
The Objective Standard



UNDERSTANDING
RATIONAL
EGOISM

CRAIG BIDDLE

Understanding Rational Egoism

CRAIG BIDDLE

Copyright © 2018 by The Objective Standard. All rights reserved.

The Rational Alternative to “Liberalism” and Conservatism



The Objective Standard is the preeminent source for commentary from an Objectivist perspective. Subscribe to our quarterly journal for in-depth articles; visit our website for daily commentary; and join us on Facebook and Twitter for interesting links and stimulating conversation.

Subscribe Today!

www.TheObjectiveStandard.com

Contents

Introduction	4
1. The Beauty of Ayn Rand's Ethics	5
2. Secular, Objective Morality: Look and See	8
3. The Is-Altruism Dichotomy	16
4. <i>Atlas Shrugged</i> and Ayn Rand's Morality of Egoism	23
5. Purpose, Value Hierarchies, and Happiness	47
Endnotes	62

Introduction

If you want to flourish in life—if you want to make your life the best it can be—you need a moral code geared to that purpose.

Rational egoism is the only moral code that is.

Rational egoism—or rational self-interest—is the name that Ayn Rand gave to the moral code of her philosophy, Objectivism. This book is a guide to understanding rational egoism by means of your own observations and integrations.

Although relatively short, the book provides a *inductive* approach to understanding rational egoism. It proceeds by pointing out, step by step, the observable facts that form the foundation of rational egoism, the observable facts that give rise to its core principles, the logical fallacies that cause some people to misunderstand or reject its principles, and practical guidance for applying its principles in your daily life—immediately and to profoundly positive effect.

After reading this brief book, you will understand rational egoism from the ground up. You will be able to apply its principles consistently. You will be able to explain its principles clearly. And you will be able to defend the truth and objectivity of rational egoism against attacks—whether they be on the grounds of religion, subjectivism, tradition, or psychological intimidation.

In short, by reading this book, you will equip yourself to thrive, to help your friends and loved ones thrive, and to explain why rational egoism is morally correct.

If that appeals to you, keep reading. *Understanding Rational Egoism* will improve your life dramatically.

1

The Beauty of Ayn Rand’s Ethics

Ayn Rand opposed the morality of self-sacrifice, which is inherent in most philosophic systems and all religions. She advocated instead a morality of self-interest—the Objectivist ethics—which, as she explained in her essay “Causality Versus Duty,” is neatly summed up by the Spanish proverb “God said: ‘Take what you want, and pay for it.’”¹

Rand was an atheist, so her use of “God” here is metaphorical. By “God said” she means “reality dictates.” She is referring to the immutable fact that if you want to achieve an effect (an end), you must enact its cause (the means). This is the law of causality applied to human values. Our values—whether a wonderful career, a romantic relationship, good friendships, life-enhancing hobbies, or political freedom—do not come to us automatically, nor do we pursue them automatically. If we want these things, we must choose to act in certain ways and not in others. This is the way reality is. This principle is an *absolute*. “God said.”

“Take what you want” refers to the fact that human values are *chosen*. The realm of human values—the realm of morality—is the realm of choice. A proper morality is not about “divine commandments” (there is no God) or “categorical imperatives” (there’s no such thing) or “duties” (they don’t exist). Rather, it is about what you want out of life and what you must do to get what you want. A proper morality is a set of principles to guide your choices and actions toward a lifetime of happiness.

Importantly, as Rand emphasized, this does not make morality subjective. What promotes a person’s life is dictated not by his feelings divorced from facts, but by the factual requirements of his life and happiness—given his nature as a human being. Just as a rabbit can’t live and prosper by jumping off cliffs, and just as an eagle can’t live and prosper by burrowing underground, so a person can’t live and prosper by acting contrary to the requirements of *his* life.

We are complex beings of body and mind, matter and spirit, and the requirements of our life and happiness derive from both aspects of this

integrated whole. If we want to know what these requirements are, we must identify the relevant facts. Given our nature, we need certain values in order to live and prosper. We need material values such as food, clothing, shelter, and medicine; we need spiritual values, such as self-respect, self-confidence, friendship, and romantic love; and we need political values, such as the rule of law and political freedom—which enable us to pursue our material and spiritual values. Consequently, in order to live and prosper, we must uphold and employ the one *fundamental* value that makes our identification and pursuit of all our other values possible: reason.

Reason is our means of observing reality, forming concepts, identifying causal relationships, avoiding contradictions, and forming principles about what is good and bad for our life. Reason is our only means of knowledge and our basic means of living. Thus, if our goal is a lifetime of happiness, we must uphold reason as an absolute; we must be rational as a matter of principle.

Being rational doesn't mean never erring; humans are fallible beings, and occasional errors are part of life. Nor does it mean repressing or ignoring one's feelings; that would not be rational, as feelings are a crucial kind of fact. Rather, being rational means committing oneself, as a matter of principle, to identifying the available and relevant facts concerning one's alternatives in life, to acting on one's best judgment given what one knows at any given time, and to correcting any errors one commits if and when one discovers them.

Seen in this light, "Take what you want" doesn't mean: "Go by your emotions without respect for facts and logic." It means: "Use your rational judgment to figure out which goals and courses of action will result in a lifetime of happiness, and proceed accordingly." It means: "Take what you *rationally* want."

"Pay for it" refers to the fact that if we want to achieve our goals, we must *work* to achieve them, we must *enact* their causes. So says the law of causality. This is not a burden but a blessing: Choosing values and working to achieve them—whether a career in computer programming, a romantic relationship with the girl or guy of our dreams, a sailing trip around the world, or a summer home in the Catskills—is not a process to bemoan. It is part and parcel of living a wonderful life.

A proper morality is a crucial tool for living and loving life, and the Objectivist ethics is just such a morality. Its values of reason, purpose, and self-esteem—along with its virtues of rationality, productiveness, honesty, integrity, independence, justice, and pride—are, one and all, in service of this end. They are our means of taking what we want and paying for it.

Such is the beauty of the Objectivist ethics.²

2

Secular, Objective Morality: Look and See

“Thinking is man’s only basic virtue, from which all the others proceed. And his basic vice, the source of all his evils, is . . . the refusal to think—not blindness, but the refusal to see; not ignorance, but the refusal to know.” —Ayn Rand

You’ve heard it countless times and in various forms: “If there is no God, there is no objective morality”—“If there is no God, anything goes”—“If there is no God, ‘good’ and ‘evil’ have no objective meaning”—and so on.

But that notion is demonstrably false and morally disastrous.

Objective morality does not depend on the existence of “God.” And that’s a good thing, too. Among other reasons: (a) There is no evidence for the existence of God, which is why no one has ever provided such evidence. And (b) according to the scriptures of each of the three major religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—God commands murder, commits mass murder, condones slavery, authorizes rape, and sanctions other atrocities.¹

Further, morality based on commandments is not objective but *subjective*; it is based on assertions issued by the alleged ruling consciousness; thus, whatever that consciousness commands—whether to love your neighbor or to beat your wife or to murder unbelievers—is “moral” simply because he said so. That is the very essence of subjectivity.

Objective morality comes not from revelation, faith, or divine commandments—but from observation, logic, and the laws of nature.

Morality (or ethics) is a code of values intended to guide people’s choices and actions.² This is true of *all* moralities, whether religious or secular. As to which morality is objectively correct, that depends on which one corresponds to the facts that give rise to the need of morality.

Either we need morality, or we don’t. If we don’t need it, then we don’t need it, and there is no point in pursuing the subject at all.³ If, on the other hand, we *do* need morality, then identifying the reason *why* we need it will help us to understand which values are objectively correct and which are not.

Because morality is a code of *values*, in order to understand why people need it we must first understand what values are and why people need them. This is why the philosopher Ayn Rand began her inquiry into morality with the questions: What are *values*? And why do people need them?⁴ We'll follow Rand's approach and take these questions in turn.

What are values? Looking at reality, we can see that values are the things one acts to gain or keep.⁵ For instance, you act to gain or keep money; you value money. Students act to gain or keep good grades; they value good grades. Churchgoers act to gain or keep a relationship with "God"; they value that relationship. People act to develop or sustain fulfilling careers, to establish or maintain romantic relationships, to gain or keep freedom, and so on.

The key concept here is: *act*. Values are objects of *actions*. If someone *doesn't* act to achieve good grades, or to develop a fulfilling career, or to establish a relationship with God, then he doesn't value the thing in question. He might want the thing. He might dream about it. He might tell himself or others that he values it. He might feel that he *should* value it. But if he takes no action to gain or keep the thing, he doesn't truly value it. This is why, if a child leaves his bicycle out in the elements to rust, his parents properly say that he doesn't value the bicycle. A value is that which one acts to gain or keep.

Broadening our view, we can see that values pertain not only to people, but to *all* living things—and *only* to living things. Trees, tigers, and people take actions toward goals. Rocks, rivers, and hammers do not. Trees, for example, extend their roots into the ground and their branches and leaves toward the sky; they value minerals, water, and sunlight. Tigers hunt antelope and nap under trees; they value meat and shade. And people act to gain their values, such as food, education, and friendship. This pattern continues throughout the plant and animal kingdom: All living things take self-generated, goal-directed action.

Non-living things, on the other hand, take no such action. They can be moved, but they cannot act in the self-generated, goal-directed way that living things do. A rock remains still unless some outside force, such as a wave or a hammer, hits and moves it. A river flows, but its motion is not self-generated; water moves only by means of some outside force—in this case, the gravitational pull of the earth. And a hammer does not, by itself, smash rocks or drive nails; it does not generate its own action. Even a robot programmed to engage in some purposeful activity, such as vacuuming a carpet, does not take self-generated, goal-directed action. Rather, a robot acts only as it mechanically must, given that someone built and programmed it to act that way. In this

case, the self-generated, goal-directed action is that of the programmer or the person using the robot.

Living things are unique in this respect: Only they take self-generated, goal-directed action. Only living things pursue values.

Why? Why do living things pursue values? What are values *for*?

At this point we can see, as Ayn Rand observed, that “the concept ‘value’ is not a primary; it presupposes an answer to the question: of value to *whom* and for *what*? It presupposes an entity capable of acting to achieve a goal in the face of an alternative.”⁶

A tree faces the alternative of reaching water and sunlight—or not. A tiger faces the alternative of catching and keeping its prey—or not. And a person faces the alternative of achieving *his* goals—or not. To whom does the alternative matter? It matters to the organism taking the action. The objects a living thing acts to gain or keep are *its* values—values *to it*.

That answers the question: “to whom?” The question “for what?” remains.

What *difference* does it make whether an organism achieves its goals? What happens if it succeeds? What happens if it fails? What *ultimately* is at stake?

This question takes us to the very foundation of values, where we can see how rational morality is grounded in perceptual reality. As Rand observed, and as we can too:

There is only one fundamental alternative in the universe: existence or non-existence—and it pertains to a single class of entities: to living organisms. The existence of inanimate matter is unconditional, the existence of life is not: it depends on a specific course of action. Matter is indestructible, it changes forms, but it cannot cease to exist. It is only a living organism that faces a constant alternative: the issue of life or death. Life is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated action. If an organism fails in that action, it dies; its chemical elements remain, but its life goes out of existence. It is only the concept of “Life” that makes the concept of “Value” possible.⁷

The reason why living things need values is: to *live*. The answer to the question “for *what*?” is: for *life*.

Life is *conditional*: If a living thing takes the actions and achieves the values necessary to remain alive, it remains alive. If, for some reason, it fails to take those actions or fails to achieve those values, it dies. And human beings are no exception to this principle. We need values for the same reason plants and other animals do: in order to sustain and further our life.

An organism's life is its *ultimate value*—the ultimate goal or end toward which its actions are the means. Consequently, an organism's life is its *standard* of value—the standard by reference to which all of its other values and actions can be objectively evaluated.⁸

Each form of life has its own specific needs as determined by its nature. And the requirements of a given organism's life constitute its standard of value. Nutrients, sunlight, and water are good for a tree—why? Because they serve its life. Meat, shade, and water are good for a tiger—why? Because they serve its life. And so on. For any given organism, the *good* is that which sustains or furthers its life, and the *bad* is that which harms or destroys it.⁹

Now, as human beings, we have *free will*, the ability to *choose* our values and actions, and this aspect of our nature adds a layer of complexity to the issue.

The ability to choose is what gives rise to the field of morality: Morality is the realm of *chosen* values. If we couldn't choose our values and actions, there would be no point in a science (or even conventions) dedicated to telling us which actions we should and shouldn't choose.¹⁰

Whereas other animals act automatically or instinctively to further their lives, people do not. A person *can* choose to act in ways that are contrary to the requirements of his life—as some people tragically do. For instance, a person can choose to consume harmful quantities of alcohol, opiates, or other drugs. Or a person can choose to do nothing but sit around and be unproductive, even though doing so will not advance or support his life. A person can even choose to commit suicide. Free will makes life-harming or even life-destroying action possible. Further, free will makes possible the choice to adopt a *morality* that is contrary to the requirements of human life, a morality that calls for people to sacrifice their life-serving values for the sake of “God” or others—as the morality of altruism does.¹¹

So free will adds *significant* complexity to the question of values. But this complexity is substantially simplified by reference to a crucial observable fact: People don't *need* to take anti-life actions; nothing *in nature* necessitates or warrants such actions; there is *no reason* to act self-sacrificially.¹²

The fact that people can choose a course of action or even a code of values that is contrary to the requirements of their life does not change anything about the *objective standard* of value. Whatever anyone's choice, these facts remain: The only reason we *can* pursue values is because we are alive, and the only reason we *need* to pursue values is in order to live.

This observation-based, two-pronged principle is the key to grounding morality in reality, so it is worth emphasizing: Only life makes values *possible* (non-living things cannot pursue values), and only life makes values *necessary*

(only living things need to pursue values). Put another way: You have to *be alive* in order to pursue values, and you have to pursue values in order to *stay alive*.

In accordance with this observation-based principle, the choices and actions that promote one's life are objectively good, and those that harm or destroy one's life are objectively bad.¹³

Observe, in this connection, that people generally regard matters of life and death as the most important matters of all. It is no coincidence that this commonsense idea corresponds to the very foundation of objective morality. The alternative of life or death—existence or non-existence—is the fundamental alternative that makes possible all other alternatives that matter. It is the basic alternative that gives rise to the possibility and need of values—and thus to the need of ideas such as *good* and *bad*, *right* and *wrong*, *matters* and *doesn't matter*. If it weren't for life and the goal of sustaining it, nothing would or could matter at all.

Ayn Rand's seminal discovery here is that life is the standard of value because life is the very reason why values exist. And *human* life—life in accordance with our nature as human beings—is the standard of *moral* value: the standard by reference to which we can determine which choices and actions are good or bad, right or wrong for human beings. As Rand put it, this observation-based standard encompasses “the terms, methods, conditions and goals required for the survival of a rational being through the whole of his lifespan—in all those aspects of existence which are open to his choice.”¹⁴

As Rand specifies, the standard here pertains to the survival requirements of a *rational* being because that is what man is: a being who possesses—and survives by means of—the faculty of reason. That we possess the faculty of reason does not mean that we always or inevitably use that faculty. (Clearly, many people do not use reason regularly or even frequently.) Rather, it means that we can use reason if and when we *choose* to use it—and that using it is our basic means of living.¹⁵ This makes our choice to use reason our basic life-serving virtue.

Using reason—observing reality, applying logic, identifying causal connections, and acting in accordance with the full context of one's knowledge—is objectively moral because doing so is essential to understanding reality and thus to living and prospering in reality. By contrast, refusing to use reason—turning away from facts, rejecting logic, pretending that causal connections are not real, and acting in disregard of what one knows to be true—is objectively immoral because doing so contradicts the requirements of human life.

We can see the consequences of rationality versus irrationality on every level of human life, from personal to social to political. Compare the life of Jeff Bezos to that of Bernie Madoff, or the culture of New Zealand to that of Saudi Arabia, or the political system of South Korea to that of North Korea. All else being equal, to the extent that individuals or societies proceed rationally, they progress, prosper, and flourish. To the extent that they proceed irrationally, they stagnate, suffer, and perish. These are causal relationships. Using reason sustains and advances human life; refusing to use it throttles and destroys human life. Thus, rationality—the commitment to use reason as a matter of principle in all areas of life—is the fundamental objective virtue.¹⁶

Likewise, being productive—creating goods or services for consumption or trade—is objectively moral because doing so is essential to human life and prosperity. Refusing to be productive is objectively immoral because it flies in the face of such facts. People who refuse to produce goods or services either die or exist parasitically on those who do produce them. Being productive is essential to human life and prosperity. Thus productiveness—the commitment to being productive as a matter of principle in life—is an objective virtue.¹⁷

Similarly, judging people rationally, in accordance with the available and relevant facts, and treating them accordingly, as they deserve to be treated, is objectively moral because doing so is essential to establishing and maintaining life-serving relationships—whether friendships, romantic relationships, business engagements, or political ties. Refusing to judge people rationally is objectively immoral because it is contrary to the requirements of life-serving relationships. People who fail to judge others rationally suffer life-throttling relationships and enable rights-violating political systems. Judging people rationally and treating them accordingly is vital; thus, justice, the commitment to doing so, is an objective virtue.¹⁸

The basic political principle supported by objective morality is worth emphasizing: Respecting people’s rights—which means refraining from initiating physical force against people (whether direct force, such as a bullet to the head, or indirect force, such as fraud or extortion)—is objectively moral because people must be free from coercion in order to act in accordance with their own rational judgment and thus to live fully as human beings. A human life is a life guided by the judgment of one’s own mind. Violating people’s rights is objectively immoral—and properly illegal—because it stops people from acting on their judgment: their basic means of living. (For more on this point, see “Ayn Rand’s Theory of Rights: The Moral Foundation of a Free Society.”)¹⁹

The foregoing is merely a brief indication of how an objective standard of moral value along with corresponding moral principles and virtues are

derived from and grounded in perceptual reality. But that much is sufficient to show that a secular, objective morality exists.

The controversial nature of this rational approach to morality escalates when we acknowledge the observable fact that human beings are *individuals*—each with his own body, his own mind, his own life.²⁰ This fact gives rise to the principle that each individual's *own* life is his *own* ultimate value. It means that each individual is morally an end in himself, not a means to the ends of others.²¹ It means that the individual has neither a moral “duty” to sacrifice himself for the sake of “God” or others (as religion and altruism claim he does)—nor a moral “right” to sacrifice others for his own sake (as thugs and predators pretend they do).

In accordance with secular, observation-based, objective morality, neither self-sacrifice nor the sacrifice of others is moral, because, on principle, human sacrifice as such is *immoral*.

Human life does not require human sacrifice. It does not require people to give up their values for the sake of “God” or other people or some “greater good.” Nor does it require people to attack others or to steal their belongings or to rape or otherwise assault them. People *can* live together rationally, civilly, peacefully. They can produce life-serving values and trade them with others by mutual consent and to mutual advantage. They can *refuse* to sacrifice themselves or others. And, if people commit to acting rationally, in a consistently life-serving manner, they can live and flourish in harmony with each other.

But, given the role of morality in human life—given the fact that the morality people accept as *true* substantially guides their choices and actions—in order for people to live in a consistently life-serving manner, they must embrace the morality that *advocates* living this way. They must embrace the secular, observation-based code of values we've been discussing: the morality Ayn Rand called “rational self-interest” or “rational egoism.”

Rational egoism is not hedonism or subjectivism or predation. It does not call for acting on one's feelings, or doing whatever gives one pleasure, or sacrificing other people for one's alleged benefit. Those are caricatures of self-interest pushed by people who aim to discredit this morality but know that they can't unless they misrepresent it. Such caricatures are not logical arguments but straw men—and confessions of intellectual impotence, cowardice, or both.

Every thinking adult knows that the mere fact that someone “feels” like taking some action—or that he would get “pleasure” from taking it—or that he would get a “benefit” from taking it—does not mean that the action is in his self-interest. This is why rational parents strive to help their children learn

the importance of *thinking*—observing reality and taking into account the available and relevant facts—before they act.

As rational parents know—and as rational egoism elaborates—there are proper and improper ways to treat one’s feelings, to pursue pleasures, and to seek benefits. It is, of course, vital to acknowledge one’s feelings, but one should always act in accordance with one’s rational judgment—because feelings are not one’s means of knowledge; reason is. It is good to pursue pleasures, but only if the pleasures are in concert with one’s long-term self-interest—as judged by one’s reasoning mind. And it is crucial to pursue benefits that will enhance one’s life—but sacrificing or abusing others does not work toward that end; thinking, producing, trading, and engaging *rationally* with others does.

Again, the observations and integrations here are just an indication of the secular foundation and principles of objective morality. There is a great deal more to it—including the principle that the meaning of life is a function of one’s chosen, life-serving purposes; the principle that for a virtue to be objective it must account for both the material and spiritual requirements of human life; and the principle that to make one’s life the best it can be one must organize one’s values hierarchically, according to their relative life-serving importance, and pursue them respectively. But the purpose of this short essay is not to examine every aspect of secular, objective morality. Its purpose is simply to show that such a morality exists and makes sense. (For a fleshed-out presentation of the foundations and principles of objective morality, see Ayn Rand’s *The Virtue of Selfishness*, or my book *Loving Life: The Morality of Self-Interest and the Facts that Support It*.)²²

People are free to continue claiming, “If there is no God, there is no objective morality.” But they are not free to do so honestly. Ayn Rand’s derivation of morality from reality is too clear and too accessible for anyone interested in this subject responsibly to neglect. If people think her reasoning is in error, they should point out where and how they think she erred. But to ignore the existence of Rand’s ideas while asserting, “If there is no God, anything goes,” is to engage in *evasion*: the refusal to think, the refusal to see, the refusal to know. Such evasion is akin to the Church’s refusal to acknowledge Galileo’s proof that the Earth orbits the Sun—except that those who evade Rand’s proof have much more knowledge and, consequently, much less excuse.

It is time for everyone who cares about human life, happiness, and freedom to repudiate the nonsense that objective morality depends on God. Objective morality depends on *reason*—and, if we’re willing to look, we can see that it does.

3

The Is-Altruism Dichotomy

A dichotomy is thwarting moral thought. Call it the “is-altruism dichotomy.” You’ve probably heard of the “is-ought dichotomy” or the “is-ought gap”—the idea that you cannot derive moral principles (principles regarding how people “ought” to act) from facts of reality (from what “is”). This idea originated with the Sophists of ancient Greece, who held that all moral views and values are subjective or mere opinions.¹ It was later popularized in terms of “is” and “ought” by the 18th century Scottish philosopher David Hume.² Today the idea is widely regarded as a fact beyond question. Outspoken scientist and atheist Sean Carroll sums up the view: “Attempts to derive ought from is are like attempts to reach an odd number by adding together even numbers. If someone claims that they’ve done it, you don’t have to check their math; you know that they’ve made a mistake.”³

The “is-ought dichotomy” is now affirmed, implicitly if not explicitly, by virtually all intellectuals; and taught, in some form or other, to practically all college students.⁴ This is why so many educated people subscribe to moral relativism. If morality can’t be grounded in reality, who’s to say what’s right?

Widespread acceptance of the “is-ought gap” not only breeds moral relativism; it also lends credence to claims that in order for objective morality to exist, there must be a divine lawmaker, a “God,” who issues objective moral laws or commandments. “If moral standards are not rooted in God,” says popular talk show host Dennis Prager, “they do not objectively exist. Good and evil are no more real than ‘yummy’ and ‘yucky.’ They are simply a matter of personal preference.”⁵

But the idea that we can’t derive moral standards from observable reality is demonstrably false. We certainly can—but we must first understand why man *needs* morality at all. If man needs morality, then the reason he needs it—the ultimate end it serves—logically sets the standard for determining the validity of moral principles and values. If man doesn’t need morality, then he doesn’t need it, and there is no point in discussing or even pondering the subject.

This is why the American philosopher Ayn Rand began her inquiry into ethics with the questions, “What are values? Why does man need them?” and “Why does man need a code of values?”⁶ By looking at reality and pursuing answers to these and related questions, Rand discovered that values are the things one acts to gain or keep. For instance, we seek to gain or keep knowledge, food, wealth, relaxation, romance, and freedom. And she discovered that the ultimate reason we *need* values is *to live*—to sustain and further our lives. If we gain and keep values, we can live and prosper; if we fail to gain and keep them, we will suffer and die.

Rand discovered that *man’s life*—meaning, the requirements of an individual’s life and happiness on earth—is the standard of moral value: the ultimate standard against which we can judge good and bad, right and wrong, should and shouldn’t. That which sustains and furthers man’s life is the good; that which harms or destroys it is the evil. On this standard, moral virtues are the principled actions by means of which individuals pursue life-serving values.⁷ For instance, looking at reality, thinking, producing goods or services, being honest, being just, trading value for value, advocating liberty, and the like are good because such actions serve and promote human life. Refusing to look at reality, refusing to think, acting parasitically, being dishonest, being unjust, engaging in theft, advocating tyranny, and the like are bad because such actions throttle or thwart human life. On the basis of this demonstrably true standard of value, Rand developed a secular, observation-based, objective morality—rational egoism—according to which each individual should pursue his own life-serving values and respect the rights of others to do the same. (For elaboration, see Rand’s book *The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism*, or my book *Loving Life: The Morality of Self-Interest and the Facts That Support It*.)

But Rand’s rational, life-based approach to morality is far from the norm; very few people understand and embrace it. Even among those who have read her books, few recognize the virtue of selfishness. Why?

When people think about deriving morality from reality, what they usually have in mind is not “Why does man need values or morality?” This question *implies* that the purpose of morality, if it serves a purpose, is to enable man to gain or keep something; the question aims to discover a need-oriented standard of value—a standard that serves man’s self-interest. If people were to ask and begin answering that question, they would soon see, as Rand did, that man’s life is the standard of moral value, the ultimate reason he needs to gain or keep things; they would see that men need moral principles to guide their thought and action so they can live and prosper; and they would soon proceed

to the next question: “What, in principle, are the requirements of man’s life and happiness?”—which they would have no difficulty answering. They would simply look at reality and see that certain ideas, actions, and conditions are necessary for man’s life, and that others are inimical to it, and they’d be on their way to grasping a fact-based morality. The problem is that when people approach the issue, they typically have in mind some form of *this* question: “How can the idea that you should selflessly serve others be derived from the facts of reality?” This common approach is a consequence of a fallacy Rand termed the fallacy of the frozen abstraction.

The fallacy of freezing an abstraction consists in substituting a particular conceptual concrete for the wider abstract class to which it belongs.⁸ In the case at hand, it consists in substituting a specific morality, “altruism,” for the general class “morality.” This substitution is fallacious because, although altruism is a particular *type* of morality, it is not the *only* type of morality; it is not morality *as such*. The concept of “morality” is a broad category subsuming several kinds or codes of morality—altruism, egoism, hedonism, utilitarianism, and others. To substitute the concept of “altruism” for the concept of “morality” is to exclude from the broad category of “morality” all of the other moral codes that are properly included under it. Of course not every morality can be valid, but the question of which code is demonstrably true is a separate matter. Just as we do not treat “math” as the equivalent of “algebra” and thus exclude “geometry,” “calculus,” and other kinds of math from the field—just as we do not treat “religion” as the equivalent of “Christianity” and thus exclude Judaism, Islam, and other religions from the field—and just as we do not treat “government” as the equivalent of “theocracy” and thus exclude “democracy,” “constitutional republicanism,” and other types of government from the field—so we should not treat “morality” as the equivalent of “altruism.” It is not.

When people freeze the broad abstraction of “morality” at the level of the narrower concrete of “altruism,” they thereby preclude themselves from grounding morality in reality—because there simply are no facts to support the morality of altruism.⁹ To see why, we must grasp the essence of the code.

Altruism is the idea that you should self-sacrificially serve others. Importantly, altruism does *not* hold that you should serve others in a way that results in a net gain on your part, as in selling a good or a service to a customer. Rather, altruism holds that you should serve others in a way that results in a net *loss* on your part, as in providing them with goods or services in exchange for nothing. Otherwise we’d have to regard Michael Dell as more altruistic than Mother Teresa, because he has served millions more people

than she did. Dell, of course, serves people by employing them or selling them computers—that is, by exchanging value for value, an exchange in which both sides gain. Mother Teresa, on the other hand, served people by giving them her time and effort for nothing. That is a big difference. And it is an *essential* distinction regarding the nature of altruism. “Altruism,” as New York University professor Thomas Nagel clarifies, entails “a willingness to act in consideration of the interests of other persons, without the need of ulterior motives”—“ulterior motives” meaning personal gains.¹⁰ Princeton professor Peter Singer further clarifies, “to the extent that [people] are motivated by the prospect of obtaining a reward or avoiding a punishment, they are not acting altruistically.”¹¹ Altruism calls not for pursuing gains, but for incurring losses; it calls for giving up your values (time, effort, wealth, etc.) in exchange for something less or for nothing at all. It calls for self-sacrifice.

A sacrifice is, as Ayn Rand put it, the surrender of a greater value for the sake of a lesser value or of a non-value.¹² If you spend your time selflessly serving strangers at a soup kitchen and thus forgo other uses of that time that would better serve your life and happiness—whether writing a novel that could launch your career, or snuggling with your lover, or camping with your friends, or exercising to maintain your health, or the like—then you are committing a sacrifice. You are giving up something more important to your life and happiness for the sake of something less important or unimportant. You are incurring a net loss. If, on the other hand, you spend your time maximally enhancing your life and happiness by always pursuing your life-serving values with respect to their relative importance toward that end, then you are not sacrificing; you are living selfishly.

Importantly, a choice or an exchange that results in a net gain cannot logically be construed as a sacrifice. Consider what such an equation would mean: “After due diligence and much negotiation, I paid the seller \$90,000 dollars for the summer home of my dreams—what a sacrifice I made!” The reason that sounds wrong is that when I buy a house from a seller, both of us *profit* from the exchange. The house is more valuable to me than the money I exchange for it, and the money is more valuable to the seller than the house he exchanges for it. Such an exchange is not a sacrifice but a trade—a mutual gain.

Take another example: “I spent the day golfing with my best friend on our favorite course rather than golfing with a casual acquaintance on a lesser course. Just call me the sacrificial golfer!” Again, this is silly. If I forgo one outing in order to partake in a different outing because the latter is better for my life and happiness, I have not committed a sacrifice; I’ve upheld my

hierarchy of values; I've steered my life in a self-interested manner; I've sought to maximize gains. To call this a "sacrifice" is to abuse words.

One more example: "Mother Teresa was clearly just out for personal gain. Look at all the sacrifices she made; imagine all the rewards she reaped. That's why the Church canonized her—because she was out to fill her life with goods and maximize her own happiness." Again, that just doesn't make sense—and Mother Teresa would have been the first to say so. Mother Teresa served people not for personal gain, but because she held that being moral consists in serving others self-sacrificially—serving others at a net loss—and because she wanted to be "moral" in accordance with that standard.

Gain-oriented actions and loss-oriented actions are essentially different kinds of actions, so we need different terms to denote them. We have perfectly clear terms for the kinds of actions that result in or are intended to result in net gains; they are "gains" or "trades" or "investments." And we have perfectly clear terms for the kinds of actions that result in or are intended to result in net losses; they are "losses" or "forfeits" or "sacrifices."

Altruism calls for you to surrender greater values for the sake of lesser values. It calls for you to *self-sacrificially* serve others—that is, to serve others at a net loss.

Now, given what altruism is, what facts of reality give rise to the need of it? None do. There is no such thing as a "need" to surrender greater values for the sake of lesser ones. Human life does not require self-sacrifice—or any kind of human sacrifice. Human life requires net gains in value, not net losses in value. It requires rational thought, productive effort, voluntary trade, political and economic freedom, and many other things; but it does not require sacrifice. The only thing that can be "accomplished" by means of sacrifice is suffering or death. And to "achieve" that end, a person need not do anything; he can just stop acting and he'll be miserable or expire in short order.

In contrast, what facts of reality give rise to the principle that people should pursue values and achieve net gains? When we look around, we see plenty of facts that give rise to this principle. Look at reality and your life. If you want to live fully and happily, you *must* pursue life-serving values—and you must refuse to surrender those that are more important for the sake of those that are less important. For instance, you must choose life-serving career goals and work to achieve them; you must engage in recreational and leisure activities that bring you joy; you must establish and maintain relationships conducive to your life and happiness; you must work to establish and maintain liberty so that you can act on your judgment. To the extent that you take such actions and succeed, you can live and prosper; to the extent that you don't, you can't.

Self-interested action is essential to a life of happiness, self-sacrificial action is detrimental to it, and reality is full of facts to support these truths.

If moral principles or “oughts” are ideas to guide our choices and actions in service of our life and happiness (and they are), then we certainly *can* derive them from the facts of reality. And we not only can; we *must*—that is, *if* we want to live and prosper.

The reason contemporary philosophers and intellectuals—including “New Atheists” and “secular humanists”—have been unable to bridge the “is-ought gap” is that they have not been trying to derive morality from reality. Rather, they have been trying to derive *altruism* from reality—and there simply are no facts that give rise to the need of self-sacrifice.

The dichotomy at hand is not between reality and morality, but between reality and altruism. You can’t derive altruism from facts. And thank goodness for that.

4

Atlas Shrugged and Ayn Rand's Morality of Egoism

Author's note: This is an expanded version of a talk I've delivered on various college campuses over the past several years.

Because of its seemingly prophetic nature with respect to current events, Ayn Rand's 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged* is receiving more attention and selling at greater volume today than it did when it was first published fifty-five years ago. That's a good thing, because the ideas set forth in *Atlas* are crucial to personal happiness, social harmony, and political freedom.

Atlas Shrugged is first and foremost a brilliant suspense story about a man who said he would stop the motor of the world and did. But the book is much more than a great novel. Integrated into the story is a revolutionary philosophy—a philosophy not for pie-in-the-sky debates or academic word games or preparing for an “afterlife,” but for understanding reality, achieving values, and living on earth.

Rand's philosophy, which she named Objectivism, includes a view of the nature of reality, of man's means of knowledge, of man's nature and means of survival, of a proper morality, of a proper social system, and of the nature and value of art. It is a comprehensive philosophy, which, after writing *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand elaborated in several nonfiction books. But it all came together initially in *Atlas*, in which Rand dramatized her philosophy—along with the ideas that oppose it.

While writing *Atlas*, Rand made a journal entry in which she said, “My most important job is the formulation of a *rational morality of and for man, of and for his life, of and for this earth.*”¹ She proceeded to formulate just such a morality, and to show what it means in practice.

Tonight, we're going to focus on the morality presented in *Atlas Shrugged*, but I want to do so without spoiling the novel for those of you who haven't yet read it. And since it is impossible to say much of substance about *Atlas* without giving away key elements of its plot and the mystery of the novel, I'm going

to limit my discussion of the book to a brief indication of its plot—without giving away anything pivotal—after which I'll discuss Rand's morality of egoism directly.

Atlas Shrugged is a story about a future world in which the entire globe, with the exception of America, has fallen under the rule of various "People's States" or dictatorships. America, the only country that is not yet fully socialized, is sliding rapidly in that direction, as it increasingly accepts the ideas that lead to dictatorship, ideas such as self-sacrifice is noble, self-interest is evil, and greedy producers and businessmen have a moral obligation to serve the "greater good" of society.

Given this cultural climate, the economy becomes increasingly regulated by the government, and the country slides further and further into economic chaos: Factories shut down, trains stop running, businesses close their doors, people starve—just what you would expect if the U.S. government started acting like the government of the USSR.

But then, something strange starts happening. America's top producers—various scientists, inventors, businessmen, and artists—start to disappear. One by one, they simply vanish. And no one knows where they've gone or why.

Consequently, the supply of goods and services—from scientific discoveries to copper to wheat to automobiles to oil to medicine to entertainment—reduces to a trickle and eventually comes to a halt. Life as Americans once knew it ceases to exist. The country is in ruins.

Where did the producers go and why? Were they killed? Were they kidnapped? Do they return? How is this resolved?

Read the book. You'll be riveted.

As I said, I don't want to give away the story, but I will mention its theme. The theme of *Atlas Shrugged* is the role of the mind in man's existence. The novel dramatizes the fact that the reasoning mind is the basic source of the values on which human life depends. And this is not only the theme of *Atlas*; it is also the essence of Rand's philosophy of Objectivism: Reason—the faculty that operates by means of observation, concepts, and logic—is the source of all knowledge, values, and prosperity.

In this same vein, the theme of my talk tonight is the role of the mind—specifically *your* mind—in understanding, evaluating, and embracing a moral code.

Suppose you are offered two moral codes from which to choose—and whichever one you choose, you have to live by it for the rest of your life. The first code tells you that your life is supremely important—that it is properly the single most important thing in the world to you. This code says that

you should live a wonderful, joy-filled life, and it provides an abundance of guidance about how to do so: how to make your life great; how to choose your goals, organize your values, and prioritize the things that are important to you; how to succeed in school, in friendships, and in romance; how to choose a career that you'll love and how to succeed in it. And so on. In short, this first moral code provides you guidance for achieving a lifetime of happiness and prosperity.

The second moral code offers an entirely different kind of guidance. It tells you *not* that you should live a wonderful life, *not* that you should pursue and achieve your goals and values—but, rather, that your life is *unimportant*, that you should *sacrifice* your values, that you should give them up for the “sake” of others, that you should abandon the pursuit of personal happiness and accept the kind of “life” that results from doing so. That's it. That's the guidance provided by the second code.

All else being equal, which moral code would you choose—and why?

I suspect that, on serious reflection, you would choose the first code. I further suspect that your reasoning would be something on the order of: “We're talking about my *life* here. If it's true that embracing the first code will make my life wonderful, and embracing the second will make it miserable, then this is a no-brainer.”

I think that's good reasoning. Let's see if it holds up under scrutiny as we flesh out the respective natures and implications of these two codes.

The first code is Rand's morality of rational egoism, which lies at the heart of *Atlas Shrugged* and is the centerpiece of Objectivism. The second code is the traditional ethics of altruism—which is the cause of all the trouble in *Atlas Shrugged* and is the ethics on which we all were raised. In order to be clear about what Rand's egoism is, I want to compare and contrast it with altruism. This will serve to highlight the value of Rand's ideas and help to dispel potential misconceptions about her views. It will also show how destructive altruism is and why we desperately need to replace it with rational egoism—both personally and culturally. (I will be using the terms “egoism” and “rational egoism” interchangeably for reasons that will become clear as we proceed.)

Let me stress that I cannot present the whole of Rand's morality in one evening—that would be impossible. What I'm going to do is just indicate its *essence*, by discussing a few of its key principles. My aim is to show you that there is something enormously important here—something important to *your life and happiness*—and to inspire you to look further into the subject on your own.

To begin, observe that each of you brought a morality with you tonight. It is right there in your head—whether you are conscious of it or not. Each of you has a set of ideas about what is good and bad, right and wrong—about what you should and shouldn't do. And you refer to these ideas, implicitly or explicitly, when making choices and taking actions in your daily life. Should I study for the test, or cheat on it, or not worry about it? What career should I choose—and how should I choose it? Is environmentalism a good movement or a bad one? What should I do this weekend? How should I spend my time? Whom should I befriend? Whom can I trust? Is homosexuality wrong? Does a fetus have rights? What is the proper way to deal with terrorists?

The answers one gives to such questions depend on one's morality. This is what a morality is: a set of ideas and principles to guide one's choices, evaluations, and actions.

Because as human beings we *have to* make choices—because we have free will—a morality of some kind is unavoidable to us. Morality is truly inescapable. Our only choice in this regard is whether we acquire our morality through conscious deliberation—or by default, through social osmosis.

If we acquire our morality by default, we will most likely accept the dominant morality in the culture today: *altruism*—the idea that being moral consists in being *selfless*. “Don't be selfish!”—“Put others first!”—“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”—“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”—“Volunteer to serve in your community.”—“Sacrifice for the greater good.” And so on.

This is the morality that surrounded all of us growing up—and that still surrounds us today. It is the morality taught in church, synagogue, and school—offered in books, movies, and on TV—and encouraged by most parents.

Interestingly, however, although our culture is steeped in this morality, the actual meaning of altruism, in the minds of most people, is quite vague. Is a doctor acting altruistically when he cares for his patients? Or is he seeking to *gain* from doing so? Are parents being altruistic when they pay for their children's education? Or is it in their best interest to do so? Are American soldiers acting altruistically when they defend our freedom? Or is defending our freedom in their self-interest? Are you acting altruistically when you throw a birthday party for your best friend? Or do you do so because he or she is a great value *to you*—and thus, something is in it *for you*?

What exactly is the difference between *self-less* action and *self-interested* action? What is the difference between altruism and egoism?

To understand how each differs from the other, we need to understand the basic theory of each code and what each calls for in practice. To begin clarifying this issue, let us turn first to altruism.

Altruism is the morality that holds self-sacrificial service as the standard of moral value and as the sole justification for one's existence. Here, in the words of altruistic philosopher W. G. Maclagan, is the basic principle: According to altruism, "the moral importance of being alive lies in its constituting the condition of our ability to serve ends that are not reducible to our personal satisfactions."² This means that the moral importance of your life corresponds to your acts of *selflessness*—acts that do not satisfy your personal needs. Insofar as you do *not* act selflessly, your life has *no* moral significance. Quoting Maclagan again, altruism holds that we have "a duty to relieve the stress and promote the happiness of our fellows. . . . [We] should discount altogether [our] own pleasure or happiness as such when . . . deciding what course of action to pursue. . . . [Our] own happiness is, as such, a matter of no moral concern to [us] whatsoever."³

Ayn Rand was not exaggerating when she said, "The basic principle of altruism is that man has no right to exist for his own sake, that service to others is the only justification of his existence, and that self-sacrifice is his highest moral duty, virtue, and value."⁴ That *is* the theoretical meaning of altruism. And the altruistic philosophers know it—and state it forthrightly. (We'll hear from more of them a little later.)

Now, what does altruism mean in practice? Suppose a person accepts altruism as true and strives to practice it consistently. What will become of his life?

A widely-used college philosophy text gives us a good indication. As I read this passage, bear in mind that this is not someone speaking for or against altruism. This is just a textbook writer's depiction of what altruism means in practice.

A *pure* altruist doesn't consider her own welfare at all but only that of others. If she had a choice between an action that would produce a great benefit for herself (such as enabling her to go to college) and an action that would produce no benefit for herself but a small benefit for someone else (such as enabling him to go to a concert this evening), she should do the second. She should be *selfless*, considering herself not at all: she should face death rather than subject another person to a minor discomfort. She is committed to serving others only and to pass up any benefits to herself.⁵

That illustrates the practical meaning of altruism—and indicates why no one practices it consistently.

Observe, however, that whether practiced consistently or inconsistently, the basic *principle* of altruism remains the same: The only moral justification of your existence is self-sacrificial service to others. That some people subscribe to altruism but fail to uphold it consistently does not make their moral code different in *kind* from that of a person who practices it consistently; the difference is only one of *degree*. The consistent altruist is acting with a bizarre form of “integrity”—the kind of integrity that leads to his suffering and death. The inconsistent altruist is acting with plain-old hypocrisy—albeit a necessary hypocrisy given his moral code.

And not only is the altruist's *morality* the same in kind; the *consequences* of accepting it are the same in kind, too. To the extent that a person acts selflessly, he thereby thwarts his life and happiness. He might not die because of it, but he certainly will not live fully; he will not make the most of his life; he will not achieve the kind of happiness that is possible to him.

Have *you* accepted the principle of altruism? If so, how is it affecting your life?

Have you ever done something for the sake of others—at the expense of what you really thought was best for your *own* life? For instance: Have you ever accepted an invitation to dine with someone whose company you do not enjoy—because you didn't want to hurt his or her feelings? Have you ever skipped an event—such as a ski trip or a weekend at the beach with your friends—in order to spend time with family members you'd really rather not see? Have you ever remained in a relationship that you know is not in your best interest—because you think that he or she couldn't handle the breakup?

Conversely, have you ever felt guilty for *not* sacrificing for others? Have you ever felt ashamed for doing something that was in your own best interest? For instance, have you felt guilty for not giving change to a beggar on a street corner? Or guilty for pursuing a degree in business or art or something you love—rather than doing something allegedly “noble,” such as joining the Peace Corps?

These are just some of the consequences of accepting the morality of altruism.

Altruism is not good for your life: If you practice it consistently, it leads to death. That's what Jesus did. If you accept it and practice it inconsistently, it retards your life and leads to guilt. This is what most altruists do.

Rational egoism, as the name suggests, and as we will see, *is* good for your life. It says that you should *pursue* your life-serving values and should *not*

sacrifice yourself for the sake of others. Practiced consistently, it leads to a life of happiness. Practiced inconsistently—well, *why* be inconsistent here? Why *not* live a life of happiness? Why sacrifice *at all*? What *reason* is there to do so? (We will address the profound lack of an answer to this question later.)

At this point, we can begin to see why Rand called altruism “The Morality of Death.” To fully grasp why it is the morality of death, however, we must understand that the essence of altruism is not “serving others” but *self-sacrifice*. So I want to reiterate this point with emphasis.

Altruism does *not* call merely for “serving others”; it calls for *self-sacrificially* serving others. Otherwise, Michael Dell would have to be considered more altruistic than Mother Teresa. Why? Because Michael Dell serves millions more people than Mother Teresa ever did.

There is a difference, of course, in the way he serves people. Whereas Mother Teresa “served” people by exchanging her time and effort for *nothing*, Michael Dell serves people by *trading* with them—by exchanging value for value to mutual advantage—an exchange in which both sides *gain*.

Trading value for value is not the same thing as *giving up* values for nothing. There is a black-and-white difference between pursuing values and giving them up—between achieving values and relinquishing them—between exchanging a *lesser* value for a *greater* one—and vice versa.

In an effort to make their creed seem more palatable, pushers of altruism will try to blur this distinction in your mind. It is important not to let them get away with it. Don't be duped!

Altruists claim, for instance, that parents “sacrifice” when they pay for their children to attend college. But this is ridiculous: Presumably, parents value their children's education more than they value the money they spend on it. If so, then the sacrifice would be for them to forgo their children's education and spend the money on a lesser value—such as a Ferrari.

Altruists also claim that romantic love requires “sacrifices.” But this is ridiculous, too: “Honey, I'd really rather be with another woman, but here I am sacrificially spending my time with you.” Or: “I'd really rather have spent this money on a new set of golf clubs, but instead I sacrificially bought you this necklace for your birthday.” Or: “It's our anniversary—so I'm fixing you your favorite dish for a candlelit dinner—even though I'd rather be playing poker with the guys.”

Is that love? Only if love is sacrificial.

Altruists also claim that American soldiers sacrifice by serving in the military. Not so. Our non-drafted soldiers serve for a number of self-interested reasons. Here are three: (1) They serve for the same reason that the

Founding Fathers formed this country—because they value liberty, because they realize that liberty is a requirement of human life, which is the reason why Patrick Henry ended his famous speech with “Give me Liberty or give me Death!” His was not an ode to sacrifice; it was an ode to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. (2) Our soldiers serve in exchange for payment and education—which are clearly in their self-interest. (3) They serve because they are fascinated by military science and want to make a career of it—another selfish motive.

Do some of these soldiers die in battle? Unfortunately, yes. Theirs is a dangerous job. But American soldiers don't *willfully* give up their lives: They don't walk out on the battlefield and say, “Shoot me!” Nor do they strap bombs to their bodies and detonate themselves in enemy camps. On the contrary, they do everything they can to beat the enemy, win the war, and *remain alive*—even when the Bush and Obama administrations tie their hands with altruistic restrictions on how they can fight.

The point is that a sacrifice is not “any choice or action that precludes some other choice or action.” A sacrifice is not “any old exchange.” A sacrifice is, as Rand put it, “the surrender of a greater value for the sake of a lesser one or of a non-value.”⁶

Whether or not one is committing a sacrifice depends on what is *more* important and what is *less* important to one's life. To make this determination, of course, one must know the relative importance of one's values in regard to one's life. But if one does establish this hierarchy, one *can* proceed non-sacrificially—and consistently so.

For example, if you know that your education is more important to your life than is, say, a night on the town with your friends, then if you stay home in order to study for a crucial exam—rather than going out with your buddies—that is not a sacrifice. The sacrifice would be to hit the town and botch the exam.

Life requires that we regularly forgo lesser values for the sake of greater ones. But these are *gains*, not sacrifices. A sacrifice consists in giving up something that is *more* important for the sake of something that is *less* important; thus, it results in a net loss.

Altruism, the morality of self-sacrifice, is the morality of *personal loss*—and it does not countenance personal gain. This is not a caricature of altruism; it is the *essence* of the morality. As arch-altruist Peter Singer (the famed utilitarian philosopher at Princeton University) explains, “to the extent that [people] are motivated by the prospect of obtaining a reward or avoiding a punishment, they are not acting altruistically. . . .”⁷ Arch-altruist Thomas

Nagel (a philosophy professor at New York University) concurs: Altruism entails “a willingness to act in consideration of the interests of other persons, without the need of ulterior motives”—“ulterior motives” meaning, of course, personal gains.⁸

To understand the difference between egoistic action and altruistic action, we must grasp the difference between a trade and a sacrifice—between a gain and a loss—and we must not allow altruists to blur this distinction in our mind. Egoism, as we will see, calls for personal gains. Altruism, as we have seen, calls for personal losses.

Now, despite its destructive nature, altruism is accepted to some extent by almost everyone today. Of course, no one upholds it *consistently*—at least not for long. Rather, most people accept it as true—and then cheat on it.

All the major religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam—advocate altruism; their holy books demand it. All so-called “secular humanist” philosophies—utilitarianism, postmodernism, egalitarianism—call for altruism as well. (Note that “secular humanists” do not call themselves “secular egoists” or “secular individualists.”)

“Alter” is Latin for “other”; “altruism” means “other-ism”; it holds that you should sacrifice for others. From the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim points of view, the significant “others” are “God” and “the poor”; in the Old Testament, for instance, God says: “I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land” (Deuteronomy 15:11). From the utilitarian point of view, the “other” is “everyone in general”; the utilitarian principle is “the greatest good for the greatest number.” From the postmodern and egalitarian points of view, the “other” is anyone with less wealth or opportunity than you have; in other words, the better off you are, the more you should sacrifice for others—the worse off you are, the more others should sacrifice for you.

Sacrifice. Sacrifice. Sacrifice. Everyone believes it is the moral thing to do. And no philosopher has been willing to challenge this idea.

Except Ayn Rand:

[T]here is one word—a single word—which can blast the morality of altruism out of existence and which it cannot withstand—the word: “*Why?*” *Why* must man live for the sake of others? *Why* must he be a sacrificial animal? *Why* is that the good? There is no earthly reason for it—and, ladies and gentlemen, in the whole history of philosophy no *earthly* reason has ever been given.⁹

On examination, this is true. No reason has ever been given as to why people should sacrifice for others. Of course, *alleged* reasons have been given, but not legitimate ones. So let's consider the alleged reasons—of which there are approximately six—each of which involves a logical fallacy.

1. *"You should sacrifice because God (or some other voice from another dimension) says so."* This is not a reason—certainly not an earthly one. At best, it is an appeal to authority—that is, to the "authorities" who claim to speak for God. Just because a preacher or a book makes a claim does not mean the claim is true. The Bible claims, among other things, that a bush spoke. More fundamentally, this non-reason is an arbitrary claim because there is no evidence for the existence of a god. But even those who believe in a god can recognize the fallacy of appealing to an authority.

2. *"You should sacrifice because that's the general consensus."* This is not a reason but an appeal to the masses. Matters of truth and morality are not determined by consensus. That slavery should be legal used to be the general consensus in America, and is still the consensus in parts of Africa. That did not and does not make it so. Nor does consensus legitimize the notion that you or anyone else should sacrifice or be sacrificed.

3. *"You should sacrifice because other people need the benefit of your sacrifice."* This is an appeal to pity. Even if other people did need the benefit of your sacrifice, it would not follow that this is a reason to sacrifice. More importantly, however, the notion that people need the benefit of your sacrifice is false. What people need is to produce values and to trade them with others who produce values. And to do so, they and others must be *free* to produce and trade according to their own judgment. This, not human sacrifice, is what human life requires. (I'll touch on the relationship between freedom and egoism a little later.)

4. *"You should sacrifice because if you don't, you will be beaten, or fined, or thrown in jail, or in some other way physically assaulted."* The threat of force is not a reason; it is the opposite of a reason. If the force wielders could offer a reason why you should sacrifice, then they would not have to use force; they could use persuasion instead of coercion.

5. *"You should sacrifice because, well, when you grow up or wise up you'll see that you should."* This is not a reason, but a personal attack and an insult. It says, in effect, "If you don't see the virtue of sacrifice, then you're childish or stupid"—as if demanding a reason in support of a moral conviction could indicate a lack of maturity or intelligence.

6. *"You should sacrifice because only a miscreant or a scoundrel would challenge this established fact."* This kind of claim assumes that you regard

others' opinions of you as more important than your own judgment of truth. It is also an example of what Ayn Rand called "The Argument from Intimidation": the attempt to substitute psychological pressure for rational argument. Like the personal attack, it is an attempt to avoid having to present a rational case for a position for which no rational case can be made.

That's it. Such are the "reasons" offered in support of the claim that you should sacrifice. Don't take my word for it; ask around. Ask your philosophy professors. Ask a priest or rabbi. You will find that all the "reasons" offered are variants of these—each of which, so far from being a "reason," is a textbook logical fallacy. (Most even have fancy Latin names.)

Ayn Rand demanded *reasons* for her convictions. So should we.

She set out to discover a *rational* morality—one based on observable facts and logic. Rather than starting with the question "Which of the existing codes of value should I accept?"—she began with the question, "What are values and why does man need them?" This question pointed her away from the established views—and toward the facts of reality.

Looking at reality, Rand observed that a value is that which one acts to gain or keep. You can see the truth of this in your own life: You act to gain and keep money; you value it. You act to gain and keep good grades; you value them. You act to choose and develop a fulfilling career. You seek to meet the right guy or girl and build a wonderful relationship. And so on.

Looking at reality, Rand also saw that only living organisms take self-generated, goal-directed action. Trees, tigers, and people take actions toward goals. Rocks, rivers, and hammers do not. Trees, for example, extend their roots into the ground and their branches and leaves toward the sky; they value nutrients and sunlight. Tigers hunt antelope, and nap under trees; they value food and shade. And people act to gain *their* values, such as nutrition, education, a career, romance, and so on.

Further, Rand saw that the ultimate reason living organisms take such actions is to further their *life*. She discovered that an organism's life is its ultimate goal and standard of value—and that *man's* life is the standard of *moral* value: the standard by which one judges what is good and what is evil. Man's life—meaning: that which is required to sustain and further the life of a human being—constitutes the standard of moral value.

Now, the validation of the principle that life is the standard of value has a number of aspects, and we don't have time to consider all of them tonight. For our purposes here, I want to focus briefly on just a few.

By pursuing the question "Why does man need values?"—Ayn Rand kept her thinking *fact-oriented*. If man needs values, then the *reason* he needs them

will go a long way toward establishing which values are legitimate and which are not. If man doesn't need values, well, then, he doesn't need them—and there is no point in pursuing the issue at all. What Rand discovered is that man *does* need values—and the reason he needs them is in order to *live*. *Life*, she discovered, is the ultimate goal of our actions; life is the final end toward which all our other values are properly the means.

Granted, because we have free will we can take antilife actions—and, as we have seen, altruism senselessly calls for us to do just that. But the point is that we don't *need* to take antilife actions, unless we want to die—in which case, we don't really need to take any action at all. We don't need to do anything in order to die; if that's what we want, we can simply stop acting altogether and we will soon wither away.

If we want to live, however, we must pursue life-serving values—and we must do so by choice.

Free will enables us to choose our values. This is what gives rise to the field of morality. Morality *is* the realm of chosen values. But whatever our choices, these facts remain: The only reason we *can* pursue values is because we are alive, and the only reason we *need* to pursue values is in order to live.

This two-pronged principle of Rand's philosophy is essential to understanding how the Objectivist morality is grounded in the immutable facts of reality: (1) Only life makes values *possible*—since nonliving things cannot pursue values; and (2) only life makes values *necessary*—since only living things need to pursue values.

Observing reality, we can see that this is true: A rock doesn't have values. It *can't* act to gain or keep things; it just stays still—unless some outside force, such as a wave or a hammer, hits and moves it. And it doesn't *need* to gain or keep things, because its continued existence is *unconditional*. A rock can change forms—for instance, it can be crushed and turned to sand, or melted and turned to liquid—but it cannot go out of existence. The continued existence of a *living organism*, however, is *conditional*—and this is what gives rise to the possibility and need of values. A tree must achieve certain ends—or else it will die. Its chemical elements will remain, but its life will go out of existence. A tiger must achieve certain ends, too, or it will meet the same fate. And a person—if he is to remain alive—must achieve certain ends as well.

The Objectivist ethics—recognizing all of this—holds *human life* as the standard of moral value. It holds that acting in accordance with the requirements of human life is moral, and acting in contradiction to those requirements is immoral. It is a fact-based, black-and-white ethics.

Now, combining the principle that human life is the standard of moral value with the observable fact that people are individuals—each with his *own* body, his *own* mind, his *own* life—we reach another principle of the Objectivist ethics: Each individual's *own* life is his *own* ultimate value. This means that each individual is *morally* an end in himself—not a means to the ends of others. Accordingly, he has no moral “duty” to sacrifice himself for the sake of others. Nor does he have a moral “right” to sacrifice others for his own sake. On principle, neither self-sacrifice nor the sacrifice of others is moral, because, on principle, *human sacrifice as such is immoral*.

Human life does not require people to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others; nor does it require people to sacrifice others for their own sake. Human life simply does not require human sacrifice; people *can* live without giving up their minds, their values, their lives; people *can* live without killing, beating, robbing, or defrauding one another.

Moreover, human sacrifice cannot promote human life and happiness; it can lead only to suffering and death. If people want to live and be happy they must neither sacrifice themselves nor sacrifice others; rather, they must pursue life-serving values and respect the rights of others to do the same. And, given the role of morality in human life, in order to do so, they must accept the morality that *advocates* doing so.

In a sentence, the Objectivist ethics holds that human sacrifice is immoral—and that each person should pursue his own life-serving values and respect the rights of others to do the same. This is the basic principle of rational egoism. And the reason it sounds so good is because it *is* good; it is *right*; it is *true*. This principle is derived from the observable facts of reality and the demonstrable requirements of human life. Where else could valid moral principles come from? And what other purpose could they serve?

We can now see why Ayn Rand said, “The purpose of morality is to teach you, not to suffer and die, but to enjoy yourself and live.” Morality, properly conceived, is not a hindrance to a life of happiness; rather, it is the *means* to such a life.

So let us turn to the question of *how* to enjoy yourself and live. If that is the right thing to do, then what—according to the Objectivist ethics—is the means to that end?

First and foremost, in order to live and achieve happiness, we have to use *reason*. Hence the technically redundant word “rational” in “rational egoism.” Reason is our means of understanding the world, ourselves, and our needs. It is the faculty that operates by means of perceptual observation and conceptual

abstraction—by means of our five senses and our ability to think logically, to make causal connections, and to form principles.

It is by means of reason that we identify what things are, what properties they have, and how we can use them for our life-serving purposes. For example, it is by the use of reason that we learn about plants, soil, the principles of agriculture, and how to produce food. It is by means of reason that we learn about wool, silk, and how to make looms and produce clothing. It is by means of reason that we learn the principles of chemistry and biology and how to produce medicine and perform surgery; the principles of engineering and how to build homes and skyscrapers; the principles of aerodynamics and how to make and fly jumbo jets; the principles of physics and how to produce and control nuclear energy. And so on.

On a more personal level, it is by means of reason that we are able to develop fulfilling careers, to engage in rewarding hobbies, and to establish and maintain good friendships. And it is by means of reason that we are able to achieve success in romance.

Since this last is perhaps less obvious than the others, let's focus on it for a minute.

To establish and maintain a good romantic relationship, you have to take into account all the relevant facts pertaining to that goal. To begin with, you have to know what kind of relationship will actually be good for your life; you were not born with this knowledge, nor do you gain it automatically. To acquire it, you have to observe reality and think logically. Further, you have to find someone who suits your needs and lives up to your standards. To do so, you have to judge peoples' characters and qualities accurately—which requires reason. Once found, you have to treat the person justly—as he or she deserves to be treated. To do this, you have to understand and apply the principle of justice (which we will discuss shortly). Your means of understanding and applying it is reason.

To succeed in romance, you have to discover and act in accordance with a lot of facts and principles. You must think and act rationally. If you choose a lover irrationally, or treat your lover irrationally, then your love life will be doomed. I'm sure you all know of people who approach relationships irrationally—and what the results are.

The Objectivist ethics recognizes that reason is our basic means of living and achieving happiness. Thus, it upholds reason as our guide in *all* areas of life: material, spiritual, personal, social, sexual, professional, recreational—you name it.

Now, what about emotions? Where do they fit into the picture?

The Objectivist ethics recognizes and upholds the crucial role of emotions in human life and happiness. Emotions are our psychological means of enjoying life—which is the whole purpose of living. But, toward that end, it is important to treat emotions for what they *are* and not to expect them to be what they are *not*.

What exactly are emotions? They are automatic consequences of our *value judgments*. They arise from our *evaluations* of the things, people, and events in our lives. For instance, if you apply for a job that you consider ideal for your career path, and you get it, you will experience positive, joyful emotions. If you don't get it, you will experience feelings of frustration or disappointment. Similarly, if you have not seen your good friend for a long time and you run into him in a restaurant, you will be thrilled to see him. If, however, he informs you that he has joined the Church of Scientology, you will become highly upset. If he later tells you he was kidding, you will feel somewhat relieved. Likewise, if your favorite team wins a big game, you will react one way. If your team loses, you will react another way—especially if you bet a lot of money on the game.

Your emotions reflect what is important to you; they are, as Rand put it, “lightning-like estimates of the things around you, calculated according to your values.” As such, they are *crucial* to your life. If you did not experience the emotion of desire, you would have no motivation to take any actions at all—and you would soon die. If you never experienced joy, you would have no reason to remain alive; a life devoid of joy is not a life worth living. We *need* emotions.

But emotions are not our means of knowledge. They cannot tell us which berries are edible or how to build a hut, how to perform heart surgery or how to make an iPod, who is honest or who has a right to do what, what to do about terrorism or what will make us happy. Only reason can tell us such things.

Thus, rational egoism holds that we should respect each of our mental faculties for what it *is*. Unlike emotionalist moralities—which treat emotions as if they can tell us what is true and what is good and what is right—the Objectivist morality recognizes emotions for exactly what they are and treats them accordingly. To expect emotions to be what they are not—or to do what they cannot—is to misuse them. Just as we do not call child-abusers “pro-child,” so we should not call emotion-abusers “pro-emotion.” They are not.

The Objectivist ethics *is* pro-emotion—and it is the only moral code that is so. It is both 100 percent pro-reason—and 100 percent pro-emotion. It calls for the proper use of each mental faculty at all times on the grounds that human life and happiness *depend* on their proper use.

Reason is our only means of knowledge—and thus our basic means of living. Emotions are automatic consequences of our value judgments—and thus our psychological means of enjoying life. Properly understood, reason and emotions are not warring aspects of human nature; rather, they are a harmonious, life-serving team.

The Objectivist ethics holds that you should pursue your life-serving values with the *whole* of your life in mind, including all of your needs—physical, intellectual, and emotional—over your entire life span. Your basic means of doing so is reason.

Thus, egoism does *not* call for “doing whatever one pleases” or “doing whatever one feels like doing” or “stabbing others in the back to get what one wants.” Those are caricatures of egoism perpetrated by pushers of altruism who seek to equate egoism with hedonism, subjectivism, and predation. Again, don't be duped! Egoism is *not* hedonism; it does not say: “Do whatever gives you *pleasure* regardless of its effects on your life.” Egoism is *not* subjectivism; it does not say: “Do whatever you *feel* like doing regardless of the consequences.” And egoism is *not* predation; it not only denies that you *should* achieve values by abusing others; it fundamentally denies that you even *can* achieve life-serving values through dishonesty, injustice, or coercion.

Egoism does not hold pleasure or feelings or conquest as the standard of value. It holds *life* as the standard of value—and reason as your basic means of living. Thus, an egoist strives always to act in his long-term best interest—as judged by his use of reason. In other words, an egoist is *rationally goal-oriented*, which brings us to another key aspect of Rand's morality: the value of *purpose*.

A purpose is a conscious, intentional goal. A person acting purposefully is *after* something—as against meandering or wandering aimlessly. The rational pursuit of life-serving goals is the essence of good living; purpose is a hallmark of self-interest.

If we want to make the most of our days and years—if we want to be *fully* selfish—we have to be consciously goal-directed in every area of our life where choice applies. For instance, we have to choose a career that we will love. We have to think rationally about how to succeed in it. We need to plan long range and work hard to achieve excellence and happiness in our chosen field. We also have to choose and pursue interesting hobbies and recreational activities that will bring us great joy—whether making music or riding horses or surfing or blogging or the like. And, as mentioned earlier, we have to pursue friendships and romance. Such purposes are essential to a life of happiness.

Our purposes in life, according to the Objectivist ethics, are what make life *meaningful*. They are what fill our lives with intensity and subtlety and joy. They are the stuff of good living. And if our purposes are to serve their purpose, they must be chosen and pursued *rationally*. Reason and purpose go hand in hand. Having rational purposes is essential to our life and happiness.

Another value Rand identified as crucial to human life and happiness is *self-esteem*—the conviction that one is able to live and worthy of happiness. I won't say much about this, since it is a relatively obvious requirement of life and happiness. Suffice it here to say that we are not born with self-esteem; we have to *earn* it. And the only way to earn it is by thinking rationally and acting purposefully.

These three values—reason, purpose, and self-esteem—are, as Rand put it, “the three values which, together, are the means to and the realization of one's ultimate value, one's own life.”¹⁰ To live as human beings we have to think (reason); we have to choose and pursue life-promoting goals (purpose); and we have to achieve and maintain the conviction that we are able to live and worthy of happiness (self-esteem). All three are necessary for success in each area of our life.

Building on these basic values, let's turn to some key *social* principles Ayn Rand identified. We will look first at the Objectivist principle of *justice*.

“Justice,” writes Rand, “is the recognition of the fact that you cannot fake the character of men as you cannot fake the character of nature. . . .”¹¹ Because people have free will, a person's character is what he chooses to make it. We can either recognize this fact or fail to do so—but, either way, the fact remains. A person has the character he has; he is responsible for it; and his character, whether good or bad, can affect our life accordingly. A person of *good* character can generate good ideas, create life-serving products, provide friendship or romance, become an honest politician, or in some other way have a positive impact on our life. A person of *bad* character can generate evil ideas, destroy life-serving values, deceive us, assault us, steal our property, push for life-thwarting laws, or even murder us.

Justice is the virtue of judging people rationally—according to the available and relevant *facts*—and treating them accordingly—as they *deserve* to be treated. This is the basic principle of selfish human interaction. In order to live, to protect our rights, and to achieve happiness, we have to *judge* people. “The precept: ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged,’” writes Ayn Rand, “is an abdication of moral responsibility. . . . The moral principle to adopt in this issue, is: ‘Judge, and be prepared to be judged.’” Quoting Rand further:

Nothing can corrupt and disintegrate a culture or a man's character as thoroughly as does the precept of *moral agnosticism*, the idea that one must never pass moral judgment on others, that one must be morally tolerant of anything, that the good consists of never distinguishing good from evil.

It is obvious who profits and who loses by such a precept. It is not justice or equal treatment that you grant to men when you abstain equally from praising men's virtues and from condemning men's vices. When your impartial attitude declares, in effect, that neither the good nor the evil may expect anything from you—whom do you betray and whom do you encourage?¹²

Only one kind of person has anything to fear from moral judgment; the rest of us can only benefit from it. Being just consists in acknowledging this fact and acting accordingly.

To live successfully, happily, and freely, we have to judge our friends, our parents, our employers and employees, our professors, and our politicians. We have to judge *everyone* who has an impact on our life. We have to judge them rationally—and treat them accordingly.

In a sense, this is so obvious that it seems silly to have to say it. But given the commonly accepted views on morality—from the biblical tenet: “Judge not that ye be not judged” to the relativist mantra: “Who are you to judge?”—not only does it have to be mentioned; it has to be stressed. *Judging people rationally and treating them accordingly is a requirement of human life.*

While those who do not care about human life might be indifferent to this fact, those of us who want to live need to take it very seriously. We need to uphold and advocate the principle of justice, and not only when it comes to condemning those who are evil, but also, and more importantly, when it comes to praising, rewarding, and defending those who are good—those who think rationally and produce the values on which human life depends: scientists who discover the laws of nature, inventors who create new life-promoting devices and medicines, businessmen who produce and market life-promoting goods and services, artists who create spiritual values that fuel our souls and bring us joy, and so on. Justice demands that we recognize such people as *good*—good *because* they self-interestedly use reason and produce life-serving values.

By studying Ayn Rand's ethics—in addition to learning a great deal more about her ideas on reason, purpose, self-esteem, and justice—you will discover the objective meaning and selfish necessity of the virtues of honesty, integrity, productiveness, and pride. In each case, Rand points to the facts that give rise to the need of such virtues; she shows why your life and happiness depend on

them; and she provides an integrated philosophical system for guiding your actions accordingly.

I've merely indicated the kind of guidance offered by egoism. But in light of what we've seen so far, consider for a moment how it compares to the guidance offered by altruism. Given the many values on which human life and happiness depend—from material values, such as food, shelter, clothing, medical care, automobiles, and computers; to spiritual values, such as knowledge, self-esteem, art, friendship, and romantic love—we need a great deal of guidance in making choices and taking actions. We need moral principles that are conducive to the goal of living fully and happily over the course of years and decades. In answer to this need, egoism provides a whole system of integrated, noncontradictory principles, the sole purpose of which is to teach us how to live and enjoy life. In answer to this same need, altruism says: Don't be selfish; sacrifice your values; give up your dreams.

If we want to live and be happy, only one of these moralities will do.

And just as egoism is the only morality that provides proper guidance for our personal lives, so it is the only morality that provides a proper foundation for a civilized society. Let us turn briefly to the politics implied by egoism.

Like every ethical code, egoism has definite political implications. Just as the morality of self-sacrifice lays the groundwork for a particular kind of political system—one in which the government forces people to sacrifice (e.g., socialism, communism, fascism, theocracy)—so the morality of self-interest lays the groundwork for a certain kind of political system—one in which the government plays an entirely different role.

The basic question in politics is: What are the requirements of human life in a social context? What, in principle, must people do—or refrain from doing—in order to live together in a civilized manner? Here, Ayn Rand makes another crucial identification. Since we need to think rationally and act accordingly in order to live, we need to be *able* to act on our judgment. The only thing that can stop us from acting on our judgment is other people. And the only way they can stop us is by means of *physical force*. Quoting Rand:

It is only by means of physical force that one man can deprive another of his life, or enslave him, or rob him, or prevent him from pursuing his own goals, or compel him to act against his own rational judgment.

The precondition of a civilized society is the barring of physical force from social relationships—thus establishing the principle that if men wish to deal with one another, they may do so only by means of *reason*: by discussion, persuasion and voluntary, uncoerced agreement.¹³

If someone puts a gun to your head and tells you what to do, you cannot act on your judgment. The threat of death makes your judgment irrelevant; you now have to act on the gunman's judgment. If he says, "Give me your wallet," you have to give him your wallet. If he says, "Take off your clothes," you have to do that. If he says, "Don't object to my decrees," you must not object. You have to do whatever he says, or you'll get shot in the head. Your own judgment—your basic means of survival—has been overridden and is now useless.

And it makes no difference whether the gunman is a lone thug, or a group of thugs, or the KGB, or the senators and president of our rapidly deteriorating America. Whenever and to whatever extent physical force is used against you or me or anyone, the victim cannot act on his judgment, his basic means of living; thus, he cannot live fully as a human being. This is why rational egoism holds that the initiation of force against people is *evil*. It is evil because it is *antilife*.

On the basis of this identification, Rand established the objective case for individual rights. Since physical force used against a person is factually contrary to the requirements of his life—and since life *is* the standard of value—we need a moral principle to protect us from those who attempt to use force against us. That principle involves the concept of *rights*. Quoting Rand:

"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—the link between the moral code of a man and the legal code of a society, between ethics and politics. *Individual rights are the means of subordinating society to moral law. . . .*

A "right" is a moral principle defining and sanctioning a man's freedom of action in a social context.¹⁴

The key word here is *action*. Just as life is the standard of value and requires *goal-directed action*, so the *right* to life is the basic right and pertains to *freedom of action*. The right to life is the right to act as one's life requires—which means, according to one's basic means of survival—which means, on the judgment of one's own mind.

All other rights are derivatives of this fundamental right: The right to *liberty* is the right to be free from coercive interference by others. The right to *property* is the right to keep, use, and dispose of the product of one's effort. The right to the *pursuit of happiness* is the right to seek the goals and values of

one's choice. The right to *freedom of speech* is the right to express one's views regardless of what others think of them.

And because a right is a sanction to action, it is *not* a sanction to be given goods or services. There can be no such thing as a "right" to be given goods or services. If a person had a "right" to be given food, or a house, or medical care, or an education, what would this imply with regard to other people? It would imply that others have to be *forced* to provide him with these goods or services. It would imply that *some* people must produce while others dispose of their product. As Rand put it: "The man who produces while others dispose of his product is a slave."

If some men are entitled by right to the products of the work of others, it means that those others are deprived of rights and condemned to slave labor. Any alleged "right" of one man which necessitates the violation of the rights of another, is not and cannot be a right. No man can have a right to impose an unchosen obligation, an unwarranted duty or an involuntary servitude on another man. There can be no such thing as "*the right to enslave*."¹⁵

The North fought (and thankfully won) a legitimate war against the South on the principle that there can be no right to enslave. Rand made explicit the fundamental reason this principle is *true*. The reason each individual's life should *legally* belong to him is that each individual's life does in *factmorally* belong to him. Each individual is morally an end in himself—not a means to the ends of others. Each individual has a moral right to act on his own judgment for his own sake—and to keep, use, and dispose of the product of his effort—so long as he respects the same right of others.

The Objectivist ethics recognizes that to live as civilized beings—rather than as masters and slaves—we need a social system that protects each individual's rights to his life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness. The only social system that does so—consistently and on principle—is *laissez-faire capitalism*. Quoting Rand:

[Laissez-faire capitalism] is a system where men deal with one another, not as victims and executioners, nor as masters and slaves, but as *traders*, by free, voluntary exchange to mutual benefit. It is a system where no man may obtain any values from others by resorting to physical force, and *no man may initiate the use of physical force against others*.¹⁶

The only function of the government, in such a society, is the task of protecting man's rights, *i.e.*, the task of protecting him from physical force;

the government acts as the agent of man's right of self-defense, and may use force only in retaliation and only against those who initiate its use.¹⁷

The citizens of a laissez-faire society delegate the use of retaliatory force to the government and thus make domestic peace possible.

Of course, in an emergency situation, or when the police are not available, or when there is no time to rely on the government, citizens are morally and legally justified in using retaliatory force as necessary. (If someone comes running at you with a bowie knife, you are morally and legally justified in shooting him.) But in order to live together as civilized beings, rather than as feuding hillbillies, people must leave such force to the government whenever possible. As Rand put it, "The government is the means of placing the retaliatory use of force under *objective control*."¹⁸

In a capitalist society, if someone physically harms a person or damages his property or threatens to do either—and if this can be demonstrated by means of evidence—then the victim has grounds for legal recourse and, when appropriate, compensation. For instance, if someone defrauds a man, or threatens to murder him, or dumps trash in his yard, or poisons his water supply, or infringes on his patent—or in any other way causes him or his property specific harm—then the perpetrator has violated the man's rights. And if the man (or an agent on his behalf) can demonstrate that the perpetrator has done so, then he has a case against the rights violator and can seek justice in a court of law.

Properly understood, capitalism is all about enabling people to act on their own judgment, and to keep, use, and dispose of the product of their effort. It is all about stopping people from physically harming others or their property. It is all about recognizing and respecting individual rights. In other words, it is all about the requirements of human life in a social context.

Capitalism is the only social system that permits everyone to act fully according to his own judgment and thus to live fully as a human being. No other social system on earth does this. Thus, if human life is the standard of moral value, capitalism is the only moral social system.

Whereas rational egoism guides our choices and actions in pursuit of our life-serving goals and long-term happiness, laissez-faire capitalism protects individual rights by banning the initiation of physical force from social relationships. The two go hand in hand. Egoism makes human *existence* possible; capitalism makes human *coexistence* possible. Quoting Ayn Rand: "What greater virtue can one ascribe to a social system than the fact that it leaves no possibility for any man to serve his own interests by enslaving other

men? What nobler system could be desired by anyone whose goal is man's well-being?"¹⁹

Rand has much more to say about individual rights and capitalism; I have just touched on her revolutionary principles in this regard. *Atlas Shrugged* is a hymn to capitalism and the moral foundations on which it depends. And Rand's book *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* is a series of essays demonstrating the vital nature of the social system, and blasting common fallacies about it. For a good understanding of the principles of capitalism, I highly recommend both books.

Reflecting on what we've discussed so far, Rand's morality of selfishness holds that, in order to live as human beings, we must pursue our life-serving values and respect the rights of others to do the same. Put negatively: We must neither sacrifice ourselves to others—nor sacrifice others to ourselves. One of the heroes in *Atlas Shrugged* put it in the form of an oath: "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." That is an oath we can all live by. But to do so, we have to repudiate the morality of sacrifice.

Rand's morality of selfishness is all about living and loving life. It is the morality of pursuing values and refusing to surrender a greater value for a lesser one. It is the morality of *non-sacrifice*. There is no reason to act in a self-sacrificial manner, which is why no one has ever given a reason to do so. Nor is there any rational justification for sacrificing others, which is why no one has ever offered one of these, either. But there *is* a reason to act in a self-interested manner: Your life and happiness depend on it.

Since we necessarily operate on a code of values of some kind while making choices in life—since morality *is* inescapable—here is the alternative that we all face in this regard: We can passively accept a morality through social osmosis—or we can think the matter through for ourselves and decide what makes sense given the observable facts. We can accept appeals to authority, tradition, popular opinion, intimidation, and the like—or we can insist on *reasons* in support of the morality we choose to accept. In other words, we can rely on the views and opinions of others—or we can rely on the judgment of our own mind.

This brings us to the final point I want to make tonight—and to what I regard as the single most important aspect of the Objectivist ethics: the principle that you should rely on your own observations and your own use of logic, the principle that you should not accept ideas just because others accept them, the principle that you should think for yourself.

Since your mind is your only means of knowledge and your basic means of achieving your goals and values, rational egoism says that—if you want to live and be happy—you must *never* surrender your mind. You must never sacrifice your judgment to anyone or anything—neither to faith, nor feelings, nor friends, nor parents, nor professors, nor Ayn Rand. And no one is more adamant about this than Rand. As she put it, “The most selfish of all things is the independent mind that recognizes no authority higher than its own and no value higher than its judgment of truth.”²⁰

This is the Objectivist principle of *independence*. An independent thinker relies on his *own* judgment to determine what is true or false, good or bad, right or wrong. He does not turn to others to see what he should believe or value. He may learn from others—if they are rational and have something to teach him. He may take their advice—if it makes sense to him. And he may listen to their arguments—so long as they present evidence for their claims and proceed logically. But he always makes the final judgment by means of his own thinking. In regard to any important issue, he asks himself: “What are the facts? What does the evidence say? What do *I* think?” His primary orientation is not toward other people—not toward his peers or his parents or his professors—but toward reality. And his means of assessing reality is his own use of reason.

Because rational egoism recognizes that the individual's mind is his basic means of living, it holds rational, *independent* thinking as the essence of being moral. Unlike altruism, it does not call for you to accept its principles on faith or because others say so. Rational egoism is not a dogma. It is not a set of commandments or “categorical imperatives” from on high for you to obey.

In one of Rand's essays, she tells a story of an old black woman who, in answer to a man who was telling her that she's *got to* do something or other, says, “Mister, there's nothing I've *got to* do except die.”²¹ Rational egoism does not say that anyone has *got to* do anything. It says only that *if* you want to live and achieve happiness—then you must observe facts, use your mind, pursue your goals, not sacrifice greater values for the sake of lesser ones, uphold the principle of individual rights, and so on. That is not dogma. It is logic. It is recognition of the law of cause and effect.

And just as Rand's ethics is not dogmatic—so it is not relativistic. It is *absolute*. It is absolute because it is based on and derived from reality—from observable facts, from the laws of nature, from the requirements of human life.

Rand exposed the false alternative of dogmatism vs. relativism. In the light of her philosophy, we are no longer faced with the ugly option of Jerry Falwell's morality vs. Jerry Springer's—or that of Bill Bennett vs. that of Bill

Clinton. We now know of an *objective* ethics: one that is secular, observation-based, demonstrably true—and, best of all, *good* for you.

If you want to live a wonderful, value-laden life, you need a morality that supports that goal and guides you to act accordingly. You need a morality that upholds the value of rational, self-interested, purposeful action. Rational egoism is the only morality that does so. If you want to live in a society in which you are free to lead your life as you see fit—a society in which no one, including the government, may force you to act against your own judgment—you need a morality that is conducive to that goal. You need a morality that provides a foundation for the principle of individual rights. The only morality that does so is the Objectivist ethics.

The moral code you accept underlies and shapes everything you do in life. It determines whether you live a richly meaningful, truly happy life—or something less. And it determines whether you advocate a fully free, civilized society—or some other kind of society. I have given you just a brief sketch of Rand's ethics. There is a great deal more to it. Hopefully, I have inspired you to look further into the subject on your own.

I urge you to take a closer look at the morality that says you should live your life to the fullest and achieve the greatest happiness possible. Use your own judgment in assessing it. See if it makes sense to you. Read *Atlas Shrugged*, which is a spellbinding mystery at the heart of which is the conflict between altruism and egoism. Not only will you discover what happened to the earlier-mentioned disappearing producers; you'll also see Ayn Rand's ethics dramatized in ways that today will cause a feeling of *déjà vu*. Or, for a nonfiction introduction to rational egoism, read Rand's book *The Virtue of Selfishness*, which is a series of essays elaborating the groundbreaking principles of the Objectivist ethics—or my book *Loving Life: The Morality of Self-Interest and the Facts that Support It*, which is a systematic introduction to the ethics.

If you are not rationally convinced by the arguments, then do not accept them. To sacrifice your own judgment would be the most selfless thing you could do. I would never advocate such a thing—and neither would Ayn Rand. You should accept only those ideas that make sense to you.

But if you read up on this issue and *are* convinced—as I think you will be—then you can start living your life fully in accordance with the only moral code that is conducive to that goal: rational egoism—the morality Ayn Rand so appropriately called “The Morality of Life.”

5

Purpose, Value Hierarchies, and Happiness

Author's note: This essay is an edited version of a lecture I've delivered to various Objectivist community groups. It assumes some understanding of and agreement with the philosophy of Objectivism.

That we live only once is not speculation. This is it. This life is all we have. This fact, however, is not cause for despair; it is cause for action.

To quote a favorite ad, "It's not that life's too short, it's just that you're dead for so long." Our time in life is substantial—we might live to eighty, ninety, or even a hundred years old—and we can do a great deal in the decades we have. But we are going to die. And when we do, that's it. We're done. So: What to do?

As rational egoists—as people who know that the moral purpose of life is to maximize our personal happiness—we want to fill our days and years with accomplishments and joy. We want to wake up every morning and pursue our values with vigor. We want to thrive in a career we love, in romance, in our recreational pursuits, in our friendships, and so on. In short, we want to make our lives the best they can be.

That's easy to say. And, in a sense, it's easy to do: Just think rationally and act accordingly. In another sense, however, it is the single most difficult thing in the world.

Making our life the best it can be is the only project that requires the harmonious use of *all* of our resources and capacities—physical and mental, personal and social—toward a highly complex goal for the span of our entire life. No other project comes even close to this in terms of its demands. In fact, all of our other egoistic endeavors are subsumed under this one. Whether we are performing brain surgery, or composing a symphony, or building a semiconductor company, or raising children, or learning to hang glide—all

such endeavors are only projects *within* the broader goal of making the most of our life. Everything we do is but an aspect of this grand, all-encompassing goal.

To achieve the greatest happiness possible, we have to unify all of our choices, values, and goals into a single harmonious whole. This requires a great deal of thinking, selecting, planning, prioritizing, coordinating, reviewing, reevaluating, and so on. At every turn, we must gain or apply the necessary knowledge, use our best judgment, and act accordingly—with respect to the full context of our values and goals.

This is a huge subject, and, in keeping with the opening point, we have limited time. So I want to be clear about the scope of my talk. My goal tonight is to indicate the nature and importance of purpose (and related matters) in good living. My overarching point is that understanding and upholding the concept, value, and principle of purpose is essential to making your life the best it can be.

What is a purpose? It's a kind of goal—specifically, a conscious, intentional goal, a goal chosen and pursued for a desired outcome. Not all goals are purposes. For example, although plants have goals, in that they act to gain or keep things (e.g., sunlight and water), plants are not conscious and thus cannot engage in intentional action. Only certain conscious animals can act purposefully. Nor are all purposes equal in significance or scope. Although dolphins are conscious and may act intentionally or purposefully in a certain respect (e.g., they try to catch fish and may even help people or other animals in trouble in water), such intentions or purposes are orders of magnitude different from the kinds of long-range, wide-range, conceptual goals that human beings choose and pursue—such as, “I’m going to create an institute for the study of the cognitive capacities of sea life.” A purpose in the sense that we are talking about here is a volitional and *conceptual* goal.

Although the concept of purpose is narrower than that of goal (in that all purposes are goals but not vice versa), purpose is nevertheless a very broad concept—broader than some egoists or Objectivists might think. And grasping its breadth is essential to employing this cardinal value toward maximizing our personal happiness.

Importantly, purpose is not the equivalent of central purpose. A central purpose is a *kind* of purpose, namely, a primary long-range productive goal, the central goal around which one integrates all of one's other projects and goals.¹ Depending on one's age and circumstances, one's central purpose might be completing school, building a business, advancing one's career, raising one's children—or working toward selecting a central purpose. But such goals do not exhaust the meaning of purpose. Purpose is much broader

and much deeper than that, and, if we want to think clearly about how to live selfishly, we need to understand and employ the concept and value of purpose in all its breadth and depth.

To treat central purpose as the equivalent of purpose is to commit the fallacy of the frozen abstraction. It is to freeze the concept of purpose at the level of one of the narrower abstractions that is subsumed under it, and thus to omit from the broader concept all of the other crucially important kinds of purposes—purposes we need to conceptualize, embrace, and pursue if we are to live fully. Among the many purposes that are omitted from the concept of purpose by the commission of this fallacy is the moral purpose of life, which is the achievement of your personal happiness. That is not something you want to omit from your thinking!

Life is not all about work—it is all about achieving happiness. If we want to achieve the greatest happiness possible, we must pursue many purposes in addition to our central purpose. We must pursue romantic relationships, recreational activities, leisure activities, friendships, homes, vacations, adventures, and so on. These are not central purposes, but they are crucial, life-serving purposes. And if we want to make the most of our lives, we must see them as such, conceptualize them as such, and proceed to design our lives accordingly.

Religionists are right about two things: There is a designer, and he is intelligent. But he is not God. He is *you*. And what he designs is not the universe, but *your* universe: your life.

Living fully purposefully consists in intelligently designing every aspect of your life that is open to your choice. This means always acting with a specific life-serving purpose in mind—whether in regard to work, play, romance, or rest. Put negatively, it means never acting aimlessly.

Here's a relevant passage you may recall from *Atlas Shrugged*:

“I don't know what sort of motto the d'Anconias have on their family crest,” Mrs. Taggart said once, “but I'm sure that Francisco will change it to ‘What for?’” It was the first question he asked about any activity proposed to him—and nothing would make him act, if he found no valid answer. He flew through the days of his summer months like a rocket, but if one stopped him in midflight, he could always name the purpose of his every random moment. Two things were impossible to him: to stand still or to move aimlessly.²

“What for?” means “For what *purpose*?”

The question “What’s the purpose?” regarding any given endeavor is the question: “What does this mean for my life?”

Purpose, like reason, is *fundamental* in the Objectivist ethics because it is fundamental to good living. In a certain respect, purpose is even more fundamental than reason.

Reason is our basic value—but only because it is our basic means of achieving our basic *purpose*: that of living and loving life. This purpose necessitates reason, not vice versa. This purpose makes reason a value, not vice versa. This purpose is the end; reason is the means.

This means-end relationship holds not only with respect to our most basic purpose, but with respect to *all* of our purposes. We need to use reason if we want to succeed in our career—if we want to enjoy our recreational activities—if we want to establish and maintain good relationships—if we want to defend our rights—and so on.

Reason is, as Rand put it, “a purposefully directed process of cognition.”³ We think in order to gain knowledge of the world and our needs—so that we can act accordingly—so that we can achieve our chosen goals—so that we can live and love life. Reason is a value because it serves our purposes—and *only* because it serves them. To put it most starkly: Apart from our purposes, reason wouldn’t even be a value.

This fact in no way diminishes the value of reason. Reason, not purpose, is our means of knowledge. Reason, not purpose, is our basic means of survival. The only way to identify the requirements of life and happiness is by using reason.

The only way to choose or pursue valid, life-serving purposes is by means of reason. Reason is our supreme life-serving value.

So the point of my emphasis here is not to demote reason, but to *promote* purpose—or, more accurately, to recognize it for what it really is.

Recognizing the full breadth and depth of the concept and value of purpose is essential to understanding and embracing a closely related and crucial tool—the *principle* of purpose: the fundamental truth that, if you want to make your life the best it can be, you must be consciously goal-directed in every aspect of your life where choice applies.⁴

To say that this is a demanding principle would be quite an understatement, so, before we consider how to uphold it, let’s be emphatically clear about the answer to “What for?”

What is the purpose of this principle? Well, it’s not to uphold the categorical imperative that “thou shalt be purposeful!” There is no such thing as a categorical imperative. There are only conditional imperatives, such as:

If you want to maximize your happiness in life, then you must embrace the means to that end. The purpose of being fully purposeful is to achieve the greatest happiness possible.

At any time, in regard to any endeavor, without conscious reference to a rational, life-serving purpose, you cannot know what is good for your life or bad for it, whether in regard to crucially important matters or in regard to relatively trivial ones. Consider, for instance, cleaning your house. How clean is clean enough? Should you sterilize the place? Without a purpose in mind, you could waste a lot of time scrubbing tiles.

Consider exercising or working out. How much is enough? Should you make yourself as fit as an Olympian? You wouldn't get much else done if you did. The question is: Fit for what? What is your purpose here? Are you aiming to win some major athletic competition, or are you just trying to stay healthy, energetic, and attractive? Your proper level of fitness depends on your purposes in life—and you can't decide on that proper level without reference to those purposes.

Take studying philosophy. Which philosophers should you study? Which branches should you focus on? Which problems or questions should you tackle? How much time—if any—should you spend on this? Assuming you're not a professional philosopher, if you spent as much time studying philosophy as professional philosophers do, your other values—such as your career, your business, your love life, and your health—would suffer severely. And if you are going to study this vast subject profitably, you need to know what you are trying to get from it so you can guide your studies accordingly.

How about the vital activity of introspecting? How much time should you spend on this? A few minutes per month? A few hours per week? Days on end? It depends on what you are trying to accomplish. Is your goal to routinely monitor your mental processes, ideas, and emotions so that you can think clearly and act accordingly? Or are you working with a therapist to unearth some deep-rooted psychological problem that is wrecking your life? Or are you doing research for a book you're writing on the process and value of introspecting? Your purpose makes a difference.

If a person thinks or acts without respect to consciously chosen, life-serving goals, then he is proceeding either "from duty" (like a Kantian robot) or aimlessly (like a Kerouacian hippie). Either way, he is not being selfish—and he will pay the price. He will find himself either strapped by bogus obligations—or awash in a sea of concretes without the abstractions necessary to navigate life.

Your purposes not only guide you; they *are* you. There is no *self* apart from one's purposes; there is no you apart from your chosen goals. What you choose to do and how you choose to do it *is* who you are.

If you want to make the most of your life, then, no matter what you are doing at any given time, you should know *why* you are doing it. You should know the purpose of the activity in relation to the full context of your values and goals. Whether you are designing an oil rig, or watching a movie, or receiving a massage, or running a marathon, you should know *why*—given the full context of your knowledge and values—this is what you should be doing right now. There is no “duty” to know why; there is only the fact that you live only once and that every precious, irretrievable moment of your life is spent either in optimal service of your life and happiness or in some suboptimal way.

Consider what this means in regard to the major areas of life.

The major areas of life include career, romance, recreation, friendship, and, if you have children, parenting. There are essentially two ways to approach each of these areas: fully purposefully or less than fully purposefully. What does it mean to be fully purposeful in one of these areas? It means to rationally determine exactly what you want—and then to selfishly pursue it to the best of your ability.

Take central purpose first. Have you chosen your career or education goals by reference to the full context of your values and options? Have you done due diligence here? Or have you fallen into your job (or, if in college, your major) because it was convenient or expected of you? Are you pursuing your central purpose with passion and rigor; are you thinking through every aspect of this crucial mission and putting forth your best effort at every turn? Or are you occasionally coasting in regard to this vital and defining issue? (Coasting here doesn't mean doing other important, life-serving things in addition to your central purpose; rather, it means pursuing your central purpose in a less than fully selfish way.) Your central purpose is the main source of your self-esteem and happiness in life. Coasting is not a selfish option.

Take romance. Do you really know what you want in a romantic relationship—and are you making a concerted effort to achieve or maintain it? Or are you loafing on the love front? If you're single, have you thought out the essential qualities you want in a romantic partner? Or are you relying on unexamined emotional reactions to potential candidates? Are you actively pursuing romance? Or are you waiting for it to knock on your door? If you have a lover, are you treating him or her as the crucial value he or she is to you? Do you express your love openly and justly? Do you work rationally to keep

the relationship alive, fresh, exciting, rewarding? Or are you coasting in an emotional auto-mode of some sort?

Our emotions are crucially important—especially in the realm of romance—but they cannot tell us who is good or bad for our life, or how to establish or maintain wonderful, life-enhancing relationships. Only reason can—and *only* if we choose to apply it with respect to our life-serving purposes.

Take recreation. Have you chosen your recreational activities purposefully? Have you considered the relevant alternatives and zeroed in on the ones that are likely to bring you the greatest joy? Or have you just fallen into something by accident or mere convenience? Playing basketball might be a perfect recreational activity for you—or it might not. It depends on whether you’ve made the determination on the basis of selfish due diligence. If you just happen to play basketball because there’s a court near your house, then you might be (and probably are) missing out on an alternative that you would find more rewarding—perhaps kayaking or ballroom dancing or horseback riding—which you would discover if you were to approach the issue fully purposefully.

Take friendship. Who are your friends? With whom do you spend your precious social time? Who do you dine with, ski with, chat with over a beer? There are a whole lot of people out there. Do you engage with interesting, virtuous ones—people who deserve your company and bring you great joy? Or do you spend your time and energy in mediocre relationships—or worse? Meeting interesting and good people is not always easy, but hanging out with uninteresting or unethical folks is no way to make an effort. You can always visit a new coffeehouse, join a different gym, try a new hobby, or the like and meet new people in the process. If you want wonderful, life-enhancing relationships, you must make a conscious, purposeful effort.

If you are a parent, similar questions apply. Are you doing your best to provide your child with rational guidance, good education, and opportunities to explore his interests? Do you have a rational, purposeful approach to parenting? Or are you just winging it? The rewards of parenting are largely a result of the rationality and purposefulness of one’s parenting program.

Living purposefully means being thoughtful about *everything* you do. It means being fully intentional at every turn. It means living your life like it’s your only one—which, of course, it is.

It is a simple but profound truth that our time is limited and that every moment that passes is really gone forever. This fact gives rise to what I call *the principle of non-neutrality*. There is no such thing as a neutral action. Since the hours and days of life are limited and irretrievable, to spend any time doing

something that is not good for your life is to act in a manner that is bad for your life. Any action that does not promote your life thereby squanders it.

This means that not only is drifting not pro-life; it is *anti*-life—and any degree of it is anti-life. To the extent that we are not acting consciously on behalf of chosen life-serving values, we are acting *selflessly*. And if we do not establish our purposes, organize them rationally, and pursue them accordingly, then we *will* drift; we will live less than fully purposefully—which means less than fully selfishly—which means less than fully happily.

Now, this doesn't mean that we should panic if we find ourselves drifting. That would serve no purpose! Rather, it means that we should commit (or recommit) ourselves to living fully purposefully.

Living purposefully means seeing every moment of every day as a precious, irreplaceable part of an integrated whole—and acting accordingly.

What practical steps are necessary to live this way? One crucial step is to explicitly organize and prioritize our values and goals with respect to their relative importance to our life and happiness.

Consider a highly relevant passage from Rand's *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*. Bear in mind here that "telos" means "end" or "goal"; thus "teleological" means "goal-directed." A teleological measurement is a value calculation made with respect to the relative importance of a number of goals or values.

A moral code is a set of abstract principles; to practice it, an individual must translate it into the appropriate concretes—he must choose the particular goals and values which he is to pursue. This requires that he define his particular hierarchy of values, in the order of their importance, and that he act accordingly. Thus all his actions have to be guided by a process of teleological measurement. (The degree of uncertainty and contradictions in a man's hierarchy of values is the degree to which he will be unable to perform such measurements and will fail in his attempts at value calculations or at purposeful action.)

Teleological measurement has to be performed in and against an enormous context: it consists of establishing the relationship of a given choice to all the other possible choices and to one's hierarchy of values.

The simplest example of this process, which all men practice (with various degrees of precision and success), may be seen in the realm of material values—in the (implicit) principles that guide a man's spending of money. On any level of income, a man's money is a limited quantity; in spending it, he weighs the value of his purchase against the value of every other

purchase open to him for the same amount of money, he weighs it against the hierarchy of all his other goals, desires and needs, then makes the purchase or not accordingly.

The same kind of measurement guides man's actions in the wider realm of moral or spiritual values. (By "spiritual" I mean "pertaining to consciousness." I say "wider" because it is man's hierarchy of values in this realm that determines his hierarchy of values in the material or economic realm.) But the currency or medium of exchange is different. In the spiritual realm, the currency—which exists in limited quantity and must be teleologically measured in the pursuit of any value—is *time*, i.e., *one's life*.⁵

The crucial points here for our present purpose are: (1) Our fundamental currency in life—the thing we spend one way or another depending on the clarity and consistency of our value hierarchy (or lack thereof)—is our *time*, which *is* our life. They're the same thing. (2) If we don't have our values organized and prioritized with respect to their relative importance—and thus integrated into a noncontradictory life-serving whole—we can't even *think* in a consistently selfish manner, let alone act in a consistently selfish manner.

The first point is relatively obvious: Our time is our life. What we do with our time—and how we do it—is what we make of our life. The second point, although not immediately obvious, is on examination true. "Should I go to the ball game this Saturday? Or should I go to the office and work?" Observe that the question cannot be rationally answered without knowing how these alternatives fit into the hierarchy and network of my other values, needs, goals, purposes. What is the nature of this ball game? Is my son or daughter playing in it? What is my situation at work? Is this Monday the deadline for a major project? What is the context here? What other values and aspects of my life are relevant to my making this decision? And, given that context, what matters most?

To think rationally—to think selfishly—we must organize our values hierarchically and refer to them regularly. Some of the elements of the hierarchy are relatively straightforward. Our career (or our need to choose one) is certainly going to be one of our top values, as are our health, our romantic interests, and, if we have children, our children. And each of these top values entails or implies many related values, elements, and aspects. Plus there are all of our other values—recreation, friendships, art, fitness, home improvements, travel, and so on—along with all of the aspects of these values and goals. If we want to think clearly about our choices, goals, and actions in life, we need

to know how our values relate to one another. We need a value hierarchy that includes and accounts for the many things that matter to our happiness.

If I want to lose my gut or strengthen my quads or the like but don't include this goal in my value hierarchy in a way that integrates with my other values, then I will not put sufficient mental attention toward this goal to generate the kind of physical effort required to achieve it. Likewise, if I want to travel but don't include travel goals in my value hierarchy in a way that integrates with my other values, then I won't be able to think clearly about travel or related matters; thus, among other problems, I may only fantasize about travel, rather than actually do it.

To make objective calculations and decisions about what is best for our life and happiness, we must establish and maintain a personal and rational value hierarchy; and we must refer to it regularly, review it periodically, and revise it as necessary over the course of our life. I discuss this process and related matters in detail in my forthcoming book, *Thinking in Principles: The Science of Selfishness*, but I'll touch on a few essentials here.

The first thing to note is that mere desires are not the same thing as values. Values are not just things we dream about or long for; rather, they are things we *act* to gain or keep. The key word here is: act. If we dream about someday starting our own business but never take action toward making that a reality, then we don't truly value it. Values are objects of actions.

The second and related thing to note is that we have a value hierarchy of some sort already, whether or not we're conscious of it. Our existing value hierarchy consists of whatever we recently have been and currently are acting to gain or keep. This may or may not be the value hierarchy we want; it may not be consistent with our genuinely self-interested needs and desires. But if we have been taking action at all—which, of course, we have—then we've been allotting time to the corresponding goals and thereby assigning them relative value. Toward establishing and pursuing the hierarchy we *want*, the starting point is to identify the one we have and then compare it to the one we want so that we can see the changes we need to make.

To identify your actual value hierarchy, look back at the past few months of your life, observe how you have actually spent your time, and write down all the major time expenditures on paper or on your preferred electronic device. (Omit normal, healthy sleep hours, but include extra sleep necessitated by heavy drinking or the like.) Writing down these items is crucial because there will be too many units to retain otherwise, and because you'll need to be able to see the big picture and all of its parts in order to make selfish use of the hierarchy.

What have you been doing with your time? If you've been working fifty hours per week at a job you love, then you've been valuing that job that much. If you've been working fifty hours per week at a job you loathe, you've been valuing *that* job that much. If you've been watching television for two hours per night, then you've been valuing the shows you've been watching—and valuing them above all other possible uses of that time. If you've been taking ballroom dancing lessons for a few hours per week, then you've been valuing those lessons above all other possible uses of that time. If you've been engaging with your lover in the evenings, then you've been valuing him or her accordingly. If you've been building an addition onto your house during the weekends, or going sailing on Sunday afternoons, or taking aikido lessons on Thursday evenings, or hanging out with friends on Friday nights, or sleeping all day on Saturdays—then you've been valuing that particular engagement to that extent. And so on.

Once you have accounted for all of the major time expenditures in your recent past, simply arrange the items with respect to the amount of time you've spent on each, and there, roughly, is your hierarchy of values. (There is also the matter of the *quality* of the effort exerted in these areas, but I'm setting this aside here, as our time is limited.) This value hierarchy may or may not portray the life you want to be living. But it provides an enormous value toward making change, if that is what you want to do.

(It is important to note here that although we may spend the majority of our waking hours working, one of the reasons we do this is that our work enables us to pursue all of our other values. Our work provides us with money for food, homes, and countless other material values; it provides us with self-confidence and self-respect, which improve all aspects of our life; and it buys us time to spend on recreation, leisure, and—most importantly—with the people we love. So bear in mind that the fact that we spend more time working than we do with our loved ones does not mean that we value work more than we value them; rather, it means that we recognize, implicitly if not explicitly, the integrated nature of our values and the causal relationships involved.)

With your actual value hierarchy in hand, you can fruitfully turn to your *desired* hierarchy. Here the overarching question is: What do you *want* to do with your time?, which means: What do you *want* to make of your life? The goal is to write down what you want in each major or significant area of your life, and to begin arranging these potential goals in an integrated, noncontradictory way—prioritizing the things you want most, subordinating the things that matter less, and eliminating or postponing the things that can't

be integrated at this time. (If you want to move to Denver *and* go surfing every day, something has to give.)

Your life is yours to design, and you can design it intelligently or otherwise. As an egoist, you want to design it intelligently. And your only limitation is the law of causality. You know the proverb that Rand said captures the essence of the Objectivist ethics—“God said: ‘Take what you want, and pay for it’”—that’s what this is all about. What do you want? And what must you do to get it?

The goal here is to put down on paper a blueprint of your ideal life—*all* the things you want to do during this one, limited, precious life you have—so that you can begin taking specific actions to design your life in the image of your selfish desires. Once you have both your actual and your desired value hierarchies in front of your eyes, you can begin to identify the changes you need to enact (if any) toward making your life the best it can be.

(For more on value hierarchies and related matters, including principles and techniques for breaking down complex goals into subgoals and ultimately into specific action steps, see *Thinking in Principles*.)

Of course, in addition to organizing and hierarchizing our desired values, we have to commit ourselves to doing our very best in pursuing and enjoying them. Given our time restraints, I can’t say much on this subject tonight, but I want to touch briefly on the essence of the matter and mention a few helpful principles and standing orders.

The essence of the issue here is that we have to commit ourselves to the virtue of *pride*—the virtue of upholding all of the virtues all of the time—the virtue of moral ambitiousness.⁶ Contrary to the tenets of fantasy philosophies (such as religion and Kantianism), moral perfection is not only possible, it is also necessary if you want to make your life the best it can be. Moral perfection does not mean never making an innocent mistake or an error of knowledge. Rather it means always using your best judgment given your knowledge. If your values are in selfish order, and if you keep them that way by adjusting your value hierarchy in accordance with your rational desires as a matter of course, then you *can* act in a consistently selfish manner—and thereby (literally) make your life the best it can be.

I assume that you are familiar with the major Objectivist virtues—rationality, honesty, integrity, and the like—so I’m not going to say much about them here. But I do want to point out the necessity and beauty of converting these highly abstract principles into more specific guides to thought and action—guides that take into account *your* personal needs, *your* personal context, *your* personal strengths and weaknesses, *your* particular purposes.

The precepts to always go by reason, never fake reality, always uphold rational principles, be morally ambitious, and the like are so abstract that if we don't convert them into more specific principles of action, we are not likely to succeed in our efforts at upholding them. We need personal techniques, standing orders, and principles of action that work for us, given our specific circumstances.

I have developed several that I find very helpful, and I'll present a few here just to indicate what I have in mind and how they work.

One standing order I use is "Go about your business." I'm sure you are familiar with various "business and life" analogies, but this one—in conjunction with the Objectivist ethics—is particularly profound. Just as the saying "Time is life" is cliché but true, so too for "Life is business."

Living consists in producing, consuming, and trading values—both material and spiritual. We produce goods and services, whether cattle or automobiles or medical care or the like; and we produce spiritual values, such as ideas, moral character, and self-esteem. All of this is currency in the business of life. As egoists, we are constantly producing and trading. We live by "doing business."

Take "your business" here to mean your well-thought-out hierarchy of values, the full context of your circumstances, and the causes necessary to achieve your goals. This standing order—"Go about your business"—helps you to remain selfish when your immediate desires or emotions might distract you from the actual, considered hierarchy of your values and your plans to achieve them. For instance, suppose there is a party tonight that you would love to attend, but you have a crucial deadline tomorrow—such as a term paper or a business proposal—and you must work tonight to make it. Depending on the state of your subconscious, the thought of the party might be distracting—even seductive. It could even make you feel as though going to the party would really be in your best interest. The standing order "Go about your business" reminds you that you've already established what is in your best interest; you already have a plan. It reminds you that you've already thought this through, already established what matters most, already made the selfish decision. Thus, it frees you of the shortsighted temptation to commit what would in this context be a sacrifice.

"Go about your business" can also be helpful when the next task you need to do in some endeavor is unpleasant or infuriating—say, cleaning out your chaotic closet or having to attend a "diversity" training class where you work. Likewise, it can be helpful when the going gets tough—say, you lose a major customer or get fired or break up with your lover. Such losses can *feel* like

the end of the world, but if you remind yourself of the full context of your values—of the master plan of which these are aspects—then you can refocus your energy on the positive and move forward.

As an egoist, “your business” is to be true to the full context of your selfish values by respecting their hierarchy and enacting the causes necessary to achieve them. Do you ever find yourself procrastinating? “Go about your business!” Watching too much television? “Go about your business!” Avoiding the gym? Dwelling on losses or misfortunes of the past? Spending too much time on Facebook? “Go about your business!”

Just as angel investors are looking for return on investment, so too are we ego investors. Our investment in life is our time and effort. The return we are seeking is a life filled with values and happiness. Where we choose to put our time and effort largely determines our success or failure.

Decide what you want, organize your values accordingly, and “Go about your business.”

Another business-oriented standing order I use is “Focus on the benefits.” This one helps with motivation—specifically, motivation by values or love as against motivation by pain or fear, the carrot as against the stick.

Why do advertising and marketing specialists recommend to businessmen that they “sell the benefits, not the features” of their products? The reason is that the general (and correct) assumption of the marketplace is that people are largely motivated by their selfish values, that they want to know “What’s in it for me?”. As Objectivists, we recognize the deeper truth that the only legitimate reason why we (or anyone) should do anything is because we can see what is in it for us. As Francisco insists, “What for?”

Do you need to wake up at 4 a.m. in order to work on that business plan before going to work so you can start your own company this year? Getting out of bed that early can be difficult. But if, when the alarm goes off, you immediately enact the standing order to “Focus on the benefits” of getting this thing done, you can draw yourself out of bed with relative ease. The trick is to picture the benefits as vividly as possible: that beautiful restaurant with the bougainvillea-covered pergola, your happy customers sitting at linen-topped tables ordering your best bottles of wine to go with your melt-in-the-mouth duck breast, the glowing reviews on Yelp and Urban Spoon, the financial security for you and your family . . . The aim is to focus not on the feature—in this case, the writing of the business plan—but on the reason you are writing it: the “What for?”. Once you are out of bed and have had some coffee, you can turn your attention to the feature, at which time you’ll find yourself pleasantly eager to write it.

Likewise if you need to motivate yourself to go to the gym at the end of an exhausting workday, “Focus on the benefits”: Think about the wonderful things that being fit enables you to do—and that you will do—from feeling healthy and being energetic when you wake in the mornings, to looking great in your suit or dress or swimwear, to skiing with your children when you’re eighty.

This technique does not make every effort a breeze; that’s not the point. The point is that when we have to do difficult things that are good for our lives, we need to use the best tools we have to motivate ourselves to act. One of the best tools we have toward this end is our love of our values. Motivating ourselves by appealing to them works. The secret to making this technique work is to visualize the benefits as vividly as possible. Try it. You’ll be surprised how well it works.

One more vital principle I use is what I call *the 100 percent rule*: One hundred percent of the shots you don’t take won’t go in. (This is adapted from hockey player Wayne Gretzky’s great line, “You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.”)

I discovered this gem when I was single, and I applied it, among other ways, to various aspects of the process of seeking a great girl—and it worked. One hundred percent of the girls you don’t ask out won’t go out with you. But the principle applies to pretty much everything: One hundred percent of the schools you don’t apply to won’t accept you. One hundred percent of the business plans you don’t create won’t be funded. One hundred percent of the articles you don’t write won’t be published. One hundred percent of the scuba lessons you don’t take won’t move you closer to swimming through underwater worlds of wonder. One hundred percent of the flights you don’t book won’t take you to Italy. And so on. In every case, although taking action might not guarantee that you will get the value, it markedly increases your chances—and not taking action guarantees that you won’t get the value.

(For more of these kinds of highly practical principles and standing orders, see *Thinking in Principles*.)

Living *fully* purposefully means deciding what you truly selfishly want in each of the major areas of your life—and all of the lesser areas, too—figuring out what you need to do to get them, and going after them as if you live only once, because you do. It means filling every moment of your life with the pursuit of conscious, intentional, self-serving goals. It means being fully selfish as a matter of unwavering principle.

Is this easy? No. But you now have a few more vital tools toward that end—and the incentive couldn’t be better. Get busy living.

Endnotes

1. The Beauty of Ayn Rand's Ethics

1. See Ayn Rand, "Causality Versus Duty" in *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (New York: Signet, 1982), 95–101.
2. For more on the Objectivist ethics, see Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964), 13–39. See also Craig Biddle, *Loving Life: The Morality of Self-Interest and the Facts that Support It* (Richmond, VA: Glen Allen Press, 2002).

2. Secular, Objective Morality: Look and See

1. For example, in the Bible, God deliberately drowns practically everyone on earth (Genesis 6:7); calls for the murder of blasphemers (e.g., Leviticus 24:16), infidels (e.g., Deuteronomy 13:6–9), homosexuals (e.g., Leviticus 20:13), and children who curse or disobey their parents (e.g., Leviticus 20:9, Deuteronomy 21:18–21); and condones slavery (e.g., Leviticus 25:44, Deuteronomy 15:12) and rape (e.g., Deuteronomy 22:28–29, Numbers 31:15–18). Likewise, in the Koran, God calls for the murder of unbelievers (e.g., 2:191, 9:5) and for making sex slaves of their wives and daughters (e.g., 4:24, 33:50).
2. See Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964), 13.
3. Recognition of this fact is the death knell of the entire duty-based approach to ethics advocated by Immanuel Kant and his followers. If man needs morality or values, then he must need them for some life-serving purpose. What else could "need" mean? If man doesn't need values, then there is no point in telling him which values, much less which code of values, he should adopt.
4. See Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 16.
5. See Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 16.
6. Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 16.
7. Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 16.
8. See Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 17.
9. See Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 17.
10. Observe, in this connection, that people who use moral terms—such as "good" and "evil," or "should" and "shouldn't"—while denying the existence of free will commit the fallacy Ayn Rand called "concept stealing," which consists in using a concept while ignoring or denying a more fundamental concept or fact on which it logically depends. If people have no choice in their actions, if they are predetermined to act as they do, then moral terms have no referents in reality. What could "ought" mean if a person has no more choice in what he does than he did about whether or not to be born? What could "evil" mean if everything people do is as out of their control as the fact that water is wet? The existence of morality depends on the existence of free will. Thus, to use a concept such as "morality" or "virtue" or "should" or the like while denying the existence of free will is to rip the concept away from its foundation and the context that gives it meaning. For a particularly egregious example of this fallacy,

see Sam Harris's denial of free will in conjunction with his book *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 2010). In that book, Harris sets forth his views on how we can know what is moral and immoral and how we should and shouldn't act. However, he also says that "free will is an illusion" and that "you are no more responsible for the next thing you think (and therefore *do*) than you are for the fact that you were born into this world" (104). Well, if people don't have free will and are not responsible for their thoughts or actions, why write a book about how people *should* and *shouldn't* act? If they have no choice in the matter, they have no choice in the matter.

11. See my essay "The Creed of Sacrifice vs. The Land of Liberty," *The Objective Standard*, Fall 2009.
12. See my article "Altruism: The Morality of Logical Fallacies," TOS Blog, May 22, 2006, <https://www.theobjectivestandard.com/2006/05/altruism-the-morality-of-logical-fallacies/>.
13. Whereas the broadest, most basic definition of the concept "value" is, "that which one acts to gain or keep," once we have used this basic definition in conjunction with various other observations and integrations to arrive at the objective standard of moral value (i.e., the requirements of human life), we can then see that a *morally correct* value is defined as, "that which one rationally acts to gain or keep for the purpose of sustaining or furthering one's life." For more on these two definitions, see Leonard Peikoff, "Unity in Epistemology and Ethics" lecture (New Milford: Second Renaissance Books, 1997); and my book *Loving Life*, especially chapters 3, 4, and 6.
14. Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 26.
15. The choice to use reason or not to use it—to think or not to think—is, as Rand observed, the locus of our free will. Free will "is your mind's freedom to think or not, the only will you have, your only freedom, the choice that controls all the choices you make and determines your life and your character." Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York: Signet, 1963), 127.
16. See Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 28.
17. See Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 29.
18. See Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 28.
19. *The Objective Standard*, Fall 2011.
20. For more on the nature of individualism and its opposite, collectivism, see my essay, "Individualism vs. Collectivism: Our Future, Our Choice," in *The Objective Standard*, Spring 2012.
21. See Ayn Rand, "Introducing Objectivism," in *The Voice of Reason* (New York: Meridian, 1990), 4.
22. *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964); *Loving Life* (Richmond, VA: Glen Allen Press, 2002).

3. The Is-Altruism Dichotomy

1. See *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, trans. Kathleen Freeman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 125; and Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), vol. I, pp. 91–94.
2. See David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Appendix I, esp. pp. 287–89, 292–94; and *Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), Book III, esp. pp. 457–59, 462–70.

3. Sean Carroll, “The Moral Equivalent of the Parallel Postulate,” *Discover*, March 24, 2010, <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/cosmicvariance/2010/03/24/the-moral-equivalent-of-the-parallel-postulate/>.
4. Although some contemporary intellectuals are open to the possibility that moral principles can be derived from facts of reality, to my knowledge none (other than Ayn Rand) has shown how this can be done. In the absence of specific knowledge of how it can be done, intellectuals are effectively in the position of conceding that it can't be done. The “is-ought dichotomy” goes by other names as well, including the “fact-value dichotomy” (the notion that you can't derive values from facts) and the “naturalistic fallacy” (the notion that you can't define “good” in terms of natural properties). There are trivial differences among the variations, but they're essentially the same problem. Below I explain a major cause of the widespread confusion.
5. Dennis Prager, “Why Young Americans Can't Think Morally,” September 20, 2011, <http://www.dennisprager.com/columns.aspx?g=b5f5f8f2-7c6f-4c41-a48c-cfb8b97d48bb>.
6. Ayn Rand, “The Objectivist Ethics,” in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964), pp. 13–16.
7. Of course, people have free will and thus can pursue values that are contrary to the requirements of their life, but the fact remains that they don't *need* to pursue such values. If they don't want to live, they can simply stop acting and they will soon die. For more on this point, see Ayn Rand, “Causality Versus Duty” in *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (New York: Signet, 1982), pp. 95–101; and Craig Biddle, *Loving Life: The Morality of Self-Interest and the Facts that Support It* (Richmond: Glen Allen Press, 2002), pp. 43–52.
8. See Rand, “Collectivized Ethics,” in *The Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 94.
9. The error of equating morality with altruism is not the original reason philosophers had trouble deriving morality from reality; the original reason is that philosophers observed correctly that we can't perceive “value” or “moral principle” or “ought,” and they assumed that these things must therefore just be ideas detached from any fact in reality. (I address this aspect of the problem in a chapter titled “The Is–Ought Gap: Subjectivism's Technical Retreat” in *Loving Life*.) But the idea that we can't derive morality from reality *persists* in large part because people equate morality with altruism. Observe that few people doubt the existence of “precision” or “ambiguity” or “religion” or “economics” or the principles of physics or those of medicine or countless other things we can't see. The principles of morality remain elusive today largely because of the widespread practice of freezing the broad abstraction “morality” at the level of the narrow, concrete morality “altruism.”
10. Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 79.
11. Peter Singer, *A Darwinian Left* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 56.
12. Rand, “The Ethics of Emergencies,” in *The Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 50.

4. *Atlas Shrugged* and Ayn Rand's Morality of Egoism

1. Ayn Rand, *Journals of Ayn Rand*, edited by David Harriman (New York: Dutton, 1997), p. 610.

2. W. G. Maclagan, "Self and Others: A Defense of Altruism," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 15 (April 1954): p. 122. Maclagan was an early 20th-century Scottish philosopher who taught at the University of Glasgow and was an ardent advocate of altruism.
3. Maclagan, "Self and Others," pp. 109–11.
4. Ayn Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (New York: Penguin, 1984), p. 61.
5. John Hospers, *Philosophical Analysis* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997), p. 259.
6. Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1962), p. 50.
7. Peter Singer, *A Darwinian Left* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 56.
8. Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 79.
9. Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, pp. 61–62.
10. Rand, *Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 27.
11. Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York: Signet, 1963), p. 129.
12. Rand, *Virtue of Selfishness*, pp. 82–83.
13. Rand, *Virtue of Selfishness*, pp. 126.
14. Rand, *Virtue of Selfishness*, pp. 108–10.
15. Rand, *Virtue of Selfishness*, pp. 110–13.
16. Ayn Rand, *The Voice of Reason* (New York: Meridian, 1989), p. 4.
17. Ayn Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: Signet, 1967), p. 19.
18. Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, p. 19.
19. Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, p. 136.
20. Rand, *For the New Intellectual*, p. 142.
21. Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, p. 99.

Purpose, Value Hierarchies, and Happiness

1. Cf. Ayn Rand, interview by Alvin Toffler, *Playboy*, March 1964.
2. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Signet, 1992), pp. 92–93.
3. Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 2nd ed., edited by Harry Binswanger and Leonard Peikoff (New York: Penguin, 1990), p. 32.
4. Cf. Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1991), p. 298.
5. Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, pp. 33–34.
6. See Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964), p. 29.