgently to be self-indulgent. But if without being ignorant a man does the things which will make him unjust, he will be unjust voluntarily. . . .

Aristotle, however, goes on to say

Yet it does not follow that if he wishes he will cease to be unjust and will be just. For neither does the man who is ill become well on those terms. We may suppose a case in which he is ill voluntarily, through living incontinently and disobeying his doctors. In that case it was then open to him not to be ill, but not now, when he has thrown away his chance (1114a4-22).

The question this last quote raises is how responsible for one's character can one truly be? Once the character has matured and become firmly established, so that the exercise of its states are almost instinctive, is it fair to call actions which flow from that mature character fully voluntary? Jean Roberts<sup>9</sup> writes

The question being considered here is whether the actions of those of firmly established character, for whom being of a different character is no longer the same sort of option as it once was, are to be seen as involuntary rather than voluntary. Aristotle does not deny that there is a real difference between actions done out of firmly established character and those not. He does claim that, despite the difference, actions done out of firmly established character are not to be seen as involuntary.

It is easy to understand this, and it has been so understood, as claiming that until one's character is firm one is in a position to choose between virtue and vice, one chooses knowingly, and thus the vicious are vicious as a result of their own prior actions which were knowingly and freely

performed. The vicious chose at an earlier time to perform the sorts of actions that they know would make them vicious in character, so they wanted to become bad and, moreover, wanted to become bad at a time when it was still possible for them to be good.

Let us assume for the moment that this is right. Aristotle would be admitting that actions done out of firmly established character are, because fully determined by that character, not strictly speaking voluntary. They are, nonetheless, voluntary in some derivative sense because that character itself is the consequence of earlier actions which were strictly voluntary (Roberts, pp. 27-28).

The problem, *prima facie*, about actions done out of firmly established character, given what Aristotle had been saying about voluntary action, is that they seem to be suspiciously similar to natural processes. . . . The person of firmly established character is . . . all too similar to the stone that cannot be taught to fly (see 1114a16-19 and 1103a20-26) (Roberts, p. 29).

In the end, Roberts concludes that Aristotle's treatment of responsibility and the freedom of action is adequate. But she nevertheless raises an important problem for the Aristotelian position on the freedom of actions flowing from a mature character, and I think this problem bears further examination.

*Problem One: External processes and states are involved in the constitution of the character.* A voluntary action is one whose movement is in the individual (1111a22-23). It then follows that an action whose movement is not within the individual in question is not a voluntary action. And while there are "mixed" actions (1110b3-7), it is unclear whether all of the external forces that work toward the establishment of a given character are indeed occasioned each and every one by a movement in the individual in question.

(1) The natural states of pleasure and pain (1104b4-1105a16 and cf. 1110b9-15) necessarily act as reinforcers to the choices we make, and this is especially true in our formative years. Indeed, at the start, it is pleasure and pain that start the processes of habituation. And yet the occasions of our experiencing pleasure and pain are for the most part strictly out of our control. Experiencing these feelings is a matter of *nature*, not a matter of

free choice. Now, while it is the virtuous person who knows when to pursue pleasure and when to refrain, it is not the case that in our formative years we are in possession of the maturity and virtuosity necessary to avert the strong influence that the forces of pleasure and pain exert over us.

(2) Moral instruction and teacher reinforcement are discussed by Aristotle as being guides in our youths. Moral education plays a serious role in the constitution of our characters, and on simple reflection, it must be clear that in concert with (1), moral instruction is strictly an external and compelling cause to our habit development.

(3) Finally, it is the case that some people are simply born with a natural faculty for discerning goodness that others do not possess.<sup>10</sup> If my friend has a greater eye for judging rightly than do I, then I am by nature inferior in the matters of moral character formation than is he. While I have no reason to lament the situation or begrudge my friend, as I do not begrudge my basketball-playing friends for being by nature tall, it is nonetheless the case that my well-endowed friend will have a leg up, so to speak, on good character formation. And this advantage is a matter of nature, not of practice or volition.

*Problem Two: Throughout Aristotle's work, responsibility is only described as being about singular events.* In order to act virtuously, one must not only have one's actions flow from a virtuous character, one must also have deliberated about the best means of exercising one's virtue. A precondition of such deliberation is for one to understand the situation and grasp the context in which the exercise of virtue is being contemplated. If one fails to do this, it constitutes ignorance on the part of the moral decision maker, and may, given certain situations, constitute some impairment of the voluntary nature of his or her actions.

However, nowhere in this formula about the avoidance of ignorance and the need to be informed is expressed any need to be knowledgeable about any other situation but this one. I need not consider, or at the very least Aristotle does not instruct me to consider, events in my life like this one, neither am I supposed to engage in any sort of Kantian universalizability test or Rawlsian original position construct. I must know the situation in which I am involved, and with due care determine how I ought act given the leadings of my virtues, but no more.

Given the absence of any connection -- metaphysical, psychic, rational or temporal -- with other situations in one's decision making, one is naturally at a loss to understand then the mechanism of transitivity that allows one to be held accountable over the whole of his or her formative years for the construction of his or her character. Since ethical decisions

are, for Aristotle, matters of the moment, it is unclear how we are now to accept that in derivative or transitive fashion, we must assume responsibility for some state which has only psychologically supervened or emerged from the hosts of decisions we made in our youth.

*Problem Three: even if one is responsible for one's immature actions and the establishment of his or her character, the fact remains that for any given event subsequent to the onset of a mature character, one cannot be held responsible for that event considered in isolation.* Perhaps I was free in my formative years to behave as I saw fit at the time. And perhaps those decisions and actions on my part did indeed lead to the construction of a certain character that I now possess. And perhaps still that I am in some fashion responsible for the development of that character. Yet no where in this equation do I find reason for believing that I am freely responsible for the actions I *now* commit, actions which flow from a mature, firmly established character. To employ a Platonic allusion, I am, in committing action flowing from a settled character, three steps from full autonomy. My action, determined by my character, flows from this character, the creation of which I only tentatively assume responsibility, constructed of the voluntary but individual actions of my youth – themselves, it might be added, immature and not appropriately called virtuous.

If one is ill, supposing the illness came from overwork and fatigue, a matter originally in control of the agent, that individual is not punished or held blameworthy each time he or she sneezes or coughs. If one in his or her youth dropped out of high school for frivolous reasons, we do not forever after hold that individual blameworthy for that decision. One may return to finish high school, take a G.E.D. examination, or go on to found a major corporation. We do not fault the illiterate individual for not taking advantage of the school system while he or she attended school; we celebrate his or her bravery in taking up the challenge to learn to read as an adult.

We do not as a matter of course find blameworthy, or even praiseworthy for that matter, the actions of individuals which flow from or involve circumstances beyond their control, even if they themselves were the creators of such circumstances. One need only think of the compassion that is appropriately felt for the mother of a newborn living on welfare. No matter our convictions about welfare programs, to disparage the birth and life of that new child is simply inhuman.

Analogously, actions which flow from a settled character, considered in isolation, are not voluntary in the sense that the agent performing those actions could do otherwise. Once we understand mature



virtuous action as almost instinctual in nature, we understand that those mature moral events are not free in the same way that immature moral decisions are.

*Problem Four: if we must have an established character from which to practice truly virtuous acts, then we are in the strange situation of having, in the above situations, our most free and voluntary acts being done before we can correctly call them virtuous, and those acts we commit that can truly be called virtuous done after full freedom and volition are things of the past.* Aristotle writes,

[To do those acts which are virtuous,] [t]he agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the act, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his actions must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character (1105a30).

When I am young, I act freely but not virtuously. When I am mature, I act virtuously, but not with the sense of freedom that I had in my youth. It becomes, then, a matter of moral luck – no action committed in my youth being properly called virtuous – that the habits ingrained in me lead to the establishment of virtues in my character. Those immature actions are not virtuous, strictly speaking. And so those actions of my youth are merely the means to the ends of my acquiring virtues. And since my then immature mind, reasoning immaturely, and making each decision based on the situation in isolation from all others, is a matter for which I must bear responsibility, it is curious indeed to consider upon what that responsibility rests.

It is in concert with Aristotle's position for me to claim that I am most free in my youth. But I am, according to common sense and the implications of Aristotle's position on virtuous action, least responsible in my youth. And yet it is volition that is meant to ground responsibility.

Let me conclude this section by restating that Aristotle wrote clearly that since the character was, at least in the formative stages, the individual's responsibility, it is not the case that we rightly call actions preceding from that character involuntary. What I have attempted to do in this section is to cast doubt on this thesis. Whether or not Aristotle was mistaken is not a matter upon which we need settle. It is enough that doubt can be cast to prompt us to look for other strategies for reconciling established character with freedom of action.

## III

In this final section of the paper I want to sketch a strategy<sup>11</sup> for resolving the sometime tension between character and decision-making. Whether this strategy is ultimately successful is still, I think, a matter open for debate; however, it is the best way I can think of for resolving the tension in Aristotle's ethic. This strategy involves making a distinction between the ends and means identified in each moral decision. Aristotle says that in any decision deliberation, the ends of the action contemplated are not a matter for deliberation. The ends are set – we might say "pre-determined." It is the means, and the means alone, that are the subject of deliberation. In essence, when one is faced with a moral choice, one does not debate with oneself about whether or not to make a decision, one only deliberates about which decision should be made. That a decision will be made is analytic to having the problem; one does not have a problem that does not call for a solution, else it was not really a problem in the first place.

Consider Aristotle's practical syllogism. In that syllogism, the major premise always consists of a general statement of the end that is desired to be reached. The middle or minor premise relates the conclusion of the deliberation; the minor premise states the means by which the end is to be reached. The deductive conclusion, then, is merely the command to pursue the means that was related in the middle premise. For instance:

Major Premise:	Patience is a virtue.
Minor Premise:	In the event that I must wait for someone, I ought wait patiently, in calmness and for a reasonable amount of time.
Conclusion:	Such an event is at hand, so I will wait patiently.

That was an easy one. Let's take one that focuses on a specific moral dilemma.

Major Premise:	Murder is wrong.
Minor Premise:	In the event that I find myself holding a knife to the throat of an innocent person, I ought not cut that person's throat.
Conclusion:	Such an event is at hand, and I will not cut that throat.

Though my first example was a bit mundane, and in my second I may have overcompensated, the point is quite simple. The end, which is expressed in the major premise, is not a matter, according to Aristotle, of debate. It is only the means to that end, as expressed in the minor premise, that is a matter for deliberation.

How does this strategy resolve our dilemma? *We may understand character and the deliberative process as having two fundamentally distinct provinces.* The established states of one's character refer, and refer only, to the ends which that individual intends to pursue. Since the ends are not a matter of deliberation, the settled character can contribute to the practical syllogism in a non-flexible, non-deliberative way by conferring the content of that major premise. And, in complement, since the result of the deliberative action is reported only in the minor premise, then voluntary decision-making can have a purview that is not in conflict with that of the character.

To repeat, the settled state of character only refers to the ends of action. And the ends of action are not a matter of deliberation. It is only the means to that end that are the subject of deliberation, and such deliberation involves not a consideration of *whether* the settled ends ought be pursued, but only of *how best* they ought be pursued. While the character's contribution is not subject to the empirical description of the context of the decision, the deliberative activity of the agent must necessarily take into account the context, implications and ramifications peculiar to each particular moral decision-making event. Understanding the two traditionally opposed aspects of ethics – settled, programmatic character and flexible, rational deliberation – as having two distinct provinces, precludes the tension that is created in attempting to reconcile them together.

Does this solve the problem? I think it may. Although one does not experience, in making ethical decisions, the fullest control in those situations, there is still a meaningful venue of decision-making. One can be held praiseworthy or blameworthy for how one chooses to handle a given situation, and this can be the case even if what prompts one to action (one's settled virtues) is not under immediate (volitional) control. Indeed, this is not much dissimilar from the common perception that some, if not much, in particular moral situations, is out of one's control. We see this problem frequently in considerations of the place of moral intent: sometimes the best intentions cannot be actualized in a situation due to elements of the situation that are out of the agent's control. Although the difficulty

described in this paper focuses on elements of moral situations that (in many moral theories) are traditionally under agent control, the parallel to more common limitations on agent control is obvious. With Aristotle's virtue ethic, we do not have as much control in situations as we might otherwise have, but there is still something upon which to assign praise and blame: how we choose to handle the situation. And that is enough to make such actions meaningfully voluntary.

#### IV

To recap the ground we have covered, it is clear that there exists in the history of ethics the problem that naturalist systems of ethics frequently fall prey to the entailment of behavioral determinism. If this occurs, it robs the ethic of doing any real work. Instead of proscribing correct and incorrect action, or allowing those considering the situation and activity to meaningfully assign praise or blame, the naive naturalist ethic functions only as a psychological thesis: that one will behave according to whatever psychological or mechanical program one is informed by.

The question of this paper was whether Aristotle's system falls prey to such a difficulty given his reliance on the individual's established character as one of the bases upon which ethical decisions are made. The case that it does is strong. The strategy for answering the problem presented here is that in Aristotle's system, the roles which character and deliberation play are quite different. Character informs the ends of action; deliberation informs the means to those ends. Since they are in different provinces, the tension between the two as means of coming to ethical decisions is averted.<sup>12</sup>

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1. "Key Largo" was originally a play which was written by Maxwell Anderson. Huston's film starred Humphrey Bogart as Major Frank McCloud, a visitor to a hotel on Key Largo, Lauren Bacall as Nora Temple, daughter-in-law to the hotel's owner, Lionel Barrymore as Mr. Temple, the hotel's owner, and Claire Trevor as Gaye Dawn, a sometime companion to Johnny Rocko, a Milwaukee gangster who has taken over the hotel, played by Edward G. Robinson.

2. Aristotle says "The end, then, being what we wish for, the means what we deliberate about and choose, actions concerning means must be according to choice and voluntary. Now the exercise of the virtues is concerned with means" (1113b2-4).

3. See 1144b 1 & 14.

4. I have argued that some kinds of naturalism entail determinism in an unpublished paper, "Naturalism, Mechanism and Determinism."

5. Aristotle would have agreed (1103a19-25 and 1110b9-15).

6. Ignorance as such does not automatically make the action involuntary; see 1110b3-5.

7. I take it, as did G. E. Moore, that sufficient evidence for claiming a view to be naturalist is that an identity or reduction is made between value states or properties and natural states or properties. Aristotle does this in two ways: (i) in offering a functional definition of goodness, where a thing's goodness is dependent on the natural and empirically discernable state of being an object of a kind and the natural and empirically discernable state of being a highly functioning one of that kind. I discuss this in depth in my "Are Functional Accounts of Goodness Relativist?" (*Reason Papers*, Forthcoming). And (ii) secondly, in identifying the only intrinsic goodness as that "end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake..." (1094a17-18), Aristotle identifies the chief good, and the only intrinsic good in his system, empirically, in terms of the actions we actually commit and the desires we actually possess.

8. W. D. Ross' translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* will be used throughout the paper.

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9. Jean Roberts, "Aristotle on Responsibility For Action and Character," *Ancient Philosophy* 9 (1), 1989, pp. 23-36.
  10. Aristotle discusses this in (1114b5-9).
  11. Perhaps I ought say an *additional* strategy given the possibility that actions which flow from an established character may still be, at least derivatively, voluntary.
  12. I want to acknowledge a debt to the work of Professor K. S. Harris on Aristotle.

# The Irrationality of the Extended Order: The Fatal Conceit of F. A. Hayek

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Friedrich A. Hayek (1899-1992) is considered by many to have been one of the true intellectual giants of the twentieth century. He was without doubt one of the most influential thinkers of his time. Moreover, Hayek is almost universally characterized as a dedicated—even radical—proponent of capitalism. The questionable validity of such a characterization is one of the key issues to be dealt with in this essay.

Part of Hayek's fame stems from the fact that, in 1974, he shared the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science with the socialist Gunnar Myrdal. The prize was awarded "for their pioneering work in the theory of money and economic fluctuations and for their penetrating analysis of the interdependence of economic, social, and institutional phenomena" (Machlup 1976, xv-xvi).<sup>1</sup> There seem to have been, in other words, two different reasons why Hayek was deemed worthy of the award. The primary reason was his brilliant technical work during the 1930s on money and credit conditions and their impact on business cycles. The secondary reason was his provocative analysis of the comparative efficiency of socioeconomic systems undertaken during the 1940s and 1950s. During the last fifty years of Hayek's life, however, most of his work was devoted to political and social philosophy, legal theory, and the philosophy of science rather than to economic theory. Both the breadth of his knowledge and the scope of his work were enormous.<sup>2</sup> He discussed everything from anthropology to the evolution of language to the role of religion in Western civilization. And yet, despite the wide range of topics addressed, Hayek's later work usually exhibited a unifying theme: the nature and societal role of knowledge (or information). Whether discussing science, politics, or economics, he often framed his arguments in terms of knowledge and its use (or misuse).

The task of this paper will be to examine critically the proposition which is perhaps most closely associated with Hayek's name: his famous contention that (1) socialism was and is "a mistake", because (2) only a free-market economy (or, as he preferred to call it, the "extended order") can produce both prosperity and liberty. First of all, Hayek's explanation and defense of that "extended order" will be presented. Secondly, certain fundamental philosophical positions which underlie his train of thought will be identified, and his approach will be contrasted with a defense of capitalism based on epistemological realism and ethical egoism. Finally, the suggestion will be made that Hayek's defense of the free society—despite its renown—is ultimately both unconvincing and misguided due to his failure to identify the principles that are most essential to such a society.

In the course of the presentation references will be made to a variety of Hayek's major works. However, the core of his argument will be taken largely from the last book published before he died (Hayek 1989). The reason for such a focus is that that book offers his ultimate statement of the case against socialism.<sup>3</sup> He had introduced certain parts of this developing argument as long ago as the 1930s, and *The Fatal Conceit* seems to be the distillation and refinement of those many years of reflection. As such, it will be taken to be the definitive version of his defense of a free society.

### **The Case for the Extended Order**

The importance of the extended order is boldly stated by Hayek. He declares that "our civilization depends, not only for its origin but also for its preservation, on what can be precisely described only as the extended order of human cooperation, an order more commonly, if somewhat misleadingly, known as capitalism" (1989, 6). To understand the complex train of thought that leads Hayek to such a conclusion, one must start with his view of the nature of knowledge and of the essence of an economic system.

### **The Nature of Knowledge**

Hayek's position on the nature of knowledge can be found in bits and pieces scattered throughout many of his books and articles. For the present purposes a summary rather than an exhaustive treatment would seem appropriate. Perhaps the key elements in his approach are the assertions that knowledge is (1) widely dispersed, (2) subjective, and (3) often tacit. Each of these assertions requires some explanation.

The dispersal of knowledge literally means that relevant economic knowledge must, fundamentally and irrevocably, be decentralized to a significant extent. That is, there exists no monolith called "knowledge" that



is equally accessible to, and equally-well understood by, all persons. Most crucial to our actions is our “concrete and often unique knowledge of the particular circumstances of time and place” (Hayek 1960, 156). Of course, Hayek understands that “the ‘man on the spot’ cannot decide solely on the basis of his limited but intimate knowledge of the facts of his immediate surroundings” (1945, 524-25).

Something more is essential if individuals are to allocate resources efficiently. There must exist some mechanism by which the overlapping areas of particular knowledge possessed by specific persons can be combined and then utilized by all. Hayek points out that “[w]e must look at the price system as such a mechanism for communicating information” (1945, 526). Moreover, prices not only convey information but also coordinate human activities. That is, “prices can act to coordinate the separate actions of different people in the same way as subjective values help the individual to coordinate the parts of his plan” (Hayek 1945, 526). Such interpersonal coordination (which Hayek often refers to as “plan coordination”) is essential to a successful socioeconomic system and impossible in a socialist framework. In short, Hayek sees economic knowledge as discrete bits of widely scattered information about concrete phenomena. In light of this, the “marvel” is that a free-market price system comes to the rescue by making it possible for us “to extend the span of our utilization of resources beyond the span of the control of any one mind” (Hayek 1945, 527).

Hayek also insists that knowledge, or at least that kind of knowledge most germane to the social or human sciences such as economics, sociology, politics, and history, is pervasively subjective in nature. To the social scientist it is, allegedly, not the objective, demonstrable characteristics of an artifact that are significant. Hayek repeatedly argues that human beings classify objects on the basis of the object’s purpose or function. And that classification depends on how one evaluates the usefulness of the item relative to one’s ends or goals. “A medicine or a cosmetic, for example, for the purposes of social study, is not what cures an ailment or improves a person’s looks, but *what people think will have that effect*” (emphasis added)(Hayek 1979a, 51).

It is instructive to note that Hayek expresses some reservations about his own use of the terms “subjective” and “objective.” He concedes that they “inevitably carry with them some misleading connotations,” but he believes that other possibilities like “mental” and “material” possess “an even worse burden of metaphysical associations” (1979a, 49).

Actually, it would seem that the point at issue here is primarily epistemological, not metaphysical. Are sense qualities intrinsic to entities in the external world? Are sense qualities purely internal mental phenomena? Or, are sense qualities an aspect of the process by which a human being perceives external entities? The first might be called "naive realism," the second "subjectivism," and the third "contextual realism,"<sup>4</sup> Hayek clearly embraces some version of the second, for he declares that "when we study qualities we study not the physical world but the mind of man" (1979a, 48). The third and final aspect of knowledge that Hayek discusses is its "tacitness" (Hayek, 1967, 43-63). The claim here is that much of what we know we do not, and perhaps cannot, articulate. Rules which are not stated explicitly govern much that we do and set the framework for much that we know. We may know how to perform some task, but we may not be able to explain to someone else how that person should go about performing such a task. Simple examples might include activities like riding a bicycle or hitting a ball with a baseball bat. Of course, Hayek is largely interested in a higher order of human activities than the likes of cycling or baseball. Nevertheless, part of this tacitness is manifested even in such lower order phenomena as the identification and imitation of gestures and facial expressions. Hayek sees many human actions and even many perceptions as guided by the "movement patterns" and "ordering principles" which he subsumes under the category of "rules." Somewhat more complex is the example of language. For Hayek, language is a system of learned rules that evolves spontaneously. That is, at the level of the individual, language is acquired through a process of intuitive recognition of repeated patterns which are not explicitly specified. At the societal level, languages come into existence without the benefit of conscious central direction. The intelligibility of communication via language is due to the fact that it is a species of "conduct following a rule with which we are acquainted but which we need not explicitly know" (Hayek 1967, 55).

Hayek even extends his approach to the realm of science. He grants that, in the natural sciences, tacit knowledge cannot properly be made part of a truly scientific explanation. However, he does insist that "intuitive understanding" on the part of the scientist often constitutes the first step of the investigative process that produces some explicit scientific proposition. Moreover, he asserts that the (often tacit) intelligibility of human interactions forms the basic data of social sciences such as economics:

[T]he facts of the social sciences are merely opinions, views held by the people whose actions we study. They differ from the facts of the physical sciences in being beliefs or opinions held by particular people, beliefs which as such are our data, irrespective of whether they are true or false, and which, moreover, we cannot directly observe in the minds of the people but which we can recognize from what they do and say merely because we have ourselves a mind similar to theirs. (1979a, 47)

The culmination of Hayek's exploration of tacit knowledge and implicit rules is his discussion of what he refers to as "supra-conscious processes" (1967, 60-63). It is Hayek's claim that, contrary to widespread belief, conscious conceptualization is *not* the highest form of mental function. There exists a "meta-conscious" level that forms a framework within which conscious mental activity acquires meaning. Without these supra-conscious processes, communication becomes impossible. Why must such a meta-conscious level exist? According to Hayek, its existence is the necessary implication of the fact that some rules simply cannot be articulated. "[M]uch that we successfully do depends on presuppositions that are outside the range of what we can either state or reflect upon" (Hayek 1967, 61). That is, a conscious mental order may be able to explain its component elements, but it cannot explain *itself*. Complete self-specification of any system of formal propositions is, allegedly, not possible. This meta-conscious framework consists of a set of conventions or "rules" that are taken for granted by human beings. These rules are unconscious mental events which form the foundation for all that we understand consciously. Moreover, if in the future humans were ever able consciously to examine those tacit rules that underlie our present knowledge, Hayek maintains that there would then have to exist some further unspecified rules which would make such conscious understanding possible.

As a special case of this broad principle, Hayek cites the famous example from mathematics of Godel's theorem (1967, 62). This theorem asserts that systems of formal propositions deductively derived from "self-evident" axioms (the prime example being arithmetic itself) must be incomplete and, therefore, may appear to be internally inconsistent. This does not mean that arithmetic actually is inconsistent, only that in order to prove the consistency of arithmetic one must have recourse to certain informal "meta-mathematical" arguments. In short, purely deductive

systems cannot explain themselves. Hayek takes that theorem to be an excellent representative of his declaration that all conscious processes presuppose “a system of rules....which we can neither state nor form an image of” (1967, 62).

### Knowledge and Economic Systems

For most economists, knowledge plays a relatively minor role in their analysis. Indeed, all-too-many economists still seem to think in terms of the elementary textbook model of “perfect competition” in which it is assumed that all buyers and all sellers already possess all *relevant* information (the prices and qualities of products, the availability of resources, the preferences of buyers, the locations of sellers, and so forth) prior to the process of market exchange. In that model, economic efficiency is manifested via a relatively simple mathematical extraction of the optimal result, which result is actually implicit in the given data. The market process then consists merely of recognizing the significance of what is already known and acting upon it.

This is not the case with Hayek. He, like all the other members of the so-called Austrian School of economic thought,<sup>5</sup> considers economic knowledge (or information) to be far too important to take as a given. For Hayek the market process is, to a large extent, a process by which the participants *discover* the information that is relevant to them. Indeed, Hayek quite literally sees the economy as a mechanism that both generates and distributes knowledge. For him the study of economics, like all the social sciences, is, at its core, a study of information systems. “The economic problem of society is thus not merely a problem of how to allocate ‘given’ resources . . . it is a problem of the utilization of knowledge not given to anyone in its totality” (Hayek 1945, 519-20).

Hayek’s focus is thus quite different from that of more conventional economists. Commonly-encountered descriptions of economics include “the study of the allocation of scarce resources among unlimited wants,” “the science of wealth,” and “the science of human action.”<sup>6</sup> Hayek’s characterization of economics as the study of the utilization of knowledge in society is a marked departure from the norm. He is not without his admirers, however. For example, the philosopher W. W. Bartley III adopts Hayek’s perspective and even extends it. Bartley, inspired by Karl Popper as well as Hayek, argues that the primary concern of epistemology (usually defined as that subset of philosophy which deals with the nature and validation of knowledge) should be the growth of knowledge. Furthermore, he notes that knowledge is an important kind of

wealth. Therefore, Bartley concludes that epistemology should be thought of as a branch of economics; since economics is, of course, interested in the growth of wealth (Bartley 1990, 89-94). Whether or not one finds Bartley's taxonomy useful, his argument is instructive in that it reflects the interface between epistemology and economics which plays so prominent a role in Hayek's work.

Having established what he considers to be the nature of (1) economic knowledge and (2) economic systems, Hayek proceeds to the conclusion that only in a decentralized system, that is, in a free market, can an efficient utilization of all resources—especially knowledge—be achieved:

[D]ecentralization has become necessary because nobody can consciously balance all the considerations bearing on the decisions of so many individuals . . . because all the details of the changes constantly affecting the conditions of demand and supply of the different commodities can never be fully known, or quickly enough be collected and disseminated, by any one center, what is required is some apparatus of registration which automatically records all the relevant effects of individual actions. (1944, 49)

That "apparatus of registration" is, of course, the price system. It accomplishes every day what no central planning agency could ever come close to doing. It quickly and automatically takes account of every choice made by every market participant, reveals the net effects of those choices in the form of an array of prices, conveys changes in the relative scarcities of products and resources by means of changes in those prices, and thus coordinates both the vast matrix of prices and the plans of the participants so as to move ever toward a structure of internally consistent relationships. As Hayek continually reminds the reader, *only* a free-market price system can do all this. A central planning agency cannot gather the requisite knowledge because knowledge is "widely dispersed" (and constantly changing). Such an agency cannot form a meaningful plan for the use of resources because economic knowledge is "subjective" and, as such, cannot be aggregated. And, since at least some relevant knowledge is "tacit" (cannot be articulated), it can never be transformed into data and collected centrally. The social sciences, and especially economics, are concerned with "knowledge of the kind which by its nature cannot enter into statistics and therefore cannot be conveyed to any central authority" (Hayek 1945, 524).

### Cultural Evolution

It might appear from the foregoing that Hayek is arguing for the superiority of a market-based socioeconomic system merely on some narrow technical grounds. While it is true that much of his thought is indeed framed by his training as a professional economist, Hayek's hypothesis is of a scale that transcends the bounds of any particular academic discipline. As noted earlier, Hayek claims nothing less than that civilization itself depends on the existence of the "extended order of human cooperation" (1989, 6). Moreover, it is his firm conviction that civilization is being endangered by the widespread failure to understand the origin and nature of, and appreciate the enormous value of, that extended order. "To follow socialist morality would destroy much of present humankind and impoverish much of the rest" (Hayek 1989, 7).

What does Hayek mean by the phrase "extended order"? Many people might prefer to call it capitalism. Briefly, it is a society based on voluntary exchange in a free market, individual rights (especially property rights), limited government, and the Rule of Law.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the extended order is simply Hayek's idiosyncratic name for what is more commonly called a classical liberal society.

How does this extended order come into existence? It is Hayek's answer to that question which has garnered so much attention. First of all, Hayek explains that the extended order is a species of what he calls "spontaneous order" processes, that is, phenomena that are "the result of human action but not of human design" (Hayek 1967, 105). This is a concept that he knowingly borrows from the eighteenth-century Scottish writer Adam Ferguson, and it appears with regularity throughout his work. It is a notion that is central to several of the themes that typify Hayek's thinking since World War II. The essence of spontaneous order is that a systematic, stable matrix of relationships can develop from certain evolved rules, rules which may be poorly understood, may be implicit rather than explicit, and may be neither rationally justified nor rationally justifiable. Clearly, Hayek's approach to knowledge fits comfortably within this framework. The significance of spontaneous orders is that they exist and, indeed, prosper, without any *conscious central direction*. According to Hayek, money, law, and language are all good examples of the products of spontaneous order processes. The most important of all such spontaneous developments is the extended order. In fact, it subsumes several more narrowly-focused phenomena of the same sort. For example, both the evolution of the common law and the transformation of barter economies into monetary economies are essential components of the extended order.

In order to explain the appearance and nature of the extended order, and to contrast it with alternative social structures, Hayek employs three concepts: "instinctive morals," "evolutionary morals," and "rationalistic morals"(1989, 11-28, 66-88). (His use here of the word "morals" can be misleading. He is referring to cultural norms and traditional rules of behavior as much as to explicit ethical systems.) Each of the three represents a particular kind of culture, a particular socioeconomic system, and a particular result in terms of prosperity and population. The early stage of human development was, per Hayek, characterized by instinctive morals. Humankind was sorted out into small tribes of hunter-gatherers who were motivated by an "instinctive" urge to adopt altruism as their guiding ethical principle.<sup>8</sup> Such tribal groups exhibited a strong sense of group solidarity (the tribe being a version of what today might be called an extended family), owned property communally rather than individually, and usually took action collectively. "The savage is not solitary, and his instinct is collectivist" (Hayek 1989, 12).

Because of their instinctive altruism, these tribes remained small, devoid of much wealth, and primitive. Why? What is the connection, according to Hayek, between instinctive morals and poverty? He explains that the members of communal tribes (1) were hostile to outsiders and (2) dealt with one another as kinsmen. In other words, there were no market exchanges, only the sharing of resources by what were, in essence, members of the same family group. Therefore, phenomena such as individual property, contracts, trade, commerce, and a price system did not develop. In the absence of those developments, civilization as we know it could not exist. Humans remained poor, primitive, and few in number. And, as Hayek sees it, the principal reason for their wretched state was their failure to adopt *abstract rules* of conduct. Instead, they persisted in perceiving all relationships in personal, rather than formal, terms.

Eventually however, the extended order does arise by means of "cultural evolution." Hayek means by this that certain beneficial rules, customs, and morals ("evolutionary morals") are adopted which lead to wealth and population growth. The acceptance of institutions like individual property (which Hayek insists on calling "several property"), contract law, and the market system brings about a greater division and specialization of labor, expanded commercial transactions, exploration, scientific inquiry, and industry. Society expands enormously in terms of both material production and population.

Several features of this Hayekian view of cultural evolution deserve attention. First of all, the discussion is couched in terms analogous

to those of Darwinian biological evolution. There are references to "differentiation," "natural selection," "adaptation," and the "transmission of characteristics." Indeed, in a fashion very similar to Darwin's discussion of the survival of particular species, Hayek concludes that the extended order replaced or supplanted the earlier tribal groups by means of its superior adaptation to its environment. However, he emphatically states that the evolution he has in mind is Lamarckian rather than Darwinian. That is, cultural evolution proceeds by transmitting acquired characteristics in the form of learned rules rather than by genetic transmission of innate attributes. "Moreover, cultural evolution is brought about through transmission of habits and information not merely from the individual's physical parents, but from an indefinite number of 'ancestors'" (Hayek 1989, 25).

Secondly, the evolution of the extended order is not a process undertaken consciously by the persons involved. Hayek never tires of repeating his own claim that the extended order "arose from unintentionally conforming to certain traditional and largely *moral* practices, many of which men tend to dislike, whose significance they usually fail to understand, whose validity they cannot prove, and which have nonetheless fairly rapidly spread by means of an evolutionary selection"(emphasis in original)(1989, 6). The benefits of the extended order are incalculably great, but wholly unintended.

Thirdly, Hayek eagerly concedes that the emergence of the extended order is the product of a non-rational process. The version of rationalism he takes as a foil is Cartesian rationalism, which "not only discards tradition, but claims that pure reason can directly serve our desires without any such intermediary, and can build a new world, a new morality, a new law, even a new and purified language, from itself alone" (Hayek 1989, 48-49). Furthermore, Hayek is convinced that rationalism leads to "scientism", the misapplication of supposedly scientific methods (which may be perfectly appropriate in, say, physics or engineering) to the social sciences (Hayek 1979a, 77-92). And scientism leads inexorably to a belief that a socioeconomic system can and should be centrally directed. In short, Hayek argues that those who place great value on human rationality tend to be socialists.

By way of contrast, the extended order is predicated upon (1) the acceptance of the "pervasive ignorance" of the human race, (2) the limited capacity of reason to solve human problems, and, therefore, (3) the adoption and observance of traditions and customs which may not even be explicitly stated, much less logically defensible, but which nevertheless



“work” in the sense of promoting prosperity. Hayek clearly agrees with David Hume’s comment that “the rules of morality are not the conclusions of our reason” (quoted in Hayek 1989, 66). The extended order is not only not constructed, it also eludes the understanding of those who are devoted to reason and a search for clear causal relations. In fact, Hayek goes a step beyond Hume when he declares that “while it is true that traditional morals, etc., are not rationally justifiable, this is also true of *any possible moral code* (emphasis in original)(1989, 68).

Different from both instinctive morals and evolutionary morals are the “rationalistic morals” of the socialists. Hayek characterizes socialists as motivated by two powerful impulses: (1) the longing for a brotherhood of man in which everyone’s wants and needs are attended to and (2) the conviction that a perfect social order can be achieved by means of comprehensive central planning. The first is born of their atavistic desire to recapture the allegedly simple, free, and harmonious life of the “noble savage” (Hayek 1989, 19). The second, as was noted above, is the result of their overvaluing reason. To Hayek, however, socialism is not an immoral system. It is a serious mistake to be sure, but one that stems merely from factual errors in the thinking of socialists. They simply fail to recognize that greater prosperity can be achieved via learned rules than through conscious planning. Hayek specifically credits them with both intelligence and good intentions (1989, 9). In fact, he declares that “[n]or should my argument suggest that I do not share some values widely held by socialists” (1989, 8).

Between the “instinctive” order of primitive man and the “rational” planning of the socialists lies the extended order. The “evolutionary morals” of that extended order are based on neither instinct nor reason. They constitute a third category that lies *between* the other two. The extended order is “beyond instinct and often opposed to it, and . . . incapable of being created or designed by reason” (Hayek 1989, 21).

Hayek devoted most of the last forty years of his life to an exploration of knowledge, the use of knowledge in society, and the evolution of the extended order. Despite the great fame of this work, despite his brilliance, despite his eloquence, Hayek’s defense of a free society is, simply, untenable. It is founded on several principles which are, on closer inspection, inconsistent with such a society. Moreover, if one examines Hayek’s enumeration of the characteristics of his ideal society, one will discover that it is certainly not laissez-faire capitalism that he defends. His vision of a “free” society turns out to be a limited version of the distinctly unfree “mixed economy” so common in this century. In

order fully to grasp Hayek's failings one must turn to a thinker both much more rational and much more radical than he.

### A Rational Defense of Capitalism

There has been but one prominent thinker in this century who has both been an uncompromising advocate of pure, laissez-faire capitalism and based such advocacy on a comprehensive and integrated philosophical system in which the fundamental questions of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics are addressed.<sup>10</sup> That person is the controversial novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand (1905-1982). There is, obviously, insufficient space here to provide a thorough review of Rand's thought.<sup>11</sup> However, a brief survey of some of her principal insights is necessary in order to grasp the context within which the critique of Hayek will be presented.<sup>12</sup>

Rand's philosophy, which she named Objectivism, and which is clearly in the broad Aristotelian tradition, is built around several axiomatic propositions.<sup>13</sup> First of all, "existence exists." There is an objectively real world of entities that is metaphysically *independent* of any human being's mental functioning. Secondly, "A is A." Every entity has a specific identity and the entity *is* its identity. Implicit in the foregoing is recognition of the fact that consciousness is epistemologically active but metaphysically passive. The human mind does not create reality, it discovers it. "Existence is Identity, Consciousness is Identification" (Rand 1957, 942). Indeed, Rand argues that consciousness (the subject) is only identifiable because one can distinguish it from external entities (its objects). If—as some subjectivists claim—the mind were capable of concocting *all* of its constituent elements, then there would be no means by which one could differentiate between "mind" and "reality," between subject and object.

Further, Rand holds the law of causality to be an essential corollary to the foregoing axioms. This is the proposition that every effect must have a cause, and every cause consists of the action(s) of an entity. Therefore, there are no truly "inexplicable" events, because to identify the nature of the acting entity is to understand the source of the effect. In other words, mystical "explanations" explain nothing precisely because they fail objectively to identify the nature of the acting entity. The cause of a given effect may, at present, be unknown, but no cause is in principle unknowable. To suggest otherwise is to maintain that reality is unknowable.

For Rand, the only means of acquiring knowledge is through the rigorous application of reason to the data provided by our five senses. Faith, emotion, instinct, whim, and appeals to either tradition or authority are not "tools of cognition." "Man cannot survive except by gaining knowledge, and reason is his only means to gain it. . . . Truth is the recognition of reality; reason, man's only means of knowledge, is his only standard of truth" (Rand 1957, 942-43). The highest cognitive level is the conceptual, which involves a conscious process of both integrating entities (into groups whose members possess similar attributes) and differentiating entities (into groups with dissimilar attributes). But conceptualization is neither automatic nor infallible. One must *choose* to function at the conceptual level. The next level of cognition is the perceptual. Here the process *is* automatic; perceptions are the interaction between (1) one's brain and sense organs and (2) entities. A perception is the awareness of an entity as such. The lowest level is that of sensations, momentary responses to specific stimuli. Lower animals function at the sensory and perceptual levels; man can—and should—function primarily at the level of concepts.

Rand's metaphysical and epistemological views lead directly to her ethics. For her, in sharp contrast to almost all other modern philosophers, the facts of reality (the "is") do indeed imply a particular code of human conduct (the "ought"). Because (conceptual) knowledge cannot be gained without a focused awareness and the employment of logic, and because the knowledge of how to sustain their lives is not given to men at birth in the form of innate ideas, men should adopt an ethics that honors rationality, productiveness, and pride (Rand 1964, 25). Rationality is a virtue because reason is man's only means of achieving knowledge; productiveness is a virtue because man must produce the material values that sustain him; pride is a virtue because man "must acquire the values of character that make his life worth sustaining—that as man is a being of self-made worth, so he is a being of self-made soul" (Rand 1957, 947).

Above all, Rand condemns as irrational and immoral any creed which even suggests that sacrifice is admirable. Every individual is an end unto himself and should *never* be a means to someone else's ends. In short, Rand is an ethical egoist. Altruism, the ethical doctrine which holds that the highest moral good consists of service to others, that is, that sacrifice in some form and to some degree is the ethical ideal, is utterly contemptible in her view. It must be understood clearly, however, that she is not an irrational "egoist" in the mold of Nietzsche; she explicitly rejects the idea that "inferior" men should be sacrificed in order to benefit "superior" men. Rand repeatedly states her basic ethical principle: Never live for the sake of

another person, and never ask another person to live for your sake (Rand 1957, 993).

Of all possible politico-economic systems, Rand finds but one that is consistent with rational egoism. That one is capitalism—pure, laissez-faire capitalism, not the bastardized modern version that goes by the name but which exhibits as many socialistic elements as truly capitalistic ones. Indeed, she well realizes those modern-day “mixed economies” are actually a species of fascism (Rand 1967, 202-20). Rand is a philosophical capitalist because (1) capitalism recognizes that the mind is the source of all values and (2) the essential social principle of capitalism is that of voluntary trade for mutual benefit. Capitalism demands that if a man seeks some material value, he must trade value for it. The political and legal implications of such a “trader” principle are that the initiation of physical force must be forbidden (the defensive employment of force is, of course, legitimate); the government’s sole concern should be the protection of individual rights (especially property rights); other than an unflinching respect for the rights of others, no citizen has a “responsibility to society”; and the financing of government operations must be achieved by voluntary means.

It is obvious that Rand’s defense of capitalism differs markedly from that offered by most economists. She praises capitalism because it is the incarnation of certain metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical truths and, therefore, it holds the natural rights of the individual to be sacred. As a rule, those economists who have been advocates of a free-market system—from Adam Smith to Milton Friedman—have done so based on broadly utilitarian grounds. For example, economists usually justify their espousal of free markets by declaring that such systems lead to an efficient allocation of the society’s resources or to the maximization of consumer welfare. Rand explicitly criticizes all such criteria. What is essential and crucial is that capitalism is *moral*; it is incidentally true that capitalism is also efficient.

The “practical” justification of capitalism does not lie in the collectivist claim that it effects “the best allocation of national resources”. Man is *not* a “national resource” and neither is his mind. . . . The moral justification of capitalism lies in the fact that it is the only system consonant with man’s rational nature. (emphasis in original)(Rand 1967, 20)

It is equally clear that Rand's defense of laissez-faire capitalism also differs drastically from Hayek's explanation of the extended order. Moreover, this difference is a reflection of the significant philosophical gulf that separates these two thinkers. A useful way to summarize the contrast is to consider the intellectual roots of each. Rand draws heavily upon the metaphysics and epistemology of Aristotle,<sup>14</sup> although she rejects much of his ethics and politics. Furthermore, she considers both the skepticism of David Hume and the idealism of Immanuel Kant to be anathema (Rand 1961, 28-32). Hayek makes it clear that his position is largely the opposite. He criticizes Aristotle quite severely (1989, 45-47), but lavishes praise on both Hume and Kant, whom he calls "two of the greatest philosophers of modern times" (1967, 166). Rand models a free society based on reason, egoism, and individual rights; while Hayek's version of such a society is founded on a mixture of skepticism and subjectivism, is guided by altruism, and is governed by traditional rules.

### Problems with Hayek's Work

Perhaps the single most frequently recurring theme in Hayek's many books and essays is his steadfast belief that human reason is weak, unreliable, and limited. It is true that he does not claim that reason is *totally* devoid of value, but he certainly relegates reason to a quite minor role in his social philosophy (Hayek 1989, 8). As discussed earlier in some detail, Hayek insists that the conscious level of conceptualization is not even the highest level of mental functioning. There allegedly is a non-rational, "supra-conscious" level of abstract conventions or rules upon which all conscious thought depends. Hayek's approach to knowledge is an application of such a notion. There he emphasizes that, because individuals are the repositories of the dispersed knowledge of particular times and places, no single person possesses sufficient knowledge to justify central planning of the economy. This "pervasive ignorance," which is inescapable and ineradicable, becomes a major component of his defense of a free society. Hayek's error is subtle but important. He is, of course, correct that comprehensive central planning of any socioeconomic system is impossible in the sense of being incapable of achieving an efficient allocation of resources. And he does indeed identify the immediate reason why that is so, namely the fundamental complexity of social and economic interactions. Such complexity *in all its particulars* is truly beyond the processing capacity of any single mind.

However, Hayek utterly fails to see *why* the complexity exists. He asserts that one's inability to foresee perfectly all the consequences of one's

actions (that is, the inability to grasp all the specifics of any given complex social phenomenon) means that traditional rules rather than reason are the key to a free society. What he overlooks is the fact that one cannot foresee all the (unintended) consequences of one's actions precisely because other individuals exercise their free will and employ reason to promote their own welfare. Moreover, Hayek never seems to realize that the abstract rules which he deems superior to reason only "work" when, if, and to the extent that they accord with objective reality and with man's use of his reason to comprehend that reality. The only appropriate rules are those which are rational. To understand capitalism one must embrace and use reason, not reject and demean it.

In addition, does not the rejection of reason—man's primary means of survival and only means of knowledge—constitute a slur upon mankind? For example, Hayek states that "[i]f there were omniscient men . . . there would be little case for liberty" (1960, 29). Obviously there are no omniscient men, and there never will be any. However, does not Hayek's position suggest that the greater man's knowledge becomes, the less men will deserve freedom? It is interesting to note that Rand condemns an analogous argument often made by political conservatives. She calls it the "argument from depravity," which is the claim that, since all men are "innately depraved, no man may be entrusted with the responsibility of being a dictator . . . therefore, a free society is the proper way of life for imperfect creatures" (Rand 1967, 198-99). Parallel to Hayek's, this argument suggests that if men become less depraved, they will deserve less freedom. Neither argument does man justice.

Before leaving Hayek's views on reason and knowledge, four additional points must be raised. First of all, he does not seem fully to grasp that all events are the actions of entities. This error is manifested by the fact that he devotes enormous effort to his analysis of complex social phenomena but scarcely even begins to investigate the nature of man. "A great deal may be learned about society by studying man; but this process cannot be reversed: nothing can be learned about man by studying society—by studying the inter-relationships of entities one has never identified or defined. Yet that is the methodology adopted by most political economists" (Rand 1967, 15). Rand may not have been thinking of Hayek when she wrote those words, but they are surely appropriate in his case.

Secondly, Hayek distorts the case for rationality by choosing Cartesian rationalism as its exemplar. The approach adopted by Rene Descartes, which David Kelley refers to as "representationalism" (Kelley 1986, 10), is rather easily shown to be flawed. Indeed, Berkeley, Hume, and

Kant all make much of Descartes' errors (Kelley 1986, 18- 27). Hayek, if he truly is convinced that all rationalistic philosophies are fallacious, should choose as his target their best representative: the contextual realism of Ayn Rand. This he fails to do. In fact, there is no mention of Rand in any of his numerous works.<sup>15</sup>

Third, Hayek's claim that the data of the social sciences are subjective in nature should be questioned. For example, as was noted earlier, Hayek says that a medicine is what one *believes* will cure an ailment, not what will actually do so. However, to pursue his own example, surely it is true that one will cease to buy a medication that has failed to perform as promised and expected. It seems odd that Hayek, as an economist of the Austrian School in which so much emphasis is placed on the market as a discovery and learning process, should pay so little heed to the means by which beliefs are revised. And one must constantly revise his beliefs by testing them against the ultimate arbiter: objective reality. Economic valuations are not subjective in the fundamental sense of being formed truly independently of external entities. Instead, economic value is *relational*. It is the estimate of the usefulness to a particular valuer of an entity possessing specific attributes in the context of that valuer's knowledge, expectations, goals, and preferences. It is analogous to the "form" in which one perceives external objects.<sup>16</sup> Both economic value and perceptual form represent means by which one is aware of external objects. Both are contextual; correctly speaking, neither is subjective.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, it will be recalled that Hayek cites Godel's proof as confirmation of his view of knowledge, an integral aspect of which is the proposition that human reason is quite limited. Hayek seems to misunderstand the implications of the proof, because, as Nagel and Newman point out, "[i]t does not mean, as a recent writer claims, that there are 'ineluctable limits to human reason'. . . . The theorem does indicate that the structure and power of the human mind are far more complex and subtle than any non-living machine yet envisaged" (Nagel and Newman 1958, 101-2).

Hayek's rejection of reason in favor of traditions and customs is a grievous error. Nevertheless, there are several additional grounds upon which his case for the extended order can be criticized. For example, Hayek explains its emergence as the result of an evolutionary process akin to biological evolution. He asserts that the extended order replaces the primitive tribal order via superior adaptation. Specifically, the extended order appears and prospers while the tribal order stagnates. In short, he sees the process as a "zero-sum game," that is, a situation where one gains at

the expense of the other. This is no doubt true of (non-human) animals. Since animals do not *create* their food source, inter-species competition for food must be a zero-sum game. But humans are radically different. Man produces the material values he requires. Using his conceptual power, he transforms natural resources into economic values. Moreover, the market process is a “positive-sum game”—to produce and exchange is mutually beneficial. The emergence of the extended order should have brought prosperity to the tribal order as well as to itself. In other words, the tribal order should have become the extended order. Yet Hayek does not describe it in those terms. He appears to conceive of tribal orders as literally dying out because of their lower level of wealth, higher mortality rate, and lower birth rate. The problem is that Hayek sees men largely as blind, or at least myopic, followers of rules. Some rules happen to work, others do not. Men who adopt the latter die out.

A topic that has not yet been addressed in this essay is Hayek’s very problematic concept of coercion. In order to understand his vision of a free society as one which minimizes coercion, one must be aware of exactly what he means by the term. “Coercion occurs when one man’s actions are made to serve another man’s will, not for his own but for the other’s purposes” (Hayek 1960, 133). This is usually achieved, Hayek says, by manipulating the relevant data so as to limit the other person’s range of choices. Coercion is often accomplished by force, but “the threat of physical force is not the only way in which coercion can be exercised” (Hayek 1960, 135). According to Hayek, the set of coercive acts also includes the failure to provide goods or services expected by the recipient and which are crucial to the well-being of that recipient (1960, 136-37). Furthermore, coercion is an inescapable fact of life because “coercion of one individual by another can be prevented only by the threat of coercion” (Hayek 1960, 139). It is clear that Hayek equates coercion with force—whether physical or not—and makes little distinction between, on the one hand, the *initiation* of force and, on the other hand, the employment of *defensive* or *retaliatory* force. Amazingly though, certain governmental actions, such as conscription and taxation, largely cease to be coercive if they are “at least predictable and are enforced irrespective of how the individual would otherwise employ his energies” (Hayek 1960, 143).

This Hayekian notion of coercion is horribly misguided. He defines it in a way that makes certain common market transactions “coercive” and certain truly coercive acts voluntary” (High 1985, 8-9). If an employer keeps raising his wage rate offer until a worker agrees to work for him, is he causing the worker to serve his will and thus being “coercive”?



On the other hand, if a firm threatened a consumer with bodily harm if he did not buy the firm's product, and there existed an alternative source of the product, would not the consumer's choice set be unchanged and thus the consumer's choice remain "voluntary?"<sup>18</sup> Worse yet, both government confiscation of individuals' income via taxation and forced labor in the armed services are perfectly acceptable to Hayek as long as they are predictable and imposed equally on everyone.

Hayek's error is fundamental. Coercion should be defined as the initiation, or viable threat of the initiation, of physical force. That is the proper definition because coercion, if it is to be a meaningful term, must involve the violation of an individual's rights. And since rights pertain only to one's freedom of action, the only way to violate one's rights is by means of physical force (Rand 1964, 92-98). Mere inconveniences or irritations, such as a "morose husband" or a "nagging wife" (Hayek 1960, 138), are not instances of coercion.

Why does Hayek refuse to think of coercion in terms of individual rights? First of all, he believes that rights are non-rational and arbitrary because he thinks all ethical systems are non-rational and arbitrary. Thus, no doubt also partly as a result of his training as an economist, Hayek is reluctant to make ethical judgments. Secondly, rights play a minor role in the development of the extended order. For Hayek, rights have importance only *instrumentally*. The protection of rights is indeed part of the extended order, but it is only the means to an end, not the end itself. The extended order requires that individual rights be respected (to some extent, though not rigorously) in order for the society as a whole to enjoy greater wealth. The success of the group, not the rights of the individual, is the goal and the promise of the extended order. In this, as elsewhere, Hayek reveals the conjunction of both a holistic analysis and an altruistic ethical standard.

Hayek is no crusading altruist; he is more an altruist by default, so to speak. He states, for instance, that "all systems of morality *of course* commend altruistic action" (emphasis added)(1989, 81). Hayek seems literally to be ignorant of the fact that some thinkers have indeed advocated egoism, most notably Ayn Rand. Furthermore, he takes a position very common among modern conservatives in that he sees the free market as indirectly or ultimately altruistic. Individuals in the extended order may intend only to benefit themselves, but the "morals of the market" compel them to act in a fashion that benefits others.<sup>19</sup> The extended order "does make our efforts altruistic in their effects" (Hayek 1989, 81). If one adds to this the fact that Hayek repeatedly insists that the *unintended* consequences of any social structure are more significant than the intended consequences,

one comes to an important insight. One must conclude that for Hayek the extended order is laudable because it is altruistic.

The holistic aspect of Hayek's work would seem to be rather obvious. Although he claims to be an advocate of individualism,<sup>20</sup> he is clearly not a consistent methodological individualist. His primary concern is with "complex social phenomena," "patterns of social interaction," and the "unintended consequences" of the extended order, not with the nature, rights, and needs of the individual person. Hayek himself reveals this holism, for example, when, while explaining the evolution of the extended order, he says that men "had to combine into *entities* of a distinct character; not merely a sum but a structure in some manner analogous to, and in some important respects differing from, an organism" (emphasis added)(1989, 80). But the only true entities in society are individual human beings. All human organizations are merely matrices of relationships among people; they are not separate entities. To speak of groups as constituting entities concedes far too much to the collectivist opponents of capitalism.

And one must not overlook the praise Hayek bestows upon religion. His words seem striking given that he identifies himself as an agnostic (1989, 139). He declares that religion has been one of the enduring pillars of the extended order. Despite the mysticism that permeates all religious beliefs, organized religions have, allegedly, brought great benefits to the human race.

We owe it partly to mystical and religious beliefs, and, I believe, particularly to the main monotheistic ones, that beneficial traditions have been preserved and transmitted. . . . This means that, like it or not, we owe the persistence of certain practices, and the civilization that resulted from them, in part to support from beliefs which are not true—or verifiable or testable . . . and which are certainly not the result of rational argumentation. (Hayek 1989, 136-37)

Furthermore, he warns that if men reject religion as "mere superstition", then civilization itself may be in danger; because the likely alternative to belief in "God's will" is belief in "the will of society". In other words, socialism will probably flourish if religion is discarded (Hayek 1989, 140).

Hayek's evaluation of religion is very wide of the target. It is not altogether surprising, however, considering his attitude toward reason. Basically, he has matters backward. Despite superficial appearances to the

contrary, it is the mysticism and altruism of religion that have corrupted the defense and celebration of capitalism. Any doctrine which tells man that he lives in an unknowable universe where the ethical imperative is to serve others before himself, is a doctrine both alien and hostile to laissez-faire capitalism. It is true that certain established churches, as social institutions, have functioned as important parts of the culture, and therefore helped to maintain this extended order in a structural way. However, those same sects promulgated certain beliefs which, as theological doctrines, simultaneously undermined the intellectual defense of a free society. If ideas really do matter (and they do), then the latter is of greater consequence than the former. In short, religion has done enormous harm and some small good. Hayek sees it as the reverse. One might think of the role of religion in capitalistic societies as analogous to the carpenter who builds a house out of rotten wood. Should you thank him for building the house, or curse him for building it so badly? The correct answer is obvious.

Hayek seems blind to the fact that most of the human race already embraces some variety of socialism. How is it that religion has saved civilization from socialism, then? In fact, the modern half-socialist, half-capitalist welfare state seems clearly to be the evolutionary result of a culture devoted to collectivistic sentiments,<sup>21</sup> with much of it applauded by religious leaders. And he wonders why both the primitive tribal order and socialism produce suboptimal results. What he seems unable to comprehend is that both fail in large part because they are both motivated by the same ethical doctrine, a doctrine that lies at the core of religious faith: altruism. One demands sacrifice for the good of the tribe; the other demands sacrifice for the good of society. The only real difference is one of magnitude. The symbiotic relationship is not between altruism and capitalism, but between altruism and socialism.

Finally, there is one overarching error, reflected in all aspects of Hayek's multi-faceted work, whose importance cannot be overstated. Inspired by David Hume,<sup>22</sup> among others, he enthusiastically embraces epistemological skepticism. Hayek rejects the suggestion that certainty is possible with regard to knowledge, and instead declares that, because human reason is so inept and so limited, the guiding principle of social interaction should be an adherence to traditions and customs. Here is the flaw in skepticism: While it is true that human beings are certainly capable of error; the identification of error *presupposes* the possibility of knowledge with certainty. How else can one state that he is "sure" that an error has been committed? How can Hayek be so sure that socialism is a mistake?

He builds his case against socialism upon a foundation of skepticism, never realizing that this actually precludes any clear conclusion. It is a foundation, not of concrete, but of shifting sands.

### Conclusion

Considering the foregoing testimony to Hayek's murky thinking, ambiguous terminology, and outright errors, the reader may be quite justifiably perplexed. How is it possible that a radical and rigorous defense of capitalism can be built on such a shaky base? The truth is it *cannot*. Hayek is almost universally perceived—by both his enemies and his allies—as some sort of hard-core advocate of capitalism.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, such a perception is false, if one takes capitalism to mean (as one should) a pure, unadulterated *laissez-faire* system in which the only role for government is the protection of individual rights via prohibitions on the use of force or fraud.

One might think that Hayek would disguise his true position, but that is not the case. He makes it abundantly clear that the *laissez-faire*, minimal state approach is not his. For instance, while discussing free-market, or classical, liberalism, he openly declares that “nothing has done so much harm to the liberal cause as the wooden insistence of some liberals on certain rough rules of thumb, above all the principle of *laissez-faire*” (1944, 17). If not *laissez-faire*, what does Hayek advocate? He suggests that what is necessary is the “planning which is required to make competition as effective and beneficial as possible” (1944, 42). Indeed, there is “a wide and unquestioned field for state activity” (Hayek 1944, 39). Hayek even admits that his position “does not mean that all state enterprises must be excluded from a free system” (1960, 224).

The list of specific governmental intrusions into the market which Hayek finds acceptable is quite long. It includes an “extensive system of social services,” restrictions on the smoke and noise emitted by factories, the prohibition of certain poisonous substances, limits on laborers' working hours, regulations concerning sanitary conditions for workers, limitations on deforestation, and the provision of roads and signposts (Hayek 1944, 37-39). Later he adds to the foregoing the imposition of compulsory health and old age insurance, city planning, public housing, public parks, compulsory education, taxation (if imposed proportionally), and compulsory military service (if required of everyone) (Hayek 1960; 143, 286, 314-16, 346, 351, 375, 377-78). Toward the end of his career he expands the list so that it also encompasses a guaranteed minimum income for everyone, the financing of schools and research, the enforcement of

building codes and pure food laws, the certification of certain professions, the provision of theaters and sports arenas, protection against natural disasters, and the use of eminent domain for the “public good” (Hayek 1979b; 44, 55, 59, 62-63).

Any politico-economic system that exhibits the above features cannot be called capitalism. What it is is a variety of the “mixed economy” that dominates the political landscape today. It is no wonder that Hayek’s arguments ring hollow to those who do advocate laissez-faire. He is not really a proponent of capitalism at all. He perhaps should not be categorized as a libertarian or classical liberal, but as a conservative, despite his protestations to the contrary (Hayek 1960, 397-411). Certainly he shares with political conservatives a reliance on traditions and customs, a belief that human reason is unreliable and severely limited, an altruist ethics, and a penchant for compromise.

What Hayek offers us is a dichotomy and a dilemma. He declares that the free market intentionally aims at private profits but unintentionally achieves the greater good of group prosperity. Socialism intends to assist the less fortunate by means of a centrally-planned economy, but it thereby unintentionally impoverishes everyone. He offers us, in short, either production without pride or virtue without prosperity.

Wherein lies his error? It lies in his failure to ground his work in a sound philosophical framework. He denies the fact that reason is the key to man’s survival and prosperity. He totally misunderstands the destructive nature of altruism and its role in socialist thought. He discards realism in favor of a mongrel mixture of skepticism and subjectivism. He dwells endlessly on an important, but secondary, attribute of the free market—its undeniable efficiency in generating and processing information—but ignores the ethical essence of capitalism. To put it bluntly, the “fatal conceit” of Hayek is his implicit assumption that a free society can exist without a rational philosophical base.

The world crisis of today is a moral crisis—and nothing less than a moral revolution can resolve it. . . . [One] must fight for capitalism, not as a “practical” issue, not as an economic issue, but, with the most righteous pride, as a *moral* issue. That is what capitalism deserves, and nothing less will save it. (emphasis in original) (Rand 1961, 54)

1. Despite the joint nature of the award, Hayek and Myrdal were neither collaborators nor allies.
2. Nevertheless, there existed at least one glaring gap in his study of such areas of philosophy as epistemology, ethics, and politics. Namely, he seems to have been totally unaware of Ayn Rand.
3. See the comments by Hayek's editor, and long-time friend, W. W. Bartley III in Hayek (1989, x).
4. For a brilliant exposition of these issues, see David Kelley (1986).
5. For discussion of the Austrian School, see Shand (1984), Spadaro (1978), and Dolan (1976).
6. See Kirzner (1976) for elaboration on the evolution of economics.
7. Hayek (1960, 148-75) explains the Rule of Law in some detail.
8. Altruism is the ethical doctrine which posits that the highest moral good is achieved when one serves others rather than oneself. Hayek is inconsistent in his use of the term. Sometimes he appears to use altruism as a synonym for generosity or benevolence toward one's friends or family, which can be fundamentally egoistic rather than altruistic.
9. In fairness it must be admitted that Hayek does not deny that human reason possesses some value. He is, however, quite skeptical of its power and reliability.
10. The Austrian School economist Ludwig von Mises might also be mentioned in this context. However, Mises, despite his interest in certain philosophical (especially epistemological) issues, does not offer the reader a complete system of thought as does Rand.
11. Anyone who seeks a fuller understanding of Objectivism should consult Sciabarra (1995) and Peikoff (1993) in addition to Rand's own works.
12. The author of this essay, although he may disagree with Rand on some points, is very much in accord with the fundamentals of her philosophy.

13. For presentations of Objectivism see Rand (1957, 936-93; 1964; 1967; 1990).

14. See Den Uyl and Rasmussen (1984, 3-18) for an explanation of the Aristotelian elements in Rand's work.

15. The author does not claim to have read everything Hayek ever wrote. However, he has examined all of Hayek's better-known works as well as most of his lesser works and journal articles. He has not yet found a single reference to Ayn Rand.

16. See Kelley (1986, 88-91) for his theory of perceptual "forms."

17. The author is aware that the relational nature of value needs to be developed much beyond these brief comments. It seems to hold promise as a possible bridge between Austrian economics and Objectivism.

18. Hayek might object that the second is clearly coercive because of the threat of physical force. But all that does is illuminate the fact that, to be meaningful, coercion must involve the initiation (or the viable threat of the initiation) of physical force. In Hayek's taxonomy persuasive acts and coercive acts are sometimes grouped together.

19. This is, of course, the famous "invisible hand" of Adam Smith.

20. His version of "individualism" is quite different from that espoused by Rand. See Hayek (1944, 14-19).

21. One has to wonder why Hayek does not openly tout the modern welfare/warfare state as desirable; since the process of cultural evolution allegedly produces, via adaptation, superior social systems. And the welfare/warfare state is clearly the result of a multitude of incremental cultural changes that have occurred over the last century. Of course, in a sense that is exactly what Hayek does do; because his "free society" is actually a modest welfare state. He is simply reluctant to call it that.

22. Hayek speaks of Hume as his "constant companion and sage guide" (1960, 420 n.9).

23. Ayn Rand was one of the rare, and early, exceptions. In a 1946 letter to writer Rose Wilder Lane, Rand responded to Lane's query about possible philosophical and political allies in the following way:

[T]hose who are with us, but merely do not go far enough, yet do not serve the opposite cause in any way, are the ones who do us some good and who are worth educating. Those who agree with us in some respects, yet preach contradictory ideas at the same time, are definitely more harmful than 100% enemies. . . . As an example of the kind of "almost" I would tolerate, I'd name Ludwig von Mises. . . . As an example of our most pernicious enemy, I would name Hayek. That one is real poison. (quoted in Mayhew 1995, 145)



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## *Special Forum: Rand & Philosophy*

### **A Philosopher for the New Millennium?**

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Ayn Rand's novels, especially *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, belong among the literary masterpieces of the twentieth century. They have had a profound impact upon many readers, and contributed, arguably, to recent momentous political changes in the United States and, consequently, throughout the rest of the world. Rand's fictional heroes in their deeds and words—in particular, Howard Roark's courtroom defense and John Galt's radio speech—proclaimed a world view and a sense of life radically at variance with the prevailing culture. Her writings suggested earlier influences: of Nietzsche, of Aristotle, and of early classical liberals. But Ayn Rand was no mere eclectic. Whatever ideas she may have gleaned from others were transmuted into a brilliant new intellectual vision, which she called "Objectivism". The outlines of this were set forth in a short monograph, *An Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, and in a number of brief popular essays and speeches, written in a lively style and often with a polemical edge, which appear in collections such as *The Virtue of Selfishness*, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, and *Philosophy: Who Needs It*. She did not employ the conventional idiom of academic philosophers, attend conferences, or submit papers to scholarly journals. She disparaged many past philosophical "greats" and did not conceal her disdain for academic philosophy as generally practiced. This accounts in part for why—aside from their unorthodox content—her writings are seldom mentioned in academic publications.

Ayn Rand contributed many noteworthy ideas, notwithstanding, including those briefly enumerated below. The most familiar of these concern her views on ethical egoism, but she also made insightful contributions to the theory of knowledge, with which the list begins:

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1. In epistemology, Rand argued that consciousness is not a passive state but an active process involving differentiation and integration of the data of awareness. She challenged the view (which she attributed to philosophers as disparate as Aristotle and Kant) that consciousness could know things in themselves without distortion only if it were like a diaphanous medium.

2. Rand formulated a theory of concepts which contained a solution to the traditional problem of universals and an account of the relationship of reason to perception which differed from both empiricism and rationalism. She sought to reconcile the primacy of reason with the cognitively basic status of perception.

3. Rand pointed out the contextual nature of knowledge: we can form a concept or grasp a fact only in a specific context. We must explain facts and define our concepts in terms of fundamental characteristics, but a characteristic is fundamental only in relation to a specific context of knowledge. She endorsed a version of essentialism, but argued, contrary to Aristotle, that essences are epistemological rather than metaphysical. By emphasizing the role of context, her epistemology avoided the traditional dichotomies of foundationalism and coherentism.

4. Rand also maintained the importance of axiomatic concepts such as existence, identity, and consciousness. She viewed these as epistemological guidelines necessary for a rational consciousness. Because they are fundamental they cannot be deduced from anything else, but can only be defended indirectly by negative demonstration.

5. In ethics, Rand repudiated the orthodox non-cognitivism according to which reason is unable to apprehend the ultimate ends of actions. She rejected the irrationalism of Nietzsche and other philosophers associated with moral individualism. She sought, however, to accommodate the fundamental role of volition and reason in ethics.

6. In her theory of value, she analyzed value as the object of action, and she argued that values are objective rather than intrinsic or subjective. (The latter dichotomy contributes to the perennial

problem of deriving "ought" from "is.") Her treatment anticipated the now widely discussed "agent-relative" theories of values and reasons. Based on this analysis of value, she argued that life is the ultimate value for human agents.

7. Rand defended egoism as a theory of moral conduct. She argued that a version of egoism could be rationally defended, and that this was consistent with a moral, virtuous way of life. Interestingly, many interpreters of classical ethics have come independently to the view that ancient philosophers such as Aristotle also viewed virtue and self-interest as fundamentally in accord.

8. Rand's theory of rights has affinities with John Locke's theory, in which the right to liberty and the right to private property have primacy, but his theory had only a vague and weakly defended theistic basis. Rand gave a secular derivation of rights from her theory of life as the ultimate value.

9. In political theory Rand defended the minimal state against the totalitarian and welfare state ideologies that were dominant in her day. On many specific policy issues she agreed with libertarian theorists, but she argued that a clear and stable political theory must be based on a rationally defended theory of rights. She opposed the view that politics should be based on ungrounded precepts or pragmatic strategies.

10. In political economy Rand argued for *laissez faire* capitalism at a time when the superiority (and historical inevitability) of socialism was widely pronounced. However, Rand was exceptional in arguing that capitalism was superior not only in terms of efficiency but also on moral grounds.

The foregoing list very sketchily describes some of Ayn Rand's main contributions to philosophy. She argued for these positions in an inimitably succinct and incisive manner. When she first advanced these views, they would have been rejected by nearly every recognized philosopher. Today, it is noteworthy that some influential academic philosophers have taken positions rather close to hers on some issues in epistemology and ethics. Perhaps her deepest insights concern the nature of consciousness, the contextual character of knowledge, and the agent-

relativity of value. These distinguish her philosophy of Objectivism from other forms of realism. Because she did not write systematic treatises expounding her ideas, they are still not well understood, even by those in basic sympathy with them. It remains to be seen how she will influence the new millennium. Ayn Rand's philosophical legacy has scarcely begun to be realized.

## On Rand as Philosopher

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I want to say a few words that will be elaborated on more fully by my colleagues about why Ayn Rand is worth studying. This is different issue from why she is influential. She appeals to people for lots of reasons, but what is of concern here is the academic question—why is she worth spending any serious time reading as a possible significant thinker in our era. I see the matter in three categories, starting with the broadest:

Rand has a remarkable knack of being insightful intellectually. I think that sometimes she fails to fill in some gaps which then need to be filled in by others, but she has an intellectual vision. It perhaps is a coherent one, but it is certainly interesting in the sense that Rand has put together what people would not normally have conjoined, and she has revived an interest in things that people (at least early on) were moving away from.

In epistemology, for example, Ayn Rand revived an interest in classical realism. She has also, as I think my colleagues will say in ethics and politics, moved us to think about a defensible liberalism from the point of view of an Aristotelian ethic as opposed to a modern ethic. In other words, she has managed to integrate things that were not thought of by others in the contemporary era. How successful she is at doing this is yet to be determined, but those of us who have taken, and do take, an interest in her thought see that she has set some directions for study and research that are new and different and interesting. So her vision is there.

The second thing I want to say is that Ayn Rand has done what Contemporary Ethics has failed to do, and I think her accomplishment here is part of her appeal to people. It certainly was part of her appeal to me when I first started reading her. What Rand has done is to give a moral defense for one's own actions and one's interest and one's own projects and one's own pursuits. This is not a practical defense. It's not a defense which says, "Well, there is nothing we can do about self-interest so we'll have to

let it go on." It is not a defense which says we need self-interest because society is better off if we give it some range. It is not a defense which says self-interest is fine, but there are really many higher and more important values. Rand's theory is actually an attempt to give a moral justification for why it is right and of paramount importance for you and I to pursue our own lives and our own interests. And this is unique. The typical ethical systems that people use—utilitarianism and deontology in their various guises—have a very difficult time doing this.

Kant, for example, does talk about duties to self, but it is almost like an afterthought. It is as if he needs to worry about it and not because it's central to the system itself. And while utilitarians appear to give the self a central location in the theory, since they begin with the individual, the individual is in the end completely subsumed by others. So I believe in ethics Rand has, more than anyone else, provided us with a moral defense for a primary focus on one's own actions. She does it, by the way, without seeing human beings as bundles of desires pursuing one satisfaction after another, but as seekers of meaning guided by reason.

Finally, what I think is also important and interesting about Rand is that she gives a positive defense of liberty. Giving a positive defense may not sound particularly remarkable, but when you think about it, most of the classical defenses of liberalism have been essentially negative. We are ignorant; therefore, the state cannot really guide us, because no one possesses the wisdom to do so. We are sinners; therefore, we cannot really depend on the virtuous to rule. We need to allow certain vices of self-interest to take place in order to gain the goodies that doing so allows. I am not denying whatever truth there may be in these positions. What I am suggesting though is that Rand at least takes an additional step, if not points in whole new direction. She says, "It's not just that we need liberal orders because there are these failings in human nature; we need liberal orders because it is the appropriate positive political expression of what is best in human nature."

I think that is a unique defense. It is an interesting and unique way of going about defending liberalism. And again, I think part of her appeal is saying that we do not have to just settle for liberalism because we cannot have a society of angels. Her position grows out of an affirmation of human existence. And again, whatever one finally judges about these views, I think they are interesting intellectually. They are worth following through. They are worth debating. They are worth discussing. And for that reason I think Rand is going to remain an interesting, controversial, and important figure for some time to come.



## Rand and Philosophy (and Capitalism)

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I would like to continue discussing why Ayn Rand is worth studying. I agree that Rand is very audacious. She can go to the heart of a controversial matter with just a few sentences. Her analytical skills are great. However, it is with her power to convey the emotional meaning of individualism, capitalism, and liberty that she is truly unsurpassed. By "emotional" I mean having to do with values and morality. Anyone who reads Rand can come to feel both the supreme worth of the individual human being and the evil of all forms of oppression. When it comes to expressing the moral importance of the individual, of capitalism, and of liberty, there is no better writer.

Professor Machan has correctly identified Rand as a cognitivist in ethics. She is also naturalistic; that is, she appeals to human nature to understand the human good. I further agree that Rand is a "classical egoist" if we mean by those words that self-interest is determined by the facts about your nature and not merely by your wants or desires.

I would also argue, though this is not the place, that Rand makes the most sense if she is interpreted as advocating human flourishing or *eudaimonia* as the ultimate good, and not merely survival. For her human virtues are not simply means to survival. They are also constituents of the human good, what Rand calls "man's survival qua man." They have more than mere instrumental value. The human good is, in other words, partly defined by virtue, and so we are always speaking of a way of living. Human living is much more than not being dead. In the early 60's, when Rand came on the scene in ethics, she was advocating what is now called "virtue ethics." She was in some respects ahead of her time. In her work, "The Objectivist Ethics," she talks about the virtues that comprise human moral well being and rejects the consequentialist/deontological dichotomy.

Rand is, of course, an individualist, but the type of individualism she advocates is what I would call Aristotelian, not Hobbesian. I also think

it is incorrect to call her view Nietzschean, but there is a lot of debate now about what Nietzsche is really saying. Much could be said on this matter, but not at this time. I think one should consider Rand a philosopher, and if one does that, one will not make the mistake of reading only Rand. I think one needs to read Aristotle and Aquinas. I think one needs to read Wittgenstein. I think one needs to read many others.

Rand suggests that if we are true intellectuals, new intellectuals, we might be able to find a more powerful justification for the classical liberal society. Many people who have read her works have taken up this challenge in various ways.

I want to say something more about Rand's advocacy of capitalism. If the Pope in *Centesimus Annus* is giving one cheer for capitalism, and if Irving Kristol, the neo-conservative, gave two cheers for capitalism, Rand certainly is giving three cheers. She is for capitalism obviously because of the value of liberty; but she is also for capitalism for a reason that, in a very interesting way, is similar to Michael Novak's reason for endorsing capitalism.

In fact, if Michael Novak is correct, Rand's reason is similar to the current Pope's basis for endorsing capitalism. The reason for her commitment to capitalism is that it unlocks the human mind. It unleashes it. This is also, by the way, an idea implicit in Hayek's understanding of free markets. Rand, however, takes this idea even further.

Rand is tremendously impressed with what she calls the motor that runs the world. If you have read her novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, she says, "What happens if we stop the motor of the world? What happens if people who think, who produce, who create stop? What will happen to the world?" Everything that is decent and good about human life will end. It will come to a halt. The individual human mind is of fundamental moral importance, and since capitalism allows people the freedom to follow their own judgments, capitalism is of fundamental moral importance too.

This is a very different approach to justifying capitalism. Most justifications of capitalism have been of the capitalism-makes-more-and-better-bathtubs form. As former Secretary of State, James Baker said to the citizens of Albania, "Freedom works." I am for more and better bath tubs. I think we all are. That is an important fact. That is a moral vision of sorts. Yet, it is not enough, and Rand understood this. She sees the human good, the human intellect, liberty, and capitalism as intimately linked. We cannot be all that we morally and intellectually need to be without political and economic liberty, without capitalism. This makes Rand very

important when it comes to the justification of the classical liberal political vision.

I can only briefly note one other reason why Rand is important. I think Rand pushes you toward looking into deep philosophical questions. I mentioned *Atlas Shrugged* earlier. You probably know—or maybe some of you do not—that the three main parts of *Atlas Shrugged* have titles that correspond to the Aristotelian laws of thought: non-contradiction, excluded middle, and identity. Now what is the point of this? She is saying that the world is fundamentally intelligible, that answers are possible. That is important. Today, when relativism and subjectivism are advocated by many intellectuals, Rand is a non-compromising defender of the idea that answers are possible. We can know the truth. This is an epistemological point, and it is crucial both for our own lives and in understanding Rand's thought.

Professor Den Uyl and I have co-edited a book, *The Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand* (University of Illinois Press, 1984). This book seriously examined and analyzed her thought. I recommend it to those who want to explore her positions more deeply.

I do not want my enthusiasm for Rand to be taken as an unqualified endorsement. I think, in many respects, she is not a complete philosopher. She failed, for example, to discuss the role of *phronesis* or practical wisdom in ethics. I think this is a large gap, and it hampers her understanding of ethical individualism. In addition, she did not sufficiently understand the complex character of "rights" and what is involved in defending them. Finally, her discussion of the "problem of universals" in her epistemology failed to consider possible sources of support for her own views—for example, Aquinas' theory of abstraction. Yet, why must one person have all the answers? Whoever said that all you do is just go to a book, open it, read it, and everything is solved. You read someone for what they make you do, for what they make you think, for what they make you feel.

If you read Rand carefully, and you pay attention to her subtleties, it is my conviction that you will be the better for it.

# Ayn Rand's Contribution to Philosophy

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"[It was] a face that bore no mark of pain or fear or guilt. The shape of his mouth was pride, and more: it was as if he took pride in being proud. The angular planes of his face made her think of arrogance, of tension, of scorn—yet the face had none of these qualities, it had their final sum: a look of serene determination and of certainty. . . . It was a face that had nothing to hide or to escape, a face with no fear of being seen or of seeing, so that the first thing she grasped about him was the intense perceptiveness of his eyes—he looked as if his faculty of sight were his best-loved tool and its exercise were a limitless, joyous adventure, as if his eyes imparted a superlative value to himself and to the world—to himself for his ability to see, to the world for being a place so eagerly worth seeing" (Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, 647).

Ayn Rand's greatest contribution to philosophy, in my view, lies not in her philosophical writings, but in her novels. The vision of life she presents in her novels has shown thousands of readers the importance of philosophical reflection in their lives. Rand is well-known as the great individualist, the champion of individual liberty, free markets, and minimal government. She is also well-known as an ethical egoist. What is rarely understood, even among her devotees, is how close her brand of ethical egoism is to ancient eudaimonism.

Rand's novels dramatize, as no other fiction or film has, the ancient philosophical claim that the fully happy life must be the ethical life, the life of virtue, that morality is in one's self-interest—and that true self-interest or happiness cannot be defined entirely independently of morality.

In doing so the novels contradict—rightly, to my mind—some of her own explicitly philosophical claims about these issues. The joy in being alive in this world, the serenity and certainty, the freedom from pain, fear, and guilt that John Galt is described as possessing in the passage quoted above, has an essential connection to his perceptiveness, his focus on reality, and openness. And these traits are either themselves virtues or aspects of virtue. Remarkably, Rand's novels combine striking, complex plots with the most subtle psychological explorations of her characters' emotions and thoughts and philosophical reflections that rarely lose sight of the dramatic context.

Readers of Aristotle will recognize the connections between the passage quoted above and Aristotle's conception of pride as the crown of the virtues, a virtue that only the most virtuous can have; his conception of the virtuous as especially perceptive; and his remark in the *Metaphysics* that the faculty of sight is our best loved faculty. Remarkably, again, the drama of good and evil Rand's characters play out is set in the contemporary industrial America of skyscrapers, steel mills, transcontinental railroads, and glimmering highways. Her protagonists are not explorers of new planets or dragon-slayers or commanders of armies against invading forces, but women who run railroads and men who pioneer new architectural concepts. The power of Rand's analyses of her characters' motivations, the contemporaneous settings, and the gripping plots, explain why so many have found her depiction of the nature of virtue and its relationship to happiness so compelling and inspiring. Rand's vision of life at its best is a vision of liberation, joy, and success.

Many of the qualities ascribed to Galt in the passage above are shared by her other heroes and heroines at their best: exceptional self-possession, independence of thought, the innocence and purity of a consciousness that seeks always to see things as they are, freedom from the fears and conflicts inherent in self-deception and manipulation, and freedom from the burdens of unwarranted guilt and unnecessary suffering. In *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* her protagonists are also largely successful in achieving their external aims, i.e., their professional and romantic goals. In Rand's novels we get a picture of happiness as a successful state of life, successful both internally or psychologically and externally or "existentially."

This is contrary to many of Rand's statements in her philosophical essays, where she equates happiness with success in attaining one's (rational) external goals or values and the positive mental states that result therefrom. But, as stories of tortured geniuses testify, positive mental states are only contingently related to external success, no matter how rational

one's goals: one can be successful and, at the same time, inflicted with fear and self-doubt. The reality-anchored serenity and sense of fulfillment that is so central to her depiction of her characters' happiness is guaranteed not by the achievement of external values, but by the achievement of certain inner or spiritual values. Rand's picture of happiness in her novels is thus far more plausible than her overtly philosophical view. It is also more plausibly connected to virtue.

Rand's official view is that virtue is a means to happiness. This is an instance of the more general claim that virtues are means to rational values, and values are the ends that we act to gain or keep through virtuous activity (*The Virtue of Selfishness*). But if this is true, then we ought, rationally, to act virtuously only when it is likely to bring us the values we aim at, and not otherwise.

Thus, in *The Fountainhead* Howard Roark should have acted with integrity only when doing so was likely to help him to build the sorts of buildings he thought should be built—and not when it was likely to destroy his chances of ever building again. Yet this suggests a contingency of connection between virtue and happiness that Rand clearly does not accept. She clearly believes both that Roark did the right thing in refusing to compromise, even though it condemned him to a quarry—and that virtuous action has a necessary connection to happiness.

Hence, although Rand never says so explicitly, she must see happiness not primarily in terms of external success, but at least equally in terms of an inner success, success in achieving the values that define the virtues. And, indeed, not only is this conception of happiness illustrated in her novels, it follows from her view of the cardinal values and their connection to happiness. According to Rand, "happiness is possible only to [someone who] . . . seeks nothing but rational values and finds his joy in nothing but rational actions" (VOS, 29). The three cardinal values that the virtues realize and preserve, and that are "the means to and the realization of one's ultimate value, one's own life" (25), are reason, purpose, and self-esteem.

Since Rand typically equates the ultimate value that is "one's own life" with a happy life, it follows that someone who has sound reason, a sense of purpose, and self-esteem, "realizes" or possesses a major part of happiness, regardless of external failure. And since a virtuous life, specifically, a life of rationality, productivity, and moral ambitiousness, necessarily expresses these values, virtuous activity is sufficient for possessing a major part of happiness. It is this conceptual connection between virtue and the cardinal values, and between the cardinal values and

happiness, that establishes a necessary connection between virtue and happiness.

Rand's neo-Aristotelian conception of the relationship between virtue and happiness thus emphasizes both a certain kind of active, goal-directed life, and a certain kind of character, a character of which a clear awareness of self and others is an important feature. Even more explicitly than in Aristotle, a recognition of certain facts is central to each of the virtues. But there are also distinctively existentialist emphases in her conception of virtue and vice.

Like Nietzsche and Sartre, Rand sees self-deception or, more generally, evasion of reality, a motivated unfocusing of consciousness, as the heart of vice. Her worst characters also exemplify the sort of masked, malicious resentment of superior character and ability that Nietzsche called *ressentiment*. Nietzschean in many of its overtones, too, is her attack on the morality of self-sacrificial altruism as an expression of such *ressentiment*, and a trap for the innocent of spirit.

Rand's lasting achievement is to have written novels that convince us, as no argument can, of the ugliness and self-destructiveness of vice and, by contrast, of the centrality of virtue to full happiness, a happiness that includes a reality-anchored "capacity for unclouded enjoyment" and "an inviolate peace of spirit" (AS, 117).

# What is Living in the Philosophy of Ayn Rand

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If I had to say which part of Ayn Rand's philosophical work is most unjustly neglected, and most likely to yield pleasant surprises when it is eventually discovered and exploited, it would certainly be her writings on aesthetics. The clarity and systematic rigor of her core writings on this subject—namely, the first three essays in *The Romantic Manifesto*—suggest very powerfully that she thought her position on these issues through as thoroughly and carefully as she did her views on any other subject. It has always seemed a shame to me that these writings are so seldom discussed in the secondary literature and that they have influenced, in comparison with the rest of her output, a relatively small group of people. The single virtue of these writings that I find most valuable today is also one that strikes me as the cardinal virtue of all of her work: this is a trait that I like to think of as her "radicalism," a term that I mean in the very literal sense of a tendency to approach an issue in terms of its root (*radix*) in the issues that underlie it.

Perhaps the best way to indicate what I have in mind, both what this trait is and why it is a virtue, is to say a word or two about how her work in this area is related to a recent debate in literary theory. I have in mind the recent controversy between Judge Richard Posner and Professor Martha Nussbaum on the relation between morality and literature.<sup>1</sup> In it, Posner defends that view that aesthetic value, the value that is distinctive of a work of art, is not only distinct but separable from moral value, and that, where imaginative literature is concerned, moral properties of any sort are "almost sheer distraction."<sup>2</sup> Nussbaum insists, for her part, that it is a very important fact about literature that it provides us with a particular sort of moral enlightenment and character-improvement: the sort of "uplift" one gets from Charles Dickens, in which we learn to be compassionate toward the little fellow.

I would expect that many people find the general tendency of this discussion extremely unsatisfying. On the one hand, the deep sterility of



Posner's conception of literature is difficult to escape. On the other, he does score some palpable hits against Nussbaum's view. Most devastating, perhaps, is his pointing out that the books that she picks out as clearly embodying her theory—such works as Wright's *Native Son* and Forster's *Maurice*—are not the clearest examples of artistic greatness. To my way of thinking, perhaps the most telling case in point is one that Posner does not take advantage of, and that is Dickens' *Hard Times*. I find it shrilly and tediously didactic, and yet it seems to be precisely the sort of work she is must recommend to us. In fact, her presentation of her theory in *Poetic Justice* virtually takes the form of a commentary on Dickens' book.

A more deeply frustrating aspect of the debate is one about which Rand would very obviously have something to say. This is the fact that, in it, the nature of literature, and of art in general, are left unexamined. Posner is claiming that art, whatever it might be, does not need morality, and Nussbaum is claiming that art, whatever it is, is even better if one adds morality to it. The position she takes is thus actually wide open to a certain Posnerian counter-charge. Most of the argument of her *Poetic Justice* consist of attempts to show how literature can have good moral effects on us. Such a case, even if it is made out, is perfectly consistent with the view that literature is an intrinsically amoral object which becomes good for us when it is turned toward moral purposes. Judge Posner can simply point out—as, in effect, he does—that these arguments do not show that the addition of morality to literature makes it better *as literature*. On the other hand, his own positive argument consists mainly in examples which tend to indicate that morally good works can be inferior literature while works expressing unsound moral and political theories can be great. These arguments are almost entirely intuitionist, in that they merely appeal to presumptive judgments of literary merit that we already have, and stop there. Neither side of this debate, however, presents an account of what art and literature are. In effect, the debate is carried on as if art were, as Rand would put it, an "irreducible primary," something that can explain other things but cannot itself be explained.

On this point Rand departs radically from the approaches of both Posner and Nussbaum. Just as, in her ethics, she begins by asking, not which values are right but why there are any values at all, so in her aesthetics she does not begin by asking what makes art better or not so good, but why there is any art at all.

With her distinctive drive toward the most radical, the most fundamental concepts, she poses an answer based on the nature of consciousness and the requirements of human survival. In order to plan

their lives and give them unity, she maintains, human beings need to have a view of the nature of the world in which they live and of the value of broad categories of concerns that depend on human action. They need to have serviceable answers to questions like these:

Can man find happiness on earth, or is he doomed to frustration and despair? Does man have the power of *choice*, the power to choose his goals and to achieve them, the power to direct the course of his life—or is he the helpless plaything of forces beyond his control, which determine his fate? Is man, by nature, to be valued as good or despised as evil? These are *metaphysical* questions, but the answers to them determine the kind of *ethics* men will accept and practice; the answers are the link between metaphysics and ethics.<sup>3</sup>

Rand calls the abstractions that answer such questions "metaphysical value judgments." They are so broad, and the entities subsumed under them are so various, that no human mind could adequately apply the principles involved directly to reality. An intermediary is needed, something that can bridge the crevasse that yawns between the abstract and the concrete. This intermediary, according to Rand, is art, though art conceived in a sense much wider than high art as we usually conceive of it. It is wide enough to include myth, legend, religious icons, and popular television shows. Art is a selective recreation of reality projecting fundamental abstractions into the only medium in which they can be readily grasped: that of perceptual concretes. Without such projections, the human mind would not be able to fully carry out its function as part of a living organism.

Thus conceived, the role that judgments of value play in literature, and in art in general, is much more profound than that put forward by Nussbaum in her exchanges with Posner. If Rand is right, then art will be particularly apt to be turned to the ends to which Nussbaum suggests it be turned, those of instructing us in previously unknown moral truths and molding our character. But the judgments which are essential to art, and make it a necessity of life itself, concern matters that are anterior to the comparatively petty issues with which Nussbaum is concerned. The function of art is not to express moral, political, or economic theories, but to embody ideas about the nature and possibility of human life, and its value.

If we assume that Rand is right about this, we can readily explain why works that vividly exemplify Nussbaum's theory can be artistically mediocre. She chooses the wrong sorts of issues for art to be about. Though art can deal with such issues and should, this is not the sort of function that makes it art, nor is it the sort of function that gives art value that it has by its very nature. More particularly, the sort of moral enlightenment Nussbaum recommends can easily degenerate into didacticism, and the egalitarian sympathy-based ethic she believes in can produce sentimentality, and often does.

From Rand's point of view, Posner would be seen as making the very same mistake, that of misidentifying the way in which literature would be linked with morality if there were such a connection, though he takes the error and draws the opposite conclusion from it: that no connection exists. The Posner-Nussbaum controversy illustrates several of the sorts of damage that follow from a failure to be sufficiently radical. These would include the trivialization of deep issues, the creation of false dichotomies in which entire alternative theories become invisible, and the creation of unsatisfying discussions, in which all participants seem to be both right and wrong—right in what they deny, but wrong in what they assert.

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1. Posner's original contribution, at least in print, was "Against Ethical Criticism," *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 21 no. 1 (April, 1997), pp. 1-27. This was a criticism of Nussbaum's *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press). This exchange of views recently took the form of a lively symposium, which featured not only Posner and Nussbaum but an extremely helpful presentation by Wayne Booth, at a May 9th, 1998 session of the Central Division Meetings of the American Philosophical Association.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

3. *The Romantic Manifesto* (New York: Signet, 1971), p. 19.

# Rand and Objectivity

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Ayn Rand was an unusually creative philosopher. In every major branch of philosophy, from metaphysics to aesthetics, she had original insights and integrations that contributed to the field. But I would say that her most important contribution was the one that gave her philosophy its name: her analysis of objectivity. Its importance lies in the fundamentality of the issue. If we cannot establish the basic objectivity of our knowledge, then all other conclusions in philosophy are in trouble.

In the history of philosophical thought about knowledge, one encounters over and over again a single problem: how can the products of the mind—percepts, concepts, statements, theories, etc.—be objective, i.e., true to reality, given that they are products of the mind, i.e., results of definite processes shaped by the nature of the mind and the activity of the knower? For example:

A long line of thinkers, going back to the Sophists, have argued that our perceptual experience of the world cannot be trusted or regarded as veridical because the way things appear to us depends on the nature of our sensory faculties and the way they interact with the physical environment. There is the stick that looks bent in water, the penny that looks elliptical from an angle, the railroad tracks that seem to converge, and so on.<sup>1</sup> Most philosophers have concluded that it is not the objects themselves—the stick, the penny, the tracks—that we perceive, but an inner representation of them.

A long line of thinkers, going back to Plato, have wondered how a concept like MAN could have an objective referent. After all, the concept does not stand for any particular existing man but is universal; and its content does not include the determinate features of any existing human, such as hair color or height, but is abstract. There does not appear to be anything in reality that is universal or abstract in itself, i.e., apart from human cognitive operations. Some philosophers, like Plato, argued that

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there must be an objective referent—a "man as such"—somewhere in existence, even if it does not exist in the perceptible, spatio-temporal world. Others have argued that since there is no such referent in reality, our concepts are merely human constructs that are not constrained by the world.

Again, many thinkers, especially in this century, have wrestled with the problem of truth. How are we to understand the truth of a statement as correspondence to a fact when the world does not appear to come already broken up into facts, any more than it comes already grouped into categories that correspond with our concepts? Snow exists, and so does its color, but there is nothing over and above these existents that could be called the fact that snow is white. In parallel with the problem of concepts and universals, this dilemma has driven some philosophers to invent a recondite ontology of facts, while other philosophers have abandoned the notion of truth as correspondence and held that the truth of a statement is determined solely by its relationship with other statements.<sup>2</sup>

There is a common pattern in these issues, a pattern found in numerous other specific issues. We start with the assumption that objectivity requires some sort of direct correspondence between the mind and reality, a correspondence in which the mind passively mirrors the object it purports to grasp. I have called this assumption the diaphanous model of cognition, because it likens conscious awareness to a diaphanous medium in which objects are revealed without any "distorting" coloration from the medium itself. But when we examine the case, we find that the mind is not passive after all; it actively combines, divides, abstracts from, or selects among the data at its disposal. In response, some thinkers posit a higher-order form of correspondence in order to preserve objectivity. Others, claiming that no such correspondence can plausibly be maintained, conclude that objectivity is not possible (or else redefine objectivity as intersubjectivity).

Ayn Rand cut through all these problems by challenging the basic assumption that objectivity requires diaphanous correspondence between mind and reality. Our cognitive faculties operate, she argued, in the same way as our faculties for digestion, respiration, and the like: they interact with the environment in various ways that are determined by their own nature. The fact that the stomach mixes its own acids with the food we ingest from outside does not invalidate nutrition. Nor is our knowledge invalidated by the fact that cognitive products such as concepts and statements reflect the cognitive processes from which they emerge.<sup>4</sup>

This insight applies quite generally to all forms of cognition. It is an implication of the even more general law of causality. The nature of an entity's action is determined by the nature of the entity itself as well as by the conditions in which it acts, so the nature of cognition must be determined by our own nature as knowers as well as by the objects we come to know in the external environment. In perceptual awareness, for example, we may distinguish the perceived object and its attributes from the variable forms in which we perceive them. The penny is actually round, and we are perceptually aware of its actual shape, but because of the way our visual system responds to light, we are aware of the penny's<sup>5</sup> shape in a specific form that depends on the angle from which we view it.

In perception, despite the variable form in which we perceive an object, there is still a one-to-one correspondence between the perceptual awareness and the object of which we are aware; the object of perception is always a concrete, particular thing or action. At the conceptual level, however, there is no such correspondence. Rand describes the referents of a concept as "units"--a technical term she uses for things regarded as members of a class of similar objects. We are able to form and employ concepts designating open-ended categories of units only because we have the capacity to disregard the specific measurements that differ from one unit to another, and to retain the common dimension of measurement. As a result, the concept MAN designates "a man"--not any particular man in the full specificity of his nature, but every man regarded as differing from other men in a merely quantitative as opposed to a qualitative way.<sup>6</sup>

There is no passive mirroring of nature here. The ability to form such a conception involves a specific process of integration and differentiation, a process that, as far as we know, only a human brain can perform. Does this mean that concepts are human constructs, that we can validly group things together in any way we wish, that we can define terms according to our subjective wishes? No, says Rand. For one thing, concepts are based on our awareness of relationships of similarity and difference in the things themselves; those relationships exist apart from us and constrain us in forming concepts. We are also constrained by the nature of our own conceptual capacities, which work in certain definite ways and not in others. In accordance with her basic insight that the mind functions in a definite way as the result of its own nature, she holds that the constraints imposed by our faculties are an aspect of objectivity, not a refutation of it.

Rand's insight allows us to develop a rational conception of objectivity as a standard for cognition, a standard that takes account of the process of thought and the constraints set by our faculties rather than

wishing them away. There is a great deal of work still to be done in extending the Objectivist theory to other issues in epistemology, such as the nature of propositions and their truth-conditions, the standards for rational certainty, and the problem of induction. But Rand's insight gives us a basic principle to follow, and her theory of concepts gives us an example of how the principle applies to a specific form of cognition.

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1. See my *Evidence of the Senses* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), Chapters 3-4 for many examples of this argument.
  2. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 4-5, 20.
  3. For a fuller description of the pattern, see *Evidence of the Senses*, pp. 36-43.
  4. Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 2nd expanded edition (New York, NAL Books, 1990), chapter 8.
  5. I have developed this approach to perceptual epistemology in some detail in *Evidence of the Senses*. For a discussion of form and object, see chapters 3 and 5.
  6. Rand's theory is presented in her *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*. See also my analysis of her theory: "A Theory of Abstraction" (Poughkeepsie, NY: Institute for Objectivist Studies, 1995).

# Rand Revisited

J. Roger Lee

## Past

It has been thirty-two years since I last talked to Ayn Rand, almost thirty since I last read her for guidance.

Ayn Rand was important to philosophy in this last century, in at least three ways. First, she convinced many good philosophers to be philosophers. Many adolescents of us embraced her vision of philosophy as a noble career. Some of them have contributed to the field.

Second, she inspired us to serve humanist values. Advised by her, we (at least I) came to philosophy concerned: (1) to defend reason against skepticism; (2) to defend human achievement against those who decry and belittle it; (3) to advocate an ethics of human flourishing, virtue-ethics, against any claim of unelected duty; and (4) to treat rights as important, against the then politically dominant utilitarianism.<sup>2</sup>

## Present

. . . [a person] must acquire the values of character that make his life worth sustaining - . . . man . . . is a being of self-made soul - . . . to live requires a sense of self-value, but man, who has no automatic values, has no automatic sense of self-esteem and must earn it by shaping his soul in the image of his moral ideal, in the image of Man, the rational being he is born able to create, but must create by choice . . . a soul that seeks above all else to achieve its own moral perfection.<sup>3</sup>

Invited to remark on Ayn Rand's influence and relevance, I have revisited some of her writings, thirty years on, and I have been struck by the importance of one of her views, not much explored. It is the role she assigned to objectivity in perfectionist ethical theory.

Rand held that being moral makes humans excellent. Morality's primary question about anything, *x*, is: does *x* realize or impede a person's



flourishing?<sup>4</sup> We do not get all of her perfectionist theory, unless we integrate it with her main title idea, objectivity.

Ayn Rand drew attention to three ontological categories,

- *Intrinsic*: “inherent in things as such,” independent of consciousness of it.
- *Subjective*: “consciousness, independent of reality.”<sup>5</sup>
- *Objective*: “produced by man’s consciousness in accordance with the facts of reality, as mental integrations of factual data computed by man – as products of a cognitive method of classification whose process must be performed by man, but whose content is dictated by reality.”<sup>6</sup>

Values, the good and virtues are objective entities. The *objective* theory holds that the good is . . . *an evaluation* of the facts of reality by man’s consciousness according to a rational standard of value. . . . The *objective* theory holds that *the good is an aspect of reality in relation to man* . . . values, objective entities, are produced through the interaction of a rational consciousness with the intrinsic. Rand stresses the place of choice in this production, meaning by “choose,” however, only, “act in a non-automatic way.”<sup>8</sup> Rand urges that to produce values and to have them a person must *chose* to think about action and goals, and about action-organized-to-realize-goals (projects). In thinking about projects, one chose to think about the causal structure of the world discerning facts about causation. Action is organized into projects only in alignment with the causal nexus of reality.

In a project, people cognize their goals-of-action in the context of the causal nexus of the world. That cognition of goals of action in the causal nexus of the world, presents nodal points of awareness—awarenesses of ways one can use causal mechanisms in realizing goals. Each nodal point of awareness is an awareness of a causal potency as-an-available-aid-in-our-projects—each node is a value.

Whenever I value something, *x*, in the way indicated here, I must think of *x*, relative to some goal I am actively pursuing, and must, loyal to the facts about *x* and its causal properties, cognize *x* as a ready-to-use-aid that, if used by me will enhance my present project-activity. Insofar as I am engaged seriously in realizing a goal, my cognizance of *x-as-an-aid* includes the content that I am reasonably drawn toward using *x*.

Once I have cognized x as a ready-to-use-aid-that-can-enhance-my-activity-toward-realizing-a-goal, under that description I have classified it as a value. I should then *chose* to store it in my theory of the world, making it available for use as a value.

As one's knowledge of values grows one can and should choose to think about other value topics: about how actions themselves are values in projects, and of how the causal-aid-value was there to be seen only when it was cognized as possibly taken up into one's activity, enhancing it. One should *choose* to think about how projects mix with one another, some mixes better than others, also of how some ways of acting are better than others. This should culminate in one's adopting some mix of projects with their values—a mix that makes for living fully and well.

Every bit of this increasingly sophisticated assembly of information has to be brought into being by people choosing to think about action, goals and projects. All their values have to be made by them.

Non-conscious objects cannot have values. They cannot think, cannot value; and have no goals to be thought of. Humans have values by only by valuing.<sup>9</sup>

A value's ontological status as objective imposes a twofold ontological dependency. The value, x,<sup>10</sup> will exist, only if a valuer will have *done things* that helped *produce the value* of the thing, x.

What must the valuer have done? —*think rationally* about the thing, *trusting* his judgment while fully *accepting* the discipline of the facts about the thing valued and its causal properties, and he has *produced* knowledge and a value. The last sentence reports that the valuer, in valuing instanced four of Rand's idiosyncratic list of seven virtues. If the person is self-aware of having done all this, he instances a fifth, pride. Characteristically valuing realizes an excellence of character.

For Rand, characteristically valuing and pursuing values is not an accumulating or using of things, but is using the mind in an excellent way. Her theory is not an individual-centered rival to utilitarianism, calling for maximizing-the-number-of-acquired-entities-that-are-valued. It is a perfectionist ethics, presented in a way that highlights one activity realizing human excellence—valuing.

It is importantly right that our values are not some factual given, parts of the background to human life and choice. They are achievements. Some people convince themselves that they do not have to create values and do not value. They think that values must exist, somehow, independent of their having done anything, not even thinking. Such people avoid valuing.

Such a person avoids valuing, avoids producing values by acting and thinking in the world. He puts himself into a position in which he has not engaged himself in valuing valuable things; he has not integrated things that could have been values for his projects into his projects and character. He has not integrated accurate awareness of good things into a structure of planning and character. Had he done so, the integrated awareness of values would have informed his life with value. He misses out on that value.

Rand's position as indicated and lightly amplified here seems importantly correct and worthy of further exploration.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Sadly, that put us (at least me) off Ayn Rand, for she decried with enraged, unjust smears many respectable artists, philosophers, writers . . . and people of affairs—people who created and maintain the bulk of our knowledge and culture. Incredibly she portrayed real human achievements as being the ugly aspects of what she saw as the dying of culture.

2. Some would add a fifth “good influence,” toward defending laissez-faire capitalism. I, with others, undertook that defense. But I now think laissez-faire is inconsistent with Rand's first four influences.

3. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (NY: Random House, 1957), pp. 1020-1021.

4. Rand obscured her position by using the Hobbist language of “interests,” and by speaking of egoism, which can only be defined using the language of interests.

5. The quotations in this paragraph to this point are from Rand's “What is Capitalism,” in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: New American Library, 1967), pp. 21-22.

6. Ayn Rand, “Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology, Chapter V: Definitions (Continued),” *The Objectivist* 5 (November 1966): 6.

7. “What is Capitalism,” p. 22. Here I follow Rand in using “value” and the “good” interchangeably in this context.

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8. One chooses to walk or to think, but does not chose one's heart beating or choose to metabolize food.

9. "[A] moral commandment is a contradiction in terms. The moral is the chosen, . . ." *Atlas Shrugged*, p. 1018. For Rand's ascription of relatively primitive values pre-ethical, pre-moral code values to animals and plants as if they had purposes and projects, see her "The Objectivist Ethics," in *The Virtue Of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism* (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 18. That the values spoken of there are not the values spoken of in morality, on Rand's view, is proven by her claim that all that works for the survival of an animal or a plant, and so is a "value" to it, is functions in the activity of the animal or a plant automatically. The human values of perfectionist morality, in contrast, must be taken up into the life of a human by choice.

10. As opposed to the thing, *x*.

11. I am thankful to Laurence I. Gould and Ellen Stuttle for comments on an earlier draft of this paper

# Ayn Rand's Philosophical Significance

John Hospers

Ayn Rand held a wide variety of interconnected philosophical views. What is most impressive about them is as much the interconnectedness as the value of each component separately. Some of the component parts of her philosophy were original with her; some were not original and she knew it (especially in case of Aristotle); and some were not original but she may have thought them to be original.

She shared H. W. B. Joseph's view of logic and ontology (in his *Logic*) and the ontological realism of Cook Wilson (in his *Statement and Inference*), though it is doubtful that she had read either of these works. She was in enthusiastic agreement with the metaphysical character and objective status of the Aristotelian Laws of Thought, as expressed by Brand Blanshard in his *Reason and Analysis*, though she almost never explicitly referred to it. As for contemporary ethics, she considered it an impossible morass, and as far as I can tell never read in this area and did not talk about it expect to condemn it.

It was her political philosophy, occupying the center stage in *Atlas Shrugged*, that made her most famous. Though political theory was only a small part of her overall philosophy, it became the best known (the tail wagging the dog). The idea of limited government was, of course, not original with her; it had been worked out in John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* and in a more purely libertarian manner by Herbert Spencer in *Social Statics* and *Man versus the State*, as well as other books in the 17th and 18th centuries. Her economic theory came largely from Ludwig von Mises' *Human Action* and *Socialism*, and was a perfect fit when incorporated into her philosophy.

Her ethical theory, however, was quite original. She called herself an ethical egoist, but if her ethics is to be called egoistic at all, it is a very different brand of egoism from the traditional variety. Epicurus, for example, was a traditional egoist, believing that each person should pursue his own self-interest over a life span (long-range self-interest). Rand didn't think much of Epicurus because his egoism took a specific form, hedonism ("We should all try to maximize our own pleasure"), and Rand condemned

all forms of hedonism. She distinguished pleasure sharply from happiness, pleasure consisting of a series of episodes rather than a coherent whole, and when she talked about self-interest it was always "rational self-interest" – though it is not always clear what the adjective "rational" added to the noun "self-interest." One might suggest that "rational" means guided by reason, but that is just what Epicurus believed himself to be recommending. The word "rational" was not often carefully defined in this context: sometimes it referred to the kind of egoism that was guided by the principle of human rights, thus excluding egoistic actions that were not so guided. But sometimes (so it seemed to me) the word "rational" acted as a kind of safeguard against egoistic action she found unacceptable. For example, it is possible that a certain act of theft might be to a person's self-interest under certain circumstances, e.g. if there was no chance of being detected and to act produced certain good consequences (such as Raskolnikov robbing the rich old lady in order to put himself through college). This might indeed to his self-interest, but it would not (Rand would say) be an example or rational self-interest.

Utilitarians had argued that if happiness (or flourishing, or eudaimonia, etc.) is a good worth having, then it its good no matter who has it. Therefore, they argued, we should work for everyone's happiness: each of our actions should be calculated to increase the general happiness. Rand, of course, questioned this inference: even if your happiness is as worth-while as mine in some cosmic scheme of things, this gives me no reason to pursue yours. You may get happiness from mountain-climbing, but this provides me no reason to assist you in that enterprise. I should pursue my interest and you yours. So far, Rand's view is not distinguishable from that of traditional egoism.

But now comes the distinctively Randian twist, which makes some readers question whether Rand was an egoist at all. A few examples will illustrate this point:

Suppose I could somehow induce legislators to provide me (and no one else) with a million dollars from the public treasury each year. This added income would be immensely gratifying to me. But Rand would not approve such a scheme, at least if the gift was simply random or capricious (it might be all right if I was president of the republic, and had earned it). Why should it go just to me? But if it went to everyone, the whole economic system would be quickly destroyed.

Some critics of egoism have suggested that an egoist ought to want everyone else to be an altruist. As an egoist, wouldn't my interest be better served if everyone else were trained to do nothing but serve me, bending to

my every whim? Should I indoctrinate others to be altruists, who considered it their sacred duty to serve me? But Rand would have no truck with such “narcissistic egoism.” There would be no way to make it adoptable by everyone. Suppose that A, an egoist, believes that others should serve him, A. B, an egoist, believes that others should serve him, B. What now should C do – serve A? Serve B? Or, more likely, serve himself, C? Such egoism (more properly called egotism) could not be held by everyone, You can’t have all chiefs and no braves. Rand wants everyone to be an egoist.

Still, Rand is not an egoist in any traditional sense. Suppose someone is serving time in prison for a crime I have committed. Should I turn myself in, thereby allowing the innocent person to go free? Many people—shall we call them egoists?—Wouldn’t turn themselves in, believing that years in prison would be very enjoyable for them—much more happiness can be achieved on the outside, even knowing that someone else is being punished for my crime (my qualms of conscience don’t last nearly as long as your prison sentence). But I am quite sure that Rand would say that I should see to it that the innocent person goes free, even at great cost to myself. I am more sure that she would want justice done in this case, than that she would assert that going to prison would be my self-interest.

Strange egoism, one might say. The traditional egoist might well say “let him suffer in prison while I enjoy myself on the outside.” But Rand believed that one should never violate the rights of another. I have violated your right to live freely. If I kill you or injure you or rob you of your possession, I have violated your rights to these things, and it is as wrong to deprive you of these things as it would be wrong for you to deprive me of them. Justice is impartial. You may not violate my rights and I may not violate yours. The traditional egoist doesn’t mind violating the rights of others if doing so would promote self-interest (as surely it would in some cases), but for Rand the violation of rights is the ultimate no-no. In the end, teleology gives way to deontology.

Egoists would violate rights if it was in their own self-interest. Utilitarians would do so if the single violation didn’t greatly affect the fabric of the whole society. But Randians would not do so at all: rights are not negotiable. It might not be to my interest to abolish slavery, if I am a slave owner; and it might in some cases promote utility (e.g. if the slave-owners or their society profited more from the practice than the slaves suffered), but it is always a violation of rights, and rights are not negotiable. Once something is a violation of rights, no further discussion of its morality is necessary.

The view that resembles Rand's is not traditional egoism, or utilitarianism, but Kant's Second Categorical Imperative: one should treat everyone, not as a means to one's own ends, nor to the ends of society, but as an end in himself. It is not clear that Kant's second imperative and Rand's principle have the same extension: Rand's principle prohibits only acts which are forced on others, whereas Kant's seems to have a somewhat wider range. If I cultivate the girl only to gain a job from her rich father, and then drop her after I have achieved this goal, I have certainly used her as a means to my end, but I don't think have gone so far as to violate her rights (depending how broadly I conceive her rights). In any case, the main Randian prohibition is against using people as unwilling vehicles for achieving one's own ends. I must not sacrifice myself to others, that is, I must not be an altruist. This is the part that traditional egoism would agree with. But equally, says Rand, I must not sacrifice others to myself. Your life is a sacrosanct as mine. I may not forcibly interfere with your life any more than you may forcibly interfere with mine.

This certainly sounds more like a principle of justice than it does a principle of egoism. Each person is an end in himself, and I may not violate your freedom and you may not violate mine – this is surely not in any obvious way a principle that one would be inclined to call egoistic: it is more a principle of universal non-interference: let the chips fall where they may. Rand defended the principle eloquently from the very beginning. Way back in 1940 she wrote, in *Ayn Rand's Journals* (Dutton, 1997 pp. 149-150):

Either you believe that each individual man has value, dignity, and certain inalienable rights which cannot be sacrificed for any cause, for any purpose, for any collective, for any number of other men whatsoever. Or else you believe that a number of men—it doesn't matter what you call it: a collective, a class, a race, or a state—holds all rights, and any individual can be sacrificed if some collective good—it doesn't matter what you call it: better distribution of wealth, racial purity, or the Millennium—demands it.

And if you—in the privacy of your own mind—believe so strongly in some particular good of yours that you would be willing to deprive men of all rights for the sake of this good, then you are as guilty of the horrors of today as Hitler and Stalin.



# Ayn Rand as Moral & Political Philosopher

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"In many ways, Ayn Rand stands higher and sees farther than any other thinker of our day." So says Jack Wheeler in "Rand and Aristotle"<sup>1</sup> But I'm afraid I find Wheeler's assessment not credible. Despite my libertarian proclivities, I am a main-line academic philosopher, and no doubt share the tendency of most such academics to dismiss Rand as a minor personage on the conceptual scene. Her work is important because of the quite uncommon influence her novels have had on a great many nonacademic people—an influence that I agree is largely in the right kind of direction, to be sure. Those novels do reflect a philosophy, yes. But I don't think it's the formal adumbration of that philosophy that has attracted all those admirers; and, frankly, I don't think her strictly philosophical work is very good.

Take, for a main example, her basic pronouncements about "Objectivist Ethics." These have been well examined by Charles King<sup>2</sup> recently, and I have little to add. Rand's proclamation that life is necessarily an end in itself, for example, is a classic example of an exciting-sounding but actually not very interesting philosophical thesis. What is it supposed to mean? In part, perhaps, a denial of theism. Fine, I share that—but it's not as though she has contributed anything of substance to anti-theology itself. But beyond that, what does it do in the way of providing an ethical criterion for anything? Does it mean, for example, that we should do everything in our power to keep alive as long as possible, regardless? (And so, suicide is necessarily *immoral*?) One hopes not. But if not, then what? We are told that life is the "objective standard of value;" is that supposed to tell us how to lead a *better* life? No. Our general purpose in life, I take it, is to live lives as good as we can manage to live. Fine: but what *makes* a life good? "Living life to the full," "realizing our potentialities," and so on, are phrases that have been around a great deal longer than the works of Rand. But they don't help any in answering that fundamental question, and she adds nothing at all to the discussion.

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Again, Rand makes much of an idea that there is a “fundamental choice” confronting living beings possessed, as we are, of consciousness and reason sufficient to appreciate the fact: the choice to live or to die. “To live is his basic act of choice,” says she about man. But in the first place, choice is scarcely ever like that. What you and I are nearly always choosing among are alternatives of much lesser moment, such as which brand of milk to buy, or where to go for vacation next year. Those are choices among options all of which, so far as we know, yield just about equal life expectancy—“life or death” just isn’t where it’s at. Only those contemplating suicide, or at least the undertaking of some venture with an extraordinary degree of risk, make the Randian choice. And in those cases, her apparently clear and unequivocal answer is simply wrong: choosing death is a live option and the answer could rationally be in favor. Consider, for instance, smokers—such as Rand herself. They often do so quite deliberately despite the known likelihood that this reduces life expectancy. In short, when we look at the matter soberly, the pronouncement that we are always *making* that “fundamental choice” is essentially silly, while the claim that when we do confront it, we will necessarily prefer life is also false.

To make any such claim at all plausible, it must be converted into the very different one that what we choose is always some hoped-for increase in the *quality* of our lives. There’s no basic objection to that: if chocolate is better than vanilla, then presumably my life if I take chocolate will be just that much better than if I had chosen vanilla. But what makes chocolate better than vanilla? *Not* that the quality of my life will be better if I choose it—for the order of explanation is *the other way around*. So here we are into the fundamental question that philosophers have grappled with down through the ages: trying to understand what the *good* life would be—and seeing the utter pointlessness of claiming that the good life is just “life.” (Here see Eric Mack, in “Rand’s Theory of Rights”<sup>3</sup>.)

Moreover, there is potential in her pronouncement for inferences from which she would shrink. In saying that all men have *values*, she seems also to be saying that they have *value*—meaning, that no matter who you may be, it is your responsibility to put a positive value on every *other* human’s life, just because it’s human. (This would no doubt be said by Rand to be part of the “objectivist” idea: that others have value is an “objective fact” about them, that we can just “see” to be so.) But if so, it surely sounds as though we ought, *prima facie*, to be altruistic in just the sorts of ways she was known to be strongly opposed to. Moreover, that is what socialists profess to believe. But if her pronouncement does not imply

that, then just what *does* it imply? By and large, these are the sort of questions that I think she simply didn't understand, and would no doubt dismiss as nit-picking or word-mongering. (That was ever her way with critics.) But they are questions that call for a clarifying response, and in the absence of which she must be said not really to *have* a theory. See, again, the aforementioned essay by Charles King, who explores the point gracefully and well.)

Rand is, I suppose, identified in the public mind with advocacy of capitalism more than anything else. Certainly it was commendable, in the intellectual atmosphere of the day, for her to be doing so—full marks for that. But is there anything special about her advocacy of it, either? I rather think not. According to Den Uyl & Rasmussen, "Capitalism,"<sup>4</sup> "One of the unique features of Rand's defense of capitalism is that she neither considers capitalism a necessary evil (as do many conservatives) nor tries to defend it simply in terms of the benefits it produces (as do many economists). It is not that we must put up with the system to reap its benefits. . . . Rather, Rand defends the thesis that the very mode of human interaction called for by capitalism is the only morally justifiable way for people to socialize. Consider this passage:

"The *justification* of capitalism does not lie in the altruistic claim that it represents the best way to achieve "the common good". . . . The moral justification of capitalism lies in the fact that it is the only system consonant with man's rational nature, that it protects man's survival *qua man*, and that its ruling principle is: *justice*." (173)

Earlier, they quoted Rand as saying that individual rights are a means of subordinating society to moral law. (165)

But the problem with talking about the subordination of the individual to the group or vice versa is that groups are groups *of individuals*, this being all there are. And the trouble with denying that the justification of capitalism lies in its contribution to the common good or to community is that the community consists of those very same, rational people. The common good *is* the good of rational people *qua* rational—there isn't anything else for it to be. Now, each person rationally pursues his own good. That *allowing* each person to do that—which is equivalent to insisting that people not use violence against others in the pursuit of their ends—will contribute *to the common good* is an obvious implication. Rand agrees: we are not allowed to use force and fraud. Rand probably doesn't

think that capitalism would be right even if it led to general poverty—instead, she (quite reasonably) thinks that it *won't* lead to general poverty. Fine. But then it's pointless to insist that Rand, startlingly, defends capitalism *irrespective* of its effect on community good. What she says may sound impressive, but again, on reflection it's not.

The libertarian foundations of capitalism disallow what we would now call external diseconomies. They are diseconomies precisely because, and insofar as, they attack individuals' property rights: in dumping polluted air into your lungs, I attack what belongs to you (your lungs). Rand can't insist on the right of owners of pulp-mills to pollute rivers without restriction. If we describe measures against pollution as "protecting people from some of the downside effects of capitalism," that is conceptually a mistake. Rand in no way disagrees with the substance of that criticism. We *do* get to curtail the "free actions" of polluters—thank goodness! By what mechanisms and how much is quite another matter, and I am the first to insist that regulatory agencies are not the way to go here. But Rand contributed nothing to the detailed formulations needed to cope with these problems satisfactorily.

Summarizing her contributions, Den Uyl and Rasmussen suggest that "Rand attempts to combine . . . an Aristotelian view of man's nature . . . with a liberal political doctrine. The argument . . . is that freedom of action in society is a function of what is proper to living a good human life—indeed, what is necessary for the fulfillment of our human potential."

But to begin with, Aristotle's main contribution to ethical theory is his account of virtue, especially moral virtue; yet Rand, to my knowledge, doesn't show much sign of ever having heard of this, let alone making it a cornerstone of her theory. And a good thing too, since Aristotle was a political conservative, all ready to turn to the State to make sure that everybody conforms to his ideal of virtue. One hopes Rand wouldn't go along with that.

So what's left? We've seen that "fulfilling our potentialities" is uninteresting in any sense in which it is true, for we have potentialities for evil as well as for good, and trying to fix things up by saying that we realize the good by fulfilling our *good* potentialities is not exactly an important advance in ethical theory! Indeed, she makes no genuine advances over her predecessors, such as Locke—unless you count Locke's theological proclivities as essential to his theory (they aren't); and she is not nearly up to Hobbes, whose contribution to moral theory is very far ahead of her and rather ahead, for the most part, of Locke. Really figuring out what's going on here is a difficult conceptual job of work, which is being fruitfully

pursued by the likes of David Gauthier, David Schmidtz, Anthony de Jasay, and many other people. I don't see Rand as being in a class with these careful and insightful writers—I doubt that she'd have much of an idea what they're talking about, let alone anything useful to say about them. But when it comes to literary rhetoric, I fully grant that all of the above take a back seat to Ms. Rand.

At the risk of attracting hate letters from her loyal fans, I would suggest that Rand's philosophizing is about at the level of Karl Marx's. Both were brilliant sophomores: neither of them knew what they were getting into, and both were totally devoid of the self-discipline necessary to make anything clear and important of their intuitions. And both were terribly unsystematic; followers have to search to find snippets of pure philosophy amidst the voluminous literary or journalistic texts. Marx said quite a bit more than Rand, and got into even more semantic thickets and conceptual swamps than she. But just as we learn a great deal more from reading G. A. Cohen on Marx than from reading Marx, so we learn more from reading philosophers like Eric Mack on Rand than we do from reading Rand.

Still, in marked contrast to Marx, Rand has to her credit three literary works of merit—and in still more marked contrast, she bears no responsibility for some of the worst social catastrophes in the history of mankind.

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1. In Douglas J. Den Uyl and Douglas B. Rasmussen, *The Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand* (University of Illinois, 1986) The articles from this admirable collection to which I refer quote extensively from Rand; I am leaning on their work rather than attempting to improve on it in this respect—which I am certainly not competent to do.

2. Charles J. King, "Life and the Theory of Value: The Randian Argument Reconsidered," *Op.Cit.*, pp. 102-121.

3. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 122-164.

4. Same volume, p. 165-182.

## *Discussion Notes*

### **Kamhi and Torres on Meaning in Ayn Rand's Esthetics**

Roger E. Bissell

In their challenging essay "Meaning in Art" (*Aristos*, vol. 6, no. 6, Sep. 1997), Michelle Kamhi and Louis Torres continue their examination of Ayn Rand's esthetic theory. They point to "seeming contradictions" in her discussion of subject and style, claiming them to be inconsistencies between her stated principles and her interpretive statements which "appear to undercut the clarity and credibility of her theory as a whole." While there is much of value in their essay, I hope in these brief comments to offer some insights into unnoticed subtleties in Miss Rand's analysis which indicate that things are not quite as serious as Kamhi and Torres paint them as being. They begin by noting that Rand is thoroughly Aristotelian in her view that the fundamental meaning in all art is some aspect of human life and values. But how does art convey meaning? On this issue, they claim, Rand has not been completely consistent in her published statements. In support of this claim, they cite Rand's criticism as "Naturalistic" of Rembrandt's portraying a side of beef or Vermeer's depicting everyday domestic subjects. This, they say, suggests that "subject" for Rand means "the aspects of external reality which constitute the artist's starting point . . . what he chooses to 'selectively re-create' in his work," and that "such external subject matter [is] the 'end' to which all the other attributes of the work . . . are the means." They say that Rand has an "occasional confusion [between] external subject matter (the existential phenomena a work nominally 'refers to' or 'is about') with the ultimate content, or meaning, of a work of art. . ." I take strong issue with this. When Rand says art is a re-creation of reality, she does not mean that it is a re-creating of some

thing from reality, and she would never refer to a painting, for instance, as being about or referring to a side of beef. As I argue in "The Essence of Art" (*Objectivity*, Vol. 2, No. 5) this is mythology which has been perpetrated by theorists such as Susanne Langer and John Hospers.

Their critiques of the "imitation" and "re-creation" models of art show them to be trapped in a concrete-bound focus on the secondary level of things in the artwork, instead of addressing the nature of the artwork as a whole. Instead, as Leonard Peikoff has pointed out (*Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, p. 417), art is fundamentally a microcosm—a sort of little reality, as it were. The re-creation is, at root, the re-creation in a new (and necessarily finite, limited, selective) form of the reality we live in; and this microcosmic form, by the very selectivity of what is included or not, conveys an abstract view of the world. It is certainly true that this form, to be intelligible, must have a coherent subject—i.e., it must, as its central feature, present coherent objects or (as in music) melodic patterns. However, those objects or patterns are there not to replicate or copy something from the real world, but to serve, as Kamhi and Torres themselves say, as "the principal bearer of meaning" or, in Rand's words, as the means of "express[ing] a view of man's existence" ("Art and Sense of Life," *The Romantic Manifesto*, p. 40). And when Rand says that the subject indicates "what aspects of human experience the artists regards . . . as worthy of being re-created and contemplated," she does not mean concretes; instead, she is referring to abstract views, such as the heroic and unusual vs. the tedious and mundane. Naturally, to be contemplable, such abstract aspects of experience must be embodied or concretized in an image of an object; but Rand's objection first and foremost is to what aspects of experience the image is assigned to carry—and not any existential concrete that the image may resemble. It is the turning of art to the relatively unimaginative portrayal of a side of beef as a carrier of the abstraction of the mundane or the irrelevant that she objects to—as against the relatively imaginative projection of a heroic, assertive human being as a carrier of that abstraction. Is it possible that I am wrong, and that Rand really did mean concretes? After all, in "The Goal of My Writing" (TRM, p. 166) she states: "It is the selectivity in regard to subject . . . that I hold as the primary, the essential, the cardinal aspect of art. In literature, this means: the story—which means: the plot and the characters—which means: the kind of men and events that a writer chooses to portray." Doesn't this sound like concretes? No. Rand is very precise here. She does not just say that a writer chooses to portray "men and events" but the KIND of men and events. As in: heroic men, tumultuous events vs. scoundrels, sinister events, etc. Not

as in: Andrew Carnegie and the events comprising the building of his business empire. (To avoid possible confusion on this: yes, an author may draw upon concrete persons or events for inspiration, but a novel so inspired is not, or ought not to be, a portrayal of those concretes. It is a portrayal, instead, of the kind of people/events that those concretes inspire or exemplify. And yes, an author has to concretize "the kind of men and events," but that image of a concrete is not the same concrete that inspired the portrayal. Rand said something similar about visual art in "Art and Cognition," (TRM, p. 47.) Nevertheless, perhaps Rand did mean concretes, after all. In Peikoff's comments about Rand's definition of art including "selectivity in regard to subject" (OPAR, p. 440), he notes that an artist "is free to express his viewpoint by choosing the concretes he regards as best suited to his purpose." Again, doesn't this sound like concretes? My brief rejoinder is that this comment by Peikoff leads in his text into the quote of Rand cited above, so it should receive the same interpretation. The context of his comment is Rand's observation that an artist is not portraying things from reality, but kinds of things that represent a metaphysical point of view.

However, to reflect further specifically on what Peikoff said: when he uses the word "concrete" here, he is not referring to concrete things from the environment, but to concrete images of things and attributes in the artwork. The only possible ambiguity in Peikoff's remark that might mislead readers is the term "choosing." He is discussing selectivity in regard to subject—what to include in the subject of the artwork and what to omit. And by "subject," he means—and he states it clearly, as does Rand—the "objectification . . . the projection of a specific person . . . [i.e.] of fictional heroes like Howard Roark and John Galt." (OPAR, p. 420) So, an artist's "choosing the concretes he regards as best suited to his purpose," following this example, would involve acts like deciding whether to include a description of the color of Roark's hair or an account of Galt's undergraduate. Or, in a still-life—deciding whether to including any objects in the background, or what color to make the table, or whether to include any (seemingly) extraneous objects on the table. These are the kinds of concretes that Rand and Peikoff are talking about, when they discuss what is appropriate to include (or not) in the subject.

Nor is there any conflict between Rand's holding that the subject is the central, fundamental attribute of an artwork, and her view that the theme (abstract meaning) is the "integrator" or "link uniting . . . subject and style." Nor with her view that "all the elements . . . are involved in projecting an artist's view of existence." The basic task in artistic creation is



to fashion a microcosm which has images of objects or patterns that carry (or project or embody or bear—the synonyms are legion!) an abstract view of reality. As in language (i.e., propositional speech), before you can convey a style of expression in your symbol, before you can characterize the nature or actions of things in your symbol, you must do something more fundamental. You must first decide what you are going to characterize, what you are going to present in some manner or other, etc. Subject is central, for it is what exemplifies the abstract meaning of the artwork. Now, am I confusing subject with theme here? After all, the theme is “the summation of a novel’s abstract meaning” (Rand, “Basic Principles of Literature,” TRM, p. 81), and isn’t the theme conveyed by the manner or style in which the subject is handled? Yes and no. There is a crucial ambiguity here. The subject is what conveys the theme, and the style is how the theme is conveyed by the subject. For instance, one might say, “An image of implacable integrity was conveyed by Gary Cooper’s character in the movie version of “The Fountainhead.” Or, one might say, “An image of implacable integrity was conveyed by the manner in which the film editor of “The Fountainhead” excised any segments in which Gary Cooper’s character looked less than stolid and unflinching before the jury rendered its verdict.” Here we have an abstraction being conveyed both by the subject (or an element of it, the Howard Roark character) and by the style (the manner of film editing by essentials). (Caveat: this is just an illustration. I don’t know that either the acting or the editing was really that good!) Rand would never say, as Torres and Kamhi suggest, that the “nominal subject” corresponds to “the artist’s view of existence,” but rather that the actual subject of the artwork embodies it (again, feel free to substitute your favorite synonym). It is precisely the abstract meaning or “ultimate content” or theme of the artwork that corresponds to that view, and which is embodied by the artwork’s subject (not by the “nominal subject” from which the artist might have drawn the impulse or inspiration to fashion the artwork).

At any rate, this is my own reading of Rand, in which I fail to detect the inconsistencies that Torres and Kamhi claim to see. They suggest, for example, that these supposed contradictions explain instances in which Rand failed to grasp the real abstract meaning of certain paintings by Vermeer, one of her favorites. I would alternately suggest that her disappointment at the lack of heroic motifs in said paintings and her excitement over his style which she found so admirable combined to interfere with her ability to focus on what was embodied in Vermeer’s subjects. These factors may well have encouraged her mistaken judgment

that his subjects were banal and his style everything (relatively speaking). As strong as Rand's allegiance was to the idea of the centrality of the subject in esthetics, her real love obviously was for style. It's not unreasonable to suggest that she probably had an overly narrow view of what subject matter would be appropriate to the execution of a particular style. (Otherwise, why speak, as she did, of such apparent mismatches between subject and style as an "esthetic crime"?)

As for the allegedly special case of music, referred to in Kamhi and Torres' notes for the essay, I disagree with the claim they cite by L. A. Reid. He says that music does not have a subject or subject-matter and that, as Kamhi and Torres say, "what is represented" in music cannot be "conceptualized and verbalized apart from the representation itself." One widely discussed example to the contrary is that of the semblance of motion and goal-directedness in music. (See for instance Leonard B. Meyer's *Music, the Arts and Ideas*, The University of Chicago Press, 1968.) Using Reid's own schema: the primary subject-matter of such music is the existential instances of motion and goal-directed activity (shades of plot-based literature and drama!)—the secondary subject-matter is an array of music materials selected and transformed imaginatively by a composer because of their experienced or sensed appropriateness in presenting a semblance of such motion and activity—and the tertiary subject-matter is those fully organized musical materials as they present such a semblance (which in turn embodies the abstract view of a world in which values and goal-directed activity exist, which (along with their root: volition) Rand claims to be the essence of Romanticism in art).

It is sometimes claimed that the music of such pre-Romantic, even pre-Classical era composers as Bach or Vivaldi or Handel contains Romantic elements, that their music is passionate at times, reflecting the spirit thought by many to be confined to the wild and woolly 19th century. Indeed, with analytical tools such as those developed by Meyer, Schenker, and others, this claim can be shown to be more than just emotive opinionizing. I once did an analysis of a section of the courante movement of one of Bach's unaccompanied cello suites (a rather unlikely place to look for Romantic, goal-directed elements) and found a surprisingly rich musical "plot" unfolding within a fairly short span of time. Scarlatti and Monteverdi and Telemann do not have as many bells and whistles in their music as, say, Mozart or Hayden or, for that matter, Beethoven, Chopin, Shostakovich, etc. The structural hierarchies within which the goal-directedness in Baroque music works itself out are relatively "flat" (i.e., having fewer levels) compared to those in the music of later composers. In

this respect, the Romanticism (in Rand's sense of goal-directedness) in early music is more subtle and restrained. It took a great deal of "pushing the envelope" of stylistic boundaries before composers at last broke through into the obvious lush Romanticism that we most often associate with the term. I'm not trying to argue that Bach et al. were full-blown Romantics! All I'm saying here is that there is no Great Divide between music of the 1600s and 1700s on the one hand and music of the 1800s and 1900s on the other. Instead, there is a demonstrable continuum of gradually increasing amounts of goal-directedness in music during the Common Practice Era (aka, the Age of Tonal Music).

Much more needs to be said about music than I can reasonably attempt here (see my essay, "Thoughts on Musical Characterization and Plot: the Symbolic and Emotional Power of Dramatic Music," *Art Ideas*, June 1998). I hope it's clear, however, that a key element I see as missing from the Objectivist esthetics is the acknowledgement of an extensive, striking analogy between music and the literary arts. Rand said she was not able to understand how to develop a "clear conceptual distinction and separation of object from subject in the field of musical perception." I think the reason is that she saw the primary link between music and experience as the emotions, which instead is a derivative element in music—as in the other arts. The way to understand how music represents basic abstractions is to learn music theory and analysis and to carefully study what is happening in music, not to focus inwardly on whatever feelings you might be experiencing in regard to it. That latter way, as Rand rightly recognized, lies subjectivism. And fortunately for those of us who want equal status with the other arts for the objectivity of musical experience, much of the spade-work in developing techniques for uncovering "teleological" structure in music was (unknown to Rand) done over 25 years ago. (Again, see the work of Meyer.) In lieu of such a total revolution in esthetics, perhaps even now, although a great deal of music does not afford such an experience and abstract view of the world, it will not be gainsaid that a vast body of music written during the past 300+ years does do so. Not all literature is Romantic either, but that didn't stop Rand from establishing the outstanding value of the literature that is Romantic as an important cornerstone of her esthetics. I would strongly suggest that the time is past due to extend the same consideration to the realm of music. Doing so would be an enormous step forward in esthetics for three reasons. It would go a long way toward establishing the essential unity of the arts. It would take music out of the realm of quasi-mystical, emotive characterizations (e.g., music as "the language of the emotions") and allow it

to be illuminated by the better understood arts such as literature and painting. And it would significantly extend the application of Rand's esthetics of literature, thus reinforcing its credibility and fundamentality.

This last point is important. Some question whether Rand's ideas about the nature of literature are properly a part of the philosophy of art. Perhaps she is simply equating her personal esthetics with esthetics in general (and thus committing the Fallacy of the Frozen Abstraction, about which she wrote so cogently in "Collectivized Ethics," *The Virtue of Selfishness*). I think that such a view grossly sells Rand short. It is clear to me that she was really on to something, but that she just didn't take it nearly far enough. Using the volition premise as a differentia for classifying art as Romantic or Naturalistic is just one way to sort out the arts. But note that this premise is based on an aspect of the human conceptual faculty. Another aspect (and I suspect there are still others) that shows great potential for classifying art is the fact that the contents of our consciousness are hierarchical, i.e., structured in interconnected layers, following the principle of unit-economy. And there can be relatively deep (many-layered) or relative flat (few-layered) hierarchies—not to mention hierarchies on which a great deal too much has been heaped! Both literature and music—as well as architecture, sometimes included in the fine arts—exemplify this attribute to one degree or another. Setting aside the question of whether music exemplifies volitionality and goal-directedness, there is thus another highly important question as to the hierarchical structuring of the temporal arts (and architecture). In contrast, just consider the styles of 20th century music in which perceiving organized pattern is deliberately eschewed: no goal-directedness, no hierarchy—just chaos shading gradually into boredom (or irritation!).

The common thread running through both ways of looking at art works and genres is their being based on one of the main features of human consciousness. This ties in well with Rand's and Peikoff's point about art being concerned with teaching "a technique of directing one's awareness," about the fact that art "conditions or stylizes man's consciousness by conveying to him a certain way of looking at existence (OPAR, p. 423). A well-structured story or musical piece—apart from (or in addition to) whatever it may convey about human volitional mental functioning—certainly does draw the reader or listener into a process that conveys an important point about human hierarchical mental functioning. There is a strong presumption, in other words, that Rand has laid the groundwork for a Grand Unified Theory of Esthetics. Someday, I suggest, a methodology derived from her work will allow theorists to legitimately classify artworks

and connoisseurs to legitimately evaluate artworks as to how and/or whether they enhance one's experience of the volitional, hierarchical nature, etc., of one's consciousness. Far from Rand's well-argued personal preference for Romantic literature being merely an idiosyncratic intrusion into philosophy of art, I think it is reasonable to see it as the preface to a much deeper analysis and understanding of the nature and value of art. My disagreements with them over certain issues notwithstanding, I congratulate Lou and Michelle for their very stimulating essay. If it is any indication of the quality and provocative nature of their forthcoming book, *What Art Is* (Open Court, 1998), there should be some extremely interesting discussions of esthetics in Objectivist circles and (one hopes) academic circles, as well, in the next several years.

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## Addressing Some Critics

Jan Narveson

Friar Sirico's rejoinder to me goes something like this: The Christian religious sustained Western civilization for a long time, and has inspired lots of people. And a great many very smart people believed in it and wrote a great deal about it. Therefore, it must be true.

He appears also to think it obvious that the stories reported in the New Testament provide "evidence" for the truth of the Christian religion. Friar Sirico, not surprisingly, claims to know what I have argued is, to put it mildly, unobvious: *why* a supreme being would do that sort of thing—e.g., send his son "to die on the cross for our sins." Ah, well, you see—"It's the Divine mystery!" This exemplifies my point. These are not explanations; they are more utterances of the very faith whose rational credibility is what was in question in the debates on the existence of God. He does not, of course, concern himself with the miracles of one sort or another vouched on behalf of most religions far and wide. Any Christian "knows" that they prove nothing except the depth of ignorance of those who claim to have witnessed them. Deep and sincere beliefs in mutually incompatible propositions are familiar stuff in human history, however.

All of which just reminds us of the serious point at issue here: is there a credible argument, along rational lines, for the view that the universe as we know it was literally created by a minded being of some remarkable sort? Friar Sirico points to the thousands of pages, nay of volumes, written by his fellow believers. But if you look for cogent arguments, or indeed, arguments at all, in the writings of people intelligent enough to have some idea what an argument is supposed to look like, it's remarkable how rapidly those pages dwindle. For every page devoted to providing genuine evidence, or some kind of general argument, for the proposition that there exists a god, you will find a hundred thousand devoted to worshipping "Him", exhorting others to believe in "Him", and question-beggingly reprimanding all who do not. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, devotes just about one page of actual argument for the existence of god (the famous "five ways"). Some of the five are transparently silly by

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modern standards; some are variants of one argument, namely the Cosmological Argument. My analysis of that argument occupies many more pages than Aquinas' off-the-cuff exposition, come to that. If victory went to the larger battalions on this matter, evidently it is I who would have it here.

But of course it doesn't. Friar Sirico, true to his profession, provides no discussion whatever of my arguments—depending on what you count as discussion, anyway. He does say (p. 122) "Is not Narveson really making a case far more extreme than merely that belief in God is nonsense [note: I did not say that, remember], and is he not really arguing for the non-existence of anything real and non-provability of any truth claim?" This is rhetoric: I obviously was doing nothing of the sort. Science, I take it, has told us a great deal about the world we live in and will no doubt tell us, as time goes by, a great deal more. It is precisely because of the evident fruitfulness of its methods that I propose to apply them to the hypothesis that the world was, after all, created by a super-mind rather than just bungling along on its own or due to some other interesting processes.

Friar Sirico claims that the Christian literature "on the logical (as versus empirical) proofs of God's existence are massive and complex." That is true, in a sense. And he claims to "find them persuasive"; but it will be noted that he does nothing whatever to set the arguments back on their feet. He accuses me of appealing to "authority," though I do nothing but point out that those who have examined these arguments as arguments—as distinct from further professions of faith—have, overwhelmingly, found them wanting. In the case of the strictly "logical" proofs, I have in very general terms explained why they are wanting. What is needed are premises which will show how the claim that the Universe is the product of intelligence is to be understood, and then what would constitute evidence in favor of them; after that, we would see whether the evidence does support them. The problem here is not lack of evidence, but that the hypothesis simply doesn't get to first base. There is, in the end, no hypothesis, no explanation—nothing but, as Hume puts it, "sophistry and illusion".

To take an important example of my point, I noted that the supposed "creation vs. evolution" dispute is not a genuine dispute at all, but simply a muddle, for there isn't actually any theory of "creationism" with any content whatever. The reason for this is quite straightforward. Assume that the universe is created by a super-mind. Now: what would it look like, having been so created? The answer is that it depends ENTIRELY on what the mind in question wanted. But unfortunately, that variable is wide

open, and indeed, according to all the theories of theology, fundamentally unknowable to mere men. Therefore there is NO WAY to know that god wouldn't have created a universe exactly like the one we've got, evolution and all. Saying that the universe was "created" adds nothing whatsoever to our level of information about it, nothing whatever to our idea of what to expect in such a place. What a creative mind will do is limited only by its creative imagination, and humans do so well at this that there's simply no predicting what the next science-fiction writer will dream up. Now make that creative mind absolutely unlimited, and you see the point.

So there is no debate whatever. Those who think there is think they know the divine mind, but on their own account they can't know that. There is no dispute, because there is no rival theory. Evolution is indeed a theory, or rather, a partial theory, a framework with genuine explanatory power given a lot of other information; but creation is not.

The same would be true regarding the moral destination of man, were it not for the complication that we do indeed have some pretty decent ideas what's going on with morality. And what's going on there is well enough known so that the door is anything but wide open on this matter. Can god decide that murder is just fine, starting at 10:43 tomorrow? No. A super-intelligence with no moral pretensions could say such a thing, but it wouldn't do "Him" any good. The reasons why murder is wrong have nothing whatever to do with supposed super-fancy intelligences, and indeed, it's the other way around. It's precisely because we expect our "gods" to be good that we know perfectly well that they can do things like that. Nor can they decide that what morality is "really" all about is staring at your navel from dawn 'til dusk, or seeing how many incisions you can make in a kewpie doll. The idea that the content of morality is wide open is absurd. The Ten Commandments, for example, include the familiar ideas that murder, theft, and fraud are wrong. Big surprise! Do you think that Moses could have come down from the mountain with a couple of stone tablets declaring those things to be just fine, after all? Indeed, he could not: he would have been laughed out of town. Given the sort of thing morality is, it can't help condemning things like that.

The Judaic code also, of course, included several "commandments" making clear who's boss—"though shalt not take MY name in vain!" and "you'll damn well go to church on Sunday and worship ME"—just the sort of thing you'd expect from a dictator asserting control over his turf. In order to see a connection between that sort of thing and morality, we have to look at indirect considerations, such as the desirability of having a day of rest every so often; "commanding" people to spend that day sitting around



in the tabernacle instead of wearing themselves out in the vineyards is a plausible shot at a regulation that conceivably could do some good for us humans. For that matter, trying to get them to have some regard for each other and not behave like a bunch of egomaniacs also has much to be said for it (though doing it by having them all "worship" the same egomaniac is arguably not an ideal way to accomplish that worthwhile end!) And so on. But the point is clear: the idea that morality could be genuinely "based on" the commands of some exotic super-personage is fundamentally wrong. Rather, our image of what a perfect superintelligence would be like is deeply informed by antecedently understood moral considerations. There is no other way. When Socrates asks the theologically pretentious Euthyphro whether what's right is so because God loves it, or instead it's that God loves it because it's right, Euthyphro immediately responds that it's the latter, failing, however, to get the point that it can't be both. And neither do most, evidently. Plato's lesson is not learned easily by would-be believers. But it's there to learn, and the sooner the better, so far as world peace, among other things, is concerned.

Turning to Mark Turiano's response, he thinks to save the argument from design, which he sets forth as follows: (1) if  $x$  is intelligible, then there must have been an intelligence that designed  $x$ . (2) The cosmos is intelligible; therefore, (3) it must have had a designer—god. What makes him think that (1) is true? He rejects what he takes to be my suggestion that intelligibility is essentially a matter of regularity or order. Instead, he says, "when we look at the cosmos we find that it is shot through with intelligibility, so much so that even what appears at first sight to be chaotic can be understood according to principles, i.e. it is intelligible." This is an interesting claim. Others, when looking out at the same cosmos, seeing the same stars, apparently see no such thing. Why not? Evidently intelligibility is not, after all, an observable property. One observes, and one attributes to it this further characteristic of being "intelligible". But what is this characteristic, and why should it be thought to have anything to do with designing intelligences?

Intelligibility certainly relates to intelligence. To say that  $p$  is intelligible is to say that a rational being can understand  $p$ . Just what it is to "understand" is, indeed, a difficult matter. But what Turiano wants to claim is that if  $p$  is intelligible to someone who observes and analyzes the phenomena that  $p$  concerns, then it must also be the case that some further rational being, some other intelligence, brought it about that  $p$  is true in the first place—brought it about intentionally, hence *designed*  $p$ . We may ask

two questions about this. First, is there anything about the nature of intelligibility as such that requires it to be true? And second, does it even make any sense at all?

1. The answer to the first is quite obviously in the negative. That this, that, or the other thing was designed by some clever person is often true and a good explanation of how it came to be. But then, it is precisely because we understand design and designing that we understand that lots of things were not thus originated—so far as the *evidence* is concerned, that is. Watches do not grow on trees, but apples and pears do. And no investigation of trees will show them to have been "designed"—except, latterly, for the rather important set of cases in which agrobiologists have improved on Mother Nature by cross-breeding, gene-splicing, and the like. Now these latter cases are of considerable interest, since for one thing they suggest that Mum Nature, if she is taken to be a "designer," is a pretty incompetent one: people can improve on Her work, and do, all the time. That is why we are so much better off than the cave men.

But of course to talk of mother nature as a "designer" is metaphorical. What scientists find upon closer examination is that nature is ordered by a set of regularities: fundamentally, by basic forces of—so far as we presently know—four different kinds. Perhaps one day a true Unified Field theory will work, in which case we might be able to unify all of nature under a single principle. It will then be about as intelligible as it can manage to be. Now, what about the character of those basic principles?

We could hardly do better for examples of basically intelligible principles than elementary logic. 'If p, then not not-p', for example, is quite delightfully intelligible—so much so that its denial would lead immediately to the destruction of any and all knowledge about everything and anything, gods and all kinds of designers included. Yet the idea that the principle of non-contradiction was "created" or "designed" by anybody is itself totally unintelligible. Think about it: to claim that it was "created" is to claim that there was some time, prior to which the principle *wasn't* true; and then, Lo and behold!, at that time, this amazing Personage waves her magic wand or completes her act of rational gestation and gives birth to the principle. But of course if the principle weren't already true, then the whole story about what happened prior to it would make no sense whatever; and yet if that story were necessary for the "birth of logic," as it were, then logic couldn't ever have *been* born.

Well, a similar thing turns out to be true at the level of physical reality. When we humans design and build something, we utilize principles of nature that were *already in place*, prior to our act of designing. Indeed,

we can build and design anything at all only because principles that, so far as there is any reason to believe, were *not* "designed and built" but are simply true, were already in place. Watt was able to invent the steam engine because steam was already the sort of thing that was capable of imparting accelerations to objects (as in geysers and volcanoes); what Watt did was to note that if he moves one's limbs in various ways, one could bring together various material elements into the sort of juxtaposition that would enable the steam to do what we perceive to be useful work. Invention, in short, presupposes pre-existing physical forces and laws already in place.

Just as design implies a designer, in short, designers imply nondesigned principles. Intelligent beings cannot function except against a background of regularities that can be understood and relied on in the course of our designing activities. The idea that it might have been the other way around at a basic level is, in the end, unintelligible. So the situation is precisely the opposite of what Turiano proclaims. We do not make the cosmos *more* intelligible by supposing that it "has a designer", but *less* so.

Supposing that the universe was the result of some creative act of some being is supposing that there were in existence, *prior* to that being's work, some principles of order and some materials such that the designer could hitch this to that, or pour this into that, or whatever, in such a way that—voilà!—out comes a cosmos! But this account is obviously nonsense when you think of it. And for that reason, all theological "explanations" are surrounded by mystery. They are so because they don't actually make any literal sense. And so the aspiring priest or theologian, hoping to sway the souls of potential parishioners, quickly resorts to what we can see to be his basic *modus operandi*, the principle that "the lord works in mysterious ways". Yes, indeed—'mysterious' ways are the *only* ways to square the supposed theory with the facts.

Monotheism carries a special problem with it. Creation literally *ex nihilo* is crazy, because the creator *himself* has to be already something—yet if he is, then at the time of creation, it is *not* true that there was nothing, nor can it be true that *everything* is the product of intelligent design (it is logically impossible for the eternal deity to "bring himself into existence" by an act of intelligent creation). And if, on the other hand, there was literally nothing—no creators or anything—and yet something did come of it, it logically couldn't be the work of a creator, there not being any creators on hand in the first place.

Fundamental monotheism, then, is necessarily a masterpiece of evasion. However, I should point out that my proffered refutation of religion didn't go quite like that. I have been harping, above, on aspects of creation that I for the sake of argument passed over in my paper. The theist does, I said, owe us an explanation of just how the divinity was supposed to operate, and it is pretty obvious that he is not going to be able to supply it. I have detailed my offhand complaint above. However, creation requires *two* things, not just one. Besides a background of materials and regularities to make talk of "creation" intelligible, it requires, in addition, a *motivational* story. When we make watches, it is easy to see why. People find it useful to keep track of time, because they have things to do, they have a limited temporal budget, and we waste a lot less of it if our arrangements with others can be made more precise by establishing a communicable metric. And so on. But why would an *omnipotent* being create anything at all, for goodness' sake? The idea that the poor old guy might be lonely and bored up there all by himself, and so be moved to create a bunch of little quasi-godlets to entertain him suggests itself—but it does so at the cost of nonsense. For an omnipotent being, it would seem, doesn't and can't need or want anything at all. And there is no reason to think that he would need or want this, that, or the other thing in particular. This, by the way, is what's wrong with "creationism". Creationists think that there is an *alternative* explanatory hypothesis to the collection of specific and general explanations that are marshaled under the general rubric of evolutionary biology.

Evolutionary biology offers a general structural hypothesis that makes all sorts of sense. If species x exists in an environment full of dangers to its continued existence by virtue of having properties f, g, and h, while further properties j, k, and l are resistant to those dangers, then those specimens that happen to be equipped with the latter will survive and those without them will not. Evolutionary biology as such does not tell us where any of those properties "came from"; for that it leans on the work of other sciences, including other branches of biology. But it tells us plenty about the subject it's immediately concerned with, viz, how and why some species in certain circumstances survive and others do not.

But Creationism does nothing of the sort. It instead tells us what whatever happens, it does so "because" some cosmic intelligence *wanted* it that way. Why did it want it that way? Dunno! "God only knows," we say. We say this as a confession of ignorance. Because it is that, however, it is also a confession of explanatory *impotence*. We explain x in terms of the creative activity of y only if we have some idea what y might have been up

to in creating x. When we can observe the painter at work in his studio we have our mechanical story to hand—we know what brushes and paints are like; and in addition, we can talk with the painter, and find out that he is trying to create something visually interesting. Succeed or fail, we at least understand that this painted canvas was, literally, painted by something (a human) with known capabilities of that general type. We may well be baffled by the result—we do not share his intuition—but since we have ample independent evidence that it was he who did it, confirmation of the "creationist" story for this painting is no problem at all. But now if we look at some object whose alleged creator is nowhere to be seen, and nevertheless attribute its existence, on the basis of observable characteristics of the object, to the creative work of an intelligence, we can do so only if we can understand how a thing like that could have been intentionally designed, and some idea of why such a being *would* do a thing like that.

The theological story, however, necessarily fails us on this second feature just as completely as it does on the first. It is, therefore, an "explanation" only in form—an explanation that is fundamentally incapable of genuinely explaining *anything whatever*. Mr. Turiano's vaunted "intelligibility" is, therefore, a total fraud. Something else, one suspects, is going on—such as a desire to survive death and a story that implies the prospect of doing so on favorable terms. However, Turiano evidently agrees with me that the fact that one would like it to be the case that p is really not much of a reason for thinking that p.

## How Steven Pinker's Mind Works

Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works*.  
New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977.

Roger Bissell

Every so often, a book addressed to scholars and general readers alike attempts to reveal the workings of the human mind in a manner both broadly integrative in scope and abundantly rich in detail. In the mid-1960s, for example, Arthur Koestler's *The Act of Creation*, sought to explain in terms of a single powerful mental mechanism ("bisociation," the unlikely mental conjoining of two previously unassociated contexts of knowledge or experience) the widely disparate processes of humor, artistic creation, and scientific discovery. Another such book, the subject of this review, is *How the Mind Works*, authored by the head of M.I.T.'s Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, Steven Pinker, who presents "a bird's eye view of the mind and how it enters into human affairs."

Following Tooby and Cosmides of the Center for Evolutionary Psychology, Pinker skillfully synthesizes (another Koestlerian "bisociation"!) computational theory from cognitive psychology and natural selection from evolutionary biology. On this framework of "evolutionary psychology," he weaves together a vast array of ideas into a "big picture" about the complex structure of the human mind. Pinker's basic thesis is that "a psychology of many computational faculties engineered by natural selection is our best hope for a grasp on how the mind works that does justice to its complexity." (p. 58) He argues well for this view in the three opening chapters, and the weight of evidence in the five chapters of applications that follow make the conclusion seem inescapable. Such a wealth of interesting and valuable material is included in Pinker's hefty tome that this review will of necessity be but a selective

glance of the “bird’s eye” at some of its most salient virtues and flaws—beginning, appropriately, with Pinker’s *definition* of “mind.”

The human mind, Pinker says, is “a system of organs of computation, designed by natural selection to solve the kinds of problems our ancestors faced in their foraging way of life, in particular, understanding and outmaneuvering objects, animals, plants, and other people.” (p. 21) This definition underlies a wide-ranging discussion noteworthy for clarity, precision, liveliness, and wit. Yet, its inconsistency with other things Pinker says leaves his stand on the mind-body relation shrouded in ambiguity. He says that the mind “is not the brain, but...a special thing the brain does, which makes us see, think, feel, choose, and act, [namely,] information processing, or computation.” (p. 24), and that “the overwhelming evidence [shows] that the mind is the activity of the brain” (p. 64). By his own words, the organ involved in all these mental processes appears to be not the mind, but the *brain*, which has “a breathtaking complexity of physical structure fully commensurate with the richness of the mind.” (p. 64)

Thus, although Pinker’s definition refers to the mind and its component “mental modules” as a system of organs of computation that solve problems, it is *really* referring to the brain—and, more specifically, to regions of the brain “that are interconnected by fibers that make the regions *act as a unit*” (p. 30, emphasis added). Pinker construes mental modules or mental organs as being any interconnected group of brain parts or brain regions *insofar as they carry out (or able to carry out) a mental process*. “[M]ental modules are not likely to be visible to the naked eye as circumscribed territories on the surface of the brain [but instead] sprawling messily over the bulges and crevasses of the brain [or] broken into regions that are interconnected by fibers that make the regions act as a unit...distributed across the brain in a spatially haphazard manner” (p. 30-1) To refer to such brain regions and the functions they carry out as “the mind” or “mental modules” or “mental organs” seems altogether reasonable and accurate, and gives Pinker every bit of the semantic leeway he needs.

However, this would require Pinker to modify his stance that the mind is not the brain, but (some of) what the brain does – and instead to acknowledge that the mind *is* the brain insofar as it is doing *some* of what it does, i.e., *insofar as it carries out (or able to carry out) mental processes*. Or, in more Pinkerian terms: “the mind is a system of brain structures that function as organs of computation.” This proposed modification would thus simply ratify and formalize his insight about mental organs or modules being specialized brain structures – and firmly place Pinker’s work in the

best tradition of non-spiritualist, non-reductionist theories of mind, as exemplified by the “mentalist monism” of neuroscientist Roger Sperry (*Science and Moral Priority, Merging Mind, Brain, and Human Values*, Columbia University Press, 1983).

Pinker carefully distinguishes between mind in the sense of *intelligence* and mind in the sense of *consciousness*. Problems about the nature and origin of the former, he says, have been solved by cognitive science, intelligence being “the ability to attain goals in the face of obstacles by means of decisions based on rational (truth-obeying) rules.” The source of intelligence is not “a special kind of spirit or matter or energy but...information,” (p. 65) carried by some piece of matter that “stands for” the state of affairs that the information is about. This is the basis of the computational theory of mind, the idea that intelligence is computation, “the processing of symbols: arrangements of matter that have both *representational* and *causal* properties, that is, that simultaneously carry information about something and take part in a chain of physical events.” (p. 76) Even if some special form of matter, spirit, or energy were someday revealed to underlie consciousness, what makes a system intelligent is not any of these, but what the symbols the system uses stand for and how its internal dynamic patterns “are designed to mirror truth-preserving relationships.” (p. 77)

As for mind qua consciousness, Pinker slashes through the tangle of meanings that has grown up around the term. Sometimes “consciousness” is taken to mean access to information (as against information out of reach in the subconscious). The most interesting feature Pinker attributes to access-consciousness is “an executive, the ‘I’, [which] appears to make choices and pull the levers of behavior.” (p. 139) This would seem to point to a naturalistic explanation for our experience of a self or will.

Unfortunately, Pinker’s discussion of *freedom* of the will hits a fundamental snag. In saying that “the science game treats people as material objects, and its rules are the physical processes that cause behavior through natural selection and neurophysiology,” he spotlights the Humean “event analysis, cause-effect” paradigm that has ruled modern science almost since its inception. On this model, there really *is* no room for a view of people as sentient, rational, free-willed agents – and no answer to Pinker’s question: “How can my actions be a choice for which I am responsible, if they are completely caused by my genes, my upbringing and my brain state?” (p. 558)



On the Humean model, it is all too true that “the scientific mode of explanation cannot accommodate the mysterious notion of uncaused causation that underlies the will...[A] random event does not fit the concept of free will any more than a lawful one does, and could not serve as the long-sought locus of moral responsibility...Either we dispense with all morality as unscientific superstition, or we find a way to reconcile causation...with responsibility and free will.” (pp. 54-5) The latter is precisely what has to be done, along the lines of the Aristotelian, agent-cause model of causality elaborated in the writings of Roger Sperry and Edward Pols.

Rather than exploring an alternative to the metaphysical and methodological dogmas at the foundations of modern science, however, Pinker accepts them as given. Instead, he resorts to the tattered Kantian dodge of segregating science from morality, as if freedom and dignity were no real part of “what makes us tick and how we fit into the physical universe” – and “cloistering scientific and moral reasoning in separate areas” an adequate reconciliation of science and morality and safeguard against dehumanizing people or deontologizing science. (p. 56)

Finally, “consciousness” is sometimes taken as referring to “*sentience*, subjective experience, phenomenal awareness, raw feels, first-person present tense, ‘what it is like to be or do something’...” (p. 135) Pinker admits that sentience and access may be inseparable, dual aspects of consciousness, despite their being at least conceptually distinguishable. He has no way, however, to answer claims that *qualia* (sentient experiences) are either cognitive illusions or inconsequential to our understanding of how the mind works. Pinker ultimately affects a “perhaps we weren’t meant to know” stance that seems to amount to another Kantian cop-out on the research and rethinking that needs to be done. In contrast, this reviewer has noted elsewhere (“Review of Fred Dretske’s *Naturalizing the Mind*,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1997) that the background proprioceptive awareness of bodily states and processes is emerging as a likely candidate for the “what-is-it-like” quality accompanying conscious awareness. Qualia will yield their mysteries to the inexorable progress of cognitive science – much to the chagrin of the “Mysterians,” to be sure.

Pinker also seems overly perplexed by thought experiments involving “zombies” and at one point says: “I can imagine a creature whose layer 4 [of the cortex] is active but who does not have the sensation of red or the sensation of anything; no law of biology rules the creature out.” (p. 561) True, but imagination is no substitute for empirical research! If indeed there *are* creatures who have “access without sentience” – e.g., those

suffering from blindsight syndrome – isn't the needed line of research obvious? Following Pinker's own approach regarding intelligence (p. 65), find out *how* the system provides access without sentience – i.e., what parts of the brain are *not* working, or working differently from people with sentience *and* access.

On the evolution side of his synthesis, Pinker explores how the mind—and, more broadly, living organisms—could have evolved. He voices his agreement with Richard Dawkins that “a straightforward consequence of the argument for the theory of natural selection [is that] life, anywhere it is found in the universe, will be a product of natural selection,” and he reviews the various alternative ideas that have been advanced and later shown to be “impotent to explain the signature of life, complex design.” (p. 158) Quoting complexity theorist Stuart Kauffman's remark that evolution may be “a marriage of selection and self-organization,” Pinker wisely acknowledges that complexity theory—the idea that mathematic principles of order underlie many complex systems and that “feats like self-organization, order, stability, and coherence may be innate properties of some complex systems”—may help explain how organisms and major organ systems came into being in the first place, and that “if there are abstract principles that govern...web[s] of interacting parts..., natural selection would have to work with those principles.” (p. 161)

Even if complexity theory did explain the constraints within which adaptation works, however, Pinker argues that this would not render natural selection obsolete. The complexity involved is, after all, “*functional, adaptive design*: complexity in the service of accomplishing some interesting outcome...Natural selection remains the only theory that explains how *adaptive* complexity, not just any old complexity, can arise, because it is the only nonmiraculous, forward-direction theory in which *how well something works* plays a causal role in *how it came to be*. (p. 162) Furthermore, the evidence that life evolved by natural selection is overwhelming. Not only is natural selection readily observable in the wild, and in parallel in the numerous forms of artificial selection humans have practiced for thousands of years, but also mathematical proofs from population genetics and computer simulations from the relatively new field of Artificial Life have shown that natural selection can work.

Considering the obvious selection advantage of having an accurate sense of the real objects in the world, it is therefore no surprise that the study of psychology of perception has been in the forefront of evolutionary psychology's programme to “reverse-engineer” the mind, which Pinker discusses in his chapter on the psychology of perception (“The Mind's

Eye”). In contrast to skeptical philosophers who try to argue against “our ability to know *anything* by rubbing our faces in illusions,” perception scientists “marvel that it works at all.” The accuracy of our brains in analyzing the swirling patterns of energy that strike our sensory receptors and discerning objects and motion “is impressive because the problem the brain is solving is literally unsolvable; [deducing] an object’s shape and substance from its projection is an ‘ill-posed’ problem...which has no unique solution.” Through evolution, however, vision has made these problems solvable “by adding... assumptions about how the world we evolved in is, on average, put together...When the current world resembles the average ancestral environment, we see the world as it is.” (pp. 212-3) When these assumptions (some of which are discussed on pp. 234 and 247-9) are violated, illusion can result. The scientific value of the study of illusion is thus its revelation of “the assumption that natural selection installed to allow us to solve unsolvable problems and know, much of the time, what is out there.” (pp. 213)

Of particular note are Pinker’s discussions of the illusions by which stereoscopes trick us into seeing flat pictures as three-dimensional, the various “tricks” (“mental-rotation,” “multiple-view,” and “geon”) our minds use to recognize shapes, the recently gathered evidence that mental images for both perception and imagination are indeed “pictures in the head,” and the existence of a critical period in infancy for the development of binocular vision, “as opposed to rigid hard-wiring or life-long openness to experience” (p. 240), the latter being but one of many examples Pinker offers in his book against the oversimplified alternative of innate ideas vs. *tabula rasa*, favoring a view of learning not as the “indispensable shaper of amorphous brain tissue [but instead] an innate adaptation to the project-scheduling demands of a self-assembling animal.” (p. 241)

Because of the limitations of images (see pp. 294-296), human beings also evolved the ability to think in terms of ideas, which is the subject of the next chapter (“Good Ideas”). In contrast to Darwin, who thought that his evolutionary theory would put psychology on a new foundation, scientists such as his contemporary and rival, Alfred Russel Wallace, and modern-day astronomer Paul Davies could see no good evolutionary reason for human intelligence to exist, turning instead for an explanation to the superior guiding intelligence postulated by creationism or some form of self-organizing process eventually explainable by complexity theory. Pinker follows Stephen Jay Gould in pointing out what Wallace, Davies, and others overlook: that the brain has made use of “exaptations: adaptive structures that are ‘fortuitously suited to other roles

if elaborated' (such as jaw bones becoming middle-ear bones) and 'features that arise without functions...but remain available for later co-optation' (such as the panda's thumb, which is really a jury-rigged wristbone)." (p. 301) The human mind really *isn't* "adapted to think about arbitrary abstract entities...We have inherited a pad of forms that capture the key features of encounters among objects and forces, and the features of other consequential themes of the human condition such as fighting, food, and health. By erasing the contents and filling in the blanks with new symbols, we can adapt our inherited forms to more abstruse domains...We pry our faculties loose from the domains they were designed to work in, and use their machinery to make sense of new domains that abstractly resemble the old ones." (pp. 358-9)

Pinker explains at length "why the original structures were suited to being exapted" (p. 301), in the process also showing why the intuitive scientific and mathematical thinking that people do virtually from birth onward (contra William James' "bloomin', buzzin' confusion" model of infant awareness) is not always reliable for problems outside the demands of the natural environment. Faulty inference is to the conceptual level what illusion is to the perceptual; a close study of each kind of glitch reveals the original optimal conditions for the corresponding form of awareness--and how the formal sciences, mathematics, logic, etc. were developed at least partly to compensate for less optimal circumstances.

Among the intuitive theories presumed to comprise the mind's natural repertoire for making sense of the world are modules for objects and forces, inanimate beings, artifacts, minds, and natural kinds such as animals, plants, and minerals--as well as "modes of thought and feeling for danger, contamination, status, dominance, fairness, love, friendship, sexuality, children, relatives, and the self." (p. 315) Pinker stresses the point that what is innate is not knowledge itself, but *ways of knowing*. While exploring how these modules operate as babies learn about objects and motion and how to distinguish inanimate objects from living beings, he dwells on the very important issue of essentialism (are there natural kinds in the world?) and the equally important question of whether there really are objects in the world. Pinker defends essentialism against both the extreme essentialists such as Mortimer Adler who argue that human beings could not have evolved, and the modern anti-essentialists who use "essentialist" as a term of abuse against those who try to genuinely explain human thought and behavior (rather than merely redescribing it along ideological lines).

But do natural kinds exist? And why do we use concepts anyway? What is their biological utility? What in nature dictates that they are a necessity to our survival—if they are? The standard arguments given in psychology texts—memory overload and mental chaos—do not make sense, Pinker says, because we have more than adequate storage space for our experiential data (and we often remember both categories *and* their members), and “organization for its own sake is useless,” if not downright counterproductive. (p. 307) Instead, he argues, the survival value of concepts and categories, the reason they evolved into being, is their *predictive* power. One kind of categories uses “stereotypes, fuzzy boundaries, and family-like resemblances” and is more useful for simply “recording the clusters in reality,” for “examining objects and unisightfully recording the correlations among their features,” their predictive power coming from *similarity*. Categories of the other type are well-defined, having “definitions, in-or-out boundaries, and common threads running through the members,” and they “work by ferreting out the laws that put the clusters there,” their predictive power coming from *deduction*. (p. 309-10)

Sometimes the former—registering similarities—is the best we can do; but when we are able to use the latter, with definitions and lawful connections, we are not just fantasizing, Pinker says. At heart, Pinker is a realist – both in regard to the nature and existence of the external world and our knowledge of it, and in regard to the nature of our cognitive faculties. The world really is “sculpted and sorted by laws that science and mathematics aim to discover,” and “our theories, both folk and scientific, can idealize away from the messiness of the world and lay bare its underlying causal forces.” The systems of rules incorporated in “lawful” categories “are *idealizations* that abstract away from complicating aspects of reality, but are no less real for all that.” (pp. 308, 312) Similarly for concrete shapes, motions, and objects themselves. As against people like Buckminster Fuller or Arthur Koestler who claim that modern science has “dematerialized matter” and that solidity is an illusion, Pinker avers that “the world *does* have surfaces and chairs and rabbits and minds. They are knots and patterns and vortices of matter and energy that obey their own laws and ripple though the sector of space-time in which we spend our days.” (p. 333)

Such a ringing endorsement of common-sense realism – the view that the contents of our perceptual and conceptual awareness are real effects of real causes – is reassuring and welcome, indeed. What is truly remarkable is that the same author also acknowledges in no uncertain terms that the

*forms* of that awareness are the real effects of real causes, as well. Neither minds, nor living organisms, nor physical objects consist of a single, homogenous kind of stuff that somehow miraculously gives them their powers to do things. Pinker rightly consigns arguments postulating “mental spam” or “connectoplasm” and other formless, nearly-magical entities to the theoretical dustbin along with “protoplasm” and the ancient tetrad of “earth, air, fire, and water.” Instead, mind like the rest of nature, is hierarchically organized and has a “heterogeneous structure of many specialized parts.” (p. 31)

From a humanistic standpoint, the chapters on emotionality and sociality (“Hotheads” and “Family Values”) are arguably the most important sections of Pinker’s book. They should be required reading for all college majors in anthropology, sociology, and psychology—and for all parents. In the first of these, one of the shorter chapters of his book, Pinker manages to explode the reason-emotion dichotomy and to enlarge and enhance our concept of a universal human nature—an amazing accomplishment. To this, he adds some other very worthwhile material, including discussions of the biology of the positive and negative emotions, happiness, romantic love, and “altruism.” A highlight of the chapter is the set of extremely valuable insights, supported by copious citations of contemporary research, that the human emotions are universal, that (in Darwin’s words) “the same state of mind is expressed throughout the world with remarkable uniformity,” and that the mistaken belief that emotions differ cross-culturally comes mainly from language vocabulary differences and opinions either naively or deliberately at variance with actual behavior.”

Just as valuable is the revelation that the emotions are not nonadaptive baggage stowed in the basal ganglia and limbic system (MacLean’s Reptilian Brain and Primitive Mammalian Brain) but instead, as Pinker shows, “are adaptations, well-engineered software modules that work in harmony with the intellect and are indispensable to the functioning of the human mind.” (p. 370) The topmost goals of human beings, in relation to which subgoals, subsubgoals, etc. are the means, have been wired in through natural selection and, Pinker suggests, include not just the “Four Fs” (“feeding, fighting, fleeing, and sexual behavior”) but also, more broadly, “understanding the environment and securing the cooperation of others,” each emotion serving to mobilize “the mind and body to meet one of the challenges of living and reproducing in the cognitive niche,” both those posed by physical things and those posed by people. (pp. 373, 374) The reason we need emotions to do this, he says, is

that we cannot pursue all our goals at once, but instead must selectively commit ourselves “to one goal at a time, and the goals have to be matched with the best moments for achieving them.” (p. 373) Pinker thus sees the mechanism that sets the brain’s highest-level goals at any given moment as being not, as some might expect, the will, but instead the emotions:

Once triggered by a propitious moment, an emotion triggers the cascade of subgoals and sub-subgoals that we call thinking and acting. Because the goals and means are woven into a multiply nested control structure of subgoals within subgoals with subgoals, no sharp line divides thinking from feeling, nor does thinking inevitably precede feeling or vice versa (notwithstanding the century of debate within psychology over which comes first). (p. 373-4)

The emotions certainly are *motivating*, and it is difficult at times to analytically separate them from the thoughts that generate them. But motivation must be distinguished from *self-regulation*, which is the essence of the will. As Pinker explains later, the alleged reason-emotion dichotomy often refers to the fact that people sometimes are tempted to sacrifice long-term interests for short-term gratification. This problem of self-control or “weakness of the will” is actually rooted, Pinker says, in the “modularity of the mind”: “When the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, such as in pondering a diet-busting dessert, we can feel two very different kinds of motives fighting with us, one responding to sights and smells, the other to doctor’s advice.” (p. 396)

As Pinker explains it, “self-control is unmistakably a tactical battle between parts of the mind.” We have many goals (e.g., food, sex, safety), which “requires a division of labor among mental agents with different priorities and kinds of expertise.” These agents are all committed to the interests of the whole person over a lifetime, but in order to balance the person’s needs and goals those agents also have to “outwit one another with devious tactics.” Thus we are able to “defeat our self-defeating behavior,” as Pinker puts it (p. 396), by acting through those mental agents “with the longest view of the future...to voluntarily sacrifice freedom of choice for the body at other times....The self that wants a trim body outwits the self that wants dessert by throwing out the brownies at the opportune moment when it is in control.” (pp. 419-20) But how does this module or agent with the longest view *get* control if its motivating desires are *weaker* than those of the brownie-seeking module? More “devious tactics” such as giving one’s

brownie-seeking self “permission” to eat the brownie, along with “permission” *not* to? Or instead perhaps the psychic equivalent of arm-wrestling with one’s brownie-seeking self?

This is one of the weaker parts of Pinker’s discussion, for it fails to provide for a master module for the “we,” the “whole person” whose interests the lesser modules have been genetically engineered to look out for in a dynamically balanced way, the “whole person” who acts voluntarily, through one mental module or another, to deny pleasure to the body in preference to future well-being, or vice versa. Instead of a master self-regulator, the self/will, we seem to be left with a Dennett-esque congeries of clashing, warring self-regulators, reduced to using coercion and deceit over one another. The closest Pinker comes anywhere in the book to providing an explanation for even our *experience* of a self or will is his notion of an “executive process” or “set of master decision rules” comprising “a computational demon or agent or good-kind-of-homunculus, sitting at the top of the chain of command” and “charged with giving the reins or the floor to one of the agents at a time . . . another set of if-then rules or a neural network that shunts control to the loudest, fastest, or strongest agent one level down. ( pp. 143-4 ) Unfortunately, he seems to prefer the model of the “society of the mind” in explaining the emotions.

Perhaps, as Pinker says in the next chapter is the case for society, some amount of this conflict will always be present in the “society of the mind,” but that doesn’t make it morally right and it doesn’t mean we should try to reduce it. But how? Pinker does not pursue this, but his analogy between mind and society, expressed in the section “Society of Feelings,” suggests that we should find ways for our long-term and short-term modules to *cooperate* with and *be generous* to one another in achieving what each other is after: e.g., delicious, low-fat brownie recipes, along with some combination of suspending or relaxing one’s diet during holidays (retreat), not beating up on oneself for eating too much (conciliation), and accepting the fact that some weight gain is an inevitable part of the aging process (live and let live). But how is this cooperation to be implemented: anarchistically, by free-floating negotiation between competing modules— or governed from above by a mediating master module (the self/will)? As noted, Pinker does not address this point, nor do his other discussions of the free will issue help much.

Pinker sees the psychology of social relations as being largely about inborn motives that put us into conflict with one another. Contrary to several decades of conventional wisdom and romantic wishful thinking, epitomized by Margaret Mead’s “spectacularly wrong” portrayal of Samoa



as a paradise of idyllic social relationships, conflicts over power, wealth, and sex are traits universal to all human cultures. Yet, as Pinker points out, this does not make exploitation and violence morally correct, nor does it mean that the existing level of them is necessary or the best we can hope for. "People in all societies not only perpetrate violence but deplore it. And people everywhere take steps to reduce violent conflict, such as sanctions, redress, censure, mediation, ostracism, and law." (pp. 428-9)

Cooperation and generosity, which also exist in all human cultures, do not "come free with living in groups" but instead, like stereoscopic vision, are "difficult engineering problems," which human beings solved through natural selection, because "even in the harshest competition, an intelligent organism must be a strategist, assessing whether its goals might best be served by retreat, conciliation, or living and letting live." (p. 428) The bulk of this chapter is devoted to a detailed exploration of "the distinct kinds of thoughts and feelings [people should have] about kin and non-kin, and about parents, children, siblings, dates, spouses, acquaintances, friends, rivals, allies, and enemies." (p. 429) Especially helpful are Pinker's asides about feminist theory, in which he explains how evolutionary psychology challenges not the feminist goals of ending sexual discrimination and exploitation, but those feminist arguments that rest on faulty biological, psychological, and ethical premises.

As a part-time aesthetician and music theorist, this reviewer would be remiss not to comment on Pinker's discussion of art in the final chapter. The arts seem trivial, futile, biologically frivolous, Pinker says; yet we often experience them as among the most noble, exalted, rewarding things our minds do. What computational, evolutionary function, if any, do they serve? The visual arts, he says, are sensory "cheesecake...exquisite confection[s] crafted to tickle the sensitive spots of...our mental faculties." (p. 534). Pleasure-giving "patterns of sounds, sights, smells, tastes, and feels" given off by fitness-promoting environments are purified and concentrated so that the brain can stimulate itself with "intense artificial doses of the sights and sounds and smells that ordinarily are given off by healthful environments." (pp. 524-5)

As a 25-year veteran parent and consumer of the Montessori method of education, however, this reviewer thinks it is clear that visual art as *not* just sensory cheesecake, but instead also a means for sensory *conditioning* or *training*, as the artist shares her view of, for instance, "Here's how to see (or think of) apples." The very "purifying" and "concentrating" of patterns Pinker cites has a consciousness-molding function—much as Montessori's didactic materials help children form

sharper mental images and categories than they otherwise would from unguided everyday experience.

Pinker also discusses the basic design features of music and claims that it functions as "auditory cheesecake." Music cannot convey a plot, Pinker says, and "communicates nothing but formless emotion." (pp. 528-9) This is supposed to decisively differentiate music – even dramatic music – from literature, which "not only delights but instructs" and is thus presumably not merely a technology, but an evolved adaptation (p. 541) Pinker describes fiction's function thusly: "the author places a fictitious character in a hypothetical situation in an otherwise real world where ordinary facts and laws hold, and allows the reader to explore the consequences... The protagonist is given a goal and we watch as he or she pursues it in the face of obstacles... Characters in a fictitious world do exactly what our intelligence allows us to do in the real world. We watch what happens to them and mentally take notes on the outcomes of the strategies and tactics they use in pursuing their goals..." The cognitive, biologically adaptive role of fiction, then, is to "supply us with a mental catalogue of the fatal conundrums we might face some day and the outcomes of strategies we could deploy in them." (p. 543)

As this reviewer has argued elsewhere ("Thoughts on Musical Characterization and Plot: the Symbolic and Emotional Power of Dramatic Music," *Art Ideas*, 5/1, 1998, pp. 7-9), much the same reasoning and facts apply to the case of musical plot and musical motion itself. The key to understanding a fundamental similarity between dramatic music and literature is unearthed by Pinker's account of a film made by social psychologists Heider and Simmel. The plot of their movie consists of striving by a protagonist to achieve a goal, interference by an antagonist, and final success by the protagonist with a helper's aid. The "stars" of this movie are three dots (!), which Pinker says it is impossible *not* to see as "trying to get up [a] hill...*hindering* [the first dot]...and *helping* it reach its goal." (p. 322) Even toddlers "interpret certain motions...as animate agents [which] propel themselves, usually in service of a goal." (p. 322)

The behavior of musical tones in dramatic music is completely analogous to that of these dots and, this reviewer submits, is naturally, unavoidably experienced in the same way. Like the three dots, musical tones are much more concrete and specific in their "strategies and tactics" than are (most) literary characters, but the kaleidoscopic variety of melodic and motivic development in Western music offers a vast catalogue of opportunities to perceptually experience goal-seeking. Surely this is adaptive. Surely it is a clear indication that music's alleged "purely

emotive" nature and its status as "the language of the emotions" is overblown hyperbole, soon to be replaced by the acknowledgement that it is merely "a" language of the emotions, operating by the same general kinds of imagery and syntax as literature and the theater.

Finally, it is rather surprising to hear a psychologist say that religion and philosophy are "biologically functionless activities." Isn't it obvious that we *need* religion and/or philosophy? Even if the answers they provide are *wrong*, we need *some* kind of plausible answers to the "holistic," orientational questions about life. *That* is an unavoidable consequence of the fact that humans require not just perception but concepts for successful living. Because we see beyond the here and now, we need guidelines, a mental framework, a model to steer us – for better or worse – through our day to day decisions and actions. People without such a view of the world are bewildered, disoriented – in a very important way, *maladapted*. Philosophy is not a luxury, but a necessity – even in the form of its protean ancestor, religion. Philosophy is a quintessentially human adaptation – not for solving specific life problems, but for solving the "holistic" problem of determining what kind of life to live.

Yet, presumably since certain fundamental problems have resisted solution for 2500 years, Pinker suspects that philosophy and religion are at least partly "the application of mental tools to problems they were not designed to solve" (p. 525) Perhaps so, but why couldn't they be "exapted" to solving those problems anyway? Pinker suggests that philosophical problems like the nature of subjective experience, self, free will, meaning, knowledge, and morality are not "sufficiently similar to the mundane survival challenges of our ancestors" (p. 525), and that is why people have pondered them for millennia "but have made no progress in solving them." Our minds are well suited to perceiving objects and motion and to discovering causal laws in *parts* of the universe, but their very excellence at meeting those challenges may compromise them for dealing with "peculiarly holistic" kinds of problems like the nature of sentience and will.

If our consciousness were inherently limited in this way, Pinker would be right: we should rejoice at all that our minds make possible and let go of perennial, insoluble conundrums. But surrender is not warranted. First of all, there *has* been progress. The vast increase in research into brain function and conscious processes in the past few decades has led to numerous discoveries and insights. Researchers and philosophers such as Roger Sperry, Edward Pols, Antonio Damasio, Jerome Kagan, Fred Dretske, Henry B. Veatch, and Panayot Butchvarov increasingly point the way to a non-dualistic, non-reductionist, naturalistic understanding of the

self and the will. Pinker's own impressive work is a prime exhibit in support of this more optimistic scenario.

Secondly, consider how long and how severely religion's supernaturalist premises and theocratic controls over society have impeded scientific discovery. Two and a half millennia is not nearly as long a time as it may seem. (What could we measure it against, anyway?) It may just be that the problems of self and will require a lot more hard work, and that science and philosophy must continue to pool their efforts in order to solve them. Such cooperation has gotten us a long way already, and there is no good reason not to keep traveling confidently down that road.

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## Bibliographic Essay: A Renaissance in Rand Scholarship<sup>1</sup>

Chris Matthew Sciabarra

The title of this article is not entirely accurate; a “renaissance” is a rebirth. Given the sustained sales of Rand’s books, one might conclude that interest in her work has never died. Still, in this last decade of the twentieth century, Ayn Rand seems to be everywhere: in magazines, from the *New Yorker* to *U. S. News and World Report*; in film and theater, from an Oscar-nominated documentary feature (“Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life”) to a Showtime cable movie and a British stage dramatization of Barbara Branden’s biography, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*; and on television, from “The Simpsons” and “South Park” to “Saturday Night Live.”

This is not a mere pop cultural revival. My *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical* (1995b) is one of fifteen book titles dealing with Rand that have been published since 1995, along with countless articles and other references to her work. Among these titles are Rand’s *Marginalia*, *Letters*, and *Journals*, as well as several useful anniversary editions of her fiction. Scholars are witnessing too, an important growth in critical and interpretive studies of the Randian canon.

Advancing scholarship on Rand has proceeded apace with the publication of materials that continue to provide clues into the development of her thought. The Rand Estate has played a pivotal role in this endeavor. While some of Rand’s papers are on reserve at the Library of Congress, the bulk remain housed in the Ayn Rand Institute’s burgeoning archives. Until such time as bona fide scholars can gain archival access, they are being fed a diet of edited collections. Her personal diaries and interviews are due to be excerpted in an “authorized” biography. And the Estate plans to publish her 1969 lectures on non-fiction-writing (to be edited by Robert Mayhew), her 1958 lectures on fiction-writing (to be edited by Tore Boeckman), and her old film scripts. Sadly, eight to ten

silent screen scenarios from the 1920's have been lost; these will be published if they are ever rediscovered.

Not all of the material that has been issued thus far is of deep scholarly interest. *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life*, written by Michael Paxton (1998), is the companion book for the documentary feature. In addition to the film's screenplay and many of its dazzling vintage photographs, the book includes an intensely personal introduction by Paxton, who tells us of his own discovery of Rand's work, and its place in his life. And in a Foreword, Peikoff touches upon Rand's love of the cinema, and its impact on her. From the time of her youth, film was a crucial source of Rand's development as an artist; in my view, it is an aspect of her aesthetic context that requires greater scholarly investigation.

As I suggested in my review of the movie (1998a), however, the material would have benefitted from some alternative voices. The interviewed principals — all of them handpicked by the Estate — shed little light on such things as the Rand-Branden affair, which pulverized the nascent Objectivist movement in 1968.<sup>2</sup> The limitations of Paxton's book notwithstanding, it is a beautifully packaged historical artifact of sorts, and highly recommended for collectors.

*Ayn Rand's Marginalia* (1995b), edited by Robert Mayhew, offers a glimpse into Rand's thoughts on works written by various authors, from Windelband to Goldwater. In her comments on a John Herman Randall book, there are some interesting, though undeveloped, meditations on Aristotle's philosophy (9-36). And while Rand celebrated Ludwig von Mises's contributions to economics, she blasts his praxeological doctrine (105-41). In many cases, however, Rand's observations, disconnected from full-fledged analyses, seem a bit uncharitable. She calls C. S. Lewis a "cheap, awful, miserable, touchy, social-metaphysical mediocrity" and an "abysmal scum" (90-4). She dismisses F. A. Hayek as "real poison," a "fool," an "ass," and a "damn collectivist" for his compromises with interventionism (145-60). We are left wishing for more critical engagement with these thinkers. But fully developed essays are not to be expected in the margins of one's books; hence, the featured extracts have limited scholarly value.

In addition to the *Letters of Ayn Rand* (1995d),<sup>3</sup> the most important collection yet authorized by the Estate is *Journals of Ayn Rand* (1997). When Rand was creating her ideal man, John Galt, she suggested that he was "as 'Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, who was born ready and whole out of Jupiter's brain'" (637). The *Journals* should forever shatter the

sycophant's similar image of Rand as a modern Minerva. Through this book, we become part of her captivating intellectual adventure, witnessing her struggle to understand many theoretical issues and their practical implications.

Editor David Harriman presents us with material dating from 1927 to 1966. The only unpublished notes are some "cryptic" pieces, says Harriman, and isolated commentary on events such as Truman's firing of MacArthur (xvi). Harriman claims to have made minimal editorial changes; he shows competence in pointing the reader to Rand's mature formulations when her earlier musings seem unclear or paradoxical. He also provides important supplementary material from Barbara Branden's 1961 interviews with Rand — though Branden's name is nowhere to be found. In fact, there is an overall problem throughout this book with regard to the identification of various individuals; Rand occasionally uses peoples' initials or simply their first names, and the editor gives us no indication of their identity. Perhaps some could not be identified, or the Estate has chosen not to identify them. But a name glossary would have augmented the project's historical interest and accuracy.

In some instances, however, it is not simply a name that is missing; it is an intellectual link between Rand and other thinkers. Consider these two versions of the same passage from 20 January 1947. The first version appears in *The Objectivist Forum*:

*An important point to stress: blast the fool idea that material production is some sort of low activity, the result of some base "materialistic" impulse — as opposed to the "spiritual realm" (whatever they think *that* is) which consists of some sort of vague, passive contemplation of something or other (the Albert Jay Nock idea). (Rand 1984, 1) [*italics* in text; underlined emphasis mine]*

The second version appears in the *Journals*:

*An important point to stress: blast the fool idea that material production is some sort of low activity, the result of a base "materialistic" impulse —as opposed to the "spiritual realm" (whatever they think *that* is), which consists of some sort of vague, passive contemplation of something or other. (Rand 1997, 549) [*italics* in text; underlined emphasis mine]*

Aside from the inexplicable change of one word (from “some” to “a”), the *Journals* version has dropped the reference to Albert Jay Nock, the Old Right individualist. Harriman claims that, at times, for stylistic and grammatical reasons, he does “eliminate words without affecting the meaning.” He calls this a “restrained approach” to editing, in which omitted phrases are indicated “by ellipsis points in square brackets” (xvii). In this example, there are no bracketed ellipsis points in the *Journals* that might suggest a missing reference. Nock is simply no longer a part of the historical record. To have mentioned Nock’s name, with critical implications, Rand must have wrestled with his ideas on the subject. One must wonder about editorial changes that are not made explicit. And the fact that there are other instances of such editing casts doubt on the full authenticity of the project, even if it does not impugn the book’s overall value to critically-minded scholars.<sup>4</sup>

Rand’s early journals foreshadow the things to come. The volume opens with her film scenario, *The Skyscraper*, based on a story by Dudley Murphy. She changed the architect-hero’s name from Francis Gonda to Howard Kane. (Apparently, she remembered the surname “Gonda”; Kay Gonda became the protagonist of Rand’s unpublished play, *Ideal*.) *The Skyscraper*’s importance is that it focuses on the triumph “over obstacles” (9), an omnipresent theme in Rand’s mature work. Several scenes and techniques anticipate *The Fountainhead*, including the use of the trial as a dramatic device — a staple in nearly all of the author’s fiction. And in the scenario that follows, *The Siege*, Rand’s protagonist is “tied to a torture machine” — shades of *Atlas Shrugged*.

The single most striking aspect of the early *Journals* is Rand’s flirtation with Nietzsche. The extent of Nietzsche’s impact on Rand is one of the most contentiously debated issues among scholars. A comparative analysis of the 1936 and 1959 editions of *We the Living* shows some editing of the more Nietzschean passages. Such changes are also on display in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Anthem* (1995a), which is, by far, the most useful of the special volumes issued by the Estate. It provides an appendix that shows us Rand’s line-changes, sometimes illegibly, on the original 1938 English edition. The first American edition, published in 1946, has some key differences with this earlier version. Though much bitterness toward the collective remains, Rand omits some of the angrier formulations. It is unfortunate that the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *We the Living* (1995c) did not have a corresponding facsimile of the highly inaccessible 1936 version.



We can only hope that the Estate will commit itself to publishing the unedited original at some future date for the benefit of scholars.

The *Journals* helps us to consider more formally whether or not Rand underwent a veritable “Nietzschean phase,” as the late Ronald Merrill (1991) suggested. In a final book review before his untimely death, Merrill (1997) argues that the *Journals* bear out his contention of a “strong Nietzschean element in Rand’s early work.” David Kelley (1998) claims, however, that the book “does not shed further light” on this issue, since Rand never seems to accept any “aristocratic political philosophy, where some men have the right forcibly to command others” (8). For Kelley, the early Rand is at her most Nietzschean when she celebrates “energy, will” and the “rage to live” (9). Yet, there are several passages that suggest precisely an elitist command to obey. At one point, in *The Skyscraper*, those workers who refuse to labor on a sabotaged, unsafe building site are ordered to do so by the protagonist at the point of a gun (Rand 1997, 12).

In his Foreword, Peikoff focuses important attention on Rand’s “organic development” as a writer (vii). He recognizes that the early notes reveal a Nietzschean-subjectivist hue, insofar as Rand denounces the masses and calls for their domination by “innately great” heroes. For Peikoff, all of these ideological “droplets . . . evaporate without residue . . .” But even in *The Fountainhead*, Nietzsche’s voice can be heard, loudly at times, on every subject from morality to laughter (187).<sup>5</sup> Rand once toyed with the idea of opening every section of this novel with passages from Nietzsche’s work (219). A close reading of the *Journals* shows that Rand internalized Nietzsche in such a way that one might detect his influence in aspects of all her published fiction.

In 1928, Rand began work on *The Little Street*, easily the most Nietzschean of her early writings. She rails against a world that consumes its heroes. Her malevolent, pessimistic view of society is angry and cynical. The protagonist, Danny Renahan, kills a villainous religious figure modeled on a real-life Ku Klux Klan pastor (33).<sup>6</sup> Renahan is also drawn from real-life; his character is based on 19-year old social outcast William Edward Hickman, who was the defendant in a highly publicized trial of the day. Hickman was subsequently executed for the kidnaping and murder of a little girl.

Looking through a Nietzschean lens, one might say that, from her earliest discussions, Rand was engaged in a vast deconstruction of conventional morality, probing its inner essence, making transparent the appearance of its “‘high’ words [as] a monstrous lie” (24). As Cox (1989)

argues, the essence of textual deconstruction is the attempt "to reveal conflicting or incommensurable elements in the language that the text requires for its existence, to reveal the ways in which the terms and concepts that create its intellectual structure simultaneously undermine that structure" (56). In Rand's project, the revelation of hypocrisy at the foundation of traditional ethics was intended to usurp the very structure of these ethics, laying the groundwork for a moral revolution of her own making. This is a point emphasized by Douglas Den Uyl (1999) in his book, *The Fountainhead: An American Novel*. Nietzsche, a pioneering "deconstructionist," sought to undermine religious and altruist values by disclosing the context within which they were embedded. He inverted their meaning by penetrating into their core. So too, Den Uyl argues, Rand alters the "positive connotations associated with such terms as 'altruism,' 'selflessness,' and 'equality.'" He recognizes that Rand appropriated terms, like "selfishness," and related these to an entirely different context so as to redefine them, and by so doing, create neologisms.<sup>7</sup> Rand (1997) absorbed Nietzsche's transvaluation of values; she highlighted "the irrational paradox of altruism . . . the process by which qualities (virtues) desirable in fact become undesirable in [conventional] morality" (283). Like Nietzsche, she viewed "altruism as a weapon of exploitation" (246). She retained even the form of his distinction between "master" and "slave" morality.<sup>8</sup> In *Atlas Shrugged*, she drew an analogous distinction between the Morality of Life and the Morality of Death. The former requires and perpetuates rationality, independence, honesty, purpose, happiness, and self-esteem. The latter requires and perpetuates irrationality, dependence, aimlessness, pain, humility, and the initiation of force. The Death principle places moral standards "outside of man and of reality," and engenders fatal oppositions between "mind and body, the moral and the practical, theory and practice, reason and emotions, security and freedom, yourself and others, selfishness and charity, private interests and public interests, . . . human rights and property rights" (651; 653). Just as the values of Nietzsche's slave morality become the vices of his master morality, so too, for Rand, in the Morality of Death, "all [man's] virtues are called vices, all his vices are called virtues . . ." (651).

Despite these similarities, Rand had deep differences with Nietzsche. My own research suggests that, in the cultural milieu of Silver Age Russia, the young Rand was exposed to a highly subjectivist-emotionalist version of Nietzschean philosophy. Among her favorite poets, she cites Aleksandr Blok, a Nietzschean Russian Symbolist. For

Rand, Blok had a “ghastly” sense of life, even though his poetry was “magnificent” (Sciabarra 1995b, 390 n.19). Her discomfort with both Nietzsche’s and Blok’s work was an extension of her philosophic realism. That stance led her to imbue Nietzschean paeans to the Superman with an emphasis on the superiority of reason. In 1945, for example, she wondered if “we are really in the process of evolving from apes to Supermen — and the rational faculty is the dominant characteristic of the better species, the Superman” (1997, 285).<sup>9</sup>

Rand’s departure from Nietzsche is also rooted in the integrated systemic and dynamic — what I have called “dialectical” — structure of her thought. Though Nietzsche was a superlative dialectical commentator, his anti-dualism was, in many ways, a reaction against systems *per se*. It inspired his deconstructionist successors toward nihilism. In Rand, however, the revolt against dualism is a formal expression of profoundly dialectical insights into the *integrated* nature of being and knowing.

Prompted by *Russian Radical*, scholars continue to debate Rand’s status as an organic, dialectical thinker.<sup>10</sup> The *Journals* provides us with compelling evidence for the dialectical motif in Rand’s work. This motif appears in Rand’s earliest notes, some of them written in her native Russian. She outlines the nature of the “epic,” among whose characteristics are the necessity for “a large theme, a grand theme — and an enormous conflict (external or internal).” The epic “exhausts and integrates everything related to the theme; it represents the essence, in the best possible form” (15). This deeply Aristotelian view of the literary work as an organic whole would influence all of Rand’s Romantic fiction. Cox (1993) reminds us that her “romantic individualism . . . is like DNA” in the body of her novels — “it’s present in every cell, and it controls every cell” (19). Indeed, her affinity for organic modes may have led her to appreciate, on a profound level, Frank Lloyd Wright’s “‘organic’ architecture,” wherein each aspect “express[es] the meaning of the whole” (1997, 119; 122).

As early as 1928, Rand sought to “paint a real picture of the whole.” “*Show them the whole,*” she demands of herself (23). She denounces people who function as animals, those who

cannot connect together the things [they] observe . . . Man realizes and connects much more than an animal, but who can declare that his ability to connect things is perfect? The future, higher type of man will have to perfect just this ability

[to achieve] the clear vision. A clear mind sees things *and* the connections between them. (24)

Two themes come together here: Rand's dialectical impulse toward a science of interconnections, and the influence of Nietzsche. Rand's goal was "to put it all together, to show the whole, to bring things a little closer to each other, allowing people to see the close relation between" conventional morals of sympathy and humility "and the horror of their lives" (1997, 36). Sensing the affinity, she adds: "I know what Nietzsche and I think on this subject" (41). Like the Silver Age writers of her youth, Rand embraces a quasi-Nietzschean outlook, expressed even by Trotsky ([1924] 1960), who yearned for a "higher social biologic type" (255), a person of integrated reason and emotion. Silver Age thinkers wedded this ideal Superbeing to the Russian utopian vision of *sobornost'*, in which individuals unite socially on the basis of their common values and harmonious interests. One might say, as Murray Franck (1997) suggests, that Rand aims for an analogous conflict-free utopia, despite all the problems it entails.<sup>11</sup>

Still, the organic or dialectical model remains as important to Rand's social theory as it is to her literary method. In *Russian Radical*, I organized Rand's critique of statist power relations on three interrelated levels of generality. Rand seeks to understand these relations in terms of their Personal, Cultural, and Structural dynamics. Level 1, the Personal, encompasses ethical and psycho-epistemological aspects. Level 2, the Cultural, encompasses aesthetic, linguistic, pedagogical, and ideological aspects. Level 3, the Structural, encompasses economics and politics. In the *Journals*, in her notes for *We the Living*, we encounter the first manifestations of this model. Rand traces the interconnections within a wider totality, quite self-consciously, on three analytical levels: the realm of "morality," the "political and cultural," and the "economical." This enables her to grasp the dynamics of collectivism in terms of its moral, mental, and economic conditions (56-7). Such explicit triadic organization is a profound corroboration of the proposed model; it is striking to see its appearance so early in Rand's thought.

The multi-levelled approach shows up again in her notes on *The Fountainhead*, where even architectural styles are examined "sociologically" as well as "artistically" (187-8), and again, in her notes on *Atlas Shrugged*, where moral codes are grasped in terms of their "Personal" and "Social" implications (653). The only difference between the earlier and later notes

is this: Rand uses the word “organic” explicitly in her earlier journals. I suggest that by the time she has matured intellectually, the organic conception is so automatized that it is a virtual given in all of her inquiries.<sup>12</sup> Throughout, Rand rejects one-dimensional perspectives, and their “crude, blanket conclusions and unanalyzed, unwarranted generalizations” as the basis for “all the errors in sociological thinking . . .” (324).

Rand’s dialectical savvy had implications for her writing techniques as well. A dialectical analysis has several components.<sup>13</sup> On the basis of one’s *ontological* and *epistemic* premises, one proceeds to the moment of *inquiry*, in which one explores the intricate complexity of the real world from different vantage points. The next stage is the moment of *intellectual reconstruction*, in which one engages in self-clarification, reconstructing the nature of the totality at one’s disposal and the interconnections among its parts. It is only then that one can create a coherent *exposition*, in which one’s investigations are presented to others, taking into account their distinctive contexts. As Rand suggests: “It may be said that the first purpose of a philosophical book is the clarification or statement of your new knowledge to and for yourself; and then, as a secondary step, the offering of your knowledge to others” (480).

In composing an unpublished manuscript, “The Moral Basis of Individualism,” Rand recognizes the importance of intellectual reconstruction. She writes in three stages: First, she presents a tentative outline. Second, she poses questions and critiques her original draft. Finally, she rewrites the segments based on her deeper understanding (243). She explains:

The art of writing is the art of doing what you think you’re doing. This is not as simple as it sounds. It implies a very difficult undertaking: the necessity to think. And it implies the requirement to think out three separate, very hard problems: What is it you want to say? How are you going to say it? Have you really said it? It’s a coldly intellectual process. (269)

Rand recognizes that a person must “rationally grasp every step in the process if he is to grasp the whole.” If one does not perform the process methodically, one will not grasp the whole — “there is no whole” (306), she asserts, for without thought, there is no structured totality. Her

“Philosophical Notes on the Creative Process,” composed in May 1946, are significant for their depiction of such “completed cycle[s],” of the reciprocal relations between learning and creativity, theoretical and applied science. Rand’s status as both philosopher and novelist enabled her to concretize formulations of principle in the events and characters of her fictional works, moving through abstraction from the concretes of the real world to the thought-concretes of her created world. “The completed cycle,” Rand argues, always “leads back to man” (480). And like an “electric circuit,” this dialectical movement

does not function in the separate parts; it must be unbroken or there is no current; the parts, in this case, are of no use whatever, of no relevance to the matter of having an electric current. This is the basic pattern and essence of the process of thinking. (481)

These expressions of Rand’s underlying metatheoretical premises are not the only interesting aspects of her *Journals*. In fact, about 60% of the *Journals* is devoted to Rand’s notes on *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. Among the book’s other sections, there are ideas for several possible short stories, a novel, “To Lorne Dieterling,” and a treatise on *Objectivism*. Raw material from Rand’s various lectures and articles, including out-takes from *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, are also here, as are her musings on a 1961 New School lecture series she attended on “Methods in Philosophy and the Social Sciences,” featuring such speakers as Noam Chomsky and Ernest Nagel.

Rand’s notes for a screenplay on the atomic bomb, “Top Secret,” to be produced by Hal Wallis, constitute an entire chapter. She understood why the bomb was the central “focus of everybody’s sociological thinking” (317), and grasped the dangerous implications of nuclear proliferation. Though she did not deny the role of the government in bankrolling research and development, she argued that only in a capitalist country could the invention of such a weapon have been possible, since it leaves its scientists free from the political interference of the state. The totalitarian Nazis, their “racial prejudice . . . armed with State power,” destroyed any possibility for scientific achievement, engendering an exodus of scientists to the free world.<sup>14</sup> Rand’s interviews with many of the principals of the Manhattan Project, including J. Robert Oppenheimer and General Groves,

fueled her movie scenario, a dramatic depiction of the connections between abstract science and applied technology.

In a chapter devoted to "Communism and HUAC," Rand's anti-Soviet stance is given full expression. Included here is Rand's open letter, "To All Innocent Fifth Columnists," which derides those conservative intellectuals who, by the inconsistency of their defense of freedom, were acting unwittingly as traitors to the individualist cause. Also featured are Rand's 1947 HUAC testimony and reflections, and her *Screen Guide for Americans*. Rand cautioned film makers not to smear the American political system (365), if they sought to preserve liberty. Ironically, however, she was among that system's most trenchant critics. In *Atlas Shrugged*, she focused on how politicians had corrupted the very institutions she admired. "For the politicians," Rand says,

do not name their exact political positions. Keep it vague and general — as it deserves. They are nonentities and their titles or jobs do not matter — all that matters, the essence of it, is that they are useless, faceless mediocrities, parasites and exploiters — as exemplifying the kind of government they represent. Therefore, avoid the honorable connotations attached to such a title as "President of the United States" by another era and a different principle of government. (453-4)

One of the more frustrating aspects of Rand's *Journals* is the editor's occasional flashes of interpretation. While points of information are a welcome addition to the text, Harriman's interpretive spins are sometimes questionable. Early in the *Journals*, for instance, Rand's critique of "Women's clubs" (35) and of "*Family-life*" as "the glorification of mediocrity" (25), leads Harriman to conclude that Rand had rejected both liberal "feminism" and conservative "family values" from the outset (36). But such a verdict is misleading at best; an entire volume has now been devoted to an exploration of the complex relationship between Rand and feminism.

*Feminist Interpretations of Ayn Rand* (1999), co-edited by Mimi Reisel Gladstein and this author, part of the Penn State Press series, "Rereading the Canon," features essays from an international group of writers in psychology, cultural anthropology, politics, aesthetics, literature, and linguistics. Each of the more than twenty volumes in the series is devoted to feminist interpretations of the works of a key Western thinker.

That Rand appears on the same shelf as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, etc., is further proof of the entrance of her thought into the pantheon of serious scholarly study. Given my status as the project's co-editor, however, I leave assessment of this work to others.

The feminist motif is not exclusive to the Gladstein-Sciabarra volume. Douglas Den Uyl's book, *The Fountainhead: An American Novel*, part of Twayne's Masterwork Series, also explores significant feminist themes in Rand's work. A similar Masterwork volume is being developed by Gladstein on *Atlas Shrugged*.<sup>15</sup> Like Cox (1993) before him, Den Uyl sees "*The Fountainhead* [as] the quintessential presentation of American individualism, American optimism, and the promise that is America."<sup>16</sup>

Among the more interesting and provocative aspects of Den Uyl's book is its defense of Dominique as the central character of the novel. Merrill (1991, 46) anticipated this perspective, but Den Uyl develops it in unusual ways. He observes that Dominique is the only character for whom a special section of the book is lacking; she pervades all the sections, developing toward the realization that the good is both possible and necessary to human life. Unlike Roark, who is almost fully formed from the beginning, Dominique is an intuitive character who "pieces the parts together and becomes at one with herself; her tensions and divisions disappear." For Den Uyl, the reader is led to a comparable sense of wholeness and completion in the experience of Dominique's transformation. If Den Uyl is correct, then Rand's literary legacy can be appreciated as a contribution to Women's fiction. With Gladstein (1984) arguing that Dagny Taggart is the main character of *Atlas Shrugged*, and with Kira's centrality in *We the Living*, Rand's quest for the ideal man is equally a quest for the ideal woman.

Unfortunately, while Den Uyl discusses the relationships of the different characters in the novel, the ties between Roark and Wynand are not examined extensively. Rand (1995d) tells us that their love is "greater . . . than any other emotion in the book" (137); Wynand, she says, is "in love with Roark" (171), in the "romantic," and therefore, "highest sense" (137) — a qualification that she ordinarily reserves for lovers. She denies any "sexual perversion" between the characters, though she believes Wynand's love verges on the masochistic. He enjoys "the torture of loving a man whom in many other ways he hates . . ." (171). Still, Rand (1997) posits that Roark, Wynand, and Dominique are participants to a romantic "triangle — in which the husband and wife are both in love with the same man" (233).



That this relationship borders on ambiguity, a kind of non-erotic homosociality, was first suggested by Baker (1987), but it is examined in greater detail by several authors in *Feminist Interpretations of Ayn Rand*. Use of the *Journals* would have benefitted Den Uyl's exposition in this regard, though I suspect that the volume had not been published in time for his consideration. Issues of gender and sexuality pervade Rand's notes on *The Fountainhead*, shedding some light on her predilections for the "rape" of strong women by even stronger men. And given the "whip" as a prolific symbol in Rand's quasi-sadomasochistic, fictional representations of dominance and submission, the journals are brimming with interpretive potential.

Den Uyl's book does pinpoint a genuinely Socratic element in Rand's work, insofar as she views philosophy as "a moral enterprise, . . . an intellectual activity in the service of human life . . ." His eudaimonistic conception, so well defined in his works with Douglas Rasmussen, focuses on the organic unity in Rand's ethics, such that integrity, independence, and the pursuit of excellence are integrally related. Here, as in his other works, Den Uyl highlights the "integral triadic connection," so important to Rand's project, "between activity, life, and independence," in opposition to the triad of "passivity, death, and subservience."

Den Uyl emphasizes too, the "melding of . . . art and philosophy" in Rand's thought, for "the aesthetic cannot be separated or understood apart from the philosophical." The aesthetic ideal is simultaneously, a moral ideal, "an object of personal transformation." This is crucially important. Den Uyl grasps the revolutionary intent of Rand's model of endogenous causal agency, where "the ideal cannot remain 'outside' of the reader as something to gaze upon. It only becomes 'ideal' when the individual incorporates it as part of one's own inner truth and motivation." In rereading Rand's work, it becomes more apparent that her "novels are but a literary expression of philosophy and art conjoined in human action." As Den Uyl puts it: "The individual is 'artistic' because what one becomes requires creative shaping. The individual is 'philosophical' because the success of creativity requires that one understand what to become."

Particularly impressive is Den Uyl's concentration on *The Romantic Manifesto* (1975), a nearly forgotten book in the Randian canon.<sup>17</sup> Those who would place aesthetics as an afterthought to Rand's corpus commit an inexcusable error. Indeed, as I have argued in *Russian Radical*, the aesthetic theory belongs at the very heart of Rand's philosophic system, a virtual bridge between her metaphysical-epistemological assumptions and

her ethical-political theories. Given this centrality, a book that critically engages Rand's aesthetics is long overdue. On these grounds alone, *What Art Is: The Esthetic Theory of Ayn Rand* (1999), by Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi, the first published book-length study of the aesthetics, should make an invaluable contribution to Rand scholarship. Not even in the milestone Den Uyl and Rasmussen (1984) anthology is there a single essay examining this sadly neglected aspect of Rand's thought.

The Torres-Kamhi book is based on their co-authored series of articles that first appeared in their journal, *Aristos*. The finished manuscript, however, will far outdistance the earlier series in both theoretical comprehensiveness and historical scope. It explores Rand's understanding of the cognitive function of art and relates this theory to others in the history of aesthetics. It offers scientific corroboration of Rand's insights drawn from archeology, anthropology, ethnomusicology, cognitive and clinical psychology, and neurology. The book has breathtaking range, uniting aesthetic theory, art history, arts education, law, politics, and economics.

*What Art Is* inverts a famous question posed by Leo Tolstoy ([1899] 1913), who asked: *What is Art?* That Rand offers an objective answer to a seemingly simple question is an achievement. But the Torres-Kamhi book is no mere summary of the Randian perspective. The authors engage Rand; they are not afraid to explain their differences from her, and they often provide trenchant criticisms of some of her more ambiguous formulations. Moreover, they extend and apply the Randian theory in a broad-based critique of modernist and post-modernist "art" forms.

Some of their proposals are bound to be controversial. They critique the notion that photography and architecture are forms of art. While Rand (1975) would agree that photography is not art (74), she was less clear about architecture, sensing that it served a "utilitarian purpose," and that it did "not re-create reality" — an essential aspect of her definition of art, which "*is a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value judgments*" (19).<sup>18</sup> But even a casual perusal of her *Journals* shows that Rand (1997) characterized architecture as "a creative art" (147) — indeed, "the most important of the arts" (189). That Torres and Kamhi disagree with Rand makes their volume a contribution to both interpretive and *critical* Rand studies.

Critical studies of Rand's work are fundamentally important to the advancement of scholarship. Two such studies are John W. Robbins's *Without a Prayer: Ayn Rand and the Close of Her System* (1997) and Peter

Erickson's *The Stance of Atlas: An Examination of the Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (1997). While neither study touches on Rand's aesthetics, each offers something of value.

The Robbins book is notorious for its macabre cover — a photo of the gravestone of Ayn Rand and Frank O'Connor, perhaps symbolic of Robbins's own wishes to put the final nail in the coffin of Objectivism. But this — his second book on the subject since 1974 — is just one more indication of Rand's staying power. The book's title was anticipated by Böhm-Bawerk's similarly titled, *Karl Marx and the Close of His System*. The parallel here is striking in two ways: Robbins attacks the "common [materialist] premises" that he believes Rand and Marx share. He also views Objectivism and Communism as systems that have reached a philosophic "close" or dead-end. Steeped in Calvinist theology, a follower of Gordon H. Clark (some of whose essays appear in the book's appendices), Robbins (1997) seeks to demonstrate Rand's errors, and to provide an alternative to her system "in the name of Jesus Christ" (24).

Interestingly, as the economist Bruce Caldwell (1997) makes clear, the original German translation of Böhm-Bawerk's work was: *Karl Marx: The Completion of the Marxian System* (3). Böhm-Bawerk's subtitle was merely a recognition that, with the publication of the final volume of *Capital*, Marx's theory had reached its culmination. In a sense, however, Marx's system would first undergo a vast theoretical development extending well into the twentieth-century, as scholars explored its relevance — or irrelevance — in the comprehension of contemporary events.

In a similar fashion, Rand's works constitute a living system of thought. As each succeeding generation relates her pronouncements to its own context, Objectivism grows like an open-ended, hermeneutic spiral, producing further implications that Rand, her followers, critics, and interpreters could not have possibly foreseen. Robbins seems aware of this possibility. While he focuses primarily on what Rand wrote, he also examines, in various appendices, key works from Peikoff and Kelley. He regrets that Rand's work may eventually provide her with "academic respectability, if not . . . dominance," given its inevitable evolution, but he is convinced that her system is full of logical holes (5).<sup>19</sup>

Robbins's arguments have some of their own logical problems, which have been examined variously by Gordon (1997) and Register (1997). Though I did not find his critique of Rand persuasive, I was intrigued by his various interpretations. He approaches Objectivism as if it were a faith, and finds support for this view in Rand's *Letters*. He also sees in the

Objectivist movement all the trappings of religiosity; it is a “cult” with a charismatic leader, who created mythic characters and epic fiction as a textual substitute of Biblical proportions.

Robbins is correct that in her *Letters* — and now, even in her *Journals* — Rand frequently appeals to egoism as a new “faith.” Yet, her concept is non-mystical. Faith, in this context, says Rand (1997), has “a philosophical, not a religious meaning.” It serves “as a set of certain principles, as a goal, aim or inspiration, as a life-system” (80). Robbins does have a point, however, in his recognition of quasi-religious symbolism in Rand’s fiction. Unlike Merrill (1991), who claimed that Rand inadvertently used Jewish symbolism in her work, Robbins traces some interesting analogies between Rand’s symbols and those of Christianity. In *Atlas Shrugged*, for example, John Galt is presented as a Christ-like savior, tracing the Sign of the Dollar over the desolate earth on its day of deliverance. Indeed, one can find such provocative parallels even in the journal notes for *Atlas Shrugged* where Rand (1997) compares the tunnels of the Taggart Transcontinental to “the catacombs of the early Christians in Rome. . . . And the sign of the dollar is like the sign of the cross — the secret symbol of the heroes and martyrs” (560). However, such religious metaphors are used for entirely secular and humanistic purposes. Rand sees the “rational mind” as the “god-like aspect of man”; it is through this faculty that man “*create[s] himself*” [emphasis added] (564). Rand ([1943] 1993) sought to sever the concepts of “exaltation,” “reverence,” and the “sacred” from what she saw as religion’s requirements of “self-abasement.” As she puts it:

Religion’s monopoly in the field of ethics has made it extremely difficult to communicate the emotional meaning and connotations of a rational view of life. Just as religion has preempted the field of ethics, turning morality *against* man, so it has usurped the highest moral concepts of our language, placing them outside this earth and beyond man’s reach. (ix)

Though she became less militantly atheistic in her later years, Rand (1997) viewed religion as “the great poison of mankind,” a destroyer of human souls, “organically hateful,” and “contrary to [human] nature” (25). From the time of her earliest reflections, she regarded

Religion [as] . . . the first enemy of the ability to think. . . .  
*Faith is the worst curse of mankind*; it is the exact antithesis and  
 enemy of *thought*. . . . I want to be known as the greatest  
 champion of reason and the greatest enemy of religion. (1997,  
 68)

This opposition to religion incites Robbins (1997) to a fascinating analysis of the provocative convergence between Rand and those on the left, such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Feuerbach, and other atheist-materialist thinkers. Like Rand, these thinkers, says Robbins, are fully committed to the validity of the senses, the empirical basis of knowledge, and Promethean naturalism. Rand may have “physically escaped from the Communists in 1924,” he asserts. “She never escaped from the Communists intellectually” (37).

In his chapter on “Objectivist Theology,” the parallels are more pronounced. However, contrary to Robbins’s claims (140), Rand was not a materialist; she did not view the mind as an epiphenomenon of matter. Moreover, she did not endorse an ethics based on physical-survivalism. She extended the eudaimonistic Aristotelian tradition —as Den Uyl and Rasmussen (1984) have demonstrated persuasively. And though Robbins is correct to treat Rand as a critic of “non-dialectical vulgar materialism,” he is incorrect to view her in “dialectical materialist” terms.

In *The Stance of Atlas*, Erickson (1997) comes close to committing the same error. But his exposition is much clearer, and more entertaining. Erickson has fun with his audience; he approaches Rand’s philosophy by constructing an illuminating dialogue among four characters: Dr. Standford, Miss Doxa, Penelope, and, the voice of the author, Philosophus, who is described as “polite,” and “*a distinguished looking gentleman of indeterminate age*” (24-5). The dialogue form, popular since the time of Plato, is an instructive technique for dramatizing “the *conflict* of ideas” (xii).

In examining Objectivism, however, Erickson concentrates almost exclusively on Rand’s ideas alone. There is a subtle reference to the Peikoff-Kelley split, though Erickson does not mention Kelley by name (207). Given Erickson’s close attention to all things epistemological, it might have been valuable for him to examine formally Kelley’s work, especially his *Evidence of the Senses*. And though Erickson includes several citations from Peikoff’s book on Objectivism, there are no references to Nathaniel Branden. Given Branden’s enormous contributions to

Objectivism, especially while he was associated with Rand, this omission is regrettable.

The author draws many intriguing parallels between Rand's work and the work of others. He points to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century thinker, John Cook Wilson, as having anticipated Rand's idea that essence is an epistemological, rather than metaphysical concept (102). He draws analogies between Rand and Eugen Dühring, against whom Engels directed a famous critique (150), and between Rand and H. W. B. Joseph on the nature of identity and causality (152). He suggests that the work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French intellectual, Charles Renouvier was a precursor to Rand's theory of free will. In addition, he proposes an interesting correlation between Rand's view of concepts and her grasp of the gold standard and its characteristics (291-3). His discussions of time and space are also thought-provoking. And like Robbins, Erickson seeks to defend an alternative philosophy — in this case, "*Factivity*" (318). It is outside the scope of this essay to subject his or Robbins's system to any comprehensive examination.

Also like Robbins, Erickson is at his most interesting when he focuses on the parallels between Objectivism and dialectical materialism (or "diamat"). Erickson grapples with the various *Russian Radical* theses, and accepts Rand's revolt against dualism as an important characteristic of her overall project. He traces important similarities between Rand and Hegel in their repudiation of Kantian dichotomies (41-2), and points to a common "emphasis on the objectivity of external reality" in Objectivism and Marxist-Leninism (21). Echoing *Russian Radical*, Erickson remarks that while Rand "rejected much" from what she was taught by the Soviets, "she held on to some of it" (98). Indeed, her system shows "traces of what she rejected" (220).

However, through the character Penelope, he wonders if Objectivism succumbs to materialist monism, in the tradition of diamat (20). In a revealing chapter on "Ayn Rand and V. I. Lenin," Erickson recognizes that both thinkers shared a "partisan character," opposing "vulgar materialism," while retaining contextualism, an essentially "Hegelian" perspective.<sup>20</sup> Rand also retains a "Hegelian" concept of reality as an interconnected whole (216). But the attempt to place Objectivism closer to diamat is a bit too close for intellectual comfort. The basic problem with Erickson's discussion is that it does not carefully distinguish between dialectics and dialectical materialism. "Dialectical materialism" is monistic.<sup>21</sup> Its stress is not on the primacy of existence, but on the

primacy of *material* existence. While the diamat philosophers rejected vulgar materialism, they believed that in the last instance, all of reality, including consciousness, could be explained in material terms. Translated into a theory of history, this *undialectical* approach stressed macroscopic laws of development in which material conditions played the crucial role in determining social evolution.

Rand (1997) rejected “dialectic materialism” unconditionally. Entirely reductive, historicist, and self-contradictory, diamat saw human actors as pure “by-product[s] of physical environment, nutrition and ‘conditioning,’ operating without volition, automatically and unalterably” (301, 256). Rand’s opposition to such determinism is so dramatic that it is hard to fathom how anyone could possibly *identify* her with diamat. Originally, Rand had entitled one of the chapters in *Atlas Shrugged*, “The Materialists,” in a frontal assault on their reductive metaphysic (533). She once thought of dedicating *Atlas Shrugged* “to all those who think that material wealth is produced by material means” (489), because she upheld “material production [as] the result of the *highest spiritual quality* and activity” (550). Her anti-materialism is deeply embedded even in her literary credo, inspired by Dostoyevsky and other great Russian novelists, highlighting the interplay of principles embodied in characters whose physical features mirror their spiritual essence. In this context, there are times when Rand appears to treat matter as an epiphenomenon of mind. She argues that

the material proceeds from the spiritual, not vice versa. The material is the expression of the spiritual, the form of the idea, the flesh of the soul. The spiritual intention determines its material expression. Not the other way around. . . . [M]an may be the highest form, the crown and final goal of the universe, the form of spirit and matter in which the spirit predominates and triumphs. (447; 466)

Ultimately, however, Rand views mind and body as “indivisible *unity, integrity, continuity*.” Her genuinely dialectical approach rejects dualistic false alternatives *and* monistic reductionism. Human beings possess both spiritual and material “elements —but not to be split into them, since they can be considered separately only for purposes of discussion, not in actual fact. In actual fact, man is an indivisible, integrated entity —and his place is here, on earth” (466; 551).

Despite Rand's disavowal of all forms of materialism, Robbins and Erickson are correct to see many interesting affinities between Rand and her Marxist adversaries. David Brooks (1997), in his otherwise rude review of Rand's *Journals*, suspects that Rand's "virulent anti-Marxis[m]" inevitably led her to construct "her own epic class struggle" between producers and parasites, "turn[ing] Marx on his head." In her *Letters and Journals*, the convergence is often quite pronounced.

In 1944, in a letter to Gerald Loeb, Rand (1995d) may have eschewed the use of the word "labor," given its Marxist connotations, substituting the phrase "productive work." She argues "that one finds worthwhile men and women among *people who work*. . . . I do not mean LABOR. I do not mean people who have to earn their living. I do not mean proletarians" (154). And yet, like Marx ([1844] 1964) who saw the "free conscious activity" of labor as fully expressive of human species-identity (113), Rand (1997), in her *Journals*, celebrates all human "labor [as] a creative activity to some degree" (223). Just as Marx ([1857-58] 1973) saw in machines "the power of knowledge; objectified" (694, 706), so too, Rand (1997) endorses a thoroughly non-mechanistic view. Machines are not "*mechanical, automatic substitute[s] for thought*"; they are the repository of "intelligence and ingenuity" that cannot be "cut off from their creators." They are "extensions of man's intelligence," says Rand, related to a human purpose (485-6).

Another striking similarity between Marx and Rand centers on their use of a base-superstructure model of human action. Though Harriman, the editor, provides interpretive qualifications in other instances of the *Journals* (1997), this parallel with Marx eludes his attention. His basic point seems to be that "psycho-epistemology" is "a concept [Rand] originated" in her pioneering notes on "Psychological 'Epistemology'" and "Memory-Storing Epistemology" (667).<sup>22</sup> Like Marx, she views the "super-structure" as the realm of a person's conscious philosophy. The "sub-basement" is "the realm of psychology," that is, "the *method* by which a mind acquires and handles its content." Sub-basement premises remain implicit in adult consciousness, explains Rand, "in the method of thinking ('front seat' or 'back seat,' directed or contemplative)" (671). Ultimately, the "super-structure" determines the "sub-basement"; faulty methods of awareness can only be altered by changing a person's philosophic ideas (672).

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels talked of material conditions as the "base" upon which a whole "superstructure" of *social*



consciousness would arise. In her model of human action, Rand sees this “superstructure” in similar ideational terms, referring to the tacit or implicit dimensions of the subconscious as “sub-basement” premises. She inverts the Marxian model while using its terms to analyze the relationship between an *individual’s* philosophy and psychology. While Rand and Marx are not alone in positing these kinds of structural relationships, there is some historical significance in her use of language originating in the Marxian canon. Rand was surely exposed to its essential texts in her student days; that she uses its idioms only reinforces our appreciation of how she both absorbed and transcended aspects of her Russian past.

The differences between Objectivism and Marxism are among the issues discussed by Tibor Machan, in his book on *Ayn Rand* (1999). Machan’s monograph is in the tradition of the Oxford University Press *Past Masters* series. It draws partially from his previously published essays, and from his chapters in the Den Uyl and Rasmussen (1984) anthology. The book’s subtext is deeply personal. Machan reminds us that he first read Rand’s novels while serving in the U.S. Air Force:

Several of us stayed up into many weekend nights at Andrews Air Force Base, in the summer of 1962, examining the various philosophical themes covered in Galt’s famous speech. Although I kept reading Rand’s work afterwards, even attended a few lectures given by her one time student and disciple, Nathaniel Branden, I kept away from what came to be called “the inner circle.” Eventually, after an exchange of correspondence, I was declared *persona non grata* by Branden and thereafter had no fruitful contact with her and those surrounding her. I proceeded, however, to study her works and to begin to develop some of her ideas as I understood them, throughout my career in academic philosophy.

Machan argues that, like Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein, Popper, and Sartre, Rand begat a movement of “admirers and *epigone*.” His book avoids the cultic mentality, and offers a fine general introduction to her thought. He helps us to situate Rand in comparison to other Western thinkers, from Aristotle to Nussbaum. He grapples with Rand’s moral philosophy, answering the criticisms of Humean skeptics, and devotes an entire chapter to the contrast between Rand and Kant. He examines many complex issues generated by Rand’s epistemology, especially its

implications for axiomatic concepts and propositions. He also provides an informed perspective from which to engage O'Neill's and Dancy's criticisms of the principle of non-contradiction.

Machan concludes his book — as I should conclude this bibliographic essay — with a challenge to others, to probe into the many “unfinished” issues provoked by our consideration of Rand's system. Among the “problems left for Objectivism,” Machan cites tough questions on the nature of free will, human evil, evolution, aesthetics, moral obligation, and the family. Fortunately, the current renaissance in Rand scholarship augurs well for a future of critical engagement.

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1. I would like to thank Stephen Cox, Murray Franck, and Barry Rosenthal for their critical comments on an earlier draft of this article. The usual caveats apply.
  2. Walker (1999) will focus on this movement; unfortunately, it was unavailable for review at press time.
  3. See Sciabarra 1995c for my book review.
  4. For an examination of other examples, see Sciabarra 1998b. Also see Cox 1998 for a discussion of the problems inherent in the journals' editing.
  5. Nietzsche is not the only writer with whom Rand engages. She cites Mencken, Goethe, Kropotkin, and Ortega y Gasset as well. In fact, Rand (1997) seems quite favorably impressed by Ortega y Gasset — appreciating his insights, and appropriating his phraseology on the “mass-man” in her notes for *The Fountainhead* (141). Ortega y Gasset became one of the models upon which Rand would base the character, Hugh Akston, in *Atlas Shrugged* (405).
  6. Rand often drew from real-life; the story of another criminal defendant, the Swedish “Match King,” Ivar Kreuger, inspired her play *Night of January 16th*.
  7. Den Uyl (1999) argues that Rand's deconstructions are not always successful; e.g., he believes that she fails in her deconstruction of “humor.” Rand sometimes accepts common usage, even as she tried to transcend it. The *Journals'* early notes bear out her attested confusion over the words “egoism” and “egotism.” Rand ([1943] 1993) admits that her use of the word “egotist” in *The Fountainhead* was an “error,” prompted by her reliance on her dictionary's “misleading definitions” (viii). Erickson (1997), discussed below, questions Rand's definitions of such concepts as “selfishness,” arguing that she “tries to stack the deck by redefining familiar words” (258).
  8. The master-slave form is not distinctive to Nietzsche; it can be found too, in the thought of Hegel, who resurrects it from the works of Aristotle. See Sciabarra 1995b, 300-11.
  9. In published works, Rand hardly ever used the word “Superman.” She remarks in a *New York Times* letter (July 24, 1949): “I much prefer the word ‘man’ which, in my philosophy, is quite honorable enough . . .” (Rand 1996, 11).

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10. For an overview of these debates, see my websites:  
<http://www.nyu.edu/projects/sciabarra> and  
<http://pages.nyu.edu/~cms10>.
  11. Franck argues that the conflict-free ideal would require a synoptic perspective in which perfectly rational people always pursue “the philosophically-objective values.” A dialectical sensibility is at odds with such synopticism. Characterizing Rand as a dialectical thinker means that she is *predominantly* contextual in her methodological research orientation (MRO). It does not mean that she is *always* dialectical in *every* aspect of her thought. On the distinctions between dialectics and other MRO’s, see my forthcoming book, *Total Freedom*.
  12. I am persuaded by Stephen Cox, who suggests, in a personal correspondence, that Rand may have stopped using the word “organic” because she did not like its naturalistic connotations. Given Rand’s use of this word in her earlier journals, it is quite possible that the concept was a holdover from her student years. Interestingly, the word “organic” can be found in quite a few of the philosophic works to which Rand may have been exposed while she was a student at Leningrad University; N. O. Lossky, a renowned philosophy professor whom Rand recalls, wrote a well-known volume called, *The World as an Organic Whole*. See Sciabarra 1995b, Chapter Two.
  13. See Ollman 1979, Chapter 4, for a fuller discussion of these components.
  14. In the *Journals*, Rand does not address sufficiently the development of rocket and satellite technology in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Given the “Project X” episode in *Atlas Shrugged*, she sensed that statism could promote innovations in the industry of destruction.
  15. Gladstein is also developing an expanded edition of her fine resource guide, *The Ayn Rand Companion*.
  16. In contrast to *The Fountainhead*, where Roark resides in-the-world, *Atlas Shrugged* depicts America in a utopian light, says Den Uyl (1999). The utopia emerges external to the reality of America. Its creator, John Galt, speaks “from the outside” looking in. Den Uyl, here, puts his finger on a key ingredient of utopian fiction; indeed, he identifies an essential aspect in all utopianism — the reconstruction of the world from an Archimedean vantage point. See Sciabarra 1995a.

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17. Cox 1986 is a notable exception in its treatment of *The Romantic Manifesto*.
  18. Kamhi and Torres critically assess Rand's definition. In my own research, I have discovered only one other instance of this definitional form — in the work of the Rand-influenced Roy Childs (1994), who viewed history as “a selective recreation of the events of the past, according to a historian's premises regarding what is important and his judgment concerning the nature of causality in human action” (18).
  19. Given the possibilities for this academic evolution, Peikoff (in Rand 1997) criticizes subtly “[t]oo many of AR's professed admirers in print [who] are academics of the scholastic persuasion” (xii). Yet, one of the ways in which Rand's work might achieve dominance is through the scholarly process of give-and-take, a process that is just beginning.
  20. Actually, such contextualism is rooted in the work of Aristotle. See Chapter One of my forthcoming, *Total Freedom*.
  21. In actuality, Marx did not originate the phrase “dialectical materialism.” It was coined first by the Soviet Communist, G. V. Plekhanov.
  22. Interestingly, in a book of more than 700 pages, this section is the only place where the name Nathaniel Branden shows up — once (673). Of course, Rand's explorations in psychology took place while she was closely associated with the Brandens; indeed, it was Barbara Branden who first coined the concept, “psycho-epistemology,” persuading Rand of its importance (N. Branden [1969] 1979, 98 n.29). Rand seems to recognize the nature of their joint intellectual work in this area; it is one of the few sections of the *Journals* where she uses the word “we,” rather than “I,” in reference to the development of a philosophic abstraction.



## *Book Reviews:*

*Justificatory Liberalism* by Gerald Gaus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. xiv + 374 pps.

Traditionally, political philosophy seeks to justify political principles on the basis of something more philosophically fundamental. For example, Mill argues for his Liberty (or Harm) Principle on the basis of a more fundamental utilitarian moral philosophy, which judges actions and policies on the basis of their tendency to maximize utility. Social contract theories (e.g., Hobbes's, Gauthier's) derive political principles from a theory of rationality. Marxist political philosophy relies on a certain conception of human nature, a philosophical anthropology, if you will. Rawls's argument in *A Theory of Justice* appeals to a multiplicity of more fundamental philosophical views. On this way of conceiving of political philosophy, the political philosopher's task is to explain the derivation of the political principles he favors from these more fundamental philosophical views and to explain or justify these more fundamental views themselves.

What is unique and perhaps most interesting about Gerald Gaus's book is his attempt to argue for certain features of a liberal political order on the basis of elements of a theory of knowledge in general and a moral epistemology in particular. Epistemology occupies roughly the same position in Gaus's political philosophy as utilitarian moral philosophy occupies in Mill's political philosophy. Central to Gaus's task, as he conceives it, is to provide a *public justification* for certain features of a liberal political order. A public justification is a justification *to others* for the imposition of organized coercive power that defines state action. To this end, he constructs a general theory of justified belief in Part I (*Personal Justification*) and works out its implications for moral epistemology. Part II, *Public Justification*, further develops and extends this theory in the service of constructing a theory of public justification. Part III, *Political Justification*, applies the results of Part II to argue for certain features of a liberal political order, such as rights and limited constitutional government, the rule of law, and judicial review. The discussion throughout is sustained at a very high level, both in terms of its philosophical sophistication and the quality of the argumentation. This is not a book for those who have no background in epistemology and political theory, which perhaps limits its audience but not its importance.

Gaus's general theory of justified belief is causal in nature; justified beliefs are those that are causally sustained by good reasons. Good reasons are defined relative to a person's belief system (which include inferential norms), as that system might be modified by new information and criticism. The theory of justified belief that emerges is relativistic in that what is justified in one person's belief system may not be justified in another's. This theory is not radically relativistic, however, since a person's beliefs are not immune from criticism and revision. The set of beliefs a person is justified in accepting include not only the justified beliefs he happens to hold, since they also include beliefs that he would or should hold in the light of new information and criticism. Gaus calls this, 'open justification.'

Further articulation of his theory of justified belief requires Gaus to identify its implications for such as issues in epistemology as foundationalism, intuitionism, coherentism, and reflective equilibrium. Epistemologists are fond of making fine distinctions in an attempt to slip between various Scyllas and Charibdises that line the banks of their discipline. Gaus is no exception and can split hairs with the best of them. A distinctive feature of his approach is that his normative account of how people ought to reason is informed by careful attention to psychological findings about how people actually do reason.

In Part II, Gaus extends his theory of justification to the question of what counts as justification in a public context. As noted above, a theory of public justification is needed for questions about the justification for the use of the coercive power of the state. As Gaus says, "Moral commitments . . . . presuppose public reason because they combine two features, demandingness and culpability" (p. 121). If we are not simply to browbeat people into accepting something, we need to give them reasons which they *should* accept, not as a matter of convenience or prudence, but in a moral and epistemic sense. What makes this question difficult for Gaus is the fact that the moderate relativism of Part I leaves open the possibility that a proposition can be justified in one person's system of beliefs that is not justified in another's. His way of dealing with this problem is to argue that for an individual to give a public justification for his belief, it must not only be justified in his system of beliefs; he must also justifiably believe that it is justifiable in the system of beliefs held by those whom he is trying to convince. He may not be successful in convincing these others, and public justification does not require the actual assent of the relevant parties. But, it is necessary to show that the belief is justifiable in the system of his interlocutors, which turns out to impose a heavy—but not impossibly

heavy-burden of proof. Public justification also requires that he expose his belief to discussion and challenge.

One of the most important ways in which a belief can fail to be publicly justified is for it to be *inconclusive*. An inconclusive belief is, roughly, one for which there are good, though not compelling reasons. This situation arises when the burden of proof (as it pertains to others' systems of belief) has not been borne or the publicity requirement has not been met. Gaus believes that reasoned public debates on a host of important issues result in inconclusive beliefs. This may be true even if a more "generic" version of the belief is publicly justified. For example, a commitment to a system of rights might be publicly justified, even though a commitment to a more specific conception of rights may be inconclusive. This notion, which Gaus calls, "nested inconclusiveness," is extremely important for what follows in the remainder of Part II and Part III, where Gaus seeks to give a public justification for fundamental liberal principles.

The commitment to public justification leads directly to liberal toleration and freedom of thought and expression. Gaus also maintains that a commitment to civil peace and the protection of what Locke called "civil interests" (e.g., life, liberty, personal property) can also be publicly justified by hypothetical social contract arguments. How these and other liberal principles are to be interpreted remains contentious, however, since particular interpretations of these principles are inconclusively justified. The problem here is partly practical and partly moral. The practical problem is that some interpretation of these and other principles must be accepted and enforced for social life to go on, but there is a moral dimension to the problem, since people disagree about what it is *right* to do. In other words, it is not a mere coordination problem. This leads Gaus to adopt what he calls an "umpire" model of political authority. Although the umpire is not assumed to have any special moral wisdom or authority, his job is to resolve these disputes, as best he can determine, in a way that is consistent with the generic conception that has been publicly justified.

There seems to be a problem with this model of political authority, however. The task of the umpire is to interpret some generic conception (e.g., the right to freedom of speech), which effectively means choosing among a number of inconclusively justified particular interpretations. Those who lose out as a result of the umpire's decision can, as a practical matter, be made to see the wisdom of accepting whatever the umpire's decision is, provided that the bounds are the generic conception are not exceeded, but it is hard to see how or why they have any moral reason to accept that interpretation. By hypothesis, the

particular conception being enforced is not conclusively justified, even if the more generic concept is. He does not adequately explain how the justification of the generic conception (of, e.g., rights) extends to whatever particular conception the umpire adopts.

In Part III, *Political Justification*, Gaus attempts to give a public justification for an umpire who rules through law and all that this entails. This requires him to justify the rule of law, which involves three elements: (i) the rules by which the umpire adjudicates conflicts must apply equally to all citizens and must not permit arbitrariness on the part of the umpire (the rule of law vs. the rule of men), (ii) the personal freedom of individuals must be protected against the state, i.e., individuals have rights, (iii) these rights must be recognized and enforced by an independent judiciary. He also argues that government must be limited in scope to adjudicating conflicting interpretations of generic conceptions and to those policies that everyone has conclusive reason to embrace (whether or not they actually embrace it). This gives a fresh perspective on the classical liberal demand for (strictly) limited government. Unlike libertarians, who believe that the chief evil of modern governments is that they violate very powerful (and hard to justify) rights, Gaus's argument implies that the relatively unlimited majoritarianism of modern governments is unjustified because it violates the demands of public justification.

Part III also discusses the role and rationale of the legislature and the judiciary. The legislative branch is to track as closely as possible publicly justified morality, and Gaus discusses some of the problems and challenges this poses for institutional design in Chapter 13. Chapter 14 explores the implications of justificatory liberalism for democracy and political equality, and Chapter 15 considers challenges to the conception of democracy developed in Chapter 14. Chapter 16 explores the role of the judiciary and the justification for judicial review.

The overall organization of Part III is not as clear as it might be. The author seeks to give a public justification for a variety of liberal principles (or features of liberal political institutions), but it is not as clear as it might be how these various principles fit together, what has been omitted, and why. One feature of the liberal order that Gaus explicitly abjures from discussing is the existence, extent or nature of private property rights in the means of production. Actually, there are two issues here that can be usefully distinguished. On the one hand, there is the question of whether a liberal society should have some form of private ownership or some form of social ownership of the means of production. Nearly all liberals believe in the former, and it would seem that a generic conception

of private property rights should be publicly justifiable. The other question concerns the extent and nature of private property rights in the means of production. Here there is considerable disagreement among liberals, and a rough dividing line can be drawn between classical liberals and "new" liberals on just this question. As Gaus rightly notes (p. 161), the mere fact that there is considerable disagreement about this question does not mean that a (successful) public justification for some position on this question is not forthcoming. Undoubtedly, accomplishing the latter task would be a monumental undertaking. On the hand, the former task—publicly justifying a generic conception of private property in the means of production—would seem to be more manageable. Liberal socialists would disagree, but that does not mean that such a justification would be inconclusive. At the very least, it would have been useful for the author to say something about the contours of that argument, even if working it out fully would have made a long book even longer.

Overall, *Justificatory Liberalism* is a demanding but rewarding book. It offers a fresh perspective on many of the traditional questions of political philosophy and opens new lines of argument to resolve some of them. It repays careful study and reflection.

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*American Academia and the Survival of Marxist Ideas.* By Dario Fernandez-Morera. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.

The topic is pertinent, the title inviting, no doubt, to intellectuals across a wide philosophical spectrum, but this work is likely to appeal finally to a much smaller group of readers. On the one hand it is replete with all the trappings of academic scholarship; on the other it falls so far below the minimal standards of rational analysis and scholarly precision as to make it unacceptable to any in either academia or what the author calls "the outside world" except the most frantic sympathizers with his sentiments. This book seems addressed primarily to partisans unlikely to challenge its premises or documentation.

In his introduction Dario Fernandez-Morera asks why "for many academicians . . . Karl Marx's ideas remain preferred explanations of how the world works" (1). The answer he proposes in his concluding chapter, which I found his most interesting, is that "the socialist organization of the universities" (177) attracts naive, impractical sorts who like being "protected from both the unintended and the intended consequences of their thought" (180) and who are thus inclined by their interest, nature, and training to "blur the distinction between the factual and the imaginary" (180). Unfortunately Fernandez-Morera, a specialist in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish literature, shows no interest in or awareness of the methods and literature of the sociology of American higher education which might justify such a broad claim with any specificity. Rather he proceeds anecdotally—he is a skilled and engaging writer—with only the most casual efforts to present or document his speculations in precise, quantified, or verifiable form.

His chief effort to quantify his claim of the pervasiveness of Marxist views in academia is this:

a recent issue of the *Arts & Humanities Index* lists Marx and Lenin as the two most frequently cited sources in arts and humanities journals over a seven-year period: This means that in their professional work, arts and humanities academicians routinely refer to Marx and Lenin more often than to Aristotle, Plato, Shakespeare, or even God Himself (the Bible ranked only sixth on the list). (3)

Fernandez-Morera's wittily presented ranking does of course not prove the larger claim he intends it to support. In the chapter endnote, conceding that the *Index* does not show the attitudes reflected in these citations, he asks us to accept his assurance that they are "by and large sympathetic" (17). How many of them did he check? The information in the endnote suggests that he not only did not check the citations in question, but did not consult the *Arts and Humanities Index* at all! His reference is to a January 1993 article in the *Chicago Tribune*, which is apparently his daily newspaper (it is his most frequently cited source, far ahead by my count of Marx himself). The *Chicago Tribune* is no doubt a fine source for some kinds of information, but it is clearly not a useful reference for readers who might wish to verify the author's claim: for example by checking the unnamed issue of the *Arts and Humanities index*, by comparing it with other issues and sources, or by determining the nature of the specific citations; all these

are in fact minimal checks we might have expected a responsible researcher to perform. This casual reliance on the daily newspaper is even more annoying in the several cases in which, after reading Fernandez-Morera's extended critique of a quoted passage, we discover that the passage is quoted not from its source, with the attention we would expect to the overall argument and context, but from an op-ed piece in the newspaper (e.g. 38ff, 112).

The central part of this book (chapters one through nine) is concerned with justifying the introductory question by arguing that the twentieth century has shown, in theory and especially in practice, that Marxism is a "crackpot idea" (120). Unfortunately Fernandez-Morera's scholarship stands as a model of meticulous precision in comparison with the reasoning of his argument, which follows what I'll call the *Weird Sisters'* model. The procedure is to homogenize all forms and manifestations of Marxism, socialism, and generally leftist thought and practice from whatever period, along with Nazism and Fascism for good effect, into a single witch's brew labeled "materialist discourse." Fernandez-Morera gives "materialist discourse" two primary attributes: a relativist epistemology and a coercive collectivist politics, which he sees as corollary. These are the real issues that trouble him, but in each case the argument begins and ends with a simplistic polarization: epistemologically between facts and perceptions, and politically between collectivism and individualism. Defense of the objectivity of facts and the interests of individuals is good; consideration of the role of perceptions and the interests of collectivities is bad. There is nothing in between, no spectrum, no nuance; there are just two camps. Which camp is the good one ought to be self-evident, because "materialist discourse" inevitably leads to totalitarian horror. But all those professors, nefarious or naive, bewitch us with "materialist discourse" and "camouflage" the "links between the discourse and its historical effects" (5).

In his relatively brief discussion of literature and visual art, literature professor Fernandez-Morera neglects the extensive scholarly work relevant to his topic and focuses instead on a few anecdotes, suggesting, again, that he is addressing primarily a largely non-scholarly audience. His rejection of ideological analysis of the arts reflects with admirable consistency the ideological assumptions implicit in his discussions of politics and ethics. Great books are great simply because they are, he says, great; they must be, people have read them for centuries. The notions that personal values enter and have always entered into people's responses to books, that personal and communal values have

influenced what literature is published (or what scientific research is funded), or that recognition of such values may enrich our understanding of works: such ideas, commonsensical though they seem, are in fact strains of the sirens' song of "materialist discourse," which will lure us to totalitarian horror if we do not block our ears.

Fernandez-Morera deals with important issues. Should he choose in future work, through a more specifically focused engagement with authors he opposes, to bring his passion to bear on the epistemological questions that are perceived as crucial in so many disciplines today, he may make a useful contribution to the intellectual dialogue. Essential preparation for such an effort would be the development of his own position. The most serious shortcoming of *American Academia and the Survival of Marxist Ideas* is the author's failure to develop or even to summarize the foundations of his own position. There is no positive argument here. Instead Fernandez-Morera wages a kind of guerrilla effort, as from an unlocated position on the misty heath he stirs up trouble for those who seem threatening to him. Frequent references to Hayek and von Mises permit us to guess the general area he is operating from, but if he is to engage rationally and constructively with the important issues that concern him, all that—what he's for and what he's against—will need much clearer definition. The present book stands as a useful object lesson on the importance of precision in intellectual discourse.

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