

The optimistic philosophy

Business



Everyone has a philosophy of some kind. Whether it be your religion or just a code of ethics, you have morals that you base your decisions off of.

In 1905, a new philosophy began to take shape. That is the year that Ayn Rand was born in the USSR. Over the course of her lifetime, she wrote several fiction and nonfiction accounts of her philosophy, objectivism. This unique way of thinking has grown in the past century. It has its believers and deniers, but is still a relatively unknown idea. It is time for this idea to be shown to the world.

Objectivism is a philosophy. A philosophy is defined as a comprehensive system of ideas about human nature and the nature of the reality we live in (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). In other words, it is a guide for living. Objectivism is said to be a philosophy for living on earth (Rand, “ Ayn Rand’s Ideas”). The teachings of objectivism are generally broken down into five groups, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). Metaphysics deals with the theory of reality.

In this category, Objectivism states that there is but one reality, and it is the one that we live in in (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). Reality’s existence is an absolute that is independent of our feelings. The existence of reality is based on our possession of consciousness. The fact that we possess consciousness is also an axiom of Objectivism (Rand, “ Ayn Rand’s Ideas”). Because we can perceive reality and know of its existence, there should be no conflict between the body and the mind.

Objectivism speaks against any and all kinds of metaphysical relativism and idealism (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). Epistemology is the theory of

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knowledge. According to Objectivism, all human knowledge is reached through reason (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). Knowledge and reason, reached through perception and memory. It is said that reason is man’s only means of perceiving reality, his only source of knowledge, his only guide to action, and his basic means of survival (Rand, “ Ayn Rand’s Ideas”).

Through our life experiences, we learn and our learning helps us survive. Without it, we would perish. Ethics is the theory that deals with moral values. The ultimate virtue of Objectivism is a person’s own happiness. It requires a certain amount of selfishness to be truly happy (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”).

A selfish person does not give undeserved rewards to others and doesn’t ask for them. Every man is an end in himself, not the means to the ends of others (Rand, “ Ayn Rand’s Ideas”). This is illustrated by John Galt 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.” A rational code of ethics is possible and derivable from an appropriate assessment of the nature of human beings. Ethics come from knowledge that we collect through reason from the reality that we observe. Politics is defined as the theory of legal rights and government (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”).

This is more familiar to most people. Objectivism states that the ideal political-economic system is laissez-faire capitalism. This stands to reason because this is the only system in which men deal with one another as equals (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). They trade for a free, voluntary

exchange for mutual benefit. No physical force is used to obtain any values from one man or by one man.

According to Rand, capitalism has not yet been fully explored. There should be a complete separation of state and economics, like the separation of church and state. The government was established solely to guard and protect individual rights (Rand, “ Ayn Rand’s Ideas”). There should be a respect for individual rights and this respect should replace sacrifice in human relationships (Branden, “ Benefits and Hazards”). Instead of giving everything to your friends and family, there should be mutual respect for one another. This respect is the best way to show your love because it shows you as an individual.

Only “ I” can love someone. The use of force against another is only permissible in retaliation against those who have initiated it and foreign invaders (Rand, “ Ayn Rand’s Ideas”). Aesthetics is the theory of the nature of art (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). Rand has said very little about her thoughts on art, but she illustrates it well in her novels. In Atlas Shrugged, the most beautiful things are made of steel, glass and the new invention Rearden Metal.

In The Fountainhead, Roark’s style of architecture is described as sharp and angular but utilitarian. According to objectivism, artists should interpret the world and recreate it in the way they envision it. Art is supposed to be an element of world view. It should not be used to give our deepest values physical form to experience a sense of life (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). It should be life as one artist knows and sees it.

“ My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute,” From the appendix of Atlas Shrugged, Ayn Rand’s words sum up her philosophy. Men must hold themselves and their lives as the greatest cause and live by the code of free individuals. This code includes self-reliance, integrity, rationality, and productive effort (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). This philosophy brings a new hope to humanity. It glorifies your potential and your possibilities. Ayn Rand gives you hope.

This is gave objectivism its nickname as the “ optimistic philosophy,” (Thomas, “ What is Objectivism?”). It stood out in the 20th century because philosophy no longer offered answers to human existence and had no practical value to offer anyone. Objectivism could answer those questions. In the beginning, objectivism was unwanted. In fact, is held a “ cult status” in the 1960s.

But as the 20th century continued, and religion lost its influence, people were still looking for answers to the eternal questions. Objectivism gives us a frame of reference to understand the world and fulfills our need for a philosophical vision of reality. It can easily fit into your current model of reality. Even modern critics can attest that Rand’s ideas were misrepresented in its early days with the media (Branden, “ Benefits and Hazards”). Young adults find her philosophy alluring. They are trying to escape from the cynical world of their parents and grandparents.

They are fighting for the hope that they can do better. They want to rise higher than their parents and relatives. “[Objectivism] tells you that your main problem is that you have not learned to understand the nature of your own power and, therefore, of your own possibilities. It tells you that your mind is and can be efficacious, that you are competent to understand, that achievement is possible, and that happiness is possible. It tells you that life is not about dread and defeat and anguish but about achievement and exaltation,” (Branden, “ Benefits and Hazards”).

Unfortunately, when you take a closer look at the details, you can see conflicts and holes. Every way of thinking that was not objectivist was deemed as “ irrational”, “ mystical”, and “ against reason.” She advocates reason, individual rights, and political and economic freedom but she does not tell you how to achieve the morals that go along with these beliefs. Her view also simplifies humanity so greatly that it is practically impossible to apply her teachings to the real world (Branden, “ Benefits and Hazards”). While the general ideas and beliefs of objectivism seem reasonable and true, the details that Rand lays out leave flaws in her logic.

All in all, it is a great idea, but it needs refining. Rand was born in 1905 in Russia while it was still known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). She lived through the Russian Revolution and immigrated to America in 1926. She wanted nothing to do with a state-run system. This may have been influenced by her extreme dislike of socialism that she experienced in Russia.

Her philosophy evolved from her novels, especially *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. She explained its details in nonfiction books like *The Virtue of Selfishness* and *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (Thomas, “What is Objectivism?”). She has been criticized as a materialist, fascist, and an advocate for a dog-eat-dog world (Branden, “Benefits and Hazards”). In a review of *Atlas Shrugged*, Granville Hicks begins “This gargantuan book comes among us as a demonstrative act rather than as a literary work. It seems an expression of the author’s determination to crush the enemies of truth—her truth, of course—as a battering ram demolishes the walls of a hostile city.

Not in any literary sense a serious novel, it is an earnest one, belligerent and unremitting in its earnestness. It howls in the reader’s ear and beats him about the head in order to secure his attention, and then, when it has him subdued, harangues him for page upon page. It has only two moods, the melodramatic and the didactic, and in both it knows no bounds.” However, she has also been applauded. “Ayn Rand...is perhaps the only person left in the world who can speak in praise of the dollar sign without looking fearfully over her shoulder” (Nicholas, “Talk With Ayn Rand”) Her work has also influenced many celebrities, including Hugh Hefner and Angelina Jolie. Its growing popularity, even after her death, has kept her books and her ideas alive for another generation.

Objectivism takes the greatest things of mankind, reason, knowledge, thought, and ties them into a certain way of thinking. Ayn Rand merely illustrated her ideals of a free-thinking society of creators and inventors. In reality, those ideal must be tweaked to fit the person whose life they are

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applied to. Critics will still argue and followers will still justify, but in the end, the true objectivist takes the concepts that they are given and use them to better themselves. That is really what objectivism is about.